

**ROMANIA'S ENGAGEMENT IN SUBREGIONAL  
CO-OPERATION AND THE NATIONAL  
STRATEGY FOR NATO ACCESSION**

**by Adina Stefan**

*'...Since we obviously could not make it  
into the Alliance when it was created, at  
least we should be allowed now to bring  
our share to a more ambitious NATO,  
empowered to cope with new  
challenges...'*

Andrei Plesu, Romanian Minister of Foreign  
Affairs (8 December 1998)

## HARMONIE PAPER 10

Romania's Engagement in Subregional Co-operation and the National Strategy for NATO Accession / by Adina Stefan

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## FOREWORD

By Peter Volten

When the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) first approached the Volkswagen Foundation to seek funding for our European Fellowship Programme (EFP), we stressed two features of our scheme. One was the opportunity we wished to provide: for scholars from Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) to examine an aspect of their own nation's transition in the defence field, under our professional supervision and with a period of 'study abroad' in the Netherlands. The other was the results we could expect: authoritative, original research on *civil-military relations* and *security policy-making* in CEECs – the two themes on which we decided the EFP should focus – and hence valuable additions to an English-language literature on these subjects which had been dominated hitherto by general (and often superficial) essays by Western analysts.

In terms of these aims, the programme has succeeded beyond our expectations. It is now in its final months, but by the end of 1999 some 25 fellows will have taken part in it and most will have seen their work published in this monograph series. For this success I have to thank all those members of my staff who have been involved in the exercise. In particular, I must mention EFP Co-ordinator Sipke de Hoop, who has been responsible for the selection of Fellows and overall management of the programme since early 1997; Joost Herman, who fulfilled this role at the start of the venture in 1996/97; and our administrators – Elena Herman and, later, Joke Venema – who have provided office support for everyone and much practical help to the Fellows themselves.

Coming from CEECs, our Fellows have faced the formidable challenge of writing-up their research in English, which for each of them has been a second language (or even a third). All have risen to this challenge, some impressively. Not surprisingly, however, their final submissions have required careful editing prior to publication. The lion's share of this demanding and time-consuming work has fallen to David Greenwood, Research Director at CESS. To him we owe a substantial debt for the effort he has expended in 'helping authors to say what it is they have to say' (in his own formulation). Thanks are also due to Sergei Malkin – and, latterly, Elzaline Schraa – for undertaking the final preparation of copy for our printer.

One last debt of gratitude I must acknowledge is to the Volkswagen Foundation, for providing the academic venture capital that made our programme possible. This was a courageous investment; but it has yielded regular dividends, of which this volume is a good example.

In fact Adina Stefan's work demonstrates some special qualities which we always hoped that EFP inquiries might reveal. In the first place, her analysis of Romania's sub-regional relations – in the context of this quest for NATO membership and the promotion of interoperability with this in mind – clearly benefits from the author's first-hand knowledge of Bucharest's policy-making process. There are details and

insights here which one would be unlikely to get from an 'outside' observer. In the second place, her overview of the regional dimension of a south-east European country's recent experience has obvious comparative possibilities. In particular, it is instructive to look at this account alongside Žaneta Ozoliņa's examination of a north-east European state's approach to neighbourhood relations (published in this series earlier this year).

On these grounds – and others – what Adina Stefan has written is another valuable contribution to the literature on politico-military transition in CEECs. Appearing in a period when everyone's attention is on south-eastern Europe, not least because of the hopes attached to the recently-launched Stability Pact for the area, it is also most timely.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War was the starting point of a complex process of structural transformations within the international security domain at the subregional, European and global levels. In the Euro-Atlantic area two major elements of this process are NATO's opening towards the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) which in 1989 made a turn from the communist system to a society based on democratic politics and market economics, and the organisation's launching of special partnership relations with the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Thus we have seen the first accessions to NATO – of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland – and there is an 'open door' for other CEECs; and, since 1997, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter have provided a framework for the enlarging NATO's dealings with the major post-Soviet states.

Taking into account the above, Romania's aspiration to join a collective security system that has provided stability and prosperity for its members is fully justifiable. Consequently, Romania's paramount objective in the foreign policy field is integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. This should not be understood as a response to an immediate and inherent military threat to the country's security, for the good reason that this kind of threat does not exist anymore. Rather, it is a natural preference since Romania has always looked, throughout its history, for strong ties with western countries.

Along with this pro-NATO orientation, there exists a strong commitment to enhancing regional co-operation. These two directions in Romanian foreign policy have indeed co-existed for several years, with apparently no link between them. 'As a Central European country, closely connected to South East Europe, Romania tried hard to respond to the challenges of regional and subregional co-operation as an important pillar of co-operative security in Europe. She did so while at the same time pursuing resolutely the fundamental goals of integration into the European Union and accession to NATO'.<sup>1</sup>

The approach to regional co-operation is 'extensive, all-encompassing and four-layered'.<sup>2</sup> First, there is the bilateral plane, Romania is interested in developing partnership-type relations with its neighbours and other countries in the region. Second, Romania is involved in a series of trilateral co-operation schemes – Romania/Greece/Bulgaria, Romania/Turkey/Bulgaria, Romania/Poland/Ukraine, Romania/Moldova/Ukraine – which have security targets such as joint action against non-conventional threats. Third, Romania participates in a wide range of subregional co-operative structures such as Black Sea Economic Co-operation, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, a South East European Defence Process, and the South East Co-operation Initiative. Finally, at the multilateral European and Euro-Atlantic level, Romania is a member of OSCE and the Council of Europe and is taking part in programmes aimed at preparing the country for future membership of NATO and the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrei Plesu (Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs), *Speech to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Ministerial Meeting (EAPC)* (Brussels, 8 December 1998).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The question arises: how should Romania's active involvement in regional security co-operation structures be understood and explained when its major formally-declared objective is integration into NATO? The answer is that Romania is interested in promoting certain values and concepts highly necessary within an extremely volatile area of Europe: liberal democracy, the market economy and the rule of law. Indeed, the nation's President said in 1998 that 'the most important objective at the moment is supporting the democratisation processes in Central and Eastern Europe. The success of the transition in the countries of this area represents a vital factor for the stability of the whole continent'.<sup>3</sup>

The countries of the region strove to set up a network of good-neighbourly relations at an early stage after communism had collapsed. This was considered necessary to show the international community that the CEECs had opted to build democratic societies which could work together. It took them some time to switch from the declaratory level to the pragmatic one. Nevertheless, the augmentation of transparency and confidence building represent the main elements of Romania's policy of prevention, deterrence and peaceful resolution of crises and conflicts, which is imperative given the present regional context. This has been the case with the evolution of Romanian-Hungarian relations, which exemplify confidence building and achieving stability through subregional co-operation. Another relevant example is the South East European Defence Process that started in 1997, aiming at increasing transparency and trust among the countries in the area. In 1998, the participant countries agreed on setting up the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe to support stability and security in the region.

The CEECs have begun to feel the need to work with one another in order not only to face a wide range of threats to regional stability and security, but also to lower the costs of integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures and to diminish the time needed to prepare for this process. Moreover, NATO has encouraged these countries to develop regional co-operative arrangements. In this context, Romania's involvement in local or sub-regional security co-operation must be seen as *complementary* to the quest for integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures and not as an *alternative* to this. Furthermore, Romania considers that it can prepare itself for accession into NATO better and faster by co-operating with other countries in its area to achieve fulfilment of all the integration criteria.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of the present study is to elucidate this complementarity. To this end it begins with a review of the risks and threats to European security which affect Romania and its neighbours and a presentation of Romania's objectives regarding these. There follows an account of Romania's involvement in subregional military co-operation structures. The analysis continues with a discussion of NATO interoperability – which is both a main requirement of the Alliance and an objective of Romania's involvement in subregional co-operation – and two illustrative case studies on how Romania is using such co-operation to reach interoperability with NATO,

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<sup>3</sup> Emil Constantinescu (President of Romania), *Speech at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Workshop of NATO* (Vienna, 20-22 June 1998).

<sup>4</sup> For a presentation of these criteria see the *White Book on Romania and NATO* (Bucharest: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997), pp.26-38.



together with an assessment of the financial costs implied by all these activities. As to whether Romania's involvement in these affiliations is an asset for its integration into NATO, it is noted that there are *direct benefits*, such as subregional military co-operation which is valuable in itself, and *indirect benefits*, such as economic progress, which is among NATO requirements.



## II. THREATS AND RISKS TO ROMANIA'S SECURITY

### 1. Overview of Romania's geographical position and the neighbouring area

Romania is situated in an area with a special meaning not only for the security of its small states, which during the centuries proved to have different and even contradictory interests, but also for the security of NATO's southern flank. It is a paradox that the end of the Cold War, which everybody expected to bring more stability and security, failed to do so. As a consequence, because of the emergence of new risks and threats, the area is facing increasing turmoil. Furthermore, it includes revisionist states<sup>5</sup> or extremist political forces<sup>6</sup> and, unfortunately, too many examples of how political actors can pursue negative goals in a world obsessed by security matters. And in the 1990s there have been lots of violent conflicts threatening to engulf the whole region: wars in the former Yugoslavia and Albania, the old and continuing tensions between Greece and Turkey.

A look at the map of Europe should help us to better understand the security risks and threats in Romania's neighbourhood. In the southern part there are the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean countries; in the western part there are the countries of Central Europe, some of them already invited to join NATO and the EU; and in the northern and eastern part there are the states of the former Soviet Union. As the Romanian President Emil Constantinescu has emphasised, 'Romania's position at the crossing of certain geopolitical and strategic axes transforms it in the knot which coherently completes the co-operation and security network of the whole Central and Eastern European region'.<sup>7</sup> Romania seems to be *at the cross-roads* of the linking channels between the Occidental and the Oriental worlds. The main issue here is that both worlds – and, implicitly, Romania – have to face broadly the same security risks. Furthermore, the threats that Romania and the rest of South Eastern Europe have to cope with are the same as those which the southern flank of NATO has to face.

A list of the security risks and threats in the region would include almost all the types identified by political analysts: nationalism, irredentism, ethnic and religious harassment, terrorism, illegal immigration, drug and arms traffic, organised crime, poor ecological standards, nuclear proliferation, weak states.<sup>8</sup> As noted earlier, Romania has no direct military threat to face at the moment. This does not mean that military threats are absent from the region: if countries from the area are involved in an open conflict, this could endanger the whole area.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This does not refer to revisionist claims on Romania's territory, because at the present there are no such claims, but to other situations of this kind that exist or could emerge in the area.

<sup>6</sup> Such forces are present in all the countries of the region.

<sup>7</sup> Emil Constantinescu, 'Speech at the Nobel Institute in Oslo', *Azi* (28 October 1998), p.C5.

<sup>8</sup> According to Barry Buzan's definition in *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold Era*, (Harvester, Wheatsheaf, 1991), p.100.

<sup>9</sup> This possibility is analysed below.

## 2. Some threats to Romania's stability and security

Although Romania is a very active country participating in almost all the subregional co-operation structures in Central and Eastern Europe, it cannot be successful if its expectations differ from those of other countries. There is a real and deep need for the harmonisation of actions and focus on the most effective solutions. This should not be a difficult task to accomplish as long as the countries in the area face more or less the same threats. They should be interested in finding the best ways to cope with these. It is useful to enumerate the most important challenges.

### 2.1. Cessation of NATO enlargement and Russia's opposition to a new phase of enlargement

At the 1997 Madrid Summit, NATO launched its 'open door' policy strongly supported within the final declaration by all members. It was more than once underlined that enlargement should be considered an on-going process and those then invited to join would not be the last. Moreover, NATO made a commitment in Madrid to review the subject at its next Summit, in Washington in April 1999. It has done this, but has effectively postponed 'second wave' accessions until 2002.

Romania and Slovenia were specifically mentioned in the Madrid Declaration as the most viable candidates for a next round of enlargement if they managed to continue their political and economic reforms and to obtain sustainable growth. Still, it is obvious that these statements only gave a clear perspective, not a guarantee. The Washington decision confirms this.

Clearly, the first round of enlargement highlighted several difficulties. Accession talks with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland showed that, for the new members, fulfilling all the responsibilities of NATO membership would be more difficult than both the allies and candidates had imagined. In addition, although ratification of the first round was completed without major debates and disputes, it did not pass the US Senate with a comfortable majority and a group of senators wanted – and have effectively obtained – a three-year moratorium on further enlargement.

In these circumstances it is difficult for a not-yet-invited country not to feel frustrated by being left out, without getting any assurance for the future that it will join the club. Many Romanian politicians have underlined this. For one thing, as the Romanian President, Emil Constantinescu, has explained: '...It would be exceedingly worrying if, by using a kind of political and strategic surgery, Central Europe was divided in the long term into prepared and unprepared states to participate in the Euro-Atlantic welfare and security architecture...'<sup>10</sup>. For another, the cessation of NATO enlargement could lead to another serious situation within the country. The extremist Great Romania Party managed to win a lot of sympathy – increasing its position from 5 per cent of the vote in the elections in 1996 to 16 per cent in the last poll made in 1998 – by arguing that 'The West clearly showed that it had no interest in Romania and, still, we continue to beg for its attention and favours' or 'The coalition in power leads Romania to a disaster with its foreign policy aiming at integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions'.<sup>11</sup> Such a rise of nationalism is not surprising; and, although

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<sup>10</sup> Emil Constantinescu, *Speech at the Nobel Institute* (Oslo, 26 October 1998).

most Romanians still want to join NATO, the 67 per cent in favour registered by a Eurobarometer poll in November 1997 has to be compared with the enthusiastic 95 per cent scored in early 1997.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, there is the well-known fact that Russia opposes NATO enlargement. The Alliance would not allow Russia to veto decisions that are legitimate ones for NATO and nations wishing to join NATO, so it decided that the best way would be to work with Russia and to take into account Russia's concerns. The signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in Paris in 1997 was a great achievement in this regard. Although Russia still objected to enlargement, the parties were able to agree on a co-operative relationship that is meant to build confidence between them and to dispel mistrust. The problem comes from the possibility of a severe change in Moscow's policy orientation. A new leadership could come with a more aggressive message regarding this issue. This would strengthen opposition to further enlargement. It could be relevant in this regard to note the position of a high-ranking Russian officer: 'We have retreated a thousand miles without firing a shot, and you are still advancing. And all the while you accuse Russia of aggression. When are you going to stop? When Russia's frontier is in Ryazan?'

