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**ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY POST
EURO-ATLANTIC ACCESSION: SO FAR SO GOOD**

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Executive Summary

- Romania, throughout her modern history, has repeatedly faced dilemmas deriving from her self-identification with Europe, on the one hand, and its proximity and energy dependency on Russia, on the other. However, the prospects for stability and economic prosperity, provided by its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union led all Romanian post-Cold War governments to distance themselves from the decaying Russian Federation and consistently assert the country's "Return to Europe."
- Romania's inclusion in Western institutions, being a difficult task in itself, was further undermined by the country's open issues in her foreign affairs. Nevertheless, Bucharest during the 1990's, applying a highly realistic and conciliatory foreign policy agenda, reached settlements on long lasting disputes with Hungary and Ukraine, closed the issue of reunification with Moldova and refrained from assertive policies towards Moscow.
- The following period, between 2000 and 2007, constituted an era of extreme mobility and of important achievements for Romanian foreign policy. Romania in November 2002, in the context of massive changes in global order after 9/11, was invited to join NATO while it also concluded accession negotiations with the European Union in October 2005 and became a fully-fledged member in 1/1/2007.
- Romanian foreign policy after the country's accession in NATO is drastically altered in two ways: on the one hand, Bucharest, by proclaiming the creation of the Washington-London-Bucharest axis, has fully aligned itself to Bush administration's foreign policy agenda and on the other, by applying a more assertive policy towards Moscow, it strives to alter the traditional balance of powers in the Black Sea region.
- With regards to the European Union, the main political objectives of Romania as a Member State are twofold: first, Bucharest aspires to utilize EU's political and economic influence in order to fully exploit and develop her geographic assets, such as the Danube River, her locality between the energy transition pathway of the Black Sea and the European mainland as well as her proximity with the potentially dynamic emerging markets of the Balkans. Secondly, Romania, aims at strengthening European institutions in order to render the European Union an independent global power that could embrace assertive common policies in the field of energy as well as in the geopolitical arena.
- Romania's regional policy is defined by a strongly competitive attitude towards Russia. In that respect, Bucharest has repeatedly utilized its political influence for bringing

both the Western Balkans (more importantly Serbia) and the Black Sea countries closer to Euro-Atlantic accession and for promoting energy supplies' diversification. Both these policies stem from Romania's aspiration to challenge Russia's geopolitical dominance and acquire a regulatory economic and political role primarily in the Black Sea but also in South Eastern Europe.

- As from 1.1./2007 both goals that defined Bucharest's transition period (the country's admission in NATO and the EU) were realized. However, the new stakes for Bucharest after 2007 are equally challenging. Romania as a member of NATO and the European Union has, so far, followed an extremely proactive and assertive foreign policy line especially in the Black Sea region. The level of success of this policy will be largely defined by the agenda of the new US' administration, the future of the ratification process of the Strategic Partnership Treaty between EU and Moscow (as well as its viability once put in action) and the developments in the energy field.

1. An overview of Romanian Foreign Policy in the Pre-EU- Accession Period

Romania, a country of Eastern Europe, constitutes the largest Balkan country and is watered by the Black Sea. Throughout its modern history, it has repeatedly faced dilemmas deriving from its self-identification with Europe, on the one hand, and its proximity and energy dependency on Moscow, on the other. However, Romanian governments, especially after the emergence of Emil Constantinescu in 1996, adopted common stances and goals and consistently asserted the country's inclusion in Euro-Atlantic structures. Its eventual accession in NATO in 2004 and the European Union (EU) in January 2007 came as a result of Romanians' unyielding commitment for their 'return to Europe' as well as Romania's special geopolitical significance for both institutions. The latter is primarily derived from EU's and NATO's willingness for acquiring a foothold in the oil transiting Black Sea while minimizing Russia's sphere of economic and political influence in the region.

Romania's foreign policy after its accession in NATO in 2004 and even more after its accession in the EU in 2007 has been rigorous and manifold. Romania, participates in numerous initiatives in the context of the EU and NATO, takes part in regional projects in the Balkans and the Black Sea while it has also developed a large network of individual activities in diplomatic and political level. Bucharest consistently supports the deepening of European structures as well as EU enlargement in the Balkans and the Black Sea. On the other hand, Romania constitutes one of the most dynamic US allies in Europe and has embraced both militarily and politically Bush administration's policies in spite of the generalized anti-Americanism that exists in Europe.

The purpose of the present report is to unfold the whole range of Romania's foreign policy agenda. We will undertake an effort to utilize Bucharest's international, regional and individual initiatives in order to examine the motivations and goals of Romania's foreign policy making and estimate the developments that these policies could bring about in the short and medium-term.

1.a. POST COMMUNIST FOREIGN POLICY : 1990-2000

Romanian foreign policy in the post-Cold War era was defined by its unwavering commitment for joining Euro-Atlantic structures. Both Ilescu's (1992-1996) and Constantinescu's (1996-2000) presidencies consistently promoted Romania's potentials for joining Western institutions by embracing an agenda targeted at adapting to the needs and requirements of EU and NATO. Bucharest feared that a potential failure at being bound to the Euro-Atlantic enlargement process, except from depriving the country of indispensable Western funds could severely undermine Romania's geopolitical position. In particular, its alarm is derived from the fact that a potential dissociation from the Central European integration process would result in the country's isolation. Moreover, the aversion of the creation of a grey area between Russia and Eastern Europe constituted a top priority for Romania. Bucharest estimated that such a development would undermine its potentials for accession in EU and NATO and would render Romania a buffer zone in the context of the diachronic Churchillian concept of keeping Russia out of Europe.

In this context, the main foreign policy initiatives taken by Romania during the 1990's can be summarized as following:

- Reaching a compromise regarding the status quo of Moldova
- Restoring bilateral relations with Hungary and Ukraine
- Participating in EU and NATO initiatives
- Promoting regional cooperation and stability

After Moldova's unilateral declaration of independence in August 1991, both Romanian and Moldovan governments were mobilized for the reunification. The realization of the union primarily stumbled on two issues: the legal status of the 14th Russian Army that stationed in Moldova and the future of Transdneistria region.¹ The former, after the recognition of Moldova as an independent state, would constitute a permanent threat for Romanian sovereignty (in case the reunification was realized) while at the same time it would provide an important pressure tool in the hands of Russia for asserting its policies in the region. As the Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea characteristically stated: "Right now what we

¹ Transdneistria is located in the eastern side of Dniester River, and is primarily populated by Ukrainians and Russians (constituting 14% and 13% out of the countries overall 4, 4 million respectively).

have is a Russian army, a foreign force, in an independent country that has virtually no army of its own. Moldova does not even have a border with Russia. What has to be established is to whom is this army responsible and under what conditions is it there."² With regards to Transdnistria, both the Russian and the Ukrainian minority strongly resisted the imposition of Bucharest rule. Their reluctance to accept the union with Romania was openly manifested through the secessionist movement of the Slavic minorities that took place in 1993. Under these circumstances the potentiality of reunification soon lost its appeal to both Romanians and Moldavians.

For their part Romanians feared that in case of a reunification Bucharest's relations with Moscow would suffer a serious blow whose outcome could not be fully estimated. Russia constituted an alternative for Romania in case its aspirations for EU and NATO inclusion were not realized. Given the country's unstable relations with western institutions (such as the IMF, EU and NATO) and the unavoidable Russian discontent in case of Romania's reunification with Moldova, Bucharest was facing the risk of international isolation.

