

## FROM STAR WARS TO AEGIS: ROMANIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE ON THE CURRENT DIALOGUE BETWEEN ROMANIA AND THE USA

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to investigate the representation of the relations between the USA and Romania in the discourse of Romanian media. The corpus consists of 63 news items and editorials which have been published in the online editions of two Romanian newspapers. The main research aims were: (1) to identify the topics which obtained the largest media coverage in regard to the diplomatic and military relationships between Romania and the USA; (2) to assess evaluation expressed in the media discourse by applying the evaluation parameters designed by Thompson and Hunston (2001). Four main topics regarding the relations between the two countries attracted extensive media coverage throughout the year 2011: (1) Romania's decision to host AEGIS Ashore components on its ground; (2) the diplomatic visit made by the Romanian president to Washington and his meeting with the US president Barack Obama; (3) the intention expressed by the Romanian government to purchase F-16 military planes produced by the US company Lockheed Martin and (4) the fact that Romanian citizens need US entry visa and the criteria they have to meet in order to obtain the visa. results show that the issues of contemporary military cooperation attract the most positive evaluations in the media discourse, especially in terms of its importance. The most controversial topics (in this corpus, the purchase of second-hand planes or the difficulty of obtaining a visa for the United States) are assessed in terms of certainty and/or expectedness.*

**Keywords:** *Romania, USA, military relations, evaluation, media discourse.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key ideas of postmodernism sustains the nonexistence of a unique truth and therefore of a unique discourse on it; every individual speaker has a particular point of view which is conveyed through the selection of specific linguistic items from the total range of the linguistic resources the speaker disposes of. In Ruth Berman's words, "any state of affairs in the worlds of fact or fantasy can be described in multiple ways" (Berman 2004: 109). The postmodern perspective on subjectivity is also connected to a new conception about history and about the relationships between center and periphery. History is no longer seen as a serial connection of events but it is known that historical discourse may be – and, in fact, it is – as biased as any other discourse type. Discourses

issued by speakers which would have been considered previously as marginal have become the focus of attention, challenging former hierarchies (e.g. Vattimo 1993).

The aim of this paper is to investigate stance and evaluation in media discourse in connection to its function of reporting events or, in other words, of narrating contemporary history. The subject chosen is connected to the representation of the relations between the United States and Romania, two states with different capacities and status at the international political level. The discourse of Romanian media regarding this subject may constitute the scene of a clash between former and new representations of power and cooperation. On the one hand, the collective images enforced by the communist propaganda depicted the USA as an enemy. On the other hand, such cultural

representations are presently challenged and restructured as a result of a shift observed, for instance, by Fairclough (2001: 59): for various languages (and, implicitly, cultures), the power-based system tends to be replaced by a solidarity-based system which has as a consequence “a movement away from the explicit marking of power relationships”.

## 2. PERSPECTIVES ON STANCE AND EVALUATION

Though studies on stance are varied, two main directions are visible. One is a strictly text-based approach, having as its core the definition of stance formulated by Biber and Finegan (1989) as

the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message.

This has led to studies interested in the analysis of certain terms or expressions in a given corpus, as the mere selection of a certain lexical device from the whole possible range of lexical choices available to the speaker is itself a form of stancetaking. The identification of the lexical and morpho-syntactical salient features of the analyzed corpus will be restricted to the formal expression of stance. The investigation of the lexis and the morpho-syntax represents a first step in understanding stance and it has the advantage that it is highly quantifiable.

Recent research has shown that quantitative investigation must be accompanied by qualitative analysis: „Quantifying stance is problematic because there is no simple correspondence between individual words, on the one hand, and stance functions, on the other” (Hunston 2007: 35). Another direction of research requires outrunning the mere description of grammatical features and taking into account the conversational as well as the social and cultural background leading the speaker to assume a certain stance. Instead of viewing the expression of stance as an isolated act, it tends to analyze it from an interactive and

intertextual point of view. Du Bois (2007) argues for the necessity to go beyond the mere grammatical analysis of isolated sentences and to contextualize the utterances investigated:

Speakers do not just perform generic stance types, they perform specific stance acts, which have specific content and are located in a particular dialogic and sequential context. (Du Bois 2007:145).

In order to achieve this goal, Du Bois proposes a more complex definition of stance, opposing to that of Biber and Finegan in the sense that it pays attention not to the microlevel of isolated lexical devices but to stance as a speech act and its insertion in the context of discourse. This view is grounded in Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and it has the merit of acknowledging that any act of stancetaking is in relation to other acts or events prior or simultaneous to it. According to this definition, any act of stancetaking has three dimensions: evaluation, positioning and alignment. This idea will be used in the present article, where “stance” is used as a broader term, encompassing evaluation, but not restricted to it.

