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ROMANIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO SHIFTING NATO'S GEOPOLITICAL DOCTRINE IN EASTERN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT: The accession to NATO in 2004 and the active contribution to the Alliance's configuration of its geopolitical doctrine are significant determinants of Romanian foreign policy in recent times. Romania has made an uncontested contribution to shaping NATO's vision and strategy for Eastern Europe, and the main reason is its historical links with Russia. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia became a security concern to NATO and its Eastern European members, including Romania. Based on a qualitative analysis, this material presents the major political decisions at the Alliance high-level meetings in the 2022 – 2024 interval and argues that the Eastern members have an extended influence on the new strategy. Romania and Eastern NATO members substantially benefitted from the internal transformations of NATO doctrine.

KEYWORDS: Romania, NATO, Eastern Europe, NATO doctrine.



NATO'S GEOPOLITICAL DOCTRINE SHIFT

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is the political and military alliance that reunites the most advanced democracies in the world. Its action principles include shaping political decisions according to geographical imperatives and derive from the territorial polarisation between democratic and undemocratic regimes. NATO was created to protect democracies against the expansion of autocracies, and the actual deterioration of the international order enhances this objective. NATO, as a deterrence and defence organisation, safeguards the democracy, freedom and civil rights of its member states. NATO has a democratic transformative role in this political area because maintaining collective security is associated with protecting democracy.¹

Through its war against Ukraine and geopolitical revisionism in the Black Sea, Russia seeks to establish uncontested hegemony and project influence beyond its neighbourhood and into the Western Balkans, South Caucasus, Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. This would allow Russia to challenge European security from multiple positions.

As a response to Russia's intensifying aggression, the 32-nation alliance is shifting its doctrine from a reactive stance to preemptive defence, prompted primarily by Russia's war on Ukraine. This political turn must also lead to a radical change in defence strategy from building a cooperative security system in Europe to a counter-reaction against the Russian policy of territorial expansion. Compared with preventive actions, which are prohibited under international law, preemptive action is allowed under the right to self-defence under strictly defined conditions, such as an imminent attack.

After 2014, when the relative post-Cold War harmony ended with Russia's attack on Ukraine, the Alliance at its Newport summit initiated a transition to the concept of forward presence (in peacetime) and forward defence (in case of aggression), which is still in force today. It assumes stopping possible aggression with troops deployed on the eastern flank and definitively defeating the aggressor in a strategic counteroffensive.

Located on the eastern periphery of the Euro-Atlantic space, with a 650-kilometer border with Ukraine, Romania is next to the Baltic states and Poland, exposed to the possibility of Moscow's advance towards the West. The urgency of defending the buffer zone between Russia

¹NATO, "Deterrence and Defence", 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_133127.htm.



and NATO, an area formed by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, was explicitly formulated at the NATO summits in Madrid (June 2022), Vilnius (July 2023) and Washington (2024). At the Bucharest Meeting in November 2022, the Romanian MFA outlined again the agenda objectives regarding the Eastern neighbourhood in a geopolitical approach.

MADRID SUMMIT, JUNE 29-30, 2022

The Summit in Madrid was the first NATO high-level meeting after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. At this reunion, the officials formulated clear responses. They condemned the Russian actions and opened a multilateral solidarity network for Ukraine. It includes long-term support at multiple levels: political, economic, social and military. NATO members realised that the Alliance's future depends on the management efficiency of the war in Ukraine because it produces various consequences and collateral effects. As NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg further emphasised, the decision-makers met “at a pivotal moment,” and “the decisions we take will define our security for the decade ahead.”²

The most important outcome of the Madrid Summit is the updated Strategic Concept. The document outlines NATO's purpose, core tasks, and strategy to address fundamental security risks and challenges and exploit opportunities to promote Allies' interests in a changing security environment. The process of negotiating such a statement is itself a proper internal exercise for the member states: NATO's Strategic Concepts facilitate compromise and unity of thought and purpose by compelling Allies to jointly address vexing strategic issues. “It is a strategic document that quite literally focuses on the big picture: NATO's key objectives.”³ Since its foundation in 1949, NATO has adopted seven Strategic Concepts. Since 1989, the Strategic Concept has been updated roughly every ten years, and the 2022 document is the fourth of its kind in the post-Cold War era.

