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ROMANIA’S DEFENCE POLICY POST-WARSAW

Oana-Elena Brânda, PhD, Lecturer

Titu Maiorescu University, Bucharest, Faculty of Social, Political and Humanistic Studies

Abstract:

The Warsaw NATO Summit of 2016 represents a turn in NATO policy, focusing more on achieving tangible results and a more active involvement of the member countries. Apart from strengthening the military capabilities, the results of the Summit also signaled an enhanced cooperation with the European Union.

In this regard, it is interesting to highlight the manner in which Romania’s decision-making process complied with the outcomes set by the Warsaw Summit, in light of the country’s membership within the two organizations and its particular role in the North-Atlantic alliance.

The aim of this article is to perform an analysis of the steps taken by Romania in its foreign policy in order to identify a degree of compliance with post-Warsaw NATO prerequisites. Thus, the new Governance Programme shall be analyzed, together with the positions taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Defense Ministry. Statements of the major decision-makers after the Summit shall be used in order to create the framework of analysis, as well as the country’s stance taken due to the activation of the Deveselu base. The focus of the analysis shall be on the major elements established as threats and the efforts made in their countering by the habilitated institutions.

Keywords: defense policy, compliance, threat, NATO, security, multinational.

1. Introduction

It is highly important to see the context in which the Warsaw Summit took place: on the background of the refugee crisis, the increase in number of terrorist attacks in Europe, the amplifying of the fighting in Syria, the re-commencement of the Nagorno-Karabakh tensions, the testing of the A-235 Nudol System missile, the Russian initiative to build an anti-missile defense system and the probable exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union (already voted upon several days before the Summit).

Two major perpetrators have been identified at the Summit: the Russian Federation and ISIS. However, other problematic issues have been approached, with no immediate resolution, only the Alliance remaining seized-upon: the Ukrainian crisis and the need to ensure Ukrainian independence, the matter of human rights in Crimea, the challenges in the Baltics, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, instability in the Middle East and North Africa region, the impact of the Syrian crisis for the regional stability and the security of the south-eastern border of NATO.

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The documents issued after the Summit showed that those decision-makers present in Warsaw tackled all these problems and many more, aiming to create a joint effort to counter them. This can be seen from the statements issued concerning Afghanistan, EU-NATO cooperation, Georgia, etc.

These have been troubling aspects for the Alliance for the past years. While ambitious in dealing with so many matters, the Warsaw Summit continued the line drawn by the Wales Summit of 2014 and encouraged more the member states to become involved in active solutions. A hint which has been recognized and acknowledged as a directive by most, including Romania.

Romania's stance at the Warsaw Summit was a pro-active one, intending to show its strength not just as another member of the Alliance, but one that could become itself a provider of regional security. Romania's message at the Summit was that after almost 12 years of being a member and enjoying its benefits, it was high time its membership paid off. A first step was taken when increasing the defense budget to 2% of the GDP, complying thus with NATO requirements. More steps have been taken during the Summit and especially after, as shall be seen in the following chapters.

The aim of this article is to analyze the manner in which Romanian defense policy modelled itself in the aftermath of the Warsaw Summit, taking into account both NATO prerequisites, as well as domestic capabilities and resources. Romania's position within the international community shows an active commitment, as well as dire intention to contribute effectively with expertise, know-how and human and logistical resources. Given the international context and the many changes occurring within the Alliance, such an ambitious position assumed by Romania is noteworthy and commendable.

2. Outcomes of the Warsaw NATO Summit of July 2016

The Summit of July 8th-9th, 2016 occurred against a troubled background, as mentioned above, and this has been specified all throughout the document issued at the end of the meeting – the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016.

In light of the present security environment, NATO needs to adopt a comprehensive approach, focusing on all possible aspects, be they political, civilian, military, in order to ensure crisis management and security through cooperation¹.

The major issues agreed upon at Warsaw were the need to improve strategic anticipation, achieve better interoperability among NATO armed forces and ensure continued complementarity with international actors, such as the European Union, United Nations and OSCE.

The major focus of the Warsaw Summit was the continued fight against terrorism and the tackling of Russia.

¹***, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016, 9th July 2016, paragraph 119, available at http://nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm?selectedLocale=en, accessed 28.09.2017.

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Ergo, the need to enhance collective security, as well as rely more, and on more effective neighbors, which is present also in the Warsaw declaration on Transatlantic Security – “Collective defense remains NATO’s fundamental responsibility. Our deterrence and defense is based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabilities. (...) If our neighbors are more stable, we are more secure”².