At this point, two of Russia's initiatives, affecting Romania, should be mentioned. At the end of 1997, the Kremlin announced that President Boris Yeltsin would go on a tour through the CEECs which had not yet been invited to join NATO. He intended to invite these countries to accept Russia's security umbrella. (The tour did not take place due to Yeltsin's severe health problems.) In November 1998, a new proposal initiated by Russia and Belarus emerged: the setting-up of a Russia-Belarus-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Union. The Yugoslav Government analysed the proposal and sent the deputy prime minister Vladimir Seselj to participate in the meeting of the Russia-Belarus Union Commission. He not only took part, but also made a most surprising declaration – that there were real chances for Armenia and Ukraine to join the union very soon, with Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia following in a next phase. The Bulgarian Government strongly rejected this proposal as 'a most ridiculous one, aiming to set up a military East European bloc as an alternative to NATO'; but the Romanian authorities simply said that 'the proposal of the Yugoslav vice-prime minister is not of our concern'.<sup>13</sup> The Romanian Government statement is not surprising if one takes into account that Bucharest rarely rushes into adopting a tough position, but this situation should have elicited a strong reaction based on the given that Romania's declared objective is to join NATO.

These initiatives could represent a serious signal that Russia has not given up its intentions to expand its sphere of influence in order to counterbalance NATO's enlargement. Official statements referring to this issue should not be neglected and, in this regard, President Yeltsin's affirmation that 'NATO enlargement is a huge mistake' is noteworthy.<sup>14</sup> Nor should one ignore other political or mass media representatives'

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<sup>11</sup> Corneliu Vadim Tudor (Leader of The Great Romania Party), *Press Conference* (November 1998). Tudor is well known for his anti-West position and extremist language.

<sup>12</sup> See: 'Eurobarometer poll (November 1997)', *Azi* (5 June 1998).

<sup>13</sup> For both declarations see: 'Balkan Dispute', *Curentul* (6 November 1998), p.1.

<sup>14</sup> 'Boris Yeltsin's declaration at the American-Russian Summit in Moscow', *Azi* (3 September 1998), p.A2.

declarations regarding 'the existence of a most serious obstacle for upgrading Romanian-Russian relations, that is, Romania's future accession to NATO'.<sup>15</sup> These facts have to be taken into account by the Romanian representatives when they set up the new security strategy of the country. The strained relations with the Soviet Union/Russia during the communist years are still too recent to allow the development of a sound confidence-building system between these two countries. Yet Romania is part of no security system. Thus any signal coming from Russia is checked and double-checked. For Romanian politicians, the population's opinion on this matter is also important. For instance, at a poll taken in April 1997, 50.6 per cent of the respondents considered that Russia was the most likely neighbouring country to threaten Romania's security in the future.<sup>16</sup> Under these circumstances, it could take years to finally conclude the Basic Treaty between Romania and the Russian Federation and that could nourish the Romanian population's fears regarding 'the big enemy from the east'.

This kind of situation could be easily avoided by deciding upon a timetable for 'second wave' NATO enlargement which would offer more certainty to aspirants. A schedule would surely confirm the Alliance enlargement process as a dynamic and rational one because the first thing it would achieve is diminishing uncertainty regarding its continuation. Russia is not yet in a position to have a strong and serious reaction, which makes NATO's task much easier. As for Romania, its politicians will not have the excuse of using most of their energy to persuade NATO officials that enlargement should continue. They will have to focus more on the severe economic issues Romania has to face. Moreover, the extremist language of nationalist leaders will not have high resonance anymore and the possible winning of the legislative elections in 2000 by a left wing and nationalist coalition will be prevented. Finally, defining the moment in time for the next round – although without announcing the new invitees – would also augment the verbal commitment NATO has made to an 'open door' for new candidates.

## *2.2. Minor conflicts in Romania's neighbourhood*

Unfortunately, as has been stated before, Romania is part of a very turbulent area. This situation makes things a lot more difficult when it comes to assessment of the threats Romania has to face. However, minor conflicts in Romania's neighbourhood could clearly threaten not only the stability and security of Romania, but also the whole region's.

The intensity of the sudden release of the genie of ethnic and religious disputes took Europe by surprise. This has been most vividly represented in the Balkans, where ethnic and religious disputes burst into open warfare in the former Yugoslavia, and where formal territorial boundaries have proved to be little or no restraint on violence. But: 'while the people of Denmark or Belgium may find the conflict repugnant, it has much more immediacy or salience to those states which share borders with the former Yugoslavia. Here, there is a fear that the conflict could spill

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<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Ivanov (Political Analyst), 'Comment', *Russia's Voice* (14 May 1998).

<sup>16</sup> 'Poll made by ESOP OMEGA', *Romania Libera* (5 April 1997), p.1.

over into neighbouring countries, many already experiencing ethnic tensions of their own, and many already burdened by the flight of refugees'.<sup>17</sup>

In this regard many believe that if the newly independent states of Eastern and Central Europe are not included in multilateral security arrangements under US leadership the whole region could once again become a tinderbox, as it was in the 1920s and 1930s with the Baltic countries, Russia, Ukraine, the Czech and Slovak republics, Hungary and Romania worrying about each other and all of them worrying about Germany. According to one writer, 'This tense situation, according to a sort of post-Cold War domino theory, will threaten the stability of the entire continent, as, for instance, a nuclear-armed Ukraine provokes the nuclearization of, say, Poland, which in turn pressures Germany into acquiring nuclear weapons, which ignites latent suspicions between Germany and its neighbours to the West'.<sup>18</sup>

This is an extreme theory with a lot of dramatic accents, but reality provides a situation concerning Romania which shows that a small conflict in this area could spill over, therefore representing a threat to all the neighbouring countries. The 1998/99 Kosovo crisis – in which Romania's neighbour, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), was directly involved – is instructive. Thus, in October 1998, Romania decided to support NATO in a possible humanitarian mission, but not in a military operation against the FRY. In adopting this decision, its authorities took into consideration Romania's traditional good relations with the FRY and NATO's solicitation of support, addressed to all the partner countries. Still, the Yugoslav authorities accused Romania of 'hostile behaviour', stating that 'through its decision, Romania has become hostile to the FRY...'.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Bucharest declared that political relations between Romania and his country could not develop properly as long as 'Romania is striving to get into NATO using a shortcut, if possible, and it does not want to annoy in any way those who have something to do with its accession'.<sup>20</sup> In this context, it is worth noting that although Hungary had the same position regarding this Kosovo crisis as Romania, it did not receive any direct negative reaction from the Yugoslav authorities. It is obvious that Hungary's status as a new NATO member made a difference.

To sum up, Romania could be dragged into a conflict which it initially seems to have no connection with. Such conflicts are going to represent a threat until all states are integrated in sound security arrangements. And, because in most cases an international organisation is involved in the settlement of a crisis, it could be interesting to analyse the effects of this involvement on the internal stability of a neighbouring country which is not a member of a strong security structure.

<sup>17</sup> Werner Bauwens, Armand Clesse and Olaf F. Knudsen, *Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe*, Brasseys no.8 (NATO, Brussels, 1996), p.81.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Schwarz, 'NATO Enlargement Eastwards', *World Policy Journal* (Fall 1997), p.28.

<sup>19</sup> Desimir Jevite (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's (FRY) Ambassador in Bucharest), in: *Curentul* (14 October 1998), p.12.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with FRY's Ambassador in Bucharest', *Azi* (16 December 1998), p.C4.

### *2.3. Supporting international organisations: how this could become a threat to Romania's stability*

It is generally supposed that supporting international organisations in their efforts to stabilise an area has good consequences for all the participant countries in the action and for the region as well. Still, there are circumstances in which support could lead to undesirable outcomes.

In this regard, as far as the instruments and measures adopted by the international community to deal with instability in Romania's neighbourhood are concerned, a wide range of activities enters the reckoning. They vary both in their purpose and effects: for instance, sanctions imposed by the UN, the embargo on arms supplies to former Yugoslav states and the Dayton Accords concluded in 1995. The latter have been successfully followed up by a number of related bodies set up to regulate both the civilian and military aspects of inter-ethnic reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These include commissions for arms reduction verification and control and mutual confidence-building, resettling refugees, ascertaining the legal status of property deeds, economic reconstruction and re-establishing normality. The international organisations – OSCE, EU, WEU, NATO, UN – have been active, not only in individual countries but in the region as a whole. They are helping to consolidate the peace and restore regional relations. They are also engaged in the enhancement of democratic institutions, the improvement of living standards, the battle against corruption and organised crime.

Worthy though such activities are, associations with them can be problematical in certain conditions. For instance, when the Romanian parliament had to vote on the country's participation alongside NATO in actions aimed at resolving the 1998/99 Kosovo crisis, the debates between the government and opposition clearly indicated an important lack of convergence of the politicians' points of view. Although an early declaration, submitted by the government to the parliament for approval, did not foreshadow participation in a military mission against the FRY – it mentioned only Romania's political support for the actions of the international community and the country's readiness to participate in humanitarian missions if necessary – most of the politicians of the opposition considered the declaration a betrayal of Romania's traditional good neighbour. There were all kinds of criticism of this declaration, from those referring to 'the existence of too many general wordings, which could allow lots of speculation'<sup>21</sup> to more radical ones: 'Romanian governors ignore the good relations we have had with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for more than a thousand years. Their position is a servile act addressed to a military alliance which has repeatedly rejected us ... They have involved the country in the most dangerous adventure since the end of the World War II'.<sup>22</sup> Teodor Melescanu, a former minister of foreign affairs in President Iliescu's government, pointed out that 'the decision adopted by the parliament would significantly influence Romania's security in the future'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Valeriu Tabara (Leader of the National Unity of Romanians Party), in: *Azi* (13 October 1998), p.A5.

<sup>22</sup> Corneliu Vadim Tudor (Leader of the Great Romania Party), in: *Azi* (13 October 1998), p.A5.

<sup>23</sup> Teodor Melescanu (Leader of the Alternative for Romania Party and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1992-1996), in: *Azi* (15 October 1998), p.A7.



The relevant issue here is that, in a situation which required strong support in the parliament from all the political forces, the government got around 60 per cent of the votes in favour of its proposal. Such a difference between government and opposition is highly counter-productive in matters related to the national interest. A decision which leads to the involvement of the country in action of no matter what nature outside its borders requires broad support from the population, because the national interest does not or should not be a party-political matter. It is well known that the Romanians have always sympathised with the Serbs. They learned at history classes that there had been no military conflicts with their south-eastern neighbours through the centuries. Under these circumstances, it should not be surprising that the elected representatives had different points of view and that the opposition deplored the position of the coalition in power towards the FRY. The 60 per cent won support in the parliament in this case was not enough, especially in such a tense situation.

That is an example of how the decision of a country to join the efforts of the international community to settle a dispute in its neighbourhood affects the country's political life. In other situations, the presence of instability in the vicinity could influence its economy. In this regard, Romania has the unfortunate experience of the two embargoes imposed by the UN on Iraq and the FRY. While in Iraq's case the cost to Romania was only US\$ 2 billion, commercial exchanges with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were stopped. The estimated losses during the four-year embargo in the latter case were around US\$ 18 billion.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, in this period Romania lost another important element for its economy – the access to the Black Sea-Danube waterway to Central Europe – which severely affected its exports of metallurgical products. If we have a look at the 'side effects' of this embargo, the boom of illegal activities in all the neighbouring countries was spectacular: fraud, contraband, real-estate speculations and, the most profitable, traffic in motor fuels. To cite only one example, the explosion of prosperity in Clisura Dunarii – a Romanian village at the frontier with the FRY – is notorious. Here, in November 1994, there were more filling stations than in Bucharest and the billionaires were emerging like 'mushrooms after rainy weather'.<sup>25</sup>

As one can imagine, these results were for sure not what the UN wanted to achieve by imposing the embargo on the FRY. Anyway, for a country like Romania which does not enjoy a profitable economic system yet, the losses were crippling. In fact they led to industrial unrest because of increasing unemployment and to huge losses in the state budget in a period when any income was vital. Not to mention that stopping commercial exchanges with a very good traditional partner damaged political relations between the two countries. These have not been so intense as before the embargo. In sum, this case is a striking illustration of how sanctions can affect not only the 'target country' but also its neighbours – without achieving any remarkable strategic result.

As for other instruments used by international organisations in the region, the international community has taken some important steps. NATO managed to get Russia and other partners involved in the military mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a post-SFOR mission. In Albania it is not a matter of keeping the factions separate

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<sup>24</sup> 'The Bill Has Nine Zeroes', *Curentul* (13 October 1998), p.5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

but of helping to make the state institutions more secure and to support the supply of international aid. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia it is necessary to maintain a preventive strategic presence in order to shore up stability.<sup>26</sup> In all these situations, however, internal efforts are as important as external ones if relevant progress is desired. Sometimes this is not well understood and those involved in a dispute expect the international community to settle it. The best solution can be reached only through the co-operation of the parties in good faith, with the active assistance of the international community. Any solution proposed by the latter which does not fulfil local expectations will only worsen the situation.<sup>27</sup>

In short, it is quite difficult, even with the help of the international community, to settle disputes and to obtain conflict resolution if the most appropriate instruments are not identified and used. This risks a further worsening of the situation and impacts on the neighbouring area, throwing the whole region into turmoil. Meanwhile, the areas affected by a conflict enjoy a flourishing of all kind of criminal activities.

#### *2.4. Non-conventional risks to security*

The non-conventional risks to security include terrorism, drug traffic, illegal immigration, money laundering; and they are a real threat to the whole of Europe. It is extremely difficult to imagine another response to this threat but close co-operation among states. In the new democracies the establishment of sound democratic governance is a big challenge. This process is particularly vulnerable to these new risks. If the countries fail to make the transition, the price paid by the more developed ones will be more violence, drugs, illegal immigration within their own borders; and more money, resources and human lives spent in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, in an attempt to remedy the consequences of international neglect.

The new risks affect all countries. Transnational organised crime and illicit drug trafficking are especially pervasive: no country is immune. Transnational organised crime is also to be blamed for much illegal immigration, which in many cases might be more aptly described as human trafficking or a new form of slavery. Some writers have analysed the possibility of using military means to assist law

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<sup>26</sup> Sophia Clement, *Conflict Prevention in the Balkans: Case Studies of Kosovo and the FYR of Macedonia*, Chaillot Paper 30 (Paris: WEU Institute, December 1997), p.33.

