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Romania and NATO

Membership Reassessment at the July 1997 Summit

by Jeffrey Simon & Hans Binnendijk

Conclusions

- Romania has made enough progress in its political reform efforts and treatment of ethnic minorities to warrant consideration for NATO "candidacy."
- Romania, though, still has much unfinished business to accomplish in basic treaties with some neighbors and in economic reform. When economic reform is implemented and necessary accelerated military downsizing occurs, civil-military frictions will test democratic control mechanisms.
- NATO needs to design a clear plan to keep Romania on the reform path.

Romanian Actions Offer Marked Improvement

The question of Romania's readiness for NATO membership has recently become a significant policy issue. Romania had always been a "dark horse" among potential NATO candidates, in part, because its revolution had a slow start, its diplomatic effort had been diffuse and ineffective, and unlike Poland it had no political constituency in the United States.

NATO's enlargement has evolved from the January 1994 Brussels' Summit announcement of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program and its commitment to enlarge the Alliance to the December 1996 Brussels' North Atlantic Council (NAC) ministerial announcement that the Alliance actually would invite new members at the July 1997 Madrid Summit. Recently, however, attention has refocused on whether Romania is getting a "fair shake."

Reassessing Romania's candidacy is appropriate not only because Romania has recently demonstrated significant progress in its domestic policies and diplomatic efforts, but also because NATO has significantly defined membership conditions for new members.

NATO's Enlargement "Principles"

The Alliance began developing general principles for enlargement in the PFP program launched in January 1994 and in the NATO Enlargement Study, commissioned by the December 1994 Brussels NAC

ministerial, and briefed to the Partners in September 1995. Also during this period, President William Clinton's speeches and Secretary of Defense William Perry's "five principles" emphasized that new members should conform to basic principles of political reform. These include democratic elections, individual liberty, and the rule of law; demonstrated commitment to economic reform and market economy; adherence to OSCE norms and principles involving ethnic minorities and social justice; resolution of territorial disputes with neighbors; and the establishment of democratic control of the military.

The NATO *Enlargement Study* also stipulated further what constitutes effective democratic control of the military as well as some minimal degree of NATO interoperability and military capability. In addition to active participation in PFP, new members would have to ensure that adequate resources are available to assume the added and considerable financial obligations of joining, and to develop necessary interoperability-to include: (1) defense management reforms in areas such as transparent defense planning, resource allocation and budgeting, appropriate legislation, and parliamentary and public accountability; and (2) minimal standards in collective defense planning to pave the way for more detailed operational planning with the Alliance. Finally, new members should not "close the door" to future candidate members.

Using the standards that NATO has adopted, we can now examine where Romania stands in its "candidacy" for membership.

Romania's "Candidacy"

(1) Political reform/democratization

Romania's political transformation got off to a slow start after the violent overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu in 1989. The National Salvation Front (NSF) filled the initial vacuum, followed by growing polarization between the newly-formed democratic movements and parties and the NSF-controlled Government in January and February 1990. The May 1990 elections maintained Ion Iliescu as President and Petre Roman as Prime Minister. Conflict soon developed between the Ion Iliescu-Petre Roman group and democratic forces, followed by the breakup of the Iliescu-Roman alliance and the fall of the moderately reformist Roman Government in September 1991.

The 1992 elections left no political party with the majority necessary to govern. The government had to rely upon three extreme and nationalist parties: the Greater Romania Party (PRMC3.85%), Gheorghe Funar's Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNRC7.7%), and Socialist Labor Party (PSMC3%) which were anti-Hungarian. Ion Iliescu's Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSRC27.5%) tended to rely on this bloc for support. The opposition parties claimed that Iliescu's running for President on the NSF ticket was unconstitutional because he was a member of a political party (e.g., the Central Election Bureau, not the Constitutional Court settled the dispute) and the Democratic Convention (CDRC20%) claimed that the election was fraudulent because 3 million ballots were invalidated. When the Central Election Board rechecked the ballots, one million were revalidated, but the election results were unaffected.

This period displayed some undemocratic tendencies. Some journalists were subject to criminal charges for insulting public officials and the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) was accused of spying on journalists and opposition parties. Over time, these tendencies changed.