Moldova's objections to reunification were more widespread and dynamic and ultimately decisive for the countries' future. The first free Moldovan elections held in 1993 were won by forces opposed to the union while in a referendum held parallel to the election the majority of Moldavians also opposed the prospect of reunification with Romania. Thus, the vision of reunification of the two countries was permanently drawn away. Moldova's adherence in the CIS in 1994 constituted a rational choice and turned a new leaf for Chisinau's foreign policy agenda which commanded Moldova to sustain the balance between Moscow and Bucharest. Moldova's relations with Romania were clearly defined in the new government's program as: "a reality that should be dealt with on the basis of common roots and mutual respect. The common goal is the creation of a common culture and a common economic space that will lead both countries into European structures".³

The Hungarian minority in Romania constitutes 7.2% of the country's overall population and numbers between 1.6 and 2 million people who mainly reside in the region of Transylvania. Bilateral relations between Romania and Hungary have diachronically been undermined by

²Michael Kaufman, "Moldovan Conflict Worries Romania", *The New York Times*, 6.7. 1992

³Moldovan Governmental Program, 1996, cited in Charalambos Tsardanidis, "Romanian Foreign Policy, *Agora Without Frontiers*, Vol. 4, No.2, 1997, p.268.

Romanians' harassment of the minority. Iliescu's government failed to comfort Hungary with his minority policies. The participation of extreme nationalistic elements in the governmental coalition was met with discontent from Hungary. The latter, playing successfully the card of the fearful international environment after the secessionist Yugoslav Wars, denied recognizing existing borders as inviolable before certain commitments were made by Bucharest regarding the Transylvanian minority while supporting the Democratic Alliance for Hungarian Rights (DAHR) in their claims for more autonomy of the Transylvanian region.

Romania's image abroad was severely damaged by its failure to comply with European standards on minority rights while causing both EU's and NATO's condemn. On the other hand, Hungary was also affected by its interethnic differences with Romania given the diachronic reluctance of NATO to include countries with unsettled ethnic issues as well as EU's strict warning that an inclusion would not be implemented unless the bilateral disputes were settled. The Protocol of Friendship and Cooperation, signed in September 16th 1996 brought the countries out of the stalemate. Budapest dropped the claim for more autonomy of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Bucharest, on the other hand, bound itself to live up to EU's standards regarding the minority protection. Moreover, both countries pledged to recognize the inviolability of existing borders' and denounced violence as a way of resolving their differences. The political part of the agreement was supplemented by strategic, economic and commercial clauses aiming at manifesting the countries' commitment for a deep and long lasting solution that would bring the countries closer to their common goal of inclusion in Euro-Atlantic structures.

With regards to Ukraine, Romania strongly insisted on the denouncement of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact before any agreement could be reached. The Pact, signed in 1938, identified Northern Bessarabia and Southern Bukovina as parts of the Soviet Republic of Ukraine. Moreover, the potentiality of an agreement, according to Bucharest could stay on the table as long as the rights of the Romanian minority (counting about 400.000 people) in Ukraine were guaranteed. Kyiv, for its part, looked forward to an agreement with Romania that would limit its dependence on Moscow and would bring Ukraine closer to European institutions. Thus, despite the initial fears of Kyiv that the prerequisites set by Bucharest constituted the prelude of Romania's further claims in the region regarding Southern Bessarabia and Northern

Buckovina the two parties reached an agreement and signed a Treaty in 1997. The treaty was an outcome of two distinct goals of Romanian foreign policy:

- To close all territorial issues before it asserted NATO inclusion
- To prevent a further alignment of Ukraine with Russia, in which case Bucharest would have to deal with orchestrated claims from Kyiv and Moscow

According to the Treaty Romania acknowledged the inviolability of Ukrainian borders thus recognizing the loss of Northern Buckovina and Southern Bessarabia. On the other hand, Ukraine denounced Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and made commitments regarding the protection of the Romanian minority. Finally the countries' agreed to work on a mutually accepted solution regarding their economic and commercial belts in the Black Sea where there was a strong possibility for the existence of oil reserves. In case such a solution was not found both countries were bound to appeal to the Hague International Court of Justice.

Romania throughout the 1990's consistently promoted itself as a committed champion of regional cooperation both in the Black Sea region and South Eastern Europe. Since 1992, Romania adopted realistic policies regarding the project of its reunification with Moldova and avoided taking nationalistic positions grounded on irredentism that would potentially upset the balance of powers in a fragile geopolitical region. In addition, Bucharest's cooperativeness on its territorial issues with Ukraine clearly manifested the country's commitment for avoiding tensions and asserting its inclusion in Euro-Atlantic structures. Furthermore, its active participation in the revitalization of South Eastern European cooperation through the promotion of multilateral discussion in ministerial level -primarily in the context of South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) also constituted a step in the same direction. Constantinescu government's agreement in 1999 to participate in the SPSEE (Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe) was a point of reference for the country's Euro-Atlantic bid. In spite of Bucharest's initial fears that SPSEE constituted a counterweight for the country's exemption from EU's enlargement procedure and a step towards Romania's demotion to a regional player in the Black Sea and the Balkans, its eventual agreement manifested increased cooperativeness and pragmatism in the country's foreign policy that promoted Bucharest's Euro-Atlantic bid. Similarly, the Romanian government, since 1997, had signed the initiation of South Eastern Cooperation Initiative (SECI program) that aimed at hosting and promoting discussion among high level Balkan

incumbents.

On the other hand, prompted by its strong desire to enhance its potentials for meeting EU criteria and prevent the country's dissociation from other central European candidates, Romania participated in programs and initiatives aiming at Central European Cooperation. In particular, the country having signed a European Association Agreement since 1993, participated in CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement) and CEI (Central European Initiative). Through its rigorous foreign policy Bucharest aimed at manifesting its potentials of serving as a bridge between the Black Sea and the Balkans on the one end and Euro-Atlantic institutions on the other and thus promoting itself as a provider of security in the region rather than as a consumer.

Romania's relation with NATO was largely undermined by the country's records regarding human and minority rights. A further blow in their relations was caused by Romania's inability to control the transfer of goods and oil from the region of Timisoara to Yugoslavia during United Nations general embargo between 1992 and 1995, despite its official, save reluctant, support of NATO's campaign. However, two events that took place between 1995 and 1997 largely enhanced NATO's image of Romania:

- The country's participation in NATO-led IFOR mission in Bosnia
- Romania's participation in Italy-led NATO mission in Albania following the collapse of the state in 1997

NATO's official satisfaction for Romania's commitment to the organization's policies was not followed by an inclusion of Romania in the Atlantic Alliance together with Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. Bucharest despite openly expressing its dissatisfaction and frustration, did not change its stance towards the Alliance. In 1999, Romania's decision to support NATO mission in Kosovo by allowing NATO air forces to use its air space for its operations was met with satisfaction by the Alliance while the rejection of Russia's similar request for providing humanitarian support to Serbia set the foundations for the country's short-term inclusion.

1.b. ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PRE EU ACCESSION PERIOD: 2000-2007

The objectives of Romanian foreign policy were not altered after Iliescu's re-emergence in 2000. Despite his communist past and his personal pro-Russian affiliations, Iliescu followed his predecessor's line and put NATO and EU inclusion on top of his foreign policy agenda. These policies constituted the outcome of the ongoing crisis of the Russian Federation in combination with the multiple benefits of a potential inclusion in Euro-Atlantic structures. Thus, in the eve of the new millennium Romania's efforts for meeting Western institutions' criteria were rewarded: Romania in February 2000 officially initiated negotiations for its accession in the EU while in November 2002, during the Prague summit, it was invited to join NATO. The negotiations with the EU were concluded in October 2005 and the country became a full member on 1st January 2007 while with regards to NATO, Romania became a fully-fledged member State on 23 April 2004.

Romanian foreign policy before its accession in NATO was defined by its desire to manifest its commitment to the Organization's goals. Bucharest was one of the first European countries to be allied with the US in George Bush's "War Against Terror". Since 2002, Romania supported the mission in Afghanistan through allowing NATO troops to use its facilities and air-space as well as through its active participation in the campaign with 600 soldiers. Obviously, Bucharest's commitment was appreciated by the United States which at the same time was in need of more flexible system of strategic alliances. The United States, after 9/11, abandoned the concept of establishing large, permanent military bases in Western Europe for a new circuit of smaller military bases closer to the front. Romania was enthusiastic for allowing US forces not merely use its ground but also supply military equipment and train its armed forces. Thus, NATO's invitation to Bucharest in November 2002 is largely derived from by the new geopolitical needs of the United States, after 9/11 which could be served by Bucharest due to its proximity to the front and its eagerness to support and promote US interests by all means.