<sup>27</sup> The role of the international community as a mediator is crucial in this process. For instance, regarding the 1998/99 Kosovo crisis, the author's opinion is that in mediating the early negotiations between the Serbs and Albanians the international community performed poorly. The mediators did not strive to identify the solutions which would have satisfied both parties. In fact, they tried to impose their own solution and to settle the crisis as soon as possible. This is how we got to the weird situation of having an agreement signed by one of the parties while the other one could not make up its mind. 'Having a treaty signed only by the Albanian part does not mean that 50 per cent of the problem is solved. What if the Serbs decide to resume negotiations? The Albanians could claim that they have nothing to negotiate anymore because they concluded a treaty... But with who did they conclude the treaty if the Serbs did not sign it?' (Adrian Severin (Romanian former Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Speech at a conference at the Amsterdam School of International Relations, 30 March 1999.) The author believes that the international community took a hasty decision at this point which, in fact, only worsened the situation.

enforcement. But the use of military assets can only be envisaged as a closely supervised, limited, and specialised contribution to crime prevention.<sup>28</sup>

As for Romania and the other CEECs after the collapse of the communist system, they represented optimum *emerging markets* for the proliferation of these risks. They opened their borders without being really aware of the threat represented by criminal activities. It was the porous nature of Romania's frontier with the Republic of Moldova which made a lot easier the introduction of Russian and Chinese mafias, illegal immigrants and drugs to Romania's territory. There is not only a threat to the economy of the country, but to political life as well.

An aggressive expansion of terrorist activities and organised crime on Romania's territory could even seriously affect the country's stability. In July 1998, Romanian official representatives declared that 'at least eight terrorist groups including the 'Muslim Brothers'<sup>29</sup>, Hezbollah, 'Western Front'<sup>30</sup> and the Kurdistan Working Party (PKK) take action on Romania's territory'<sup>31</sup>. For instance, there are more than 8,000 Kurds, most of them members of the PKK, and 'they represent a potential threat to Romania's national security'<sup>32</sup>. This group is concerned with obtaining money for self-support and propaganda activities, the strengthening of its structures and involvement in organised crime.

Given this situation, it should be taken into account that Romania lacks strong and experienced institutions to successfully counter these activities. Almost 30 per cent of the population is very poor and, consequently, it is easy to be involved in illegal action of any nature. And the same goes for the underpaid clerks working within the institutions which are supposed to fight illegal activities. As a result, Romania has a good chance to become an important scene for a wide range of terrorist and organised crime actions and a new route for their penetration of Western Europe. In due time, we get a weak state unable to face any kind of external or internal challenge. This could lead to a serious delay in joining the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. For instance, the European Commission has mentioned many times that Romania should improve its border control if it requires for its citizens the right to travel in Western Europe without a visa. And NATO requirements for developing strong democratic institutions and achieving sustainable economic growth would not be attainable in these circumstances.

### 3. Romania's objectives and its role in the region

We have seen some of the major threats to Romania's security and stability and their possible consequences. At this point, it is interesting to analyse how Romania copes

<sup>28</sup> For more details see Alessandro Politi, *European Security: The New Transnational Risks*, Chaillot Paper 29 (Paris: WEU Institute, October 1997), pp.55-68.

<sup>29</sup> Arab grouping co-ordinated from Vienna concerned with setting up professional, cultural or religious associations.

<sup>30</sup> Palestinian grouping concerned with obtaining financial support.

<sup>31</sup> General Stan Stangaciu (Commandant of the Romanian gendarme troops), reported in *Azi* (13 July 1998), p.A7.

<sup>32</sup> Colonel Ion Stefanut (Chief of the anti-terrorist brigade of the Romanian Intelligence Service), in: *Azi* (13 July 1998), p.A7.

with these threats and which are the objectives established in this regard. After the collapse of the communist system, Romania had to learn to promote transparency in its international relations and to purge its policy and messages of all the ideological ingredients which did not meet any of the people's needs but the political class. As already mentioned, Romania's paramount goal is to integrate into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Accession to NATO is a major part of this process. The rationale is well illustrated by using the US Secretary of State's words: 'Enlarging NATO will make us safer by expanding the area of Europe where wars simply do not happen...thus reducing the chance that American troops will again be called across the Atlantic to fight. It is not an accident that no nation has ever dared to attack a member of NATO in Europe or that we have never had to fire a shot to defend a NATO ally...'.<sup>33</sup>

Besides, this paramount goal goes together with a wide range of objectives of political, economic and military nature, which Romania is determined to reach.<sup>34</sup> The political objectives include:

- speeding up the process of integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures and achieving political interoperability with NATO members;
- optimisation of the relationship system with significant NATO/EU members;
- active involvement in a network of institutions, co-operation initiatives and bilateral and multilateral relations with neighbouring states, and those of Central Europe, South Eastern Europe and the Black Sea area;
- and establishing and improving the relationship with Russia.

As for the military objectives, the most relevant ones are:

- reaching compatibility and interoperability with NATO forces so that the time needed for full integration of the Romanian military can be minimised;
- building a defence planning system according to the Alliance's standards;
- and strengthening bilateral military co-operation with NATO member states.

In addition to these actions Romania will continue its involvement in subregional military co-operation initiatives in Central and South Eastern Europe as well as in the Black Sea area, further enhance military relations with neighbouring states, including the latest recruits to NATO, and assume a security-provider role by participating in NATO-WEU-led actions of crisis management.

In the process of reaching these listed objectives, Romania should make the best use of its strengths and strive to eliminate its weaknesses. Its geostrategic position and the extended network of good relations with its neighbours, as well as the

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<sup>33</sup> Madeleine Albright (US Secretary of State), Speech at the University in Louisville, 27 October 1997, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> These objectives are listed in the *Strategy of Action of the Ministry of Defence to integrate into NATO (October 1997-April 1999)* (Romania: MoD, October 1997), pp.2-3.

intensive collaboration with NATO and partner countries, are factors already noted. As for preparation of the Romanian Armed Forces, including training, this matter is analysed in later sections of this study.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The sudden collapse of the communist system found the countries of Central and Eastern Europe more or less prepared to cope with the new challenges to their security. At the same time, they made a clear choice to become part of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, which was itself undergoing profound transformation. In this context, the CEECs had to identify the most appropriate means to counter a wide range of threats, such as nationalism, irredentism, ethnic and religious harassment, terrorism, illegal immigration, drug and arms traffic, organised crime, poor ecological standards.

As already pointed out, Romania is connected to South Eastern Europe, an area where all countries have been searching for stability and security. Romania has understood that its own efforts to cope with current risks and threats must not be isolated from those of neighbouring countries.

Among the risks Romania has to face is the possible cessation of NATO enlargement. Combined with Russia's opposition to a new phase of enlargement, this could have unfortunate consequences for the country such as the rise of nationalism and success in the next legislative elections for a left-wing nationalist coalition. Moreover, Romanians' fears regarding the expansionist policy of the Russian Federation could increase again and the conclusion of the Basic Treaty between these countries could be postponed for a long period of time.

Another important threat is represented by the so-called minor conflicts in Romania's neighbourhood. Under certain circumstances, as happened at key stages of the 1998/99 Kosovo crisis, Romania could become involved in a confrontation with which it seemed to have nothing to do at the beginning. Over Kosovo, traditional good relations between Romania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did not stop the Romanian authorities supporting NATO, but the Serbs were highly dissatisfied with this position. Such dilemmas will continue to arise until all the countries concerned are incorporated in sound security arrangements.

Whenever an international organisation is involved in the settlement of a crisis it has been demonstrated that, sometimes, supporting the action could have unfortunate effects on the internal stability of a country and its economic situation. Romania's case – concerning the internal political debates on its involvement with NATO in the Kosovo crisis and the economic losses it had to cope with due to the embargo imposed to FRY – is illustrative in this regard.

In addition, the new risks to security can also be regarded as a considerable threat to the political and economic stability of Romania, which is still building up strong democratic institutions and has just started to restructure its economy. As organised crime, terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, illegal immigration are expanding very fast, and no country is immune to their impact, the most efficient way of fighting them is close and intensive international co-operation.

Romania has set up a wide range of objectives in order to cope with the threats to its stability and security and, among these, the paramount goal is to join the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Still, involvement in subregional military co-operation initiatives is essential as well as are achieving interoperability with NATO forces and making Romania a strong candidate for the next round of enlargement of the Alliance. 'Whatever Romania is doing in these co-operative frameworks proceeds from its own choice and is an organic consequence of shared Euro-Atlantic values. That is why we acted as if we already were NATO members. We will do so irrespectively of when the Alliance will be ready to launch new invitations for membership'<sup>35</sup>.

From this overview of the threats to stability and security that Romania has to face and the main political and military objectives designed in such a way that fulfil Romania's need to cope with those threats, this study now proceeds to consideration of the practical modalities being used to fulfil the objectives, that is, Romania's engagement in subregional military co-operation.

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<sup>35</sup> Andrei Plesu (Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs), Speech at the EAPC Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, 8 December 1998.

### III. ENGAGEMENT IN SUBREGIONAL MILITARY CO-OPERATION

#### 1. NATO and the new security risks

The Euro-Atlantic security architecture is going through a complex process of transformation. Not only are the security policies and institutions of CEECs being adapted to confront the new risks and to cope with the needs of their people in building and strengthening democracy, but also the western security structures themselves are changing.

In this process, NATO faces two important challenges: internal restructuring while expanding eastwards. Both are essential. In Budapest in April 1998, Alexander Vershbow, US Ambassador to NATO, explained why: 'What we are doing is nothing less than to defy history: to overcome the historic tendency toward instability, nationalism and regional conflict that has plagued this part of the world for generations'. This is very much a vision, but it confirms that NATO has the same interests regarding the stability of the region as CEECs have. What is crucial in this respect is that all the countries of the area should be offered a strategy, a general and accurate perspective about the steps they should take by way of preparation to integrate into NATO.

In 1997 three countries were invited to negotiate accession, and in March 1999 they joined NATO. There is an 'open door' for other would-be members. Such aspirants are offered military co-operation within the Enhanced Partnership for Peace (EPfP) and political co-operation in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) plus, since April 1999, the opportunity to pursue individual Membership Action Plans (MAPs).<sup>36</sup>

The MAPs idea is an important innovation, but one which cannot yet be evaluated. In any event, it does not supersede the EAPC, with its broad remit. 'The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council forms the framework for an expanded political dimension of partnership and practical co-operation under PfP. Co-operative partnership activities in the EAPC are aimed at ensuring the fullest integration and effectiveness of all co-operation activities between the Alliance and Partners raising the level of the political and military co-operation among its members. Focus will be given to the result-oriented multilateral political and security related consultations, enhanced practical co-operation, increased consultation and co-operation on regional matters and activities and to increasing the transparency and confidence in security matters among all EAPC member states...'.<sup>37</sup>

The strength of the EAPC Basic Document is that it clearly points out that NATO encourages CEECs to develop co-operative relations and to co-ordinate their political actions. This has happened; and in 1998 the North Atlantic Council looked forward to involving Partners in developing proposals for promoting regional co-

<sup>36</sup> The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Enhanced Partnership for Peace were launched at the Ministerial meeting of the North-Atlantic Co-operation Council (Sintra, 30 May 1997). The concept of Membership Action Plans was outlined in a document issued at NATO's Washington Summit (April 1999).

<sup>37</sup> *Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Basic Document* (30 May 1997), p.1.

operation between the Allies and the PfP Partners and in the development of a political-military framework for NATO-led PfP operations...'.<sup>38</sup>

Promoting and supporting regional co-operation is one of NATO's main concerns. If we refer only to the Central and Eastern Europe the facts prove beyond any doubt the interest in preserving stability there: the number of PfP exercises organised with countries from this area, including Romania, the interest shown in the fast development of subregional co-operative initiatives and the direct involvement in Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo.<sup>39</sup>

The rationale was explicitly acknowledged at Madrid in July 1997 and reaffirmed in April 1999 at the Washington Summit.<sup>40</sup> Developments in this region pose a real threat to the stability and security of Europe.

In this context, it should not be surprising that Romania favours involvement in subregional co-operation, partly to make Romania more attractive for NATO's next phase of enlargement.

The initiatives the country participates in have specific objectives: the Romanian view being that co-operation structures are effective and successful when they focus on the function they are meant to perform. At the beginning of the 1990s, after the collapse of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe, all the countries of this region had the incentive to collaborate with one another and to establish good neighbourly relations. Although the situations were slightly different from one country to another, they all had an initial disposition towards developing co-operation with neighbours as a response to the demands of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures they wanted to join. However, such co-operation was not perceived as a useful tool to face shared security risks and increase confidence in the area. This came later, after 1995, when it became apparent that subregional co-operation would decrease the costs of preparation for integration and promote stability in the meantime.

It should also be emphasised that at first subregional organisations were set up mostly in order to fill a political vacuum and restart economic co-operation among countries that were just beginning to explore the possibilities of their newly-won independence. They were considered 'the Cinderellas of European security' for quite a long time and their members 'spent more time underlining what these groups could not be expected to achieve, than what they could'.<sup>41</sup> In the last few years the situation has changed. The CEECs have reached an essential common conclusion: subregional co-operation could have important outcomes, if focused on the function of the structure and not simply on promoting an image.

As for Romania, the first articulated position regarding involvement in regional co-operation structures – including military ones – was elaborated by the

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<sup>38</sup> *Final Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the North-Atlantic Council* (Luxembourg, 28 May 1998), p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Under the co-operation heading, we may note the rapid development of the South Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial process (SEDM) and the establishment of the Multinational Peace Force South East Europe.

<sup>40</sup> See: *Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Co-operation* (1997), p.2 and the official *Communiqué* of the Washington meeting (1999).

<sup>41</sup> Alyson J.K. Bailes, 'Subregional Organisations: The Cinderellas of European Security', *NATO Review* (March 1997), p.13.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs (also taking into account the Presidency's opinions) after the elections in the autumn of 1996.<sup>42</sup> Many of the relevant projects in this field have been launched since the former opposition came to power, thanks to a more pragmatic approach by political leaders and a propitious international environment. The following subsections describe the military and other co-operative structures of which Romania is a member, taking into account the threats they have to deal with, the objectives they were set up for and whether they represent an asset for Romania's integration into NATO.

## **2. Initiatives in neighbouring areas with direct influence on Romania's security**

### *2.1. Military co-operation with Central European countries*

In the field of military co-operation with Central European countries there are some specific objectives Romania aims to reach.<sup>43</sup>

- First, transferring experience from the countries already admitted to the Alliance regarding the achievement of interoperability is considered by Romanian decision-makers as highly important for the country's own accession preparations.
- Second, such experience can show that NATO enlargement will not lead to the appearance of new dividing lines in Europe but is a continuous and transparent process.
- Third, Romania has a basic interest in preserving stability and security in Central Europe. In line with these objectives Romania has participated in numerous bilateral and multilateral programmes aiming to develop co-operation and build confidence among the countries of the area.