## 3. STANCE IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSE

Summing up the findings of previous research, Englebretson (2007: 6) identifies five main characteristics of stance: (1) stancetaking occurs on three levels: physical action, personal attitude or belief or evaluation and social morality; (2) stance is public; (3) stance is interactional; (4) stance is indexical and (5) consequential. These characteristics take specific forms when applied to the context of media discourse.

First, in media discourse, the personal and the social level clearly overlap, as the journalist expresses his/her point of view but at the same time s/he represents the media organization as his/her employer and, in turn, the organization endorses the point of view expressed by the journalist. Furthermore, this point of view enters in a relationship with the common beliefs and expectations of the society in which the media discourse takes

place. Every specific instance of media discourse takes place simultaneously at the three different levels of social organization outlined by Fairclough (2001: 20-21): the level of the social situation in which the discourse occurs, that of the social institution and the general level of the society.

The public character of the stancetaking act is a prototypical feature of media discourse and of the process of mass communication involved. The public character of stance may be linked to Goffman's notion of identity and "face", i.e. taking a stance is a manner of construing the speaker's personal or social face, the projection of his/ her identity. The relationship between the expression of a stance and the construction of face is a bilateral one: as every act of stancetaking contributes to the constitution of the personal "face" and at the same time the desired or projected "face" may constrain the individual to adopt a certain mode of behaviour and the expression of a certain stance. In order to constitute and maintain the projected organizational identity (or "face"), media are compelled to tackle problems of interest for their audiences.

The interactional dimension of stance is less visible for written media texts. Though online media are becoming more interactional and tend to pay more attention to their publics and involve their readers in the production process of the news (Robinson 2011), one-sidedness still represents a general feature of media discourse (Fairclough 2001: 41), as the readers' feedback is difficult to reach the media producer especially in the case of print media. The interaction should not be understood only as an interaction with the readers but also with other instances of discourse. The stance expressed in the media may be a result of the stance expressed by other social actors, like authorities, experts, other media institutions a.s.o.

The indexical character of stance is due to its possibility to refer to "aspects of the broader sociocultural framework or physical context in which it occurs" (Englebretson 2007: 6). A similar observation is also made by Du Bois, who notes that every act of stancetaking employs sociocultural values (Du Bois 2007: 141). These sociocultural values

are at the core of the unavoidable subjectivity which pervades all discourse forms, even the media ones. As Ettema points out, news are a category of texts which have to be coherent "within the system of meanings and values that produced them" (Ettema 2011: 271). Media discourse is primarily concerned with the level of facts, of the real events which it must keep the public updated about. At the same time, media do not realize a mere presentation of the facts, but also offer a filter for their interpretation. They thus act at the level of society norms and are lead by the common presuppositions about what is good and bad. When issuing evaluations on specific aspects of the social environment, media voice the level of the deep beliefs and attitudes, the collective mental models of a society. Last but not least, the public stance or the evaluations expressed in the media may have direct consequences on the persons and situations subject to evaluation but also on the instance which issued it. For instance, public persons often need a positive coverage in the media while, in other cases the institution may be legally held responsible if the negative evaluations are not documented.

#### 4. CORPUS SELECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The paper aims to investigate the representation of military and diplomatic relations between Romania and the USA in the discourse of Romanian online media. The corpus consists of 63 news items and editorials which have been published in the online editions of two newspapers: 41 articles selected from the site of *Adevărul* ([www.adevarul.ro](http://www.adevarul.ro)) and 30 articles from the site of *Gândul* ([www.gandul.info](http://www.gandul.info)). The journal *Adevărul* has both a print and an online edition, while the other one appears only in electronic format. All articles forming the corpus were available to the public by free online access. The combined keywords used for search were *Romania* and *USA*. The search was restricted to the articles published during 2011. The articles were selected first according to their titles, then a second selection was made in terms of their content.

Only articles that discussed extensively topics regarding the relations between the two states were retained. The starting hypothesis was that expression of stance in newspaper articles varies according to the text type (news articles vs editorials) and to the topic discussed.

