

ANTI-BALISTIC MISSILE SHIELD IN ROMANIA. An Opportunity or a Vulnerability for Romania's National Security?

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Abstract

The current paper analyses the decision taken by Romania to accept the construction of anti-ballistic missile defense system components on Romanian territory. The reactions the international and national actors have had regarding President Traian Basescu's announcement about hosting components of the ballistic missile defense system have been manifold. Therefore acquainting with the former George W. Bush missile defense program, the changes made in deployment plans under Barack Obama leadership considering the international arena context and Romania's relationship with the Russian Federation creates the grounds for a better understanding of the reasons for which it took this important strategic decision.

Key words: anti-ballistic missile shield, Bush proposal, Barack Obama proposal, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, NATO, SM- 3 Interceptor, security, strategic opportunity.

Introduction

On 4 February 2010 the Romanian President Traian Basescu officially announced that Romania will be hosting components of the future ballistic missile defense system proposed by the American President Barack Obama in 2009. On the one hand, this announcement may be seen as a strategic decision of great importance to enhance the national security, but on the other hand it may be seen as placing an even heavier burden over the security of the state, as Romania might become a target for potential missile attacks or any kind of military aggression on this account.

The purpose of this paper is to establish whether the decision taken by Romania to accept the construction of anti-ballistic missile shield on Romanian territory is an advantageous strategic foreign policy decision or the Czech Republic and Poland have taken a better stance postponing taking a decision of such great importance. This analysis will be undertaken by balancing out the advantages and disadvantages of hosting components of antiballistic missile defense system, taking into account the

geopolitical position of Romania along with the context of the international arena, former developments of this program and issues that have emerged due to its implementation. Furthermore, I will provide a temporal analysis (from the end of the Cold War until the current events) regarding the evolution of the relations between Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania respectively with Russia and the US, aimed at understanding the different behavior of these three states with regard to the missile shield. I will provide an analytical view over the events and interests which drove Poland and the Czech Republic, on the one hand, and Romania, on the other hand, to have different approaches towards the missile shield program and particularly towards Russia.

In this respect, the methodology relies on content analysis of official documents, interviews, and declarations of heads of states for offering a comprehensive view over the chronology of events, over the changes made to the antiballistic missile defense program throughout time and over the foreign policy of the states involved in this matter.

The acceptance of Barack Obama's proposal reveals Romania's acknowledgement of the obligation to comply with a series of responsibilities implied by NATO membership. Romania's commitment reveals a behavioral pattern specific to the realist theory of international relations according to which a state seeks to enter such an alliance for the ongoing pressing selfish purpose of self-preservation, for granting its own security (Miroiu and Soare 2006, 209). According to Hans Morgenthau, "alliances are a necessary function of the balance of power operating in a multiple state system" (Morgenthau 1985, 187). For the Realists the alliance is important as a formal or informal commitment which brings benefits to all of the allies (Miroiu and Soare 2006, 210). All of the states are obliged to intervene for each other in case any of them is attacked by a non-member state, because, by signing the alliance foundation treaty, the states must provide mutual military assistance. The Realists believe that the allies act as rational actors whose main common goal is to maximize their security at a minimum risk and cost. One of the key elements of an alliance is its political character. The allies have a series of mutual expectations that go beyond the purpose of the agreement, such as political support for their diplomatic undertakings in various fields (Miroiu and Soare 2006, 213). According to Hans Morgenthau, states decide to enter a military alliance for the purpose of balancing, which means allying with the weakest state power for counterpoising the balance of power. The imbalance of threats a

state has to face determines it to have a balancing behavior. These threats are a sum of elements of offensive military capacity, geographical position and other actors' perception over the amount to which the threat's intentions are offensive. The Realists believe that the states' behavior inside the alliance is a consequence of their external threats just as much as their desire to acquire more power inside the system (Miroiu and Soare 2006, 215-216).

