Sergiy Solodkyy
Ileana Racheru

FOREIGN POLICY AUDIT: UKRAINE-ROMANIA

DISCUSSION PAPER

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Authors: Sergiy Solodkyy
                                                Ileana Racheru

Editor and project coordinator: Kateryna Zarembo

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, Ukraine was positioned as an unfriendly state in the public space in Romania. The Ukrainian information space and political assessments reciprocated by generating a high level of suspicion, mistrust, and even hostility to the neighboring state. Recent years were marked by a kind of mutual rediscovery of the two countries.

Year 2014 brought clarity – the country that had sworn eternal friendship committed aggression against Ukraine, whereas Bucharest, which was sometimes perceived in Ukraine as possibly the main threat to national security, helped Kyiv. The revival of Ukrainian-Romanian cooperation did not, of course, lead to the settlement of a host of problems accumulated over more than 20 years of tense relations, but now there is at least hope for the development of trustful cooperation based on the security-first principle. The emergence of a common threat forced the two countries to revise their relations, but it is too early to say that they have completely put distrust behind them.

After 1991, the relations between the two countries revived but were affected by numerous conflicts. The most important foundational document for bilateral relations was signed in 1997 – the Agreement on Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation between Ukraine and Romania. Romanian experts note that Bucharest wanted to show in this way that it had no territorial claims against Ukraine, which was essential in view of its desire to obtain candidate status for NATO membership. It was equally important for the Ukrainian government to resolve border issues, considering that the so-called "Big Treaty" with Russia envisaging "the inviolability of the existing borders between them" had yet to be signed at the time.[1]

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[1] *Russia delayed the ratification of the treaty despite the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine taking the necessary step. The main point of discussion in the Russian parliament was Crimea. Despite the fact that Moscow had violated the treaty when it annexed the Ukrainian peninsula and launched military actions in eastern Ukraine in 2014, it remains in force de jure. Accessed at http://zakon5. rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_006*

The hottest debates hampering progress for both countries were about protecting the rights of the Romanian minority in Ukraine and those of the Ukrainian minority in Romania, the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Black Sea, creating a deep waterway between the Danube River and the Black Sea in the Ukrainian part of the delta, and the situation with the Kryvyi Rih Mining and Processing Works. All these questions arose against a background of mutual suspicions of insincerity. The Ukrainian authorities suspected that Bucharest intended to implement the Greater Romania project, while the Romanian leaders distrusted Kyiv's multivector policy, which occasionally tilted more towards Russia, creating an additional source of anxiety.

Year 2014 was a turning point in the relations between the two countries. Romania was the first EU country to ratify the Association Agreement with Ukraine. Similarly, an agreement on small border traffic was signed in 2014, which provided an opportunity for nearly 500,000 Ukrainians residing in the 30-kilometer zone on the border with Romania, to travel to the neighboring country without visas. Romania's support for the Euromaidan and condemnation of Russian aggression against Ukraine largely determined the new dynamics in bilateral relations. In 2015, the Romanian president was in Kyiv on an official visit. A year later, the Ukrainian leader was in Bucharest, paving the way for new breakthroughs in cooperation. Over the past year, the two presidents met four times[2].

Achievements that indicate a new spirit of cooperation include the opening of Romanian consulates in Solotvyno village in the Zakarpattia region, cancellation of payment for long-term (national) visas, and joint border patrols to combat smuggling. This list may grow longer, considering the desire of the leadership in both countries to establish transport links between the countries (direct railway connection between the two capitals, direct air connection, and the Chernivtsi-Bucharest bus route). Importantly, the Joint Presidential Ukrainian-Romanian Commission resumed its activities after a nine-year hiatus. This commission is likely to be charged with solving the abovementioned bilateral problems.

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[2]   *IWP Prepared a Memo for the Visit of President of Ukraine to Romania, May 19, 2016. http://iwp.org.ua/eng/public/2038.html*

The key reason for the drastically new dynamics in bilateral relations was Russian aggression against Ukraine. An important role was played by the election of Klaus Iohannis as president. Unlike his predecessor Traian Băsescu, he is less burdened by historical legacy in his approach and rhetoric regarding Ukraine. At present, Ukraine has the most positive dynamics with no other neighboring country than Romania.