The research aims were: (1) to identify the topics which obtained the largest media coverage in regard to the diplomatic and military relationships between Romania and the USA; (2) to assess evaluation expressed in the media discourse by applying the evaluation parameters designed by Thompson and Hunston (2001). The authors highlight the fact that acts of evaluation are realized along four main parameters. The parameters identified are: the good – bad (positive – negative) parameter, which is considered the basic one, certainty, expectedness and importance (Thompson, Hudson 2001: 22-25).

In the first research stage, the articles were read and grouped into categories according to their content. In the second stage, the assessment of evaluation was realized for each category separately. Evaluation was assessed by identifying the most salient expressions of stance, according to their frequency and to the context in which they occurred. Although stance and evaluation can be expressed at all textual levels, the investigation was focused on the lexical items selected in the media discourse and on the discursive level.

## 5. BACKGROUND

Diplomatic relations between Romania and the USA have not ceased to exist during the Romanian communist regime, but they have changed and developed considerably after 1990. At present, the cooperation between the two states is not limited to the area of diplomacy but also encompasses fields like economy, law and justice, science and education or social care. It is officially acknowledged by the ‘strategic partnership’, an agreement established in 1997 when president William Clinton came to Romania on a diplomatic visit. The intense military cooperation with the USA is also characteristic for the foreign policy adopted by the Romanian post communist governments

especially since 2004, when Romania became a NATO member. Romania sustained the United States in the fight against terrorism and took part to military operations in Irak and Afghanistan. Another aspect of the defense cooperation programs of the last two decades implies the presence of US forces on Romanian ground: for example, a NATO base was opened in the town Mihail Kogalniceanu, in the south-eastern part of Romania, in 2007<sup>1</sup>.

The newspaper articles forming the present corpus were written and uploaded during 2011. This period was chosen especially because the events in the sphere of defense cooperation between Romania and the USA. The most important event consisted in Romania’s decision to take part in the AEGIS Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) System and to host ground-based components of the system on its territory. Romanian authorities announced that these components were going to be located in a US military base in Deveselu, a village in the region of Oltenia. This village was selected because it hosts a military airport which is no longer in use. The consultations between the Romanian and the American officials were carried on for about two years and the final agreement was signed in September 2011 in Washington, DC by Teodor Baconschi, the Romanian minister for foreign affairs, and Hillary Clinton, the American secretary of state. As a starting point for the research, it was assumed that such events would trigger various evaluations and acts of stancetaking from both authorities and journalists.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Four main topics regarding the relations between the two countries attracted extensive media coverage throughout the year 2011:

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<sup>1</sup> For more detailed information regarding the history of the diplomatic relations between Romania and the USA see, for example, <http://washington.mae.ro/node221>. A synthetic presentation of the programs developed in the area of defense cooperation between the USA and Romania can be found at <http://romania.usembassy.gov/policy/map/index.html>.

(1) Romania's decision to host AEGIS Ashore components on its ground;

(2) the diplomatic visit made by the Romanian president to Washington and his meeting with the US president Barack Obama;

(3) the intention expressed by the Romanian government to purchase F-16 military planes produced by the US company Lockheed Martin and

(4) the fact that Romanian citizens need US entry visa and the criteria they have to meet in order to obtain the visa.

A fifth category of news articles emerged, consisting mostly of declarations of US officials or news about activities of the US embassy in Romania. While acknowledging that such articles are equally important for stance research in the media, this paper is limited to the four major topics, for reasons of space.

The first two topics obtained significant coverage as they refer to events which took place during the year. The last two received less coverage as they were not totally new to the Romanian readers and not related to a specific event. News and comments regarding the purchase of military planes for the Romanian army date about three years ago and this decision has caused long debates in the Romanian media. The US entry visa represents another aspect of the diplomatic relations which the media depicts as 'unsolved' for the last twenty years. As a general characteristic, it is visible that the first two topics were described in news articles, mainly, in terms of symmetry of the relations, while the last two ones were perceived to reveal a marked asymmetry in the diplomatic relations between the two states.

**6.1 The AEGIS ashore system in Romania.** The Romanian government's decision to take part in the AEGIS project received coverage both in news reports and in opinion texts. The news articles on this topic were diverse: descriptive texts presenting the technical features of the AEGIS project, texts about the conditions of the final agreement and news articles presenting public interventions of the authorities on this topic. Not surprisingly, the event triggered many acts of stancetaking from various social actors.

According to Fairclough (2001: 42), the sources quoted by the media in news reporting „do not represent equally all social groupings in the population”. This was also the case in the analyzed corpus, as public officials were quoted in the media most often (in 25 articles) and hence their perspective was commonly adopted in the news reports, while experts and „common” people's voices were quoted only in two reports, one for each newspaper.