In 1996, Emil Constantinescu's Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR - 31%) and Petre Roman's

Social Democratic Union (USD - 13.4%) won a majority in both houses of Parliament. The Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania (UDMR), the ethnic Hungarian Party, also participates in the coalition. In the run-off presidential election, Constantinescu unseated Iliescu with 54.4% of the vote. The November-December elections culminated in the first democratic and peaceful change in Government since 1937-demonstrating that Romania had overcome many of these earlier problems and its slow political development.

(2) Economic reform/market economy

Romanian economic reform has lagged far behind most of Central Europe in developing a market economy. In 1995 only 45 percent of GDP (compared to well-more than 60 percent in Poland and Hungary) is derived from the private sector. Though the agricultural sector was privatized, the PDSR moved slowly on industrial privatization because of fears of both the market and labor strikes. When the Ceausescu regime was overthrown, Romania had no external debt because Ceausescu had eliminated Romania's debt at the population's expense. Since 1990, the Romanian Government and PDSR has pursued a policy of subsidizing the populace through deficit spending and postponing economic reform in order to maintain domestic tranquility. As a result, Romania now has a debt of \$6 to 7 billion. It is clear that this situation cannot continue. Indeed, the longer Romania waits, the more difficult and painful the process will become.

When economic reform is finally implemented social pressures will result. Fuel and energy subsidies, which have placated the population, will have to be removed. Inflation and unemployment, officially at 6 percent, are likely to rise dramatically. New arrangements will need to be implemented with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to create macro-economic stability.

(3) Relations With Neighbors

Romania signed a Basic Treaty with Bulgaria in 1992 and a 20-Year Friendship Treaty with Serbia in May 1996. The September 14, 1996 Treaty with Hungary has significantly "legitimized" Romania's efforts to establish good neighbor relations in the West's view (See Strategic Forum 93 - Hungary's 'Near Abroad': Minorities Policy and Bilateral Treaties"). Up until the signing of the treaty, some saw Romania as stalling in the negotiations with Hungary because of the (misplaced) belief that the absence of a treaty would exclude Hungary from NATO membership and "level the playing field" with Romania. But, after the March 1995 Hungary-Slovak Treaty was finally ratified by Slovakia in March 1996, many Westerners perceived Hungary as making a sincere effort at achieving Good Neighbor relations. As Hungary's membership in NATO became increasingly plausible, Romania became more willing to support a treaty.

Despite this progress, Romania's negotiation of basic treaties with Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova remain stalled. The new government needs to conclude this unfinished business.

- **With Russia.** The major outstanding issue has been Romania's demand that Russia repudiate the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Immediately after his election, President Emil Constantinescu indicated a new effort to wipe clean the "blemishes of history" with Russia.
- **With Ukraine.** Romania also wants Ukraine to acknowledge that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty was immoral and Ukraine wants Romanian condemnation of Hitler and Antonescu. While acknowledging that Serpents Island in the Black Sea which had been part of Romania until taken over by the USSR in 1948-is now part of Ukraine, Romania wants an agreement for joint exploitation of the Delfin zone's oil and natural gas.

- **With Moldova.** The treaty with Moldova is very important because some Romanians would like Moldova reincorporated with Romania. While this is not the position of the Romanian Government, a number of issues remain outstanding with Moldova. First, Moldovans resist Romania's desire to call the treaty "fraternal cooperation." Second, Romania insists that the treaty language be in Romanian (not also Moldovan). Finally, issues remain over the question of dual citizenship.

(4) Treatment of Ethnic Minorities

Romania is more ethnically-homogenous than in 1945. Aside from a large Romany (gypsy) population, its major ethnic minority involves Hungarians who have resided within Romania since the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. Improvement has been evident since the treaty with Hungary and the recent election. The Romanian-Hungarian treaty, like the Hungarian-Slovak treaty, also provides a "brake" on Romanian and Hungarian extremism. Article 7 of the treaty confirms each party will "support one another in their efforts to join the EU, NATO, and the WEU." In other words, the treaty should put a brake on Romanian nationalist extremists if Hungary joins NATO before Romania, and, according to Hungarian minority party leaders, it strengthens the political "bridging" role of the Hungarian minority. The recent 1996 Romanian elections also witnessed a decrease in popular support for ultra-nationalist political parties who pursued anti-Hungarian agendas.