Background

The ballistic missile defense system is a concept which appeared during the Cold War in the US military strategy whose main theme was to deter the USSR. The anti-ballistic missile shield concept was complementary to the policy of deterrence; its essence was to inflict such a cost on the attacker that, even if there was a strong possibility that it would emerge as the winner of the conflict, the effort to carry out the aggression would not be worth the effort (Kaufmann 1958, 2). On March 1983, the Reagan administration drafted the initiative for a strategic defense project, Star Wars, meant to defend the American territory from the Soviet missiles through a Space Laser Satellite Defense System (Libor 2010, 60). However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the changes in the international landscape needed to be addressed from a different perspective, as the concept of security gained a new dimension. NATO's *raison d'être* up until that moment was to respond to the threat posed by the Soviet Union. The massive potentially immediate military threat – NATO's main concern until 1989 – had disappeared, and thus no longer provided the focus of the Allies' strategy. The new threats consisted of unsolved economic and social problems, regional conflicts on ethnic, religious, territorial and historical disputes concerning distribution and dominance facing some European countries, which could have possibly lead to instability and armed conflicts in Europe and have a spillover effect over the NATO allies, thus affecting the security of the Alliance.

In the context of the reconfiguration of the international landscape, Central and Eastern Europe remained a geostrategic space of great importance to NATO mainly because of Russia's proximity, because it can be acknowledged as a passage to the Middle East and as an area of high instability, very likely to produce insecurity. However, the new states in this area, as soon as they received independence and freedom from the soviet troops, saw NATO as the sole guardian of their security and the main support for accomplishing the democratic transition (Eyal 1999, 700-

703). Most of the Central and Eastern European states still regarded Russia as a potential threat to their independence and autonomy, thus NATO's military superiority, along with its successful resistance to Russian expansion in the Cold War, made it appealing (Kydd 2001, 804). Russia's use of force in Chechnya was increasing the Central and Eastern European states' concern and their desire to become NATO members. Therefore it is proper to say that they chose to join NATO in order to balance a perceived threat coming from Russia, revealing a behavioral pattern in accordance with the realist theory. Enlarging the Alliance brought benefits for NATO allies and the aspiring states as well, having the fifth Article (The North Atlantic Treaty, Article 5, 1945) as the main shield against Russia's potentially offensive actions.

The end of the Cold War thus created the favorable context for NATO to expand again, but it triggered Russia's virulent rhetoric against NATO enlargement. The first official stance of this kind appeared in a confidential letter sent by the Russian president to the Western leaders, stating that furthering the NATO expansion would re-install the bloc politics, would isolate Russia and affect its relationship with the West (Wittmann 2009, 37).

Russia's fears referred to losing its sphere of influence, the Russian USSR legacy of exerting control over the former soviet states. The interest attached to this region is revealed by Russia's strategic documents published since the collapse of the URRS. The 1993 "Foreign policy concept" and the new military doctrine published in the same year included provisions according to which Russia had a special responsibility in the so-called "near abroad" territory and that countries in this region should maintain a "friendly neutrality" (Katarzyna 2010, 44). Limiting NATO's enlargement was part of Russia's strategy of establishing a new security architecture in Europe with Russia as the main guardian of peace, with restrained US military presence and influence in the region. Notwithstanding Moscow's foreign policy agenda, the enlargement was carried on, Poland and the Czech Republic joining the alliance in the first wave in 1999 and Romania in the second wave in 2004. Simultaneously, the ballistic missile defense program was resumed as well.

The project was reset on the table by the Bush administration, but it needed to suffer a series of changes due to several reasons: there were new threats to US national security emerged as a consequence of the potential access of terrorist networks to nuclear arsenal components, the possibility of using

them against the USA, as well as of the increasing number of nuclear states. The nuclear strategies of China, Iran and North Korea were mentioned as a threat. The Bush administration claimed North Korea tested a nuclear device and had a ballistic missile defense satellite program, and that Iran had an active nuclear weapons development program, even if Tehran announced on 2003 that it had already ceased it (Hildreth and Ek 2009, 7). According to US intelligence assessments, Iran may have long-range ballistic missile capability no sooner than 2015 if it does not receive any significant foreign assistance from Russia or China.

