

## US-ROMANIAN RELATIONS – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

**Gabriel GABOR**

Ph.D., Associate Professor, "Nicolae Bălcescu" Land Forces Academy  
*gaborsmg@yahoo.com*

**Abstract:** *In this paper, we aim to analyze the evolution of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America. Launched on 11 July 1997, the partnership was a political and diplomatic platform for cooperation between the two countries. The novelty of this article is the SWOT analysis of the Strategic Partnership but also its deepening. We propose that the Strategic Partnership be institutionalized and instrumentalized in the form of a new format for cooperation and collaboration. One of the three pillars of our country's foreign policy is the privileged relationship with the United States of America, which must be deepened and developed. The Strategic Partnership concluded between Romania and the United States of America is the only certitude for our country to survive as a state, and to preserve its entire territory. This year we celebrate 25 years since this partnership emerged on the stage of History. Now, as we experience uncertain times marked by fierce geopolitical competition, it is high time we developed and formalized our Strategic Partnership. Not that we want to minimize NATO's role, but the Alliance without the United States does not have the strength to oppose multiple challenges at international level. The Strategic Partnership strengthens our country's profile, while being the certitude of our country's preserving its territorial integrity, and full sovereignty. The bilateral relationship has become a model of diplomatic cooperation and has manifested itself in various domains, political, military, economic, informational, environmental, social, and cultural.*

**Keywords:** *Romania; the United States of America; Strategic Partnership; perspectives; extended national security.*

### Introduction

The concept of extended national security relies on observing constitutional democracy, and the democratic values. The 2015-2019, as well as the 2020-2024 National Strategy for State Defense are both implemented while observing the European security principles and while developing a direct proportionality link to the European Security Strategy, and with the Internal Security Strategy of the European Union. The convergence of those principles is a desideratum of both national defense strategies. (Gabor, Gabriel; Cristian, Alexandru 2021)(124). The New National Strategy for State Defense for 2020-2024 is also based on enhancing the concept of *extended national security*. The Strategy proposes a double-sided integrated risk, threat, and vulnerability management. There is a domestic/national side, and an international side, that is the external commitments undertaken by our country. (Gabor, Gabriel; Cristian, Alexandru 2021) (123).

The international security environment, characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, requires viable solutions for preserving security. Romania's foreign and security policy is stable and predictable as it relies on the *triad* consisting of the European Union, the North-Atlantic Alliance, and on the country's Strategic Partnership with the United States. What is not predictable is the evolutions in the Black Sea Extended Region – that is why these two converging concepts – the one of extended national security, and the one of resilience – make up a new clear and concise concept, applicable in the current context of our country's international profile. The challenge for our country is maintaining a high standard of resilience and interoperability at sectorial level to strengthen national security.

The international security environment shapes the reactions and behaviors of states. In the analysis of the Strategic Partnership, we must not forget the Band Wagoning concept developed first mentioned by Arnold Wolfers and then taken over by other thinkers. This concept means that a small or medium state allies with a greater power to survive on the

international political scene. The concept was popularized by Kenneth Waltz in his book *Theory of International Politics*.

### 1. A brief history of the evolution of US-Romanian relations

Relations between states have evolved throughout history. From first contacts to trade, diplomatic or even friendship relations is a long way to go. Romanian-American relations have been part of the classical paradigm of history, namely an evolution depending on the historical events that have followed. We divided the Romanian-American relations into four great periods, according to some authors there are even five periods. The early period, the period of formalizing bilateral relations, the period of the Cold War and the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain. We divided the periods in bilateral relations according to the historical evolution but also to the main events that took place in our countries. We must mention that the United States of America was in the period of its ascension and our country was in a period of state consolidation but also of modernization.

The *early* period is considered to have spanned from 1843 until 1880. 1843 is the year when the first American trading ship reached the Romanian harbors, namely the Brăila harbor. Back in those times, the United States were experiencing territorial and economic expansion at its fullest, while trade was a fundamental pillar to developing the American state. Statele Unite ale Americii erau în perioada construcției și dezvoltării statale (Vitcu 2000).

