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The USA and Romania’s NATO integration: 1994-2004

Summary of Ph.D. thesis

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It has been said – more or less rightfully – that contemporary history is the only possible history, its profound and truthful knowledge being guaranteed by eyewitnesses and events actually lived, not from mediated and dry sources. From this point of view, I was privileged at least twice: firstly, because I personally lived, just like my entire generation, memorable events, which have deeply transformed the world, and secondly because I had the opportunity to be or to at least seem to be a protagonist, when certain representatives of Romania's young generation participated in important decision-making regarding NATO enlargement. Another personal privilege was that of benefiting from the scientific guidance of a rare personality, one of those who write and make history at the same time. Here I refer to Professor Vasile Puscas, an authentic professional, history school founder in the field of contemporary studies in general and international relations in particular.

Between 1989 and 1991, Central and Eastern Europe underwent fundamental changes, which led to the reconfiguration of international relations. The USSR ceased to exist, which, among others, led to the fact that the USA undertook the part of the world's greatest power, thus putting an end to the long era bipolarism. These changes caused the United States of America to have a decisive role in all first rank political, economic and military problems, exercising a leading role within NATO, the group of most industrialized countries or other numerous international organizations, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

Starting with the last decade of the 20th century Romania has undergone a historical process marked by the transition from communism to capitalism. This process included the reformation of society, adoption of democratic values and integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, the most important being NATO and the EU. These objectives were fully supported by the entire Romanian society, regardless of political or other options. Another undertaking which received support from state

structures, but also citizens, was the increased level of closeness to the United States of America, which was even strengthened by a strategic partnership between the two countries.

A significant part of Romania's recent history was marked by the process of accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Association. My professional activity was connected during 2002-2006 to Casa NATO, a non-governmental organization which contributed to Romania's NATO accession. Within this framework, I understood how serious this accession issue was, I was able to distinguish as an insider the many and profound difficulties for reaching this goal, but also the interests and conduct of the main actors and the nature of each of their roles.

Therefore, taking into consideration, on the one side, the privileged position of the United States of America within the Alliance and, on the other, the bilateral relations between Romania and the strongest country in the world, I found it fascinating, important and decisive to treat matters from this point of view. As such, the main topic of this paper is the influence of the United States regarding our country's NATO accession, the implications of the American factor in modeling Romania's attitude and the conduct of its allies towards Romania during those years.

I wished to focus on the 1994-2004 timeframe, considering that on January 26, 1994 the Partnership for Peace (PfP) was launched, the most important program to reunite NATO members and partners, while in 2004 Romania's NATO accession process was officially finalized, the country also celebrating 10 years of PfP participation. That same year, during the NATO summit held in Istanbul, Romania participated for the first time in a high level reunion as a full member. I believe that these precise time frames, which enclose a decade, bear the necessary features for such an approach, as they are fundamental referral point representing, the first a beginning and the second an end to a journey. Obviously, such wording must be considered with the necessary dose of relativity.

I had in mind, from the beginning and throughout the research, the purpose of reaching several objectives, such as identifying the fundamental elements of the Romanian-American relations and their evolution on the background of Romania's NATO accession, but also to capture certain aspects of historical nature of the

integrations process and its wider implications.

The thesis focuses on the evolution of Romanian-American bilateral relations, primarily in the context of Romania's NATO accession, however not aiming to cover and analyze the issue comprehensively, an endeavor impossible to perform for the time being. Certainly, some of the related topics, which are only briefly or not at all mentioned within this paper, could be addressed in an ample and detailed manner within certain specialized studies.

This thesis should be regarded as an approach to Romania's NATO accession from the perspective of our country's relation to the United States. The structure of the chapters came somewhat naturally, from the nature of research dynamics.

I considered necessary to draft a short preamble of Romanian-American diplomatic relations, which by now have a long tradition, being initiated in the second half of the 19th century. In June 2010 took place the 130th anniversary since Eugene Schuyler was appointed diplomatic agent and general consul to Bucharest, event which occurred in June 11, 1880.