Romania's primal goal as a member State of NATO was to establish a special relationship with the United States in order to acquire a regulatory role in the Black Sea region. As soon as President Basescu was elected in 2004, he articulated the project of the establishment of an axis between Washington, London and Bucharest. The public statement of the Romanian

Ministry of Defense is characteristic of Bucharest's full alignment with US' goals: "If four of the components do not differ considerably from the old strategy (proliferation of mass destruction weapons, totalitarian regimes which support terrorism, frozen conflicts, or cases of instability not far from Romania), the element of change is the emphasis laid on the "preventive action, alongside the allies, beyond the borders of the country".⁴ Bucharest's statement, made in 2005, provided not only for a close partnership but for an unconditional support for U.S.' policies, thus exemplifying the meaning of the vociferous word 'axis' used by Basescu in order to describe Romania's relations with the United States.

The purpose of the 'axis' was to lend Romania the role of an indispensable security provider in the wider Black Sea region, closely affiliated with Washington. Obviously these aspirations of Romania's were not cherished by the traditional powers of the region. Turkey, for example, since its admission in NATO in the 1952 had enjoyed the status of both the guarantor of NATO's interests and of an important regional player in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Through Romania's 'special relationship' with the US, Turkey's role would be diminished given that through its five bases on Romanian ground (hosting 2.000 American soldiers), the United States could control the geopolitical stakes in the region. Therefore, Turkey will stop being indispensable for the alliance and thus it would be unable to use the leverage of its geographic location for asserting its policies. On the other hand, Romania's close relation with the US would alter the balance of power with regards to energy and economy. Turkey, since the end of the Second World War has been the only benefactor from the utilization of the Straits through which large amounts of oil was entering the Black Sea and supplying Europe. The military presence of the United States in Romania that secured Romanian ground and facilities was opening the way for the initiation of projects that would diversify energy supplies through oil pipes running on Romanian ground which would ultimately minimize Turkey's role in the process of energy transition.

Russia, on the other hand, was also discontented with Romania's strong alignment to the United States. Despite the fact that their relations were improved by signing the Basic

⁴ Victor Lupu, "Changing defence doctrine - an image initiative?", *Nine o'clock*, 4.3.2005, p. 5,

Political Treaty in 2003, primarily due to Iliescu's close relations with Moscow, the emergence in 2004 of the pro-American new President Traian Basescu reinstated the coldness in the countries' bilateral relations. The new Romanian President's proclamation of the Washington-London-Bucharest 'axis' further deteriorated Romania's relations with Moscow. The latter feared that Romania would work as America's foothold in a region that was traditionally off-limits for the US. In that respect, US' bases in Romanian ground would facilitate energy transition projects, antagonistic to respective Russian ones. Russian Foreign Minister Aleksandr Yakovenko's statement shortly after Romania's accession in NATO is characteristic of Russia's guardedness: "Bucharest should refrain from actions with a 'negative influence', being a NATO member. We hope that Romania being a NATO member and being engaged in the accession process to the EU will not have a negative influence on the Romanian-Russian relations, nor on the future development of the commercial and economic relations".⁵

Finally, Brussels were also not particularly thrilled with the proclamation of the 'axis'. The EU feared that Romania had gone too far with its pro-Americanism and that once it entered in EU it would act as an agent of US' interests. Thus, Romania's inclusion combined with the pro-American governments of Poland and the UK could jeopardize the procedures and the objectives of Europe's policy making given that all three countries are among the seven largest of the Union. Romania's rather premature inclusion in 2007 was partly an outcome of EU's fears that a further delay of the country's integration would render the full alignment of Bucharest with Washington's position irreversible.

Another priority of the Romanian foreign policy between 2000 and 2007 regarded the settlement of frozen conflicts in the Balkans and the Black Sea. Bucharest's initiatives were primarily targeted at the conflicts in Kosovo and Transdnier. With regards to the former, Romania consistently supported a negotiated solution and defended Serbia's sovereignty. Bucharest's position that contradicted the official US line was derived from its fears that Kosovo's secession would bring about new demands on behalf of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Regarding the Transdnierian region, Romania consistently asserted its

⁵ Alina Grigoras, "Tête-à-tête Putin – Basescu : At the core of the talks, the re-launching of the economic Collaboration between Russia and Romania", *Nine o'clock*, 13.2.2005, p. 3.

participation in the discussions for the settlement of the conflict. However, this right has been repeatedly refused by Moscow given that a potential participation of Romania, which would shortly become a member state of the EU, would increase the leverage on Moscow for finding a multilaterally accepted and binding solution. Romania's suggestion for reunification with Moldova in 2006, as a means for including the latter in the EU (that was firmly rejected by the President of Moldova Vladimir Voronin), was partly derived from Bucharest's desire to acquire a locus standi for defending Chisinau's positions in the context of the European Union.

Another priority of the pre-EU accession Romanian foreign policy was bringing issues of extraordinary importance to EU's attention. Bucharest made full use of its right to participate in European Committees and instruments ever since its membership was unanimously approved in 2005. The main priorities in this period was obtaining unofficial consensus over burning issues of Romania foreign policy agenda. In particular Bucharest promoted a negotiated solution in Kosovo, supported Moldova's positions regarding the Transdnister conflict as well as its EU accession potentiality while putting particular weight on pointing out the potential assets deriving from the establishment of a closer relationship with the Black Sea region. President Basescu's statement regarding the latter in an interview in September 2006 was characteristic. "The Black Sea problems will stop to be simply a problem of Romania, they become a problem of the EU, and especially that Europe derives over 50 per cent of the necessary energy from the greater Black Sea area." ⁶

Overall, the period between 2000 and 2007 constituted an era of extreme mobility for Romanian foreign policy. As from 1.1.2007 both goals that defined Bucharest's transition period - the country's admission in NATO and the EU- were realized. Despite the general enthusiasm deriving from the ultimately successful foreign policy in the first seventeen years of the post-communist era, the new stakes for Bucharest are equally challenging. Romania as a member state of the EU and of NATO is asked to maintain the balance between its political and public pro-americanism and its commitments to the EU while being an important regional player in an area of great geopolitical importance.

⁶ Vaida Adrianna: *Policy towards US - unchanged, relations with Russia – improved: These are the coordinates of the foreign policy of Romania after the EU accession*, Nine o'clock, pp.3, 29/9/2006

2. ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY POST EURO-ATLANTIC ACCESSION: SO FAR SO GOOD

2. a. ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS PART OF CFSP/ESDP⁷

Romanian foreign policy, since its admission in the EU in 2007, has been characterized by its strong support to projects and initiatives aiming at intensifying EU Neighborhood Policy (ENP) through tightening the Union's relations with South East European and the Black Sea countries. The inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria, both Black Sea littoral states, in the Union provided the EU with the essential legitimacy for being more pro-actively involved in the Black Sea. Thus, the EU, to Romania's satisfaction, acquired observer status in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSECO) in 2007 while launching the Black Sea Synergy during the same year.

The Black Sea Synergy launched by the European Commission in June 2007 constituted a clear sign of EU's aspiration for a more active policy in the region. The aim of the synergy is to extend EU's network of relations in an area which provides a market in evolution, a turntable for energy flows, an area with interweaving transport routes, confronted however by major challenges such as frozen conflicts, illegal migration, organized crime and environment problems. In that context, according to the Commissioner for External Relations and Neighborhood Policies Benita Ferrero Waldner, "Romania and Bulgaria have been two of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Black Sea Synergy."⁸ Romania considers the Synergy as a stepping stone for an institutional arrangement of EU-Black Sea relations through the establishment of the EU Pontic dimension following the model of the Northern dimension.⁹ Overall, Romania's enthusiastic support for the Synergy is derived from its

⁷ Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defense Policy of the EU.

