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Rumänien
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Foundations of Romanian Geopolitical Thinking

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with 3 figures in the text

Contents

Zusammenfassung

Grundlagen rumänischen geopolitischen Denkens

Der Artikel beschäftigt sich aus einer interdisziplinären Perspektive mit den komplexen und komplizierten Fragen der geopolitischen Positionen Rumäniens. Der Artikel ist

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sehr synthetisch und beschäftigt sich mit verschiedenen Themen, denen das geopolitische Potenzial, die Risiken und Möglichkeiten von Rumänien als Nationalstaat und als Mitglied in diversen internationalen Organisationen wie der Nato oder der Europäischen Union gemeinsam ist. Er beruht auf den Arbeiten rumänischer und ausländischer Autoren, die er kritisch würdigt. Wichtige Themen sind die rumänisch-ungarischen Beziehungen, die Fragen der Nachbarschaftspolitik, der Schwarzmeer-Strategie und der wachsenden Rolle Rumäniens in kollektiven Sicherheitsstrukturen. Der Artikel lässt auch geo-ökonomische Aspekte nicht unbeachtet. Methodisch folgt er der Linie der Diskursanalyse, wobei aber auch einige konstruktiv-kritische eigene Ideen formuliert werden.

Schlagwörter: Rumänien, Geopolitik, euro-atlantische Integration, Verhältnis Rumänien-Ungarn, Nachbarschaftspolitik, Schwarzmeer-Strategie, ungarische Minderheit, Moldau, Gegensatz Russland-Westen

Summary

This paper is dealing from an interdisciplinary point of view with the complex and complicated issue of Romanian geopolitical thinking. The text is very synthetic and dealing with various subjects, having in common the geopolitical potential, risks and possibilities of Romania as a nation state and as a member of various international organisations like Nato or the European Union. It is based on the works of Romanian and foreign authors and applies a critical approach. Major issues are Romanian-Hungarian relations, neighbourhood policies, the Black Sea Strategy and the growing role of Romania in structures of collective defense. The study also highlights geo-economic aspects. Methodologically the article is following the line of discourse analysis, while some constructively critical original ideas are also formulated.

Keywords: Romania, geopolitics, Euro-Atlantic integration, Romanian-Hungarian relations, neighbourhood policies, Black Sea Strategy, Hungarian minority, Moldavia, West-Russia opposition

1 Introduction

Considering its economic, military and political importance, Romania is the most significant country of South-East Europe and is becoming a more and more important stabilising factor as far as security is concerned in this area, thus its geopolitical value is increasing. Our study tries to reflect on these roles from several points of view. We mainly analyse its role on the European continent, the advantages and obligations derived from its Nato membership, and the relations with other neighbouring countries. Once the country's Euro-Atlantic integration has finished, it cannot expect – as a relatively young nation state – the consolidation of its status, the increase of its international importance and its quick catching-up with Central Europe from an expansion as it is understood in the classical geopolitical sense, but from an intensive and quality-based internal development and an

expansion in the geo-economic sense. Our study also endeavours to critically analyse the bibliography related to this topic, basically following the line of discourse analysis.

2 Romania's geopolitical assets derived from its geographical location

Pinpointing Romania's geographical location has immediately ignited sharp arguments among foreign and Romanian historians, geographers and political scientists. The lack of consent is caused by the fact that the location of the country, i.e. the location of the principalities, which formed the core of the country, is described as "Balkanic" (especially in German and French sources), more rarely as Eastern European (Neguț 2008, p. 371). Since the word *Balkanic* has assumed a negative meaning bringing up prejudices, contemporary writers are consciously using the term *South-East European*. Thus, the majority of contemporary foreign (not Romanian) encyclopaedias describe Romania as a South-East European country. This South-East European positioning, similarly to the other Balkan countries, is deductible from the mental submission to the five hundred years of Ottoman dominance and from the simplistic over-generalisation of foreigners considering this area.

Maria Todorova affirms that because Westerners did not colonise the Balkans, this lead to numerous misconceptions and legends with negative connotations (Asteris & Tsardanidis 2006, p. 468). It is obvious, though, that we cannot start from the geographical, topographical definition of the Balkan Peninsula, a definition that draws its northern limit along the Danube-Sava river line, since for the socio-economic homogeneity of South-East Europe a key role was played by historically determined social-cultural factors and forces, not by physical parameters.

Applying the same thesis, defining Romania as a Central European country (Cocean 1993b, p. 5) is not valid either, since the fact that the country is geometrically a central point of the continent does not reflect the social-cultural realities created by history, the particular political-cultural space created by the Habsburg and German style of state organisation and the particular system of institutions we would regard as essential for the concept of Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*) as, e.g., defined by Naumann. We would not be able to call Romania a Central European country even if Transylvania [Transilvania],[1)] the region, which represents the larger part of the country and which was for a long time a cultural-ethnic zone of transition, has Central European traditions of state organisation as compared to the other regions of the country, the principalities outside the Carpathians (Fig. 1). If we only considered Romania's location as the topographic centre of Europe, then we should consider Russia a European country. However, international geopolitical consensus as well as Russian self-definition consider the Russian Federation as a separate entity, as a Eurasian country. This means that Romania is on the south-eastern periphery of Europe.

[1)] In contrast to Figure 1, Transylvania is understood here in the sense of all Romanian territories inside the Carpathian arc, i.e. development regions 5, 6 and 7 in Figure 1. Transylvania in the narrower sense [Ardeal], i.e. in the sense of the historical principality, would comprise just development region 7 plus the counties Cluj and Bistrița-Năsăud as represented by Figure 1.

Cartography: Török IBOLYA 2017

Fig. 1: Romania's current territorial-administrative structure with counties [judeţ] plus development regions [regiunea dezvoltare]

Important elements of Romania's spatial self-definition are the three major points of its geography: Danube, Black Sea and the Carpathians (more precisely their south-eastern ranges). Danube and Black Sea, apart from being natural water borders, have always played an important role for Romania's mobility, transport on water and defense. The Black Sea is probably overrated from the mythological point of view as well, as the country's not too long coastline connects it to free trade secured by the World Ocean, and this is true although the Black Sea is a rather isolated basin, and on top of all it is also situated in a geopolitically dangerous area. Romanians generally are 'educated' at school that the Black Sea is a cardinal element in the well-being of the state, although European countries like Switzerland, Austria, Slovakia and Czechia are richer and more successful than Romania without access to a sea. However, Romania's position on the Black Sea coast has increased in value due to the routes of transportation used for hydrocarbons, as we will see later in this study.

According to Simion MEHEDINŢI, the classical Romanian geographer with a determinist view, Danube and Black Sea are natural borders, while the Carpathians are the symbol and warranty of survival, as in history they served as a shelter where the country's population could retreat, when foreign military forces were threatening.

Discourses that were meant to be scientific but are in fact rather poetic are frequent even today, although they tend to be irrationally spiritual due to the fact that they personify

natural elements and give them providential powers in the welfare of the population. This process is called the "culturalisation of nature", or the "re-ification of nature" (Benedek 2000, pp. 124f.).

The country's size is also a very important aspect, as its geopolitical role is significantly determined by it. In global terms we cannot talk about 'large' European countries. Even the European Union (EU) is small in a geo-economic and geo-strategic sense. In the European context, Romania is a medium-sized country as the 'club of the big' begins with Poland and Spain, whose population is at the least double of Romania's. Romania's population is decreasing significantly due to an increasingly negative birth rate and a threatening emigration wave. According to the census of 2011 the country's population was 20.1 million, a figure that decreased to 19.8 million by 2015 according to data from Eurostat, placing Romania on the 7th position in the EU. As far as the surface is concerned it ranks 9th, and this gives Romania a relatively rich relief and more resources. As far as strategic resources are concerned, Romania can supply itself at a rate of 80% with hydrocarbons, which is a very good share in the EU.

Taking into consideration its dimensions on a regional level, Romania ranks better as it is the largest country in South-East Europe, and it has in relative terms increased its territory due to processes of disintegration in the area, during the crises following the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe (Czecho-Slovakian, Yugoslavian and Soviet territorial-political disintegration). This also underlines the fact that the country has a strong social cohesion as Romania has coped with the stress of the historically unprecedented post-Socialist transformation with relative ease, while several of its multinational Socialist neighbours disintegrated.

As far as Euro-Atlantic integration is concerned we can state that apart from Poland and Romania the countries accepted in Nato have minor defensive force, they only increased the number of votes in the organisation and decreased its efficiency (Michta 2009, p. 370).

