

## CENTRAL EUROPE SECURITY INTERESTS: ROMANIA'S CASE

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**Abstract:** *Historically, Central Europe has been a geopolitical reality which comprised the so-called "central third" of the continent. It had no definite contours especially because the portions of that vast area belonged along the centuries to different political entities. Here, up to the First World War, for example, it was the borderline between the Northern Empires (Russia, Austria and Germany) and only after 1918 has emerged independent small and medium-sized states. Not being a no man's land but anyway a perimeter of confrontation between the great powers, Central Europe has been an unstable area between the world wars and the Soviet hegemony sphere after-wards. At the end of the Cold War, Central Europe focused again the new Europe security architecture's builders attention.*

**Keywords:** *security, European state, institution, system.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War has triggered a wide structural transformation process of the geopolitical framework of international security at sub-regional, European and global level. At present, the Euro-Atlantic community is strongly concerned with building a new continental security architecture deeply rooted on the values of liberal democracy and free market economy. This new European security system should be achieved including the newly developed democracies of Central Europe within the Western European structures and by forging a strong partnership between the enlarged Euro-Atlantic community and the other East European countries, firstly with Russia and Ukraine.

As the last centuries of European history are proving, the role of Central Europe in achieving a stable and secure continent has been crucial. Building a new European security system has always dealt with ensuring the peace and security of the "central third" of the continent. At present, this issue continues to be the main concern of all those (people and institutions) involved in finding enduring solutions for achieving that goal. Such solutions will not be effective if they do not

take into account the security interests of Central European countries. Therefore, I have focused my paper on that essential issue of European security, stressing on the particular case of Romania.

Firstly, I argue that Central Europe is not an entity defined on purely geographical or cultural-religious criteria, but it should be described on the basis of its geo-historical features, namely a common geographical position (between Germany and Russia), a common geopolitical vulnerability (historically sharing a common fate by being rather objects than independent subjects of European politics, that is being included along centuries inside the former empires), as well as common domestic and foreign policy options. The purely geographical criteria (limiting it largely by the 10° to 35° E meridians) can not be used in defining Central Europe in the post-Cold War era as it would involve including fractions of existing states in different geopolitical regions, situation that might lead to breaches of the current international law. The religious criteria could not be properly used as, on the one hand, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Central European states are secular and not theocracies and, on the other hand, reshaping the political map of Europe

according to that of the year 1500 (on S. Huntington's cultural-religious model) is not explicitly aimed, as far as I know, by any European state or institution.

Any Central European state designs its security and defense in a framework defined by the interlocking institutions system as well as by increasing interdependencies among security of all European states.

In the current geopolitical context, NATO is the backbone of the new European security system. The Alliance repeatedly stated that its main goal is to project the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic community along the whole continent. This feature is reflected by the NACC / PfP activities, the individual dialogue developed both with the countries wishing to become NATO members and with Russia and Ukraine, as well as by peace-support missions conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the future, NATO's Eastward enlargement and the activities developed within the framework of APC will become a firm expression of will of the Alliance to continue promoting that goal.

The Western European Union expand its efforts to increase involvement in maintaining and strengthening the continental stability and security, as well as in building a new security architecture on the ground of consolidating the European Security and Defense Identity. On that way, the new concept of CJTF adopted by NATO has been reinforced by the decisions taken at the Berlin meeting of the Alliance Foreign Ministers (June 1996) concerning the possibility of purely European PK missions with US logistic support.

OSCE actions are directed to developing the dialogue in Europe, promoting disarmament and arms control, forging and strengthening confidence building measures, preventing and managing conflicts. It makes a strong contribution to ensuring security and stability on the European continent.

Consolidating good neighborly relations among Central European states enlists itself in the general trend of strengthening the co-operative approach of security on the continent. In that context, the role of military bilateral relations with neighboring countries is important for ensuring a framework of

pragmatic approach to promoting national security objectives and interests of the states from that area.

By the beginning of the '90s, it seemed that a new security environment, characterized by enduring peace and multilateral co-operation, could be built up, now once Soviet communism and the threats engendered by it were buried for ever. In spite of the awareness that a new range of security risks, such as the spread of instability generated by ethnic and religious conflicts, international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, illegal immigration, organized crime were emerging at the forefront of the international environment, there has been also a strong confidence that with all these risks could be effectively dealt exclusively through multilateral co-operation within the framework of a system of "interlocking international institutions".

The search for a new security architecture (or structure) and for effective means to counter the new security risks have become the main concerns of politicians, officials and scholars throughout the Euro-Atlantic area. However, those tasks could not find a multilateral solution yet. On the contrary, the discussions on this subject revealed that competition did not disappear completely from the arsenals used to promote foreign and security policies by all states. We are witnessing the revival of Realpolitik, and, concomitantly, the danger of re-nationalization of the foreign and security policies has become obvious. Nevertheless, NATO enlargement will provide an adequate answer to eliminate these dangers in Central Europe.

## **2. CENTRAL EUROPE SECURITY INTERESTS**

The newly emerging democracies in Central Europe define themselves as depositories of the same sets of values as the Western European countries.