⁸ "Romania and Bulgaria among most active supporters of 'Black Sea Synergy' tabled by European Commission", *Romanian National News Agency (ROMPRES)*, 21.4.2007

⁹ The Northern dimension of the EU was a successful initiative that was produced by the governments, the EU, the EBRD, the IMF, private businesses and the civil society in order to indulge regional cooperation and

aspiration to be rendered a point of reference for the EU-Black Sea relations while, due to its geographic proximity, emerging as a hub with regards to energy transition, regional stability and investment inflows.

Moreover, an unwavering goal of Romania's foreign policy is diversifying regional cooperation that during the past fifteen years had been monopolized by BSECO, an organization traditionally dominated by Russia. The initiation of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership (henceforth BSFDP) in June 2006, constituted a clear manifestation of Bucharest's aspirations in that end. However, the Romanian initiative, which was considered antagonistic to the BSECO by Moscow, was deprived from support and continuity due to participants' fears that closer cooperation in the context of the Forum would have a negative impact on their relation with Russia. With regards to the Black Sea Synergy, Bucharest aspires that the central role of the European Commission will provide substantial counterweights for the participant states in order to overcome their reservations of Russia's reactions. Bucharest expects that European Union's involvement will deprive Russia from its leverage through the provision both of political guarantees and support and of substantial economic potentials.

In that context, Bucharest has openly supported Moldova's and Ukraine's accession in the EU. With regards to the former, Romanian Prime Minister, in the context of a bilateral meeting in Chisinau, stated: "Bucharest supports its neighbour and is willing to guide its reform efforts aimed at EU accession [...] Romania is the most important supporter of the Republic of Moldova on its way towards the European Union [...] the main objective of Romania's relations with the Republic of Moldova would be for the European integration process of Moldova to become irreversible as soon as possible.¹⁰" Romania's unyielding support on Moldova's accession in the EU, a prospect that is currently not examined by the Union, is derived from Romania's willingness to strengthen its position in the European institutions by the accession of a fellow nation with strong sentimental bonds and similar political objectives.

promote concrete projects for the development of the region through functional funding mechanisms. The idea for the establishment of the Pontic dimension derived by the conclusions of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership held in Bucharest in 5th June 2006 (regarding the latter see chapter I part B)

¹⁰ "Romania wants Republic of Moldova to get as close as possible to EU", *Romanian National News Agency*, (ROMPRES), 29.6.2007.

Moreover, Traian Basescu has been severely critical of the unofficial government of Transnistria and has openly defended Moldova's territorial integrity: "It seems to me than any limit of decency is overshoot when Transnistrians decline any kind of talks with the sovereign authority of the Moldovan state." ¹¹ Also, as the Romanian President has stated on a different occasion, "the involvement of the EU is fundamental and essential in finding a solution in line with the international legislation and that will fully observe the territorial sovereignty and integrity of the Republic of Moldova".¹² Bucharest anticipates that EU's involvement in the Transnistrian affair will lead to the long awaited inclusion of Romania in the negotiation party while strengthening the potentials for a fair and long lasting solution whose implementation would be guaranteed by the Union.

Romania's support for Ukraine's EU inclusion stems from its willingness for mutually accepted settlement of territorial and environmental issues as well as from the commercial potentials provided by the large Ukrainian market. Bucharest anticipates that Ukraine, in the process of meeting EU conditionality, will accept, promote and implement international instruments' decisions and standards regarding the future of Transnistria (whose Ukrainian majority envisages its reunification with their motherland), the future of the alleged oil reserves of the Snake Island whose domain is scrutinized by the International Court of Justice (whether it is a Romanian or a Ukrainian province) as well as on the environmental abuse of the lower Prut River and the Bistroe channel which runs through Ukraine in the Danube Delta. Former Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ungureanu wording regarding the conditionally Romanian support to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic accession potentiality is characteristic. "We will support Ukraine's aspirations related to accession to the EU and to the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization and we wish the country to have as many arguments as possible before the NATO and the European partners so as to prove its pro-Western orientation is final."¹³ Finally, with regards to economic factors of Romania's support, Ukraine constitutes a huge, save largely unexploited, market of fifty million people.

¹¹ "Romania and the Republic of Moldova have similar stance on frozen conflicts", Romanian National News Agency (ROMPRES), 20.8.2008.

¹² "President Basescu advocates more pro-active EU involvement in the of Black Sea conflicts", *Romanian National News Agency (ROMPRES)*, 12.3.2008.

¹³ "Romania presents solid arguments to ICJ in Snake Island case, says ForMin Ungureanu", *Romanian National News Agency (ROMPRES)*, 9.2.2008.

Ukrainian market's opening, under EU's economic conditionality, is expected to increase Romanian economy's dynamics through investments' inflow and outflow.

Among the Western Balkan countries, Serbia has received the lion's share of Romania's political support, both regarding its open territorial questions and its EU accession potentiality. Both President Basescu and Prime Minister Popescu - Tariceanu have argued in favor of Serbia whenever an opportunity was provided. "It is unfair to force Serbia to choose between her territorial integrity and her accession in the EU" ¹⁴ and "using the collective rights of minorities as instrument to deteriorate, affect the states' territorial integrity, is unacceptable." ¹⁵ As far as Serbia's EU accession prospect is concerned, Romania suggested that Radovan Karadzic's arrest should open the way for the initiation of accession discussions. As Popescu - Tariceanu characteristically stated in the context of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) of the EU in June 2008, "the recent capture of Radovan Karadzic represents a convincing proof about the Belgrade authorities' commitment to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia". ¹⁶

Romania's strong commitment in averting Serbia's territorial fragmentation is partly derived from its own anxieties regarding the Hungarian populated regions in its territory. The Hungarian minority primarily resides in Transylvania, on Romania's borders with Hungary. Throughout the 1990's the minority had repeatedly expressed irredentist tendencies through claims either for more autonomy or even for reunification with Hungary. Even after the bilateral agreement of 1996 and both countries' accession in the EU and NATO these claims were not abandoned by Budapest. In a visit of the Hungarian President Lazlo Slyom in March 2007, the call for more autonomy for the Transylvanian minority was reiterated. Thus, Bucharest fears that in case of recognition of Kosovo will result in the creation of a precedent that would threaten Romania's sovereignty.

¹⁴ "Lazar Comanescu argues in Brussels in favour of Serbia's inclusion amid EU candidates", *Romanian National News Agency (AGERPRESS)*, 22.7.2008.

¹⁵ "ForMin Comanescu: Frozen conflicts' persistence poses great risk for regional security", *Romanian National News Agency (AGERPRES)*, 27.8.2008.

¹⁶ "Lazar Comanescu argues in Brussels in favour of Serbia's inclusion amid EU candidates", *Romanian National News Agency (AGERPRESS)*, 22.7.2008.

Another important goal of Romania's foreign policy is the institutionalization of the Danube River as a central European hub of transportation, economy, navigation, environment, culture and tourism. Acting in cooperation with the Austrian government, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the European Commission, Bucharest launched the 'Danube Cooperation Initiative' in 2007 in order to establish a framework for the coordination, initiation and implementation of co-operation projects among Danube riparian states. President Traian Basescu has consistently promoted Danube's importance in the context of EU's Community Transport System as a potential link of the EU to the coastal areas of North-West and South-East Europe as well as the Black Sea region. As he has noted before the European Parliament, "the time has come for the EU to focus on a strategy for the river axis that crosses its territory from the North Sea to the Black Sea, a strategy that would capitalize on the huge cooperation potentials existing in the Danube basin."¹⁷

Romania strives to promote the establishment of a common and independent EU energy policy while providing its support for alternative projects in the region aiming at the diversification of energy supplies. According to President's Traian Basescu statement in the context of a meeting with Jozias van Aartsen, European Commission's coordinator for the construction of 'Nabucco' gas pipeline, "Romania pays an utmost importance to this project of diversification of the gas supply routes to the European Union space."¹⁸ Many EU members such as Austria, Spain, Hungary, France and Italy share Romania's commitment for the realization of this project that would minimize EU countries' energetic dependency on Moscow. As Traian Basescu has characteristically stated, "EU needs to approach the issue of energy security in a common voice because otherwise we will not be successful or miss the chance to attain our major goals."¹⁹ EU interest has primarily been reflected in the Pan European Oil Pipeline (PEOP) project that was co-signed, after EU Commission's suggestion, in a common ministerial declaration on April 3, 2007 which also reaffirmed the countries' commitment for working out projects aiming at energy supplies' diversification.