In developing bilateral military relations, Romania has striven for upgrading its co-operation with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland. In this respect, the relationship with Hungary is highly appreciated by both parties and is carried on in accordance with ten documents covering collaboration in the military field in general, airspace and air defence, military geodesy and topography, communications, military information exchanges, social protection of personnel, military transportation, confidence-building measures and establishment of the 'Open Skies' regime. The activities the two parties conduct together are very useful for developing mutual trust.<sup>44</sup> The high representatives and experts of both parties have periodic meetings within a bilateral working group in order to co-ordinate the efforts of their militaries and to promote increased and more effective collaboration. At every meeting each of

<sup>42</sup> Published in: *The Basic Programme for Romania's Macro-stability and Development until the year 2000* (Bucharest, December 1996). Before November 1996 Romania was a member of Black Sea Economic Co-operation, the Bulgaria-Greece-Romania trilateral and was participating in PfP activities.

<sup>43</sup> These objectives were listed in the *Strategy of Action of the Romanian MoD to integrate into NATO (October 1997-April 1999)* (Romania: MoD, October 1997).

<sup>44</sup> More than 70 activities were carried on in 1997, with their number reaching 90 in 1998. See *Romania's international military relations* (Romania: MoD, July 1998), pp.3-4.

the parties presents an evaluation of activities undertaken, remarks regarding possible improvements of the co-operation and particular.

For instance, in several meetings of the bilateral working group the Romanian representatives asked the Hungarian ones to support Romania's application to join the multinational force set up by Italy, Hungary and Slovenia.<sup>45</sup> A special concern is establishment of a Romanian-Hungarian peacekeeping battalion, to be operative in 1999. There is also a permanent information exchange regarding reform of the Armed Forces and measures undertaken to adapt the militaries to NATO's requirements. Practical activities include troops and military personnel training in common, participation in exercises and tactical trials with troops or observers, artillery and air defence missile firings.<sup>46</sup>

In this context, it could be relevant to ask whether Romania's co-operation with Hungary represents an asset for its integration into NATO. Taking into consideration the objectives defined for co-operation with Central European countries, it should be underlined that the most important achievement is the extraordinary improvement in Romanian-Hungarian relations. The two countries started developing military collaboration while political contacts were poor, because of suspicion and lack of confidence. But military co-operation has led to the conclusion of some relevant accords (for instance, the Open Skies Agreement concluded in 1994). As a Hungarian political analyst has remarked, 'military relations between Romania and Hungary have traditionally been better than those in some other fields'.<sup>47</sup> What is significant about recent experience is that there has been an impact on political co-operation.

Post-Cold War political contacts between Romania and Hungary began in 1994 and started the long period of negotiations on the provisions of a Basic Treaty. The conclusion of the Basic Treaty in September 1996 is one of the most meaningful outcomes of this political collaboration. The relevance of this establishment is even more obvious if we take into account the fact that at the beginning of the 1990s a conflict between Romania and Hungary was considered possible, even likely. Now, Hungary is one of Romania's most reliable partners in the area. There are no issues which cannot be overcome through a close and fruitful co-operation – even the issue of the Hungarian minority in Romania.<sup>48</sup>

This is an important achievement from the point of view of Romania's desire to join NATO. The Alliance is reluctant to acquire new conflicts when admitting new members. In this respect, Romania and Hungary had to settle major differences before Hungary became a NATO member. What is even more outstanding is that their co-operation has increased since then. The fact that Romania's candidature was not accepted at the same time as Hungary's could have been a serious obstacle for further development of bilateral relations. However, Romania overcame the frustration of being left out of the first round of enlargement, and Hungary understood

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<sup>45</sup> The proposal has been discussed at every bilateral meeting. For instance, at the Romanian-Hungarian Working Group in March 1998 held in Budapest.

<sup>46</sup> See text cited in note 44.

<sup>47</sup> Pal Dunay, *The Effects of Enlargement on Bilateral Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Chaillot Paper 26 (Paris: WEU Institute for Security Studies, 1997), p.13.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

that it was in its own interest that Romania should become a NATO member in the very near future. Both parties agree on this and Hungarian Minister of Defence Szabo Janos has said '...Romania's accession into NATO as soon as possible represents one of Hungary's fundamental interests...'.<sup>49</sup>

In comparison with the outstanding development of Romanian-Hungarian relations, Romania's co-operation with the Czech Republic and Poland has not been spectacular. With the Czech Republic, Romania is carrying on military activities on the basis of an Agreement on Mutual Collaboration concluded in 1995 and a Co-operation Protocol in the topography field. A Protocol on common training exercises is under negotiation. The common activities in which the two militaries have been involved are fewer than those undertaken with Hungary.<sup>50</sup> However, there have been common training periods for staff officers and troops, participation of observers in exercises and trials undertaken by the two militaries, and experience exchanges regarding peace-enforcement missions.<sup>51</sup>

Romania's military co-operation with Poland is taking place within the framework of a Military Collaboration Agreement concluded in 1994 which settles the fields and modalities of co-operation on various military issues. Negotiations are underway on three Protocols on collaboration in military education, military topogeodesy and protection of classified information. As in the case of the co-operation between Romania and the Czech Republic, the number of common activities is not so impressive as in Hungary's case and it was only in 1998 that the two parties decided to increase the practical side of their co-operation.<sup>52</sup>

If co-operation with Hungary is a real asset for Romania's integration into NATO, the outcomes are not so encouraging with respect to co-operation with the Czech Republic and Poland. Among the reasons for much slower progress are the interest of each of the latter countries in developing closer relations with their immediate neighbours and in supporting the Slovak Republic and the Baltic States for the next round of NATO enlargement. In addition neither the Czech Republic, Poland nor Romania has identified a pragmatic joint project really useful and profitable for each of them. In this regard, the Romania-Poland-Ukraine trilateral might provide the practical framework for a further development of Romanian-Polish relations (as will be shown in the 'Black Sea Military Co-operation' part of this section).

Military bilateral co-operation led to the evolution of different collaboration projects on a multilateral basis reflecting the common risks the countries have to face and also the common objectives they are determined to reach. For example, a co-operation initiative in Central Europe designated CENCOOP – which includes Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland – aims at liaison when UN and OSCE mandates require deployment of a rapid reaction force. It also takes into consideration the possibility of training observers and military police forces. However, this initiative has not made remarkable progress and the more

<sup>49</sup> Declaration made at the Press Conference following the meeting with the Romanian Minister of Defence Victor Babiuc (Baile Felix/Romania, 10 August 1998).

<sup>50</sup> 25 activities in 1997 and 26 in 1998 according to *Romania's international military relations* (MoD, July 1998), p.5.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.6. There were 36 activities carried on in 1998.

rapid and dynamic development of some co-operation structures in South Eastern Europe has overshadowed it.

## 2.2. *Stability and security in South Eastern Europe*

Romania has some specific objectives concerning the development of co-operation with countries from South Eastern Europe.<sup>53</sup> The most important one refers to the enhancement of security and stability in the Balkans using the experience which Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey have acquired by preparing and carrying on PfP common exercises and participating in crisis management operations.<sup>54</sup> Also relevant are: the setting up of a bilateral agreement network regarding the adoption of supplementary confidence-building measures using the experience acquired within the Romanian-Bulgarian framework; development of military collaboration among the states in the area including the adoption of an 'Open Door' policy regarding the admission of the countries of former Yugoslavia on the basis of the progress made in the democratic field; the transfer of experience in reaching interoperability with NATO members. Considering these objectives, it is important to see how many of the co-operation initiatives in South Eastern Europe are really an asset for Romania's integration into NATO.

Romanian-Bulgarian military co-operation is developed on the basis of documents which settle the general framework in this field, airspace and air defence co-operation, and civil protection issues. In 1995, Romania and Bulgaria concluded the *Agreement on supplementary confidence-building measures and military relations*. There are on-going negotiations regarding agreements on military transportation, personnel specialised training, troops training, scientific research in the military topogeodesy field and protection of classified information. Both countries have declared integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures their main objective. Consequently, they have identified co-operation fields of common interest like measures at the borders, joint exercises and experience exchanges regarding Armed Forces restructuring and civil control over the military. In January 1998, the Defence Ministers agreed to start consultations on setting up a joint peacekeeping unit.<sup>55</sup>

At this point, it should be mentioned that co-operation with Bulgaria has been developing very slowly, although the Basic Treaty between the two countries was concluded in 1994. There has been a lack of confidence between the parties, severely deepened by controversy about Bulgaria's Kozlodui nuclear plant which, due to several cases of malfunctioning, was assessed by the Romanian authorities as presenting a high ecological risk. Recently, disputes have continued, focusing on Bulgaria's desire to build a new bridge over the Danube in collaboration with Romania. The Bulgarians want this to '...avoid the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's blackmail given the fact that now this country controls the sole link between Central

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<sup>53</sup> These objectives were listed in the *Strategy of Action of the Romanian MoD to Integrate into NATO (October 1997-April 1999)* (Romania: MoD, October 1997).

<sup>54</sup> To refer only to Romania's experience, it is worth mentioning her participation in the IFOR/SFOR and post-SFOR missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the ALBA mission in Albania.

<sup>55</sup> From *Romania's international military relations* (Romania: MoD, July 1998) pp.7-8. There were 56 activities undertaken in 1998.

Europe and the Balkans...'. However, an assessment made by consultants clearly pointed out that current traffic did not indicate the necessity to build this bridge in the next ten years.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, the EU declared that it would not finance the project and Romania has made it clear that it has no resources available to support such a huge investment.<sup>57</sup> Because of the geopolitical importance of this bridge to Bulgaria and Romania's rejection of the project, bilateral relations remain lukewarm.

To all this should be added that Romania did not want too close co-operation with Bulgaria before the 1997 Madrid Summit because Bulgaria was not a front runner for the first wave of NATO enlargement. Romania considered that an association with Bulgaria, in this case, might be a liability in the competition.<sup>58</sup> But, after the disastrous economical situation in 1997, Bulgaria undertook some radical restructuring measures and has staged a recovery. Its foreign policy is focused mainly on integration into NATO and EU and it appears determined to achieve these aims. As a consequence, Bulgaria has become a desirable co-operation partner for Romania. Since late 1997, both countries have identified some common interests in the preparation process for integration and their political and military co-operation has increased considerably. This bilateral collaboration has also been enhanced by the development of subregional co-operation structures in South Eastern Europe. In short co-operation between Romania and Bulgaria has become a political asset for both parties as they seek integration into NATO.

Turning to another country in the area, military co-operation with Greece is conducted within the juridical framework established by an *Agreement between the Ministry of National Defence of Romania and the Ministry of National Defence of Greece on military co-operation*. The provisions of this agreement are complemented by Protocols on collaboration in the field of military topography and student exchanges between the military education institutions and a Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation in arms and defence technologies. Activities relate mostly to modalities for reaching compatibility with NATO forces. Greek military experts have been invited by the Romanian MoD for exchanges on civil control over the Armed Forces and defence planning. The two countries have held joint naval exercises.<sup>59</sup> Co-operation in the arms and defence technologies field relates mainly to Romania's efforts to modernise the defence industry, capital investment in the military and the procurement of new equipment in order to reach compatibility with NATO forces. The parties foresee also an augmentation of Greece's political-military support for Romania's integration into the Alliance.<sup>60</sup>

Besides Bulgaria and Greece, in South Eastern Europe Romania also collaborates with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Through the mid-1990s relations between the two states' Armed Forces were affected by the UN's embargo on the FRY. In 1997, normalisation allowed the negotiation and conclusion of an

<sup>56</sup> The Romanian government asked the international consulting firm Alexander Gibb to do a cost-benefit analysis.

<sup>57</sup> According to the assessment made by Alexander Gibb, the bridge would cost around US\$ 1.2 billion, *Azi* (28 April 1998), p.C5.

<sup>58</sup> This was not officially declared but was part of the unofficial policy regarding the preparation for integration into NATO at this time.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9. There were carried on 50 activities in 1998.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

*Agreement on Military Co-operation.* Logistics, military information, communications, defence procurement and scientific research were the main fields of collaboration envisaged.<sup>61</sup> In the first quarter of 1999, a document on supplementary confidence- and security-building measures should have been negotiated and concluded, but the dramatic developments in Kosovo and Romania's position regarding this issue precluded any kind of bilateral meeting.<sup>62</sup>

Another important partner for Romania in this area is Turkey. There are several documents governing relations between the two countries' Armed Forces; on collaboration in military training, technology and sciences; logistics and defence industry; classified information exchanges; social protection of personnel; military topogeodesy; training of medical personnel. The activities carried on in the last years aimed to sustain the Romanian Armed Forces in their attempt to reach NATO standards and to support Romania's candidature for NATO membership. To this end, there have been periodical meetings of Defence Ministers, joint exercises, student exchanges between various military education institutions, reciprocal ship visits, activities in the military medical domain and others.<sup>63</sup> In the interoperability field, unlike in the case of co-operation with Greece, Turkey gives assistance to Romania mostly on personnel training.

Enumerating Romania's *bilateral* military relations in South Eastern Europe is, however, only part of the story. Sharing the view that 'this is an area where co-operation is much more necessary than anywhere else in Europe'<sup>64</sup> the country is also engaged in multilateral efforts to enhance regional co-operation. For instance, there is some *trilateral* co-operation: Romania-Bulgaria-Greece and Romania-Bulgaria-Turkey.

The Romania-Bulgaria-Greece trilateral aims to encourage economic and communication infrastructure development; to support the struggle against illegal immigration, drug trafficking and organised crime; and to harmonise the positions of the participants on certain foreign affairs and regional security issues. Although it was set up in 1995, the outcomes of this trilateral co-operation are unimpressive. It was difficult to make any relevant progress with Greece mainly interested in enhancing its influence in the Balkans at Turkey's expense. In addition, each of the three countries had a different point of view regarding transportation corridors from the Caspian Sea, which led to competition among them. Hence the Romanian-Bulgarian-Greek trilateral has functioned mostly as a framework for political consultations on security matters. This was the case at the meeting in Delphi, 5 October 1998, when the Romanian and Bulgarian presidents and the Greek prime minister made a common declaration regarding the Kosovo crisis and the necessity to strengthen democratic institutions in Albania.

The Romanian-Bulgarian-Turkish trilateral was launched in 1997. Its main objective since the beginning has been the fight against organised crime. There is a

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.10. There were carried on 30 activities in 1998.

