

Transformation of the Romanian Armed Forces in the Post–September 11 Environment: New Principles, New Missions, and New Capabilities for a New NATO

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Transformation of Risks and Threats: Setting the Scene for the Transformation of the Armed Forces

In the post–September 11 context, the emerging new threats to international security have transformed the role and missions of the armed forces, and consequently the way one thinks about and shapes national and collective defence.

The way the attacks in New York and Madrid were conducted demonstrates that many of the settled norms of the Westphalian system have been unhinged. Some analysts went so far as to say that the tragic events depicted a new phase in the historic rivalry between state and nonstate actors. The main purpose of terrorist perpetrators was not to acquire territory or defeat an army, but to change the ideological balance of power – the same balance that the globalization of world politics turned in favour of the democratic principles and values and market economies.

Historically and traditionally, terrorism has been perceived more as a domestic risk than a global danger: from the anarchic movements at the end of nineteenth century to the liberation fronts of the colonial era and the radical groupings during the Cold War, the agenda of terrorist actions aimed at using political violence to obtain limited political goals in a certain society or within a certain state. Transnational connectivity between terrorist groups was more related to financing sources and support networks than to a global design in planning attacks against the democratic world. Today, however, the global terrorist threat has become an international problem. It is more than a matter of police functions or internal security, since Al Qaeda networking has spread its centres and actions across the globe, from areas of instability such as Afghanistan and Iraq, to the weak states of what we call the Third World,

to even inside open Western societies. Moreover, the means of fighting this war have also changed, since terrorist attacks target civilian populations and not soldiers, as was the case for most former interstate wars. Terrorism has moved the war from the margins to the heart of our societies.

How can a government shape its response to such a complex, widespread, and insidious threat? How can it counter a global phenomenon that has linkages and connections throughout more than forty countries on six continents? This question is at the core of the academic and policy debates on the future roles of national defence institutions and the way they could cooperate in improving both homeland defence and international security.

Any state institution responds to a clearly defined demand of the society it has to support, develop, organize, and protect. Potential conventional wars in Europe or at its borders are highly unlikely to occur in the next decades, while terrorist threats and activities of rogue states have become the biggest concern of the democratic communities. The role of the armed forces, while maintaining their conventional classical purpose of deterring traditional enemies, should be reassessed according to the new security needs of states and societies. As Daniel Nelson noted, “military force is explained and rationalized to democratic citizens as an act of defence – defending principles if not territory.”

Successive revolutions in military affairs started in NATO member countries in the beginning of the 1990s, but none of them has tackled at that time the deepest level of transformation envisaged today – namely, defence concepts and missions. None of the reforms went beyond the simple framework of technological developments and post-Cold War rearrangements of armaments. As President Bush has pointed out, the war against terrorism will be a long one. The transformation of concepts is also a long process and a process that is built on its own gradual progress.

When thinking about military reform to improve the fight against terrorism, one could approach two main dimensions of transformation: (1) the changes in the military establishment and operations, and (2) the changes in international cooperation and the way collective defence is perceived. I will use these two dimensions to focus my remarks about the reforms of the Romanian Armed Forces and the way Romania foresees its own role and policy in NATO.

The Reform of the Romanian Armed Forces: Structural Changes in the Post–September 11 Context: New Principles, New Missions, New Capabilities

New Principles for Reform

In addressing the issue of reforming the militaries to better cope with the emerging asymmetrical threats, there are a number of new assumptions that should be taken into account:

1. Prevention and deterrence should be reassessed by incorporating new means of action. One cannot keep a large conventional military establishment in the barracks and hope that this will dissuade a terrorist from launching strikes against the population or infrastructure. Terrorism should be countered where it arises, by projecting military force to conduct counterterrorist operations and stabilize and control distant areas, as happened in Afghanistan.
2. The globalization of threats requires a global response. There are no geographical limits to military operations, just as there are no geographical limits to terrorist activities. If the international community wants to be effective against terrorism, it should have the will and means to project its forces wherever necessary.
3. Unlike the behaviour of states, terrorist organizations can be highly unpredictable and very fast in action. Rapid reaction and flexibility should be the main determinants in reforming the military.
4. If exit strategies and end-state objectives will continue to define political decisions to move forces into a theatre, no one should expect their military component to be either easy or unproblematic. Sustaining forces for extensive periods of time in Afghanistan or Iraq is a must if one wants to prevent any future resurgence of terrorism in these areas.

It is on the basis of these premises that Romania has defined its defence policy objectives and the main targets of its military reform, together with the role it will play in NATO and the cooperation with its allies.