¹⁷ "Traian Basescu: Danube should occupy an important place on the EU agenda" ,*Romanian National News Agency (AGERPRES)*, 6.10.2007.

¹⁸ "Romania fully supports 'Nabucco' project, states Romanian president Traian Basescu", *ROMPRES*., 25.10.2007

¹⁹ "Romania, a key point on the regional energy market", *Nine o'clock*., 15.1.2008

The main aim for EU's member states mobilization for upgrading European cooperation in energy sector is the diminishment of Russia's role in the European energy market. Russia, the traditional energy power supplying Europe, is currently in control of most pipelines transferring oil and gas supplies in the European mainland. Sequentially, European's extraordinary needs for energy constitute an important asset for Russia's geopolitical assertions. EU's endeavour for tightening relations with the oil producing and transiting countries of the Caspian and the Black sea aims at increasing its control over their energy sector through financing the implementation of oil transition projects in an effort to deprive Russia from an effective tool of political leverage. Consequently, Romania's strong support for the establishment of a common European energy policy which will maximize EU's ability and authority to finance energy projects in cooperation with Black and Caspian Sea countries is again derived from its aspiration to minimize Russian influence both with regards to the EU and the Black Sea region. In that way, Romania will be able to utilize its triple role as an EU Member, a NATO member and a regional power, in order to marginalize Russia and thus benefit from the manifold geopolitical and economic potentials provided in the Black Sea.

Romania since its admission in the European Union has made numerous security and defence commitments especially in the Black Sea and the Balkans. Furthermore, it has repeatedly supported CFSP/ESDP as a manifestation of EU's aspiration to become a global military power. Bucharest strives to promote itself as a reliable regional power able to promote and preserve stability in turbulent geographic areas. To that end, Romanian Ministry of Defence has continuously evolved its military capacity and has actively participated in EU missions with over 6.500 personnel. In addition, Romania has established professional civil and military teams both in Bucharest and in Brussels in order to work out action plans and provide their assistance in the context of CFSP whenever it is needed.

In that context, Romania was the third country to ratify the Lisbon Treaty while consistently supporting the intensification of European efforts for overcoming impediments to the eventual endorsement. One of the focal points of the Treaty is the further institutionalization

and solidification of CFSP and ESDP. More importantly, the Treaty simplifies the decision making procedures in foreign affairs while establishing an EU ‘foreign minister’ figure, with the title of High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, who in essence is one person speaking on behalf of EU member states in foreign policy matters and with a seat in the European Commission.

Through the intensification of European cooperation on Foreign Affairs, Bucharest wishes to promote its policies in the Black Sea and the Balkans by utilizing the political, economic and military support provided by the Union. With regards to the Western Balkans, Romania aspires that the establishment of an institutional framework of CFSP could lead to dynamic common positions and actions of the EU in order to provide permanent solutions to open territorial questions and thus avert a potential relapse into violence that would have severe repercussions for the wider Balkan region. In the case of the Black Sea, Bucharest aspires that the EU will develop a bolder and more energetic policy towards Moscow. In that way the EU will be able to confront Russia’s assertiveness, and enhance EU’s geopolitical leverage in the region. Thus, Romania anticipates that through EU’s pro-active involvement, it will be rendered the main promoter of European interests in the Black Sea thus increasing its controllability of the developments in the region.

One of the burning issues of the Romanian foreign policy as part of the CFSP agenda is the future of Kosovo. Bucharest has repeatedly supported a common and pro-active involvement of the EU in both the processes of working out a mutually respected solution and of establishing peace and stability in the province. Regarding the latter, Romania participates in ESDP mission EULEX that aims at succeeding UNMIK (United Nations Mission In Kosovo) in maintaining stability, democracy and the Rule of Law in the province while, at the same time, supporting local authorities on the establishment of a reliable judicial brand and the fight against organized crime and corruption.

With regards to diplomatic activity, Bucharest urges the Union not to consider the resolution of the Kosovo conflict conditional upon Serbia’s EU inclusion provided that in case of EU hesitation regarding Serbia’s integration potentiality could strengthen Russia’s influence on

the country. At the same end, Romania has supported a solution based on bilateral discussion between Belgrade and Pristina in order to exclude Russia from influencing the peace making procedure. Russia has consistently supported Serbia's positions in order to acquire a foothold in the Balkans process of the region's integration in the EU is finalized. Consequently, Romania considers Serbia an important hub in the process of the continent's securitization that, according to Bucharest, cannot be guaranteed in case Moscow maintains a footing in the European mainland.

Romania has been an energetic player in the post-conflict phase following the Russo-Georgian war in August 2008. Bucharest was one of the co-signatories of 'Georgia's Friends' project aiming at assisting the country in its post-conflict reconstruction while it provided the EU and NATO with its own examination report regarding the events that led to the conflict. In the context of its rigorous involvement, Bucharest, consistently indulged the EU to acquire a more proactive role in the peacekeeping and peace building processes. According to the Romanian chief diplomat, "Nobody can deny Russia's responsibilities in its neighbourhood area, the same as nobody can deny the EU and NATO interests in stability at their borders". Through EU's involvement Bucharest strives to acquire the necessary support for defending its role in energy transition running counter to Russia's interests. South Ossetia, the apple of discord of the recent conflict, constitutes an energy transition hub through which run oil-pipes of Western interests, antagonistic to Russian ones. In case of a de jure secession of the province the flow of oil resources that would enter in the European mainland through Romanian ground would be interrupted. Thus, both Romanian foreign policy's goals of maximizing its role in the energy transition process and of diversifying energy supplies would be undermined.

2. b. ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF NATO

Romania, a newly adhered NATO member has enthusiastically supported NATO's policies ever since its admission in the organization in 2004. Through its dynamic participation in NATO's activities Bucharest aims not only at becoming an important regional power, but also at becoming an indispensable security provider in the Black Sea and the Balkans. In this respect, Bucharest strives to acquaint the role of a 'mediator' between the Black Sea and the

Balkans on the one hand and NATO on the other. Romania's implementation of NATO's aspirations in both regions is primarily realized through the promotion of stability, democracy and market-based economic growth. In this end, Bucharest promotes cooperation through fostering regional cooperation and providing support to the countries on their way to Euro-Atlantic inclusion. Romania's determination for promoting NATO's enlargement Eastwards and South Eastwards as well as its strong alignment with US' policies in both regions is a result of its increased willingness to diminish Russian capacity to antagonize NATO's military power through its affiliations and its leverage on the Black Sea and Balkan countries.

The recognition of Kosovo constitutes one of the few stumbling blocks in Romania's relation with the US. Bucharest's denial to embrace US line and recognize the province's independence is derived from its fears that such a development would create a precedent that could trigger unrest on behalf of the Hungarian minority in its own territory. However, Romania as a neighbouring country of South East Europe has consistently supported NATO as the primal security provider in the region. During the 1990's Romania participated in three missions in South East Europe (Bosnia (1995), Albania (1997), Kosovo (1999)). After its admission in the organization, Bucharest has increased its contribution in KFOR activities. Romania's active participation in the mission, in spite of its reluctance to embrace US positions, is derived from its determination to avert a relapse into violence that would have severe implications in regional stability and economic development.

Romania has also contributed with 800 soldiers to NATO's operations in Afghanistan since 2002. The declared goals of the missions are restoring freedom and establishing a terrorism-free Afghanistan. After NATO took over ISAF in 2003, Romania has gradually increased its contribution to NATO effort while expanding its participation in the operation 'Enduring Freedom'²⁰. Bucharest's involvement in the operation is derived from Afghanistan's great geopolitical importance for the stability in Central and South-Asia as well as from its extraordinary role in the global organized crime networks (primarily in the fields of trafficking of drugs and human beings). Thus, Romania through its contribution in the missions aims at benefiting from the diminishment of organized crime inflows from Afghanistan while promoting its image as a supporter of democratic values and the Rule of

²⁰ Romania's Permanent Delegation to NATO, <http://www.nato.mae.ro>

Law. Finally, Bucharest's involvement in the long and painful US' efforts for restoring freedom and democracy in Afghanistan is expected to have a positive impact on the countries' bilateral relations. The latter is considered essential for Romania in its efforts to preserve and extend its regional role and economic growth.