The key reason for the drastically new dynamics in bilateral relations was Russian aggression against Ukraine

Romania, whose regional ambitions used to be limited to the Moldovan direction, is now emerging as a key player in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Black Sea basin. Almost all countries that have been showcases of Europeanization in the region have been discredited by the curtailment of democratic achievements. This applies, above all, to Poland and Hungary, but questions are also raised over negative internal tendencies in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Against this background, Romania is acting as a true trust leader and, remarkably, gradually taking over from Poland in terms of regional influence. Friendly symbolic steps, starting with the ratification of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, could not have gone unnoticed in Kyiv. (However, Bucharest was motivated here not only and perhaps not so much by attention to partnership with Kyiv as by a desire to demonstrate commitment to strategic relations with the Republic of Moldova whose agreement was considered at the same time.) Before the change of government in Poland, officials from Kyiv, Bucharest, and Warsaw seriously discussed creating a "triangle" of cooperation. According to the Romanian president, the idea was to establish a regional "solidarity group".[3]

The reason for intensifying bilateral relations was awareness of common security threats. Romania was not fully convinced by Ukraine's pro-Western course and suspected excessive dependence of the Ukrainian ruling circles on Russia, but Bucharest reassessed

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[3]   *Bendarzhevsky, A. "Polshcha-Rumunia-Ukraina: trykutnyk stratehichnoi spi-vpratsi, stvorenyi Putinym". Institute of World Policy for the European Truth, 7 August 2015. Accessed on 12 June 2016: http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/ articles/2015/08/7/7036722/*

challenges after the annexation of Crimea and the launch of hostilities in the Donbas. The militarization of Crimea, lying just 300 km off the coast of Romania, is turning into a major threat. In April 2016, Russia conducted training over the Krasnodar region and the Black Sea involving the air forces and Black Sea aviation. They practiced an attack to block the Black Sea straits. Moreover, after Romania and U.S. launched the Deveselu NATO missile defense shield, Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened retaliation, pointing out that Romania would be in the crosshairs. Romania is a leader in coordinating regional efforts to build a security balance, which essentially means creating countermeasures to Russia's provocative actions in the Black Sea. There is an initiative to create a NATO flotilla in the Black Sea with the participation of Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. (However, Sofia has taken a cautious position regarding this issue.) Ukraine has expressed its desire to join in, and Georgia may follow suit if NATO accepts the Romanian initiative.

Therefore, Ukraine may become a connecting link in the regional security framework. Through cooperation with the member states, it may start turning into a de facto NATO member. Ukraine will be linked with such NATO members as Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey at sea and with Poland and Lithuania on land through the creation of a joint brigade (the relevant agreement was signed in 2014).[4] Both initiatives are essential to reform the Armed Forces of Ukraine and achieve interoperability with NATO forces. Incidentally, President Petro Poroshenko also came up with an idea to form a military brigade together with Romania and Bulgaria (following the example the Ukrainian-Lithuanian-Polish brigade). However, Bulgaria may oppose Ukraine's participation in order not to confront Russia.

Ukraine may become a connecting link in the regional security framework. Through cooperation with the member states, it may start turning into a de facto NATO member

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[4] *Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Poland, and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Creating a Joint Military Unit, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, ratified on 4 February 2015. Accessed on 11 June 2016: http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/998_548/paran2#n2*

In these circumstances, **Ukraine pursues the following interests** in its policy making regarding Romania:

1. Increasing security in the Black Sea and limiting Russia's strategic advantage in the Donbas, Crimea, and Transnistria.
2. Supporting the EU sanctions against Russia.
3. Promoting and supporting Ukraine's EU and Euro-Atlantic integration. Assistance in reforms, particularly fighting corruption
4. Energy security. Reverse delivery of natural gas.