Béla Borsi-Kálmán, a connoisseur of the Romanian language, culture and political thinking and a Hungarian-born citizen, thus an outsider, summarised the main elements of Romanian geopolitical thinking in his synthesis-like work, elements that are rooted in the geographical position of the country and its people as well as in its historical experiences (Borsi-Kálmán 2004, pp. 33–35):

1. It is positioned on the fault line of Eastern and Western Christianity.
2. As far as its culture is concerned one can find elements of three types: Central European (ambitions towards a civil society, result-centred thinking), Russian (fatalistic philosophical approach to life, societal organisation forms characteristic for Eastern Christianity) and Turkish-Balkanic (pseudo-bourgeois models, certain mentalities and behaviours). The first is characteristic for Transylvania in the wider sense, the second for Moldavia [Moldova] and the third for the South of the country, but there is mixing and overlapping.
3. It was generally bordered by three empires, the last ones were the Habsburg, the Ottoman and the Russian empires.

4. Its heterogeneity is the basis of its cohesion, as a paradox: It does not exist for a certain reason, it simply exists, and for this the reasons are being fabricated (Daco-Roman theory of continuity, etc.).
5. As far as its position is concerned it represents a bridge between Central and Orthodox Europe.
6. Its Latin culture provides it with a special position in a predominantly Slavic neighbourhood.
7. If there would be a need, it can be used as headquarters, even against threatening neighbours or more distant powers.
8. If it merges with the Republic of Moldavia, it can become a counterpart for a Central European union.
9. In this case it is a counterpart for Ukraine and Poland, too.
10. If it chooses the eastern sphere of influence, it could be Turkey's or any other powers' 'Eye on Europe'.

In the following we will analyse the main elements of Romanian geopolitical thinking from a certain constructively critical approach, contrasting existing literature and main phenomena of the present. As the authors of this study are familiar with the Romanian and western literature in the domain, the standpoint of the present study is also Western-oriented, the so-called 'Western' values predominate in it, but not without a glimpse on the interests and points of view of other powers outside this scope.

Some of Borsi-Kálmán's statements would sound inconvenient for the official Romanian political and historical perception (It is, e.g., a profanity to question the Romanian theory of settlement continuity.), others can only be taken as hypotheses, as it is very unlikely, e.g., that Romania would become Russia's or any oriental power's 'eye on Europe'. It is a fact that Romania lies geo-economically in the corridor from Western Europe to the post-Soviet zone near to three seas (Caspian, Black and Mediterranean) as well as along the Rhine-Main-Danube corridor, which connects the Black Sea with the German area (Neguț 2008, p. 376). From this point of view its peripheral role increases in value for the powers of the Western world – the United States of America (USA) and the European powers. But it represents also a risk due to the vicinity of the post-Soviet area – a risk that is not likely worth to be taken by the Western powers. This duality explains the accession of post-Communist Romania to Nato and EU.

3 European integration and its fault lines. Periphery of strategic headquarters?

Although after World War II Romania, due to its geographical location, became part of the Soviet sphere of influence, during the Cold War era it began drifting away from the Soviet Union, because of the specific Romanian way – which started in the time of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, but reached its full bloom in the Ceaușescu era. This separate way caused a series of diplomatic successes, but in the end it also resulted in failures (Georgescu

2011), and the latter brought about the fall of the Ceauşescu regime and of Romanian Communism in December 1989. After this it became obvious that the new Romanian political elite (which was not quite new, as there was not a process of accountability against the former elite of the Socialist system) is committed to the values of the Western world and wishes to adopt the achievements of Western democracy and capitalism. For this reason, a long and often painful process of transition began, a process that is not over yet from a certain point of view. A Romanian expert of international relations, Cristian Radu Chereji, analysed Romanian foreign policies of the 1990s and divided them into four periods (Chereji 2000, p. 15):

1989–1991: era of perplexity
1991–1993/1994: era of transition
1993/1994 – 1997/1998: era of stabilisation
1997/1998 – 2000: era of re-orientation

It is understood that this categorisation is subjective, and the opinion of the analyst has greatly been influenced by the fault line created by the political events of the 1990s. It goes without saying, however, that the Romanian political elite was unanimous – be it Ion Iliescu's or Emil Constantinescu's presidency – as far as the question of Western orientation is concerned, even if there were discussions between the elite and the rest of their parties about its success. The entire Romanian political elite was committed to the so-called 'Western consensus' to carry out the processes necessary to be accepted into the Nato (Angelescu 2011, p. 127).

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of Communism, the leaders of Nato and EU, the latter founded in 1992, interpreted their communities as elite clubs, who select their members carefully and can set unilateral conditions to those who want to become members – conditions that must be met even if they required sacrifices. This explains why despite the euphoria following the fall of Communism at the beginning of the 1990s, the Western powers delayed the Euro-Atlantic integration of the former Socialist countries of Eastern Europe. It is not a coincidence that in 1995, when the EU accepted new members, only Sweden, Finland and Austria became members – countries that were neutral in the Cold War – and that in 1999, when Nato enlarged its circles, only Poland, Czechia and Hungary were accepted. The latter decision was a great disappointment for the Romanian public. Romania, with its collapsed economy, which could only be saved partially by privatisation, with its increasing inflation and internal social tensions, its mob riots (the brawl between Romanians and Hungarians in Târgu Mureş in March 1990, the miners' attacks, and to a smaller extent the conflicts between rivalling criminal gangs) and most importantly with its poverty, which represented another serious factor of risk, was lagging behind the other former Socialist countries in fulfilling the conditions. And because there was no serious threat to the West at that time, they felt that in the case of Romania risk and possible failure are bigger than the possible gain.

Thus, the United States of America offered Romania an institutionalised collaboration in the frame of the Partnership for Peace Program instead of full Nato membership, just like in the case of other former Socialist countries including Russia. The Partnership for Peace initiative was called to life at the 1994 Nato summit in Brussels [Bruxelles/

Brussel] to avoid bringing expansion to a halt (Michta 2009, p. 367) and to promote access of the former Soviet bloc – leaving open the opportunity of delaying this process, if necessary.

The time for access came with the unexpected terror attacks of 9/11, and the expansion process of Nato and EU was sped up. The rapid expansion had a negative effect insofar as the cohesion of both Nato and EU weakened. The latter's weakness became obvious after the economic crisis, when the differences between the more developed members and the southern part of the EU and its eastern periphery grew – differences that became obvious again with the migration crisis of 2015. Although the decision makers must have been aware of this, in the light of the terrorist attacks of the 2000s it seemed to be the lesser problem to accept new allies than to maintain the status quo. Thus, Romania, with its economic problems (although trying to solve them, e.g., by the monetary reform of the mid-2000s), its social problems and its issues related to minorities became a member of the two clubs of Western democracies.

This situation – to use a term of the game theory – was a win-win situation, since the collaboration brought benefits not only for Romania, but also for its new allies, not so much for the relatively stable area of Eastern Europe and the Balkan countries that needed to be approached individually, but rather for the Black Sea area and those lying east of it.

By the fact that Western powers set their foot on this territory, Romania had the opportunity to take part in various regional projects as a member of a much larger area (Dolghi 2010, p. 113) – projects regarding economy, defense policies or the protection of environment. At the same time Romania increased in value for Nato – especially in the context of the Crimean crisis – considering that Nato functions as an outpost of the USA in the Black Sea area with the aim to obstruct the expansion of the Russian interest sphere (Cheşcu 2013, p. 81). In this context, the entire isthmus from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea has increased in value, as it represents the eastern border of the enlarged Nato, partly coinciding with the so-called 'cordon sanitaire' or Barriere de l'Est of Marshal Foch between the two World Wars (Toboşaru 2010, p. 47), whose primary role would have been to prevent the expansion of Soviet Communism.

Western orientation of Romanian politicians and especially their gestures towards the USA have often received connotations of exaggeration and ridiculousness, for instance the remark made by the former Romanian president Traian Băsescu about the Washington-London-Bucharest [Bucureşti] axis. Apart from the fact that this is a case of disproportion of size, the American and British 'members' do not accept the informal existence of this axis, and the statement itself caused international and internal uproar, as it was considered to be in contradiction to the priority of European integration and the more traditional French-German system of relations. Băsescu's Social-Democrat opposition at the time took the opportunity to accuse him of going in the opposite direction of the government's European orientation. On the European level the German Gernot Erler, deputy leader of the Social-Democratic fraction in the Bundestag, and the French journals Le Figaro and Le Monde attacked this statement (Toboşaru 2009, pp. 104–112). At the same time, this statement is a clear sign that Romanian politics has 'emancipated' to its Western allies and observe the fault lines within the Western world.

