

Romania and the “Western” World: a Brief Overview of Romanian Foreign Policy, 1990–2012

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The Roots

It is probable that relations between the USA and the small countries of East-Central Europe have never been as important as nowadays. This may be because of the globalization process, which reduces the importance of frontiers and distances, or because of the new US geopolitical strategy. It may also be simply the result of an uncalculated, but natural evolution of international realities.

During the 19th century, the USA was an emerging power, not yet strong enough to interfere in the European great power politics and in East-Central Europe, a region not yet organized into nation-states. Authoritarian European great powers were dominant. The World War I's result was decided by the intervention of US troops on the side of Entente Powers, and President Wilson's idealistic vision played a great role in the reshaping of borders in this specific area. After Wilson's political defeat, the leading Republicans chose to remove the USA from international politics and adopted an isolationist general policy. Just as Henry Kissinger wrote in his famous book, *Diplomacy*, for American policy-makers, Europe seemed to be too distant with quarrels between states which often seemed for Americans to be senseless.¹ And for Eastern European Small States, new and insecure, and usually embroiled in quarrels with their neighbors, alliances with European powers were much more important than connections with the distant USA, which lacked both power and will to intervene in these disputes.

¹ H. KISSINGER, *Diplomația*, București 1998, p. 343.

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During World War II, some of the East-Central European states found themselves in the Axis camp, others in the Allied one, and their wartime situation determined their positions and treatment among either the postwar winners or losers. Those which fought alongside the Axis (Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) also declared war to the USA, but this did not lead to serious repercussions, it seems, for further relations. The Western world considered these nations primarily as victims of Nazi Germany and of their own fascist governments rather than real aggressors. Besides, after 1948, all the countries which were “freed” by the Red Army became parts of the Soviet Communist Empire, reinforcing their victim status.

During the Cold War, these countries were integrated into the bloc considered to be the enemy by the Western democracies. Yet, the inhabitants of these countries were seen by American politicians² much more as the victims of a cruel totalitarian system than as enemies, and were treated as such. There existed many cases in which one or more countries of the region received American sympathy for some act which was against Soviet interests, and this good will was often concretized in economic and political advantages, too. Examples include Tito’s opposition to Stalin, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968 and the Romanian Ceausescu’s opposition toward Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, and Polish Solidarnost. After a while, the USA established commercial relations and trading privileges to certain states, based on mutual cooperation and understanding at a certain moment, but these concessions could be used as coercive tools too. For example, “most favored nation” treatment was given to Yugoslavia, Romania and Poland, but was withdrawn from Poland in 1981, because of the imposition of martial law.³ In Romania’s case, the “most favored nation” treatment was revoked in 1988,⁴ as part of

² American foreign policy during Cold War has a large bibliography, and among its resources we have to mention: H. KISSINGER, *Diplomacy*, New York 1994; M. McCAULEY, *Russia, America and the Cold War 1949–1991*, Iași 1999; Ch. S. MAIER, *The Cold War in Europe (Era of a Divided Continent)*, New York 1991; W. C. McWILLIAMS, *The World since 1945: Politics, War and Revolution in the Nuclear Age*, Colorado, 1988; O. A. WESTAD (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, London 2000; etc.

³ K. J. HOLSTI, *International Politics*, Prentice Hall 1995, p. 168.

⁴ V. PUȘCAȘ, *Sticks and Carrots. Regranting the most-favored Nation Status for Romania (US Congress, 1990–1996)*, Cluj-Napoca 2006, p. 318.

American pressures for the respect of Human rights by Ceausescu's regime.⁵ These relations never exceeded in importance those with the Soviet Union, till the collapse of communist world order, in 1989.

After the repressive communist regimes collapsed in East-Central Europe, these states and nations chose to adopt the model of Western democracy, trying to develop, with more or less success, functional pluralist democracies with well-working administrative institutions and economic welfare. On the level of foreign policy, the general goal was integration into "Euro-Atlantic" structures, mainly NATO and the European Union. But American and Western European politicians were suspicious regarding the viability of these new democracies, and asked for serious proofs and guarantees of their competence. The enthusiast application of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland in 1991 for "Western" structures was, in general, politely, but firmly rejected by Western governments.⁶ In 1990 and 1991 important Western leaders, like François Mitterrand, John Major and James Baker promised to Gorbachev that NATO would not expand into former communist countries.⁷ Even after the Soviet Union was gone, its main successor, the Russian Federation, was immersed in its own internal troubles. Neither the USA, nor the European Union's main members were in a hurry to embrace former Communist countries, and were even less enthusiastic about accepting them as new members in Euro-Atlantic structures. For example, Ronald Steel in one of his essays wrote: "*For the time being Eastern Europe is a no-man's-land, detached from Soviet control, but not yet capable of being absorbed into the democratic West without dangers for all concerned.*"⁸ Professor Stephen Fischer-Galați summarized that: "*The highly competitive economies are only marginally interested in providing economic assistance or in developing markets in heavily indebted countries with worthless currencies, inefficient work forces, and*

⁵ J. F. HARRINGTON – B. J. COURTNEY, *Relații româno-americane 1940–1990*, Iași 2002, pp. 505–538.

⁶ Y. ZHONG, *The Fallen Wall and its Aftermath: Impact of Regime Change upon Foreign Policy Behavior in Six East European Countries*, in: *East European Quarterly*, No. 2, 1994, p. 29.

⁷ A. SOLJENÎȚIN, *Rusia sub avalanșă*, București 2000, pp. 31–32.

⁸ R. STEEL, *Europe after the Superpowers*, in: J. HELD (ed), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, New York 1992, p. 171.