The Bush program implied building research and surveillance components, sensors and radars of high power, and air-to-ground missiles launching installations, like Patriot and SM3 missiles. In addition, a radar of high power would have been placed by 2013 in the Czech Republic in the Brdy district and 10 interceptors of long-range ballistic missiles near Koszalin, in Poland (Vaduva 2010, 21). The defense system, however, covered only a part of the European territory, leaving aside Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey because of the short distance between Southeast Europe and Iran (Meier 2007, 1). The development of this program was a source of concern for Bucharest, as it only increased its sense of insecurity and vulnerability to emergent threats, such as a potential ballistic missile attack against Romania.

For having the liberty to continue this policy, Bush abrogated the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002. The ABM Treaty, signed by the two superpowers in 1972, stipulated that only two ballistic missile defense systems were allowed to be built, but due to a protocol signed two years later, only a defense system as such was allowed to be placed around the capitals of the two states (Ivan 2010, 3). Russia saw this policy as an offence to its national security, hence threatened to place short-range ballistic missiles in the Russian enclave Kaliningrad and Belarus. In the "Strategy for Russia's National Security to 2020" (Vaduva 2010, 25), which was signed by the Russian President Medvedev on 12 May 2009, it was stipulated that "the anti-ballistic missile defense system development and installation undermines the global stability and disrupts the strategic power equilibrium" (and that any attempt to bring the NATO infrastructure closer to the Russian frontiers implies direct threats to the national security of Russia. Russian officials argued that the real intentions of the USA were to place a radar near Russia's borderline in order to monitor its missile sites and naval operations (Hildreth and Ek 2009, 7).

Thus, the Czech Republic and Poland had to take a great risk and accept to host the defense system and thus face a potentially hostile policy coming from Russia. Having to confront such a threat, a decision of such great importance should have at least received an overwhelming approval in the parliament and within the civil society, in order to increase the sense of internal security. Even if the Declaration on Strategic Cooperation was signed by the USA with the Czech Republic and in summer 2009 with Poland, taking into account the strategic implications, they were not approved by the legislators (Ivan 2010, 5). The coalition government in the Czech Republic did not receive enough parliamentary support for ratifying the document.

Neither of the two states ratified the agreements until the Obama administration cancelled the program. The Czech Republic launched official negotiations concerning the radar station on 28 March 2007, but faced the public's and the opposition parties' protest. However, on 17 March 2009 the government collapsed. Among the arguments against hosting the defense system, I underline the following:

- It is unnecessary or its true purpose is to monitor the Russian missile tests, as Iran is not a real threat. Hence the Czech Republic believed this might determine a new arms race against the two superpowers and that the country might get in the middle of it.
- The radar represents a high security risk because the host state might become the target of an attack and a risk for the citizens' health.
- Not accepting this proposal is part of the negotiation process to obtain financial assistance for economic development.

Because the Czech Republic never agreed to the Bush proposal, the USA lost interest in this country, as from April 2010, since Obama's visit, there has never been any political event of great importance between the two states and over two years have passed with no American ambassador being appointed in the Czech Republic until January 14, 2011 (Frank 2010, 61).

In Poland, the public also opposed the plan on more or less the same grounds, with a majority of 55%, according to a survey for the Warsaw-bases Centre for Public research (Meier 2007, 4). The USA, however, agreed to support Poland in the process of military modernization, mainly through PAC-3 air defense, if Poland accepted the Bush proposal (Frunzeti 2009, 21). One of the main reasons for Poland to accept the plan in the first place was the Russian invasion of Georgia, which occurred in the same period. It

thought that, by consolidating the partnership with the USA and building NATO infrastructure, it would have been protected by an invasion from Russia (Roman 2010, 942). But the two states did not benefit from public or governmental support for approving the Bush proposal, while Russia represented a greater risk. As previously mentioned, according to the Realists, the actions of the states inside the alliance are influenced by their perceived external threats and their own interests. Consequently, Poland and the Czech Republic acknowledged the missile shield not to be sufficient if confronted with a real Russian threat, while the risk of not complying with the opposition coming from the overwhelming majority of citizens, as well as from a number of government officials was too high, compromising the credibility of the democratic institutions.

