

**„WESTERN CONFRONTATION WITH RUSSIA:
SECURITY SCENARIOS PLANNING IN THE
GEOPOLITICAL AREA FROM THE BALTIC
SEA TO THE WIDER BLACK SEA (INTER-
MARIUM)”**

SUMMARY OF PhD RESEARCH

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1. Aims, Scope and Methodology

Scenario planning is a structured way for organizations to think about the future. Scenarios are stories about how the future might unfold and how this might affect an issue that confronts a certain actor. Scenarios do not predict the future, but they do illuminate the drivers of change, whose understanding can help managers to take greater control of the situation. Scenarios are particularly useful in developing strategies to navigate organizations and public institutions in highly uncertain times.

The main goal of this research was to combine past-focused geopolitical analysis with future-oriented scenario planning to enhance the foresight of interested political, business and military leaders on the evolving regional security environment in the area from the Baltic Sea to the Wider Black Sea (Inter-marium) -see picture below- over the next decade.



From George Friedman- “From Estonia to Azerbaijan: American Strategy after Ukraine”, STRATFOR’s Geopolitical Weekly, March 2014

This doctoral research started from the assumption of four empirical scenarios being most likely for the Inter-marium in 2025-2030:

1. **An Inter-marium Alliance: New American Containment.**
2. **The Buffer Zone: Power Sharing and Limited/Controlled Stand-off.**
3. **Western Decline: European and Transatlantic Unity broken.**
4. **Regional Chaos: Turning Confrontation into War.**

I farther applied the scenario planning method combined with the geopolitical analysis of the Inter-marium to develop and test the validity of those four empirical scenarios. After writing the four security scenarios responding to the focal issue of this scenario planning process, I tested them by discussing their implications for Romania's national security strategy in 2025-2030. A "Catalogue of Drivers of Change and External Forces" has been a byproduct of this doctoral research.

At first glance, the four hypothetical scenarios above were listed according to their decreasing likelihood. Thus, I have initially assumed that the Inter-marium Alliance is the likeliest scenario, and the Regional Chaos scenario is the least likely. However, the actual likelihood of those scenarios is impossible to assess accurately for it will largely depend on the interaction of hardly quantifiable factors and processes, at various levels of analysis. This has not been the main point of this doctoral research. The key point though was that the strategic planning process of each international actor from the Inter-marium should be resilient enough to preserve and protect, to the largest extent possible, the interests of the respective international actor, irrespective of which scenario would eventually prevail.

The level of analysis was mainly regional, but global, national or local influences were not omitted. For example, the impact of the Chinese Belt & Road Initiative and of the ensuing US strategic interests on the scenarios for 2025-2030 in the Inter-marium was considered. Or Turkey's efforts at balancing its policies against Russia and the West has an impact on the potential outcomes of the Western confrontation with Russia in the Inter-marium that couldn't be overlooked.

In terms of information collection, the relevant concepts and notions, including available scientific studies on scenario planning and its relationships with strategic foresight, as well as with strategy development and planning, were addressed. Empirical information from open sources, first and foremost from the internet and public libraries, as well as from international briefings, seminars, conferences, workshops were also fed into this research.

In terms of structure of the research, the four scenarios were developed against an assessment of the historical context of relations between European powers and Russia, on the one hand, and the US and Russia, on the other hand, focusing on the relevant drivers of change that may be also applicable over the next decade. Research then included an assessment of the recent geopolitical and strategic situation, taking into account the security interests, risks and strategies of key actors. Major regional processes with potential strategic impact over the region were also considered, including the competitive European and Eurasian integration processes, the control of the access to energy sources and the geopolitical games of their transport routes between Eurasia and Europe, the ongoing transformation of the Trans-Atlantic relations, the emergence of new security challenges (such as cyber, hybrid, illegal immigration), as well as conflict management and resolution in Ukraine, South Caucasus and in Transnistria. The above analysis provided an extensive catalogue of drivers of change¹ and external forces² which might be relevant for the region for the next decade. Each of the above-mentioned scenarios have been developed upon a unique combination of those drivers of change and external forces. Eventually, the strategic implications of each scenario for the future national security strategies of Romania has been outlined.

2. An Introduction to Security Scenario Planning as a Tool for Enhancing Foresight and for Raising the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning

The Western geopolitical confrontation with Russia has been increasingly researched over the last several years. However, so far, it has not been researched by using the scenario planning method. Scenarios are possible views of the world, described in narrative form, that provide a context in which managers can make decisions. By seeing a range of possible worlds, decisions would be better informed, and a strategy based on this knowledge and insight would be more likely to succeed.

Scenario planning provides a structured process for people to start ‘consciously’ thinking about the longer-term future and possible implications for current strategy. Scenarios strengthen a manager’s strategic management toolbox: while traditional methods focus on the past, scenario planning focuses on the future. Combining both the past and the future makes thinking about strategy stronger and promotes responsiveness, flexibility, and competitive advantage.

¹ A range of social, technological, environmental, economic, political, legislative and ethical, as well as geopolitical internal factors which may change the long-term direction of trends within the Inter-marium.

² Geopolitical, economic, social and technological external factors that might influence over the longer term a broader range of global processes affecting the Inter-marium.

Scenarios are a powerful tool in strategic planning. They are particularly useful in developing strategies to navigate organizations and public institutions (national or international) in highly uncertain times.

Strategic foresight can be gained through more than one lens. Supposed to encompass the geopolitical, socio-economic, technological, cultural, and military objectives and constraints of the relevant international actors, scenarios are alternate futures in which today's decisions may play out.

Some scholars emphasized the advantage of using the theories of international relations in predicting future world events, and surprises.

For realists, including their newer brands, structural realists or neorealists, the international system is defined by anarchy—the absence of a central authority. Thucydides was the first to set forth the idea that the dynamic of international relations is provided by the differential growth of power among states, which has been subsequently identified by Robert Gilpin as the theory of *hegemonic war*.

An essential consequence of the neorealist theory is the *security dilemma*. According to this dilemma, states are faced with the uncertain military preparation actions of the other states. Are they designed for their own defence or are they part of an aggressive design? At the root of the *security dilemma* are therefore mistrust and fear.