(5) Democratic Control of the Military

Romania has made great strides. The 1991 Constitution gives the President substantial authority in the national security arena and the 1994 Law on National Defense codifies relationships between the President, government, and Parliament. Romania's defense ministry was the last in the region to appoint a civilian defense minister-Gheorghe Tinca-in April 1994.

As in the rest of Central Europe, there are few civilian experts in the defense ministry and parliamentary defense committees. But steps are being taken to rectify the situation. The National Defense Academy educates 35 civilians and military officers in each class discussing security and defense problems as seen from a military perspective. Roughly two-thirds of each of the six classes convened by the Academy have been civilians from the Parliament (all seven parties) and government. In part because of these successful actions and because of the role of the military during the revolution, the Romanian military is held in high esteem.

It is premature to make a determination as to how effective is democratic and civilian control of the Romanian military because, to date, the government-in marked contrast to the rest of Central Europe-has exerted relatively little pressure on the military to cut its force structure. Also, unlike in the Czech Republic and Hungary, Romanian public support for the military remains quite high at rates of 80 percent.

As a result, when Romania finally implements the necessary economic reforms, and cuts Romania's forces as severely as the armed forces have been in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe-to roughly 50-55% of 1988-90 force levels-will significant civil-military friction develop. An assessment of the capability of Romanian civilian control over the military will have to wait until then. They may prove to be effective as has been the case in the Czech Republic and Hungary or prove problematic as has been the case to date in Poland.

(6) NATO Interoperability and Defense Planning

Although Romania (with Ukraine) was the first to join PFP and has been very active in the program, it has evidenced slow progress in meeting PFP interoperability objectives. Romania's overall military capacities remain weak. For example, in 1994 Romanian pilots only flew 12 hours per year. In 1995, they attempted 40 hours.

Military reform in terms of downsizing force structure has not yet really begun in earnest. In 1990 Romania's force structure was 275,000. At the end of 1995 Romania's force structure of 235,000 was similar to Poland's (which had started at 405,000), but funded at only \$680 million (one-third Poland's \$2.4 billion budget). According to "The Armed Forces-2000" Romania's forces should decline to 195,000 by the year 2000. Present plans do not envision accelerating the rate of downsizing of forces because of concerns about social security.

Summary

Romania has made great strides in improving its "candidacy" eligibility in the areas of political reform/democratization and treatment of ethnic minorities. Though it has demonstrated some progress in improving relations with neighbors, much further work needs to be done. When economic reform is implemented with accelerated military downsizing, civil-military frictions will likely develop and really "test" the capacity of established mechanisms.

Recommendations

It is necessary to keep NATO's incentives "alive" and keep Romania engaged in PFP and further reform. By wrapping NATO's umbrella around Romania, it can be encouraged to pursue reform. But the prospect of Romania's "exclusion" at the July 1997 NATO Summit can derail this goal.

How should NATO deal with the situation? If the July 1997 NATO Summit were to invite the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to commence accession talks immediately, NATO might also announce that it would look forward to starting accession talks with Slovenia and Romania in 12 to 18 months after the Summit, upon their completion of specified (but varying) objectives. Romania and the others could use the added time to proceed with and consolidate their post-election reforms. Each country would proceed at its own pace once talks begin.

Such an action would provide support to the new Romanian Government and Parliamentary opposition, encourage them to pursue necessary reforms, and mute nationalist extremists internally. Slovenia could use the time to build its defense establishment.

Dr. Jeffrey Simon is an INSS Senior Fellow specializing in NATO Enlargement and Central Europe. Dr. Hans Binnendijk is the Director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies. For more information contact Dr. Simon at (202) 685-2367, by fax at (202) 685-3973, or by e-mail to simonj@ndu.edu, or contact Dr. Binnendijk at (202) 685-3838.

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