Depiction of the CEE states' relationship with Moscow

Russia's position triggered a different approach in Warsaw and Prague than it did in Bucharest. In order to understand the reasons for following distinct policies, a brief glance over the evolution of their relationship with Moscow since the end of the Cold war is needed. Strained, sometimes tense relations have been predominant in all three cases, but due to distinct interests, Romania has never turned to the policy of "reset relations" with Moscow, as in the case of the other two states.

From a historical point of view, between the Czech Republic and Russia there have never been animosities similar to those between Poland and Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it took ten years for Polish-Russian relations to return to normal (Kratochvil 2004, 1). Even after Poland joined NATO, it still described Russia as the "archenemy of the free, democratic world" (Kratochvil 2004, 3), a state with imperial ambitions. If until the year 2000 Russia was seen as a threat and Warsaw's main objective was to join NATO and the EU, Putin's grip on power gave the Russian foreign policy a pragmatic character, thus strengthening the ties through economic cooperation. The exports and imports from Russia increased, placing the Russian Federation as Poland's ninth biggest trade partner (Report on Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic 2004, 266-267). The Czech Republic made even more efforts inside the Alliance to deepen the cooperation by endeavoring to strengthen political dialogue in the NATO-Russia Council. Thus, Prague attached great importance to Russia's position and even more to the potential threats it poses.

After the fall of communism, Poland set as foreign policy goals the establishment a special relationship with the US and the integration the European states left aside into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Until recently the relationship between Poland and Russia has been mostly tense, affected by mutual prejudices that go back in time; on this line, one should remember the Katyn crimes and the mass murder of Polish prisoners in 1940 by Stalin's secret police NKVD. The pattern of discord shows four main strategic conflicts over: a) the integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures; b) Poland's efforts into enhancing the integration of Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and the EU, and of implementing the European Eastern Partnership; c) Poland's energy security affected by repeated reductions in the volume of gas supplied by Russia, caused by its conflicts with the transit states - Ukraine and Belarus; d) the interpretation of events in common history (Nowak and Kobrinskaya 2010, 1-3).

A series of critical events have worsened the already fable relations:

- The support given to Chechnya during the Russian-Chechen war and the Russian diplomats' expulsion in 2000 followed by a countermeasure of an equal number of Polish diplomats banished from Russian ground.
- The ban placed on Polish meat imports in 2006, followed by Poland's veto in the EU Council with regard to resuming the EU-Russia negotiations on the new strategic partnership. Along the same line is Poland's effort to block Russia's accession into the WTO (Tucker 2010, 2).

Recent events have nevertheless made Polish-Russia rapprochement more realistic, such as the positioning of the country within the EU (the Prime Minister Donald Tusk believes closer ties with Russia are in the EU's economic, political and security interest), the Smolensk tragedy in April 2010 (the plane crash carrying the Polish President Lech Kaczynski and other high-ranking members of the Polish government on their way to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre¹) and the NATO New Strategic Concept, which emphasizes the core importance of "resetting " the relationship with Russia (Tucker 2010, 6-9). Even if the overall relations between Poland and Russia have been tense, the former

¹ The Katyn massacre was the mass murder of Polish military officers, policemen, intellectuals and civilian prisoners of war by the Soviet NKVD, dated in the 5th of March 1940. It was an action undertaken with the approval of the entire Soviet Politburo which resulted with 22.000 victims, murdered in the Katyn Forest in Russia.

acknowledged that a rapprochement weights more than the decision to host the missile defense shield, even if this meant affecting the strong ties with the US. However, Russia perceived Poland's actions as aimed at creating a Polish sphere of influence in the region, and thus at reducing Russia's influence over the states in its near abroad (Nowak, Kobrinskaya, 2010, 3).