Additionally, within the European Union there is an increase in populism and Euroscepticism, fueled by Brexit lately and the possibility of other states, such as Italy, the Netherlands and Poland to replicate this move. Thus, NATO presence in Europe is meant to re-assure Europe of the alliance’s commitment. As a result, a viable solution would be a joint effort between NATO and the EU, to demand all member-states (naturally, only those common member states) to raise their defense budgets to the demanded quota of 2%, and thus provide the necessary resources for an effective NATO defense system on the Eastern and Southern flanks, a solution embraced by Romania, as shall be seen later in the present article.

The Joint Declaration of the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the NATO Secretary General highlights the need for cooperation on account of the fact that security is interconnected. In order to provide security and deal with challenges, both NATO and the EU need to pool together resources and capabilities and make the most efficient use of them³.

The Summit highlighted the need of interoperability and sharing capabilities between member states⁴. This sharing of resources focuses especially on expertise and intelligence, considering the focus of the Alliance on cybersecurity. In this regard, a closer cooperation with the EU is desirable and intended-upon.

In a statement issued by Jens Stoltenberg, prior to the Summit, he highlighted the fact that the focus of NATO was no longer limited to its borders – ” Defending our homelands is not just about defending our borders. It is also about projecting stability beyond our borders. Because if our neighbours are more stable, we are more secure”⁵. It is here that Romania plays a greater role in providing the conditions and resources to achieve this desired stability.

NATO cohesion is under threat, along with an increased risk of fragmentation. The Alliance is currently under stress, both internally and externally. The resulting question is how can one achieve cohesion, both individually, as well as collectively? Consequently, states need to participate actively in strengthening its force of response, in a unitary manner. The consolidated military actions taken within NATO lately might lead to the assumption of a new arms’ race. However, the leaders present in Warsaw emphasized the fact that there is no agenda in this regard from the parties involved, and the military

² ***, *The Warsaw declaration on Transatlantic Security, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016*, 9th July 2016, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133168.htm?selectedLocale=en, accessed 20.09.2017.

³ ***, *Joint Declaration of the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 8th July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm, accessed 20.09.2017.

⁴ ***, “*NATO: Warsaw and beyond*”, Chatham House, 9-10 June 2016, available at https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/events/2016-09-06-nato-warsaw-beyond-meeting-summary_0.pdf, accessed 26.09.2017.

⁵ Jens Stoltenberg, “*The Warsaw Summit: strengthening NATO in turbulent times*”, Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Warsaw University, 31st May 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_131724.htm, accessed 19.09.2017.

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measures agreed upon are intended to constitute a defensive response, in the event of an attack against one of the member states. The four multinational battlegroups, agreed upon in Warsaw, totalling 4500 troops have been already deployed in the Baltics and Poland. Their role is clearly specified:” These forces are a defensive and proportionate deterrent force, fully in line with NATO’s international commitments. They send a clear message that an attack on one ally would be met by troops from across the Alliance.”⁶

One of the major achievements of the Summit was the adoption of a line of action suggesting the focus on adapting the Alliance’s response to specific circumstances, by resorting to all available instruments.

The resulting document of the Summit also highlights since its beginning paragraphs the change occurred as far as the security environment was concerned -it became more diverse, unpredictable and thorough⁷, highlighting that at the alliance’s periphery one can find insecurity and instability. Consequently, the new security environment needs to be able to resist to all changes and challenges.

The second paragraph of the document issued by the heads of state present at the Summit states that NATO’s mission remains the same. In this regard, it will continue to fulfil the three tasks mentioned in the strategic concept: collective defense, crisis management and security cooperation⁸.

Paragraph 32 highlights that the Alliance’s military posture is, by its nature, a defensive one⁹. This is to explain its position towards the Russian Federation, which was not present at the Summit, but was the center of attention through its menacing stand within the international community and especially towards its Western neighbors.

Taking this into consideration, the essential question asked in connection with the results of the Warsaw Summit by many scholars was: ”What next after Warsaw?”. And Romania attempted to provide an answer.

3. Romania’s defence policy post-Warsaw

In light of the recent events occurring in Europe: Brexit, the increase in migration and the new terrorist attacks hitting key European actors, solidarity, as a European value, is besieged¹⁰. The best answer to such a situation would be an enhancement of resources, and a pooling of effective commitment, translated as “(...) capability and strategy development must be reframed as a regionally inspired division of labor built on complementary force structures”¹¹.