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obsolete industrial plants.”⁹ In 1997, admission in NATO was refused to most of the candidates with the exception of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. And in the immediately following years there was no sign that this kind of attitude would change into a more permissive one. Jonathan Dean wrote, arguing against further expansion, in 1998: “*defending Romania and Bulgaria in the south will require major NATO ground, air and naval installations on the Black Sea, challenging Russia’s traditional influence there.*”¹⁰

What were the reasons for this attitude of the USA – and other Western states – toward the efforts of former Communist countries to become part of the “club”? They were multiple. One of them could be their cautious approach to offending Russia. Russia ceased to be a superpower for most of the nineties, but its large size and nuclear arsenal made its presence to be reckoned with, at least in its immediate neighborhood. Looking back on American foreign policy of the nineties, there can be distinguished two main currents in the Department of State: one more enthusiastic, dedicated to enlargement, whose main representative was Richard C. Holbrook, and the “Russia first” current, represented mainly by Strobe Talbot.¹¹ Another reason could be fear regarding the unprepared condition of these states for becoming full members of the Western community. There were real reasons for these concerns, notably the economic decline during the years of transition, the rise of unemployment, poverty and organized crime, the rise of extreme right and nationalist tendencies in many countries. A third motive could be that there existed internal fears in the USA that hasty expansion could have major financial consequences that exceeded the benefits that might accrue: For example, there were three major studies of the costs of NATO’s 1997 enlargement, by the Congressional Budget Office, the RAND Corporation and a Pentagon report to Congress. Based on their data, experts deduced the followings: “*The costs of incorporating the backward states and armies of such countries as Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia into NATO – not to mention providing a credible*

⁹ S. FISCHER-GALAȚI, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century: “Old Wine in New Bottles”*, in: J. HELD (ed), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, New York 1992, p. 15.

¹⁰ J. DEAN, *The Case Against NATO Expansion*, in: *Current History*, March 1998, p. 132.

¹¹ V. STAN, *România și eşecul campaniei pentru Vest*, București 1998, p. 37.

defense of the Baltic republics – will be staggering. If those factors are considered, even the high-end CBO estimate of \$125 billion might have to be doubled.” It seems, this was one of the motives invoked by US officials in private meetings to their Romanian counterparts, and, at least, this is said by analysts familiar with both the American and Romanian culture.¹² And there existed a fourth reason, which can affect very seriously national pride of several people, but which is no less important than the others: for the USA, in this period, Central and Eastern Europe represented only some secondary interests in comparison with other regions of the world, like Western Europe, the Far East, the Middle East or Latin-America. Representing relatively inconsequential military power, reduced and unsure prospects for economic investments and fertile ground for revival of aggressive nationalist tendencies, East- and Central European countries could only be seen as “poor relations” by the Western powers.

The situation changed a lot after September 11, 2001. This date can even be seen as the point at which visible unipolarity and US hegemony (illustrated by statistics of economic development, high living standards in the country, strong corporations and wars waged with full success and small losses) started to decline and the world began moving toward a more complex and diverse international structure. The USA is still the world’s largest power from political, military and economic perspectives, and it will probably remain so for the next decades. But the terrorists’ attacks demonstrated that the world’s only superpower is also vulnerable, and the expensive, but unsuccessful hunt for Osama bin Laden provides a constant reminder of the limits on US power. The Bush administration’s disastrous management of the Iraqi problem has also revealed these limits. Clearly there are other independent – and formidable – actors in the world, including China, the world’s future superpower, a resurgent Russia, the “big Tiger” Japan, and perhaps even the European Union, too. In these conditions, the strategic importance of East- Central European states has to be reinterpreted, especially from a strategic point of view.

¹² P. GROSS – V. TISMĂNEANU, *The NATO Shelter for Romania*, in: *Transitions*, December 1997, pp. 26–32.

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Romania and the USA

Romania’s importance for the USA increased considerably in recent years. In the first half of the nineties, Romania, mostly because of its economic problems was a kind of outsider for the West among those countries which sought to become parts of the prosperous world. Even if, after the fall of Ceausescu’s regime, US-Romanian relations improved, especially with Romanian support for the Gulf War there remained serious question marks regarding the commitment of the Romanian post-Communist elite to individual and communitarian human rights, the market economy and democracy.¹³ For Romanian public opinion, it was especially shocking that their country, in spite of all its efforts, was not admitted in the first wave of NATO enlargement, despite of the support of several European powers. Madeleine Albright admits in her memories that US officials felt themselves a bit guilty regarding this, during their visit to Romania.¹⁴ There is no wonder that after Madrid, beside Poland, Romania was the only country visited by Clinton and Albright. Nevertheless, Romanian public opinion did not turn against the USA, not even in the bitterness caused by this. As Vladimir Tismăneanu writes: “*Romania’s leaders understood that in 1997 they were rejected because of US internal political issues, even the leaders of opposition did not speculated it.*”¹⁵ The situation for Romania changed drastically after September 11, 2001. The new conditions favored the geopolitical situation of the country. At NATO summit in Prague, Romania was admitted without any question, and was also one of the two countries which President Bush visited immediately after the summit. Romanian troops participate with American forces in peacekeeping actions in Iraq, Afghanistan and former Yugoslavian territories, and Romanian foreign policy is very pro-American, but also tries to exploit some traditional, historical ties with European powers like France, Germany and Italy. When there are disputes, Romanian diplomacy traditionally tries to balance between the EU and the USA. As president Bănescu formulated in a speech from January 20, 2006: “*Romania will remain a strong supporter of a strong connection between Europe and the United States.*”¹⁶

¹³ M. F. GOLDMAN, *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe. Political, Economic and Social Challenges*, New York 1997, pp. 296–298.