Whereas the Czech Republic and Poland sought to reset relations with the Russian Federation, the same behavioral pattern cannot be traced in Romania's foreign policy. Soon after the fall of communism, the relations between the two states have frozen, because Russia was still seen as a threat to Romania's national security. An example relevant in this matter is the bilateral treaty signed in 1991 with the USSR, according to which Romania committed not to join any alliance considered to be directed against Moscow's vital interests. This was a clear reference to NATO membership (Weiner 2004, 485-486). It took almost 13 years to conclude a bilateral treaty signed on 4 July 2003 in Moscow (Tratatul politic de baza Romania-Rusia 2003), which was merely a consequence of USA's assertiveness and for increasing Romania's prospects for integration into the Alliance in the second wave of expansion (Weiner 2004, 488).

The relations between Bucharest and Moscow have always been tense and based on mutual distrust, enhanced by subsequent declarations of astringent rhetoric coming from the heads of states of both parties. Critics towards Moscow's policy are present also in "Romania's Security Strategy from 2010", which stipulates that, concerning Russia, any threats considered by NATO as belonging to the past might at any time "reappear on our security agenda" (Romania's National Defense Strategy, 2010). The Transnsdniester conflict is a source of tension, as the two states have divergent interests in this particular area. As Russia's wider strategy is to regain influence over the states in its near abroad territory, it placed strong efforts into maintaining the conflict frozen, whereas Romania has conversely taken measures to increase EU and NATO's interest and actions towards settling it. With bilateral relations at their lowest, Romania is currently the European country that pays the most for the natural gas imported from Russia. Therefore Romania obviously attaches more importance to the security provided by the missile shield and to its relationship with the USA. Romania decided to join the Alliance in order to increase its security, as well as to balance Russia. Its policy towards NATO and Moscow has been a consequence, the former still perceived as the main

guarantor of peace, and the latter as a threat, whereas Poland and the Czech Republic moved from the policy of “balancing” towards a “reset” of their relations with Russia.

The development of the missile defense system

The strategy of the Bush administration to reduce the nuclear arms proliferation did not result in significant changes in Iran’s and North Korea’s policies; the nuclear arms control negotiations, held under the “P5+1” format between the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany, are a clear indication. North Korea and Iran have successfully succeeded in postponing a firm decision on this matter. When a more firm policy has been adopted by the six great powers, North Korea threatened to attack South Korea (Mircea 2009, 8). The Financial Times offered a brief analysis of this behavior: “Mottaki's/Iranian Foreign Minister/ offer is Iran's latest tactical manoeuvre in a long-term strategy: making bogus offers to the West in order to win time, time in which Tehran can work on a nuclear weapon” (Ionescu 2010, 2). At the beginning of 2010 Iran refused the “5+1” Group proposal to have 20% of its uranium enriched by other states and to import the necessary uranium from other countries (such as France), to make sure that it is used for peaceful purposes. By pursuing this strategy, these rogue states have lost all credibility with the NATO allies, giving even more meaning to pursue the missile defense program.

Also, the American policy with regard to Iran lacked a firm support from Russia, which persistently backed Tehran in the negotiations by arguing against imposing sanctions. Moreover, Russia consolidated its relationship with Iran and agreed to provide the Iranian state with S-300 ground-to-air missiles. Iran is seen rather as a geopolitical ally in the region, therefore Russia can point out US policy with regard to Israel and Pakistan, which in turn acquired nuclear arms and missiles (Sestanovich 2008, 6). This gives Russia legitimacy for its strategy, thus increasing the insecurity on the international arena.

Barack Obama’s anti-ballistic missile defense system proposal

The new Obama administration came up with a new proposal, as new investigations revealed that Iran develops short-range missiles at a quicker scale than long-range missiles, with North Korea as a close partner. Therefore, in September 2009, American president Barack Obama officially announced that the defense system will no longer be built in the Czech