Compared to the 2010 Strategic Concept, the new one is radically different due to the changes in the geopolitical balances. But beyond all differences, the 2022 Strategic Concept resumes the entire existential path of the North Atlantic Alliance, and implicitly that of the Strategic Concepts that ensured its functional success, which consists in the power relationship

² NATO, “Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the start of the 2022 NATO Summit”, June 29, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_197294.htm.

³ Sillaste-Elling, K., “Charting NATO's Future: The New Strategic Concept”, Lennart Meri Conference, 2022, <https://lmc.icds.ee/charting-natos-future-the-new-strategic-concept/>.

between the Western community and Russia, more precisely, on the need to solidify efforts in the Western community to ensure the balance of power with Russia. This first post-Crimea Strategic Concept does not derogate from this rule, and the crisis with Russia over Ukraine was a powerful catalyst requiring the Allies to reconsider the question of NATO's identity and core missions.

The Strategic Concept reaffirms that NATO's fundamental purpose is to ensure the Allies' collective defence based on a traditional 360-degree approach. The return of great-power competition in Europe—arguably best illustrated by Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014—forced allies to put collective defence once again at the centre of NATO strategy. The new Strategic Concept makes it clear that collective defence is the foundation of this Alliance. The three core tasks that NATO will continue to fulfil, whose titles have been slightly amended compared to the 2010 Concept: deterrence and defence (versus collective defence in 2010); crisis prevention and management (versus crisis management); and cooperative security, are “complementary to ensure the collective defence and security of all Allies.”⁴

Deterrence and defence come in the foreground of NATO's strategic agenda. The new NATO Strategic Concept adopted in Madrid emphasises defence and deterrence, which was seen as a weak point of its predecessor. Crimea's annexation and separatism in the Donbas were a “wake-up call” for the Alliance. The Russian assault on Ukraine in 2022 has further consolidated the Allied resolve to focus on defence and deterrence.

Crisis prevention and management has dominated the Alliance's business for most of the past three decades, from its crucial role in stabilizing the Balkans in the 1990s⁵ to its withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The 2022 Strategic Concept specifies the Alliance will continue to “invest in crisis response, preparedness and management, through regular exercises and leverage our ability to coordinate, conduct sustain and support multinational crisis response operations.”⁶

Cooperative security, the third NATO core task, remains concretized in the Alliance Open Doors policy. “NATO's enlargement has been a historic success.”⁷ The Alliance's Open

⁴ NATO, “NATO 2022 Strategic Concept”, 2022,

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf, para. 4.

⁵ L. Simonet, “The OSCE and NATO: Side by Side in a Turbulent World,” OSCE Yearbook 23(2017): 279.

⁶ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf, para. 35.

⁷ Ibidem, para. 40.



Doors policy is reaffirmed to all European democracies that share its values. The Allies strongly support the “independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity” of countries aspiring to become members of the Alliance; they will “strengthen political dialogue and cooperation” with those, “help strengthen their resilience against malign interference, build their capabilities, and enhance our practical support to advance their Euro- Atlantic aspirations”. The wording of paragraph 41 addresses “vulnerable partners”, those countries aiming to join the Alliance and under pressure from strategic competitors and security environment challenges.