¹⁴ M. ALBRIGHT, *Doamna secretar de stat*, Bucuresti 2004, pp. 345–347.

¹⁵ GROSS – TISMĂNEANU, p. 27.

¹⁶ Extract from President Bănescu’s speech at January 20, 2006, in: *Lumea*, XIII, 2 (154),

The Romanian Way: 1989–2007

Following to the downfall of Romanian Communism, this country, just as all the rest of the non-soviet former socialist states, proposed to itself the integration, as fast as possible, in the Euro-Atlantic structures, the way NATO and European Union were designed. In one of his works, the Romanian scholar Cristian-Radu Chereji is dividing the chronology of Romanian foreign policy of the nineties in four distinct periods:

- 1989–1991, period of confusion
- 1991–1993/1994, period of transition
- 1993/1994–1997/1998 period of consolidation
- 1997/1998–2000, period of reorientation¹⁷

For most of the Romanians, who experienced the repression and restrictive measures of the Ceausescu-era, the “West” – synonymous, in this case, also with NATO and the European Community/European Union – was perceived as a kind of “Heaven on Earth”, a model which it pays to fight for, and joining it is hard, but with the right efforts, achievable. The almost enthusiastic admiration of poor and middle-class Romanians for the “West” also reflected in the political discourse, since all the major responsible political forces of the country considered the Integration to be vital, offered to the issue major importance and concentrated legislation and executive efforts in the direction to correspond to Western requests and standards. On the other hand, following the downfall of Communism, there was no similar to the post-war Marshall plan: there were only IMF loans based on severe conditions and declarations of Western governments for stimulating efforts of the new democracies to fulfill economic and political criteria requested by NATO and the European Union.¹⁸

Following to 1989, all responsible Romanian statesmen expressed repeatedly their attachment toward values of democracy and the belonging of the country to the

2006, p. 14.

¹⁷ R.-C. CHEREJI, *The Concept of Central Europe in the 90's*, in: V. PUȘCAȘ (ed.), *Central Europe since 1989*, Cluj-Napoca, p. 15.

¹⁸ V. VESE – A. IVAN, *Istoria integrării europene*, Cluj-Napoca 2001, p. 187.

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European community and its structure. For example, the Social-Democrat politician, Adrian Năstase, prime-minister (2000–2004 and in 1990), ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed on July 1, 1990, that the European integration of Romania is strictly related to democratization of the country. His successor as ministry of foreign affairs, Teodor Meleşcanu, affirmed that there is no other serious perspective for Romania than to join as fast as possible the Euro-Atlantic structures, since the only viable perspective for the future is the united Europe. In one of its reports from this period, the France Press related that in Romania the joining of European community is one of those rare objectives regarding to which all political forces are consensual. Results of a poll made in 1994 had as final conclusions that 88% from Romanians are for joining the EU, and 83% to join the NATO.¹⁹ But the road to it proved to be one full of difficulties.

The positive image of the Revolution was quickly replaced in the West with the image of a poor Romania with full of internal issues. Reform processes were going slow and inefficient (and often were the cause of all kind of new social and legal issues, like reparatory measures for reestablishing properties confiscated abusively by the Socialist regime, or the privatization process), corruption and organized crime exploded, and images of ethnic and social violence (like the interethnic clash in Targu Mures or the so-called “mineriade”) seriously damaged the image of the country. And since sometimes Romanian government expressed its positions lately and hesitating in certain major issues like the Gulf War or the unsuccessful coup d’état from Moscow, made Western politicians to consider Romania without a coherent strategy and clearly defined options in its foreign policy.²⁰ On the other hand, efforts of Romanian diplomacy often paid off.

One of the basic requests for Romania to become Euro-compatible was the establishing of good relationships with its neighbors, based on constructive cooperation, but also to become interesting for the West by its geopolitical advantage and geo-strategic partnerships with other, at first sight “exotic” regions. As the former three-mandate president, Ion Iliescu wrote in one of his books:

¹⁹ V. PUŞCAŞ – C. CHEREJI – O. TODOREAN et. al., *Romania and the European Integration 1990–1999*, in: V. POPA – C. POPEŢI (ed.), *European Paradigms*, Berlin 2000, p. 274.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

*“The geostrategic position of Romania is making it to be a real buffer zone between the East and the West, This makes compulsory to us to develop good relations with our neighbors, with countries from around the Black Sea, with the Middle East, with states of the former Soviet Union. If we manage to develop a good system of relations with other countries of the Black Sea does not mean that we are taking a distance from our strategic objectives, but in opposite, we get closer to reach the European standards.”*²¹ Regarding to this idea, Romanian diplomacy took an active role in developing economic relations and improving the political ones between Balkan countries, and participated in the CEFTA, through which the Central European states proposed to realize a complete regional free-trade area²². Another major regional project in which Romania had been involved – and which, in the nearby future, as an idea, can get a high importance – was the Economic Cooperation of Black Sea project, with its headquarter in Istanbul, created in 1992 and which has among its members countries from the Balkans and the former USSR.²³

In bilateral politics, Romanian government tried to develop good relations generally with big western countries, especially the USA. Also Ion Iliescu is writing about the US in the same book:

*“Today it is almost unbelievable to think on that vision of modernity could be brought in a country without the development of good relations with developed countries, especially with the USA, which holds the most important role in contemporary world Politics, and owns the most advanced, or some of the most advanced positions in the top of several key-domains of contemporary progress, like would be electronics, informatics, aircraft industries, biotechnologies, different branches of extractive and transformation-industries, etc. It is, as a consequence, not only legitimate, but also compulsory the orientation toward the West, good relations with the USA, amplification, diversification and consolidation of them. This is our strategic priority, a vital interest.”*²⁴

²¹ I. ILIESCU, *Dialoguri româno-americane*, București 1996, p. 9.