The evaluations of the project vary according to the text type and also to the voice quoted in the texts. Within these categories, evaluations are extremely coherent: positive evaluations were found mostly in the news discourse while negative or mixed evaluations were manifest in opinion articles and reportages. As a consequence of this pattern of distribution, it is visible that the project is positively evaluated in the authorities' discourse while lay people tend to position themselves as being rather skeptical about the outcome of the project or to make use of negative evaluations, refusing alignment with the official perspective.

The good-bad parameter is not explicitly applied in news articles and in the discourse of public officials, but the project is frequently evaluated in terms of its importance, which leads by implicature to a positive evaluation. The adjective „important” (important) has a high number of occurrences (23) in the evaluatory comments made by American and Romanian authorities, often in the superlative form:

(1.a) “[...] *am semnat astăzi acest acord important*”, a spus Hillary Clinton. “[...] we have signed today this important agreement”, Hillary Clinton said.) (Gândul, 13.09.2011).

(1.b) “*acest proiect strategic deosebit de important*” (this extremely important strategic project) (Gândul, 07.06.2011).

(1.c) “*în luna iunie, documentul extrem de important a fost parafat*” (in June, the extremely important document was signed) (Adevărul, 13.09.2011).

Another adjective used for evaluation is „esențial” (essential) which has 5

occurrences in the corpus. The following examples show that it is used for the same referent and its meaning is synonymous to „important”:

(2.a) *“un pas **esențial** în contracarea amenințărilor cu rachete balistice care reprezintă un risc din ce în ce mai crescut”* (an essential step in counteracting ballistic missiles threats which represent a growing risk) (Gândul, 13.09.2011).

(2.b) *“decizia amplasării scutului antirachetă este **esențială** în efortul combaterii pericolului terorismului”* (the decision of installing the ballistic missile shield is essential in the effort to fight against the danger of terrorism) (Gândul, 03.05.2011).

This positive evaluation of the project as being important is linked – sometimes explicitly, as in example (2.a) – to a negative evaluation regarding terrorist threats. In the examples above, the project is presented as a stage in a larger series of measures that are currently in progress. At the same time, the idea that the ground components may be used in case of war and the idea of a possible war are left in the background.

The expression of evaluation is more complex when the good-bad parameter is taken into account. The corpus was searched for the adjectives “bun” (“good”), “pozitiv” (“positive”) and “negativ” (“negative”). The first two adjectives did not occur in the news articles in regard to this topic. No occurrences of “rău” (“bad”) were found in the corpus, while the adjective “bun” (“good”) was used only in one case for an explicit reference to the AEGIS system:

(3) *“Primarul Beciu e mulțumit și convins că, odată cu venirea americanilor, multe lucruri **bune** se vor întâmpla în comună.”* (The mayor Beciu is satisfied and sure that, with the arrival of the Americans, many **good** things will happen in the village.) (Gândul, 07.05.2011).

Example (3) is an excerpt from a reportage in which evaluations of the project are elicited by the reporter from the local authorities and from the inhabitants of the village Deveselu.

The journalist asks them to express their opinions regarding the installment of an American military base in the village and also if they are happy about it or not. The adjective “bun” is used only by the mayor of Deveselu in order to express a positive evaluation, while the villagers seem more incredulous than him in front of the journalist. Moreover, the mayor’s utterance has a high degree of vagueness (“many good things will happen”). The adjective is not used for the description of the BMD system or of its effects, but in connection to the consequences that the opening of an American military base might have for the village.

The adjectives “pozitiv” and “negativ” have an interesting pattern of distribution in the corpus of news on this topic: 9, respectively 7 occurrences. However, this fact does not indicate that positive and negative evaluations are quantitatively close. First, the adjective „negativ” is mostly used with a verb in the negative form. Being thus denied, the adjective acquires a contextual different meaning, at least neutral if not positive and functions as a rhetorical device in the discourse addressed to the Romanian population by the authorities:

(4) *“[...] un sistem strict defensiv de interceptări care nu va avea niciun fel de efecte negative asupra populației”* (a strictly defensive system of interception which will have no kind of negative effects for the population). (Gândul, 04.05.2011).

Second, the adjective „pozitiv” is not used for describing the AEGIS system or its usefulness but regarding the possible consequences of Romania’s availability for cooperation in the military domain:

(5) *“acest stadiu nou [...] în relația politică dintre SUA și România va avea și urmări economice pozitive* (this new stage [...] in the political relationship between the USA and Romania will also have positive economical consequences). (Gândul, 15.09.2011).