The most critical decision was the creation of four new multinational battalion battlegroups and their placement in Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary. The Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu said this measure “is obviously in Romania's security interests” and “balances NATO's approach to the Eastern Flank. Basically, we now have a single unified approach across the whole flank.”⁸ The Minister also underlined an essential achievement of Romania, respectively the concept of “Forward Defence” introduced in the Madrid Summit Declaration. “It is an aspiration that we, and other allies on the Eastern flank, have supported and around which further developments will be built, which will be discussed in this process that has begun, of a fundamental transformation of the deterrence and defence posture on the Eastern flank.”⁹

Romania obtained these benefits through complex political negotiations. The new doctrine of the Alliance is centred much more on geopolitical objectives and comes with a clear territorial delimitation between democracy and autocracy. This summit represents a step toward unifying the eastern flank in a single bloc. It is an ongoing objective of Romania to convince NATO members of the importance of the permanent stationing of troops along the entire eastern border.

BUCHAREST MEETING, NOVEMBER 28-30, 2022

The meeting of NATO foreign ministers held in Bucharest on November 29-30, 2022, was the first hosted by Romania since it joined NATO in 2004 and the second most important formal Allied event in our country after the 2008 NATO Summit. It was the first meeting hosted

⁸ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Transcript of press statements by Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu at the end of the NATO Summit in Madrid”, June 30, 2022, <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/59081#null>.

⁹ Ibidem.

by an Allied state on the Eastern Flank of the North Atlantic Alliance since the Russian Federation's outbreak of war against Ukraine.

The discussions and decisions adopted at the Bucharest meeting constituted an essential step in NATO's response to the Russian large-scale war in Ukraine. The geopolitical and contextual stake of the reunion was all the higher as the foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland, the newest NATO members, also participated. The leaders were gathered in Romania's capital "at a time when Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine threatens Euro-Atlantic peace, security, and prosperity" and concluded, "Russia bears full responsibility for this war."¹⁰

The Bucharest meeting was an opportunity for Romania to strengthen its profile in the Alliance, and they focused on the conceptual contributions. At that moment, Romanian foreign affairs officials reiterated the country's role of ensuring stability and security on the Eastern border of the Alliance. However, the North Atlantic Alliance remains "the main guarantor of Romania's security, the transatlantic relationship representing the strategic link that gives coherence and consistency to NATO's actions."¹¹

The NATO Heads of Diplomacy analysed the challenges to transatlantic security posed by the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. In this context, security in the strategic region of the Black Sea was a cross-cutting theme of the meeting. The foreign ministers assessed the implementation of the provisions of the Strategic Concept, which recognizes the Black Sea as an area of strategic importance for the entire Alliance. Simultaneously, the officials evaluated "the progress of the implementation of the decisions of the NATO Summit in Madrid in June this year, with a focus on measures to strengthen NATO's Eastern Flank in line with the Alliance's enhanced forward defence posture."¹²

The Foreign Affairs Minister Bogdan Aurescu "reiterated Romania's firm and proven commitment to continue to be a provider of security and stability throughout the region"¹³ and highlighted the involvement of Romanian authorities in the management of regional security.

¹⁰ NATO, "Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers. Bucharest, 29-30 November 2022", https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_209531.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹¹ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Romania – NATO," <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2066#:~:text=Romania%20participates%20in%20efforts%20to,%3B%20international%20counter%20terrorism%20efforts>.

¹² Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "First day of the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bucharest: Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu Presented Romania's Efforts to Ensure Security in the Black Sea Region and Support for Ukraine", 2022 <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/60524>.

¹³ Ibidem.

He also insisted on the future consolidation of the NATO vision and strategy for the Black Sea. In recent years, after it acceded to NATO, Romania highlighted the need to develop a firm counter-response to the Russian intentions to expand its naval domination in the Black Sea and the negative consequences deriving from this policy line.

The meeting agenda included discussions on multilateral support for Ukraine. In the presence of Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, they assessed “the situation on the front and the urgent needs Ukraine has and requires from the Allies were presented. In this context, strong support for strengthening Ukraine's capabilities and resilience was reiterated.”¹⁴ Minister Aurescu reaffirmed the entire commitment of Romania to help Ukraine; he “recalled the multidimensional support provided by Romania to Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict, including to more than 2.9 million Ukrainian refugees who have crossed our country's borders and by facilitating the transit of more than 8.4 million tons of cereals and agricultural products.”¹⁵ In sum, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized the advantages, opportunities and vulnerabilities of Romania’s geographical position as a border country on NATO’s map. Romania assumed its objectives to provide regional security and political stability.

