



National School of Political and Administrative Studies

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The Abstract of the Doctoral Thesis

**Evaluation of the Romania-U.S. Strategic Partnership
and its implications in the period 2016 - 2023**

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Evaluation of the Romania-U.S. Strategic Partnership and its implications in the period 2016 - 2023

The present doctoral research, entitled "*Evaluation of the Romania-U.S. Strategic Partnership and its implications in the period 2016-2023*" has the role of transposing a document of high importance in the area of national security, into concrete realities, by interpreting it in 4 relational planes: economic, political, military, cultural. The presence of the United States of America cannot be ignored at this time in any of the geopolitical spaces, being an important international leader. The European eastern flank has been characterized in the last thirty years by various implications and in different areas of the US strategic partner. Thus, the present study aims to deepen these relations, but with an emphasis on the Romania-US Strategic Partnership. Taking into account the fact that 2024 is an election year on several levels (presidential elections in the US and Romania), the paradigm of international relations between the two states is all the more important.

Although the joint declarations supporting this partnership had as their starting point the military security of the region, there is an evolution in the area of non-military elements and the coverage of new relational capitals between the two states, in cultural, scientific, economic exchanges, etc.

Thus, through this research I want to present an objective and clear picture of how a strategic document produces effects in many of the key areas of a state. Strategic security documents between states can have effects in various areas beyond the field of security. Strategic security documents can influence economic relations between states. These may include provisions related to trade agreements, investment policies or economic cooperation, which can shape economic interactions and impact trade flows, investment decisions and economic stability. Security considerations can also affect resource allocation and spending priorities, potentially impacting economic development and growth. They can also have social implications by influencing perceptions, attitudes and dynamics of society. They can shape public opinion,

generate debate, or even affect social cohesion and identity. The perception of security threats and the resulting policies can influence social behaviours, migration patterns and the integration of diverse populations.

Security issues can lead to a range of cultural changes, increased interactions, as well as the protection of cultural heritage. Security cooperation and mutual understanding can facilitate cultural exchange and dialogue.

Finally, strategic security documents often have significant political implications. They can shape domestic policy by influencing political priorities, political discourse, and resource allocation. Security concerns can affect the balance of power between different political actors, affect election outcomes, and shape the political agenda.

It is important to note that the effects in these areas can be interconnected and complex, and can vary depending on the specific context, the content of the security documents and the implementation of the policies. In addition, the impact can be mutual, with developments in the economic, social, cultural, educational or political fields also influencing security considerations and shaping strategic security documents between states.

Thus, **the paper is structured in 6 chapters**, the first two being represented by a theoretical analysis, the third chapter is a documentary analysis, the fourth chapter contains the methodology, the fifth chapter presents the results of the qualitative research, and the last chapter presents the main conclusions and directions of the thesis.

The first chapter, entitled "*The politics of power in the international community through strategic partnership*", aims to present the theoretical considerations regarding the concept of partnership, starting from a philosophical analysis of the word, reaching the meaning given by the existing work, namely, the connection between two or more states. From the etymology of the word, to the vision of different authors, such as Aristotle, St. Augustine, J.J. Rousseau, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes or Marx, Engels, Marshall, the idea of partnership acquires new valences and meanings, on a symbolic, social, economic, realistic level through the collaboration between two state actors. Thus, several types of partnership are identified, economic, social, religious partnership and political partnership. The strategic partnership, as a form of collaboration in international relations, represented a special attention and a good theoretical foundation. The work was framed in the theory of international realism, arguing that states are the main actors in carrying out power transactions on the international market. The argument was theorized and

filtered through the prism of the great realist thinkers, from Kenneth N. Waltz, Griffiths, Aron Raymond, E.H. Carr, John Herz, Henry Kissinger or Hans Morgenthau. Moreover, in terms of the US-Romania relationship, a phenomenon called bandwagoning can be identified with important effects in the international space.