New Missions for the Armed Forces

After the end of the Cold War, a transformation from collective defence to collective security enlarged the defence strategies to areas not covered before: defence diplomacy, multilateral partnerships (PfP), and peace-

keeping operations. Correspondingly, Romania's defence policy after 1989 has been distinctively marked by a steady commitment toward regional activities and participation in international operations. In ten years of peacekeeping and crisis response operations, the Romanian Armed Forces have participated in UN missions in Africa and in NATO and EU operations in the Balkans with more than 7,000 soldiers.

In the post-September 11 environment, new security requirements revised the Romanian defence policy in two interrelated ways. Complex types of risks, from terrorism to issues of weapon proliferation, required a comprehensive analysis of Romania's overall homeland defence establishment. Military missions have changed accordingly. In 2002, a ministerial guide incorporated the new tasks for the military, from collective defence to crisis response operations, counterterrorism, and participation in the so-called coalition of the willing, defence diplomacy, and enhanced support for homeland security agencies in emergency cases. The armed forces have gradually shifted from deterrence and territorial defence to an expeditionary approach based on the need to promote Romania's strategic objectives, by assuming prevention and stabilization missions in the Balkans along with combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq – the first ones of this type undertaken by Romanian soldiers since World War II.

The core transformation of Romania's defence policy is based on the already mentioned new approach to the role of the military. While the enemy is no longer threatening the territory, defensive policies have to protect the people, the political regime, and democratic principles by using offensive means: namely, the projection of forces in theatres of operation far from the national borders. Combat operations and the seizure of terrorists and their weaponry imply a significantly higher degree of risk than the previous peacekeeping operations. Romania has already suffered the tragic loss of two soldiers, both killed in action in Afghanistan. Also, Romania had the largest number of foreign victims in the Madrid bombings, and in this line of logic, soldiers were sent abroad to ensure that the events of 11 September and 11 March will not happen again.

Moreover, once the enemy is defeated, the international community should make sure that it will also be denied any possibility of again causing harm from its former strongholds. This is one reason to remain committed and involved in two unique and major state-building and reconstruction operations under the ISAF and with the coalition in Iraq. Military missions assumed by Romania include support for the new or emerging governments and their armed forces, improving infrastructure, and sustaining civil organizations' efforts to secure the basic needs of local populations. The participation in reconstruction teams has become one of the main priorities of the Romanian engagement. In Afghanistan, steps have been made toward participation in the German-

led teams in Kunduz and the UK-led teams in Mazar-e-Sharif. Such efforts include extensive donations of medicine, provisions, and military equipment to the local population and the security forces. To some extent, given the way reconstruction teams are evolving, one might also speak about the development of a new type of civil-military cooperation that boosts interagency cooperation in a trilateral scheme: state and nonstate agencies working together with local representatives and with international organizations and humanitarian agencies.

Summing up, the new missions of the armed forces cover a large range of operational requirements, from hard security and war conduct to soft security, stabilization, and reconstruction. This could also be foreseen as a change in Romanian thinking in the post-September 11 context: at the end of the Cold War, some academics approached the armed forces missions as requiring a constabulary approach to international operations, responding to a Fukuyamist “softening” of the security environment. This is no longer the case. We cannot see the future role of the military from only one side of the story: they have to be trained to perform a number of functions: high-intensity combat tasks, search-and-capture missions to apprehend specific terrorist individuals, and peacekeeping tasks and constabulary missions. The limits and delineations between operational tasks in the theatres cannot be established from the beginning in a limited manner: the sudden emergence of terrorism and its negative effects in Iraq show that we must be rapid in adapting our strategies and actions on the ground.

New Military Capabilities

The new missions of the armed forces require new types of forces and capabilities. Since all the commitments undertaken by the Romanian government rely on the use of highly trained professional soldiers, the decision has been taken to completely professionalize the armed forces by 2007, following the changes stipulated in the new constitution approved in 2003. Another relevant legislative change is the new law adopted in 2004 for the deployment of troops abroad. This law gives additional responsibilities to the president and the Supreme Council for national defence, which will significantly streamline the domestic procedures and allow for a rapid reaction to international crises.

Military reform has not been an easy task. Countries like Romania have dealt with a large material heritage in terms of important personnel figures and a significant level of obsolete equipment, designed to ensure in an autarchic manner the country’s defence during the communist era. From 1990 to now, the Romanian Armed Forces have been reduced from more than 300,000 to less than 100,000.