First of all, it is the total commitment to market economy, as the only valid option for long term prosperity through the way the market economy employs the national resources in a global environment. Competition is here the key word, but

cooperation and common benefits are the background on which the free trade is built. The democratic systems, which emerged after softer or harder revolutions against the artificially imposed communist regimes, give a new opportunity to the person to express itself freely on all major social and economical topics. This leads towards dialogue and cooperation rather than hegemony and autocracy.

The rule of law is one of the new achievements of those states facing for decades the communist totalitarian regimes. This is very important for their armed forces. The commitment to democratic control over the military and the dialogue between the civilians and the soldiers are new features of our societies.

What is to be taken into consideration is the evidence that the democracy, the market economy and the rule of law are in transitional phases in all those countries. There are, among them, different time frames for accomplishing all the necessary steps towards a stable and sound democratic system. The differences derive from the differences in potentials and resources available in each of those states and also from the ways they chose to make the necessary reforms.

Apart from the common values and the common goals, we may observe that there are also common risks that all the Central European countries are facing with.

We all are very much aware of the risk to interethnic tensions in most of our countries. This is one common thing to all Europe, in a greater or smaller degree, but the real risk resides in the relative volatility of the state's institutions, when in transition. That is why we have to monitor, on a common information sharing, all tendencies in this field.

One of the lessons learned from the Bosnia case is that there is no military long term solution to any inter-ethnic tension or conflict. In the same time, such conflicts put at stake the very values and interests addressing directly to the national defense systems. An other characteristic is that there is no such thing like a purely national problem in respect to ethnicity. This means that any ethnic conflict tends to internationalize itself, sooner

or later.

A risk specific to the Central European states is internal instability derived from social unrest. The shock therapy is not working without the short term fulfillment of people's expectations. Most of those are economical, but social and cultural expectations are very important too, taking into account that we are speaking about nations with long and proud historical heritage. In this respect, Central European peoples are looking towards Western Europe for support. Some are more confident than others that this support will be provided in a timely manner.

Other security risks facing the Central European countries are trans-national organized crime, international terrorism, mass migration, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking. In order to counter those risks, the regional cooperation is proved to be essential. No country belonging to that region is able to cope with those challenges alone. At the same time, there is no way to transfer the responsibility towards other nations, without involving any nation. This makes the unity of the Central European states in the field of security, regardless their diversity. This unity becomes reality in the framework of regional cooperation, including regional and bilateral permanent agreements. The future belongs to the continuous enhancement of this cooperation and we see good opportunities in the way international security and defense organizations, especially NATO and WEU plan to open their doors to Central European nations.

Of course, being a homogeneous area at the continent scale, Central Europe is in itself a mirror of diversity, due to the various dimensions of the included countries. In my opinion, using three geopolitical criteria, Central Europe could be divided in three groups of countries. NATO enlargement should take into account such a reality in Central Europe for formulating the size and phase of the process itself.

### **3. ROMANIA'S CASE**

Following the December 1989 Revolution, in Romania there was started a vast process of

changes based on redefining the fundamental political options. This process aims at edifying the rule of law, performing the market economy, promoting the political pluralism and manifesting, on the whole, the democratic liberties. It has already changed Romania in a major factor of stability in the Central and Eastern Europe. The 1996, the local and parliamentary elections confirmed the peaceful alternance of government, alongside of the effective engagement, at the institutional level, of the national minorities representatives, being a proof of the accelerated maturation of the democratic process.

Geopolitically, Romania is located in the Central Europe, playing an active role in the Balkan Peninsula. Romania has a wide opening to the Black Sea, being the riverside of 1/3 of the course of the Danube and having access to the Danube mouth. The channels Rhine-Maine-Danube and Danube-Black Sea connect the North Sea with the Black Sea. Also, the Romanian city of Constantza is the largest European harbor to the East of Marsillia. The arch of the Carpathians represents an important form of relief favoring Romania, and the orientation of the water flows creates natural obstacles hard to be passed in the case of the military actions of a potential aggressor. Romania means an outpost towards the Balkans and the Mediterranean and also a bridge to the Caucasian, Central Asia, Middle East, Gulf area and North Africa. It outlines an extension of stability, at European level.

Also, Romania represents a harmonious link between the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe and those of the former Soviet

space, especially Russia and Ukraine, in order to consolidate the cooperation and partnership relations with these countries.

The programs of cooperation between the Romanian army and the armed forces of the NATO Countries opened an active way of communication by acquinng a common language and common standard operating procedures, improved by new concepts. There are assimilated in the training process, new techniques specific to the activities performed by the staffs of the NATO Countries. The Romanian military's participation in common training activities within the framework of the NATO/ PfP exercises and peace keeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (IFOR, SFOR), has been positively appreciated by high NATO political and military officials. This contributes to the optimistic state of mind at the level of the Romanian army and also, to the occurrence of some new motivational factors. This aspect is proved also by the results of the polis confirming that 90% of the Romanians agree with Romania's integration into NATO and all the political forces are in agreement with the achievement of this objective as well.

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