²² VESE, p. 193.

²³ Ibidem, p. 196.

²⁴ ÎLIESCU, pp. 10–11.

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The US diplomacy wanted to see in Romania a base of regional stability and not only a new small ally, but also a geopolitical base for possible future operations. But with all these, more proofs and guarantees of solid democratic political system, viable economy and Romania’s participation in organizations of collective security were requested. In exchange, promise²⁵ of US politicians and diplomats of American good will and support were often, and well-mediatised. Such a gesture of goodwill was the Most Favored Nation status,²⁶ retracted in the last years of Ceausescu’s rule. Another such kind of gesture was represented by the visit of president Constantinescu in Washington in 1998.

The two major objectives remained, through all the nineties, the entrance in the NATO and the European Union. Both processes went parallel, and by the use of similar methods and strategies. But, even if Euro-Atlantic structures sounded well, soon all Romanian politicians had to recognize: the entrance in NATO does not meet the admission in the European Union too.²⁷

Following to the demise of the Warsaw Pact, several idealists were hoping the NATO will have a similar fate, and some of them even suggested that the best solution would be the dismantle of both military blocks and the creation of a collective system of international security.²⁸ One of these was Mikhail Gorbaciov who, in 1989, expressed firmly to Bush that in the moment America has to accept that the Warsaw Pact represents no longer a threat, the existence of NATO ceases to have justification anymore.²⁹ NATO theoreticians, on the other hand, launched several arguments that there are still many unstable regions in the world, and since stability and security for all cannot be guaranteed, dismantle of the most powerful collective security treaty would be a great mistake.³⁰ The most hard was to convince the declining Russia that plans for NATO enlargement by incorporation of former Socialist countries does not represent an attempt for isolation of Russia, and NATO enlargement was

²⁵ PUȘCAȘ – CHEREJI – TODOREAN et. al., p. 276.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 278.

²⁷ V. STAN, *România și eșecul campaniei pentru Vest*, București 1999, p. 19

²⁸ C. OLTEANU, *Coaliții politico-militare. Privire istorică*, București 1996, p. 188.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 189.

³⁰ Ibidem, pp. 189–190.

possible only following to serious negotiations with the Russian Federation. NATO decision makers were also aware – having in front of their eyes the “good” example of Turkish-Greek conflict – that the new candidates are very enthusiast, but can bring in the Alliance also their own insecurity and internal troubles, so rather than imposing conditions based on strategies and military strength, they choose to request some general political conditions: the existence of a solid and viable market-economy, democratic political system, and the subordination of the army to civil society.³¹

Other guarantees were diplomatic agreements with neighbor countries of mutual understanding and also the join of the Partnership for Peace program.

The NATO’s Partnership for Peace was adopted at the Summit of Bruxelles in 1994, January 10, as a kind of compromise. The initiative was addressed to all the states from Eastern and Central Europe, including Russia and other states from former Soviet Union. At one hand, the Partnership is the bridge toward NATO for those countries who does not want to join the organization, but would like to keep the dialogue with it; and, for those who wants to join the Alliance, it could represent the first step for doing that. The partnership itself, in case of a security threat, does not include automatically NATO support, but guarantees consultation and eventual support. Romania actually was the first country which signed the partnership, in January 26, 1994.³²

Following the victory on parliamentary elections of a right-wing coalition, led that time by the new president Emil Constantinescu, a strong media campaign was initiated to sustain the integration process, especially the join of NATO, an objective which seemed to be more short-term and more realizable one than becoming member in the EU.³³ Reforms – which caused serious downfall of living standard, the opposite that simple Romanians desired – treaty was signed with Ukraine, and with optimism and large media publicity was waited the summit from Madrid in 1997. The Romanian diplomatic lobby was successful in case of most European powers, but the United States opposed this time the receive of Romania, so following to the

³¹ Ibidem, p. 194.

³² Ibidem, pp. 192–194.

³³ PUȘCAȘ – CHEREJI – TODOREAN et. al., p. 279.

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Madrid summit only three countries of the Visegrad four , Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were invited.³⁴ A major change intervened in the attitude of the USA after September 11, 2001, when suddenly all the possible allies became important to the American government without much regard on their political and economical situation. Romania, together with six other states from the region, was invited to join the NATO.

The road to integration in the European Union proved to be even harder and with more efforts and difficulties than the way in the NATO, even if Romania was the first of communist and post-communist countries, which established official relations with the EC in 1974, during the Ceaușescu regime, through a treaty which included Romania in the Community’s Generalized System of Preferences. Following the 1989 Revolution, Romania signed its Europe’s Agreement in 1993 and submitted officially its application for membership in the EU in 1995, being the third post-communist country in the row after Hungary and Poland. Romanian diplomacy moved keen and fast, and proved to be flexible to the Union’s requests, but its major economic issues caused a delay in its join as a full-right member in 2007, together with Bulgaria, since most of former socialist applicants managed to do this in 2004.³⁵ And, even if Romania is nowadays a full-time member of the Union, in some issues, it is not the beneficiary of the same rights as the others. For instance, right in this moment it is not a member of the Schengen zone not even nowadays, since its membership, together with Bulgaria, was adopted by the European Parliament in 2011, but was rejected by the Council of Ministers, especially due to the opposition of the Dutch government.³⁶

The Future: European, Atlantic or Euro-Atlantic?