⁶ ***, NATO battlegroups in Baltic nations and Poland fully operational, NATO website, 28th August 2017, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_146557.htm, accessed 30.09.2017.

⁷ Gabriel Bassarabescu, ”Ministrul Apărării, Mihnea Motoc, despre concluziile summitului NATO”, Interview on Radio România Actualități, 10th July 2016, available at http://www.romania-actualitati.ro/ministrul_apararii_mihnea_motoc_despre_concluziile_summitului_nato-91863, accessed 3.10.2017.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Alexander Mattelaer, *The NATO Warsaw Summit: How to Strengthen Alliance Cohesion?*, in *Strategic Forum*, No. 296, June 2016, p. 4, available at <http://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-296.pdf>, accessed 4.10.2017.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p.2.

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As a result of the Warsaw Summit, decision-makers agreed that those nations which are situated in the vicinity of threats to the Alliance would have to be prepared and act as first responders¹². This is the position taken by Romania lately, as can be seen from the Military Strategy, as well as the changes made in the budget allotted to defense and security and those implemented within the military organization.

According to scholars in the field, the Alliance is torn between dealing with traditional threats and adjusting to new ones¹³. This means that all its members face the same challenges, Romania included. However, in the case of Romania, the challenge is even greater, as it needs to overcome a gap in equipment and expertise.

All members present in Warsaw highlighted the danger coming from the eastern flank, and Romanian decision-makers rallied to such a position, as well. According to Mihnea Motoc, Romania's former National Defense Minister, the main benefit of the Summit was the provision of a realist and correct evaluation of the threats coming from the eastern border¹⁴. Thus, all member countries could build their deterrence response in a unitary manner.

In his statements issued in the aftermath of the Summit, former Minister Motoc distinguished among three action plans, necessary to be implemented for Romania: one within NATO, one consisting of engaging in negotiations and dialogue with the country's allies, to become operational within Romanian territory and one consisting of domestic actions to support the first one¹⁵.

Given the consolidated Allied presence in Romania, it is highly important that steps are taken in the direction of building infrastructure in order to provide the necessary support.

The political-military events of Ukraine, the situation in Crimea, the hybrid warfare perpetrated by Russia, the frozen conflicts of the larger Black Sea area, as well as the instability of the MENA countries and the flow of migrants from that area are all mentioned as creating an arch of instability on the eastern and southern flanks of NATO and the EU. Such a reference occupies the introduction of the chapter on national security and defense of the 2017-2020 Romanian Programme of Governance¹⁶. Moreover, "the country's geographical position has the potential to heighten these threats to Romanian security"¹⁷.

A fundamental objective for Romania is to consolidate its strategic partnerships, as can be seen from the available official documents. Immediately after the Warsaw Summit,

¹² *Ibidem*, p.10

¹³ Zachary Selden, *Looking forward from the Warsaw NATO Summit: What next for the Alliance?*, in *College of Europe Policy Brief*, No. 13, July 2016, p. 1, available at https://www.coleurope.eu/system/files/force/research-paper/selden_cepob_13-16_final.pdf?download, accessed 5.10.2017.

¹⁴ ***, *Declarații de presă ale ministrului Apărării Naționale și ale ministrului Afacerilor Externe, Lazăr Comănescu, privind angajamentele României, în urma Summitului NATO de la Varșovia*, 28th July 2016, available at <http://gov.ro/ro/media/video/declaratii-de-presa-ale-ministrului-apararii-nationale-mihnea-motoc-i-ale-ministrului-afacerilor-externe-lazar-comanescu-privind-angajamentele-romaniei-in-urma-summit-ului-nato-de-la-var-ovia>, accessed 3.10.2017.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ ***, *Programul de guvernare 2017-2020*, Guvernul României, 2017, p. 135, available at <http://gov.ro/ro/obiective/programul-de-guvernare-2017-2020>, accessed 2.10.2017.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

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consistent efforts have been made in order to comply with the needs highlighted at the meetings. Such efforts have been inventoried in the Activity Report of the Ministry of National Defense for the year 2016¹⁸: the participation in the NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, participation in the Western Balkans, the dislocation of 780 troops outside Romania, participation in the training of Iraqi Security Forces within the framework of the Anti-ISIS International Coalition, the participation in the EU battlegroups, the activation of the Ballistic Missile Defense System of Deveselu, participation in another 4 Smart Defense programmes (Romania totaling a participation in 36 such projects, increasing the strategic profile of the Black Sea).