In 2001, new reforms of the military have focused on improving mobility and training, deployment capacities, and sustainability. Enhancing and modernizing Romania's contribution to NATO is one of the main targets for the following years. Significant reductions in personnel will continue, maintaining the objective of decreasing territorial components and improving the expeditionary assets of the armed forces. The operational side has been continuously strengthened and the administrative side reduced. Changes in personnel ranks correspond to the need to enhance the NCOs' core and to prepare the gradual replacement of conscripts' functions with new functions performed by volunteer soldiers. The professionalization of the military (currently two-thirds are professionals) will also require a new type of management and upgrade according to the NATO requirements regarding the training and education component of the military establishment. New risks and threats, as well as extensive international commitments, also require long-term planning in terms of objectives and resources. A new NATO compatible planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS) has been established and is being used to develop budget requirements and planning priorities for the period 2003 through 2008.

To fight terrorism, additional capabilities and tasks have been added. Basic interoperability requirements were supplemented by a more integrated approach on how the armed forces should act, especially in critical areas such as surveillance and early warning, command and control, communications, force protection, and deployment. Within this context, I will only mention some of the most important changes for the Romanian military, which are also relevant for its strategic contribution to NATO and the war on terrorism.

First, Romania and the other new NATO members constitute the new borders of the Alliance's integrated system for collective security. Therefore, their infrastructure and territory are crucial for providing force projection assets and creating the mechanisms for rapid reaction in crisis situations. Romania's geostrategic location as the easternmost ally, linking the Balkans to the Caucasus, the Black Sea and the Middle East has acquired an increased importance for national and allied forces' projection in distant areas of operations.

Romanian military and civil infrastructure has been extensively employed by the United States and other allies both for their Afghan and Iraqi operations and for contingent rotation in the Balkans. Following these experiences, the United States is currently analyzing within the Global Posture Review the location of a new type of expeditionary military base near the Black Sea. As a NATO host nation, Romania intends to launch a significant program of base modernization in areas such as command and communication, equipment, and training, and has recently signed an agreement of cooperation with Northrop Grumman in this field.

Second, the surveillance of NATO air space through NATINEADS will be extended to the new member states to cope with the risks created by terrorist attacks or renegade aircraft. Romania's national system for surveillance and interception has been gradually connected to the NATO system, which will also allow access to the NATO database and help prepare adequate responses. Air surveillance and radar capabilities are indispensable tools for preventing terrorist attacks on allied soil. Given the current security context, Romania supports their use to protect major gatherings such as the Olympic Games in Greece, an event that could have been a target of terrorist networks given its symbolic value. Increased radar capacity has been obtained by a partnership with Lockheed Martin, and the production is in a joint venture in Romania with Gap Fillers.

Third, ensuring force projection is a very important and costly business. Romanian Armed Forces have already been deployed in Afghanistan. One of the key aspects of the transformation of the armed forces is the increase of the C-130 fleet, which currently contains five aircraft and should be increased to twelve. Furthermore, the future participation in NATO efforts for creating a multinational transport fleet will also raise additional needs.

Fourth, the improvement of assets and capabilities for the protection of deployed forces is of major importance, given the complexity of current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Romania has already developed means of surveillance by acquiring a number of UAVs and plans enhancing electronic warfare capabilities. It has also deployed national intelligence cells during military operations. In Afghanistan, the intelligence component has been increased by one platoon, while in Iraq, a detachment has been deployed since the beginning of the current operational phase. NBC assets are also an important instrument in ensuring force protection, and the NBC company has participated in Iraqi operations and will be a part of future NATO Response Force designs.

Fifth, sustaining forces for more than two years in operations has required improved logistical functions. A new concept has been developed to harmonize existing procedures at the service level, and a National Coordination Cell has been set up to ensure appropriate and coordinated campaign services, as well as medical and maintenance capabilities for troops.

Finally, the conduct of new types of operations will extensively rely on the capacity of the army to continuously improve its strategies and doctrines and adapt to the situations on the ground. The "lessons-learned" type of managing knowledge in the military establishment is an intrinsic part of the transformation. At the end of 2003, Romania has created a new J structure to deal with doctrine and lessons learned under the coordination of the first field commander of Romanian troops in Afghanistan. Cooperation with NATO and its allies in this

area will significantly improve the capacity to react rapidly to changes in the theatres and produce an efficient design of participation in operations.

NATO Transformation and the Way Ahead in Countering Terrorism

The Romanian military had both the advantage and the challenge of changing along with the Alliance, and in this context needed both to “catch up” with NATO members and to “keep up” with the current path of transformation. The future transformations will therefore be closely connected and derived from the ones that NATO has undertaken in the post–September 11 environment.