Republic and Poland. The proposed interceptors for Poland had not been tested anyway and the ground-based defense system had been designed to counter an undeveloped Iranian long-range missile threat (ACA Welcomes Shift to a More Pragmatic U.S. Missile Defense Policy, 2009), therefore it would have not protected South-Eastern Europe from the Iranian ballistic missiles capacity. In the new plan, Standard Missile 3 interceptors would be built, with an 83% rate of success (19 interceptors out of 23 attempts) and offer a more flexible, capable and cost-effective architecture, instead of the long-range missile interceptors which were supposed to be placed in Poland. This program is designed to have an intercepting capacity with an exclusive regional range as opposed to the former system 25 times larger, based on missiles of 25 tones which could reach 12.000 km (Roman, 2010, 945), and offers a variety of options to track enemy missiles. Instead of the fixed radar previously supposed to be set up in the Czech Republic, there will be an upgraded system of planes, satellites and ground sensors all over Europe, in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, UK, Denmark, and the Netherlands (Dinucci and Tommaso 2010, 2) and in other allied states. This new program is thus more eligible as it meets a very high rate of success, it reduces Russia's means of concern and it benefits from a wider range of support from the European allies.

The Obama proposal was consistent with US' "resetting policy" towards Russia. The line set by the Obama administration with regard to the US-Russia relations was established by Vice-President Joseph Biden on 7 February 2009 in his speech in Munich, when he asserted that "it is time to press the reset button and to revisit the many areas where we can and should work together" (Minikes 2005, 1). Shifting the ballistic missile defense southwards was a decision well received by Russia, described by the Russian President D. Medvedev as responsible, opening the prospects for cooperation on the ballistic missile defense system. Also, Russia gave up on its intentions of deploying the Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad enclave.

On 19-20 November 2010, at the summit in Lisbon, the member states agreed to adopt the Obama project as a NATO program in response to the ballistic missile proliferation threat posed by rogue states (Hildreth 2010, 5). The NATO New Strategic Concept defines the capacity to defend from a ballistic missile attack as one of the key elements of the common defense strategy and places the responsibility of building the defense system on all the allies (Mostoflei 2010, 16-17). It is also stipulated that the allies offer and

ask for complete transparency from the Russian Federation and that interconnecting the anti-ballistic missile systems of the USA, NATO and Russia in due time should be taken into account (Roman 2010, 944). As opposed to the previous plan, the program is not designed to defend from Russian long-range ballistic missiles, but from the current threat imposed by Iran's nuclear capabilities at this point in time and until 2015. It can also be noticed that USA and NATO want to cooperate with Russia and take the necessary measures to tighten their partnership; therefore Russia is starting to be more receptive to the new program under NATO supervision.

The project is designed to be built on four phases:

1. Phase one by 2011 - deploy more advanced missile defense systems such as the sea-based Aegis Weapon System, the SM-3 interceptor (Block IA), and the forward-based Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance system (AN/TPY-2), deployed for defense against short and medium-range ballistic missiles. A radar will be planted near Iran and Aegis Destroyers and interceptors in Southern Europe.
2. Phase two by 2015 - deploy a more advanced version of SM-3 interceptor (Block IB) in both sea and land-based configurations, and more advanced sensors.
3. Phase three by 2018 - deploy SM-3 (Block IIA) capable to destroy medium-range missiles (from 3.500 to 5.500 km). At this phase all of the territories of NATO allies will have been completely covered.
4. Phase four by 2020 - deploy the more advanced SM-3(Block IIB) capable to destroy intercontinental missiles (Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy - A "Phased, Adaptive Approach" for Missile Defense in Europe, 2009), launched from the Middle East and targeted at the USA.

Romania will be involved in the second phase. On its territory there will be installed solely SM-3 (Block IB) ground-based interceptor missiles, which will become operational since 2015 and which have proved to be very successful. For NATO allies, the Romanian state proved to be an optimal choice for the deployment of a system designed to prevent a ballistic missile attack from the Middle East for a number of reasons:

- The geopolitical position: being a NATO ally, Romania is a pass-way to the Russian Federation, to the Caucasian space (of great strategic importance due to its energy resources) and to the Black

Sea region. Also, due to the fact that Romania is a NATO border country, on the South-Eastern flank, which is one of the most exposed areas to the main threats (Vornic 2010, 1045).