In the aftermath of World War II, Romania's fate was abandoned under Russia's sphere of influence, while relations with the United States deteriorated. However, in 1974, Romania was granted the Most Favored Nation status, which it unilaterally renounced in February 1988. Following the revolution from 1989 which led to the fall of the communist regime, the situation changed significantly and the two countries started to cooperate more and more closely. An important part was played by Romania's desire, strongly expressed, to join NATO.

In the subchapter "The Americans are coming", I explained the origins of a certain "obsession" Romania and Romanians have for the United States and Americans, seen as potential "saviors", capable of removing us from the dead end we had reached after being included in the communist block. The idea that the Americans are our salvation, heard by certain citizens from their parents or grandparents, remained imprinted like a legend in the mind of the Romanian people, being kept alive even after 1989. Consequently, many American citizens who came to Romania in the '90s, both officials and simple people, were surprised by the warmth they were greeted with. They would be really impressed when hearing average citizens saying "We've been waiting for

you for over 50 years!” or “You finally came!”.

Afterwards I briefly addressed the evolution, between 1994-2004, of bilateral relations, from a political (important official visits), economic (examples regarding cooperation, such as the Romanian-American Investment Fund), American assistance programs („*Support for East European Democracies*” – SEED program, coordinated by USAID) and legislative (initiatives and legal framework).

I continued by explaining the nature and implementation of the Partnership for Peace, from the perspective of the importance of this program for Romania. The launch of the Partnership had an important contribution to the realignment of the global security system after the US-Russia and NATO-Warsaw Pact bipolarity.

Romania was the first country in the world to sign the PfP Framework Document on January 26, 1994. Starting then, there was a visible increase in the military cooperation between Romania and the USA, both in terms of official contacts, as well as common exercises and activities in theaters of operations.

Romania’s participation within the Partnership for Peace was the main instrument for achieving the interoperability between Romanian and NATO armed forces, but also an important framework for bilateral military cooperation between Romania and the United States. With the help of PfP, Romania passed some of the “exams” which helped it become a full NATO member in 2004.

Chronologically, came the regranting of the Most-favored-nation status for Romania, a process where professor and diplomat Vasile Puscas played again the part of a direct participant, which significantly helped the historian, afterwards meant to put in writing the course of events for the entire operation. The subject reemerged on Romania’s foreign policy list of priorities immediately following the Revolution. After surpassing certain obstacles, on November 8, 1993, Romania obtained from the United States the regranting of the Most-favored-nation status, framework for facilitation and promotion of bilateral economic relations, based on annual renewal. The debates that followed in the US Congress regarding this topic, had a strong geopolitical dimension, being directed not only towards commercial relations, but also towards Romania’s options to join NATO or even the European Union. The decision to permanently grant Romania the MFN status in

1996 impacted not only Romanian-American trade relations, but it also represented a recognition of its efforts and a means of encouragement to continue the integration process in Euro-Atlantic structures.

I went on with the Madrid Summit, from July 1997, which is considered by some analysts as a real “path opener”. Decision makers in Romania and Romanians in general had high hopes in the conclusions of this reunion, hopes which proved to be in vain, yet full of useful teachings. Even so, the most important fact is that enlargement, which had become inevitable even as early as 1994 (please refer to subchapter 4.3 Study on NATO Enlargement), was finally put to practice officially in 1997. There are analysts who believe that the decision to enlarge NATO by bringing in new members is the most profound and complex metamorphosis of European security order since the fall of the Berlin wall until present.

Despite efforts made for Romania’s cause, during the Madrid Summit, NATO only addressed the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland – countries supported by the United States – the invitation to start accession talks. The reason mentioned was that only these three countries had reached the necessary progress within reforms in the military, political, economical and social fields, but there were also additional problems related to costs. The decision represented a disappointment to France and the other eight states who would have wanted that the invitation be addressed to five and not three countries, but accepted this concession in order not to exercise their veto, which would have caused an irreparable gap within the Alliance.