The question arises: How does Romanian politics see the ideal future: European, Atlantic or Euro-Atlantic? Undoubtedly, the third option would be ideal, although Romanian politicians are also aware of the fact that their power is insufficient to significantly influence the cohesion of the Euro-Atlantic world. Although it seems that the Euro-Atlantic concept is in deep crisis, and following the failure of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) discussions it does not even represent economic integration, Romania – paradoxically the peripheral state – remains committed to this concept. The reasons behind this commitment are the following (Lakatos 2015, pp. 147f.):

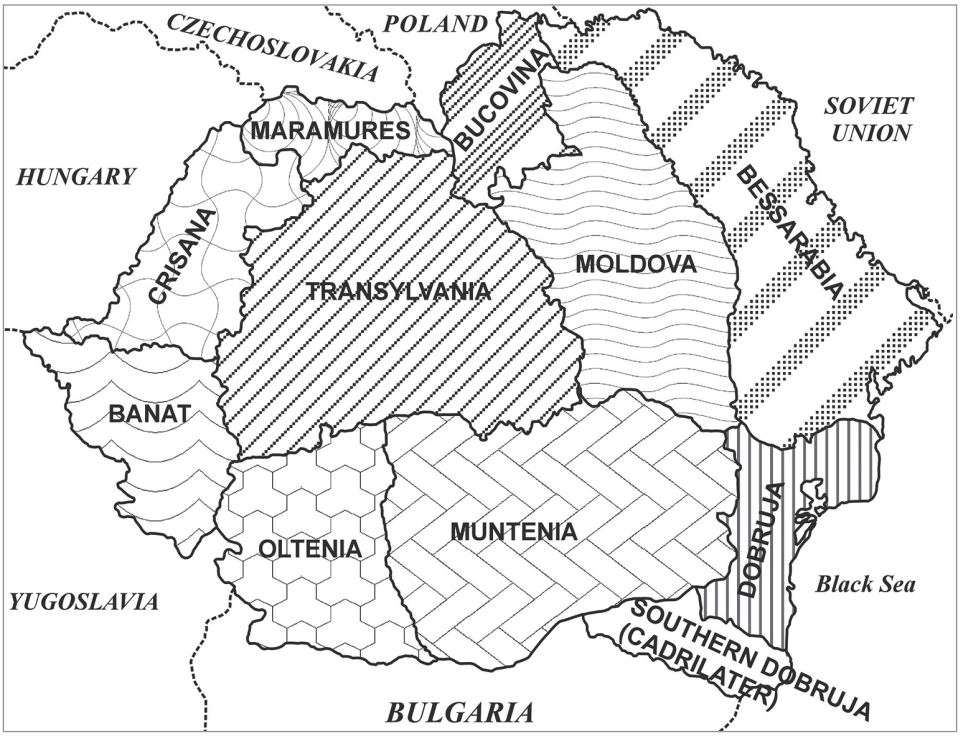
- By its traditional politics of balance, as during its history, Romania has learnt how to find the balance between the competing superpowers.
- Its role as periphery, which does not compel it to take a definite and straightforward stand in the American-European arguments. Many average Romanian citizens did not see and still do not see any difference between the processes of Nato and European integration, and today in many cases, Romanian politicians speak about a unitary West.
- Romania's geopolitical role, which allows it to be useful for the USA and for the EU at the same time.

4 Development of Romanian-Hungarian relations and their perspectives

Romania has the most complex and most problematic system of relations with Hungary, as in 160 years there were hardly any socio-political turns where the interests of the two countries would have been the same – using the words of Stefano Bottoni: "There is a peculiar history of conflict of nationality and identity policy" (Bottoni 2007, p. 1).

The long history of conflict starts in the 18th century in the era of national awakening – and it is in no case thousands of years in time span as it is presented by some Romanian or Hungarian historical interpretations, which are sometimes too mythological. The Trianon peace treaty at the end of World War I (1920) meant among others the unification of Transylvania [Ardeal], Banat, Crişana and Maramureş, i.e. all territories inside the Carpathian arc, with Romania (Fig. 2), which also meant the worsening of the relationship between the two countries. Between the two World Wars, Hungarian foreign policy was characterised by revisionism while the Romanian was motivated by the need to consolidate its new borders. The period of Socialism (1946–1989) can be deduced from the Trianon treaty in the context of Romanian-Hungarian relations. It meant that the problem of ethnic minorities was swept under the rug for a while, but it emerged more and more in the Ceauşescu and Kádár eras, and in the years before the fall of the regimes it became an open confrontation, we could say a local Cold War between the two countries.

In the Socialist period, the question of nationality could not be discussed, because fascism had compromised civil nationalism, and the great powers wanted this question out from international relations as it was a potential source of conflict (Földes 2007, p. 7). György Földes, a Hungarian historian, formulates a theory according to which in contrast to the Slavic states and neighbouring Hungary, Romania had a unique characteristic of



Cartography: Török Ibolya 2017

Fig. 2: Territorial structure of Romania following the establishing of Greater Romania after 1918

its minority policy, i.e. it did not give up suppressing its minorities, especially violently suppressing and assimilating the Hungarian minority, most of all in the time of national Bolshevism beginning in the 1970s. While in the period between the two World Wars Romania worked on preserving the status quo, and this can be interpreted as a step towards ethnic integration, in the Ceauşescu era building of the nation meant restricting the usage of minorities' languages, the gradual downsizing of their cultural infrastructure and later a more and more visible ethnicity-based discrimination (Földes 2007, p. 5). In a nutshell, Romania wanted to transform the question of ethnicity into a strictly internal issue under the cover of Socialist internationalism, while introducing its own national-Communist attitude had an effect against internationalism, and ethnic homogenisation was meant to be used by the Ceauşescu regime to support its legitimacy as being successful on the frontline of building the nation. This strategy was the perfect means to distract attention from the deteriorating economic situation of the country, the open crisis of the regime and the violent, neo-Stalinist way to tackle it. In our opinion the forced homogenisation had exactly the opposite result, i.e. it increased the opposition on the minorities' part against suppression, while a minority-friendly policy, paradoxically, could have led to a faster and

even spontaneous assimilation, as the internal solidarity of the communities would have been weakened when they were not under pressure and lacked the image of an enemy.

The post-World War I Romanian strategy to consolidate its territory is not unique as it can be labelled as statutory that states, to preserve their territorial integrity, aim to ensure the loyalty of all the nationalities living there, and this loyalty must be stronger towards the host nation as it is towards the home country of the given nationality (Reisser 2009, p. 234).

Under the pressure of these antecedents the democratic turn in 1989 took place in both countries. But even after the fall of the Communist regimes the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania has remained a defining, cardinal element of the relationship of the two countries, although there is a slight difference as compared to previous times: The question of ethnicity did not define all the segments of bilateral relations debilitating them to such an extent as it happened during the Communist period (Földes 2007, p. 7). This can be explained by the gradual development of a free market with an economy not dependent on state intervention anymore. The freedom of speech that followed the fall of the regime had an effect in two directions: On the one hand it strengthened the previously suppressed aggressive nationalist discourse on both sides; on the other it gave an opportunity to discuss the Romanian-Hungarian relationship on a new basis, without taboos.

The former Communists, who dominated the new Romanian political elite, could not carry on with the suppressive policies of Ceauşescu's regime on every level, but the neo-Stalinist habits of anti-minority xenophobia still worked and materialised in the refusal of granting rights to minorities, in the refusal of democratisation of national relations and overt nationalist instigation (e.g., the riots in March 1990 or the anti-Hungarian actions of the former mayor of Cluj-Napoca [Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg], Gheorghe Funar). These attacks used the models of other historical eras, stating that the minority represents a danger, threatens the majority, has more rights and wants still more with immeasurable greed to the detriment of the majority, a fact that meant a certain kind of parasitism and the damaging of democracy (see the manifestations of the extreme nationalist political forces, especially the communications of the Romania Mare party, published mainly in the homonymous newspaper).

With all this considered though, the Romanian political elite, irrespective of their political colour, managed to choose the strategic aim of a pragmatic-rational Euro-Atlantic integration correctly. Of course, all this meant that Romania had to adopt democratic models alien to its political tradition, in the way of tackling minority issues as well. Hungary also took advantage of this in the building of new relations, as the Euro-Atlantic integration required the full respecting of the rights of nationalities as well, and this provided the appropriate framework for the validation of minorities' rights. In fact, this process started with the signing of the resolution of the 1975 Helsinki/Helsingfors summit, when, besides the inviolability of state borders, the respecting of human rights became a central element in West-East relations, and this led to the corrosion of the respect previously earned by the Ceauşescu regime. After this, Ceauşescu looked for compensation in turning towards the Third World and building relationships there (Földes 2007, p. 9).

After the fall of the Communist regime, Hungary openly admitted to politically support the Hungarians living outside its borders, and this became a central element of its

foreign policies with neighbouring countries where Hungarian minorities lived. All this is in congruence with the first democratically elected government's foreign policy doctrine, the co-equal and synergic priority of Euro-Atlantic integration, keeping up the good relationships with the neighbours and protecting the interests of the Hungarian minorities living outside the borders (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 59).