During the post-World War II era, a special kind of unprecedented cohabitation started between the USA and most of Europe’s non-communist countries, especially

³⁴ Ibidem, pp. 280–282.

³⁵ Synthesis works, which also represent a primal source in the same time, are the memories of former chef-negotiator of Romania, Vasile Pușcaș, published in 6 volumes. V. PUȘCAȘ, *Negociind cu Uniunea Europeană*. Vol. I–VI, București 2003–2005.

³⁶ “Schengen zone. Delay for Romania and Bulgaria to join”, British Broadcasting Corporation, June 9, 2011.

in the Western region of the continent. At one side, the USA did not withdraw from the continent as it did following to World War I, but kept to involve in the continent's security and economic issues with the welcome of the local government. The USA initiated the Marshall aid for economic reconstruction, and was the main actor in creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The simple presence of the USA military bases and the USA interests offered the feeling of security for the partner countries people and governments. On its turn, the USA pretended the respect for certain values and interests from its European allies: the commitment to organize themselves mostly for their own internal stability, to develop a functional structure for pluriparty-system democracy and market-oriented economy, the keeping away of extremist parties and structures from state-power, etc. Thus cohabitation worked well for more than a half century. It survived the collapse of the Soviet Union – which represented the common “boogeyman” – but suffered a quick deterioration during the first years of the 21st century.³⁷

*“On major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. They agree on little and understand one another less and less.”*³⁸ wrote Robert Kaagan in 2002 in one of his short articles, seeing the “wind of change”, which by years became more and more visible. Several analysts and observers are blaming for this the Bush-government, of which even if requested full moral support of its allies for its own War on Terror, its decision-makers did not

³⁷ There is a rich bibliography regarding the issue of European security, the role of the USA in that and the future of European security. In here we mention a few titles: A. TOJE, *America, the EU and Strategic Culture*, London, New York 2008; J. KOPSTEIN – S. STEINMO (ed.), *Growing Apart? America and Europe in the twenty-First Century*, Cambridge 2008; J. ANDERSON – G. J. IKENBERRY – T. RISSE, *The End of the West? Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Order*, Ithaca, London 2008; W. PARK – W. REES (ed.), *Rethinking Security in Post-Cold War Europe*, London, New York 1998; A. M. DORMAN – J. P. KAUFMAN, (ed.), *The Future of Transatlantic Relations. Perceptions, Policy and Practice*, Stanford, California 2011; H. KISSINGER, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?: Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, New York 2002; V. PUȘCAȘ, *Euro-topics*, Cluj-Napoca 2008; V. PUȘCAȘ, *Managing Global Interdependencies*, Cluj-Napoca 2010; D. DUNĂ, *Integrare contra fragmentare: Studii de securitate europeană (2000–2005)*, Cluj-Napoca 2006 etc.

³⁸ R. KAGAN, *Power and Weakness*, in: *Policy Review*, No. 113, June 2002 [2012–10–15], <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/kagan.htm>.

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seek policy dialogue on a strategic level, often ignoring its “unmasked” suggestions.³⁹ It is true, that especially in the case of Iraq, the USA ignored international treaties, organizations and understandings, which were formally respected till then, and when this was brought in discussion by major European decision-makers, the answer was cheap arrogance. But in our opinion, the reasons for this “split” lies in some much deeper, political, geopolitical and economic interests. The most important of them are the following ones:

– Since the transformation of Russia from a militarily aggressive Soviet Union into a major business-partner, especially in the field of Energy, in which it became Europe’s main supplier, the immediate threat disappeared. Contemporary Russia is not a “rogue state”, a danger, but a partner with whom is possible to deal through dialogue. As a consequence, there is no major external threat for Europe in its area, and this fact has weakened the role of American military assistance.

– The Kosovo conflict proved that the European Union currently is not able to handle violent conflicts not even in its own neighborhood by the use of strong hand. The European security treaties (like WEU) are not efficient in this moment. The second pillar, introduced by the Maastricht treaty, is still insufficiently developed. However, it is unlikely, that, in the nearby future, the EU will have to intervene in such cases, in its immediate neighborhood.

– In case an integrated military structure will be created in the EU, this is going to weaken even more the transatlantic relations, since the EU will not need at all US assistance for its own security at all. In this case, those American military bases which still exists on the Union’s soil in the spirit of NATO agreement, will not only become futile, but probably will be perceived as a source of potential threat, because of possible attacks coming from the USA’s enemies.

– Source of internal security threats in the European Union still exists. These can derive from economic aspects – like the challenges faced by the Euro-zone due to our current contemporary economic crisis and the financial assistance offered to Greece and Italy – others are related to politics and mob-violence, like extreme

³⁹ For example: A. TOJE, *America, the EU and Strategic Culture*, London, New York 2008, pp. 135–136.

xenophobic nationalism, political and gang violence, etc. The *unity in diversity* by its simple proclamation did not solve those issues, which often has some very old roots. But, till this moment, experience shows that the Union can keep these cases under control – see the case of Jörg Haider’s electoral victory, the Hungarian debate around the country’s new Constitution or the Romanian attempt to remove president Băsescu – by itself, through internal debates and negotiations. And whenever in the interior of a European country, the American ambassador is expressing his, or his governments, position related to the country’s internal affairs, this is less and less accepted by citizens of the respective state.