The *security dilemma* occurs in relations between allies, as well as between adversaries. In a multipolar system, the alliance and adversary dilemmas are of roughly equal importance and are closely intertwined. Glenn Snyder has also identified a number of determinants which may affect choices in the alliance security dilemma. These determinants could be assessed against drivers of change/external forces through the scenario planning method with regard to both NATO and the EU in order to measure the prospective resilience of the Western alliances in their confrontation with Russia.

Liberal institutionalists share many realist assumptions about the international system, but they reach a radically different conclusion: co-operation between nations is not only possible, but it may be a rational, self-interested strategy for countries to pursue under certain conditions.

One of the most prominent developments within liberal theory has been the phenomenon known as the *democratic peace*. It described the absence of war between liberal states, defined as mature liberal democracies. Support of this view from political leaders translated into the

widespread Western policy of promoting democracy in Eastern Europe and the opening of the possibility for these states to join the Western institutions, the EU and NATO.

Proponents of *collective security* took realpolitik and power calculation seriously, but argued that domestic politics, beliefs and norms are also important determinants of state behaviour. *Collective security* was a way to provide a more effective mechanism for balancing an aggressor. The aim was to ameliorate security competition between states by reducing the possibility of escalating hostility into war.

A focus on the social context in which international relations occur has led constructivists to emphasize issues of identity and belief. While some constructivists would accept that states were self-interested, rational actors, they would also stress that varying identities and beliefs belied the simplistic notions of rationality under which states pursued simply survival, power, or wealth. Constructivism has also emphasized the role of non-state actors more than other approaches and have noted the role of international institutions as actors in their own right.

3. Geopolitical Analysis of Security Scenarios in the Area from the Baltic Sea to the Wider Black Sea (Inter-marium)

The security scenarios in the Inter-marium should be developed against the background of an historical assessment of the relations between European powers and Russia, on the one hand, and the US and the Soviet Union within the European bipolar security context, on the other hand. The aim would be to look at the Russian posture and power play within or against the European security arrangements since the Vienna Congress (1815) to the end of the Cold War (1991), with a focus on the Inter-marium region. Unlike in the 1990s, in the 2010s-2020s countries from the Inter-marium would be linked in various ways and with different strengths to three major integration processes (Euro-Atlantic, European and Eurasian). Those could be assimilated, to a certain extent, to a sort of “empires of the 21st century”, while various levels of Western and Russia-led integration had deepened intra-regional geopolitical differences.

Furthermore, the Inter-marium region remained covered by the collective security guarantees of the OSCE system, and it was partly marred by several unresolved conflicts, mostly stemming from and reflecting the weaknesses of the OSCE system. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has re-emerged on the geopolitical map of Europe as a largely independent actor exerting significant influence on the overall balance of power, which is reflected in the strategic situation of the Inter-marium. All those strategic changes of the European security system would require a broader historical outlook than merely looking at the inter-World Wars period,

since perhaps not all past patterns of interaction within the European system could be found within that relatively narrow historical period.

Basically, the security scenarios in the Inter-marium might develop from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats induced by the post-Cold War regional integration and cooperation processes in Europe and Eurasia, as well as by the evolutions of the Transatlantic relations.

Since the end of the Cold War, the security environment has changed almost beyond recognition. Security no longer focused on just military power. Part of this transformation has been connected to the absence of a defining threat and a significant move from military and defence-related issues towards economic, developmental and societal ones. The concept of security has been widened, encompassing political, social and economic stability, while violence and threats to physical security no longer concerned exclusively national and territorial defence. Security ceased to mean simply defence. Defence has become a component of a comprehensive security policy, including a broad spectrum of missions ranging from preventive diplomacy to peace keeping and peace enforcement to rebuilding state and societal institutions after a conflict. Some of the differences between international and domestic security have been eroded. International affairs have involved non-state actors such as global terrorist networks.

Transnational security risks and threats, including terrorism, WMD proliferation, organized crime, illegal immigration, ethnic and religious conflicts have emerged, and the international community had to define ways and find means and resources to cope with them. New potential sources of future conflicts, like inequity and poverty generated by the growing economic and technological gap between rich and poor, access to scarce natural resources, the need to preserve ethnic and religious identities in a globalized world have emerged.

The imbalances between the developed and the developing world were growing, with the population growth concentrated overwhelmingly in those countries least able to support it. This trend has had an impact on the age structure of the world population. In the developing world (outside of China), an explosion in the work force has been projected, and these countries would be unlikely to absorb it. In the aftermath of the Cold War, international borders have become porous and relatively easier to penetrate. Deteriorating economic circumstances, as well as political turmoil and regional conflicts have created a significant trend of mass movements of people that has resulted in the emergence of multi-ethnic societies of a new type.

There should be a proper management of migration to ensure the differentiation between refugees/ asylum seekers and economic migrants. Migration has also had an impact on the societies of origin. Illegal immigration has come to the forefront as an important phenomenon. In addition to drugs and arms trafficking, human trafficking has entered the portfolio of organized crime networks and terrorist organizations as a high profit activity.

Terrorism and organized crime have been recognized in the post-Cold War environment as potential sources of risk and threat to the stability and security of nations, as well as a hindering force to the development of liberal, open and democratic societies governed by the rule of law. Contemporary terrorism revealed new trends and dangers, which were tragically demonstrated by the unprecedented attacks on 11 September 2001, and the more recent ISIS-inspired attacks in Europe, and across the world. Not only did this show the terrorists' ability and willingness to use new methods of killing and destruction but also that the nature of terrorism was changing in terms of organization and operational approach. A new global framework to combat terrorism in a wide-ranging scope, including suppression of the financing of terrorism, police and intelligence cooperation has been developed.

The pursuit of democracy in many parts of today's world didn't mean "The End of History", as Francis Fukuyama was suggesting in August 1989, in his most famous article. It resulted instead in the emergence of new challenges posed by totalitarian alternatives to democratic systems, by the growth of religious fanaticism and in the need to find appropriate ways to cope with the destabilizing effects of *laissez faire* capitalism and the technological revolution.

September 11, 2001 meant a new turning point in contemporary world politics. It was not only because the war against global terrorism has become a central theme for the international security debate, but since it reinforced the movement of the focus of the global geostrategic game into Central Asia and the Middle East, it dramatically reshaped the power relations between US, Europe, Russia, China and India, given their common interest to fight against political Islam, it reinforced the anti-globalisation movement by displaying the vulnerability of US to asymmetric threats, fed by unrestrained political individual freedoms and the existence of a global financial and economic system, and it created favourable conditions for strategic coercion becoming an essential tool for reshaping the new world order.

More recently, in November 2016, the election of Donald Trump as president of the US has accelerated significant shifts in the American power play in Europe: from a new American containment, jointly with Allies and partners, against Russia and China, towards new practices

assuming the demise of the post-WWII world order; questioning the Trans-Atlantic relations in the name of the old Westphalian balance of power; ignoring the legitimate interests of many Allies and partners, under the disguise of a nationalist slogan “Make America Great Again”; and striving to undermine the unity of the European allies.³

Overall, the old global order has been under serious stress as the US remained inherently powerful, although hardly unrivalled. China has been rapidly rising as a peer competitor to the United States, while Russia, enticed by the prospect of weakening the US-led order, has strategically aligned itself with Beijing. Squeezed between America and the China-Russia duo, Europe might become too divided to effectively play the role of a mediator.

4. Security Scenario Planning in the Inter-marium: Empirical Scenarios, Drivers of Change and External Forces for the Next Decade

The aim of this chapter was twofold: (1) To briefly introduce the reasoning leading into the four empirical security scenarios chosen as research hypothesis; (2) to analyse the security scenarios found in the researched literature against their respective links with relevant drivers of change and external forces identified within the scenario planning methodology.

According to Jay Ogilvy the scenario planning usually unfolded according to an orderly, methodical process. The process usually has two major parts: first, choosing which scenario logics to flesh out, and second, telling the actual story, its implications and early indicators. A typical scenario planning project would usually start with interviews and an initial workshop, followed by at least one month of research and writing, then a second workshop to draw implications from the ramified and refined scenarios, and eventually some time to summarize the results of the second workshop into a presentation. However, for the sake of this research report, and given the limited resources available, I’ve fleshed out the scenario logics upon the information gathered from my own academic research.

In the case of this research the focal issue of the scenario planning process was: “What security scenarios would outline most accurately the confrontation between the West and Russia in the geopolitical area between the Baltic and the Wider Black Sea in 2025-2030?”

Next step consisted of identifying the drivers of change and the external forces reflecting the processes at work in shaping the focal issue with a view to gathering them into a “Catalogue

³ George Niculescu- “Is America Changing the European Power Play?”, July 2018, op-ed first published on http://gpf-europe.com/upload/new_us_power_game_europe.pdf

of Drivers of Change and External Forces”. Subsequently, according to the scenario planning process, the drivers of change and the external forces have been ordered first by importance with a view to identifying their natural hierarchy in terms of importance, and then by level of certainty to see which of them might be used in the scenario architecture as “pre-determined elements”, and which of them as “critical uncertainties”.

A deeper look at the existing scenarios in the researched literature responding to the focal issue offered both a benchmark for assessing the relevance and the level of certainty of the drivers of change and external forces from the Catalogue and an opportunity to identify several “hidden drivers of change”, which went so far barely unnoticed by other authors, and should be included in the subsequent stages of the scenario planning process.

In this vein, the most notable absences in the researched scenarios has been the driver of change “building closer partnership between EU and Russia”, while another “the US expanding its military footprint in Eastern Europe, outside of NATO” was only considered in one researched scenario. Those two drivers of change would underpin the core of the “Inter-Marium Alliance scenario”. Therefore, those drivers of change should not be outright dismissed, but kept in as “hidden drivers of change”. Actually, most recently, deeper Trans-Atlantic controversies on, for example, burden sharing, free trade, climate change agreements, Iran’s nuclear agreement or on the need for Russia’s Gazprom to build the Nord Stream2 gas pipeline, possibly being reinforced by a “hard BREXIT” might raise again the “German question in Europe”, while leading to a surfacing of those “hidden drivers of change”.

Other “hidden drivers of change” might stem from ignorant or slightly biased Western approaches to evolutions within the Russian camp. For example, the drivers of change “deepening and enlarging the Eurasian integration” and “Russia economically supporting client and unrecognized states” cannot be stripped of their relevance to the topical issue of this PhD research. In 2013-2014, the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, and the Armenian dramatic switch of geopolitical orientation proved that the Eurasian and the European integration processes have emerged as alternative futures for the Inter-marium states, while essentially remaining at odds with each other. This made of the missing hidden driver of change “building closer partnership between EU and Russia” a critical driver of change that might lead to sweeping shifts among different scenarios

The external forces suggested in the Catalogue have been fully reflected in the researched scenarios.

TABLE 1: CATALOGUE OF DRIVERS OF CHANGE

RANKING DRIVERS BY TYPES			
TYPE	DRIVERS OF CHANGE	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE	LEVEL OF CERTAINTY
Geopolitical	ROLLING BACK EUROPEAN INTEGRATION	High	Medium
Geopolitical	WEAKENING TRANSTATLANTIC LINK (NATO, NATO-EU, US-EU)	High	High
Geopolitical	DEEPENING AND ENLARGING EURASIAN INTEGRATION	High	Medium
Geopolitical	FOSTERING WEST-RUSSIA SECURITY DIALOGUE & COOPERATION	High	Low
Geopolitical	BUILDING CLOSER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EU AND RUSSIA	High	Medium
Geopolitical	COMMON NEIGHBORS JOINING THE WESTERN OR THE RUSSIAN CAMPS	Medium	Medium
Geopolitical	WEST IGNORRING UNRECOGNIZED STATES (ABKHAZIA, SOUTH OSSETIA, TRANSNISTRIA, DONBAS)	Low	Low
Ideological	RIISING ANTI-WESTERN IDEOLOGIES AND POLICIES IN RUSSIA	High	High
Ideological	RIISING RUSSOPHOBIA IN THE WEST	High	High
Security	RE-FOCUSING SECURITY ON DETERRENCE AND TERRITORIAL DEFENCE	High	High
Security	SHRINKING WESTERN INTERVENTIONISM ABROAD	Medium	High
Security	EXPANDING RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONISM ABROAD (I.E. SYRIA, LYBIA, AFGHANISTAN, ETC.)	Medium	High
Security	THE US EXPANDING ITS MILITARY FOOTPRINT IN EASTERN EUROPE, OUTSIDE OF NATO	High	Medium
Security	PERSISTING UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS IN COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD	Medium	Medium
Security	RIISING HYBRID THREATS	High	High
Economic	SHRINKING ACCESS TO ENERGY FOR GEOPOLITICAL OR OTHER REASONS	High	Low
Economic	SHRINKING ECONOMIC GROWTH	Medium	High
Economic	PERSISTING SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA. REDUCING RUSSIAN ACCESS TO FDI	Low	High
Economic	RUSSIA SUPPORTING CLIENT AND UNRECOGNIZED STATES IN COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD	Medium	High
Economic	WEST SUPPORTING CLIENT STATES IN COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD	Medium	High
Political	GROWING NATIONALISM/RE-NATIONALIZING FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES OF STATES	High	High
Political	RIISING RADICALISM (RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, XENOPHOBIA)	Medium	Medium
Political	RIISING POLITICAL POPULISM	High	Medium
Social	FAILING PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES	Medium	Medium
Social	GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT RATES	Medium	Medium
Social	GROWING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR WITHIN SOCIETIES	Low	High
Technological	SHRINKING RUSSIAN ACCESS TO MODERN TECHNOLOGIES	High	Medium
Technological	LOSING WESTERN PREEMINENCE OVER DEVELOPING MODERN TECHNOLOGIES	High	High

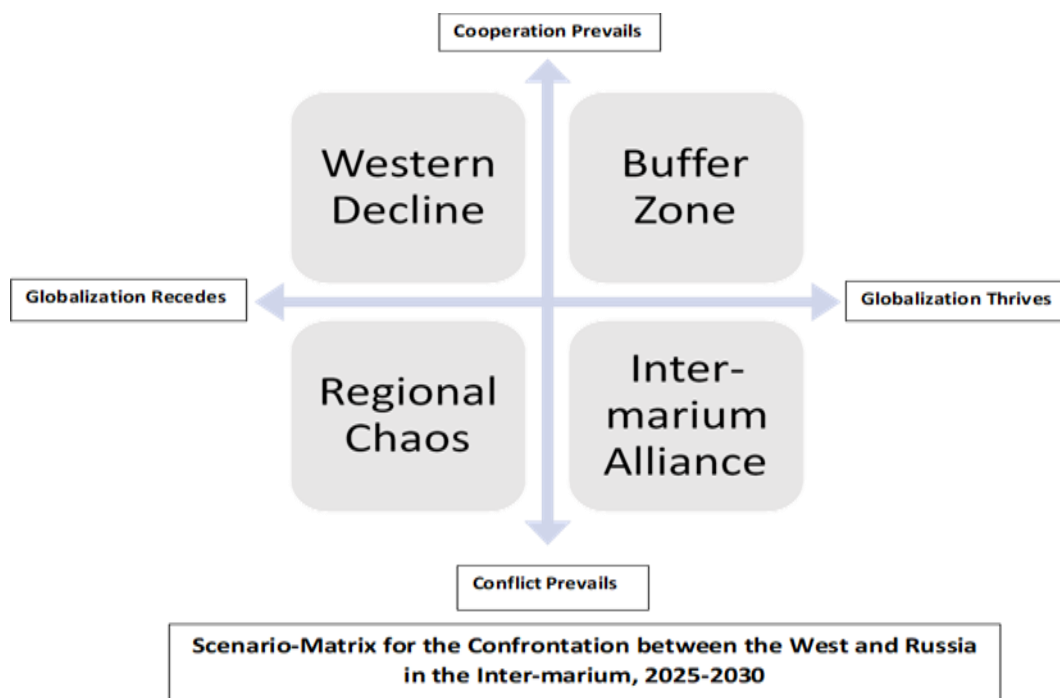
TABLE 2: CATALOGUE OF EXTERNAL FORCES			
TYPE	EXTERNAL FORCES	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE	LEVEL OF CERTAINTY
Security	RISING TERRORIST THREATS	High	Medium
Security	RISING CYBER AND ORGANIZED CRIME THREATS	Medium	Medium
Security	RISING WMD THREATS	High	High
Security	SHRINKING ACCESS TO ENERGY, FOOD, AND NATURAL RESOURCES DUE TO REGIONAL INSTABILITY	Low	Medium
Economic	SLOWING DOWN ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION	High	High
Economic	DEVELOPING EURASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (F.I. BELT & ROAD)	Medium	Medium
Economic	GREENING THE ENERGY SOURCES AT GLOBAL LEVEL	Low	Low
Social	RISING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION THREATS	High	Medium
Social	AGEING POPULATION	Medium	High
Technological	ACCELERATING TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION	High	Low

5. Security Scenario Planning in the Inter-marium for the Next Decade: Scenarios' Matrix/ Logics, Building, Writing, and Testing

The previous chapter of this research passed us through the first four steps of the scenario planning process: Defining the focal issue^σ; Identifying Drivers of Change and External Forces^σ; Ranking Drivers by Importance; and Ranking Drivers by Uncertainty. Eventually, the scenario matrix/logics was drawn up along two clusters' axes: globalization thrives vs. globalization recedes; and cooperation prevails vs. conflict prevails in relations between the West and Russia.

The four proposed security scenarios responding to the focal issue of this scenario planning process emerged in the four quadrants formed along the two clusters' axes:

- 1) **“Buffer zone scenario” – if globalization thrived, and cooperation prevailed;**
- 2) **“Inter-marium Alliance scenario” – if globalization thrived, and conflict prevailed**
- 3) **“Western Decline scenario” – if globalization receded, and cooperation prevailed;**
- 4) **“Regional Chaos scenario” – if globalization receded, and conflict prevailed.**



^σ Stratfor's methodology.

TABLE 6: RANKING DRIVERS AND EXTERNAL FORCES BY CLUSTERS (EVOLUTION OF GLOBALIZATION -G, COOPERATION/CONFLICT RATE-C)				
TYPE	DRIVERS OF CHANGE	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE	LEVEL OF CERTAINTY	CLUSTER
Geopolitical	ROLLING BACK EUROPEAN INTEGRATION	High	Medium	G
Geopolitical	WEAKENING TRANSTATLANTIC LINK (NATO, NATO-EU, US-EU, TTIP)	High	High	G
Geopolitical	DEEPENING AND ENLARGING EURASIAN INTEGRATION	High	Medium	G
Security	SHRINKING WESTERN INTERVENTIONISM ABROAD	Medium	High	G
Economic	SHRINKING ECONOMIC GROWTH	Medium	High	G
Political	GROWING NATIONALISM/RE-NATIONALIZING FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES OF STATES	High	High	G
Social	FAILING PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES	Medium	Medium	G
Social	GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT RATES	Medium	Medium	G
Social	GROWING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR WITHIN SOCIETIES	Low	High	G
Technological	SHRINKING RUSSIAN ACCESS TO MODERN TECHNOLOGIES	High	Medium	G
Technological	LOSING WESTERN PREEMINENCE OVER DEVELOPING MODERN TECHNOLOGIES	High	High	G
Geopolitical	FOSTERING WEST-RUSSIA SECURITY DIALOGUE & COOPERATION	High	Low	C
Geopolitical	BUILDING CLOSER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EU AND RUSSIA	High	Medium	C
Geopolitical	COMMON NEIGHBORS JOINING THE WESTERN OR THE RUSSIAN CAMPS	Medium	Medium	C
Ideological	RIISING ANTI-WESTERN IDEOLOGIES AND POLICIES IN RUSSIA	High	High	C
Ideological	RIISING RUSSOPHOBIA IN THE WEST	High	High	C
Security	RE-FOCUSING SECURITY ON DETERRENCE AND TERRITORIAL DEFENCE	High	High	C
Security	RIISING HYBRID THREATS	High	High	C
Economic	SHRINKING ACCESS TO ENERGY FOR GEOPOLITICAL OR OTHER REASONS	High	Low	C
Economic	PERSISTING SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA. REDUCING RUSSIAN ACCESS TO FDI	Low	High	C
Economic	RUSSIA SUPPORTING CLIENT AND UNRECOGNIZED STATES IN COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD	Medium	High	C
Economic	WEST SUPPORTING CLIENT STATES IN COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD	Medium	High	C
Geopolitical	WEST IGNORRING UNRECOGNIZED STATES (ABKHAZIA, SOUTH OSSETIA, TRANSNISTRIA, DONBAS)	Low	Low	G,C
Security	THE US EXPANDING ITS MILITARY FOOTPRINT IN EASTERN EUROPE, OUTSIDE OF NATO	High	Medium	G,C
Security	PERSISTING UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS IN COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD	Medium	Medium	G,C
Security	EXPANDING RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONISM ABROAD (I.E. SYRIA, LYBIA, AFGHANISTAN, ETC.)	Medium	High	G,C
Political	RIISING POLITICAL POPULISM	High	Medium	G,C
TYPE	EXTERNAL FORCES	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE	LEVEL OF CERTAINTY	CLUSTER
Economic	SLOWING DOWN ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION	High	High	G
Social	AGEING POPULATION	Medium	High	G
Economic	DEVELOPING EURASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (F.I. BELT & ROAD)	Medium	Medium	G
Political	RIISING RADICALISM (RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, XENOPHOBIA)	Medium	Medium	G
Economic	GREENING THE ENERGY SOURCES AT GLOBAL LEVEL	Low	Low	G,C
Security	RIISING WMD THREATS	High	High	G,C
Security	RIISING CYBER AND ORGANIZED CRIME THREATS	Medium	Medium	G,C
Technological	ACCELERATING TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION	High	Low	G,C
Security	RIISING TERRORIST THREATS	High	Medium	G,C
Social	RIISING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION THREATS	High	Medium	G,C
Security	SHRINKING ACCESS TO ENERGY, FOOD, AND NATURAL RESOURCES DUE TO REGIONAL INSTABILITY	Low	Medium	G,C

A. The Buffer Zone: Power Sharing and Limited/Controlled Stand-off Scenario

The best description of the end-state and the steps towards implementing this scenario could be found in a RAND Study, issued in 2018, on “Rethinking the Regional Order of post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia”. To achieve a new European order conducive to West-Russia dialogue on the shared neighbourhood, this RAND Study proposed the negotiation of an agreement providing for a mutually acceptable framework for regional integration of non-members of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and for norms of behaviour of outside powers toward them.⁴

In this scenario, both Russia and the West would have to commit themselves to respecting the current membership of existing institutions (NATO, EU, CSTO, EAEU), to define a framework for the regional integration of non-member states, and a template for how both Russia and the West can relate to such a state without producing conflict. The proposed compromise would consist of Russia and the West agreeing on setting up a regional integration area, resembling to a buffer zone, that would complement the existing economic and security institutions.

The starting point for this scenario is the 2019 global state of play, characterized by many as a new Cold War or Hybrid War between the US, on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other hand. The EU is still divided on how to relate itself to this global great powers’ confrontation, partly because of conflicting security and commercial interests of the member states, partly due to its uncertain status as a global actor. Some EU member states (including those from the Inter-marium) would prefer to bandwagon the US due to their overwhelming security dependence on NATO, while others aim at undertaking a more balanced multi-vector play towards US, China and Russia. This situation creates serious tensions both within the EU, as well as in bilateral relations of key EU members with the US, and the EU-US relations. The “buffer zone scenario”, unlike the other three scenarios considered by this research, assumes that those tensions cannot ultimately break either the Trans-Atlantic link or the EU (beyond Brexit). On the contrary, the growing pressure of Trumpian strategic thinking aiming to prevent, and to effectively manage US struggle against a global anti-American coalition, and the vested interests of France and Germany in maintaining security and stability in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood, and in restoring EU’s trade with Russia (including on energy) would lead to fostering security dialogue between Russia and the West in the early 2020’s. This might

⁴ Charap Samuel, Shapiro Jeremy, Demus Alyssa- “Rethinking the Regional Order of post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia”, Rand Corporation, 2018, p. 7, from <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE297.html>, last accessed on 20/03/2019.

be the case since both Russia, and the EU, as well as, to a lesser extent the US, were ill-prepared to sustaining a new arms race (including nuclear, missile defences, and space) imposed by the escalation of the Cold/Hybrid War by “hawks” on both sides.

B. The Inter-marium Alliance: New American Containment Scenario

This scenario was inspired by George Friedman’s article written in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis. Friedman suggested a *strategy of indirect engagement in Eastern Europe*, which would combine economy of force and finance, and would limit the development of Russia and Germany as regional hegemonic powers, while exposing the US to limited and controlled risk. The key element of that strategy would be an Inter-marium Alliance⁵, consisting of countries on the Estonia to Azerbaijan line, which shared the primary interest of retaining their sovereignty, and the danger that the eventual fate of Ukraine could spread and directly affect their national security interests, including their internal stability.

Given that the Baltic Sea, Moldova and the Caucasus are the areas where Russia could seek to compensate for its loss of influence in Ukraine, Friedman suggested that Poland, Romania and Azerbaijan should be the outposts around which the Inter-marium Alliance was built. He saw this alliance not as an offensive force but rather as a force designed to deter Russian expansion. By supplying those countries with modern military equipment Washington might strengthen pro-U.S. political forces in each country and create a wall behind which foreign investment could take place.

An Inter-marium Alliance would be partially overlapping with the Inter-marium area considered by this doctoral research. In Friedman’s vision, it should include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Turkey was seen as acting independent from the Inter-marium Alliance, but it would be geopolitically aligned with it, militarily self-sufficient yet dependent on the effective functioning of the Alliance. Armenia and Belarus were left out of the Inter-marium Alliance for having been deemed as militarily and economically too closely integrated with Russia for being able to play a significant role, while Ukraine and Moldova were also left out by Friedman as he has seen them as belonging to the future US-Russia battleground region.

⁵ Friedman George - “From Estonia to Azerbaijan: American Strategy after Ukraine”, STRATFOR’s Geopolitical Weekly, March 2014, from <https://worldview.stratfor.com>

This scenario assumed the dissolution, or at least *de facto* breakdown, of NATO. Although he didn't specifically mention it, the EU27 (post-Brexit) would not be compatible with the new concept, not least since Germany, a pillar of the EU, was also indirectly targeted by the proposed strategy of indirect engagement in Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is very likely that the setting up of the Inter-marium Alliance would be preceded by a contraction of the European Union, its members (three Baltic States, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria) being expected, at some point in the 2020's, to voluntarily leave, or be excluded from, the EU institutions.

The fate of NATO is indeed mostly in the hands of the US Administration and Congress. Recently, particularly over the last two years since president Trump came at the helm of the US Administration, there have been sporadic speculations about the end of NATO. However, for now, there is hardly consensus on this issue either in the US political establishment or in the public opinion. On the contrary, there still is an overwhelming majority supporting the NATO Alliance both in the US and in European political establishments, but this majority is slowly but constantly eroding due to multiple US global commitments against the backdrop of strategic competition with a rising China, growing instability in the Middle East, and insufficient technological, economic and military resources spent by the NATO Allies for collective defence.

On the other hand, the fate of the EU is very little dependent on US policies. In the wake of Brexit, France and Germany would have the upper hand, but other larger or smaller members would be interested to avoid a Franco-Germanization of the EU. However, all members of the EU have difficult internal problems to fight with: economic slowdown, sluggishness in keeping up the global technological revolution, aging populations, rising illegal immigration, terrorist, cyber and organized crime threats, which would generally lead into rising political populism to the detriment of mainstream pro-European political parties. EU members from the Inter-marium region, who may be potential future members of the Inter-marium Alliance, face significant democratic and rule of law setbacks, which are harshly criticized by the Western members of the EU as not being compatible with the values underpinning the European integration project. Coercive measures that might be taken against them as punishment for such backsliding, or fears that the Western European members would try to side-line them within the EU decision making processes could actually lead them to eventually apply for voluntary exits from the EU institutions.

C. The Western Decline: European and Transatlantic Unity Broken Scenario

This scenario draws upon the breakdown of both the European project, and NATO/Trans-Atlantic relations, potentially leading to the complete dissolution of the post-WWII European order, and the West as it has been known ever since. In spring 2018, a plethora of articles issued by serious American think tanks speculated over the imminence and possible consequences of this scenario.

The overall narrative of the Western Decline scenario included the foregone conclusion that the post-war order crafted by the United States after WWII was falling apart. Consequently, the US would return to a world where balance of power, not security cooperation guaranteed the international order, while Washington was aspiring to become the main balance holder. The primary victim of such a new strategic shift would be Germany who would be targeted by a collusion of interests between the Trump administration and the Kremlin to divide and eventually dismantle the EU. In this scenario, the old global order is under serious stress as the US remains inherently powerful, although hardly unrivalled. China is rapidly rising as a peer competitor to the United States while Russia, enticed by the prospect of weakening the U.S.-led order, has strategically aligned itself with Beijing.

The Western Decline scenario assumes globalization receded across the Euro-Atlantic area, whereas both Western European states and the United States would seek to restore the currently broken cooperation with Russia. The former would be bound by their inability to rely on US decisive contribution to NATO deterrence and defence capabilities anymore, and due to their own security and defence weaknesses hampering their ability to compete on security matters with a resurgent Russia in the Inter-marium. While the latter would prioritize altering the emerging China-Russia strategic partnership by rebuilding its broken relationship with Moscow before its Mackinder-ian interest to control geopolitically the Inter-marium. In this scenario, Washington favoured the return to a classical balance of power in Europe, where France and Russia would collaborate to contain German influence in the Inter-marium, while Great Britain should resume its 19th century role of guardian of the European balance of power, and the United States would focus on other strategic regions of the world, in particular from Asia. Appeasing Russia by both Western European states and the US, at almost any geopolitical price, would be the cornerstone of this scenario.

D. The Regional Chaos Scenario

The Regional Chaos due to uncontrolled regional military escalation in the Inter-marium cannot be ruled out, particularly in the context of the growing adversity in US-Russia relations over the last few years. Seen from the perspective of the emerging global struggle for power between the US, Russia and China, this scenario might play (although not necessarily) into Robert Gilpin's theory of hegemonic war. According to Gilpin, fundamental changes in the international system were the basic determinants of hegemonic wars, while their outcome usually led to a new international power structure.

Looking back over the last 30 years since the end of the Cold War, it may be worth noting that the *de facto* US-led unipolar international system has been seriously challenged and weakened up to the current status, where a new multipolar power structure is emerging. In conservative American circles, this pre-systemic crisis situation of the current international order, and the ensuing global power structure, may foment the need to saving the US hegemony by directly challenging China and Russia in their regional fiefdoms (i.e. in Eastern Asia and in the post-Soviet space, respectively). The fact that the US military power was still perceived as overwhelming against the developing military power of the adversaries might be a factor instilling a higher level of urgency to take action, as the gap in (military) technology dominance between the US, on the one hand, and China, Russia, on the other hand, was shrinking. Within that context, the scenario of Regional Chaos in the Inter-marium may be seen as a component of a possible 21st century hegemonic war.

However, it might not be necessarily the case that regional chaos in the Inter-marium was tightly linked to an upcoming hegemonic war. This research quoted American and Russian media and scholars who were increasingly fearing the current confrontation between the West and Russia might spill over into regional war in the Inter-marium and beyond. Persisting unresolved conflicts in the common neighbourhood (particularly in Ukraine and in Georgia), the expansion of Russian interventionism abroad, particularly in the Middle East, Africa and in Latin America, the critical uncertainty shrinking access to energy for geopolitical or other reasons, the hidden driver of change US expanding its military footprint in Eastern Europe outside of NATO could become triggers for this scenario. However, the geographic scope and the intensity of such a purely regional war are hardly predictable at this stage.

6. Implications for Strategic Planning in Romania

The main goal of scenario planning is to develop different possible views of the future and to analyse their possible consequences. Thus, scenario planning can help national security and defence managers to challenge their assumptions and to better prepare the Romanian state for possible future developments. The value of scenario planning does not lay so much in the creation of scenarios, but in the discussion of their consequences.

Security and defence strategies and policies need to be developed in light of a set of security scenarios. Rather than picking a single security scenario (where thriving European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and the US global leadership were marginally and sporadically challenged) on which political leaders would bet Romania's national interests over the next decade, it would be far better to find a national security strategy that is robust across a range of scenarios, such as those developed by this doctoral research.

As explained in the scenario planning methodology, one of the most important aspects of the process is to immerse the scenario planners within each scenario and prompt them to think about what the geopolitical and strategic realities in that world might be. Therefore, Romania's various geopolitical, socio-economic, technological, cultural, and military constraints should be considered, and as much as possible compensated through appropriate national security strategies and policies.

The scenario-based approach to strategic planning of Romania's national security is an open and creative approach that should consider multiple strategy options and should take multiple perspectives into account. The outcome of this approach would be a Core National Security Strategy that is complemented by several strategic options derived from different regional security scenarios.

The Core National Security Strategy of Romania in the 2020's should encompass the "no brainers" identified by this doctoral research, that is strategic options which would look good in each and every scenario, and which are usually associated with "pre-determined elements" — aspects of the future that can be reliably predicted. By comparing the list of "no brainers" (see Table 8) against the benchmarks set in the 2015 national defence strategy of Romania, in

TABLE 8: PRE-DETERMINED DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND "NO BRAINERS" STRATEGIC OPTIONS		
RELEVANCE	DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND EXTERNAL FORCES	NO BRAINERS
PRE-DETERMINED	WEAKENING TRANSATLANTIC LINK (NATO, NATO-EU, US-EU)	STRENGTHEN TRANSATLANTIC LINK
PRE-DETERMINED	GROWING NATIONALISM/RE-NATIONALIZING FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES OF STATES	SUPPORT MULTI-NATIONAL APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING ANTI-WESTERN IDEOLOGIES AND POLICIES IN RUSSIA	COUNTER ANTI-WESTERN IDEOLOGIES AND POLICIES IN RUSSIA
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING RUSSOPHOBIA IN THE WEST	COUNTER RUSSOPHOBIA IN THE WEST
PRE-DETERMINED	RE-FOCUSING SECURITY ON DETERRENCE AND TERRITORIAL DEFENCE	SUPPORT MULTI-NATIONAL APPROACHES TO DETERRENCE AND TERRITORIAL DEFENCE
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING HYBRID THREATS	EFFECTIVELY COUNTER HYBRID THREATS
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING POLITICAL POPULISM	FIGHT BACK AGAINST POLITICAL POPULISM
PRE-DETERMINED	SLOWING DOWN ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION	SUPPORT ACCELERATION AND EXPANSION OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND MITIGATE ITS NEGATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING WMD THREATS	SUPPORT COUNTERING WMD THREATS
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING CYBER AND ORGANIZED CRIME THREATS	COUNTER CYBER AND ORGANIZED CRIME THREATS
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING TERRORIST THREATS	SUPPORT COUNTERING TERRORIST THREATS
PRE-DETERMINED	RIISING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION THREATS	SUPPORT MULTINATIONAL COOPERATION ON COUNTERING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND MITIGATE IMPACT ON NATIONAL SECURITY
PRE-DETERMINED	SHRINKING ACCESS TO ENERGY, FOOD, AND NATURAL RESOURCES DUE TO REGIONAL INSTABILITY	SUPPORT ADDRESSING REGIONAL INSTABILITY IN EU NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND COUNTER ITS EFFECTS ON ENERGY, FOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUPPLY

particular regarding the lines of action and main ways to ensure the national security, a Core National Security Strategy of Romania in 2020's could be outlined along the following lines:

- Strengthen the Trans-Atlantic link. In the light of recent developments in Trans-Atlantic relations over the last years, pursuing this strategic option has become more problematic. Nevertheless, Romania should keep on striving to support the Trans-Atlantic link by all political, diplomatic, economic and military means.
- Support multinational approaches to international relations, including to deterrence and territorial defence. Due to the geographical and geopolitical challenges that have been historically facing Romania, Bucharest has a vital interest in maintaining multinational approaches to international relations, including its membership to NATO, the EU, and a broad engagement with regional and bilateral cooperation frameworks.
- Countering anti-Western ideologies and policies in Russia and countering Russophobia in the West.
- Effectively counter hybrid threats, support countering WMD, terrorist, cyber and organized crime threats.
- Fight back political populism and support international cooperation on countering illegal immigration and mitigate the latter's impact on national security.
- Support acceleration and expansion of economic globalization and mitigate its negative socio-economic effects.
- Support addressing regional instability in the EU neighbourhood, and counter its effects on energy, food and natural resources supply.

Naturally, in the process of outlining a Core National Security Strategy for 2020's we should take into account the following constraints which might mitigate the effectiveness over time of some of the "no brainers":

- From the four scenarios proposed under this scenario planning process (Buffer Zone, Inter-Marium Alliance, Western Decline, and Regional Chaos) the closest to the current security paradigm of Romania is the Buffer Zone scenario, since it was the only one assuming the continued relevance of NATO, the EU and US engagement in Europe in the 2020's.

- As a medium-sized European country, with a rather weak economy, measured by GDP/capita, with modest military and technological capacities, Romania will have a limited ability to influence the two clusters' axes used within the scenario matrix that would determine the prevailing scenario in the Inter-marium. Nevertheless, Romania might have more leverage on maintaining thriving globalization in the Inter-marium than on affecting the relations between Russia-US, Russia-Western Europe, that will be most likely shaped in accordance with global and broader interests of the various actors in the West, as well as of Russia. On this latter front, the best Bucharest could do is to remain involved in shaping Western relations with Russia via the NATO-Russia, EU-Russia, and obviously via other bilateral and multilateral frameworks, as long as each of them endured.
- As it can be seen from Table 8, Romania could rather support than initiate/lead most of the processes enshrined in “no brainers”. It is probably, only on countering hybrid threats, fighting back populism and countering Russophobia in Romania where Bucharest could act more or less autonomously. But even for those no brainers successful outcomes will depend on developing cooperative relations with other NATO and EU members, as well as with neighbouring countries, particularly with Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

As it was explained before, scenario planning can help national security and defence managers to challenge their assumptions and to better prepare the Romanian state for possible future developments. As the main value of scenario planning is usually drawn from the discussion of the implications of various scenarios for Romania's national security, here it is the summary of the discussion for the four scenarios considered by this doctoral research:

A. The Buffer Zone: Power Sharing and Limited/Controlled Stand-off Scenario

Only in this scenario, Romania's current three pillars security strategy would continue to remain relevant, though taking into account the possible varying dynamics within NATO, the EU, and the Strategic Partnership with the US, which might emerge by the end of the next decade.

The Buffer Zone scenario, by fostering a joint commitment of the West and Russia to prevent future changes in European, Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian institutional memberships, and to replace the latter with the provision of multilateral security guarantees, would also remove one key obstacle in the resolution of ongoing conflicts in the Inter-marium. For Romania, such an

evolution would be most important for the conflicts in Transnistria and in Ukraine, although Romanian broader regional interests in the Wider Black Sea region may be also favoured under the circumstances of conflict resolution in the South Caucasus.

The downside of this scenario for Romania would stem from the possibility that the other Romanian state, Republic of Moldova, might have to join the “buffer zone” to be set up in-between the West and Russia. In that scenario, the window of opportunity for Romania’s reunification with Moldova will be closed for the foreseeable future.

B. The Inter-marium Alliance: New American Containment Scenario

Within the context of this scenario, Romania’s current three-pillars security strategy would completely lose its European pillar, and it would have to rely on the alternative strategic option building upon: expanding and deepening the Strategic Partnership with US, and a “mini-NATO”, in the shape of an anti-Russian, US-led Inter-marium Alliance.

The downside of this scenario for Romania would stem from losing the European pillar of the national security strategy, which would likely drive Bucharest to losing access to the European single market and funding, with all the troubles of having to redefine its relationship with the EU reflected by the BREXIT experience. Depending on the positions taken by Romania’s neighbours, and by interested regional powers (France-Germany-UK-Italy-Turkey) against the Inter-marium Alliance, the territorial integrity and national unity of Romania might be questioned by various ethnic or religious groups within the country. Another downside of this scenario is related to the risks enshrined in being allied with/dependent of a global power, whose strategic priorities might not necessarily coincide and synchronize with Romania’s regional interests. For example, in case the US was simultaneously challenged by regional powers in East Asia, the Middle East and in Eastern Europe, it is unclear that it would choose Eastern Europe allies to throw the bulk of its military weight in their support.

C. The Western Decline: European and Transatlantic Unity Broken Scenario

In this scenario, Romania should completely replace its current three-pillar national security paradigm, and move either towards:

- a) regional alliances, which may be a Balkan alignment with Serbia, Montenegro Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Greece, as counter-weights to the dominant Russian-Turkish influence, and a Central-East European security arrangement with Poland, Ukraine, Moldova,

Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the Baltic States as a counter-weight to the dominant Russian-German influence.

b) seeking mutual guarantees- as buffer zone between Russia and the Western European countries;

c) individually striving for bilateral security arrangements with regional powers, including France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, or Turkey. However, this strategic option might lead to deepening fragmentation of the Inter-marium, which, in turn might eventually fall back into the regional chaos scenario.

The downside of the “Western Decline” scenario is that it might prove just a stepping-stone towards one of the other scenarios considered, while possibly abruptly transforming Romania in a mere object of regional powers’ geopolitical deals.

D. The Regional Chaos Scenario

For Romania the “Regional Chaos” scenario would be catastrophic. In that case, Romania’s security paradigm will largely depend on whether it will happen following either the “Inter-marium Alliance” or the “Western Decline” scenarios, as well as on whether or not there was enough time for the country to fully implement the strategic options deriving from the previous scenario. Of course, Romania’s ad-hoc alliances could matter, as it would also surely matter the acquired level of Romanian military capabilities, the level of readiness of the Romanian Armed Forces, as well as the geographic scope and the intensity of the regional war.