

**ROMANIA'S ACCESSION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION:
A CRITICAL – GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

Romania, together with other Eastern European countries, has been experiencing a transition from a totalitarian regime to one based on free market and democracy. This transition becomes geopolitically significant in the context of the enlargement of the European Union (EU), as a premise of Romania's accession in the EU. The focus of this thesis is on Romania's geopolitical status in the context of the EU enlargement. This status is determined by means of a critical geopolitical approach which makes use of discourse analysis. Data consist of European newspaper articles, academic journal articles, official reports and press releases of European policy makers. The method used is triangulation, based on the theory of critical geopolitics, which identifies three components of the geopolitical discourse: formal, practical, and popular. The analysis reveals key terms, metaphors and recurrent themes that create the formal and popular geopolitical images of Romania's accession in the EU. Also, the analysis of the practical discourse leads to the writing of two storylines regarding the accession. The relations identified between the two images and the two storylines show the place occupied by the country in the European geopolitical imagination. The conclusion of this thesis is that Romania's EU accession gives the country the status of a second-class member. It is also emphasized that this status is not exclusively determined by physical-geographical conditions, but also by conceptual ones.