However, USE-EU relations are still very good and important ones. Both entities are still the largest business-partners for each other. The EU is the largest market for US exported goods: in 2009, Great-Britain absorbed 4.33%, Germany 4.1% of the US total export.⁴⁰ The European Union is exporting to the USA €204 billion, and, from the USA, products in value of €160 billion are exported in the Union.⁴¹ For many Europeans the USA is still representing the figure of the “good uncle” who protected the nations of Europe from Nazism, Communism and, more recently, Muslim Fundamentalism. Most of the European countries are in alliance with the USA in the NATO, roots of political and intellectual culture are common, and there are lots of individual *bridges*, represented by double citizens or American citizens with European heritage.

Not everything is perfect in this alliance, that is true, and, visibly, it never was. Even in post WWII, not all the Europeans wanted to receive the Marshall aid, communists and non-communists altogether.⁴² During the Korean War, not all the

⁴⁰ CIA Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>, [2010–10–08].

⁴¹ *Eu-US Economic Cooperation* / European Commission: Trade. <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/united-states/>, [2010–10–18].

⁴² A good example for this is the French Communist leader, Jacques Duclos, who criticized the USA that in exchange for the Marshall aid enforces France to export from the USA wheat and coal, even if the German coal is much cheaper and more suitable for French industrial needs. More about: J. DUCLOS, *Tartós békéért, népi demokráciáért!, A francia Kommunista Párt szerepe a francia függetlenség védelmében az amerikai terjeszkedés ellen*, București 1948, p. 13.

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European politicians supported the idea of intervention; with all this, the British and French representatives in the UN Security Council finally voted the American proposal.⁴³ During the Vietnam War, if it was more a “heritage from France” for the USA, than its own initiative, all the European allies from the NATO avoided to involve itself – and not only militarily – in the “war of the USA”. And even if for long time the political-economical domination of the USA was the “lesser bad” for European democracies against Soviet Communism, nowadays interests are not always common ones.⁴⁴

Most of US politicians and leading intellectuals in IR are considering these issues to be simple “family discussions”.⁴⁵ These debates, on the other hand, are weakening the US position from moral point of view, in third countries. Of course, not all the European societies are adopting critical point of view. The strongest bastion of the transatlantic orientation is Great Britain, which is not anymore a player in geopolitics and has no European continental ambitions of its own.⁴⁶ Former communist countries are less critical on the US too; their politicians almost never make any comments on US initiatives around the globe. French, German, Italian and Spanish politicians can often be more critical, but their attitude is rather the result of a different view than of different values.

A poll realized in 2008 shows that 46% of Europeans think that the USA has nowadays a negative influence on Global Politics, because of its aggressive one-sided positions, and it is generalized that the US is one of the major obstacles in front of a global ecological policy.⁴⁷

The Danish professor Bertel Huerlin admits that the war in Iraq represents an issue of tension between the two coasts of the Atlantic, but with all this, the mutual

⁴³ M. A. KAPLAN (ed.), *Global Policy Challenge of the 80's*, Washington 1984, p. 3.

⁴⁴ S. PATRICK – S. FORMAN, *Multilateralism & US Policy, Ambivalent Engagement*, London 2002, passim.

⁴⁵ H. KISSINGER, *Diplomácia*, Budapest 1998, p. 741.

⁴⁶ Z. BRZEZINSKI, *Marea tablă de șah. Supremația americană și imperativele lui geostrategice*, București 2006, pp. 54–55.

⁴⁷ H. WILLIAMSON, *Warning on threat to Europe's US links*, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b63f852e-f596-11dc-8d3d-000077b07658.html#axzz1CXd4T3jQ>, [2008–03–19].

interdependence is strong, and the USA is still a European power.⁴⁸ For Robert J. Art, an adept of Neo-Realism, the USA is still for Europe the *first ally and protector*.⁴⁹ For Kissinger, with all of the misunderstandings, both the USA and Europe are the *world of Democracy* and, by this, they have to cooperate.⁵⁰ And, with these statements, many Europeans do agree.

Barack Obama's first presidential campaign brought hopes for most of responsible politicians of Europe. Obama often expressed his view that Europe is the most important partner for the US⁵¹ and, for most of the press, it was certitude: Europe loves Obama.⁵² Right after Obama's victory, a poll realized by the German Marshall Fund in 12 European countries showed the result that 77% of the questioned were supporting Obama's diplomatic initiatives.⁵³ But this enthusiasm didn't last for long; Europe had to notice that the Obama government has other priorities on global scale than to improve its bilateral relations with them. A good example of this disappointment is the letter of several former Central- and East-European leading politicians and intellectuals – among its signers we can find the names of Emil Constantinescu, Vaclav Havel, Michal Kovac, János Martonyi, Alexander Kwasniewski, Lech Walesa, Mátyás Eörsi and several others - which expressed the vision that the US turned its back to this region and abandoned its hoping allies.⁵⁴ What brings the future, beside the unpredictable result of the Romney-Obama battle,

⁴⁸ H. BERTEL, *Why the US is destined to remain a "European Power"*, in: *Europesworld*, Summer 2008.

⁴⁹ R. J. ART, *America's Grand Strategy and World Politics*, New York, London 2009, p. 312.

⁵⁰ H. KISSINGER, *Korszakváltás az amerikai külpolitikában. A 21 századi Amerika diplomáciai kérdései*, Budapest 2002, p. 89.

⁵¹ B. OBAMA, *A World That Stands as One*, Berlin, 2008, <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/berlinvideo/>, [2010-09-14].

⁵² J. POLL – P. POLL, *Europe loves Obama, Clinton, fears US*, in: *European Tribune*, February 18, 2008; K. BENNHOLD, *Obama Fever in Europe*, in: *The New York Times*, March 21, 2008; G. SORMAN, *Europe ♥ Obama*, in: *City Journal*, <http://www.city-journal.org/2008/eon0306gs.html>, [2014-10-12].