- The good relations between Bucharest and Washington.
- The broad support for the project among the major political forces, the centre-right government coalition led by the Democratic Liberal Party, and the opposition parties, such as the National Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party, and also among the population who is at large pro-American. Quite differently from the Czech Republic and Poland, which did not receive enough support either from the political elites or from the public (Doborowski 2010, 2-3).

Based on these arguments, in line with the Realist theory, placing the defense system in Romania brings benefits to all NATO allies. For Romania, being a NATO ally and a host state for the missile defense system represents an important strategic opportunity. It now benefits from the anti-ballistic missile shield and is a key state for the security of the other allies. As the realist theory assesses, states are rational and make use of an opportunity when it emerges.

International actors' reactions

The announcement of President Traian Basescu did not come as a surprise for the Russian Federation according to Dmitri Trenin, the director of the Moscow Carnegie Center. Placing the shield in Romania was in fact a proposal made by Russia (Roman 2010, 944). Even so, the day after Romania's announcement, Russia made its new military doctrine official, having stipulated that the ballistic missile defense system is a major threat to the security of the Russian state as it violates the status quo of the balance of nuclear forces. Previous to this new ballistic missile defense system proposal, Russia proposed the creation of a new European security architecture and of a European anti-ballistic missile shield in cooperation with Russia, but it did not meet much support throughout Europe. As Russia has vehemently opposed placing ballistic missile defense system components in North-East Europe, Scandinavia, Poland and the Baltic states, moving it in Romania is by far a more acceptable location for the Russian Federation, as the Romanian component is not directed towards it and therefore it is not threatening its national security (Ionita 2011).

Among the EU states, France has shown support for Romania's decision to host the anti-missile shield components. Pierre Lellouche, the Secretary of State for European Affairs, stated that "the ballistic threat is a growing reality. Look at what is happening in Iran. The security of the European Union is being threatened, starting with South-Eastern Europe, the most exposed part of it. Therefore, I can understand Romania's concerns very well. NATO offers us a combination of means to dissuade nuclear arming and not only" (Lellouche 2010). However, The Republic of Moldova neighboring state, has criticized the Romanian decision, regarded as a trigger for counter-measures taken by Russia in the Transdniestrian autonomous republic (Ionescu 2010, 4).

Interests and benefits sought to be gained by Romania

Moreover, Romania's interests are tightly connected to its decision. Romania agreed to be a host state also due to the desire to gain an important position in the NATO global security system, for Romania is first of all an important strategic partner to the USA and a reliable ally within NATO. USA is perceived as the main guarantor of security for Romania; this is why Bucharest makes many efforts towards increasing USA's interest in the Black Sea region. This is the policy Romania has followed so far, therefore its decision comes as a natural consequence. Its policy is in line with Randall Schweller's assessment on the behavior states have inside the alliance, referring to the desire to gain more power inside the system.

Romania is actively involved in military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan (Romania increased its number of soldiers from 1020 to 1798) and since 2005 there are four American military bases in Romania (Daborowski 2010, 3). Romania wants to reinforce its position on the international arena, especially to become a regional power. From a Realist point of view, one of Romania's main goals is to counterbalance the influence of Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea region. The balancing behavior is a consequence of the proximity of the two great powers with the Romanian state, their high influence over the states in the region, their substantial offensive military capacity and the long history of being under dominion by the two powers. States seek the balance for the purpose of increasing their security or for gaining more power. In Romania's case both are plausible because, from a Realist point of view, and they are interdependent: having more power increases the sense of security and having more security means having more power. Furthermore, concerning its aspirations to be a regional power, Romania targets energy supplies from the Caspian region and an

improvement of its relations with the Republic of Moldova. By hosting the SM-3 interceptor, Romania would indeed increase its power, as it would undoubtedly raise US engagement in the region, especially since there is a possibility for an extension of the ship-based interceptor to be built in the Black Sea, according to an indication given by the American vice-president Joseph Biden in February 2010. The Constanta port and naval facilities “could be a good platform for a military naval base” (Rozoff 2010).