Romania's stance regarding Iraq has been consistently in favour of US policies ever since the invasion took place in 2003. Bucharest supported the US mission with 5.200 soldiers in support of the "Operation Iraqi Freedom" (US-led multi-national force),²¹ while allowing US armed forces to use its facilities for its operations. Romania's stance throughout the second Gulf War ran counter to the mainstream of the EU as it was expressed by the objection of France and Germany, in spite of its status as a candidate state striving for EU inclusion. Thus, Romania throughout the war in Iraq has repeatedly chosen to secure its position as a trustworthy ally of the United States despite the negative impact that her stance would have for its integration potentiality before the completion of accession discussions in 2005 and its reliability as an EU Member State after her inclusion in 2007.

Romania supports the expansion of NATO's partnership network with the interested contact countries. As a promoter of NATO's interests in the Black Sea and the Balkans and a link between the respective countries and the organization, Romania supports NATO's door policy for the partners with aspirations for full membership and is eager to share its own experience in this regard. Bucharest is also in favour of the organization's enlargement, particularly in the Black Sea region and the Balkans while supporting the efforts of the candidate countries. During the NATO summit held in the Romanian capital in April 2008, Bucharest openly supported the immediate invitation of Ukraine's and Georgia despite the unavoidable reaction of Russia's. With regards to the South East enlargement of the organization, Romania supported Albania's and Croatia's invitations while it was also positive towards FYROM's adhesion despite the fact that the name dispute with Athens is still pending.

The selection of Romania for hosting the largest NATO summit in the history of the Organization's obviously imprinted US satisfaction for Romania's consistent and firm support to its policies. Bucharest, despite its EU membership, which was expected to define

²¹ Multi-National Force – Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom , <http://www.mnf-iraq.com>

its foreign policy stance, aligned with the US during the latter's disputes with Germany and France on NATO's enlargement eastwards. By supporting a NATO invitation to Ukraine and Georgia, Romania aimed at decreasing Russia's role in the region and promoting itself as a reliable US ally in the latter's effort to create a buffer zone in Eurasia (through the antiballistic-missile shield in Eastern Europe, Georgia, Afghanistan) in order to isolate both Russia and China. This aspect opposes the core EU line of being on good terms with Russia and China, in a multi-polar system of international players. Moreover, Bucharest supported FYROM's immediate invitation in the Atlantic Alliance which was considered to run counter to Greece's national interests. Romania's stance, despite its traditional bonds and its partnership with Athens through the EU, was legitimized by its status as the host country of the summit who traditionally strive for reaching the highest level of consent in order to promote themselves as effective guarantors of the Alliance development. Thus, Bucharest, by making full use of its role in the April 2008 summit, manifested its unwavering commitment for consolidating its alignment with the US while not impairing Greece's case or altering the negative outcome of the discussions for FYROM's inclusion.

Even before her admission in NATO, Romania has supported a strong NATO-EU partnership that respects the autonomy of the two organizations and strengthens the effects of their policy and actions. Bucharest aims at promoting Euro-Atlantic cooperation that would, according to President Basescu: "result in a dynamic cooperation able to promote common goals and promote global stability."²² Romania as a strong and committed ally of NATO's has supported all American initiatives. On the other hand, Bucharest's alignment with the United States has usually opposed the mainstream of EU member states, thus causing the latter's discontent. Thus, through a further alignment of Euro-Atlantic institutions' agendas Romania aspires to diminish the political costs that came about as a result of from its foreign policy choices in favor of the US or the EU, in cases of inter-institutional contradictions, that damage her reliability as an ally while causing impediments to the solid and dynamic cooperation that it wishes to establish with both the EU and the US.

²² "Traian Basescu: Energy projects involving the Caucasus will be continued", *Romanian National News Agency (AGEPRES)*, 21.8.. 2008

2.c. ROMANIA AS A REGIONAL PLAYER IN THE BLACK SEA AND THE BALKANS

Bucharest's regional initiatives are taken either through bilateral connections and arrangements or through organizations and instruments that aim at promoting South Eastern Europe's and the Black Sea countries' interests and positions. Romania, through its rigorous regional policy aims at becoming a key player and an indispensable partner both for the countries in the region in their way towards Euro-Atlantic accession and for Western institutions in their effort to maintain stability at their Eastern borders. The basic short and medium term objectives of Romania's regional policy can be summarized as following:

- Supporting Western Balkan countries' Euro-Atlantic aspirations and offering its assistance and expertise
- Serving as a bridge between the Black Sea and the EU Tightening relations between the BSEC and the European Union and supporting closer cooperation between the countries participating in BSEC
- Asserting its energetic independence through closer cooperation with the Black and Caspian Sea countries
- Promoting the settlement of frozen conflicts in the wide Black Sea region

Romania's commitment for supporting Western Balkan countries' inclusion in the EU has been repeatedly recognized as the ultimate goal of the South Eastern European Cooperation Process (SEECP). After its integration in the EU in 2007, Romania has provided its full support to the organization's projects. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lazar Comanescu stated in SEECP's meeting in Pomorie in May 2008, "bringing the entire region into the EU, an organization which is first of all based on the principle of unity in diversity, represents the common objective of all the participating countries."²³ Bucharest has often offered its expertise and political support to all Balkan countries in their effort to meet EU accession conditionality. Through its assistance in the pre-accession phase Romania aspires to become a point of reference in the EU enlargement South Eastwards. According to the Romanian Head of State:, "I view Romania as a linking bridge between the EU and the non-member

²³ "Romanian ForMin participates in SEECP meeting in Bulgaria", *Romanian National News Agency (ROMPRES)*., 21.5.2008

states in the region, the more so as they have the vocation to become part of the European construction."²⁴ In addition, Romania, especially after its admission in the EU, consistently supported SEECP's initiatives that aimed at setting a regional institutional framework in line with European standards in order to familiarize participating countries with EU principles and practices. Finally, Bucharest is participating in the Regional Cooperation Council which as from March 2008 succeeded SEECP in dealing with common problems of the Western Balkan countries such as organized crime and corruption that cause impediments to their accession prospects.

Since the conclusion of the accession negotiations with the EU in October 2005, Bucharest applied dynamic policies in the context of regional organizations in the Black Sea. Starting from its presidency of the BSEC in the second semester of 2005, Bucharest strived to evolve the Cooperation away from sterile political dialogues and towards more pro-active, project oriented policies. According to President Traian Basescu:, "the states in the Black Sea Region can no longer await solutions coming from anywhere else than from within the region itself. It is the duty of politicians in the region to look for effective solutions for their nations."²⁵ In addition, Romania in cooperation with countries from the Black and the Baltic Sea regions (but not Russia) initiated the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) in December 2005 after the initiative of Georgian and Ukrainian Presidents, Mikheil Saakashvili and Viktor Yushchenko aimed at hosting high level discussions with regards to "removing the remaining divisions in the [Baltic-Black Sea] region, human rights violations, and any type of confrontation or frozen conflict."²⁶

Furthermore, in the context of the Council of Europe, Romania promoted the creation of a Euro-region in the Southern shore of the Black Sea in an effort to indulge the participants

²⁴ "Romania Can Serve as a bridge between EU and non-Member States in the SEE region", *Romanian National News Agency (ROMPRES)*, 7.6.2007.