<sup>62</sup> As mentioned earlier, Romania decided to join NATO in its efforts to solve the 1998/99 Kosovo crisis and this fact was considered by the FRY a hostile action.

<sup>63</sup> *Romania's international military relations* (Romania: MoD, July 1998), pp.11-12. There were 67 activities undertaken in 1998.

<sup>64</sup> Ismail Ceim (Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs), *Speech at the Meeting of South-East European countries* (Antalya, 12 October 1998).

*Trilateral Convention on the Struggle against Organised Crime.* This three-country arrangement is also a counterweight to the former one. Romania has always sought to preserve its good relations with both Greece and Turkey, even when the relationship between these countries has been very tense. This trilateral gives Romania the opportunity to maintain a judicious balance in its relations with Greece and Turkey.

Both Romania and Bulgaria would like to use these trilaterals for identifying and proposing specific co-operative projects which could support their integration into NATO. But, until now, this has represented only an aspiration: no reasonable proposal has been made by any of the parties, yet.

Here, as in its bilateral links, Romania expected a more pragmatic approach given the fact that both Greece and Turkey are NATO members. But this has not been evident. One reason is that neither Romania nor Bulgaria stressed this option till late 1998. The trilateral structures have a lot of potential nevertheless, and this should be used in the future.

Focusing now on *multilateral* co-operation one well-published venture is the South East Co-operative Initiative (SECI) put forward by the United States and including all South Eastern European countries except for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, plus Hungary and Moldova. Its aim is to enhance co-operation among participating countries and to create new communication channels among statesmen. A particular objective is to encourage and co-ordinate planning in the region through offering assistance for achieving greater participation by the private sector in regional economic efforts and setting up a zonal environment which would favour technology transfer and investment. Its main goals are thus of an economic nature. However, SECI is in fact strengthening security in the area. Active economic restructuring and foreign investments are catalysing forces for the improvement of regional stability.<sup>65</sup>

Within the framework provided by this initiative, there have been launched some concrete projects, each co-ordinated by a member country or one actively supporting SECI. Thus, Greece co-ordinates a project on 'Commercial facilities', Bulgaria runs one on 'Improvement of transportation infrastructure', Hungary is responsible for 'The efficient use of the energy in the area' and Austria co-ordinates the 'Programme on the Danube's restoration'. All SECI projects enjoy the financial assistance of the World Bank, EU, UN or EBRD.

As for Romania's participation in SECI, it co-ordinates a project regarding 'Financial policies meant to promote small and medium-sized enterprises' in the member states. This programme is considered to be 'the main development vector of the countries in transition to the market economy, the stability of the area being very much dependent on the success of the project.'<sup>66</sup> At the same time, Romania's proposal to host in Bucharest a 'SECI Regional Centre for the Struggle against Organised Crime and Corruption' was approved by the other participants. Furthermore, President Emil Constantinescu has appointed as a special representative for SECI the former minister of foreign affairs in his cabinet, Adrian Severin, in order to have a good interaction with all the member states. Through these initiatives Romania wants to point out once more its role as a security *provider* in the area. Still,

<sup>65</sup> *South East Co-operative Initiative* (MFA, August 1998), p.3.

<sup>66</sup> Dr. Erhard Busek, SECI co-ordinator, at the meeting of the SECI General Committee (Geneva, 25 June 1997).

the real test is the way SECI projects are going to be put in practice and develop further.

Another multilateral structure is more directly concerned with military co-operation among the countries in the area. In 1997, it was decided to start a process of yearly meetings of the Ministers of Defence of South Eastern Europe. The first meeting took place in Sofia in October 1997, and the second in Skopje in September 1998. The main objective of this initiative is to achieve a further co-ordination of efforts to stabilise the region and to enhance confidence among the partners through promoting transparency in defence policy and provision. It comprises NATO members as well as PfP countries: Albania, Bulgaria, FYROM/Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and the United States. Numerous other NATO countries, including the three new members, attended the Sofia and Skopje meetings as observers. At Turkey's initiative, seven of the participating states signed in Skopje an Agreement for the setting up of a Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe.<sup>67</sup> This force is meant to represent a contribution of the states in the area to peace-support and conflict-prevention operations under UN or OSCE mandate. Because of the relevance and rapid development of this initiative, it can be considered the most important participation of Romania in a military structure in South Eastern Europe.

### **2.3. Black Sea littoral co-operation**

In general, Romania's engagement in subregional co-operation with the countries of South Eastern Europe benefits the country's quest for integration into NATO. However, Romania is also concerned with developing its relations throughout the Black Sea region. But the question is: are initiatives in this area also an asset for accession?

Military co-operation in the Black Sea region involves collaboration with countries from the former Soviet Union, such as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Some initiatives in this area also include countries from Central Europe or South Eastern Europe.<sup>68</sup> One finds here slower development in comparison with the other areas, mainly because caution is more evident. Still, the littoral states have some common objectives, which would be furthered by strengthening co-operation. These objectives relate to the enhancement of stability and security at the Danube delta's outlets and in the Black Sea; confidence-building and encouragement of trans-frontier co-operation; and co-ordination of efforts in the field of civil protection.

Romania has developed co-operative relations with *Moldova* on the basis of four documents regarding collaboration within the military field, civil protection, military transportation and the training of Moldavian personnel in Romanian institutions of military education. Between 1991 and 1994 the co-operation was quite substantial, but it has severely diminished since 1995 mainly because of the

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<sup>67</sup> These countries are: Albania, Bulgaria, FYROM/Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Romania, Turkey. The initiative is discussed further in Section IV of this study.

<sup>68</sup> This is the case of the Romania-Poland-Ukraine trilateral and Black Sea Economic Co-operation which includes former Soviet countries plus Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey.



incoherent and inconsistent attitude of Moldavia's political decision-makers. Despite this, the Romanian side has always considered relations between the two Armed Forces as having a privileged and special nature. The activities carried on have focused on: exchanges of view on the elaboration of national military strategy; assistance provided by Romanian military experts on the structural reform of Armed Forces and defence legislation; consultations on the methods of military management for different echelons and arms within Romanian military institutions; and experience exchanges regarding procurement planning and military logistics.

Relations have had more ups and downs than was expected.<sup>69</sup> Political contacts have not led to the conclusion of a Basic Treaty and military co-operation has had periods of stagnation or even deterioration. Economic and cultural co-operation have been developing very fast since 1990, but not enough to strengthen political intercourse. However, in 1998 both countries embarked on a more positive approach: the Moldavian President Petru Lucinschi said that 'Romania and Moldova have brought their relationship at a level characterised by more sincerity and less protocol'<sup>70</sup> and the Romanian President Constantinescu said: 'The development of relations with Moldova is part of Romania's national security strategy'.<sup>71</sup>

As noted, Romania's co-operation with Moldova has been rather insubstantial in the political and military fields. On one hand, the Romanian authorities were always afraid that any initiative in these matters would be interpreted by Moldova – and Russia too – as a step towards unification. On the other hand, Moldavian representatives were always suspicious of Romanian proposals. It is quite difficult for both parties to deal with the historical inheritance.<sup>72</sup>

Romania also attaches great importance to its relations with *Ukraine*. Military co-operation between the two countries is regulated by four documents on collaboration between the Romanian and Ukrainian Armed Forces, air defence, airspace and military topogeodesy. There are on-going negotiations on technical-military collaboration in the logistics and procurement field, civil protection and supplementary confidence- and security-strengthening measures. The activities carried on cover improvement of frontier co-operation, participation in tactical applications of artillery and missilefiring, liaison on naval matters and in the training and technical equipment of airborne troops. In comparison with the development of relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the case of Romanian-Ukrainian relations is different, because military collaboration followed political co-operation between the two countries. This process led to the conclusion of a Basic Treaty, together with some other agreements regulating co-operation in various specific fields. Still, the co-operation is not extensive in comparison with the potential of the two countries. The key obstacles – minorities issues and the limits of

<sup>69</sup> The Republic of Moldova is the former part of Romania called Bessarabia and it is still inhabited by a mainly Romanian-speaking population. Romanians have always considered this people as their *brothers*. That is why everybody expected relations between the two countries to develop very fast and face no difficulties.

<sup>70</sup> *Azi*, 13 October 1998, p.A7.

<sup>71</sup> *Azi*, 26 October 1998, p.B1.

<sup>72</sup> The Republic of Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991. It was Romanian territory when the Soviet Union took it by force on 24 June 1940.

the continental shelf and exclusive economic zones in the Black Sea – are considered by both parties too important to be neglected.

In Ukraine's Northern Bucovina and Hertza counties the great majority of the population is Romanian.<sup>73</sup> Until 1998 these people enjoyed some rights, such as learning in their mother language, having their own schools, participating on separate lists in the legislative elections. In the summer of 1998 many of the Romanian schools were closed, the Romanian language was forbidden in the educational system, while the new electoral law promoted by Ukraine's Government did not allow minorities separate lists of candidates. These moves contravened the Basic Treaty between Romania and Ukraine concluded in 1997 and infringe the Agreement of collaboration on education between the same parties.<sup>74</sup> The Romanian authorities reacted quite promptly and their message was very clear, underlining that 'we are extremely sensitive on this matter and we would appreciate a reparation gesture towards the Romanian minority in Ukraine. In fact, all that we ask for is that the specific commitments included in the bilateral Treaty are respected'.<sup>75</sup> The Romanian President also discussed the issue with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, who argued that the Romanian schools had been closed alongside with some Ukrainian ones – due to the severe financial crisis in his country. At the same time, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the accusations made by the Romanian authorities as 'having no real basis and being part of an anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign'.<sup>76</sup>

This confrontation did not encourage co-operation in any field until an intergovernmental joint commission met for negotiations. Even this body managed only to approve a periodical evaluation of the way each of the parties fulfils its commitments regarding the national minorities and to decide on sending a team including three representatives of each country to the areas where the minorities live and monitor the implementation of the articles of the Treaty referring to them.

As for differences over the limits of the continental shelf and exclusive economic zones, there are still a lot of aspects to be clarified related to Ukraine's succession to border treaties concluded by the former Soviet Union. Romania and Ukraine have different point of views on both the juridical framework to be used for establishing borders and the rulings for deciding the limits of the continental shelf.

Regarding multilateral co-operation in the Black Sea region, there are some trilateral arrangements of a political and strategic nature. The Romania-Moldova-Ukraine trilateral was launched by the presidents expressly to increase confidence and security in the area. At the end of 1998 some important steps were taken by the three presidents related to (a) the co-ordination of their countries' positions regarding routes for Caspian oil shipment and (b) the strengthening of collaboration in the customs field, by adopting a high-level computerised system to decrease evasion

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<sup>73</sup> Both counties are in the northern part of Romania's borders with Ukraine. They were incorporated by the Soviet Union on the basis of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact concluded by Hitler and Stalin on the 30 August 1939.

<sup>74</sup> Both stipulate the commitment of the parties to respect the rights of persons belonging to a minority as formulated in international law. Moreover, the Agreement includes a provision that education in Northern Bucovina should be in the Romanian language.

<sup>75</sup> *Declaration of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (28 August 1998).

<sup>76</sup> *Declaration of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (8 September 1998).

and introducing barriers to illegal traffic or immigration. (They also said that the Romania-Moldova-Ukraine trilateral should be regarded as a structure full of potential for enhanced co-operation and urged the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Kosovo, Transdnistria and Georgia.)

Even if Romania's bilateral relations with Moldova and Ukraine have to cope with lots of obstacles, the trilateral collaboration among them has been generally constructive. The periodical meetings of the political authorities – and the commitment of all the presidents – have clearly enhanced confidence among the partners. At the moment, in the Black Sea zone this arrangement is perhaps the most important asset for Romania's integration into NATO, because it provides a framework for confidence-building among the partners and it bolsters stability in this area. This situation could lead in time to the conclusion of the Basic Treaty with Moldova and to a mutually satisfactory solution of disputed issues by negotiation with Ukraine.

The trilateral Romania-Poland-Ukraine was also launched during a Summit in 1997. Its purpose is to strengthen co-operation and trust among these countries and to 'anchor' Ukraine in Europe. The development of Romanian-Polish political relations – and the fact that both Romania and Poland considered it significant for their security to have a democratic, independent and stable Ukraine as a neighbour – led to the establishment of this trilateral co-operation: first at the political level and afterwards on security and military matters. Regrettably, however, each country has manifested attitudes which are not conducive to further progress. Ukraine is mainly interested in economic co-operation and has tried to avoid discussions on minority issues, Poland sees few relevant outcomes for it in the foreseeable future and Romania has been half-hearted in its support for the projects initiated.

This trilateral also contemplated creating a multinational peacekeeping force but, after all the parties had decided on the draft project, they considered that the financial effort was too big and their budgets had different priorities. Consequently, the project was postponed and, for the time being, the three states mainly focused on improving political collaboration and the transportation routes which link them. Thus this trilateral has not evolved as intended and expected.

A third trilateral is formed by Romania-Georgia-Armenia. This deals with common interests in the field of economy, environment, justice, criminality and others. It may go beyond technical co-operation to establish strong political relationships, in due course.

The major multilateral arrangement in the area is Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) set up in 1992 and now having intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary, financial and international business dimensions. The diverse membership includes countries with different economic and military capacities and, at the same time, various official positions towards NATO and EU. Formally BSEC deals only with economic and cultural issues and co-operation among its members has had its ups and downs.<sup>77</sup> There have been no attempts to bring a military or security dimension formally within its ambit. Yet, consultations on non-economic issues take place and non-military security is discussed, for example, terrorism and organised

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<sup>77</sup> The members of BSEC are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

crime, arms smuggling and drug traffic, money laundering and illegal immigration. Under consideration are steps to improve co-operation among the relevant national agencies in these fields. Together with some of the BSEC countries Romania has staged joint naval exercises including maritime surveillance and search and rescue naval missions.<sup>78</sup>

The arrangement is also interesting due to its potential for states seeking EU membership. In one view 'The Black Sea area represents a viable linking bridge between the west and east worlds. That is why it is highly desirable that the EU sets up a co-operation strategy with BSEC. This strategy should take into account that certain BSEC member states are going to become EU members also and, at the same time, the organisation is going to be an effective link to those countries which will not enjoy the EU membership'.<sup>79</sup> For Romania, participation in BSEC's projects could be very helpful for the economic revival of the country and domestic reform. The member countries have set up a regional Merchandise Exchange Market for cereals and oil in the Constantza Free Area, as part of a regional Stock and Merchandise Exchange Market. This should attract foreign direct investment to the area. Their decision to take concrete steps to combat organised crime – which represents an important threat to all the Black Sea states – will also represent an asset for Romania's preparation to join NATO.