In a larger perspective, the Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers at Bucharest summarizes the Alliance’s commitment to preserve and promote liberal democracy values. Democratic values maintained by Romanian institutions support NATO’s defensive vision. With a focus on Ukraine, NATO members sustain all the vital attributes of contemporary states in international relations: “We will never recognise Russia’s illegal annexations, which blatantly violate the UN Charter. We will continue and further step up political and practical support to Ukraine as it continues to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and our shared values against Russian aggression, and will maintain our support for as long as necessary.”¹⁶

Another positive result of the discussions was the reaffirmation of NATO support for the Euro-Atlantic path of the Republic of Moldova and the Western Balkans countries as partners. NATO continues to apply the Open Doors policy and “strengthens its tailored support to

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ NATO, “Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers”, November 29-30, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_209531.htm?selectedLocale=en.



building their integrity and resilience, developing capabilities, and upholding their political independence.”¹⁷

Finally, the Foreign Ministers recall that “NATO is a defensive Alliance” with no intentions to intervene in the internal political regime of any country. They highlighted the political objectives of the Alliance to “face threats and challenges from authoritarian actors and strategic competitors from all strategic directions”, as expressed at the Madrid Summit in June 2022.

VILNIUS SUMMIT 2023

The following high-level meeting of NATO members was the Summit at Vilnius in the 2023 summer. As the Summit Communiqué mentions, it “marks a milestone in strengthening our Alliance” by counterbalancing the “shared values of individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law”¹⁸ to authoritarian regimes. In geopolitical terms, NATO members recognise the increasing challenges to the international order and affirm, “strategic competition, pervasive instability and recurrent shocks define our broader security environment.”¹⁹

The Vilnius Summit was the first assessment of the implementation of measures decided in 2022 at Madrid. This meeting laid the foundations for new thinking, the trademark of which is the will and readiness to defend “every inch” of allied territory. Consequently, the Final Communiqué comprised new announcements, including how to implement last year’s defence plans, firm commitments on defence spending, and insight into next year’s summit, to be held in Washington, DC. Vilnius has been a summit for implementation for the NATO of tomorrow. A new generation of regional defence plans has been implemented, making the Alliance more capable of deterring and defending itself than in recent decades. The new NATO Force Model, agreed at the Madrid Summit, dramatically strengthens the alliance by providing up to 300,000 troops at high readiness, improving responsiveness, and harnessing regional expertise. A new Allied Reaction Force will be established, designed to respond to threats rapidly. The Alliance is reorienting and restructuring to face a more complex and challenging global environment.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ NATO, “Vilnius Summit Communiqué”, July 11, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

From the geopolitical perspective, it was a turning point for the Alliance and Ukraine. Conceptually, NATO members adopt a much clearer vision for the Eastern flank – with the accession of Finland and the unanimous acceptance of the future joining of Sweden – and the consensus for maintaining Ukraine as a buffer zone instead of an immediate accession to the Alliance. The creation of a NATO-Ukraine Council and the removal of the Membership Action Plan from Ukraine’s NATO accession are undoubtedly concrete steps toward closer cooperation with Kyiv, especially given Washington's and Berlin's concerns about Ukraine's readiness to join the alliance. The challenge was, therefore, to find the right words to clarify Ukraine’s future as a NATO ally and convince Russia of NATO’s long-term solidarity with Ukraine while also acknowledging the constraints imposed by the ongoing war.

WASHINGTON SUMMIT 2024

Russia and Ukraine were the keywords for the third time at the NATO summits after 2022. In the Final Declaration of the Washington Summit, Russia is mentioned 40 times, and the Ukrainian issue 64 times.