Romania's core interests towards Ukraine

1. Limiting the strategic military advance of Russia in the Donbas, Crimea, and Transnistria.
2. Implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement with the EU.
3. Creating a favorable environment for preserving the identity and cultural rights of the Romanian minority.
4. Reaching a compromise regarding the Bystroye Canal and the Kryvyi Rih steel plant.

Security risks are the converging point of Ukraine's and Romania's interests. This does not mean that the two countries have forgotten the problems accumulated in the past. Obviously, Kyiv and Bucharest have decided not to bring them to the fore while faced with much bigger threats (Russia's military machine, terrorism, and disintegration sentiments in the EU). Ukraine fears that its stronger neighbors can take advantage of its weakness to protect their own interests. In any event, the parties are unable to avoid solving issues that have been on the agenda for over two decades. The involvement of a third party (international organizations) may be necessary. This approach may cause a barrage of criticism in Ukraine's public space because Romania is perceived to have greater leverage on issues involving international arbitration. One often-mentioned argument in this context is Ukraine's loss in the International Court of Justice in 2009 in a case versus Romania about the delimitation of the Black Sea. However, Ukraine and Romania may have no other solution than to turn to a third party.

2. INTERESTS OF UKRAINE IN ROMANIA, ROMANIA'S INTERESTS IN UKRAINE. POSSIBLE POINTS OF COINCIDENCE

2.1. INCREASING SECURITY IN THE BLACK SEA AND LIMITING RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE IN THE DONBAS, CRIMEA, AND TRANSNISTRIA

Romanians are very concerned about the new security challenges in the Black Sea region. According to an opinion survey (February 2015), 64% of Romanian citizens perceived the war in Ukraine as a threat to Romania. Moreover, the survey found that 70% of the respondents favored an increase in military spending in the country.[5] According to the same survey, Russia was perceived most negatively by ordinary Romanians (66% view it negatively and a mere 25% positively). The Romanian government wasted no time reacting to these concerns and pledged to reach at least 2% of GDP spending on national defense. Moreover, Bucharest proposes ambitious projects to join regional efforts in the security sector – from partnership with Poland to naval cooperation with Turkey and Bulgaria.

The Black Sea region security was seriously destabilized by Russia's aggressive behavior. Ukraine aims to build a military balance in the Black Sea region in order to prevent a situation in which the Black

Ukraine aims to build a military balance in the Black Sea region in order to prevent a situation in which the Black Sea will become a "Russian militarized lake"

Sea will become a "Russian militarized lake" (see Infographic 1)[6]. As of May 2016, Ukraine's military intelligence detected nearly 23,900 troops, 613 tanks and combat armored vehicles, 162 artillery systems, some 100 fighter jets, 56 helicopters, 16 coastal missile defense systems, 34 ships, and 4 submarines located in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Russia has also deployed the K-300 Bastion-P complex in Crimea. Their missiles can engage any of the yard attack target of

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[5] *Barometrul INSCOP- Adevărul despre România, Simpatie ări-conflictul din Ucraina, http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/INSCOP-02.2014-Simpatie-tari-si-situatia-din-Ucraina.pdf, accesed 2.04.2016.*

[6] *Deputat ucrainean, în Marea Neagră devine o regiune de confruntare, The Epoch Times România, http://epochtimes.ro/news/marea-neagra-devine-o-regiune-de-confruntare---247682, accessed 26.05.2016.*

300 miles radius and has been explicitly designed to counter U.S. Titles Aegis equipped ships. Furthermore, Russia is planning to deploy S-400 (TO-21 Growler) antiaircraft missile systems in the Southern Military District, in Krasnodar, as part of its air defense modernization plan. The Growler can engage targets at high and medium altitudes within 400 km range. The deployments of these modern and capable of anti-missile systems aims at offsetting NATO's superiority in precision guided munitions. For Bulgaria and Romania, which have been trying modernize their air forces, this represents a very dangerous development.[7] Russian actions in the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA) should be regarded as a significant threat because Moscow aims at destabilizing the power distribution (balance of power) in the region.[8] Logically, Ukraine is interested in supporting any initiatives at the international (or at least regional) level in order to stop such trends.