Because the Hungarian minority in Romania benefited from the gradual extension of rights during the process of the country's democratisation following the fall of the Communist regime, we can state that the situation of the minority has significantly improved in the past 25 years. This extension of rights was, however, not a linear process, as the governments of the early 1990s continued, although more discreetly, the anti-Hungarian policies of the Ceauşescu regime. A more significant protection of minorities in European politics was made possible by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1990 in Copenhagen [København], where there were amendments stated related to the protection of minorities (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 83).

The ruling Social-Democratic Party at the beginning of the 1990s continued the traditions of the Ceauşescu regime and did not recognise the issue of minorities as being intergovernmental trying to tackle it as strict home affair. At the 1991 CSCE summit in Geneva [Genève] it was stated due to the USA's determined standpoint that the issue of national minorities is not a home affair but subject to legitimate international inquiries (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 146).

Favourable for Romania when refusing to grant minorities rights was the fact that in international law collective rights (requested only by Hungary) were not recognised and granted, since other European governments were afraid of minority separatism (Greece, France, Spain). So, Hungary was not able to incorporate the warranties of minorities' rights protection into the documents of multilateral international organisms and could only delay, not stop, the accession of Slovakia and Romania, countries that were not interested in granting minority rights, to the Council of Europe in 1993.

The reason was that in the 1990s the West subordinated granting minority rights to preserving European stability expecting that integration of countries lagging behind will foster their readiness to change their policies to the better (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 137). This attitude was in the case of Romania all the more justified as Ion Iliescu, the president at the beginning of the 1990s, was closely related to the former Soviet leaders. In the case that Romania would have been isolated internationally, he would have been ready to tie the country to a Russian or Soviet-oriented alliance system.

As regards collective rights, Zsolt Németh, secretary of state for foreign affairs in the subsequent Orbán governments and minority politician has reasoned that "an individual belonging to a minority is in danger exactly because of his appertaining to that group (…). Not to be damaged in their individual rights, the group must be protected." (cited after Jeszenszky 2016, p. 139) This fact needs to be stressed, since several countries reason against granting minority rights by saying that citizens belonging to a minority are fully emancipated as far as individual rights are concerned, and that they need no more privileges, thus putting collective rights and individual rights in a certain opposition.

Following the European integration of Romania and Hungary, the Hungarian minority in Romania could only in a few fields not achieve any results, i.e. in the cases of territorial autonomy, recognition of collective rights, and the re-establishing of the independent Hungarian state university in Cluj-Napoca. It needs to be noted that among these cases territorial autonomy and re-establishing of the Hungarian university has had antecedents in Romania during the years of Stalinist dictatorship, i.e. in the middle of the 1950s. Democratic Romania refuses to grant them on the ground that both were the result of Soviet interference, autonomy would endanger Romania's territorial unity and was against the constitution, although there are examples in other European countries (Germans in South Tyrol [Südtirol/Alto Adige], Swedes of the Åland islands [Åland]). Also, the Republic of Moldavia assures territorial autonomy to its Gagauz minority (Orthodox Turkic people) (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 151).

The governments of Hungary, irrespective of their political colour, have all supported the Hungarian minority's claims, although rightist governments tended to be more determined and energetic in this matter. The periodical resurfacing of the autonomy problem causes a certain amount of friction in the relationship of the two countries, but over time these tensions decline. The Fidesz-government, since 2010, has been so committed to the protection of minorities' rights that it has led to a gradual cooling of the relationship between the two countries. The Romanian-Hungarian strategic partnership has lost its use, which functioned before Romania was accepted in the EU and shortly after that; and the estranging is also signalled by the fact that common governmental meetings established by the Hungarian Socialist and the Romanian central-right governments before 2010 have stopped.

The bilateral relationships have particularly worsened when László Tőkés, who was at that time the Romanian representative in the European Parliament, in 2013 suggested that Hungary be a protective power for the Hungarian minorities living outside its borders. This suggestion proved unacceptable even for the right-wing government represented by president Băsescu, because he was afraid of the Romanian public opinion's reaction, had he supported this suggestion.

This extent of cooling in relationships is in nobody's interest and especially the Hungarian community in Romania could have been affected. It is not certain whether the rigid refusal of territorial autonomy claims is the best option for Romania, since granting this autonomy could have an integrating effect making the Hungarian minority even more loyal to the state. The autonomy statute formulated by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania [Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, RMDSZ], the organisation representing the Hungarian minority, has been drawn up respecting the constitution and the principle of Romania's territorial unity.[2)] Indeed, the Hungarian minority in Romania has to be aware that territorial autonomy can only be achieved by convincing the Romanian majority that granting this right serves also the interests of the majority.

The most frequent Romanian-Hungarian geopolitical dispute is on historiography, especially after the national-Communist theses of Ceauşescu were effectuated from the 1970s onward and continuously answered by Hungarian historians, especially in the

2) *http://rmdsz.ro/uploads/fileok/dok/A_romaniai_Szekelyfold_autonomia_statutuma.pdf*

1980s. This practice continued even after the fall of the Communist regime. However, beginning with the 1990s, among Romanian historians a new generation gathering around Lucian Boia look at Romanian national historiography with a more critical eye and underline the fact that the demographic losers of the last century are rather the Hungarians, since the Romanian majority has so successfully and consciously homogenised the country that the Hungarians not only fail to represent a threat for Romanian unity, but struggle to survive and to preserve what is left of their national identity (Boia 2015, p. 127).

The Communist dictatorship with its extensive industrialisation settled hundreds of thousands of Romanians from eastern and southern parts of the country around newly established Transylvanian factories as well as thousands of Romanians from rural Transylvanian areas in cities, thus changing their ethnic proportions. As a result, to cite Catherine Durandin "The Hungarian community is de-stabilised, the industrialisation of the Transylvanian cities attracts especially the Romanian peasants into the cities, and the demographic conditions tend towards 'Romanianisation'" (Durandin 1998, p. 419). This prompts the questions: Is there any point in building the nation politically to the detriment of ethnic minorities? Does it make any sense to continue the political fights on either side based on historic rights?

The same questions can be asked the extremist and revisionist political forces in Hungary that have never been in a government position following the fall of the Communist regime. Is there any sense in striving for a reconstruction of historical Hungary when Romanians outnumber Hungarians in Transylvania so clearly?

Official Hungary has not questioned the borders even after the fall of the Communist regime. Against some internal opposition, Hungary has abandoned Transylvania when it has repeatedly committed itself to the bonds it had accepted in Helsinki/Helsingfors, and in 1996 by the Romanian-Hungarian treaty in return for commitments of minority right protection (Tunander 2001, p. 455). Treaties of this kind have at the beginning of the 1990s also been signed by Hungary with Ukraine and Slovakia. Romania did not want to miss this process, because this would have hindered its plans for Euro-Atlantic integration due to unresolved neighbourhood problems. Èdouard Balladur, the French primeminister, promoted these bilateral treaties setting off the European Stability Pact including minority right protection, good relationship with neighbouring countries as well as the principle of inviolability of borders set by peace treaties and becoming a pre-requisite for the joining of the European community (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 348).

An informal and quite successful result of bi- or multilateral neighbourhood policy is the system of cross-border cooperation, which emerged along Romania's entire borderline. It proved particularly successful along the Romanian-Hungarian border. By spontaneous popular diplomacy it has contributed to trust building, to knowing each other from the bottom and to reconciliation. Following EU accession of both countries, development projects realised in this framework were taken over by the much more generous Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) program.

From Romania's point of view, it is a disadvantage that in the wider region it has not been included into successful macro-regional cooperation groups such as the Visegrád

Four, where Hungary is a member, even the initiator. Inclusion would make it possible for Romania and Hungary to articulate the socio-economic problems of the area in a more coordinated way. However, in the pre-accession period, Romania's participation in the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) since 1997 helped intra-regional co-operation becoming more effective after some countries of the wider region had joined the EU. Nevertheless, Romania has up to the present day not been able to counterbalance the Central European cooperation of the Visegrád Four, no matter how many tri- or multilateral regional cooperation projects it had initiated. Since the mid-1990s, Romania and Bulgaria have repeatedly asked to be accepted in this group operating since 1991, but always received a friendly refusal, since the Four would not have liked to be hindered by countries lagging in democratic transformation (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 132).

Romania did not manage to revive the Little Entente, which existed between the two World Wars against the offensive Hungarian foreign policy of minority rights protection, as, on the one hand, Yugoslavia was out of this equation due to the destructive Balkan war and Hungary, on the other, via its preventive diplomacy managed to stop Czechoslovakia from creating a potential Little Entente. The Romanian geopolitical literature of the beginning of the 1990s mentioned plans, which seem nonsensical from the point of the country's successful accession to the Euro-Atlantic organisation. According to these suggestions it would have been an alternative for Romania to tighten its relations with Yugoslavia instead of Western integration (Cocean 1993a, p. 79).