²⁵ Anna Maria Nitoi, Basescu:, " Black Sea Region can no longer await for other solutions than those of its own. Organized crime and terrorism issues can be better addressed in a non-institutional framework, President says, *Nine 'clock*, 26.4.2006, p.2

²⁶ "Ukraine: Regional Leaders Set Up Community of Democratic Choice", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 2 .12. 2005, cited in Svante E. Cornell - Anna Johnson - Niklas Nilsson, - Per Haggstrom: *The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security*, Silk Road Paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of Silk Road Studies Program, December 2006

pursue democratic consolidation and the establishment of functional market economies that would bring them closer to Euro-Atlantic accession. Similarly, on the 5th June 2006, Romania held the 'Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership' that aimed at bringing forward the political dimension of the cooperation between Black Sea states, promoting and supporting the countries' Euro-Atlantic aspirations and establishing joint actions on common problems.

Bucharest's initiatives aimed at challenging Moscow's monopoly of influence in the region. Romania strived to alter the status of BSEC and infused a more pro-active political character to the Organization's primarily economic substance. Russia that diachronically defined the Organization's orientation due to the participants' energetic dependency, judged that any alteration of the contemporary status ran counter to its interests. On the other hand, the projects of the creation of Euro-region, the CDC and the BSFDC were considered by the Russian Federation as Romanian efforts to antagonize the regulatory role of BSEC in the Black Sea. Given that Moscow considered BSEC an instrument of leverage for asserting its policies in the region that also provided its access to the internal political scenes of the Black Sea countries, not only boycotted both initiatives but was also severely judgmental of their agendas and underline goals. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs reaction to the project of Euro-region is characteristic. "Russia has not participated in the preparation of the document and does not see itself bound by this declaration. (...) We are still talking about ideas, which are beautiful and interesting, indeed, but we are not yet aware of the context in which this initiative is made." ²⁷ Indeed, through the project of Euro-region and the BSFDC, Bucharest strived to promote Western principles that would bring the countries' closer to Euro-Atlantic structures and thus diminish Moscow's influence.

Since its accession in the EU, Romania has consistently worked on utilizing its position as an EU member state for bringing participating countries closer to the Union.

²⁷ Sebastian Hubati, " Russia expresses reserves over the Black Sea Euro-Region: The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds that the BSER goals overlap those of the other Black Sea cooperation bodies. Upheld by the Council of Europe experts, the BSER projects will be funded by member countries" , *Nine o'clock*, pp.1, 30.3.2006

Through these efforts Bucharest strives to put BSECO member states on track to EU integration in an effort to detach them from Russia. As President Traian Basescu noted in the context of BSECO's June 2007 meeting, "Romania wants to become a connection bridge between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSECO) and the EU as factor of economic development in the region." ²⁸ In that context, BSECO's decision to grant European Commission's observer status, in June 2007, interpreted as a sign of EU's increased interest in the region, was met with satisfaction by Bucharest. Romania believed that EU Commission's participation would constitute a counterweight to Russia's dominance that could ultimately diminish Moscow's ability to manipulate the organization through its geopolitical and economic superiority.

Another goal for Romanian regional policy is grasping potential benefits in the field of energy deriving from a closer cooperation with the Black and Caspian Sea countries. Bucharest considers both regions important and potentially beneficiary hubs of production and transit of energy. In that respect, Bucharest consistently asserts the development of close diplomatic and commercial relations with the oil producing countries in Caucasus in an effort to work out new projects and accentuate new potentials for the diversification of the energy market. In the context of EU's and US' strained relations with Russia after the conflict in Georgia and the diminishment of Moscow's energy supplying credibility after the detainment of Russian gas destined for Eastern Europe by Kyiv in January 2009; Bucharest considers the adoption of a more proactive energy policy and a diversification of gas supply routes essential for its economic development and political stability.

In that context Romania has repeatedly favored closer relations with the GUAM countries both as part of the ENP policy and as a regional player. ²⁹ Moreover, as Romania wants to

²⁸ "Romania, connection bridge between BSECO and the EU, considers Andrian Cioroianu" *ROMPRES*, 25.6.2007.

²⁹ The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM is certainly and important and integral part of the larger Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). All four GUAM members – Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine – are, at the same time, active BSEC members, members of the Council of Europe and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The GUAM group of states was the first mechanism of regional cooperation in the former Soviet space that promoted an integrated approach of the economic, commercial and transportation integration processes, which aimed at connecting with the European and Euro-Atlantic space. See for the GUAM, C. Frangonikolopoulos,

act as a bridge between the Black Sea countries and Western Europe, it supports the enhancement of the political and economic relations and the promotion of democratic values, in order to ensure a stable economic development and create a common economic space in the region. According to President Basescu's statement during the GUAM Summit in Baku, "the GUAM states benefit from Romania's solidarity, due to their choice to build democratic societies. Now, a decade since the four GUAM founding states decided to unite their efforts to jointly address the threats to the peace, security and stability of the region, we commend their decision to also explore new formulas of sector cooperation."³⁰

The energy dimension of GUAM represents a catalyst for all four member states and has a specific importance for the EU as well. As the GUAM countries are situated along a main corridor of energy transportation linking the Caspian Sea and Central Asia with Central Europe, Romania's active presence in the region and strengthened bilateral relations with all GUAM countries is the only choice. In particular, Georgia and Azerbaijan, play a decisive role not only in ensuring the energy security of Romania, but of entire Europe, as they constitute an alternative energy route (Azerbaijan by its deposits of oil and natural gas and Georgia by its strategic position in the process of energy transition). By Romania's and Bulgaria's accession in the EU, GUAM has come closer to the EU, promoting somehow the economic relations between the EU member-states and the countries from the Black Sea and the Caspian region. As a result, any European corporation can export or import products from Europe to South Caucasus or Central Asia and vice versa. The proximity of Romania to Central Europe, and the opportunities for transfer of goods through the Danube River, enhance Romania's role as a transition country.

Romania, as an EU member, contributes to the enhancement of GUAM countries membership potentiality through supporting their endeavors for the implementation of the EU programs carried out in the framework of the ENP, EU-Russia strategic partnership, Black Sea Synergy and of its strategy on Central Asia. In addition, Bucharest promotes European Commission's calls for a more active EU role through increased political

"GUAM: creation, evolution and prospects", *Agora without Frontiers*, Vol.7, No.2, 2001, pp.114-128 (in Greek).

³⁰ C.Ungur: "Romanian support for GUAM", *Romanian Journal of International and Regional Studies*, Vol. 4, No.1, 2008, *GUAM at 10: Achievements and Prospects*, Bucurest: EURISC Foundation-Romanian Institute of International Studies IRSI.

involvement in ongoing efforts to address the conflicts of Transnistria, Abkhazia, South-Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. This interest is motivated by the fact that the continuation of such conflicts undermines EU efforts to foster political reform and economic development in its neighborhood that could affect EU's own security, through regional escalation, unmanageable migratory flows, disruption of energy supply and trade routes, or the creation of breeding grounds for terrorist and criminal activity of all kinds.

Bucharest has repeatedly called for Euro-Atlantic institutions' attention to the risks deriving from a prolongation of the frozen conflicts in the wide Black Sea area in numerous occasions. Bucharest, aims at manifesting the repercussions of relapse into violence in a broader perspective, as a universal threat for the continent. According to Train Basescu: "... the persistence of what we usually call frozen conflicts, pose a great risk for security and stability not only in the region where such conflicts occur, but also for the Euro-Atlantic security as a whole and beyond it."³¹ On the other hand, frozen conflicts also constitute a useful pretext for Romanian foreign policy in order to justify the admission of Black Sea countries in Euro-Atlantic institutions and, sequentially, deprive Russia from its strategic dominance over the region. In that context, Bucharest has repeatedly supported both Western Balkans' and Black Sea countries' NATO invitation.

Overall, Romania's regional policy is largely defined by a strongly competitive attitude towards Russia which is primarily expressed through its alignment with US positions. In that respect, Bucharest has repeatedly utilized its political influence for bringing both the Western Balkans (more importantly Serbia) and the Black Sea countries closer to Euro-Atlantic accession while promoting energy supplies' diversification. Romania's alignment with the US is utterly derived from their common long-term aspiration for marginalizing Russia through blocking its access in Europe's continental part both through the 'back doors' of the Black Sea and through its Balkan footholds. Bucharest and Washington assert their policies through the provision of efficient counterweights, namely the countries' accession in NATO and the EU that could overbid the countries' geopolitical inferiority and energetic dependency on Russia. Overall, Romania's antagonistic stance towards Russia is an outcome of its aspiration to acquire a regulatory economic and political position in the Black Sea and the Balkans both individually and as a member of Euro-Atlantic institutions.