In this respect, Kyiv is willing to participate in the Romanian initiative to create a NATO flotilla in the Black Sea. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016, Romania will submit an initiative designed "to establish the framework of a Permanent NATO Black Sea Force – in compliance with the provisions of the Montreux Convention … and to conduct joint activities to train the Allied forces in the region".[9] By the way, Romanian experts close to the government recall that Romania led the Ukrainian file in NATO for ten months and introduced the term *"military aggression"* in the first statements of the Alliance regarding Russia's actions against Ukraine.

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[7]   *Interview with George Visan, editor at civitaspolitics.org and associated researcher at the Romanian Energy Center.*

[8]   *Interview with Florin Diaconu, senior lecturer at the Department of Political Science, University of Bucharest.*

[9]   *Klaus Iohannis, Preşedinţie: Mandatul României la summit-ul NATO de la Varşovia va fi validat în şedinţă CSAT, cursdeguvernare.ro, http://cursdeguvernare.ro/presedintie-mandatul-romaniei-la-summit-ul-nato-de-la-varsovia-va-fi-validat-in-sedinta-csat.html, accesed on 27 June 2016.*

Infographic 1. Russian Military Equipment in occupied Crimea[10]

	Before Crimea was annexed (January 2014)	After Crimea was occupied (data for May 2016)	Russia`s plans for armaments in Crimea 2020-2025
Troops	12500	23900	43000
Tanks	0	30	100
Combat armored vehicles	92	583	1150
Artillery systems	24	162	400
Combat planes	22	101	150
Helicopters	37	56	95
Coastal missile systems	0	16	50
Surface ships	26	34	33
Submarines	2	4	7
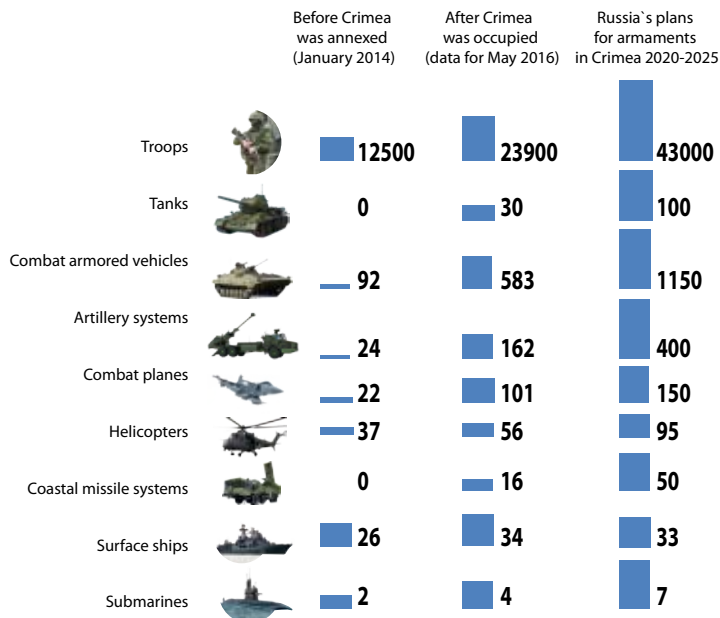
Romania is also involved in monitoring the security situation in Ukraine (41 observers were sent in the framework of the OSCE Mission in eastern Ukraine and a team leader in Chernivtsi).[11] In general, the mission consists of 709 persons; hence, the Romanian observers make up more than 5% of the total (see Graphic 1). This is a fairly high number, considering that Romania trails only the United States and Great Britain which have 62 and 44 observers, respectively.