Geopolitics has internal and external space-organising projections integrated into the scientific discourse. An example is the vehement criticism of Huntington's simplistic scheme of spatial division, which draws the border between Western and Eastern civilisations exactly along Transylvania's eastern and southern borders, thus practically dividing Romania's territory (Cocean & Filip 2011).

Another example for geopolitical arguments, this time related to internal spatial organisation, is the official denial that the Szeklerland [Ținutul Secuiesc/Székelyföld] in central Romania (Fig. 1) exists as an individual historical-ethnographic region with a Hungarian majority and the extension of this denial to the literature of regional geography. Interpretations of this kind are the reason why certain criticism is formulated that attacks exclusive ethnocentrism, for which it is impossible to consider that the defensive ethno-cultural element could be a resource of development, a value (Benedek 2004, p. 201). The cultural war developing around symbolic spaces is extended to the elements of the symbolic space, and for a long time it has materialised in the conscious destruction of the material elements of the Hungarian cultural heritage (see, among others the anti-Hungarian manifestations of Gheorghe Funar, Cluj-Napoca's former nationalist mayor) as a kind of 'damnatio memorie'. Thus, geography becomes, to use Lucian Boia's words, the key element of Romanian geopolitics and homeland-ness just as it did between the two World Wars in the 'Geopolitica şi Geoistoria" magazine (cited by Bowd & David 2015, p. 59).

We have already mentioned a few ideas about the cooling of the Romanian-Hungarian relationships after 2010. The worsening of the relationship can have been influenced by the fact that in the same alliance system the two countries acquire a different type of foreign

political orientation. Romania is consistent in its Euro-Atlantic apologetics and EU-integration oriented as well as America-friendly, while Hungary has a tone of euro-scepticism, criticises EU centralisation as well as the EU's and America' defensive policy as far as the issue of immigrants is concerned, which has been worsening since 2015. Hungary is constantly criticised by the EU and America because of its alleged internal damaging of democratic structures, while Romania received applause for its consistent and strict war against corruption. Hungary would like to achieve a privileged position at the immense Russian market after the embargo period and to achieve this also at other Eurasian emerging markets via its so-called 'Eastern opening' and its attention paid to maintaining a good relationship with Russia. Romania, however, based on its negative experiences in the past, is reserved as far as the newly emerging Russian expansionism is concerned, and to counterbalance it, it wishes to enforce its foreign and defense policies with the United States and Nato. It is also an active initiator of collective defense on the Eastern fringe of Nato.

In other words, as compared to the 1980s and 1990s, there is an apparent change of roles in the relationship of the two countries: Romania is the teacher's 'pet', while Hungary is the 'bad guy'. Obviously, Romania is trying to benefit from this situation to increase its prestige and Western influence. And as far as the battle for investors is concerned, Ro-

Cartography: Török Ibolya 2017

Fig. 3: Territorial changes of Romania during World War II

mania is trying to position itself as favourably as possible in comparison to Hungary, as a stable, trustworthy and loyal ally.

It is difficult to see what the end of this strange change of roles will be, but history is a memento for all of us. Between the two World Wars, the small Central-Eastern European countries looked for powerful protectors to preserve their territorial gains or to regain their losses and thus easily fell into the trap of Hitler or Stalin, instead of trying to find their peace with joined forces (Jeszenszky 2016, p. 22). It would be very unfortunate if nowadays, instead of European unity and common future, rivalry would revive and thus these countries would look for the grace of foreign autocracies.

In this respect it gives very serious reason for worry that Hungarian extreme right paramilitary groups like the National Frontline [Nemzeti Arcvonal] were having common military exercises with the Russian special troops of FSB, and that Hungarian extreme right political circles in general could have close relationships with Russian intelligence structures based on territorial revisionism and rejection of Western-type democracies (Juhász et al. 2017, p. 22). This could easily destabilise Romanian-Hungarian relationships, since Romanians have the embarrassing experience of temporary territorial losses during World War II (Fig. 3). The whole process of the so-called "Eastern Opening" policy of Hungary's Orbán government, especially the political approaching to Russia, can easily revive Romanians' suspicion against Hungarian irredentism, which in this interpretation is trying to gain Russian support for achieving its purposes. This would mean a real risk of ruining all confidence-building measures during the first decade of our century in Romanian-Hungarian relationships.

5 Neighbourhood policies in the post-Communist area

In the process of European integration Romania and its southern neighbour, Bulgaria, has been put into the same category by Western decision makers. The two countries have been accepted into the EU in the same year, in 2007, three years after the other post-Socialist countries, and they have also not yet been included into the Schengen Zone. Romania and Bulgaria have many similarities indeed: Both are relatively homogeneous nation states with large ethnic minority groups – among them the continuously growing Roma minority; both are dominated by the Orthodox denomination; and both face approximately the same problems – corruption, organised crime, a growing share of the population living in poverty, and instability of the daily life of the middle class.

However, bilateral relationships, although good, have not really evolved in the past few years, and it does not seem that this trend will change in near future. Although Romania and Bulgaria share a river border of 470 kilometres, there are only a few crossing points. Over a long period, a single bridge functioned between Giurgiu and Ruse, and a second has only recently been opened between Calafat and Vidin with EU money. Besides, there is only a small number of ferries that assure transportation of goods and people (Strihan 2014, pp. 6f.).

To understand the relationship between Romania and Bulgaria we need to look back into history. Although the two countries have been neighbours for a long time, cooperation as well as enmity only appeared rarely. (A first positive example is the Romanian-Bulgarian kingdom led by the Asen dynasty.) A certain kind of cross-Danube integration accepted by the elites of both countries has never been achieved, not even during Ottoman dominance. Due to the budding nationalism of the 19th century, the two independent nation states have become enemies in Dobruja [Dobrogea, Dobrudža], which led to fights during the Second Balkan War and World War I, a situation that was finally solved in 1940 by treaties – so far successfully, it seems.

After World War II, both countries became part of the Soviet sphere of interest and implemented the Socialist system on their territory. It is interesting to note that Bulgaria was the first country in 1948 with which Romania signed a contract of mutual help and cooperation. However, despite industrialisation, there was no technological exchange between the two countries, and agricultural trade was also quite underdeveloped: Romania had more trade with Albania than with Bulgaria (Stanciu 2010, pp. 345f.).

The fact that despite all well-meant intentions the two countries could not tune their interests in international context is clearly shown by the case of the Iron Gate [Porţile de Fier, Đerdap] hydroelectric power station built as a result of a Romanian-Yugoslavian initiative. This will also allow us a glimpse in the world of traffic on the Danube and into cooperation across the Danube in general.

In 1948, the Danube Convention initiative was born, which states that every European country has the right to use the Danube as a way of transporting goods even if it does not flow through it. It also obliges riparian countries to make their portion of the river navigable. Thus, the Iron Gate became important as this was the worst part of the river from the point of view of navigation. However, between 1948 and 1956 there were no plans whatsoever, let alone talks about the problem between Romania and Yugoslavia. This is due to the fact that the Soviet Union exerted political pressure on Romania to prevent it from cooperating with the Yugoslavian president, who was a personal enemy of Stalin. After Stalin's death, in the summer of 1956, the new Soviet leader, Khrushchev, called Tito to Moscow [Moskva] and they agreed upon developing a new relationship. On his way home, Tito stopped in Bucharest and agreed with the Romanian president Gheorghiu-Dej to start the Iron Gate project. This project was important for both countries from several points of view: It was not only of benefit for the waterway, but also as a source of energy, which supported the independence of the two countries in this area. It could also be used on a political level (propaganda) and it helped to develop the two countries from agricultural towards industrial economies. A disadvantage was that the building of the Iron Gate dam caused the water level of the river to rise, and this meant that the population living in the area had to be dislocated permanently and the surrounding road system had to be rebuilt.

There were also diplomatic and political effects of this huge developmental project. The neighbouring countries, especially the Soviet Union and the other Comecon states, doubted that Romania and Yugoslavia were able to complete this project successfully. That is why they tried to put political pressure on them. Thanks to this there were three

levels of talks about the project: a bilateral agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia, a somewhat wider multilateral level in which all the riparian countries participated, and bilateral talks between the Danube Convention and Romania/Yugoslavia (Benea 2013, pp. 7–11). Bulgaria, however, as readily as it would have liked to join, was not included into this megaproject, despite all the propitious approach of the Romanian Communist leaders. Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceauşescu alike failed to convince Tito to include Bulgaria into the project (Stanciu 2010, p. 347).