A few days before the NATO high-level meeting, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski spoke to Foreign Policy about “a long war” in Ukraine, which means long-term assumed expenses and preparing the population to accept this state of affairs.²⁰

At the meeting of the Supreme Council of Defence in June 2024, the Romanian leaders mentioned among Bucharest's objectives at this NATO summit “ensuring advanced defence on the eastern flank” and “a new NATO approach towards Russia aimed at measures to contain and constrain the behaviour aggressive of the Kremlin.”²¹

Romania received additional assurances for its maritime border outlined by Point 31 of the NATO Final Declaration: “We reaffirm our continued support for the regional efforts of allies aimed at maintaining security, safety, stability and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea region, including, as appropriate, by the Montreux Convention of 1936.”²² The text also

²⁰ Foreign Policy, “How to Defend Europe”, July 2, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/live/sikorski-how-to-defend-europe/>

²¹ Consiliul Suprem de Apărare a Țării, “Ședința Consiliului Suprem de Apărare a Țării”, June 21, 2024. <https://csat.presidency.ro/ro/comuni/sedinta-consiliului-suprem-de-aparare-a-tarii1718941274>

²² NATO, “Washington Summit Declaration issued by the NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C., 10 July 2024”, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm.



promises to continue permanent monitoring and assessments in the region, keep a close eye on threats and “support the Euro-Atlantic aspirations” of Ukraine and Georgia.

The Republic of Moldova is praised for its democratic path, and, in this context, NATO asks Russia “to withdraw all its forces from the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, stationed there without their consent”. These statements made by NATO officials at the end of the summit in Washington respond to Moscow’s threats after Russia demanded several times in recent months to respect the “sovereignty of the Moldavian Dniester Republic”, and the leader from Tiraspol, Leonid Manakov, claimed, last time in June 2024, increasing the number of soldiers in the so-called peacekeeping troops. He insisted that “peacekeepers are the main security factor on the Dniester” and that “as long as the Russian peacekeeping mission continues, Moldova will not make military plans or preparations against Transnistria.”²³ However, the number of Russian military personnel has decreased over the past 25 years from 9,000 to 1,500.²⁴

Romania, therefore, indirectly receives assurances that the Republic of Moldova remains essential for NATO and that Ukraine will receive 40 billion euros in 2025, military support in the face of the Russian invasion; it will replace the Patriot system donated to the Ukrainians with something similar or more sophisticated. In addition, the anti-missile shield at Deveselu in southern Romania finally became fully operational after the similar Aegis Ashore system at Redzikowo, Poland, was commissioned. These defensive weapons complement those of Spain and Turkey. The final document of the NATO summit notes, however, that “ballistic missile defence can complement the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence, but cannot replace them.”²⁵

Romania is entirely under the umbrella of these shields. NATO radars and planes monitor the Black Sea, but nothing was discussed about the need for an Allied Fleet in this sea that tends to be taken over by Moscow again. The Republic of Moldova, although it is mentioned in the final declaration of the summit, has yet to receive any explicit assurances, and Ukraine is guaranteed money only for next year. Nothing is certain, however, amid the sharp political changes taking place in NATO states and the divisions that are being felt. The difficulty of

²³ S. Fati, “Cât de mulțumită pleacă România de la summit-ul NATO”, Deutsche Welle, last updated 11.07.2024, <https://www.dw.com/ro/c%C3%A2t-de-mul%C8%9Bumit%C4%83-pleac%C4%83-rom%C3%A2nia-de-la-summit-ul-nato/a-69628705>.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵NATO, “Washington Summit Declaration”, 2024 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm.



French political forces to form a new executive and the suspense in the US elections raise many questions.

Romania, instead, is trying to bring more NATO soldiers and would like to find the best ways to keep the Russians away from the domestic coast but also Transnistria. In the Republic of Moldova, Moscow's meddling in the 2024 elections and EU accession referendum is not excluded.