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10   *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, June 2016, http://uacrisis.org/ua/43565-rozvidka-5. Accessed on 13 June 2016.*

11   *OSCE report, 8 June 2016. http://www.osce.org/ru/ukraine-smm/245376?download=true, accessed on 10 June 2016.*

Graphic 1. Romania is among the top three countries with the largest numbers of observers on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (number of observers)

USA	62
The United Kingdom	44
Romania	41
The Russian Federation	40
Germany	32
Poland	30
Bosnia and Herzegovina	30
Bulgaria	26
Hungary	26
Italy	24
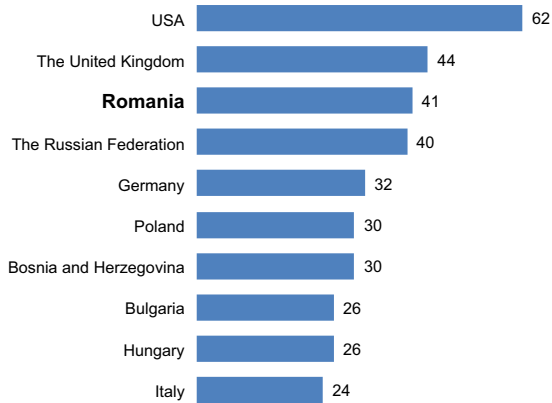
Romanian opinion makers still believe that Russia will relaunch the military offensive in eastern Ukraine in order to finalize the Novorossia project and reach the mouth of Danube, which may pose additional threats to Romania. Novorossia includes the Odesa region which borders on Romania.[12] Romania's concerns are also related to the fact that a large part of the Moldovan ethnic minority, often identified as Romanian in Romania, resides in this region. (It is the fourth largest minority in the Odesa region, and in some areas, such as the Reni district, Moldovans make up half of the population.) There is also an opinion in Bucharest that Russia's Syrian gamble may be a test of military capabilities for new operations in eastern Ukraine.[13]

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[12]   *Interview with ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergiu Celac.*

[13]   *Armand Gosu, senior lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest.*

Romania also takes into account that its interests may coincide with Ukraine's also with regard to the Republic of Moldova – both states want to see pro-European forces maintain their positions there. In the absence of pro-European reforms and because of fears of Russia's growing influence in Chisinau, there is a scenario in which Ukraine will be threatened by Russian proxies from Moldova. In this context, the Ukrainian authorities might be interested in the European transformation of Moldovan institutions. (Relevant efforts by both Romania and the EU in general are extremely important here.) .

In 2016, the Romanian authorities expressed regrets regarding political instability and the failure of various Moldovan institutions to implement pro-European reforms. Although Moldova signed the AA in a record time, the tempo and quality of implementation of its provisions is

A pro-Russian government in Moldova would put additional pressure on the precarious security of the Black Sea region, and Ukraine would be caught between two Russian fronts

questioned by both Brussels and EU capitals, including Bucharest. Moreover, the Moldovan government has not been able to secure a new agreement with the IMF or to access financial assistance provided by the European Union. Massive protests occurred in 2015 and 2016, and a 2016 poll shows that pro-Russian parties are favored by Moldovans.[14] A pro-Russian government in Moldova would put additional pressure on the precarious security of the Black Sea region, and Ukraine would be caught between two Russian fronts. Romania has a strategic partnership with Moldova based on "a legitimate interest to see the neighboring state on an irreversible path to European integration".[15]

For security reasons, Ukraine and Romania (and, no doubt, the Republic of Moldova) have similar concerns also about the Transnistrian threat. Since 1992 when the cease-fire agreement was signed, Romania has experienced a lack of trust towards Ukraine

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14   *Barometrul opiniei publice, April 2016, http://www.ipp.md/libview. php?l=ro&idc=156&id=773, accessed 26.05.2016.*

15   *Relaţii bilaterale. Republica MOLDOVA, http://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/1677#827, accesat la 31.03.2016.*

which, in Bucharest's perception, supported primarily Russia's proposals to solve the conflict. Moreover, the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to prevent the illegal activities of the separatist regime in Tiraspol were found to be insufficient. The situation changed after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the conflict in the Donbas. The Ukrainian authorities have decided to block those activities as a measure designed to prevent weapon shipments to the territory of Ukraine. Kyiv is also directly concerned with preventing a scenario that paves the way for a Russian plan to solve the conflict. Romania has a similar interest. The unclear situation of Transnistria is also a rational ground for the Romanian policy of coordination with Ukraine aimed at conflict settlement.[16]