In the post-Socialist period, Romania, during Emil Constantinescu's presidency, initiated more trilateral treaties (Romania – Greece – Turkey, Romania – Ukraine – Poland, Romania – Bulgaria – Turkey, Romania – Moldavia – Ukraine, Romania – Hungary – Austria). These were meant to increase its prestige and the faith in its trustworthiness (Angelescu 2011, p. 129). However, besides theoretical collaboration these did not deepen bilateral cooperation either. For Bulgaria as well, relations with Greece and Turkey were more important than collaboration with Romania. The main aim of Bulgarian-Turkish collaboration was common action against organised crime, information exchange against smuggling and human trafficking, action against gun and drug trade, increase of trade, development of tourism and other economic collaboration. The aims were similar in the case of Bulgarian-Greek collaboration, with the additional item of stabilisation of the area within the EU (Grosaru 2013, pp. 137f.). Even though Romania and Bulgaria, now both EU members, went through the processes preceding their acceptance into the EU, the border is still as if we were in 1989 (Strihan 2014, p. 7).

However, within Nato or EU, the collaboration of the two countries is often coordinated, even against neighbourly interests in a broad sense. A proof for this is the fact that Romania and Bulgaria support Nato's expansion in the Black Sea, the "Active Endeavours" program, by which Nato would send ships and troops in the area (besides the already existing ones). Turkey and Russia are against it invoking the treaty of Montreux of 1936. Romania and Bulgaria are ready to exit this treaty (Dumitru & Bordeianu 2013, p. 265).

Romania's relationship with its post-Soviet neighbours – Moldavia, Ukraine, Russia – is somewhat similar, yet different. EU's eastern border not only ties but also separates Romania from Ukraine and Moldavia (Marcu 2009, p. 427). A majority of Romanians is sentimentally tied to the Republic of Moldavia, which they desire to be united with Romania in the future, although this is more of wishful thinking than reality at present.

Bessarabia – the part of historical Moldavia east of the Prut River – was taken by the Russian Tsar in 1812 from the Moldavian ruler, who was a vassal to the Ottoman Empire and kept it under his rule until 1918 when, after the Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of the Tsar's regime, the Romanian population declared its will to join Romania. The revived Soviet Russia continuously stated its claim on this territory, a fact that led to a relatively cool relationship between the two countries and resulted in more non-official confrontations, such as the incident of Tatarbunar in 1924, when the Romanian army killed several hundreds of rebellious Bessarabian Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) peasants, or the 1932 Transnistrian incident, when Romanians were slaughtered and thousands of them were forced to flee the Soviet Union and seek shelter in Romania.

To counterbalance the Romanian national spirit, in the 1920s the Soviets developed the Moldavian identity, a basic thesis of which is that the Moldavian nation is not the same as the Romanian (Valachian) population, even if they are related and their language is 'similar'. In 1940, following the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, the Soviet Union acquired Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina [Bukovina] by force, a status quo that was ratified by the peace treaties following World War II. While Northern Bucovina became part of Ukraine, the larger part of Bessarabia was organised as a separate Soviet republic, with the population majority being Moldavian.

The territory east of the Dniester River [Nistru, Dnìster], Transnistria, was annexed to this republic. The population of this territory in 1989 had a share of 53.4% Slavic people (Russians and Ukrainians) and 39% Moldavians (Lakatos 2016, p. 108). The moment Romania gained its independence from the Communist system, it started to build relationships and to strengthen the existing ones with the Republic of Moldavia and later, when Romania's orientation was clear, it helped Moldavia to open up towards the West. A good example for this is the fact, that in 1999, when at the Helsinki/Helsingfors summit Romania was accepted as candidate for joining the EU, Alexandru Herlea, who served as minister for Romania's EU integration between 1996 and 1999, urged Moldavia to present its candidature as well. In 1998, Romania ensured double citizenship to Romanians living in the Republic of Moldavia and many Moldavians profited from this opportunity (Dusciac 2014, pp. 61f.).

However, the majority of the citizens of the Republic of Moldavia are not enthusiastic about joining Romania. Thus, in 2013, when the Romanian president Traian Băsescu mentioned the possibility of Moldavia joining Romania, the response of the Moldavian government was firm: It is out of question, as the Moldavian people have a distinct national identity (Ghenghea 2016, p. 91). While Romanian academic circles consider a separate Moldavian identity and language a mistake and accept the latter only as a dialect of the Romanian language, a vast majority of Moldavians consider the language they speak a separate one (similarly to the problem of the Serbian and the Croatian languages), and it seems that their attitude is adopted by a growing number of fellow citizens, despite Romania's rebuke. 27th August 2016, when the ambassador of the United States in the Republic of Moldavia, James Petit, declared that Moldavia is not Romania, but a state with separate history, and its sovereignty must be preserved within its borders, the most vehement reaction on the Romanian part came from the president of the Senate, Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, who compared the American ambassador with Stalin himself (Dâncu 2016).

Romanian diplomacy of all times – be it a question of unification or just a simple cooperation – must bear in mind that in the case of Moldavia it needs to be aware of the problem of Transnistria, which is considered one of the 'frozen conflicts' of our times. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Slavic community of this region worriedly followed the changes that went on in Chişinău and regarded them as a nationalist turn. This kind of opposition led to open armed conflicts in March 1992, which ended up becoming a regional war. The battles were won by the Transnistrians, with a little help from Russia, and they proclaimed the Republic of Transnistria, a country that is officially not recognised by the international community but de facto exists as a sovereign country.

It has repeatedly asked Moscow to recognise its independence or to be accepted into the Russian Federation, so far without success.

The main reason for this is the fact that Russia does not wish to take a firm stand, as in either case it would have advantages and disadvantages as well: If it favours Chişinău and lets the Moldavian Republic take over the Transnistrian territory again, it would disappoint the Russian population of that area and lose a good strategic area to Ukraine. If it accepts the separation of Transnistria from Moldavia, the disappointment could easily determine Moldavia to turn to Romania and the EU. Moscow is most satisfied with the present situation, and it is not a coincidence that in November 2013, when Moldavia signed the opening of discussions for its EU membership, Moscow replied with a metaphor: "The Moldavian train heading for the EU will no doubt lose a few of its carriages in Transnistria" (Lakatos 2016, pp. 108–111). From this point of view, the situation of Transnistria is primarily tragic for its inhabitants, as Russia's aim with this territory is only to use it as beach head to be able to control the Republic of Moldavia and Ukraine (Lavric 2015, p. 15).

The Romanian-Ukrainian relationship is just as complex. After the fall of the Tsar in Russia following World War I, Ukraine, inhabited by a population with a separate and crystallised sense of nationality, tried to gain its independence, but its efforts failed, and its territory was divided. Romania also received a part of this territory (Nechayeva-Yuriychuk 2013, p. 115), i.e. Bucovina, the former Moldavian principality's northern part, which had been annexed by the Austrian Empire in 1775. In 1940, Bucovina became part of the Soviet Union once again, more specifically it was part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine, a fact legalised by the 1947 Paris peace treaty.

It must be mentioned though that the relationship between the Romanians and the Ukrainians was not characterised only by opposition, not even in the years following World War I. In 1919, for example, Romania supported Ukraine's budding independence, among other things this was another factor in the worsening of the relationship with the Soviet Union (Manolache 2014, p. 80). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Romania was the last European country to recognise Ukraine's independence, since there were serious problems when defining the borders as Ukraine feared that Romania would claim the previously mentioned territories. The exact border ratified by both parties has only been drawn 17 June 2003, as in 2004 Romania joined Nato and it was a pre-requisite that Romania solve all its problems related to borders. This contract attracted great attention (from the media and from politicians as well) as it not only helped the cooperation of the two countries, but also increased the level of security in the area (Nechayeva-Yuriychuk 2013, pp. 118f.).

It is undeniable that since 1991 there have been numerous and irritating conflicts between Romania and Ukraine, which, despite all efforts and discussions, are still present today and hinder the development of the two countries' economic collaboration. Such conflicts are the problem of South Bessarabia (Budzhak [Budžak]), the issue of Northern Bucovina, the Herța Region [Kraj Herca/Ţinutul Herța], ownership of the Island of Snakes [Ostriv Zmiïnyj] (There has already been a decision about this in The Hague ['s-Gravenhage], very favourable for Romania.), the situation of the Romanian minority within

Ukraine, the construction of the Danube – Black Sea Canal on Ukraine's territory (which is the territory of historical Romania), also known as 'The Bistroe Canal', and numerous other minor problems (Dumitru & Bordeianu 2013, p. 263).

However, there is also a certain kind of mutual good disposition between the two countries, e.g., many Romanians expressed their support of the 2004 'Orange Revolution' (Angelescu 2011, p. 134). Nevertheless, not even with regard to the common opposition to Russia, it does not seem that the Romanian-Ukrainian collaboration has deepened significantly in the past few years.

Romania's relationship with Russia is unequivocally significant in the region. The Russian Empire played an important role in the development of an independent nation state Romania, as it acted as the protector of the Orthodox population living under Ottoman rule. The Russian Empire was the first to support the idea of Greater Romania, but later, when the ethnic issue gained prominence, Russia and Romania turned against each other (Comșa 2015, p. 24). The turning point in this relationship was the Russian-Turkish War of 1878 (referred to as the War for Independence by Romanian historians) and the years following, when Russia and Romania turned visibly against each other in international diplomacy.