News items are focused on the military event and sometimes on the technical features of the AEGIS system while editorials address

more the economic aspects instead of the military ones. The military and diplomatic dimension of the project is most often assessed according to the importance parameter, while the positive parameter is activated especially in regard to the economic benefits of the military partnership. This use of the two parameters can be observed in the following example:

(6) *În plan militar vorbim despre cel mai important eveniment din istoria recentă a României după aderarea la NATO. În plan economic vorbim despre o investiție consistentă [...] Faptul că România va face parte, la nivel operativ, din acest sistem de apărare antirachetă, din 2015, este un câștig politic greu de estimat. Un câștig politic care poate fi transformat [...] într-un avantaj economic deosebit în relația cu SUA.* (In the military field we are talking about the most important event in Romania's recent history after it has become a NATO member. In the economic field we are talking about a considerable investment [...] The fact that Romania will be, at the operational level, a part of this missile defense system, starting from 2015, is a political gain that is difficult to estimate. A political gain that can be transformed [...] in a remarkable economical vantage in the relationship with the USA.) (Gândul, 03.05.2011).

Although the terms “good” and “bad” are not explicitly used, the author selects many other terms, especially nouns belonging to the semantic field of economics, with a clear positive meaning: “investiție” (“investment”), “câștig” (“gain”), “avantaj” (“advantage”). This is a case of overwording and repetition, showing a particular interest from the part of the author with a singular aspect of the reality presented (Fairclough 2001: 96).

Lexical items expressing negative evaluation are more common in the discourse of common people or journalists who adopt thus the people's point of view. The following examples include the use of both the adjective “bun” and the adverb “bine” (“well”) but these terms still acquire a negative meaning given by the context:

(7.a) *"Scutul e bun, da' nu ține de foame"* (The shield is good, but not against the hunger) (Gândul, 07.05.2011)

(7.b) *"De ce să fim mulțumiți?" răspunde un bărbat [...] "De scut", spun. "Păi ce, ne dă să mâncăm?! Tot aia. Da' poa' să fie bine pentru copii, pentru nepoți. Aia da, e posibil."* (“Why should we be happy? a man answers. [...] “Because of the shield”, I say. “But what, does it give us to eat?! The same thing. But it might be well for the children, for the grandsons. That yes, that is possible.”) (Gândul, 07.05.2011).

(7.c) *"Bine, n-are cum să fie. Ce să aducă bun toate astea, armele-astea?" se întreabă, mai mult pentru sine, o bătrână [...].* (Well, that's impossible to be. What good should all these bring, all these weapons?" asks an old woman, mostly to herself [...]) (Gândul, 07.05.2011).

All the examples above belong to the same reportage as example (3). The use of the evaluations in this text, especially of “bun”, has the function to index the speakers' identity. The mayor of the village endorses the project and therefore expresses a point of view which is coherent with the perspective formulated by higher public authorities from the Romanian and the American government. Such an evaluation is contested by the inhabitants as they express a different stance, doubting that positive consequences of the project. Example (7.a) is a caption within the article and represents a quotation of one of the villagers. It consists of two clauses coordinated by an adversative conjunction (“da”/“but”), which realizes a shift of the topic of interest: the project is evaluated not in terms of its efficiency against terrorist threats but of its concrete benefits. In example (7.b), the evaluation as good is partially rejected and placed under the expectedness parameter, by the use of a modal verb and an adverb. In (7.c), the interviewee definitely rejects the evaluation of the project as “good” and this point of view is expressed not once but in two successive utterances. The second one is a rhetorical question, forcing an agreement from the hearer and, in this case, implicitly from the reader.

Negative evaluations are as well expressed in the discourse of other representatives of the society, but more complex lexical and rhetorical devices are employed in this case. The following two examples represent two similar negative evaluations of the AEGIS project, in terms of inefficiency. However, they differ in terms of the stance expressed: while example (8) expresses on the whole an epistemic stance, the following example is constructed through the frame of an affective stance.