The unclear situation of Transnistria is also a rational ground for the Romanian policy of coordination with Ukraine aimed at conflict settlement

2.2. SUPPORT OF THE EU SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA

Romania is one of the main supporters of the EU's sanctions imposed in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and military invasion of the Donbas. Back in 2014, the Romanian president asked for tough measures against Russia: "The situation in eastern Ukraine is proceeding in the direction of the Transnistrian scenario. It is obvious that Russia wants to consolidate the separatists positions in eastern Ukraine. Nobody says that Russia wants to annex eastern Ukraine. We should increase the level of sanctions just because Moscow should understand that the EU maintains its principles".[17]

Ukraine is also interested in Romania's stance to be one of the strongest backers of the Western sanctions imposed on Russia. In

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[16] *Interview with ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergiu Celac.*

[17] *Basescu cere la Bruxelles cresterea nivelului de sanctiuni impotriva Rusiei: Usor, domnul Putin o sa renunte la aroganta, http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/politic/ traian-basescu-conferinta-de-presa-inainte-de-plecarea-la-bruxelles-decla-ratiile-vor-fi-transmise-live-pe-stirileprotv-ro.html, accesat la 2.04.2016.*

this respect, the Ukrainian authorities can promote a new pro-Ukraine support (lobby) group comprising Romania, Poland, and the Baltic States.

Romania is not a major player in the EU and may not be directly involved in the process of solving the Donbas conflict. Bucharest has constantly advocated the extension of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia. Other approaches have been taken at the level of

The Ukrainian authorities can promote a new pro-Ukraine support (lobby) group comprising Romania, Poland, and the Baltic States

bilateral relations with Germany. During the two visits paid by Romania's incumbent president to Germany, the situation in Ukraine was on top of the agenda. Romania and Germany have a common agenda in Ukraine, and both states support the implementation of the Minsk Agreement.[18] Germany is Romania's top commercial partner. Bilateral trade between the two states has constantly increased during the period 2008-2014 (in 2015, German investments in Romania reached 5.14 billion euros).[19] Therefore, Germany is sensitive to the security threats faced by Romania.

Romania can also use its special relations with France in order to promote its security interests in the eastern neighborhood. The two countries concluded a Strategic Partnership in 2008. The Ukrainian issue was one of the main topics of the talks in 2015 when Klaus Iohannis paid a visit to Paris. The relations between Romania and France were reset in 2014. France is among the top five investing countries in Romania.[20]

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[18] *Presedintele Romaniei s-a intalnit cu cancelarul german. Iohannis: "Contam pe Germania pentru Schengen"; Merkel: "Nu promit", 26.02.2016, http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/politic/palatul-cotroceni-a-anuntat-programul-vizitei-lui-klaus-iohannis-la-berlin-presedintele-intrevederi-cu-gauck-si-merkel.html, accessed 29.03.2016.*

[19] *Relații bilaterale. Republica Federală Germania, Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, http://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/1704#815, accesed on 30.03.2016.*

[20] *Relații bilaterale Republica Franceza, Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, http://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/1702#813, accesat la 30.03.2016.*

Romania is also an important strategic partner of the USA. In May 2016, a U.S. ground-based missile defense system designed to provide a significant increase in NATO BMD capability was launched in Romania.[21]

Romania's strategic partnership with Poland can also be used to achieve its security interests in the eastern neighborhood. The two states are also united by the same perceptions of Russian revisionism. Both are located in the proximity of Russia's high-end military capabilities from Kaliningrad and Crimea. Cooperation in the Ukraine-Romania-Poland triangle could lead to the launch of regional security projects that would fully meet the challenges of the time as well as the ambitions of these countries.