An important document highlighting Romania's position towards defense in the wider North-Atlantic and European Union framework is the 2017-2020 Romanian Programme of Governance, which has structured its defense policies on several pillars:

- Strategic continuity within NATO and the EU;
- Increasing the operational capacity of the armed forces;
- The implementation of an optimal management of defence resources;
- Changes in the professional training and the life quality of the military personnel;
- Revitalizing the national defence industry;
- Population and territory training and inter-institutional management of military or security-related crises¹⁹.

It can be easily deduced that the Governance Programme takes into account the outcomes of the Warsaw Summit, as the document lays a great emphasis on increasing operational capacities in order to be able to implement the Alliance Action Plan, synchronizing the involvement in the NATO Smart Defense and EU Pooling and Sharing projects with the national defense priorities, modernizing operational capabilities of command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, acquiring A2AD (anti-access area denial) capabilities²⁰, such as radars and electronic warfare means, aerial defense capabilities, as well as anti-tank and anti-submarine ones, etc. A particular role is provided by using the multinational framework provided by NATO and the EU through the consecrated defense initiatives – “framework nation concept”, “smart defense”, “connected forces initiative” and “pooling and sharing”²¹.

Another important project is that of creating and developing the concept of a “National Integrated System of Crisis Management”, which could be connected to similar systems within NATO and the EU²².

It appears that Romania's response to the summit was two-folded: expenditure and participation. As far as expenditure is concerned, Romania boasts with the 2% allotted to the military spending, as a fulfilment of the NATO prerequisites. The second form of response, that of participation, occurred in the form of a multinational brigade, the activation of the Deveselu system, and the active presence in several missions abroad, in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans and a training mission in Iraq, to name but a few.

¹⁸ ***, *Raport asupra activității desfășurate de Ministerul Apărării Naționale în 2016*, in *Monitorul Oficial al României*, Third Part, No. 533, 21st April 2017, pp. 3-6, available at http://www.mapn.ro/rapoarte/rapoarte_activitate/Raport_activitate.pdf, accessed 3.10.2017.

¹⁹ ***, *Programul de guvernare....*, p. 136-140.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.136-137.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

²² *Ibidem*, p.140.

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Romania's response was a courageous one, signaling the changing of position from a country requiring assistance, to one able to provide assistance. In that regard, Romania's commitment was to create a multinational brigade, as well as an intensified instruction programme – SGT²³, both being created in agreement with possible scenarios that could occur in the near future, in the Black Sea area and the eastern flank of the Alliance. The intensified instruction programme is likely to combine all three operational fields: aerial, ground and naval training.

The Headquarters Multinational Brigade South-East, located in Craiova – a commitment taken within the Warsaw Summit of 2016, was activated during the Saber Guardian 2017 multinational exercise taking place in Cincu, in July 2017, in the presence of the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Petr Pavel. At the time, 8 NATO member states announced their intention to contribute to the Brigade, among which Poland, Bulgaria and the United States committed troops, while Germany and the Netherlands intend to send officers²⁴.

Previous to that, Romania took another strong stance within the NATO Meeting of the Ministers of Defense, which took place in October 2016. It is within this framework that Romania shall contribute militarily to the NATO battalion organized in Poland, while receiving allied support in the form of aerial patrol on the Eastern border, from the British, Canadian and Polish forces²⁵.

The activation of the Aegis Ashore site in Deveselu placed Romania as a regional security provider. The Ballistic Missile Defense System is a core-NATO capability, being intended to protect against threats coming from outside the Euro-Atlantic area, and increase the defense of troops stationed in Romania.

In 2017, Romania managed to allot 2% of the national budget for defense – a target established by NATO officials, Romania being one of the few countries able to comply. Although the country's compliance is a very enthusiastic one, it is difficult to foresee whether this would be possible in the following years as well, on account of changing financial conditions and the need to fulfil increased economic obligations within the European Union.

Apart from allotting 2% of the GDP, the challenge is to be able to maintain this quota for at least a decade²⁶, in order to be able to make significant changes as far as endowment is concerned. This entails a great responsibility for the state to acquire the equipment critical for each of the Romanian troops.