When the project is negatively evaluated by a representant of public authorities, this becomes a news item *per se*. Extract (8) comes from the speech delivered by Jean Michel Boucheron, the vice-president of the NATO parliamentary meeting which was held in Bucharest, in october 2011. The speaker is trying to cast doubts upon the efficiency of the project or even to totally reject it. In order to achieve this goal, he chooses epistemic verbs (“a crede”/ “to believe”, “a ști”/ “to know”) and a generalization (“toți tehnicienii”/ “all the technicians”). He manages to present the project as inefficient without bringing concrete evidence to support his claim. Instead of it, there is a shift from a personal stance to a semi-institutional stance. At the beginning, the speaker emphasizes that it is a personal opinion, while, in the last utterance, he uses the plural, and thus places himself as the representative of a larger community (it is not clear whether he speaks on his behalf or as a representer of France or of the European countries participating to the meeting):

(8) “Personal, **cred** că acest sistem de apărare nu servește la nimic în ceea ce privește securitatea. **Toți tehnicienii știu** că acest sistem lasă să treacă trei sferturi dintre rachete” [...] “**Cred** că sistemul antirachetă este ineficient împotriva unei amenințări care nu există. Prietenii noștri americani au încercat să ne atragă într-un «război al stelelor», a spus Boucheron [...]. “(Myself, I believe that this defense system is good for nothing **as regards** the security. All technicians know that this system allows three quarters of the missiles to pass through it” [...] “I believe that the antimissile system is inefficient against a threat which does not exist. Our American friends

have tried to attract us in a ‘star war’”, Boucheron said.) (Adevărul, 09.10.2011).

The following editorial was written in regard to a tragic event, the death of two Romanian soldiers in Afghanistan, in May 2011. In the discussion of this topic, the journalist relates it to Romania’s hosting the AEGIS ground-based component. The negative stance expressed by the journalist has more than one target: he directs his criticism against the military cooperation with the USA, against Romania’s involvement in the war in Irak, against the Romanian government’s intention to buy military planes produced by an American company, against the US president Obama for the war against talibans and against the Romanian president for endorsing the military cooperation between the two countries. The text is parcelled by references to shield installment which function as a leitmotif, reminding the reader of the current issue. The expression “scutul-minune” (“the wonder-shield”) acquires an ironic and depreciative connotation as in the last part of the editorial it is used to form a rhetorical contrast to the second part of the utterance. The wordplay based on the repetition of the word “shield” acquires a tragic connotation. It is based on two different meanings of the word. The meaning in the first clause is the one which is frequent in contemporary media discourse regarding AEGIS: a simplified form for denominating the BMD System. In the second part, it refers to the expression used for the ancient Greek soldiers killed in the battle, thus emphasizing the character of a tragedy:

(9) “Scutul – minune de la Deveselu nu-i va aduce înapoi pe caporalii Cătălin Ionel Marinescu și Constantin Lixandru. [...] Dar până să avem scutul – minune, soldații noștri ni se întorc pe scut. “(The wonder-shield in Deveselu will not bring corporals Cătălin Ionel Marinescu and Constantin Lixandru back. [...] But until we have the wonder-shield, our soldiers are coming back on the shield.)” (Adevărul, 10.05.2011)

Evaluations of topic I in terms of good versus bad are present in common people’s discourse. Authorities, which may be public



officials, experts or even journalists, evaluate Romania's participation to the project in terms of importance, efficiency and financial gains.

**6.2 Topic II: The Romanian president's visit in the the USA.** This event triggered different evaluations according to its chronology. Before the event, the media discussed it in terms of uncertainty while in the articles published after it, evaluations in terms of importance were explicitly stated. The main aspect playing a significant role in the stance taken by the Romanian media was the lack of detailed information about the Romanian president's scheduled meetings. The protocol for diplomatic visits requires public announcements made by the presidency in regard to the programme and the objectives of the visit. In this case, the meeting between the Romanian and the American president was announced to the journalists after it had taken place instead of before, hence the media perceived the timing as infringing the high diplomatic protocol. The news articles published before the event presented it by applying the certainty and expectedness parameters: it was evaluated as being of low certainty but of high expectedness. A typical lexical item used for evaluation is the verb "a aștepta" ("to wait") while other lexical items are selected from the field of uncertainty. Examples (11.a) and (11.b) include such items which can be interpreted in an ironic key:

(10) "*Agenda oficială a vizitei prezidențiale în Statele unite nu a fost deocamdată făcută publică. De asemenea, președinția nu a făcut nicio precizare privind o întrevedere a președintelui Băsescu cu omologul american, președintele Barack Obama, dar ea este de așteptat.*" ("[...] the presidency has made no announcement regarding a meeting of president Băsescu with his American counterpart, the president Barack Obama, but it should be expected.") (Adevărul, 10.09.2011).