We can consider the second period of our bilateral relations' evolution between 1880 and 1940: it is the period during which the US-Romanian relations became *official* and *got developed*. The first official representative of the United States of America in Bucharest was Eugene Schuyler. It should be mentioned that after some dates and testimonies he was close to the great Roman poet Mihai Eminescu. From here we can say that Mihai Eminescu is among the first Romanian intellectuals attracted by the United States of America. There are two years worth mentioning during this lapse of time – 1880, when the bilateral relations turned official with the appointing of the first American diplomatic representative to Romania, and 1918, when the Romanian Legation to Washington D.C. was established. We must emphasize that Romania and the United States were allies during the First World War without being bonded by an official legal deed such as a treaty or a pact. Our countries have been *Allies without an Alliance*, according to historian Ion Stanciu (I. Stanciu 2010). The year 1940 meant disrupting bilateral relations because of the state of war. The relations were suspended until the communist regime reopened the Romanian legation, and the United States of America acknowledged communist Romania by appointing a diplomatic representative on 28 July 1947 – Rudolf E. Schoenfeld.

The third period of bilateral relations (1947-1989) was marked by serious challenges. The communist period was a period in which the Romanian-American relations went from frost to an extremely interesting cooperation in the political field. We can say that it was the most interesting period of Romanian-American relations. It was a period of geopolitical turmoil but also a period in which our country moved away from the Soviet Union. We can say that Romania was the only communist state that had close bilateral relations of cooperation with the United States of America. In 1964, both states upgraded their legations as embassies. The relations between communist Romania and the United States were considered a paradox. Romania was seen as a country monitored by Moscow having normal, good relations to the latter's great enemy. Certain researchers called the 1967-1975 period an adultery in the communist family. Those years were symbolized by ambassador Corneliu Bogdan's prodigious activity. Corneliu Bogdan's personality left many traces in Romanian-American relations. We must mention that during his mandate Romania obtained the Most Favored Nation Clause (Harrington 2002)(250-260).

After the fall of the communist regime, our country wanted to leave the past behind and to look towards the future, which seemed to bring hope to everyone. We had the historical chance to be included in the Euro-Atlantic area. The 1995 Snagov Declaration was a historical milestone, the entire political class associated around some national ideal, that is to have Romania join the Euro-Atlantic space. (Manea 2016, 125)

Our country's decision to move to the Euro-Atlantic area was an extremely wise policy decision. It was a great strategy for our country for the orientation after the fall of the Iron Curtain, a strategy of survival and affirmation in the international space.

The period after the 1989 revolution of the US-Romanian bilateral relations was characterized by winning trust and by laying the bases of an even more effective cooperation. 1997 is a key year for Romania's foreign politics after the 1989 revolution. The Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America was launched on 11 July 1997. This event marked the entire history of the US-Romanian bilateral relations. Our countries have been allies with no formal alliance, they had complex relations during the communist period, but with the launch of this Strategic Partnership, they officially became partners to pursue their cooperation in various fields (Răceanu 2005) (180).

The Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century between Romania and the United States of America was signed on 13 September 2011. This legally binding document shall cement the bilateral relation as the two countries undertook several cooperation fields in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, the Joint Statement on the implementation of the Strategic Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century between Romania and the United States of America was launched on 26 September 2016 in Washington D.C. (Toboşaru 2016) (255).

From the evolution of the Romanian-American relations, we can deduce that they went towards an ascending trend favored by the times but also the attitude of the two states. Both had a geopolitical and geostrategic interest in maintaining and developing the bilateral relationship.

## **2. The Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America**

The signing of the Strategic Partnership was a one-of-a-kind geopolitical turning point after the Cold War. The largest power, as a matter of fact the only world-level superpower started such an international relation to a middle-sized power just emerging after half a century of communism.

The first country to sign the Peace Partnership was Romania – on 26 January 1994. That was a statement of interest from a democracy willing to join democratic values. This sign preceded the birth of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America. It was actually a foreign policy act performed by two states strengthening their relationship based on common values, norms, ideas, and principles (Cristian 2022)(90).

A signal was given on 11 July 1997 in Bucharest that our country would become an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic world. A Strategic Partnership which meant quite a surprising geopolitical move back in those times. The Strategic Partnership between 1997 and 2011 involved a developing and getting bilateral relations deeper. We divided this period into two parts because the *Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership* was signed in 2011. 2004 is the year when our country joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Also during the 1997-2011 period was established a Strategic Partnership Committee, a structure managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the State Department (Cristian 2022)(120).