### **3. Participation in peacekeeping units and other missions in the region**

#### *3.1. Romania's participation in IFOR/SFOR*

The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina continues to be both a test and a challenge for NATO and its partners in the new security environment. It has highlighted the importance of effective policy co-ordination within the international community, among political, military, economic and humanitarian institutions. The military task clearly demonstrates the value of a broad coalition of contributing nations set up around NATO which its high interoperability and standardised procedures.

This is borne out by the experience of the original post-Dayton Implementation Force (IFOR) and the follow-on Stabilisation Force (SFOR); and it explains the mid-1998 decision to prolong the SFOR mandate. This is to discourage the revival of hostility and to establish a secure climate, to allow implementation of the Peace Accords. The size of the force has been reduced since mid-1998 and reorganised to provide for increased mobility of the units and the setting up of Multilateral Specialised Units. But the military remain key players in the area's rehabilitation.

From the beginning of the IFOR/SFOR mission, Romania acted as a reliable partner with its contribution of an engineer battalion, a General Staff team and a logistic unit. Most recently, as an effort has been made to encourage the return of refugees, Romania has decided to upgrade its presence. In addition to the engineering

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<sup>78</sup> *Black Sea Economic Co-operation* (MFA, September 1998), pp.2-3.

<sup>79</sup> Petre Roman (President of the Romanian Senate, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC in 1997-1998), *Speech at the XI General Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC* (Bucharest, 24-26 June 1998).

battalion, currently deployed in Zenica, and an infantry battalion which is part of the SFOR Strategic Reserve, the number of officers appointed at the regional headquarters for civil-military relations is to be increased. In addition, a transportation detachment and a military police platoon are to be deployed, while two C-130 Hercules aircraft will be available for this operation.

The decision on further involvement in Bosnia had to be supported by the Chief of the Romanian General Staff before Parliament, which has to approve the participation of Romanian forces in international operations. The debates were animated and the representatives of the opposition demanded to be informed on the costs of the mission before they voted for augmentation. Some of them adopted extremist positions and pointed out that 'the Romanian military has no vocation for mercenary missions' and Romania's participation 'brings no profits'.<sup>80</sup> There were also voices from the opposition which made it clear that, after Romania had twice opted to join this operation, a rejection of further involvement would mean self-isolation.<sup>81</sup> Romania's credibility as a stability provider would decrease and its commitment to support the efforts of the international community to stabilise the area would be dismissed as empty words.

Regarding the costs of the operation for Romania, the Chief of the General Staff, General Constantin Degeratu, informed Parliament that in both 1998 and 1999 they were included in the defence budget. In 1998 the involvement cost US\$ 270,000 while for 1999 there is provision in the budget of US\$ 280,000. Romania's engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a viable proof that it is highly interested in the security of the region and is committed to support stabilisation. The decision to increase its participation – even if the costs implied are quite high for its budget – is further evidence of the country's wish to be a regional stability pillar. This has not gone unnoticed and Romania's presence in Bosnia has been considered as 'highly important' by the NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana: 'We are very content with Romania's contribution in Bosnia and we are grateful in this sense to the efforts your country makes...'.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2. Romania's participation in UN Stand-by forces

The UN quick reaction stand-by system was considered imperative due to the necessity of rapid interim troop deployment and action in order to prevent the worsening of the situation in a conflict area before the arrival of a main body of UN forces. The main characteristic of the system is the participants' capacity for immediate and effective reaction to a UN request. To be more specific, this means that participant countries must be able to respond to the UN's request at once and military units must be deployed in the territory and be combat capable within a period of 7 to 30 days. The participant countries are asked to make a *capacity* offer and conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with the UN.

Romania is willing to take part in this system, and the country's ability to do so is improving as it enhances its forces' interoperability level with the Western military

<sup>80</sup> Petre Turlea (Deputy of Romanian National Unity Party), in *Azi*, 20 June 1998, p.A3.

<sup>81</sup> Ioan Mircea Pascu (President of the Defence Commission, Deputy Chamber and Member of the Romanian Social-Democracy Party), in *Azi*, 20 June 1998, p.A3.

<sup>82</sup> Javier Solana (Secretary-General NATO), *Curentul*, 7 October 1998, p.2.

structures.<sup>83</sup> However, Romania has to catch up with other countries in acquiring a *rapid reaction* capability. In fact, the Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs have suitable units. Unfortunately, it takes a very complex and slow process to obtain political assent for their use.

Political decision-makers know that during a crisis the situation is very fluid and unpredictable. Consequently, it could be necessary to modify the structure of a quick reaction force (in number and components). These kind of modifications are made efficiently by the military command structure without the need for a new political authorisation. This is not the case for Romania. At the present, the Romanian Parliament approves the participation in a mission of a well-specified structure (in number and components). In order to modify the elements of this structure (increased number, period of time or components of the force) within the same international political mandate, the Romanian MoD has to go through the same procedures to obtain assent from the legislature and executive institutions. Reaction time is affected, with potentially negative consequences.<sup>84</sup>

A relevant example for this situation is Romania's offer to participate in SHIRBRIG, which is a multinational brigade of UN rapid reaction stand-by forces set up at Denmark's initiative and including Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Norway, the Czech Republic and Poland. Romania's participation would require a fast response to UN calls. At the moment, internal procedure calls for obtaining the assent of parliament before committing a well-established structure to a well-defined operation. This will not fit within the shortest period requested by the UN, if we consider the whole circuit: UN - Missions of Romania at UN - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs - The Supreme Council for National Defence - Parliament - Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Mission of Romania at UN - UN.

In this respect, the responsible institutions are concerned to improve Romania's capacity for rapid reaction. The Ministry of National Defence wants initial parliamentary approval of this institution on participating in this kind of mission. On the basis of this approval, MoD would like freedom of action. This will reduce considerably Romania's *reaction time* and make collaborating with other forces easier.

#### 4. Conclusions

One of NATO's main concerns is to promote and support regional co-operation in order to preserve and increase stability and security. Under these circumstances, Romania considers its involvement in subregional co-operation structures useful. This is one reason why the country's participation in such arrangements has increased enormously in recent years. Romania is interested most in co-operation initiatives which have specific objectives and are efficient and successful in reaching them. 'We

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<sup>83</sup> Anne-Marie Smith, *Advances in Understanding International Peacemaking* (Washington DC, 1997), p.10.

<sup>84</sup> For instance, a possible rejection of Romania's future participation, creating the image of decision-makers lacking clear vision, raising doubts regarding Romania's capability to reach compatibility with the Western structures, policies and military doctrines.

do not believe in regional co-operation that is not meant to achieve concrete, practical results to the mutual benefit of the participants. We do not believe in co-operative arrangements that duplicate work done in other fora, or do not make best possible use of existing resources'.<sup>85</sup>

We have analysed a wide range of activities in which Romania has been participating. The most important question remains: how many of these are an asset for its integration into NATO? In Central Europe, the outstanding improvement of Romanian-Hungarian relations certainly. Neither the co-operation with Poland nor that with the Czech Republic can be similarly regarded, although the Romanian-Polish collaboration has a lot of potential.

In South Eastern Europe, multilateral structures have yielded more than bilateral relations. Romania's relations with Bulgaria keep encountering political obstacles, and with Turkey and Greece no specific fields of co-operation have brought value-added to the participants. The South Eastern Europe Defence process, however, has managed to bring together almost all the countries of the region, including Greece and Turkey, and produced the Multinational Peace Force South East Europe to participate in peace-support and crisis management operations. Also, Romania's participation in the South East Co-operative Initiative (SECI) has been fruitful. The success of the projects Romania is responsible for could strengthen its status as a stability pillar in South Eastern Europe. They could also demonstrate Romania's capability and efficiency at the subregional level in the struggle against organised crime. All these can represent an indirect asset for Romania's integration into NATO. The only query is about whether these projects are going to be implemented and developed so that they would represent a *success story* for Romania. This remains to be seen.

Existing trilateral links – that is, Romania-Greece-Bulgaria and Romania-Turkey-Bulgaria – have been concerned mainly with 'soft-security' issues and the participants have managed to identify concrete projects that could bring benefits to all of them. That said, there is unrealised potential and their framework could be used in a more efficient way.

As for co-operation in the Black Sea region, Romania's bilateral relations with the Republic of Moldova and with Ukraine remain volatile and the process of confidence building should be more intensive. The trilateral Romania-Moldova-Ukraine could be a framework for increasing transparency and confidence among the parties. This three-state co-operation seems to work and has produced useful projects in the 'soft-security' field. It has a lot of potential and could strengthen Romania's case for integration into NATO. The trilateral Romania-Poland-Ukraine has developed more slowly but is not without promise.

Similar to SECI in South Eastern Europe, this area benefits from the development of Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC). This started as an economic structure but its members are going to develop co-operation on 'soft-security' issues, too. It could be beneficial for Romania if it manages to use this framework to boost its economy. The decision of the BSEC states to fight organised

<sup>85</sup> Andrei Plesu (Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs), *Speech at the EAPC Ministerial Meeting* (Brussels, 8 December 1998), p.3.

crime – which represents an important threat to all the Black Sea area – will also count as an asset for Romania's preparation to join NATO.

As for Romania's participation in peace-support activities, its involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina has shown a clear determination to support the stabilisation of the area and help build a sound peaceful environment there. Romania's readiness to assume all the costs of this engagement and even to increase its effort must surely have enhanced the country's claim to 'second wave' NATO accession (whenever that should come).



## IV. PROMOTING INTEROPERABILITY

### 1. Introductory notes on interoperability

The question of Romania's *readiness* for NATO membership is a significant policy issue. In this context, any initiative supporting Romania's candidacy is highly important for the good preparation of integration into Alliance's structures. This is because 'as a NATO member, you get solidarity but, at the same time, you have to be prepared to offer solidarity to the others'.<sup>86</sup>

Given the fact that Romania is so actively involved in numerous structures of subregional co-operation, it is relevant to assess in what way the results of these initiatives can be useful for fulfilling the integration criteria. These criteria include political and economic reform, good neighbourly relations, establishment of democratic and civilian control over the military, and commitment to make available adequate resources to meet the financial obligations of membership and to develop necessary interoperability.

Among these criteria, the most difficult to estimate in terms of gains from subregional co-operation is the one related to interoperability. The difficulty comes from the fact that these gains are not so obvious as for the rest of the criteria. Hence the analysis, later in this section, of subregional military structures and their contribution to Romania's integration into NATO from this perspective. At the same time, interoperability is one of the key elements of Romania's accession strategy: '...Romania will also concentrate on developing good-neighbourly relations and co-operation in the adjoining areas on a bilateral and subregional basis,...as well as on reaching an appropriate level of interoperability with the Allied Armed Forces...'.<sup>87</sup> Reaching a high degree of interoperability with NATO structures means that the costs of Romania's integration will be lower for the Alliance; and this could make Romania more attractive as a candidate for the next phase of enlargement.

For a better understanding of this term and its importance within the process of admission of new countries to NATO, the following definition is useful: 'Interoperability is the ability of systems, units or forces to provide services and to accept services from other systems, units or forces and to use those services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together..'.<sup>88</sup> Achieving *total* interoperability can be very expensive. However, NATO requirements stipulate only that a candidate country should achieve a *minimum* level of interoperability initially. From this point of view, two of the major challenges which most armed forces have to face are understanding exactly *how much* interoperability is needed and developing a programme to achieve adequate capability within budget constraints.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Javier Solana (Secretary-General NATO), *Curentul* (7 October 1998), p.2.

<sup>87</sup> *Romania's integration into NATO...* (MFA, June 1998), p.1

<sup>88</sup> US DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, See: Papers of the *Defence Planning and Management Seminar for Romania* (Bucharest: Romanian MoD/George Marshall European Security Centre, 2-5 December, 1997).

<sup>89</sup> For assessing how much interoperability the armed forces need, a methodology was proposed at the Defence Planning and Management Seminar for Romania held in Bucharest, 2-5 December 1997.

Interoperability is frequently used alongside another term: compatibility. There is a difference between the two. Interoperability pertains to the capacity of separate structures of the Alliance (e.g., divisions, sub-divisions or tactical units) to function together in peacetime and in combat. This involves uniform command procedures, communication systems and basic connectivity. Compatibility pertains to military equipment and technology, and it may require either full or partial standardisation. As interoperability is the attribute mentioned in the integration criteria – and at the same time is one of the key elements of Romania's strategy of developing subregional co-operation – the analysis here focuses on how the ability to work with other forces is being enhanced by Romania's engagements in two formations: the Romanian-Hungarian Mixed Battalion and the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe. But, first, remarks on Romania's present situation concerning the fulfilment of interoperability objectives are in order.

## **2. Interoperability objectives and Romania's present situation**

Romania attaches the highest importance to promoting interoperability with NATO members' armed forces. This should not be surprising if we take into account that three out of five main objectives comprised in the Partnership for Peace Framework Document refer directly to it; and some of the objectives of the Enhanced PfP prospectus also relate to interoperability and complement the basic ones. Therefore, in this field, Romania is striving for modification and completion of military legislation according to the requirements of integration; fulfilling the objectives the country has assumed within the Planning and Review Process (PARP); setting up a Rapid Reaction Force; pursuing compatibility with NATO in the procurement field; upgrading personnel training and preparing the technical, organisational and procedural integration of its information systems with NATO's. The main tools which are to be used by Romania to reach these objectives include the development of efficient strategic partnerships with different NATO countries, participation in peacekeeping missions and involvement in subregional co-operative structures, including those set up within the PfP.

In this respect, under PfP Romania has been most active in planning and undertaking activities in co-operation with other partners. The regularly updated Individual Partnership Programme, as well as an Overall Interoperability Survey performed by the Ministry of National Defence with US experts' support, reflect the increasing complexity of co-operation. Romanian participation in exercises and collaborative activities has also expanded and diversified.<sup>90</sup> Expenditures for PfP activities increased from 13.9 billion Romanian lei in 1995 to 41 billion Romanian lei in 1997.<sup>91</sup> It is also worth mentioning that Romania was the first Partner country to complete a full cycle of exercises on its territory (land, navy, air): Co-operative Determination – September 1995, Co-operative Partner – July 1996 and Co-operative

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<sup>90</sup> Romania carried out over 60 activities in 1994 and the number reached 530 in 1997. It also took part in bilateral and multinational exercises in the spirit of PfP: 25 in 1995, 36 in 1997. See: *Romanian Armed Forces* (Romania: MoD Review, December 1997), p.20.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24. Outlays have risen since.