The fact that Romania was not one of the invitees in July 1997 must not be considered failure. The international complex background was then partially unfavorable to our country in the short term. At the time, Romania appeared in the eyes of NATO as a very serious competitor. Furthermore, we can consider as accomplishment the fact that, at the Madrid Summit, Romania and Slovenia were nominated favorites for the next wave, announcing an important reality, namely that the Alliance doors were kept open.

Immediately after the Summit, on July 11, 1997, US President Bill Clinton came to Romania for a few hours, giving a message of hope and encouragement to overcome the issues that, at the time, made our country incompatible with the Alliance member status. Beyond his message was the significance of President Clinton’s presence in

Bucharest, in an atmosphere of emotions and hope for Romanians. President Clinton's encouraging phrases contributed to maintaining a positive attitude Romanian had regarding Euro-Atlantic integration and implicitly to continuing political-economic reforms and modernization processes, meant to transform Romania into a stable and prosperous country.

Another important element of President Bill Clinton's visit to Bucharest was the initiation of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States, which constitutes a separate chapter. This partnership was conceived as an advanced cooperation mechanism, having as priority the consolidation of connections in areas of strategic importance for both countries (military, economic, regional security, unconventional risks). The partnership represented an important stage in the evolution of Romanian-American bilateral relations, on the background of Romania's accession to Euro-Atlantic structures.

The Washington Summit (from 1999) is a new key moment in Romania's path to NATO and the topic of the next chapter. Even if there was no invitation for accession, the final communiqué of the Summit mentioned Romania at the top of the list of nominations, alongside Slovenia. Aside from this accomplishment, the Membership Action Plan – MAP was launched, to support aspiring countries in their efforts to prepare for NATO accession.

MAP offered a list of action areas, based on which each candidate state would draft their individual national preparation program for NATO membership, comprising those objectives which it considered necessary and reachable in preparing for NATO accession, thus offering a more clear perspective over continuing reforms.

A distinctive chapter deals with Romanian-American military bilateral cooperation, which has diversified and developed, both bilaterally, through programs such as MIL-TO-MIL, IMET (International Military Education and Training) etc., as well as through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) or UN peacekeeping operations. The bilateral military cooperation between Romania and the United States contributed to preparing the Romanian Army for NATO integration, by playing a central role within cooperation links with the armies of NATO member states.

The following chapter focuses on September 11, 2001, a moment which changed

the perspective of the whole world on international relations, more precisely on the role played by terrorism and instruments of terrorism, in a process meant to continuously diminish the roles of states in favor of organized forces, with the purpose of controlling global destinies. The expansion of the terrorist phenomenon and its threat have determined joint actions to counterattack and the creation of a global coalition. Following the terrorist attacks which hit the United States on 9/11, Romania took immediate measures which proved its solidarity with the American people. Romania was actually one of the first countries to join the US in the “war on terror”. Romania had an internationally recognized contribution in the fight against terrorism, both in a conceptual manner, as well as in theaters of operations (especially in Iraq and Afghanistan).

Even if Romania was not confronted with terrorism locally, the Romanian state acted with maximum responsibility, both internally, as well as through external cooperation, in order to prevent and combat international terrorism. As a sign of recognition for Romania’s efforts, during the speech held in Bucharest on November 23, 2002 by George W. Bush, one of the key phrases that the President expressed was that Romania and the United States are “serving side by side in Afghanistan”, in the fight against terrorism.

With reference to September 11, 2001 events, opinions were divided. Certain officials and analysts thought that the attacks would increase NATO enlargement chances, other that they would have no influence, while a third category, on the contrary, believed that they would lead to a stagnation in the expansion process. In time, the first position proved to be the right one, as the fight against terrorism favored the “robust expansion” which followed.