²³ ***, *Declarații de presă ale ministrului Apărării Naționale și ale ministrului Afacerilor Externe, Lazăr Comănescu, privind angajamentele României, în urma Summitului NATO de la Varșovia, op.cit.*

²⁴ Robert Lupițu, *Brigada multinațională NATO din România a fost activată în cadrul Saber Guardian 2017, cel mai mare exercițiu multinațional aliat din acest an*, in *Calea Europeană*, 17th July 2017, available at <http://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/fotovideo-brigada-multinationala-nato-din-romania-a-fost-activata-in-cadrul-saber-guardian-2017-cel-mai-mare-exercitiu-multinational-aliat-din-acest-an/>, accessed 3.10.2017.

²⁵ Robert Lupițu, *România, din nou în centrul deciziilor NATO: Forțe aliate din șapte țări, printre care SUA, Germania și Canada, vin la Marea Neagră pentru a asigura securitatea/ Spațiul aerian al României, aparat de avioane britanice*, in *Calea Europeană*, 27th October 2016, available at <http://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/romania-din-nou-in-centrul-deciziilor-nato-forțe-aliat-din-sapte-tari-printre-care-sua-germania-si-canada-vin-la-marea-neagră-pentru-a-asigura-securitatea-spațiul-aerian-al-romaniei-aparat-de/>, accessed 3.10.2017.

²⁶ Bassarabescu, *op.cit.*

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The complex international context requires a redefinition of the role and position of the military. In the case of Romania, this is an acute need, on account of the lack of conscription, as well as the lagging behind of military endowment. In this sense, the stepping up of budgetary needs to 2% of the GDP should be seen both commendable and highly needed, should Romania aspire to continue being a regional provider of security.

Apart from directing 2% of the GDP, Romanian decision-makers made efforts towards the endowment of the Romanian army. In this regard, approximately 100 million euros have been approved in the form of acquisitions, through Defense Planning Directive 15/2017 and the Supreme Council of National Defense Decision no. 174/2016, in agreement with the National Governance Programme 2017-2020. This is intended to correlate the military equipment with the challenges of the contemporary security environment.

Thus, the Warsaw Summit was the perfect occasion for Romanian decision-makers to strengthen, once again, the need to increase expenditure on the endowment of the Romanian army, especially following the lines of the "Army 2027" Programme²⁷: to modernize two frigates, to advance with the "Multi-Purpose Plane" Programme (consisting of pilot and support personnel training for F-16s), the possibility of buying multi-purpose corvettes and the establishment of framework agreements for the acquisition of several vehicles.

A piece of criticism which can be brought to the Romanian position in line with the Warsaw decision is the lack of emphasis on "deterrence". The notion has been raised at the Summit by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in an effort to highlight the fact that Russia could be brought to heel by realizing the consequences of its acts in the long-term. Unfortunately, Romania has not been very vocal as far as deterrence is concerned; as a result, critics of the current government failed to see the improvements made in the field of defense as necessary, not simply as a means to rally to NATO prerequisites, but also as a means of ensuring one's protection from an enemy looming around.

4. Conclusions

It is a fact that those states situated in areas prone to threats (threats to the Alliance) need to enhance their security. The question is how to transform a crisis in an opportunity. The position taken by Romania in the aftermath of the Warsaw Summit was in order to be able to address one's own vulnerabilities. It was also a good opportunity to show that country has the capacity to bounce back and be resilient.

As shown above, Romanian decision-makers have taken active steps in building upon the NATO prerequisites on endowment and development. The best example is the allotting of 2% of the GDP for defense expenditure. However commendable that it, it is also problematic. Romania needs to have a back-up plan on how to continue spending the 2% of the GDP, in the event of generalized economic decline all over the continent. Additionally, although aspirational the 2% expenditure on defense needs to be reported to the total pf Romania's budget and keep a realistic view that the Romanian 2% cannot be compared with the Polish 2% (of a larger GDP).

²⁷ *Ibidem.*

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Furthermore, Romania needs to exploit more on the assets it has, and should it effectively connect its intended targets mentioned in the Governance Programme with NATO reality, it needs to focus on developing research and technology projects in the field of defense, it needs to improve academic training for military personnel and, last but not least, it needs to step up its expenditures to be able to keep up the pace, both with the Alliance, as well as with the threats to the Alliance. Throughout the impressive measures taken since the Summit, Romania proved to be able to comply with Alliance demands, but the bigger challenge is to be able to comply in the long term.

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