Key – October 1996.<sup>92</sup> As a consequence of this active participation the Romanian Armed Forces had some good results regarding the increase of the capability of military personnel in using staff procedures and NATO operational language plus gaining experience in peacekeeping, search and rescue and humanitarian aid missions and the improvement of the interoperability with NATO of major units and units prepared for PfP.

All the gains from participation in PfP activities led to a relevant improvement of military training.<sup>93</sup> Along with upgrading the training of personnel, a restructuring process is underway aimed at preparing the Armed Forces for accession. As officially promulgated: 'The Armed Forces restructuring programme is meant to address Romania's security needs as they derive from the geo-regional and subregional strategic context, and to become compatible with the European and Euro-Atlantic military structures'.<sup>94</sup> Certain units are going to be reconfigured according to needs and equipment capacities. Some major units are going to be transformed. Restructuring has started with the Ministry of National Defence and the Army Staff which, by the end of 1998, had reduced their personnel by 10 per cent and adopted modular structures allowing interoperability with similar institutions from NATO countries.

This was in line with a 1997 Unitary Interoperability Programme designed to provide the basis for planning of work on adjustments to the General Staff, the departments, the service staffs and subordinate commands. An Interoperability Office at the General Staff was also established to provide a coherent and unitary approach to interoperability objectives. Its role is to plan, co-ordinate and assess achievements in the stages leading to full interoperability. It is also responsible for the implementation of NATO procedures and terminology in the operations area, and it co-operates in this field with other structures of the Ministry. Structures to support this effort were set up at the service staff level of the commands and central directorates, and within those units designed to act in the frame of the PfP.

In the PARP, Romania initially accepted 19 interoperability objectives. In the next cycle, for the period 1997-1999, Romania subscribed to 44 objectives. The Ministry of Defence designed the *Concept* and *Programme* for achieving interoperability. These two documents aim to create the general conditions for providing the conceptual, operational and technical capabilities to facilitate interoperability with integrated structures and with NATO members' forces. Things have not, however, gone according to plan because of difficulties in defining how much interoperability is needed and in what fields. Priorities were not established accurately. The authorities were too eager to prove that the Romanian Armed Forces are prepared to join NATO as soon as possible; and a wrong assessment of available financial resources led to waste in terms of time and efficiency.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *Romanian Armed Forces* (Romania: MoD Review, December 1997), p.20.

<sup>93</sup> After participation in training exercises, the MoD makes specific evaluations.

<sup>94</sup> *The Basic Programme for Romania's Macro-stability and Development until the year 2000* (Government of Romania, December 1996), p.12

<sup>95</sup> For instance, an overestimated budget for the Armed Forces based on the presumption that economic recovery would take place in 1998.

The inevitable result of this situation is that the interoperability objectives assumed by Romania under the second PARP cycle were not fulfilled as intended. Practical problems could not be solved.<sup>96</sup> Affected actions were:

- the procurement of communications equipment compatible with the Alliance's;
- the change of the existing legal system in the logistic field so that the whole set of NATO documents could be applied;
- the technical adaptation of equipment to use a single type of fuel;
- provision of data processing equipment compatible with NATO's;
- participation of different units in exercises;
- and the procurement of all the necessary equipment for the air units designated for search and rescue missions.

Many shortfalls were in mid-term procurement programmes with specific interoperability targets. These cover the upgrading of existing military equipment in various sectors and the acquisition of new items from internal or well-known foreign suppliers. Romania needs modern high performance combat weapons and equipment that meet the Alliance's performance standards. The scale of the problem is apparent from a 1998 report that 40 per cent of the navy's ships cannot execute combat missions, and the air force's Mig 21s have been temporarily grounded. Overall, the combat equipment of the Romanian military is 'far under the minimum necessary level of performance'.<sup>97</sup>

Yet there is a lack of consistent political support, and hence a lack of funds for modernisation. Consider the case of the deal first proposed by the American firm Bell Helicopters/Textron Inc. to the Romanian Government in 1996 – with a Romanian partner, IAR Ghimbav Brasov – for the acquisition of 96 Cobra helicopters by the Romanian Armed Forces. The contract stipulated that the two firms would co-operate to produce an attack helicopter offering total compatibility as to combat performance and technical similarity, and relatively low costs. 'The 96 attack helicopters would cover the defensive potential of the Romanian Armed Forces and would involve lower costs than the purchasing of new tanks' explained the Chief of the General Staff in 1980. Further, he argued, 'according to the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, Romania may possess 1,375 tanks. The ones it has at the moment are very old and cannot be upgraded anymore. Given the fact that a new tank costs around US\$ 10 million, which would raise the total amount to an unbearable figure for our budget, the attack helicopters are preferred because one helicopter of this kind counts, from the defensive point of view, ten times a tank'.<sup>98</sup>

Despite all such explanations and the resolute position of the Minister of Defence – who repeatedly emphasised the advantages of the deal and its importance for the military as part of the programme for reaching interoperability with NATO

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<sup>96</sup> *Romania - Global Study regarding interoperability within PfP in 1998*, Draft Project (Romania: MoD, October 1998). p.3

<sup>97</sup> General Eugen Badalan (Chief of Protection and National Security Division), in *Azi*, 16 September 1998, p.A2.

<sup>98</sup> General Constantin Degeratu (Chief of Romanian General Staff), in *Azi*, 19 June 1998, p.B4.

forces – many politicians thought that Romania really did not need these helicopters.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, the opposition was against the purchase, claiming that Romania should use all its resources for economic reform. Even members of the coalition in power were reluctant to approve the transaction and asked for more details regarding the terms. The toughest position came from the Minister of Finance who said that he would never agree on such a contract because in Romania's financial situation (in mid-1998) expenses should be kept as low as possible.<sup>100</sup> He could not be persuaded to give his approval on this matter and, consequently, he was dismissed in August 1998. Negotiations were then resumed and concluded in September 1998.

On the Romanian dilemma, and related to the Bell Helicopters contract, one of NATO's experts said that 'the big defence systems are incredibly expensive and you could achieve everything you want in the interoperability field without spending a lot of money. As at this moment there is no major threat to your security, your objective should be to reach interoperability by purchasing something that is working and is not necessarily new...'<sup>101</sup>. This strategy could successfully be followed for upgrading existing military equipment, in units made available for PfP activities and those participating in peacekeeping missions. The country could also buy equipment which is not necessarily new but is still functioning. Ultimately, though, the Romanian military has to achieve interoperability with NATO forces that are equipped with up-to-date armament and technique. Moreover, the standards in this field get higher and higher every year. Therefore, acquisitions of new equipment should be made on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of all these possibilities and their long-term consequences.

But what of bilateral and subregional co-operation programmes, the third main direction of action for reaching interoperability by enhancing practical co-operation with the armed forces of those countries invited to join NATO and existing NATO members? Some subregional military structures have real potential and their fast development is promising. This is the case of two peacekeeping forces Romania is participating in.

### **3. Two case studies on using subregional structures to boost interoperability**

The first case for consideration is the Romanian-Hungarian Mixed Battalion, established for the joint accomplishment of peacekeeping or humanitarian missions under NATO, WEU, OSCE or UN mandate. According to the agreement, this unit is designed for acting promptly to prevent potential conflicts, and participating as a combat force in peacekeeping missions, crisis management, search and rescue and humanitarian missions. The operational area of the battalion includes mainly Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe but, if necessary, it could be involved in operations in the rest of Europe or further afield. The participating countries are going to provide equal value sub-units of 500 personnel each. An ad hoc command (bi-national) will

<sup>99</sup> Victor Babiuc (Minister of Defence), in *Curentul*, 17 December 1998, p.29.

<sup>100</sup> Daniel Daianu (Minister of Finance), in *Azi*, 19 June 1998, p.B4.

<sup>101</sup> David Cooper (Executive Co-ordinator of NATO Defence Support Division), in *Curentul*, 28 September 1998, p.1.

be set up and will remain in 'stand-by' position. Manning, logistical and internal communication matters are a national responsibility. The operational procedures are according to NATO standards and the working language during action and training activities is English.<sup>102</sup> The *Agreement for Building up the Romanian-Hungarian Peacekeeping Battalion* was signed on 30 March 1998 and the battalion has been operational since the beginning of 1999.

The agreement was ratified by the Romanian Parliament in December 1998 after the opposition had rejected the proposal, saying 'it is almost disastrous for Romania'. The terms of the document were characterised as 'megalomaniac': 'The Romanian state is going far beyond its military and diplomatic capabilities. The Mixed Battalion should be operational only within the borders of the two countries, without any international involvement'.<sup>103</sup> It is difficult to imagine the gains this initiative would bring if the unit's operational area were so severely restricted and, implicitly, what the purpose would be. Still, the coalition in power considered the agreement conducive to good co-operation with Hungary, taking into account also that this country would very soon be a NATO member and the fruits of this initiative could be very useful for Romania in the process of preparation for its own accession.

In terms of interoperability, both countries expect to obtain important benefits in the training, command and control fields. As for operational procedures, they are going to be according to NATO standards, which will represent another achievement in the interoperability field. With these aims, the parties agreed on developing common programmes regarding the planning and conduct of joint staff training and tactical exercises starting in the second half of 1999. In the meantime headquarters' staff have been studying at the Foreign Languages Centre in Hungary.

In August 1998, when the ministers of defence of Romania and Hungary met in Bucharest in order to establish a detailed schedule on the setting up of the Mixed Battalion, the Hungarian Minister declared that: 'We are ready to transfer all the experience we gathered in the process of preparing for integration into NATO, so that Romania becomes as soon as possible fully prepared for membership' and he mentioned that the co-operation within the battalion was part of this support.<sup>104</sup> As for the costs of this structure, the Romanian Minister emphasised that 'the military and political gains of this initiative are much higher than its costs. At any rate, the costs implied by the setting up of the Mixed Battalion are not higher than the costs for a normal battalion', and are therefore affordable for both parties.<sup>105</sup>

The second case of interest is the outcome of an Agreement on Establishment of the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe (MPFSEE).<sup>106</sup> This initiative was launched by Turkey and after six months of consultations and negotiations, the Agreement was signed – in September 1998 – by the defence ministers of Albania,

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<sup>102</sup> *Building up the Romanian-Hungarian Mixed Battalion*, Project Draft (Romania: MoD, 1997), p.1.

<sup>103</sup> Vasile Dobrescu (Senator and Member of Romanian National Unity Party), in *Azi*, 17 December 1998, p.B6.

<sup>104</sup> Szabo Janos (Hungarian Minister of Defence), in *Audio-visual Press Review*, 11 August 1998, p.2.

<sup>105</sup> Constantin Dudu Ionescu (Romanian Minister of National Defence, February-April 1998), in *Audio-visual Press Review*, 21 March 1998, p.6.

<sup>106</sup> Concluded at the South Eastern European Defence Ministerial (SEDM), held in Skopje, 26 September 1998. Southeast European Brigade (SEEBRIG) has become the working name (and acronym).

Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Romania and Turkey. US Defense Secretary William Cohen was also present on this occasion and he hailed the agreement as 'an historical document' which could be the starting-point for a future period of stability in the area. 'There are some persons in this region who would rather like to dig new graves than to bury the ancient hate' he said.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, through the setting up of this subregional structure, 'a new road to stability has been opened'.<sup>108</sup> The ministers participating in this event 'reaffirmed their commitment to develop co-operation among the participating countries in order to strengthen and broaden stability and security in the region'.<sup>109</sup> The objectives of setting up the MPFSEE (SEEBRIG) include the encouragement and development of the dialogue among the countries in the region, enhancement of regional stability, strengthening of subregional co-operation, improvement of interoperability among the participating states. The formation is meant to participate in conflict prevention operations, peace support and peacekeeping missions either NATO- or WEU-led or under UN and OSCE mandate.

The involvement of the force in a mission and its operational deployment will be decided by the ministers of defence and foreign affairs of the participating countries on the recommendation of a Political Military Steering Committee (PMSC). This Committee is a joint organism meant to provide the appropriate political guidance for all the activities of the Force and approve the detailed procedures for a mission proposed by its Staff Cell. The Force will be organised as a brigade and it will mainly include Army elements and forward air control troops. As for Romania's participation, it will contribute an Army battalion and officers for the command and staff structures. Romania made an offer to host the formation's Headquarters in Constantza, but Plovdiv (Bulgaria) was preferred (for the first two years). The first Commander is a Turkish general.

On the interoperability issue, the relevant thing is that the Annex to the Agreement on the Force envisages 'concrete further steps in the enhancement of mutual relations and co-operation as support to peace and stability in the region'.<sup>110</sup> Some of these steps essential to the process promoting interoperability include:

- 'to continue developing the Defence Resource Management Training Centre, to be located in Brasov, Romania;
- to hold a seminar on Joint Staff planning to enhance internal planning capabilities and NATO interoperability of regional Partners;
- and to conduct courses on the development of a comprehensive personnel management system...'.<sup>111</sup>

The Regional Defence Resource Management Training Centre in Brasov will train military and civilian experts from NATO and partner countries in logistic and defence

<sup>107</sup> William Cohen (US Defense Secretary), 'Article', *Azi* (28 September 1998), p.A2.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Joint Statement at the SEDM*, (Skopje, 26 September 1998), p.1.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> See Annex to the *Joint Statement of SEDM*.

resources management.<sup>112</sup> The topics of the courses are founded on the following modules:

- defence economics;
- NATO standards in the logistic field;
- service command and resources procurement;
- and instruction in microeconomics

The training of selected personnel from the whole region will be consistent with NATO standards. The activity of this Centre together with the seminar on Joint Staff planning and the courses on the development of the personnel management system are meant to enhance internal planning capabilities and to speed up the adoption of NATO standards in various fields aiming to increase interoperability among the participating countries.

The MPFSEE or SEEBRIG arrangement has developed very fast in a region which has to find the most appropriate means to cope with conflicts and crises that affect its stability. Moreover, the member countries established pragmatic objectives for this co-operative venture and decided upon a rapid tempo for setting it up. All their actions proved commitment to get actively involved in strengthening stability and safeguarding security in South Eastern Europe. As the units made available by each country for the force must be self-sufficient and each member has to contribute to the common budget, taking part in this structure implies some costs. In this respect, the Romanian Minister of Defence thinks that 'it is difficult to assess the total cost of participation in MPFSEE due to the fact that it depends on each mission Romania gets involved in'.<sup>113</sup> Still, Romania is ready to bear these costs, taking into account that the gains from the participation are going to be quite important for the country and for the region as well.