I considered that it was of capital importance to include Russia in this complex equation, as it is a former protagonist, but still a main actor, despite certain predictions that were too quick, considering that its historical part as large global power was over. Furthermore, for Romania and its destiny as NATO member, Russia’s position was fundamental, considering the geostrategic region of Central and South-East Europe, the fundamental connective area which is the Black Sea Basin, certain concepts such as “near vicinity”, which became leitmotifs of Russian diplomacy. Just as important was the dynamics of rapports between the USA and Russia, the game of interest between the two

great powers, and Russia's position of energy supplier for a great part of the US allies from Western Europe, most of them NATO members.

Certain Russian officials were offended by the fact that NATO did not ask for Russia's opinion regarding the enlargement process, which they considered a dangerous one. It was speculated that Russia did not send high level representatives to the Madrid Summit, to send out the message that Moscow would not accept NATO expansion towards the East, towards countries it considered security buffer zones.

One could say that the relations between the United States and Russia thawed out following the September 11 attacks. Russia was very active in contributing to the fight against terrorism launched by the USA and the American state did not hesitate to praise the support it had received.

The main objective of NATO leaders regarding expansion was to enlarge the Alliance without endangering relations with Russia. Once Russian leadership realized that the NATO expansion process could not be stopped, its main goal was to receive from NATO security guarantees which would minimize the impact of this process on Russian national security. Actually, there have been propositions for Russia to become a part of the Alliance.

During President Clinton's visit to Bucharest in 1997, an aspect which was noticed by the international press was that in the crowd there were banners reading „Bill, don't sell us to Russia!”. It was a message pointing out that Romanians no longer wished to be abandoned within Russia's sphere of influence, just like after World War II.

In November 2002, immediately following the Prague Summit, President Bush came to Bucharest to address the Romanian people. In the same speech where he expressed the idea that if any danger were to threaten Romania, the USA and NATO would be by our side, President Bush also expressed his belief that Romania will contribute to the consolidation of the North-Atlantic Alliance and strengthen its relations to the Russia, expressing the idea that Romania could be a bridge between the Alliance and the Russian Federation.

Once Romania and Bulgaria were admitted into NATO, the Black Sea, just as the Baltic Sea, became dominated by NATO. Even if it did not represent a direct military threat, NATO enlargement meant a fundamental geopolitical rebalance West of Russia's

border. The buffer of Central Europe was no more to protect Russia from the West. But both the Kremlin leaders, as well as ordinary citizens came to terms with the idea, as there was no alternative.

The Prague Summit is described in the tenth chapter. Since it had not been on the list of invitees at Madrid, Romania intensified its efforts to become NATO member. Our country successfully completed all stages of the National Accession Plan (based on MAP-Membership Action Plan) and proved to be an important *de facto* ally, this time also having the support and appreciation of the United States. Its efforts were rewarded during the high-level reunion in Prague (November 21-22, 2002), when Romania received the invitation to start negotiations for accession to the Alliance, alongside six other countries, namely Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia.

The role of the United States was not decisive just within NATO, but also within the Atlantic Treaty Association, which is the non-governmental voice of the North Atlantic Alliance. The organization representing the US within the ATA, respectively the Atlantic Council of the United States, had the initiative of organizing the Prague Atlantic Student Summit - PASS, which I attended as head of delegation, and Foreign Minister of Romania (during the NATO Model simulation).

While NATO leaders met to discuss new threats and challenges, operational capabilities, the enlargement process and other matters of crucial importance, young people, who would live with the legacy of those decisions, held their own summit in Prague. The Prague Atlantic Student Summit was an excellent opportunity for young people with an open mind to live the experience and to understand the mechanisms of the Alliance, to get through certain hypothetical political and diplomatic crises and to hear opinions and remarks of Alliance leaders and other political personalities. All participants were grateful to the Atlantic Council of the United States and the ATA for the initiative and the efforts undertaken to make it real.