The second chapter, called "*The Romania-US Strategic Partnership*", had the role of presenting the official document that connects the two countries in different aspects. The chapter presents in a first stage the historical implications and the evolution over time of bilateral relations, later analyzing and even trying a comparative approach with other countries of the strategic partnership. From the period of 1843, representing the incipient period, passing through the period of formalization and expansion of the partnership between 1880-1989, but also the stage of multiple challenges found between 1880 - 1989, or the last postmodern stage from 1989 to the present, all were characterized by important moments that led to the existence of this partnership between the two states. Significantly, this chapter underlines an important element, namely, the degree of Romania's voluntary involvement or out of necessity in this international diplomatic approach. A series of arguments were presented in favor of both options, from which a clear conclusion can be drawn: both Romania and the US have a long tradition in bilateral collaboration, both countries wanting to strengthen their influence or geostrategic position in the Eastern European space. But let's not forget the fact that there were also a number of external factors that influenced the evolution of the partnership, also recalling controversial aspects in the Romania-US bilateral dialogue. The issue of visas for Romanian citizens, the rule of law and elements of corruption or judicial reforms, the need for American investments and Romania's desire to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development were elements seen as "differences" between the two states. However, these aspects have been overcome or are in the resolution stage, taking into account a series of external factors that have influenced the evolution of the partnership. These factors have been synthesized in this paper through the prism of theories, such as: pivot theory, rimland theory, buffer zone theory, events such as the Balkan war, the financial crisis, the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, etc.

The third chapter, outlines exactly the period that the research analyzes, the evolution between 2016 and 2023, having three clear directions: *the economic dimension, the military and security dimension and the social-cultural-educational dimension*. The chapter is based on a documentary quantitative analysis, based on international data, government reports and other

documents that could quantify in figures and data the Romania-US strategic partnership, during the Trump administration and the Biden administration. The economic dimension is characterized by two theories, the one regarding the fact that countries commit to trade and exchange goods, taking advantage of them, and the second regarding the life cycle of the product. The dimension shows an evolution of exports from the USA to Romania in the period 2014-2023, the main products exported by the USA and Romania in the period 2016-2023, according to the international classifications HS4 (Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System), the evolution of exports from Romania to the USA in the period 2014-2023, the evolution of the balance of exports/imports between Romania to the USA, the evolution of the economic complexity between the two states, significant increases in imports and exports from the USA-Romania on various products from 2016 to 2020, the evolution of the export/import balance, direct investments in the two countries, etc. In terms of the military security and defense dimension, several indicators were analyzed, such as: the export of weapons to Romania in the period 2016-2022, the presence of military troops in the two states, requests from the Romanian Government for the purchase of military equipment from the USA, joint military exercises. The social-cultural dimension was represented by an incursion in the period 2016-2023 on the statistical data found on educational exchanges, investments in the cultural and social fields, scholarships for different educational categories.

Having these data and a clear picture, both from a theoretical point of view and from the point of view of the figures that characterize this partnership between the two states, **the fourth chapter** is oriented towards the methodological apparatus, where the research issues, purpose, objectives and research questions are presented. Moreover, the research methods are represented by documentation, discourse analysis and the application of semi-directive interviewing, all of which are delimited by analysis indicators. The research is a qualitative one, starting from a series of theoretical analyses carried out and a good quantitative documentation. The documentation was carried out starting from the analysis of official documents that characterized the economic, social, political, military dimensions of the two states, starting from a series of indicators registered under four dimensions: political, economic, military, cultural relational capital. The analysis of the indicators was carried out in the period 2016-2023. The semi-directive interview was applied online and physically, to representatives of the administrative institutions that are also responsible for managing the US-Romania Strategic Partnership.

Chapter five presents the results of the research through the prism of two subchapters. The first sub-chapter capitalizes on the speeches of the presidents of states and presents the main stage findings, and the second sub-chapter presents the results of the application of the interviews. Over 35 statements of the presidents of the two states were analyzed. The analysis of public positions and speeches was carried out taking into account different indicators, such as: the tone of the statements in relation to the topics deriving from the partnership, elements strictly related to the strategic partnership, security and defense, economy and investments, references to democratic values and the rule of law or general contextual elements related to bilateral relations (education, culture, etc.). The analysis covered the period 2016-2023, with the three state representatives as central actors: Donald Trump (USA) and Joe Biden (USA), but also Klaus Iohannis (ROM).