The terrorist attacks demonstrated to the Alliance that traditional military thinking and means are not enough to deal with new strategic threats. NATO can no longer afford to do business as usual, as the Secretary General put it. They also demonstrated the negative side of the growing interdependencies in the post–Cold War environment. What happened in United States could have happened anywhere. NATO has therefore dedicated a tremendous amount of work and internal debate to the assessment of collective ways of dealing with global threats such as terrorism, starting from the premise that vulnerabilities are not measured any more in national and international terms, but rather in terms of transborder and transnational phenomena.

Transformation of the role of NATO has both a military and a political dimension that are inseparable, since military reform creates the basic ground for new collective political ambitions.

Military Transformation

The Prague Summit opened a number of initiatives directed toward the improvement of Allied military capabilities. It became obvious that NATO is required in different areas of the world and that previous thinking, focused mainly on the European continent, has become obsolete.

The construction of a NATO Response Force with deployment capacities within five days, the improvement of Allied capabilities for power projection and the sustainability of forces deployed abroad, and the enhancement of its surveillance and reconnaissance assets are some of the measures that are currently under development. NATO also decided for the first time in its history to reform its network of military command and facilities and to devote increased consideration to the

area of further military transformation within the newly established Atlantic Command for Transformation. Other tasks assumed by the Alliance have been extended and conceptualized through the Military Concept for Defence against Terrorism, the improvement of the Civil Emergencies Planning, and the creation of the WMD Centre.

Romania has committed its new capabilities to the entire range of the PCC areas of multinational cooperation, ranging from CBRN defence to information superiority, combat effectiveness, force deployment capacities, and survivability. The development of niche assets could lead to more efficient burden-sharing among the allies and to a significant improvement in national contributions to the Alliance. Furthermore, new concepts are now under discussion, such as the usability of forces in operations. If Romania wants to be effective, it should think about ways to enhance its commitments to NATO operations and be able to provide the necessary capabilities for the Alliance to be effective and responsive to today's security challenges.

The new security challenges have also shaped additional parameters for the national use and management of military force. If we pay a closer look to the way terrorist groups are acting, we find out that the mobility and flexibility of criminal networks should be replicated by a similar pattern of rapid-reaction forces. There is room for thinking further about building network-centric warfare and types of capabilities that could provide additional force multiplier means for NATO.

Planning the military operations should rely on an enhanced political willingness to engage forces, commit resources, and maintain a credible deterrent capacity. If the Prague Summit was about defining new means, the Istanbul Summit might focus again on ends and objectives. It is my belief that the use of the means of action decided in Prague might finally create new ends for the Alliance.

Political Transformation: New NATO Partnerships

This is why the dimension of reform goes beyond strict military thinking. It is of course a matter of political transformation. It is also a matter of interagency cooperation in addressing the issues of terrorism, criminal networks, or arms proliferation. It involves sound intelligence structures, rapid decision-making procedures, information processing and analysis, border security, police cooperation, and diplomatic coordination. It is the area of networking and multistructure management that remains a very sensitive topic for individual countries and for multinational organizations.

NATO-EU cooperation in jointly addressing risks and vulnerabilities is therefore the key to success. Promoting and sustaining transatlantic

cooperation in fighting terrorism remains a major priority for Romania, and the government supports the development of a role-sharing concept between the two organizations. Cooperation with partner countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, including Russia, could improve NATO efforts of promoting stability and addressing the asymmetric challenges in its new neighbourhoods.

Moreover, when thinking about the role of NATO in countering terrorism, one should define its new tasks. The most important one remains of course the extension of the ISAF mission to stabilize Afghanistan, which should soon cover the entire Afghan territory. The Istanbul Summit is expected to provide a significant boost to this complex and challenging mission. But there are other ongoing requirements we should think about in the future. One is addressing the areas of maritime security and border security in the Black Sea–Caucasus region. Another one relates to continuing and enhancing NATO operations in the Mediterranean to counter the terrorist threat along the southern border of the Alliance. Finally, one further task could be the development by NATO in preventing the emergence of new terrorist safe havens by supporting Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries in their security sector reforms and the fight against terrorism.

While comparing national reforms and NATO transformation, one may notice that there is a common core concept behind the role of the military in fighting terrorism: the armed forces have to define their own niche function in all areas of countering asymmetric threats, from prevention and deterrence to war and stabilization. New capabilities, partnerships, and operations are intrinsically connected to a new vision about strategic interests and defence policies.

NATO's role and the mission of the armed forces should be enlarged to a broader perspective regarding the promotion of security, in which a new set of instruments is progressively designed to respond to a new set of transatlantic objectives. To rephrase a well-known dictum: the only thing that does not change is change itself.