After this, although the two countries fought in the same alliance during World War I, following the Bolshevik Revolution the relationship deteriorated and this defined the period between the two World Wars. After World War II, Romania became part of the Soviet sphere of influence, but after the fall of the Soviet Union it became significantly independent. However, following a transitory weak period, during Vladimir Putin's presidency Russia has regained its forces, and nowadays it completely dominates the post-Soviet region of the Black Sea from the economic point of view (Frăsineanu & Frăsineanu 2013, p. 189).

The relationship between Russia and Romania is defined by two issues at present from Romania's point of view: the security issue, in which respect Romania considers Russia a threat, and the issue of gas.

Romania, Poland and the Baltic countries, which have serious historical experiences related to wars with Russia, are especially worried because of Russia's increasing presence in the Ukrainian area and expect a unitary and determined Nato action (Tomescu 2015, p. 21) as they would be unable to protect themselves in the case of a conflict with Russia. In recent years, in international diplomacy Romania has played the card of becoming a Western basis against Russia; e.g., in the 1990s when lobbying to become a member of Nato, unsuccessfully at that time, Romania pointed out the argument of being a stabilising factor in the Balkans, and also at the fact that it could act as counterpoint against a developing Russian-Serbian "Pan-Slavic Brotherhood" axis (Toboșaru 2010, p. 52).

At the same time, many Romanian politicians do not have any illusions as to the limitations of the Russian military power and a collective Western action: Iulian Chifu, counselor of Klaus Iohannis, Romania's president, said that there is no power that could remove Russia from Crimea [Krym/Krym], from Transnistria, Abkhazia or South-Ossetia (Naumescu 2015, p. 9). It is very unlikely that Romania would become a battlefield in the

case of a one-sided attack from Russia or in the case of a Nato-Russian conflict. It could, however, easily become the target of a Russian-American diplomacy and intelligence rivalry, moreover, there are signs that show this rivalry has already begun.

One of the main problems of this rivalry – perhaps the most important – is the supplying of Europe with Russian (and non-Russian, but post-Soviet) gas and oil, which affects Romania significantly as well. At present, energy from the post-Soviet region towards Europe takes the following routes:

- the strategic maritime corridor linking the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea, with connection to the Caspian-Asian energy corridor (the Caucasus and Central Asia regions) and toward the South-West Asia strategic corridor (which includes Turkey, Iran and most of the Arabic states of the Middle East);
- the Balkan strategic corridor in the Bulgaria-Greece-Italy direction;
- the Danube strategic corridor with Western connection till the Rhine being in touch with other Asian corridors;
- the Central European strategic corridor through the Great North European Plain (Russia-Belarus-Poland-Germany), connected through the regions of Volga and Don to Western Siberia;
- the Baltic strategic corridor with Western connection to the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean and Eastern connection to the Siberian corridors (Dună & Dăncuță 2014, p. 65).

Russia unequivocally dominates these corridors, as in 2005 and 2006 it regained almost every position it held in the former Soviet republics rich in gas, via a series of contracts, especially in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (Călin & Ilie 2014, p. 57). At present, 20% of Russia's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is covered by the energy sector, and Moscow makes significant efforts to maintain this position. Thus, Russia did not ratify the Energy Charta, which would have submitted its pipeline system to international regulations. As a measure of prevention, the EU wanted to create a Common Economic Space (CES) with Russia at Saint Petersburg [Sankt-Peterburg] in 2003 to revive free trade (Marácz 2011, p. 20).

Theoretically, Romania, due to its gas and oil reserves, is much less dependent on Russia than other European countries. Thus, taking into consideration economic data, the percentage of dependence on Russian gas is as follows: Baltic states 100%, Slovakia 99%, Hungary 80%, Czechia 78%, Poland 67%, Romania 15% (Marácz 2011, p. 23). Romania's dependence, however, is strengthened by the relative poverty of the country's population, which would sense the slightest change of prices.

With reference to Russian-Romanian political relations it is a real threat that Romania will be left out of the energy transporting network in the case Russia manages to build its new gas-pipe system (Codoban 2012, p. 5). A case in point is the plan of South Stream, which would seriously affect Romania, as it would be forced to procure its gas and oil supply from its neighbours and lose the significant transit fees.

In turn Romania tries to initiate projects to become relatively independent from Russian resources. An example is the AGRI-project, an Azerbaijani-Georgian-Romanian project determined to transport gas from Azerbaijan via the Georgian port of Kulevi to the

Romanian port of Constanţa. Hungary also indicated its intention to join the project (Chifu 2011, pp. 93ff.). As an initiative, AGRI is an organic part of the Danube Strategy, as one of its main aims is increasing the security of energy supplies and the diversification of resources. Through AGRI, Romania managed to determine Russia to reconsider the route of the South Stream project, as long as it was on the agenda, and to connect Romania to the network, although initially it was left out. AGRI has also increased Romania's bargaining position (Marácz 2011, pp. 26f.). Nevertheless, the EU did not significantly support AGRI (Codoban 2012, pp. 6f.), it focused on the more grandiose Nabucco project, which failed.

There are several options besides the pipe-system projects, to gain independence from Russian energy. One would be the better usage of the country's own resources. Although the traditionally exploited oil and gas rigs are draining gradually, Romania would have a great opportunity in the Black Sea. According to Exxon's diggings in Romanian waters, the estimated quantity of the gas found there is 85 billion m^3 (Josan 2013, p. 81). Another possibility would be the better exploitation of alternative energy resources. However, in the short term these represent viable alternatives only theoretically.

6 Romanian-Greek relationship and Balkan stability

We need to mention the specific relationship Romania has with Greece, a country that is not a direct neighbour. Although the Romanian-Greek relationships have rarely made headlines, they have a long history behind them and they are still significant today.

The Greek-Romanian relationship began in the Middle Ages. Mainly the population living to the south of the Danube became part of Byzantine dominance, but the population living to the north of the Danube, on the territory of present-day Romania, also had permanent relationships with the Greek world through Orthodoxy and trade. During Ottoman dominance, the Sultan named Greek people originating from the Fener (or Phanar) neighbourhood of Istanbul [İstanbul] as rulers of the two Romanian principalities, and they are referred to in Romanian history as Fanarioți. This practice existed until 1821 when the relationship of the Ottoman Empire and the Greek population fighting for independence deteriorated drastically. During the Second Balkan War and World War I the two independent nation states – Romania and Greece – fought on the same side. However, this changed by the time of the Cold War: while Greece became part of the capitalist world and Nato's southern basis, Romania entered the Soviet sphere of interest. The general atmosphere of the Cold War obviously influenced the bilateral relationships as well, although in the Cold War rhetoric the two countries never became each other's significant opponents. Greece became member of the European Community – similarly to Spain and Portugal – without being economically prepared; it adapted 'during the game' to say so (Karamouzi 2015, pp. 11–24), and for a long time it seemed that it did so successfully.

With the fall of the Socialist system, Greek politicians felt that their role diminished, that it was re-evaluated. On the one hand it lost its role as Nato's significant base, on the other there were new opportunities that opened up for Greek capital and politics. In a syn-

thesis-like study written by Greek experts, Greece operated with three codes in relation to its Balkan neighbours in the years following the Cold War: the 'Muslim arch' at the beginning of the 1990s; the natural hinterland in the middle of the 1990s; and the Europeanisation at the end of the 1990s (Asteris & Tsardanidis 2006, p. 468).

Since Greek nationalism sees a threat in the expansion of Islam, given Greece's historical experiences, the rather adverse Turkish neighbour, radicalisation of the Balkan Muslims and ongoing Muslim immigration to Europe strengthened its idea of being a 'castle under siege'. With these aspects in mind, Greece tried to strengthen its relationship with other Orthodox countries of the Balkans, such as Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, striving for a leading position from the economic point of view. In relation to Romania this appeared mainly in the form of Greek investments, among others in telecommunication and banking, in holiday offers of travel agencies, and mediation of Romanian workforce to Greece. The Romanian economy can be vulnerable in the case of a state bankruptcy of Greece, as there is significant Greek capital in the Romanian banking sector. So it is no coincidence that the factors of the vulnerable Romanian economy follow the events in Greece closely, and a majority of Romanian intellectuals understands the frustration of the Greeks (Cistelecan 2013, pp. 83–93).

Greek-Romanian collaboration would gain in value in the case of the development of a Black Sea strategy.

7 Black Sea collaboration

The Black Sea region gained key importance for Romanian strategic thinking and geopolitical perspectives so subtly that the large majority of Western- and Central Europe-oriented Romanian population did not even notice it.