More than 5 years after the visit of President Clinton to Bucharest, on November 23, 2002, presidential plane Air Force One landed again at Otopeni International Airport. This time, on board was President George W. Bush, who was no longer carrying a message meant to console Romanians, but warm greetings from one ally to another. Tens of thousands of Romanians gathered to hear the speech held by the American President in

Piata Revolutiei. Through such an abundant presence, Romanians showed that they really supported the Romania's integration into NATO and that they were confident in their country's Euro-Atlantic destiny. Taking place immediately after the Prague Summit, the visit of President Bush to Romania was a historic moment in the bilateral relations between Romania and the United States.

The visit reflected the maturity and substance of these relations in the framework of the Strategic Partnership between the two countries, through the close cooperation of Romania and the United States on issues such as the anti-terrorist campaign and consolidation of security and stability in South-Eastern Europe, as well as in preparing Romania for accession to NATO.

After a relatively long process, the seven states became full-fledged NATO members on 29 March 2004, when the accession instruments were deposited in Washington, D.C. Starting April 2, 2004, the flags of the new members are raised in front of NATO headquarters in Brussels. The door for entering NATO remained open for other countries wishing to join the Alliance, and the enlargement process continued over the next years.

A final chapter addresses the position that Romania was found in on several occasions, respectively between the US and the European Union. Often, while taking action upon requests of the USA, Romania found itself unintentionately in the position of „upsetting” Europe, being severely scolded for respecting the will of the ally across the ocean. And vice versa. Many observers and a part of the public opinion have become quite critical and skeptical regarding Romania's positioning between Scylla and Charybdis.

Even NATO went through a crisis started by the war in Iraq, when Alliance members had divergent positions, which grew as the intervention faced more and more criticism from the international public opinion. At that moment, a serious gap was created between the US and some of its European traditional allies, such as Germany and France, even Spain, which created an awkward situation, with possible long term effects. Romania, used to the monolithis structure of the Euro-Atlantic West, was surprinsed by these evolutions and suffered enough negative consequences.

Over the period 1997-2004, the reforms requested for NATO candidacy

coincided, on the political and economic segments, with those required by the EU. There were no conceptual contradictions between the two processes, but complementarity, while the objectives undertaken by Romania and the USA within the strategic partnership targeted directly or indirectly, both processes.

In the Euro-Atlantic integration process, Romania realized that the security of the Euro-Atlantic space was indivisible and the Euro-Atlanticism – Europeanism dilemma was false, considering that the United States were, at the same time, our ally and strategic partner, but also the ally and strategic partner of the European Union.

The moment when Romania was welcomed to NATO (in 2004) concludes this partial analysis, with certain details gathered through my your own experience, which become a sort of lived history. I treated 2004 as the end of a process, as well as the beginning of a new road, especially from the perspective of Romania's accession to the European Union, against the backdrop of the abovementioned disagreements, emerged between the US and its old Western-European allies.

The paper includes a series of documentary annexes – some of them unpublished – considered indispensable for understanding and arguing the entire research. There are general documents related to the integration of Romania into NATO, as well as some specific documents for the Romanian-American bilateral relationship within the accession process. Furthermore, I added documents and pictures from my personal archive, which I found to be relevant for the paper.

I used a relatively rich bibliography, formed, as well known, primarily from the entirely special interest Romania and Romanians had for the country's accession to NATO. I tried to make the necessary distinction between sources and bibliography, press information and analytical approach, between a news report, an essay and a scientific paper. Perhaps I did not always succeed in doing this, including due to the great proximity of the covered events, as well as subjectivism.

Therefore, after a long period when history kept the two countries apart, Romania and the United States have come to share again, officially, common values and to face common challenges.