⁵³ German Marshall Fund: Survey: Support for U.S leadership skyrockets in Europe, *Transatlantic Trends* 2009, <http://www.gmfus.org/trends/pressinfo.html>, [2010-10-10].

⁵⁴ *An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe*, in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 15, 2009, http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6825987,An_Open_Letter_to_the_Obama_Administration_from_Central.html.

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we cannot know for sure in this moment: but it is very probable that Western European powers will continue with constructive critics on the address of the US – like in the case of Iran, the Azeri-Armenian conflict and so on – and, on the other hand, for US politicians, Europe will become less and less important, its poorer Eastern parts even before, than the rich countries of the West. Well, with certain exceptions, which are the results of a certain geopolitical conjuncture.

V. The USA and Romania’s Hard Road for Integration

A CRS report⁵⁵ states that US-Romanian relations were “problematic” in the early 90s,⁵⁶ but became cordial sometimes in the middle of the last decade of the XX century. As a result, the USA granted again the Most-Favored Nation (nowadays: Normal Trade Relations) status to Romania once again and, after this, was revoked under the last years of Ceausescu. Financial aids were consistent, and the US also supported Romania’s bid for the revolving chairmanship of the Organization for Cooperation in Europe. On its turn, Romania backed the NATO action in Kosovo and provided troops for the post-conflict stabilization forces both in case of Bosnia (SFOR) and Kosovo (KFOR).⁵⁷

The US financial assistance – even if it wasn’t such an amount to solve by itself difficulties of Romanian society and economy experienced – was various and important through the last two decades.

⁵⁵ In the following one, we will use as source mostly two reports of the Congressional Research Service to prove general characteristics of US attitude toward Romania. We do so since the text of the Rapports are designed to be simple and accessible, and contains information which was designed to be confidential. The text of these Reports can be accessed on Wiki Leaks current page, among other documents.

⁵⁶ The reasons for this can be multiple. In our opinion, there were two major concerns from American side: the first one was the “black sheep” image of Romania, about which we speak in the first part of this current synthesis. The second one is probably related to the fact that the first “strong man” of post-Ceausescu Romania, president Ion Iliescu, was perceived, due to his student years in Moscow and Russian relations, to be a Moscovite reform-Communist, who cannot be trustworthy in turbid years of post-Cold War years of transition.

⁵⁷ Congressional Research Service. Report RS20886. *Romania After the 2000 Elections: Background and Issues for Congress*. Prepared by C. ELK, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division. P 6. Updated April 12, 2001. [http://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS:_Romania_After_the_2000_Elections:_Background_and_Issues_for_Congress,_April_12,_2001,_\[2012-10-22\]](http://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS:_Romania_After_the_2000_Elections:_Background_and_Issues_for_Congress,_April_12,_2001,_[2012-10-22]).

The largest share came through the SEED (Support for East European Democracy) program, which was diminished when US officials considered that Romania made advance in Democracy. But this assistance was replaced by other ones: in 2005, Romania became eligible to apply for US Department of Defense grants of Excess Defense Articles.⁵⁸ We, on our turn, have to mention that lots of US-related, but private funds also contributed to development of Romanian science, culture and economics, in here we mention only the activity of the Soros Foundation.

With the War on terror – which represented, as we also have previously shown, a favorable conjuncture for Romanian efforts for integration – Romania received a chance to prove its benevolence toward US projects. It permitted its territory – land, airspace and seaports – to be used by US and allied military forces, and participated in peace keeping actions both in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁵⁹ Not all the voices on the other hand sustain this kind of assistance; for example, in June 29, 2006, prime-minister Tăriceanu called for Romania to withdraw its troops from Iraq, the proposal being rejected by the Supreme Council on National Defense in the next day.⁶⁰ And till now, this attitude pays: the United States plans further investments related to its military bases on Romanian soil, and until this moment, Romania never suffered retaliations from Muslim enemies of the USA, like London and Madrid did, not so long ago.

The importance of Romania for the USA can grow. On short term, this is certain. Not only because of US involvement in the Middle East – where it is possible that soon we will experience an expansion of military involvement in Syria and/or Iran too – but for economic reasons too. The process called once the “Great Game” is nowadays reloaded,⁶¹ only that instead of two actors – which were, in old days,

⁵⁸ Congressional Research Service. Report RS22577. *Romania: Background and Current Issues*. Prepared by C. ELK, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division. July 12, 2007. p 6. http://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS:_Romania_After_the_2000_Elections:_Background_and_Issues_for_Congress,_April_12,_2001, [2012–10–22].

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 2.

⁶¹ In its classical acceptance, the “great game” signifies the unofficial conflict between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire for the control of Central Asia, we consider that we are not wrong if we include in the New Great game, which is a multiplayer competition, near Central Asia the Caucasus too, since the two different geographical areas has similar attractions for great power politics.

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the British Empire and tsarist Russia – the players involved are many. Russia is in geopolitical advantage, but the USA, the EU, China and even some Islam powers – like Iran or Turkey – wants their share from the riches of Central Asia and the Caucasus and the race has quite great stake. And, for being a proficient competitor, the USA needs its own regional outposts. And among these, Romania can play a crucial role.⁶²

On the other hand, it is certain that US leading politicians has no high expectances regarding Romania’s military or economic power. Besides words of recognition, CRS reports for instance also contain formulas like “*Romania is one of Europe’s poorest countries: successive governments have been slow to make necessary reforms,*”⁶³ and severe critics are formulated regarding corruption too.⁶⁴ This lack of enthusiasm is certainly “healthy” in the sense that it prevents major deception, and we have to admit that it is based on current reality. But this might be, in the nearby, less important compared to the nineties, since US foreign policy also changed from an idealist one – implementation of Democracy and Market economy etc. – into a more practical direction in which conjuncture overwrites ideals.