The dialogue between the mentioned actors has a predominantly positive tone, with a well-defined conclusion: security remains the main subject of the bilateral dialogue, and the rest of the areas are complementary and can develop by capitalizing on this security platform, more or less.

In terms of interviews, more than 30 interviews were conducted, online, by phone, face-to-face, depending on the existing context. The image of the results of the interviews does not contradict the above conclusion, but it is much more thorough, having a clear perception of the specialists on all the areas that derive from the act of the Romania-US bilateral dialogue. The difficulty of the scientific approach was represented by the difficult access to representative people and specialized documents. The main topics addressed in the semi-directive interview were represented by the respondents' perception of the strategic partnership, where the response generated was clearly oriented towards ensuring national security and geostrategic interests. The dialogue was continued by trying to answer the question "why are we together?", making explicit reference to democratic values as a central pillar of bilateral cooperation. Romania between security and dependence in relation to the US was another important theme, with both states benefiting from certain services. The common objectives and vision for development was another central element, followed by issues related to trust, reliability and vulnerabilities between the two states. In the natural continuation of things, we tried to find out if politics has any influence on this partnership and to what extent. In any collaboration there can also be risks, and a good sharing of them can lead to excellent forms of collaboration. Thus, the interview also covered this theme, complemented by Romania's positioning between the US and the EU. Finally, the theme concludes

with the dilemma of changing the form of the cooperation agreement between the two states, from partnership to treaty, followed by a global analysis of bilateral relations.

The last chapter has the role of presenting the conclusions of the paper. The first part presents a series of information that clarifies and places the image of the Romania-US Strategic Partnership 2016-2023 on scientific grounds, and the second part presents a series of future perspectives on the evolution of the relationship between the two states, in the current context.

In essence, the paper emphasizes that while the strategic partnership is solid and well-grounded in mutual interests, there are still vulnerabilities and challenges. These include Romania's dependence on American military and economic support, as well as the absence of diplomatic advantages, such as participation in the Visa Waiver Program. On the other hand, the US faces potential internal political instabilities and must maintain a consistent presence in Eastern Europe to ensure the continuity of the partnership. The relationship between Romania and the US is perceived as vital for Romania's national security, and the strategic partnership is considered an important element for its integration and development in the international context. However, there is a risk that economic and political dependence on the US will limit Romania's decision-making autonomy.

Within the research, several possible directions for the future of the partnership were highlighted, including the expansion of military and security cooperation, the development of economic and trade relations, as well as the promotion of cultural and academic exchanges. It underlines the importance of intensifying cooperation in the field of cybersecurity and hybrid warfare, as well as the need to transform the strategic partnership into a formal treaty, in order to provide Romania with greater stability and predictability in bilateral relations. In terms of the cultural and educational dimension, there has been an increased involvement through programs such as Fulbright, which contribute to the development of bilateral ties. However, the field of education and culture remains largely absent from the official dialogue, indicating an untapped potential. In the future, Romania's accession to the OECD and the Schengen Area are considered essential priorities that will positively influence economic relations and national security. In addition, the 2024 presidential elections, both in Romania and in the US, will play a decisive role in determining the direction of the strategic partnership. Regardless of the outcome, the US is expected to maintain a protectionist policy, which could affect international collaboration.

In conclusion, this scientific research represented not only an intellectual undertaking, but also a profound exploration of the complexity of relations between the United States and Romania in the post-Decembrist environment. Throughout the examination, our findings indicated that, apart from diplomatic maneuvers, economic motivations or strategic alliances, there are constantly unpredictable elements that significantly influence these interactions. It remains elusive to fully elucidate why certain bilateral initiatives flourish while others face impediments or why some coalitions appear solid while others persist in a state of fragility. It encapsulates the quintessence of international dynamics, which continually compel us to deepen our understanding of these interconnections.

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