CONCLUSIONS

In the three decades of relations, from partnership to membership, the conceptualisation of the Alliance and the security situation of Romania have undergone a continuous transformation process. NATO has expanded eastwards, expanded the scope of Article 5 and become a more flexible Alliance and better connected to the post-Cold War security developments. At the same time, Romania's security and political situation has undergone, over the last 30 years, a complex transformative process. To highlight only a part of it, Bucharest made the transition from membership to the Warsaw Treaty (and, later on, from a state without security guarantees) to joining NATO, from relative isolation in foreign relations to strong bilateral and multilateral relations in the present, as well as from a problematic regional dialogue to openness and partnership.

Looking at the last decades, some of the most important lessons to be learned for Romania should be related, on the one hand, to the positive results of the consensus around the primary security objectives, of the perseverance in their pursuit and of the readiness to involve a considerable effort for their achievement, and, on the other hand, to the necessity of continuous modernisation and updating in the field of security.

The arguments exposed here conclude that Romania is fully politically integrated into NATO's doctrine for Eastern Europe. NATO is equally a military alliance and a community of democratic values to which Romania adhered.

The time from 2022 to the present can be described as a significant NATO return to Europe, and the Eastern region is the centre of the Alliance's politics. Protecting the entire border and ensuring "a substantial and persistent presence" to deny any potential threat or opportunities for aggression require more troops deployed, new infrastructure by host nations to receive those troops and new command structures. In the lead-up to Russia's invasion of



Ukraine, and since the outbreak of hostilities, NATO has undertaken the most extensive reinforcement of its deterrence and defence since the end of the Cold War. It has emerged as the more critical agent of collective military action in Europe.

The geopolitical future of Eastern Europe will be dominated by the confrontation between NATO and the Russian policy of territorial expansion, which accompanies large-scale hybrid warfare on the entire continent. Consequently, in the future, NATO will continue to undertake preparations for collective defence against Russian aggression from the east.

It is unlikely that the conflict between Russia and the West will decrease in the near future. This is driven by the deep conviction among certain Russian elites that Western democratic systems pose an existential threat to Russia. This perception, coupled with the persistence of imperialistic ideologies within the Russian political landscape, gives rise to a sustained drive to expand the country's geopolitical influence. The war in Ukraine is part of a more extensive negotiating process in which Russia is attempting to regain control over former Soviet states in Eastern Europe that have joined NATO since the end of the Cold War. This suggests that a future military invasion of one or more NATO countries is a distinct possibility.

Eastern and North-Eastern European Allies naturally highlight the strong transatlantic bond and U.S. security assurances for the Allies, along with collective defence, as essential elements of the security and stability in the region. A political consensus is needed to implement the permanent stationing of substantial NATO forces across the eastern flank to reinforce the credibility of the Alliance's assertions regarding the defence of its territory.

After the last three summits, NATO transformed its conceptualisation of deterrence and defence. The strategy of defending territory by trading space for time while awaiting reinforcement from NATO is no longer a viable option. This was replaced by forward deterrence and defence, which requires an enhanced approach to the force posture of eastern flank countries, shifting toward denying any opportunities for aggression. At these discussions and the Bucharest meeting in 2022, Romanian foreign policy decision-makers have asked for and obtained full inclusion into the new NATO doctrine. Romania's geopolitical approach to Eastern Europe is inherently conceived to counter the Russian new imperialism and territorial revisionism.

In geopolitical terms, Romania actively contributed to the new NATO roadmap to face a much more unstable and unpredictable world. Romania is part of this complex decision-making system based on democratic consensus and solidarity. On the other hand, NATO continues



concretising geopolitical visions into action by providing strategic know-how to its members and transferring military capabilities. The Alliance's final objective is to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of not only its members but also of its partners, and geopolitical approaches will play a fundamental role in this issue.

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