These two case studies of subregional co-operation have several things in common. Both are concerned with the setting up of appropriate forces to deal with conflicts and crises in South Eastern Europe; they are focused on concrete and affordable projects for all the participants; and they aim to increase the level of interoperability among the partners in different fields. Even if there are no results at the moment, one can conclude that they represent assets for Romania's integration into NATO. The fast development of the initiatives and the commitment of the parties to make all of them work are factors which indicate that they could yield considerable benefits. Both structures became operative in 1999 and a full assessment of their contribution to Romania's accession strategy cannot be made at this stage. However, as always, success depends on the financial resources available.

#### **4. Necessary costs and available resources**

Throughout the process of expanding NATO eastwards, the financial issue was a key element of all the policy debates. The general idea was that the costs of enlargement

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<sup>112</sup> *MoD's evaluation of the Romanian Armed Forces reform* (Romania: MoD, December 1997), p.6.

<sup>113</sup> Victor Babiuc (Romanian Minister of National Defence), in *Azi*, 28 September 1998, p.A2.



should be affordable for both the Alliance and the candidates. As the accession criteria stipulated, aspirants should be able to assume all the responsibilities of membership. In this respect, Romanian political and military leaders underlined on numerous occasions that for Romania 'the integration costs and benefits can only be regarded as a balance between these and non-integration expenditures. The latter are seen as far greater not only from the financial viewpoint, but in political and security terms as well'.<sup>114</sup>

According to a preliminary study made by the Institute for Defence Policy and Military History Studies in Bucharest, Romania's integration costs are estimated as up to US\$ 2,994 million between 1997 and 2009. The main areas of expense are:

- the restructuring of the forces;
- upgrading and enhancing their capability to operate with NATO forces;
- achieving suitable equipment and training levels to conduct an adequate territorial defence, until the arrival of NATO support forces;
- creating the necessary conditions for the reception, deployment and protection of NATO combat support forces;
- and meeting the infrastructure upgrading requirements.

The assessment indicates that the military restructuring costs might amount to US\$ 1866.4 million, while reaching interoperability with NATO would take US\$ 337.3 million to 2001, and US\$ 460.3 million between 2002 and 2009. In the first stage of this process, the costs relate to meeting the initial capability to fulfil an immediate requirement, that is, a basic interoperability level. In the following stage, the costs relate to achieving enhanced capability. In addition, an amount rising to US\$ 330 million represents Romania's contribution to NATO's common budget in this period of time.

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<sup>114</sup> Constantin Duda Ionescu (State Secretary in MoD), 'How Much to Integrate Romania', *Central European Issues*, vol.3, no.2 (1997), p.23.

Alongside with this cost assessment, the experts determined the annual budgetary requirements, taking into account the state budget for 1997 and the forecast GDP growth. The results of this study were presented to state institutions concerned with the security matters and to the public. The key data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Annual resources required and forecast GDP

Year	GDP growth (annual)	GDP (US\$ billion)	% GDP for defence expenditure	Defence expenditure (US\$ billion)
1997	-3%	37.9	2.8	1.06
1998	+4%	36.8	2.9	1.07
1999	+5%	38.3	3.0	1.15
2000	+4%	40.2	2.8	1.13
2001	+5%	41.2	2.8	1.18
2002	+5%	43.9	2.7	1.20
2003	+4%	46.1	2.6	1.20
2004	+3%	47.9	2.5	1.20
2005	+4%	49.4	2.5	1.25
2006	+3%	50.9	2.5	1.29
2007	+2%	52.4	2.5	1.33
2008	+3%	53.5	2.3	1.26
2009	+3%	55.2	2.2	1.21

Source: *Central European Issues*, Vol.3, No.2, 1997.

According to this financial assessment 60 per cent of the funds would be needed for military restructuring, 27 per cent for achieving a sufficient level of interoperability and, in a second stage, reaching the enhanced capability, and 13 per cent represented the contribution to NATO's common budget. But severe economic problems and delays in implementing a coherent and radical economic policy led to a greater fall GDP than predicted and, consequently, to an allocation of less financial resources to the military than necessary. In 1997 the defence budget was only US\$ 786 million representing 2.13 per cent of GDP, far under the estimated resource requirement.<sup>115</sup> And the situation was not any better in 1998. The Armed Forces were allocated US\$ 970 million and revision of the budget in August 1998 cut off a further 3 per cent.<sup>116</sup>

The diminution of the defence budget had some important consequences for the continuation of the restructuring of the military. Manpower cuts were speeded up due to the fact that, according to the Minister of Defence, 73 per cent of the defence budget represented personnel expenditures. Even so in the second half of 1998 the military had huge difficulties in paying for normal expenses (food, uniforms, central heating, water) and no possibilities to procure new equipment or to continue any kind

<sup>115</sup> *Tendencies regarding the evolution of defence budgets regarding NATO integration* (Romania: MoD, July 1998), p.1.

<sup>116</sup> 'Parliamentaries approved on the defence budget', *Azi*, 21 May 1998, p.B2 and 'The effects of budgetary constraints on military activity', *Azi*, 10 September 1998, p.A2.

of maintenance activities. The most serious thing was that transformation of the military communication system ceased, which affected the programme for achieving interoperability with NATO forces. As if things were not bad enough already, they got even worse when the defence budget for 1999 was approved by the parliament and the military was allocated less than 2 per cent of GDP, instead of the minimum level of 3 per cent of a higher GDP deemed necessary by the assessment study.

There were many reasons for the severe diminution of the defence budget every year beginning with 1997.

- First, the fact that NATO officials had not mentioned a certain date for the next phase of enlargement raised doubts regarding the continuation of the policy despite official declarations. Therefore, Romanian politicians were not eager to allocate the necessary funds to the military as long as they considered that Romania had only a very vague prospect of becoming a NATO member. At the same time, the Alliance's officials did not agree on who might qualify for the next round. Consequently, it was not certain that the tempo of enlargement would be maintained.
- Second, many members of parliament have a very poor knowledge of defence-related matters and cannot understand the needs of the military.
- Third, the drastic drop of GDP, much below the forecast figures of the military study discussed above, necessitated a very careful assessment of budgetary priorities.
- In addition to this, constraints regarding the budget for 1999 imposed by the IMF – as conditions for a new agreement with Romania – were very strict; and, of course, they did not include the military among the priority fields.

Under these circumstances, 'with a defence budget which covers only personnel expenditures, any chance of improvement is substantially diminished and fulfilment of the missions the military is set up for is seriously jeopardised'.<sup>117</sup> The Minister of Defence as well as other military authorities have complained more than once about cuts in the budget imposed by the Ministry of Finance 'which, by undertaking this kind of measures, is endangering national security'.<sup>118</sup> Even if the members of the Defence Commissions of the Parliament had admitted that the situation was grave and had promised to allocate more funds to the military when the budgets were revised, the lack of progress in economic reform would not allow them to keep their promise.

Given these facts, it is important for the Romanian Armed Forces to reassess their priorities according to the resources society can afford to make available. At the same time, the politicians should think twice before they reduce the defence budget to the subsistence limits of the military. Because 'what we should keep in mind is that

<sup>117</sup> Victor Babiuc (Minister of National Defence), 'Article', *Azi*, 10 September 1998, p.A2.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Article', *Azi*, 26 August 1998, p.B2.

no matter how much we axe the defence budget, we do not reduce in any way what we demand from the military, that is, if necessary, to defend us by hook or by crook'.<sup>119</sup>

In this difficult financial situation there was also some good news. The Minister of Defence pointed out that the involvement in peacekeeping missions, the setting up of the Romanian-Hungarian Mixed Battalion, the participation in Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe and the activity of the Rapid Reaction Force would *not* be affected by the budgetary constraints in 1999. However, it is quite obvious that without a serious economic recovery as soon as possible the Armed Forces have little or no chance of successfully fulfilling their tasks. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which Romania would become a NATO member in the near future; and all the advantages it might once have had would be wasted.

## 5. Conclusions

Interoperability is an important requirement of NATO, but, as has been pointed out, there is no need for a country's military to acquire total interoperability with other forces. There are methodologies which allow a would-be member to exactly assess how much interoperability it needs, in what missions and what capabilities. Romania took these aspects into account when it devised its strategy. It also took into consideration that 'military procurement is not a priority, while the personnel training and transforming the infrastructure to achieve interoperability are...'.<sup>120</sup> Still, given the fact that the situation in the weapons field is severe, a great part of Romania's equipment being too old to be upgraded anymore, some new items should be purchased. But, due to the scarcity of resources, the options in this regard are limited and the legislature is not eager to approve extra defence spending.

Thus promoting interoperability through involvement in subregional co-operative structures is quite essential. Some arrangements have a real potential and their speedy development is a promising phenomenon. One of these is the Romanian-Hungarian Peacekeeping Battalion from which, in terms of interoperability, both countries expect to obtain benefits in the training, command and control fields. Moreover, the unit is an important element in development of relations between Romania and Hungary and is a successful example of confidence- and security building. Consequently, it can be considered a real asset for Romania's integration into NATO. A second example is the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe (or SEEBRIG). This too promises results in the interoperability field, among which the activity of the Regional Defence Resource Management training Centre in Brasov may prove especially valuable. This initiative has developed extremely rapidly and gathered together seven countries from the region. It can be regarded as strengthening Romania's case for accession to NATO as well.

Having said this, all the positive developments in this field could be undermined if the politicians do not allocate the necessary financial resources to the military. Romania is not part of an alliance that can guarantee its security; and yet the

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<sup>119</sup> Vladimir Pasti, 'The silent message of the military', in *Curentul*, 11 September 1998, p.1.

<sup>120</sup> General Ferenc Vegh (Hungarian Chief of General Staff), in *Azi*, 29-30 May 1998, p.B2.

country cannot realistically defend itself. It is well known that 'outside NATO one spends more for defence than inside the Alliance'.<sup>121</sup> This is why the country pursues accession. Romania's position in an area which has experienced a series of conflicts and crises that threatened regional stability and security makes it ill-advised to lower the defence budget below the level necessary to gain membership.<sup>122</sup> For the time being, involvement of the Romanian military in sub-regional structures is not going to be affected by savage cuts in the defence budget. But austerity cannot continue any longer. Politicians should take decisions on defence-related matters with more responsibility, fully aware of their consequences.

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<sup>121</sup> General Constantin Degetratu (Romanian Chief of General Staff), in *Azi*, 29-30 May 1998, p.B2.

<sup>122</sup> See earlier argument.



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## V. FINAL REMARKS: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

1. In a world experiencing deep transformations in the political, social and economic fields, the threats to security grow in complexity and cannot be addressed with traditional means or by each country on its own. The former communist countries need particular consideration because they are still building democratic institutions and reforming economies. The international community should continue helping to strengthen the democratic institutions and supporting the transition to market economies. This will contribute to Euro-Atlantic security.
2. NATO encourages the development of subregional co-operation as a means to enhance stability and security in Central and Eastern Europe. By enlarging, NATO has increased the Euro-Atlantic security area and promised to keep the doors of the Alliance open for other candidates. Still, for the not-yet-invited countries there is a lot of uncertainty regarding the continuation of this process. This has a direct influence on political life in the candidate countries. Indeed politicians spend probably too much time on the enlargement issue instead of paying more attention to economic matters. Yet they cut the defence budget without taking into account the justified needs of the military. By deciding upon a certain calendar of enlargement, NATO could diminish uncertainty and force the politicians in the aspirant states to focus more on domestic economic and social issues.
3. Subregional co-operation structures work best with very specific objectives. When this is not the case, they fail to bring any profit to their members. For example the Romanian-Greek-Bulgarian trilateral had not been efficient in the first three years of its existence and its members managed to identify and define specific objectives only in late 1998. Furthermore, such arrangements should focus on the function they are meant to perform. This benefits all participants. Successful co-operation structures support the process of confidence building and underpin stability in all Romania's adjacent areas.
4. South Eastern Europe seems to be the most threat-ridden region at the moment. And its conflicts and unresolved crises pose risks to the security of the whole continent. The instruments used by the international community to settle these crises have not always worked and their side effects have affected neighbouring countries. Solutions should address the causes of a crisis and not the symptoms. At the same time, they should satisfy the requirements of all affected parties.
5. Romania is actively involved in a wide range of co-operation initiatives in its neighbourhood. Not all of them are efficient and useful. There is also a lot of overlapping in the objectives of different structures. This is extremely costly and Romania cannot afford to spend resources unwisely. There is a need to reassess the country's priorities in accordance with its objectives and the available capabilities. The country should focus on those arrangements which are assets for its integration into NATO and are efficient in supporting regional stability and security.
6. The extraordinary improvement of Romanian-Hungarian relations and the special partnership established by these countries is a success story. It has been showed that military co-operation can be a valuable asset itself and can boost political relations, leading to increased confidence between the parties and eagerness to peacefully solve old disputes for mutual benefit. The joint battalion the two states

have established is tangible evidence of the rapport that has been achieved. On a broader canvas, the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe or Southeast Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) is expected to make a key contribution to the stabilisation of the area. This will be possible only if it answers to the purposes it has been set up for and if all the members are going to fully contribute to its further development. Hence the idea is, at this stage, a potential success rather than a proven one.

7. The continuous internal disputes in Romania on defence matters have shown several things.
  - First, the legislators who have the power to control defence expenditures by voting the budget for the Armed Forces 'have to learn to ask questions on defence-related issues'.<sup>123</sup> They should be more aware of the importance and possible consequences of their actions.
  - Second, it is highly necessary to form a body of civilian experts competent on defence issues that could help politicians in this field.
  - Third, the armed forces should use all possible means to inform the public about the reasons of their demands and their importance. They should try to maintain the trust and high esteem of the population.
8. The financial resources Romania possesses are sparse and demands are too many to be totally covered. Still, Romania is part of no alliance that could guarantee its security, so defence expenditures are still very important to enable the forces to successfully perform their tasks. If Romania wants to play a relevant role in the area as a stability pillar, it has to be adequately prepared to do it. Its part can indeed be important and it can make a difference by participating in the settlement of crises in the neighbourhood areas. 'The three keywords for securing the future of Europe are: reconciliation, re-equilibration and reintegration... And Romania should be ready to play its part in this process...'.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Dr. Andrzej Karkoszka, *Speech at the conference 'Taking Stock on Transformation'*, held at Groningen in The Netherlands under auspices of the Centre for European Security Studies, 4-6 March 1999.

<sup>124</sup> Adrian Severin (former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania), *Speech at a Conference*, held in Amsterdam at the School of International Relations, 30 March 1999.



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