(11.a) "*Marea întrebare: se întâlnește cu Obama?*" (The big question: is he meeting Obama?) (Gândul, 10.09.2011)

(11.b) "*Secretul lui Băsescu. De ce nu a spus nimic președintele despre vizita în SUA*" (Băsescu's secret. Why the president told

nothing about the visit to the USA) (headline, Adevărul, 14.09.2011).

Example (10) shows a subtle form of manipulation of evaluatory parameters in news discourse. A piece of information which is classified as low on the certainty scale is not likely to form the core of a news article. In order to avoid this result, the speaker (in this case, an official person) attempts a repositioning of the discussed subject on the expectedness scale, by using the conjunction "but" as a logical connector and thus offering a new and contrasting interpretation of the future events.

After the event, the importance parameter was implicitly activated the news discourse, especially by the enumeration of the president's meetings with US officials. Direct evaluations of the visit as important are sometimes also realized by the use of adjectives like "interesant" ("interesting"): "*Un moment interesant al vizitei a fost întâlnirea cu David Petraeus [...] (another interesting moment of the visit was the meeting with David Petraeus)*" (Adevărul, 13.09.2011). Less frequent are explicit evaluations by applying the good-bad parameter: "*Primirea președintelui Băsescu de către Barack Obama la Casa Albă nu poate fi decât o veste bună.*" ("The fact that president Băsescu was received by Barack Obama at the White House can only be good news") (Adevărul, 14.09.2011).

**6.3 Topics evaluated in terms of asymmetry.** Topics III and IV (the purchase of F-16 military planes and the desired abrogation of the US entry visa required to Romanian citizens received a similar coverage in terms of negative evaluations. The presentation of both topics in the media articles from the corpus seems to infringe the journalistic rules regarding the news value of an event. More precisely, no events connected to these subjects occurred during the period analyzed. However, the articles were triggered by the allegations of public officials regarding, in the first case, the necessity of purchasing military planes for the army and, in the second case, the possibility that the criteria for obtaining the US entry visa might be changed.

This contrasts with the idea that the news articles should report events as “categorical truths – facts – without intermediate modalities” (Fairclough 2001: 107) as articles on both topics included various expressions of modality.

Topic III is more discussed in the news than in opinion texts as it no longer represents totally new information. It is mentioned as a side comment in editorials, for instance, as an additional argument in a text whose main idea is that the partnership with the United States has no positive consequences for Romania (Adevărul, 24.03.2011). The main parameter applied is certainty: actually, the Romanian government had not taken a final decision about the purchase at that time. The news articles involve American and Romanian officials speaking but no official point of view representing the Romanian government. The high degree of uncertainty is realized by the use of modality markers. The expressions of modality are associated with indefinite temporal constructions:

(12.a) “*Este o negociere foarte complicată pentru că la un moment dat va fi nevoie de anumite aranjamente de ordin financiar.*” (It is a very complicated negotiation because at a certain moment some financial arrangements will be needed) (Gândul, 02.06.2011).

(12.b) “*România ar putea achiziționa, până la urmă, avioane F-16 noi [...]*” (Romania might purchase, in the end, new F-16 planes [...]); “*Gabriel Oprea speră ca România să poată cumpăra încet, dar sigur avioane F-16*” (Gabriel Oprea hopes that Romania may be able to buy slowly but surely F-16 planes” (Gândul, 26.11.2011).

Both examples include markers of expressive modality, the position of the speaker/ writer “with respect to the truth or the probability of a representation of reality” (Fairclough 2001: 105). Example (12.a) is a fragment of a declaration made by the US ambassador while example (12.b) refers to declarations of the Romanian minister for defense. Both speakers discuss this topic in terms of low certainty. Nevertheless, the public discussion is not limited to the certainty

parameter, to the question whether the government will buy US military planes or not, since both possibilities attract negative evaluations. The lack of military planes is depicted by the use of adjectives with a marked negative meaning: “critic” (“critical”) and “dramatic”:

(13.a) “*Se prefigurează o situație critică.*” (a critical situation is foreseen) (Gândul, 15.12.2011).

(13.b) “*[...] consecințe dramatice pentru imaginea și credibilitatea României în cadrul NATO*” (dramatic consequences for Romania’s image and credibility within NATO) (Gândul, 15.12.2011).

The decision to acquire F-16 planes is likewise rejected because the planes are not new. The following example comes from an editorial where it represents an argument for the main idea, that Romania is deceived by the strategic partnership with the United States:

(14) “*niște avioane F-16 second-hand care au făcut războiul din Vietnam*” (some second-hand F-16 planes that have taken part to the Vietnam war) (Adevărul, 10.05.2011).