Romania has security, social, economic and political benefits from taking this important strategic decision:

- Security dimension: the shield offers protection from ballistic missiles and therefore an overall increase in the national security, without having to share the costs of the interception missiles or any expenses related to their deployment on Romanian territory (Ivan, 2010, 8). In addition, the shield implies bringing the latest technology on Romanian ground and the highest quality of air-to-ground missiles launching and supervising installations.
- Social dimension: the citizens see this shield as a guarantee for their safety. Also, they gain more trust in the institutions of the state, due to the high efficiency of the shield (Frunzeti 2009, 26).
- Economic dimension: the shield implies significant investments and many new jobs, having real positive effects on the lives of the people living the area. The economy of the state will benefit from the foreign financial support and technology-sharing (Hildreth 2010, 7). Many new economic projects are being implemented, such as organizing a forum of Romanian-American businessmen or the 58 million euro factory built by the International Automotive Components in Bals town, which will create 400 new jobs for the population in the surrounding area (Gubandru 2011).
- Political dimension: strengthening the ties with USA, which increases American responsibility and involvement in the state and in the region. The anti-ballistic missile shield offers a security and political guarantee without any real expense and gives Romania more political power in the region. Furthermore, the Black Sea area gains more importance in the eyes of the USA and the European Union with respect to energy and security aspects. It is worth mentioning the visa-issue, which might be taken into consideration as a natural step in the strategic partnership with USA (Aurescu 2010). Hosting components of the ballistic defense system also implies consolidating the relationship with the Greater Middle East

or the Greater Black Sea Basin by connecting the defense sites of the USA and Europe (Ionescu 2010, 6).

Having in mind these benefits, there might also be disadvantages, similar to the ones taken into consideration by Poland and the Czech Republic. One of the main reasons for which the Czech Republic and Poland were afraid to host components of the missile shield was Russia's reaction. However, the Russian Federation changed its position regarding the Obama plan, as the missile shield cannot switch the strategic balance between the great nuclear powers if it is built on the Romanian territory. Also, it can reduce the threats the area might pose for Europe and for the energy security (Vaduva 2010, 25). Russia's security cannot be threatened, as it has no short-range or medium-range ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles since June 1991, when it made an agreement with the USA to dispose of them (Yevseyev 2010). Russia's concerns thus no longer stand.

With all these in mind, a cost-benefits analysis shows that Romania has adopted a better position by accepting to host anti-ballistic missile defense system components. This has been a strategic opportunity and Romania seized it with fewer risks than the one faced by the Czech Republic and Poland. Romania's decision is in line with its behavior inside NATO. As the Realist theory claims, Romania is a rational state and it sought to maximize its security and benefit from the opportunity. Whereas in the case of Poland and the Czech Republic there were immediate threats, in Romania's case the risks are only foreseeable in the medium term.

Conclusion

By the time Romania was proposed to host the missile shield, the threats on the international arena got a different dimension, therefore the program was changed in order to face these threats. The Czech Republic and Poland had to face risks on a larger scale, therefore the cost-benefits analysis did not lean towards accepting the Bush proposal as in the case of Romania. The discrepancy between the three states' behavior towards Moscow comes as a consequence of the differentiation between their foreign policies. Whereas Poland and the Czech Republic went towards strengthening the ties with Russia, Romania continues to have a balancing policy, being more interested to enhance its power inside the Alliance and in the Black Sea Region. Russia has had an aggressive reaction concerning the ballistic missile shield until the project was changed by the Obama administration and was entrusted to NATO, but started to be receptive and cooperative

afterwards. This has proven to be an opportunity of great strategic importance for Romania, which was seized on immediately. Romania can pursue and maximize its interests, as there are security, social, economic and political benefits, while the risks are not as high as in the case of the Czech Republic and Poland. Nevertheless, there still exists the possibility of growing national security threats, as the new sites become potential targets, but they are a natural consequence of being a NATO member state. Hosting elements of the ballistic missile defense system in Europe creates the grounds for the consolidation of Romania's security, as well as Europe's security as a whole.

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