Until the present day it is characteristic that Black Sea collaboration projects are initiated by powerful countries – the USA, Germany – and Romania joins in very politely but not very enthusiastically. For the average Romanian citizen, the Black Sea coast represents a summer holiday destination, nothing else, and even in this function it is rivalled by the offers of other countries specialising in coastal tourism. Romanian politicians, however, are very much aware of the significance of this region, and also of the fact that Romania's possibilities to initiate anything are quite limited and any results can only be obtained with external help. It is also notable that the idealist, constructive features of Romanian foreign policy has maximum potential to manifest itself in this field, as for Romania this region has never represented a territory for expansion (Frunzeti 2009, p. 56). Thus, Romania can participate in any type of constructive initiative in the region without creating a conflict with anyone.

The geographical significance of the Black Sea has been valued by many, in the following we will present some of these definitions. According to Florin-Eduard Grosaru's definition the Black Sea and its region in the wider sense is a valuable region from several points of view: Firstly, it serves as Nato's and the EU's south-eastern border, where the will of the above-mentioned meets the will of Russia, and thus it is a conflict zone at the

same time. Secondly, it is a way to secure the connection with the Caucasus, which is at the same time an opportunity (resource of energy) and a source of threat/instability. Thirdly, Romania has also a significant role in the releasing of so-called 'frozen relations' left behind by the Soviet Union in the Balkans (Grosaru 2013, pp. 3f.). Codoban regards it a mediator towards the increasingly important Middle East (Codoban 2012, pp. 2f.). Aelenei highlights that its main defining feature is the fact that it lies at the border of three large cultural-geographical units, at "the crossroads of three security macrocomplexes: the Euro-Atlantic, the former Soviet Union and the Middle East" (Aelenei 2013, p. 7). It should not be forgotten that the region, theoretically as a cohesive unit, has a market of 150 million people (Aelenei 2013, p. 5). So not only Russia, the US and the Western European powers are interested in it, but also economic superpowers like Japan and China (Popa 2010, p. 136).

The region, however, offers not only opportunities but bears threats and risks as well. Such general sources of risks can be the huge cultural and economic differences between the countries of the region, which can cause tensions, organised crime present in the region, so-called frozen conflicts, ecological problems the sea itself faces (pollution, appearance of invasive species), and above all the ongoing geopolitical game, which started as a Ukrainian internal affair and which shortly escalated to an open Russia-NATO opposition.

There are several viewpoints as far as the countries directly interested in the Black Sea region are concerned. The most restrictive point of view is that of Russia and Turkey, as they consider that this region is only made up of the coastal countries. According to the EU's definition the region is made up of ten countries, including besides the coastal countries the following: Republic of Moldavia, Greece, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. According to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) besides the above-listed countries Albania and Serbia also belong to this group; and finally, the USA lists also parts of the Middle East and Northern Africa as belonging to this region (Josan 2013, p. 76).

During the Cold War there was relative peace in the region as it was dominated by collaboration with the Soviet Union. However, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the number of countries in the region doubled, and their relationship was dominated by distrust, low level of cooperation, suspicion, and the 'freezing' of relationships. This was topped by the appearance of the great powers in the area via their companies to obtain the resources of the former Soviet republics. These new circumstances created new opportunities for Romania not only in diplomacy but also in the vindication of rights, as Romania is directly interested in the region. Among other economic interests the development of the country's coastal and fluvial regions, action against organised crime and terrorist groups present in the area, as well as the possibility of becoming a maritime power stand out (Lăzărescu 2012, p. 113; Georgescu & Sorescu 2011, p. 65). From the point of view of security policy in the region, Romania is a USA ally. At the same time, due to the fact that this region is a strategically important periphery for both Nato and EU, the policies of the two organisations can be well tuned, as they complement each other (Roșu 2015).

Beyond collaboration with its allies and partners in the region, what are the most important interests of Romania in the area? Grosaru listed them by the following nine items:

1. Expansion of diplomatic, political, economic and cultural relationships with the other EU members;
2. Development of collaboration with the region's other countries;
3. Expansion of bilateral relationships and development of dynamic political-economic relationships at all levels;
4. Increasing the political and economic relationships with all G-8 and G-20 states through their interests in the region;
5. Developing and consolidating all kinds of relationships with the Republic of Moldavia;
6. Developing good relationships with south-eastern non-EU member countries;
7. Strengthening the relationship with its neighbours: Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and the Ukraine;
8. Close regional collaboration with all south-eastern Nato members;
9. Increasing the intensity of the existing relationships with Russia, alongside with diverse regional, economic and security-related collaborations (Grosaru 2013, p. 136).

All these seemingly diverse aims, but very practical and pragmatic in their nature, have the same root: Romania's geopolitical position and potential related to the Black Sea. To vindicate these aims, the necessary resources and circumstances are needed and at present it seems that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict froze all kinds of initiatives for regional integration. Romania's potential remains, though the question is how will it manage to exploit it in the future? Should the Black Sea region gain value from geostrategic and geo-economic points of view and become dynamic, Romania ceases to function as a peripheral state. It will become a transit state, it can manifest itself as a centrally positioned mediator in international relations. However, Romania will have to wait for this opportunity.

8 Conclusions

Romania, through its successful Euro-Atlantic integration, its size, its loyalty towards Nato, its pro-European behaviour, its commitment to fight against corruption, is not only a defining geopolitical stabiliser of the region, but has also become a kind of model country through its gradual progress. Although it failed to achieve the regional power role it nourished in the period of the two World Wars, realistic political approach makes it possible that at present, concentrating on internal development, there will be a qualitative turn in the progress of the Romanian society. Its stability has increased by the fact that it achieved a relative ethnic homogeneity through its policy of suppression and assimilation of minorities, thus making any possible territorial revision claim pointless, from any of its neighbours, with whom it is in the same alliance system. Taking this into consideration it should focus on preserving the remaining ethno-cultural diversity as a resource exploiting the elements that would induce its development. The granting of various forms of autonomy (cultural, territorial or individual) to any ethnic minority depends only on Romania's goodwill.

At the same time, we should mention as a risk factor that the apparent stability of Southern Europe has wavered, and conflicts of interests have become more complex and confusing, and so have power relations. In relation to Hungary and Bulgaria, despite common Nato and EU memberships, there could be dysfunction in neighbourly relations, as in the case of these two neighbours Russian influence is visibly increasing, an influence Romania is opposing with all its forces. Generally speaking, the power games of the opposing superpowers threaten the stability of the region.

Romania is of an accentuated importance through its geo-strategic position. The Black Sea basin has become a strategically significant area because of energy transport and security policy risks, a fact that permitted Romania to exit the position of a European periphery and to approach the European centre as a regional player and transit territory. In addition, as a Nato member Romania has an important role as a stabilising factor and a spatial divider agent against a possibly Russian-led "Pan-Slavic Brotherly Union" in the era of reviving nationalism. This could be a potential aim in South-Eastern Europe of increasingly accentuated Russian expansionist politics (Toboşaru 2010, p. 52).

As far as the relationship with Hungary is concerned, a determining factor remains the situation of the Hungarian minority living in Romania. It has also to be stated that the deteriorated bilateral relations seem to be freezing at the moment. It is possible that the Romanian policy regarding the Hungarian minority in Romania departs from the assumption that the minority's negative demographic development will offer a spontaneous solution to the problem and that through emigration and accelerating assimilation of the minority the problem will be solved by disappearance of the minority ceasing to function as a geopolitical insecurity factor in bilateral relationships. Will cultural and linguistic diversity be considered as a value or will it be homogeneity from which social cohesion and effectiveness is expected? Although Romania could not support, not even tacitly, the model of assimilation, as the more than three million Romanians living abroad could become the victims of this policy in the next generation, thus causing Romania a huge human-resources loss. Romania should rather be supporting the initiatives aiming at the preserving of national identity on the European level. As far as home affairs are concerned, Romania should stop considering the issue of autonomy a taboo. This and further gestures towards the Hungarian minority would lead to it becoming more loyal. This would increase social cohesion and it would also lead to the de-tensioning of foreign relations.

By the first decade of the 21st century Romania has become an active participant in the creating of its own destiny, on the international level and in the global games of geopolitics. Being a small country, the successes and failures of these policies appear mainly in its relations with neighbours, although the current situation of a West-Russia controversary and the processes going on in the Islamic world have made Romania a 'useful periphery' for the Western powers, especially the USA. Apart from the advantages of this situation there are also negative aspects and if Romanian politics is not careful, this role of periphery could quickly turn into the role of a buffer state. Nevertheless, it would be an opportunity for Romania to use this position as a starting point for further developing its system of relations and to try to function as a 'bridge' between East and West, if it conducts an active policy in strengthening mutually advantageous collaborations and takes part in the Black Sea cooperation as much as it can through constructive initiatives.

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