The negative evaluation, in this example, is based on the writer’s assumption of the existence of a set of shared values with the readers. Two expressions attract the attention because their being negatively value-laden: the categorization “second-hand” and the reference to the Vietnam war which might embed an allusion to negative scenarios of war, conquest and politics of domination.

The fourth topic discussed in the corpus regards the US entry visa. More precisely, articles on this theme were the result of public declarations made by Romanian and American officials regarding a possible change of the criteria for receiving the visa. The theme attracted uniform coverage in the media, which did not explicitly involve the positive – negative parameter. The topic is instead evaluated in terms of a low degree of expectedness and high uncertainty regarding a solution, which consequently leads to a negative evaluations. A frequent lexical item

used when discussing it is “problemă” (“problem”) but equally interesting are the attributes associated with it:

(15.a) *”Una dintre principalele probleme aflate în suspensie pe agenda bilaterală româno – americană”* (One of the main problems pending on the bilateral Romanian – American agenda) (Gândul, 10.09.2011)

(15.b) *”Problema vizelor, o restanță istorică”* (The visa problem, a historical debt) (Gândul, 10.09.2011).

(15.c) *”Subiectul cel mai arzător pentru România în relația cu America [...]”* (the most ardent theme for Romania in its relationship to America) (Adevărul, 10.09.2011).

Example (15.b) is a caption which is interesting because of its ambiguity: it does not clearly indicate who is responsible for the “debt” or whose failure it was and therefore it manages to extend a negative stance towards both states involved. In other articles, the visa topic is brought into the readers’ attention in a specific form, which involves an allusion to a cultural script, that of the USA as a dreamland for the persons running away from Romania during the communist regime, in search for a better life:

(16) *”Noul sediu al Ambasadei Americii în România, care se întinde pe o suprafață de 4,5 hectare, pare o adevărată fortăreață ”îmbrăcată” în spații verzi. Granit, marmură, betoane și mult fier, toate dispuse într-un cadru eco. [...] (The new location of the US Embassy in Romania, which extends on an area of 4.5 hectares, seems a real „fortress” dressed up in green. Granite, marble, concrete and a lot of iron, all disposed in an eco environment.)*

*[...] Decenii la rând, pentru mii de români drumul către „țara tuturor posibilităților” a început pe strada Batiștei [...] De acum, cei care visează să se mute peste Ocean trebuie să meargă în zona Băneasa, pe Bulevardul Liviu Librescu nr.4-6.”* (Adevărul, *SUA deschid porțile ambasadei ecologice*, 07.09.2011) (Decades running, for thousands of Romanians the road to „the land of all opportunities” has started on Batiștei Street. [...] From now on, those who are dreaming to move out across the Ocean have to go to the Băneasa area, on Liviu

Librescu Boulevard, no. 4-6.) (Adevărul, 07.09.2011).

The selection of the lexical item “fortress” for the description of the US embassy is not casual and it represents the American space as one which is forbidden or extremely difficult to access to the Romanian citizens. The connotations of the noun are highlighted by the enumeration of the materials the building is made of, emphasizing the idea of coldness and distance.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The relations between Romania and the USA seem to attract positive evaluations in the news, especially in the discourse of the public authorities, and more negative evaluations in editorials and reports, where personal opinions are introduced. News reports are not completely free of bias either, but evaluation is more present in the headlines than in the text of the article. The evaluations made by journalists in the news texts are more likely to be limited to certain lexical items, while they are more complex in opinion texts and reportages, involving the discursive level and the textual organization.

The issues of contemporary military cooperation attract the most positive evaluations in the media discourse, especially in terms of its importance. The good – bad parameter tends to be avoided, or not explicitly stated, when it refers to delicate or controversial subjects. The most controversial topics (in this corpus, the purchase of second-hand planes or the difficulty of obtaining a visa for the United States) are assessed in terms of certainty and/or expectedness.

Positive and negative evaluations of the Romanian – American relations can be ultimately reduced to the representation of power, solidarity and status of the two countries, to the perception of the relations as being balanced or not. A clash is perceived by the media – and, probably, also by their public – between two major sorts of discursive and cultural frames: cooperation versus dominance or, in other terms, symmetrical versus asymmetrical relations. The events connected

to the dimension of cooperation create a specific horizon of expectations, while the issues represented as unsolved or as Romania's asymmetrical status break this frame.

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