The year 2006 was an important milestone in the two countries' collaboration, when the parties signed an agreement allowing an American contingent on the territory of Romania. The United States chose the military base in Kogălniceanu, where the country invested over 35 million dollars. Another important moment is 2011, when Romania accepted to host the

American missile shield at Deveselu although Moscow criticized placing this target in Romania, while directly and repeatedly menacing Romania. (M.A.E. 2011)

The Deveselu shield became operational – it includes one of the highest performing radars in the world. This is able to detect in a matter of seconds ballistic missiles fired by a potential enemy located thousands of kilometers away. There is also a launching unit consisting of 44 defensive missiles. This project started in 2013 and it cost more than 800 million dollars. (Crengăniș n.d.)

The Strategic Partnership was marked by steady, strong political and military relations, the two countries' cooperation with respect to the defense and security system has been excellent for this entire quarter of a century.

The US-Romanian Strategic Partnership was a geopolitical time which deeply marked the evolution of both peoples, as well as that of Europe as a whole. Europe has always been related to the US, History is a witness in this respect. The shift occurring at that point meant so much for our nation, and it has an impact difficult to quantify at the present. The wish to be present in a universe only known from written documents helped the American people dearly accept this basically geopolitical idea.

We identified three pillars difficult to measure and to evaluate, yet which underlie every human relation in general, and good relations between states in particular. (Româno-Americană, Us-Romanian Strategic Partnership 2021)

We have identified three pillars for deepening the Romanian-American bilateral relationship, loyalty, trust, and cooperation. These pillars helped to develop Romanian-American relations. Confidence is fundamental to a relationship between two states. In the 25 years of Strategic Partnership, our country has proved a real attachment to the bilateral relationship with the American partner. We would like to emphasize here our contribution to the theaters of operations in Iraq, and Afghanistan, and our commitments to state-level reform. The modernization of the Romanian state had as its main components the modernization of education, the reform of justice, the accumulation of new scientific knowledge but also the development of defense capabilities.

**Loyalty** is a term that highlights a strong connection between people but also between states. Loyalty is evident in times of peace but also in times of conflict

**Trust** is gained over time, the development of Romanian-American relations after 1989 bears the stamp of this word Trust. A relationship based on trust has been able to develop so many political, social, and military ties that have made Romania recognized as a strong, stable, and reliable ally.

**Cooperation** or collaboration must be continuous and based on the other two pillars. Thus, the Romanian and American states have developed bilateral relations in almost all areas known to human relations. In addition to the excellent cooperation in the military and defense field, a solid collaboration relationship has been developed in the cultural, scientific but also societal fields as a whole.

These three pillars must be the starting point for strengthening the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States for it to get more in-depth, to be institutionalized.

#### **4. SWOT and Blue Ocean analysis of the US-Romanian Strategic Partnership**

The SWOT analysis reveals that we can develop and deepen the Romanian-American relationship if we take into account certain elements. A strong point in Romanian-American relations is represented by a long, stable, and lasting relationship. This reveals continuity in the Romanian-American relationship. The Romanian diaspora present in the United States of America was a vector for promoting the interests of our country. Our diplomacy has been

doubled by the reputation that certain Romanians have acquired in the United States of America. The problems they face are related to the hostility of certain powers in deepening relations, a non-institutionalization of the Strategic Partnership, the lack of a clear and concise objective, and possible hybrid actions to undermine the transatlantic relationship. The analysis also reveals the fact that we have many opportunities that we must take advantage of, but also many objectives to be fulfilled. Cultural and educational relations must be strengthened and initiated through bilateral partnerships. The visa process needs to be optimized to further strengthen the bilateral relationship. Opportunities to deepen everything will consist in positioning the decision-makers at the transatlantic level but also in finding a common goal, a precise goal in the transatlantic relationship.

In the future, the Strategic Partnership will be enhanced and new cooperation mechanisms will be developed. The Romanian-American relations will also get stronger due to the international environment which is highly unpredictable and full of uncertainty. We are sure the future perspectives of the US-Romanian relations will be influenced by various events aimed to strengthen such relations

**SWOT analysis of the US-Romanian Strategic Partnership (A. Cristian 2022, 130)**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-lasting, stable relation</li> <li>• Excellent cooperation at military level</li> <li>• The Romanian people is close and familiar to the American culture</li> <li>• Fertile cultural and scientific relations</li> <li>• Civilization model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of formalization of the Strategic Partnership</li> <li>• Underdeveloped economic relations</li> <li>• The visa awarding process for the Romanian citizens</li> <li>• Unexploited educational relations</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An institutionalization of the Strategic Partnership</li> <li>• Develop and enhance economic and commercial relations</li> <li>• Develop direct passenger or commercial airlines</li> <li>• Optimize the visa awarding process for Romanian citizens</li> <li>• The Romanian nation has the benefit of young, very intelligent human resources</li> <li>• American personalities attracted by Romania's values and culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preconceived ideas triggered by hostile propaganda, occurrence of potential mutual mistrust</li> <li>• Conflict turning hybrid, manipulation and post-truth in order to hijack the US-Romanian bilateral relations</li> <li>• Lack of capitalization of power resources and tools by both parties</li> <li>• Lack of a precise goal; no concrete purpose</li> </ul>