³¹ Romanian National News Agency (AGERPRES): *ForMin Comanescu: Frozen conflicts' persistence poses great risk for regional security*, 27/8/2008

3. FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

One of the most important aspects of Romanian foreign policy since the country's accession in Euro-Atlantic structures has been President Basescu's proclamation of the Washington-London-Bucharest axis. Bucharest's alignment with the US in the context of President Bush's foreign policy agenda resulted in the creation of a special relationship between the two countries. However, the emergence of the new Barrack Obama Administration as from the 20th of January 2009 constitutes a major challenge for Romania. The new American President has distanced himself from his predecessor's policies. In fact, Obama has opted for a much milder foreign policy doctrine and has announced the immediate withdrawal of American forces in Iraq. Moreover, President Obama, contrary to his predecessor, is an extraordinarily popular person for European public opinion. Thus, in the context of the new US administration, two major stumbling blocks in EU-US relations (the public antipathy for President Bush and the political disagreement about the US legitimacy of the invasion in Iraq) will live the picture. Sequentially, Bucharest will be deprived from both the elements that rendered its relationship to Washington unique (Romania's support for the unpopular war in Iraq as well as the political and public popularity of President Bush). Thus, it seems likely that Bucharest will have to reassess and redefine its approach to the US. The future of Romanian-US relation will depend on the adaptability of Bucharest as well as its capacity to maintain, promote and develop its favorable relation with the US.

Nevertheless, Romania's extraordinary geo-strategic importance for the United States constitutes a guarantee for the continuation of close relations between the two countries in the short term, despite the alleged change of US' foreign policy objectives. Since its accession in NATO in 2004 Romania has provided a foothold for the US in the Black Sea, a region traditionally off limits for the United States. Through their bases in Romania the US managed to:

- Access the Iraq and Afghanistan fronts faster and easier
- Strengthen its geo-strategic and the military control over the Black Sea.

Thus, even in case of a short term withdrawal of the missions in Iraq Romania will not be immediately deprived of its strategic indispensability for the United States. President Obama has announced the reinforcement of US troops in Afghanistan and has not stipulated a specific time horizon for United States' missions' withdrawal from the country. However, in case that Georgia's and Ukraine's accession in NATO is realized, Romania will lose its extraordinary importance for Washington given that the latter will acquire alternative entrances in the heart of the Black Sea region, closer to the Afghanistan front. Thus, it seems that Romania's 'special relationship' with the United States in the long term could be more effectively asserted through Bucharest's manifestation of the benefits of cooperation in the economic sphere that will result in productive and dynamic bilateral relations. In that end, the simplification of US visa regime for Romanians through Romania's inclusion in the Waiver Program (already asserted by Bucharest) could severely uphold bilateral commercial relations.³²

Romania's role in the Black Sea region will be largely defined by the character of cooperation between Black Sea riparian states. Romania has supported the establishment of a more proactive, project oriented function of the BSECO while launching or participating in numerous schemes of regional cooperation parallel to the Organization. In that way, Romania aims at tightening cooperation in the region and bringing the countries closer to Western institutions. Bucharest commitment at bolstering the countries' potentials for meeting European standards is derived from its expectation that the political stabilization and market rationalization of the countries could bring about new dynamics for economic development in the region while detaching the Black Sea riparian states from the Russian Federation. However, Russia, the dominant power in the BSECO, is reacting to such projects that are targeted at altering the present status of regional cooperation and promoting the countries' Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

The future of the organization and thus the quality of regional cooperation in the Black Sea will be defined by the future of the ratification process of the Strategic Partnership Treaty

³² The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables eligible citizens or nationals of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of ninety days or less without obtaining a visa. Romania is one of the, so-called, 'roadmap' countries, which are on track to qualify for VWP admission together with Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland, and Romania.

(already delayed twice by the objections of Poland and Lithuania) between the EU and Russia and its effectiveness at comforting anxieties of both sides. The partnership is targeted at four areas:

- economy and environment
- freedom, security and justice
- research and education
- external security

Bucharest's efforts for deepening cooperation would be easier realized in line with EU's foreign policy agenda than through individual or narrow regional initiatives that lack executive legitimacy. In that way:

- Russia's fears regarding Romania's agenda in the region will be mitigated
- Romania will be protected against Russia's targeted reactions
- Cooperation will become better substantiated with the participation of both Great powers of the continent

In case the partnership is bilaterally respected and promoted, regional cooperation will acquire a new set of dynamics thus providing margin for benefits for all parties involved. Therefore, it would be preferable for Romania's regional role in the medium and long term to:

- Avoid provoking Russian reaction and guardedness
- Ratify the Strategic Partnership Treaty
- Refrain from launching and supporting projects that duplicate the BSEC (such as the BSFCP, CDC, Black Sea Euro-region)
- Contribute productively in tightening cooperation in the context of BSEC
- Support EU's involvement in regional developments through its observer status in the BSEC, the Black Sea Synergy and the ENP
- Continue to promote the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty that will infuse confidence to the EU and will open the way for bolder policy making in the Black Sea in spite of Russia's discontent
- Refrain from calls for short term EU enlargement in the Black Sea countries which:
 - Is not currently considered by the Union

- Could be counterproductive for EU's efforts to establish a viable and profitable relation at her Eastern border in the context of ENP
- Cause insecurity to Russia regarding the agenda of EU's involvement in the Black Sea

Another decisive point for the future of Romanian foreign policy will be the developments regarding the energy map of Europe. Bucharest has duly supported projects that aim at the diversification of energy supplies and sequentially at the diminishment of Russia's monopoly in the European energy market. The realization of European energy projects, such as the Nabuko pipeline,³³ will result in tightening EU's relations with the oil and gas producing countries of the Caspian Sea. In that case, the EU will be able to challenge the dominance of the state owned Gasprom that defines the contemporary prices in the European market. By diminishing European dependency on the Russian Federation the EU will be able to opt for more assertive policies in the region. Through tightening economic and political relations with the Caspian Sea countries the EU will:

- Minimize Russia's energy leverage
- Increase Europe's authority to be involved and affect regional developments
- Open the way for EU's participation in frozen conflict resolution process (Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdnistria, Abchazia, North Ossetia) that has been traditionally off limits due to Russia's negation and therefore
 - Promote peace and stability in the Black and Caspian Sea regions
 - Exploit the potentials of economic development especially for Eastern European countries such as Romania.

Another future challenge for Romanian foreign policy is related to the Western Balkans. Bucharest has wisely supported all countries accession in Euro-Atlantic structures in order to:

- Benefit from the potentials for economic development provided by an integrated market in the region

³³ The 'Nabucco' pipeline project proposes to link Turkey's borders with Iran and Georgia to the Austrian terminal of Baumgarten, crossing Bulgarian, Romanian and Hungarian territory. The pipeline, approved in June 2006, will have an eventual capacity of 25-30 bcm.⁹⁵ A feasibility study for this €4,6 billion, 3,300 km pipeline has been completed, and construction for the first phase is set to take place in 2008-2010.

- Upgrade commercial mobility in the whole South East Europe through the attractiveness of emerging markets for foreign investments
- Comfort investors' insecurity regarding the instability of the region (due to threats such as the relapse in violence, organized crime, corruption etc.) through the guarantees provided by EU and NATO
- Minimize Russia's potentials for influencing developments in the region through tightening relations with Serbia

In that end, Bucharest could promote Western Balkans' Euro-Atlantic inclusion by:

- Making use of its institutional capacities in EU and NATO instruments
- Promoting closer cooperation in the context of regional mechanisms (such as the Regional Cooperation Council, SECI etc.)
- Upgrading its role and involvement in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP)