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**THE PROCESS OF ROMANIA'S EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC
INTEGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY'S REGIONAL POSITIONS**

PhD Thesis

Abstract

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Introduction, the scientific problem

At the end of the '80s - beginning '90s security policy theories built on Soviet-American antagonism lost their validity due to global detente and the disappearance of the bipolar world order and Soviet influence. Thus they needed to be replaced – in the new theories, regional security policy matters received more important role. This, further, rendered the determination of a regions or subregions security policy situation more complicated. The regime changes in Eastern and Central Europe followed by fast changes and crises very quickly drew attention to the fact, that new security guarantees were needed, which, on the other hand required new institutional framework. Thus, European history in the '90s mostly evolved around the changes of expectations of the Western integration organizations, how they extended their membership to Eastern – and Central European countries, and, finally, how these countries could join these organizations. Starting from the „Europe of 6” these two processes led to today's 27-member EU. Of course, each country made its decisions concerning the accession in different time and way – taking into account their specific political, social, economic situation and history. I chose Romania because this country is often labeled as „unique” and I've been interested in its search for ways to join the Euro-Atlantic organizations.

In the decades following the fall of the bipolar system, Romania has also been searching for answers and solutions for the new challenges. Of these changes, in my thesis I deal with the changes in foreign and security policy as the one determining the way of Western integration. Regarding „traditional” contacts, Romania is linked to the Balkans, which should remain in the focus of its attention due to enduring ethnic conflicts, the country, however, finally committed itself to Euro-Atlantic integration. In this situation, the country developed a series of steps to prove its European identity and to reach member status. Balancing between “constraints and obligations” originating from European and Euro-Atlantic integration and Romanian national interest, Romanian diplomacy succeeded in getting involved in the accession negotiations. One part of the accession process was declaring the willingness to join NATO and acquiring membership, the other part was the EU integration.

In Romanian security policy theories, possible external threats are time-by-time accompanied with challenges posed by ethnic or national minorities. Romanian political ideas promoting a single nation state theory is not compatible with European values, thus steps to alter them are

of utmost importance, both from the point of view of their real or seeming results and the future. Throughout Romanian history, preserving the integrity of the country and creating historical-national unity always enjoyed priority. Among others, this is why the county was declared as a unified nation state in more of its constitutions, whereas its origins do not support this idea. During the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, however, the country had to take into account European expectations different from these ideas, which made it necessary for Romania to redefine its place in Europe. The quality and extent of this redefinition played an important role in NATO, and later, in EU accession, and because of this, both planned and realized changes in the nationality question deserve an in depth analysis.

Furthermore, I've deemed the analysis of this process important because its effects in the region are very important from the point of view of Hungary's stability, development and lobbying abilities, as well as Romanian contacts with the neighboring countries, which also influence the position of ethnic Hungarians living in those countries.

The analysis of Romania, our ally and Eastern neighbor is unfairly neglected, whereas 20th century history proved that Romania has on several occasions precisely assessed changes in great power politics and used this knowledge to achieve its own goals. Nowadays, Romania also aims to realize the country's interests and since its abilities are unchanged, it has no other means to reach this target than to get great power support.

Research methods

In order to meet the goals of the research I applied the methods of general (comparison, historical and empirical method) and specific (observation, comparison, synthesis, analysis, induction, deduction, analogy, hypothesis) research. It was the analysis of the literature and the positioning of the knowledge gained during my day-to-day work in Romania on historical base that provided the opportunity for in-depth analysis and for the exploration of contexts.

Reading the available sources I realized that Hungarian essays – despite their wide range of topic – analyze Romania only to a limited extent and from a narrow point of view. The development of Romanian foreign- and security policy, Bucharest-centered strategic thinking, Romanian goals and achievements are seldom analyzed. In my thesis I tried to examine the factors determining NATO and EU accession, thereby answering the incurred questions and

providing a starting ground based on facts to analyze and put today's Romania into an international context.

Whilst doing the research, I experienced both the abundance and the lack of available sources. I tried to make use of this duality in my thesis. Hungarian literature is of high quality and covers a broad field, (but) applies mostly a historical and national policy approach, though analysis of 21st century events is also available. The analysis of international literature showed, that Romanian researchers approach the problems more open minded in their essays published abroad in English, while Romanian language sources concentrate on presenting the events. Most essays written by non-Romanian (and non-Hungarian) professionals are superficial, the analyzed events are not put into historical context, thus they often lead to too far-reaching conclusions. Whilst preparing the thesis, I often significantly relied to a specific segment of available sources, that of the documents of international organizations, since these are reports prepared according to fix criteria for years and they present a remarkably objective picture about Romania.

Hypotheses

- ✧ In order to achieve its goals in European and Euro-Atlantic integrations, Romania met external expectations without real norm transfer and social/political restructuring
- ✧ Pragmatic foreign political activity based on interest achieved that Romania was considered as a “trustworthy” member of EU and NATO, without taking into account its domestic- and economic-policy problems
- ✧ By choosing European and Euro-Atlantic integration, Romania only partially performed social restructuring based on European norms and expectations. This restructuring did not bring with itself the abandonment of the pillars defining Romanian national identity (those of unified nation state, governing based on the interests of the ethnic majority, creating a homogenous state)
- ✧ even the integration period was defined by worries over territorial integrity and loosing great power support and guarantees
- ✧ integration came too early for Romania and deficiencies caused by unpreparedness weaken the international image of the country

- ⚡ putting its geopolitical position in center of attention, Romania tried to gain political influence greater than its actual possibilities
- ⚡ Romania's Western integration enhances stability in the region, our Eastern partner became more predictable, which also means security for ethnic Hungarians living abroad. Historical experience, however, shows that in case of a strategic turn, this predictability is questionable.
- ⚡ Romanian foreign politics served European and Euro-Atlantic integration, on the other hand striving for a middle power role on the Balkans is still part of it, only if hidden. Independent whether this plan can be realized or not, this striving appears in Romanian way of thinking and determines lobbying activity towards the West.

Short description of the research

The thesis is divided into four main parts, complemented by chapters on the definition of the scientific problem, on the scientific goals, the process of the research and conclusions. The first main chapter – Romania's search for ways, change in European and Euro-Atlantic integration policies – presents the process of quest after the revolution at the end of which Bucharest took the decision for Western integration. Alternatives – like approaching Russia or the acquisition of parts of the Republic of Moldova inhabited by Romanians and thereby acquiring a better regional status – were rejected; knowing the motives behind this decision also predicted that Bucharest wants to join Western integration organizations.

After the quest for solutions in the first part of the '90s, Romania chose NATO accession as its main goal, mainly because it deemed NATO and the USA as the real guarantee for its stability. In case of the possible failure of European integration, they wanted to offset the risks of Romania's being repositioned into a puffer-zone by the guarantees offered by NATO membership. NATO accession was supported by political and geopolitical reasons while not putting emphasis on the restructuring of the military. Acquiring NATO-membership got extra attention in Bucharest also because it required less social and political restructuring than EU membership. In order to gain membership, Romania took part in international peacekeeping missions above its strength, moreover, it built its integration policy on the USA's approval, for this it also took over confrontation with its European partners. As a consequence the pressure for adequacy, it started to readjust its contacts with its neighbors. Basic treaties regularizing future contacts with Hungary, Ukraine and the Republic of

Moldova were signed under strong outside pressure, without real norm transfer. As part of these treaties, Romania also showed permissiveness in minority matters.

While analyzing the literature, it became obvious, that Hungarian-Romanian compromise was hindered by the fact that the Romanian elite, which was in the process of redefining itself, linked the “Hungarian question” with the most important topic of Romanian security policy, territorial integrity, which is an unavoidable pillar of Romanian politics.

Heavy American pressure was needed to shift the parties from a standstill. In the Moldovan question, which is more complicated and open than the Hungarian one, only a temporary solution was reached and the agreement setting the common borders was also only accepted in 2011. Regarding Ukraine, they also reached an understanding on declaring that there are no territorial demands on either side.

Second chapter – the **Process of Romania's integration to the EU** – the process of European integration is presented. EU integration, as opposed to NATO accession, required changes in the economy, justice and society, which supposed concrete restructuring of the country as a whole. From Romanian point of view – not underestimating the value of US and international role in NATO accession – European integration started all those changes that led to the creation of the “new Romania” and its integration into the international community.

In the thesis I prove that in Romania, some of the above mentioned changes only started due to external pressure, thus they do not have real political or social support, rendering their efficiency and durability questionable. On the other hand, as a consequence of Western integration, Romania cannot meet external requirements with reforms covering only the elite as it could do in the previous centuries. One of the unimpeachable worth of EU accession is that during the process a lot of in depth analyzes were prepared about Romania, and that already in the pre-accession period concrete changes were demanded. Evaluation of the changes shows the actual state of being of our neighbor and can prevent us from misinterpreting Romania's standpoints and motivations. The collection of the most difficult topics of the accession negotiations shows excellently the questions in which Romania stood the farthest away from European expectations and in which it had to accept the greatest sacrifices or developments for the sake of quick and successful EU integration. It also became clear that even after the accession (in the medium term) these are the topics in which the greatest restructuring and possible deficiencies are to take place. Their evolution also influences the stability and balanced functioning of the state.

On the other hand, Romania's EU membership is the result of a bilateral agreement, which is beneficial not only for Romania, but for the EU as a whole, as well. From an economic point of view, for the EU, the accession of Romania is important, because it enhances the internal market, and the number of consumers by app. 20 million and it makes cheap labor and resources available. From geostrategic and geopolitical point of view, Romanian membership contributes to the unified Europe without demarcation lines. Because of the geostrategic positions of the country, the EU gets closer to the region, where it has enlargement and market-acquisition potential. From the point of view of the EU's foreign policy, Romania is a country of special importance – this is a fact, that Bucharest is also aware of.

The third chapter – **Main foreign policy developments determining European and Euro-Atlantic integration, the adaptation of Romanian lobbying and security policy results of it** – presents processes determining the EU and NATO accession period, Romanian expectations and their changes during the process. Domestic restructuring was – in case of Romania – established by internal politics. European and Euro-Atlantic integration presented a new level of influence on domestic politics and the sovereignty of the state, thereby a new, closer connection was established between “traditional” foreign and domestic politics. It's a generally accepted opinion that it was the foreign policy (and its traditionally strong domestic influence) that led to Romania's unprepared and early accession. Thus, when examining the process of accession, one cannot disregard its analysis. During my research, I proved that in the final moments of both NATO and EU accession, it was of utmost importance, that domestic politics adopted new standpoints and – at least formally – it abandoned old, entrenched reflexes and opinions.

After the accession, foreign and security policy expectations were to be aligned with the new status quo. After analyzing the new situation, the results of the accession led Romania to focus its efforts on preserving its credibility inside NATO and, in the EU, its role in ESDP. Another important security policy field, on which Bucharest spent a lot of effort, is migration policy. Romania supported the creation of a unified EU strategy, prompted the EU to bilateral talks with Russia, took part in the discussions about those parts of the topic which concerned the Republic of Moldova and it took a leadership position in establishing cooperation with the EU and the Black Sea Region in this question. In this last field, Romania reached that the EU revised its neighborhood policy.

With the Black Sea Synergy, such a program has started, within the framework of which Bucharest was able to convey its own message and could draw the EU's attention to the region, thereby European Neighborhood Policy is extended with a new, very valuable topic. This is why presence at the Balkans and the Black Sea Region enjoys a clear priority among Romania's strategic goals. Within the framework presented by the EU, Romania also takes part in solving the problems of the Middle East or Africa. On the other hand, it is more important that it also active in Europe's contacts with Central Asia: in diplomatic contacts with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. These ambitious goals, however,, have not lived up to the expectations. Though Romania has positioned its geopolitical position correctly, but it could not realize the possibilities inherent in it.

Fourth chapter – Lessons learned from Romania's European and Euro-Atlantic integration – tries to get an overall picture about the main characteristics about the European and Euro-Atlantic integration, with the aim of providing a closer look on both traditional and momentary motivations influencing decisions and activities. Amongst these facts is the size and geopolitical position of the country. According to these, being a 238.391 sq km country with a population of 19 million, Romania considers itself a key player in Eastern-, Central- and South Europe and since it lies in the unruly corner of South-East Europe, the ruling elite always paid special attention to the preservation of the territorial integrity of the country. This goal was achieved despite the restructuring after the fall of the bipolar system and the country could avoid territorial restructuring resembling the division of a country (see the Soviet-Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia).

All through its history, it has always been one of the most important questions, whether the country is a Balkanian or a European state? The answer to this question is that its desires point towards Europe ever since its creation and in order to let this acknowledged, it adopts – every time – international expectations and it integrates its own inner structures and Romanian solutions with them. The wording that “Romania regards itself part of Central-Europe” (formulated during the EU accession) also aims to strengthen its European bonds.

Probably the main characteristic of Romania's establishment and the change of its territory is that it was the result of international agreements, thus political elite – at all times – attributes special importance to international agreements, alliances.

Romania did not go along the way of its own civic development, so throughout its history change was in most cases initiated by the ruling elite, which sometimes succumbed to and allied with the great power of the time and when felt its weakening, after a short hesitation it

changed sides and began to walk on its own path. Events at the end's of the two world wars and the election of the king are good examples for this.

Foreign politics and diplomatic activity are (mostly) considered to be a success story for Romania and proved that it can function properly irrespective of domestic and social problems. The activity of the army is considered to be as successful as the foreign policy – part of this is, that bilateral contacts between the Hungarian and Romanian armies have for a long time been better than contacts between the two governments. It is quite challenging to find abstract, ideological considerations in the Romanian foreign policy activities, since it can be characterized mainly by pragmatism, on the other hand “policentrism” is also quite characteristic, since Romania considers every sphere of influence part of its system of contacts and links them to its short or long term goals according to the needs of its political and economic independence. Flexibility is without question a main characteristic of Romania foreign policy, namely it always counts with the fact that nothing is for free in politics.

Summarized conclusions

The topic analyzed in this thesis – a global approach to Romania's integration to Western alliances – helps to understand the importance and motivations of this historical process from a Romanian point of view. Based on the historical analysis I concluded that throughout its history one of the main problems of Romania has always been whether it remains a “half-Asian” state or it gets closer to European people and culture. During the process of the establishment of the state and gaining independence, the determining question has always been **to shift towards the West beyond its geographic position**. With the European and Euro-Atlantic integration, the country's Europeanness was reaffirmed, moreover, with the political declaration “that the country considers itself a Central-European one”, in fact it expressed its distancing from the Balkans.

During the process of creating a foreign- and security policy strategy for the post-revolution Romania, there were two main contradicting trends in strategic thinking. One emphasized the importance of gradual integration into Europe, starting from the fact that Romania has to adapt to the new situation after the global shifts in the balance of power since the fall of the bipolar system and – counting with the eastward expansion of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures – it has to find its new place in Europe. The other point of view denied the necessity of this and hoped that after getting back Moldavia (former Bessarabia), using the medium sized power status created by this, the country will be able to restore its stability and ensure its

development. By the middle of the '90s, realizing the futility of Romanian desires about being a medium power and that of the “separate” foreign policy played for decades, the first trend prevailed.

The political elite of Romania has always feared that because Romania was created by international safeguard and that because it is linked to more cultural-geographical regions, in given historical-political circumstances these can endanger the integrity of the country. This way of thinking has been present in formulating security-policy principles, even after the revolution. Though implicitly, the principle, that the territorial integrity of the country is unquestionable, has always been the central part of Romanian foreign- and security policy up until now. Also from this point of view, it was NATO-EU integration, that offered the strongest guarantees, which also helped to avoid the danger of Romania becoming a puffer-zone between Russia and the Western alliances. In the thesis I established that Romania considers the US as the great power patron unavoidable from the point of view of Romania's territorial integrity, thus maintaining Washington's interests in the region is very important to Romania.

The process Romania's NATO and EU accession can be understood the best if we consider it as **a historical opportunity, furthermore, as the greatest challenge for modernization after WWII**. At the end, the accession process turned to be the main event of Romanian state-building, because it aimed at more strategic goals at once.

Politically, NATO accession helped Romania to continue Western integration, whereas guarantees offered by the alliance and winning the support of the US broadened its military-diplomacy possibilities and its taking part in international peacekeeping operations and defined the course of developing its army. The Romanian Army actively took part, already before the accession, in international peacekeeping operations, thereby enabling the US visioned version of handling the Balkan crisis to take place. In order to gain NATO membership, Romanian foreign policy successfully proved the country's commitment to the goals of the alliance and it was the first among the European countries to join the war on terror initiated by George W. Bush. As member of NATO, Romania contributes to maintaining security in its immediate neighborhood and beyond, in South-East Europe.

Compared to NATO accession, the process of EU integration can be characterized with more contradictions and half-measures. Unlike NATO membership, EU membership had lots of prerequisites – but Romanian diplomacy maneuvered good. It is the consequence of more, simultaneously acting inner and outer factors that European leaders finally decided to support

the accession. Western companies also had significant interests in the success of Romania's EU accession, these were almost as important as foreign policy and strategic considerations.

All in all, it can be established that though the institutions were more or less in place by the time of the accession, this was not enough to function according to European expectations. Reviewing the events of the accession process I also established that **European integration “came too early” from many points of view and it caught the country unprepared** – despite the fact that it was Romania itself who urged the earliest possible date. Romania was already at the beginning of the accession negotiations trailing behind the other candidates – in my thesis I analyzed the reasons which led to this, together with the steps taken in order to overcome them. The fact, that accession could take place in 2007, is the result of several causes, which were one by one mentioned in various chapters of this thesis – but according to my view, two main factors are worth to be mentioned here, as well. First, the interests of the European economies, which supported the enlargement of the EU in order to acquire markets, cheaper labor force and resources within a well regulated framework. The second is a political-security package, which put the stability of the region and of the EU forward and did not want to risk Romania's moving apart from the “European line” - either towards Russia or the USA.

One of the important conclusions of analyzing the accession process is that Romania's European and Euro-Atlantic integration was a **“forced pace” structural change, in order of which Romanians tried to fulfill expectations on several fields, even if in many cases those expectations did not meet Romanian reality**. Romanian political elite adapted (sometimes formally) many Western norms due to pressure from the outside, without conviction, this, however, cannot be taken as real restructuring, thus can any times be reversed. Besides transposing and implementing the *acquis*, social restructuring was also to be started, amongst them strengthening the civil society and weakening of the influence of the state, which was considered as “taboo” in Romanian political culture. While preparing this thesis I carried out a separate research to identify fields where it was especially challenging to meet European expectations. The conclusion was that **justice and home affairs, free movement of capital, competition and environmental protection were the questions in which the EU required significant changes and sacrifices from Romania**.

The economic, financial and infrastructural deficiencies, based on which I think that **Romania was not ready to access financial support (structural and cohesion funds) and that pre-accession funding did not meet the expectations to stimulate the transformation of the economy**, were visible already during the accession period. It can be seen, though, that unpreparedness causes serious economic damage both to Romania and to foreign investors in the country. I concluded that the real problem is that **Romania is not improving in the absorption of the EU funds**. This however forecasts problems in the long term and that no significant catching up can be expected in medium-term. Furthermore, amidst the unfavorable conditions of the worldwide economic crisis, Romania can “fasten” its former status as “periphery”.

Despite the above we cannot ignore the fact that as a result of integration, Romania reached a new level, that of NATO and EU members, which resulted in a series of changes and adaptations in the country. During the accession period, Romania tried to meet the expectations and on several fields it took really serious efforts to achieve this. The fulfillment of defense commitments towards NATO and the US painted a favorable picture about Romania. In the thesis I showed that **even the conclusion of the accession negotiations did not mean that Romania was a prepared member and that it met the requirement of putting Western norms into practice**. This was clearly shown by the country reports, which (to a varying extent) mentioned the framework for public procurement, the protection of intellectual and industrial property, the failure to establish the payment and intervention agencies in agriculture, the adaptation and implementation of animal health and well-being standards, the lack of animal registration system, the handling of industrial pollution, the situation of the Roma minority, corruption and organized crime as questions to worry about. Soon it also became obvious that though the country can join on 1st January 2007, but this requires further efforts on Romanian side. Taking this into account, safeguard clauses were included in the accession treaty, and later, when there was no way to delay accession, the CVM (Cooperation and Verification Mechanism) was started. The latter already showed the frustration on the EU's side and – together with the Schengen-problem – it leads to the conclusion that **after gaining EU membership, Romania lost the previous generous support of the great powers**, moreover, France – which previously was considered as a “brother” turned to be one of the main critics of Romania.

Romanian foreign- and security policy was also part of the adaptation process during the integration period – it had to learn a lot in activities and principles. Romanian policy had to

abandon its previous view on many fields, e.g. relations with the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Hungary. Romania settled its contacts with its neighbors in basic agreements formulated according to European expectations, thus relations improved. For Hungary it means that Romania became a more calculable ally, moreover, Hungary profited from Romania's accession since the process enforced the improvement of the situation of the minorities, Hungarian companies gained market in Romania and bilateral contacts became more balanced. The improvement of the relations, however – because of their “enforced from the outside” characteristic – does not mean that we are part of an irreversible process.

In the thesis I also examined how Romania made use of the possibilities offered by integration organizations during the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. I established that **despite the “ambitious goals worded”, Romania wasn't quite successful in lifting its own interests to international level.** Though in its foreign policy it actively tries to make use of the advantages offered by NATO and EU membership, it **couldn't identify breakthrough points yet.**

New scientific achievements

1. By analyzing the process of Romanian integration, the thesis presents the basic problem influencing the whole Eastern and Central-European Region. The problem arises from the differences of Western expectations linked to the integration process and the actually implementation of the norm transfer. The thesis establishes and analyzes in detail the fact that Romania was only partially able to fulfill the requirements of NATO and EU accession.
2. In the thesis I summarized and presented in Hungarian the accession processes of Romania, a country which, by choosing the road of European and Euro-Atlantic integration embarked on a social-restructuring in order to close up to European norms and expectations. I also presented the results of political, social and economic transformation and drew attention to the vulnerability of the above changes – thereby willing to contribute to the understanding the unique nature of Romania's situation and activities.
3. During the research I proved that Romania is (still) sensitive to anything questioning its national integrity and that it still considers itself to be a determining factor in Central-

Europe with middle power ambitions – though the possibility of that is quite small. In medium-term, the country doesn't present a greater risk to the stability of the region than other states, though because of its constant need for great power safeguards, it might leave its current allies in case of a change in great power status quo in the region.

4. During my work I explored the enforcement, adaptation and modification of the main traditional attributes of Romanian foreign policy during the integration and accession period, respectively. I also drew attention to many continuous or discontinuous parts in the theory and practice of Romanian foreign and security policy. Foreign policy, which enjoys unanimous domestic political support, had a specific role during the accession processes, but self-critical steps on this field were – at least in most of the cases – not accompanied by a parallel critical analysis of domestic politics; and since integration came too early for Romania, deficiencies arising from its unpreparedness influence the country's international judgment negatively.

Possible fields for utilization of the results of the research

A gap was presented by the fact that the research on Romanian foreign policy and its acceptance by third countries is missing in Hungarian literature, which I researched (based on my studies and professional experience) in one part of my thesis. My view is that from Hungarian point of view, the importance of the analysis of this topic is unquestionable, since in the last period, Hungarian history was repeatedly determined by our misinterpreting or poor understanding of our neighbors international judgment and lobbying abilities. Romania – as an Eastern neighbor determining our security-political-economic position – is analyzed only on a narrow field. The development of Romanian foreign- and security policy, Bucharest-centered strategic thinking, Romanian goals and achievements are seldom analyzed. Thus, I'd like to use the knowledge gained via this research in my work and, following additional research, in publications based on this thesis.

This thesis can serve as an information base for security-policy researchers or anyone interested for this topic, moreover it is applicable as an educational material for related subjects (regional security questions, strategic/security policy matters of neighboring countries) in higher education institutions.

An important field for utilization of the presented questions can be Hungarian strategy development and the enhancement of foreign political thinking. The expansion of our

“multilateral” knowledge concerning Romania, which is mostly examined from a bilateral point of view, can be utilized in relational political thinking, as well. A complex introduction of this topic can help the preparation of foreign- and security policy experts and of government officials, and to broaden their way of thinking.

Based on the above I recommend this thesis to support the work of professionals in this field and to higher educational institutions.

Publications connected to the research

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- 2009 Embassy of Hungary in Romania, II.secretary
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