BLUE OCEAN analysis is specific to the commercial and financial environment. Adapting this analysis to the Strategic Partnership seems to us to be an attempt to highlight the possibilities of deepening the Strategic Partnership. (Româno-Americană, Analiza Blue Ocean a Parteneriatului Strategic 2021)

In the international world we encounter a competitive environment full of strangers. It's like a blue ocean full of sharks and other marine creatures. The ocean can turn red / dangerous if sharks compete for power and resources. Thus, our country must preserve its national security by immersing itself in a stable international environment without it becoming full of uncertainty and ambiguity. Such an environment will allow our country to strengthen its international profile but also to increase its deterrent position in the North Atlantic Alliance.

For the development and deepening of the Strategic Partnership, certain factors must be eliminated for the ocean to turn from red - RED OCEAN to blue - BLUE OCEAN. These factors to eliminate are:

- Hostile propaganda – made by unfriendly states;
- Anti-American reflexes / obsessions – springing from certain social groups;
- Civilizational archetype / cultural model – cultural-civilizational differences;
- Country-specific imagery – lack of a correct image on both sides.

These extremely subtle and profound factors can change perceptions and turn the blue ocean full of peace and cooperation into a red one characterized by tension and conflict. Currently, the Romanian-American relationship is in a blue ocean with certain red iridescences generated by a strong propaganda that arouses anti-American reflexes and obsessions. They can be modified or altered depending on the events that take place in the international environment, conflicts, crises of all kinds but also other destabilizing situations.

These two analyzes can reveal the current state of Romanian-American relations. The relationship is very stable and efficient but needs to be developed and deepened. We must seize historic opportunities and opportunities. We need to focus on a common goal of the Strategic Partnership and bring it to a successful conclusion. Every state has a great strategy, every state has a series of small strategies to achieve its goals. We need to use all the power resources and power tools to be able to achieve a general goal, namely to increase the international profile of our country.

## **Conclusions**

Potential evolutions of the US-Romanian relations will first and foremost pertain to the evolution of the international security environment, as well as to the political will of both countries. 25 years after the emergence of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America, it is highly important it is formalized and institutionalized. We consider that identifying interinstitutional cooperation mechanisms is a fundamental pillar for enhancing the Strategic Partnership.

As a potential evolution, we forecast the development of the Strategic Partnership, as well as intensifying the US-Romanian bilateral relations are to be confirmed by events occurring on the international stage in a near or more remote future. The world at international level fell in the famous "Thucydides Trap", according to which the hegemon is being challenged, and needs to fight to preserve its geopolitical supremacy. Graham Allison analyzed this historical concept in his book, in which he compares the geopolitical conflict opposing the United States of America and the People's Republic of China with the one between Athens and Sparta in Ancient Greece (Allison, *Capcana lui Tucidide - Mai pot evita Statele Unite și China războiul?* 2022).

In this "Thucydides trap" the United States must find solutions to overcome it or to live with this trap. Every hegemon in its evolution has moments of decline. We must emphasize that the United States of America is a rapidly changing hegemon. All the great American analysts predict that in the coming years there will be a fight for supremacy globally. The competitor is the People's Republic of China, a state with significant potential and economic and financial power. The strategy that the hegemon must adopt also includes such links with the states. Alliances, Partnerships and Formats of Cooperation need to be adapted to the evolving international security environment.

The two years of pandemic, the current conflict in Ukraine and the possible crises that will follow will exacerbate this hegemonic competition and the result is unknown because no one can predict the future. The Strategic Partnership ensures our stability and security in this international environment characterized by complex and sudden transformations.

As a conclusion that we state is that the Strategic Partnership between the two countries must be consolidated, deepened and developed and new mechanisms of cooperation and collaboration must be found. Without these mechanisms, it will be very difficult for us to increase our Euro-Atlantic profile, but also to strengthen the deterrent position on the Eastern Flank of the North Atlantic Alliance.

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