⁶² The race for oil and natural gas from former Soviet countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus is not the subject of this current study, but we have to mention a few bibliography titles in here: A. COOLEY, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*, Oxford 2012; L. KLEVEMAN, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia*, New York 2004; C. ZURCHER, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*, New York 2009; S. N. CUMMINGS, *Understanding Central Asia. Politics and Contested Transformations*, New York 2012; G. CARBONIER (ed.), *International Development Policy. Energy and Development*, New York 2011; M. LARULUELLE (ed.), *China and India in Central Asia: a New Great Game?*, New York 2010; R. G. SUTTER, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy Since the Cold War*, Plymouth 2010; R. KANDIYOTI, *Pipelines: Flowing Oil and Crude Politics*, London, New York 2012; A. KROZSER, *The Role of Energy Transit in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Budapest 2012; R. G. WHITMAN – S. WOLFF, *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York 2010; R. YOUNGS, *Energy Security: Europe’s New Foreign Policy Challenge*, London 2009; R. JOHNSON, *Oil, Islam and Conflict: Central Asia since 1945*, London 2007; A. RASHID, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, London, New York 2000; A. MUSTAFA, *New Geopolitics of Central Asia and the Caucasus: Causes of Instability and Predicament*, Ankara 2000 etc.

⁶³ CRS Report RS20886, p. 1.

⁶⁴ CRS Report RS22577, p. 3.

Romania, between Europeanism and Atlanticism. A Possible Future

In the mirror of the presented, we can ask ourselves the question: if the split – at least on level of conceptions and ideas – is unavoidable, which path is going to be taken by Romania? Will our country be a pillar of Atlantic orientation – like, for example, non EU-member states Norway and Turkey currently are – or will join the chorus of European criticism toward US warlike policies?

In our opinion Romania will remain, even if the concept of Euro-Atlantism is defunct, a Euro-Atlantic country. The causes are multiple.

First of all, Romanian foreign policy makers have a long tradition of so-called *politics of equilibrium*, longer than any other European nation does. For almost 1000 years, Romanian principalities were in the buffer zone of great continental powers and militarily active central powers. Through centuries, they had to deal with the Byzantine Empire, the khans of the Golden Horde, the medieval kingdom of Hungary and Poland, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire, tsarist Russia. These stronger powers got weakened or even disappeared through centuries, but Romanian principalities survived among them. And, for this, since usually there were more than one major actors in the area, Wallachian and Moldavian princes had to adopt, most of time, an equilibrium policy, even if being in closer relations with one, it was crucial not to provoke the other one, only in case they had the full backing of another power. The tradition of Equilibrium Politics made all-time Romanian diplomacy to be flexible, efficient and with empathy toward the position of others; and, till this moment, this attitude worked out, often generating results much over the country's effective capabilities.

Another reason why for a trenchant side-choosing will not be made that is there is no real need for that. US-EU misunderstandings were never as visible from 1945 as they are nowadays; but still there are much more common issues that bound the two than are separating them. And, while some politicians can make a determinant choice between European and Atlantic orientation, there is no compulsory need for this: for example, Poland and Bulgaria can also have the same double orientation, just as Romania does. And, in this sense, probably has a certain kind of meaning the fact that A poll realized in 2006 shows that from European countries, only three of the,

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the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Romania “*view the US leadership more positively than negatively*”.⁶⁵

In case of post 1989 Romania, political discourse of all responsible political powers was centered on European integration and NATO ascension. Most of time, the two concepts were not separated, but were viewed as two complementary needs, and were fixed as complementary objectives. Most of simple Romanians probably even couldn't clearly distinguish the two objectives. And there is no clear separation in Romanian political discourse of nowadays neither. We can say, for example, that president Traian Băsescu is more Atlantic-oriented than some other career politician. But this kind of division of Romanian politics is not prerequisite at all.

Due to its geopolitical position, manifested in practice through US bases near the Black Sea, the Nabucco-project, the recent discoveries of natural gas reserves under Romanian part of the Black Sea are all signs that Romania currently is in a very favorable international conjuncture, both as an ally of the United States and as a member of the European Union. And, until now, no possible negative consequences can be seen on the horizon. The future will show how responsible Romanian politicians can deal with these opportunities.

Abstract

This paper is dealing with the evolution of Romanian foreign policy following to the fall of the Ceausescu regime in 1989, until 2012. Our analysis is approaching the otherwise complex issue in the mirror of two different phenomenons: first, the quest of Romania for the so-called Euro-Atlantic integration, which equates with the join of the NATO and of the European Union, second, the Romanian approach to the debate between Atlantic and integrated European approaches. Based on a various bibliography, is explored the complexity of US-EU relations too, and their manifestation in the orientation of East-Central European former socialist countries. In the conclusions of the study, a predicted possible sketch of the Romanian orientation is also described.

⁶⁵ J. P. KAUFMAN, *The United States and the Transatlantic Relationship*, in: A. M. DORMAN – J. P. KAUFMAN (ed.), *The Future of Transatlantic Relations. Perceptions, Policy and Practice*, Stanford, California 2011, p. 64.

Keywords

Romania; Euro-Atlantic Integration; Globalization; War on Terror; US Diplomacy