In 1997, several NATO countries launched a movement to support Romania's accession to this Organization. Although they appreciated the results obtained by

Romania until that moment, the United States considered that our country was not sufficiently prepared. Obviously, like any decision with an important international stake, there were other reasons for Romania's rejection, which had to do with the regional and worldwide context, as well as the interests of the United States. As a result, at the Madrid Summit that year, the final decision was to Romania's disadvantage. But this was not considered an irreparable failure, and the Romanian people, through its decision makers, picked up accession efforts, with a new perspective.

Next came a period of intense reforms, a fine-tuned accession plan and hundreds of occasions in which Romania proved its commitment and military capacities, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Romanian-American cooperation was an important factor which contributed to the shaping and implementation of reforms in Romania and to the promotion of NATO accession preparations, and America continued to be Romania's partner in reform activities, even after it received the invitation in Prague or precisely because of this invitation.

Romania supported without hesitation the international coalition against terrorism, headed by the USA, by sustaining operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and through bilateral collaboration in terrorist combatting actions. Results in the area of reform and Romania's contribution to the war against terrorism, but also in other theaters of operations, led to the consolidation of US support for the integration of Romania in NATO.

In 2002 came the Prague Summit. This time, America strongly supported the candidacy of Romania, which is one of the reasons why its efforts were successful this time. And in March 2004, Romania, already *de facto* member of NATO, deposited the instruments of accession in Washington, thus becoming a *de iure* member. In June 2004, Romania attended the Istanbul Summit, the first high-level meeting where it had a reserved seat at the NATO full members table.

In 2008, with the support of the United States, came Romania's turn to host a NATO Summit, one of the most successful in Alliance history. The American Administration recognized more and more that the relationship with post-Communist Romania was a special one. Romania behaved as a powerful ally and its leaders were

never pro-Republicans or pro-Democrats, but just simply pro-Americans. Romania has shown it is where America needs it the most, and its troops have fought alongside those of the USA.

Our country has become a strategically important player for Washington also due to its position in the Black Sea area, on account of being in a key place on the map of Europe, at a crossroads of opportunities and challenges. And the United States have considered the Black Sea as a pivotal region more and more, a bridge connecting Europe to the Orient.

The relationship between the two allies became increasingly close, along with the geostrategic interests, leading to the establishment of American military bases in Romania or the inclusion of the country's territory under the missile defense shield.

Being granted full NATO membership is one of the great moments of the history of Romania, with important political, diplomatic, military, economic and social consequences. It is the end of a process that allowed Romania to completely break free from the period when its natural evolution as part of the family of Euro-Atlantic community member nations was hindered.

Beyond any reasonable doubt, the United States have played an essential role within this process – a direct role during certain stages and indirect role in others – a fact which I hope I was able to express in a clear and broad manner throughout this paper.

After joining NATO in 2004, Romania also became a member of the European Union in 2007, proving that a privileged relationship with the US is not incompatible with belonging to the EU. In a world that is constantly changing, Romania and the United States of America has found a common path to the future.

I intended to examine the bilateral relationship, as I said, from Romania's point of view, but on the background of the whole dynamics of interests and attitudes in the international relations context. The complexity of this international scene and personal limits did not allow me, of course, to optimally decypher all these mechanisms which lead to Romania's NATO accession, but there was definitely a sincere effort on my part.

The decade analyzed in this paper, from a unilateral perspective and, of course, sometimes in a less skillful manner, is part of this difficult journey Romania had to take

back to the values it was devoted to and that made it what it is today. In this spirit I wrote the present thesis and I would be happy if reading it could reveal such matters. My generation is, from this point of view, a privileged one, because it is not only close to those who write history, but also to some of those who make it, which is not to be neglected!

I would like to address my thanks first of all to Professor Vasile Puscas for his competent guidance and for the constant encouragements, as well as to all those who, from my family to institutions and individuals, have helped me to successfully accomplish this difficult and fascinating enterprise, a real challenge for me. I express my gratitude to all, together with the hope of not having let them down.

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