Romania belongs to the group of the EU member states which not only consistently defend the sanctions policy towards Russia but also insist on its intensification

Romania belongs to the group of the EU member states which not only consistently defend the sanctions policy towards Russia but also insist on its intensification. In March 2016, Romania, jointly with Britain, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden, called on their colleagues in the EU to approve additional sanctions – the so-called "Savchenko list".[22]

Unlike Greece, which supports "dialogue with Russia", or Hungary, which opposes the "automatic extension" of sanctions, the highest leadership of Romania has repeatedly and clearly stated that although sanctions harm the Romanian economy, among others, the EU had to show that "no one can change international law and no one can hurt other European countries; therefore, this is the price that the European community has to pay".[23]

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[21] *Wales Summit Declaration, 2014, http://nato.mae.ro/en/local-news/771.*

[22] *"Five EU states seek sanctions against Russian officials over Savchenko", 9 March 2016, EUbusiness. http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/ukraine-russia.16vx/, accessed on 14 June 2016.*

[23] *PM Ponta: Romania affected by Russia sanctions, but must meet commitments, 12 September 2014. http://www.agerpres.ro/english/2014/09/12/pm-ponta-romania-affected-by-russia-sanctions-but-must-meet-commitments-13-48-59. Accessed 12.05.2016.*

2.3. PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING UKRAINE'S EU AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION, ASSISTANCE IN REFORMS

Ukraine's core interests regarding Romania consist in maintaining Bucharest's support for the European integration and NATO membership (or Ukraine's endeavor to enhance its relations with NATO). The first step to achieving these objectives is to maintain Romanian support for the cancellation of the EU visa regime for Ukrainian citizens. Romania belongs to the camp of the biggest supporters of a visa-free regime for Ukraine. Kyiv is also interested in getting Romanian support for the implementation of the AA.

Since its accession to NATO and the EU, Romania has been actively working to promote new objectives for its diplomacy. Bucharest is interested in assuming the role of a democracy promoter in the Black Sea region. The Romanian leadership proceeds from the fact that Romania's democratization experience can be of significant interest to the Euro-Atlantic community, particularly for the purpose of overcoming instability in the Black Sea: "As a reliable and predictable partner of NATO Romania remains an essential source of democracy and stability in this region. We will continue to be a source of security at the Eastern border of NATO and the EU".[24] This approach also explains Romania's policy to support transformation processes in Ukraine. Incidentally, parallels have often been drawn between the revolutionary removal of Viktor Yanukovych from power and the overthrow of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. (Euromaidan participants sometimes called the former president of Ukraine "Yanusescu".)

Bucharest is interested in assuming the role of a democracy promoter in the Black Sea region

However, Ukraine has benefited not so much from the revolutionary experience as from specific achievements in the security sector. At the NATO summit held in September 2014, Romania agreed to as-

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24 *Klaus Iohannis, la Munchen: Trebuie să trimitem mesajul "Suntem puternici şi uniţi, ne apărăm valorile şi principiile", 13.02.2016, http://stiri.tvr.ro/klaus-iohannis--la-munchen--trebuie-sa-trimitem-mesajul-suntem-puternici-si-uniti--ne-aparam-valorile-si-principiile_70728.html#sthash.1lz4dD8w.dpuf, accesat la 30.03.2016.*

sist Ukraine with the Cyber Defense reform.[25] Romania is considered the main NATO country responsible for the Trust Fund, which aims to solve problems in the cyberspace in Ukraine. Romania is viewed as an informal leader in this area among NATO members. Romanian policemen make up one-fifth of the cybersecurity unit in the Europol.[26] Incidentally, cybercrime is also well-known in Romania: Romanian hackers stole USD 1 billion from U.S. citizens in 2011 alone. One of the hackers even hacked the e-mail of former U.S. President George W. Bush. Since then, hundreds of Romanian police officers have taken appropriate training in the FBI in order to fight cybercrime.[27] Romania is now sharing its knowledge with Ukraine. Romania has decided to provide 250,000 euros in military technical assistance and to contribute 500,000 euros to the Ukraine-NATO Trust Fund for cybersecurity issues.

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Romania strongly supports the implementation of the AA by the Ukrainian authorities. The Romanian parliament was the first national assembly that ratified the Association Agreement signed between the EU and Ukraine. However, Romanian politicians are skeptical about Ukraine's capacities for reforms. Their skepticism is explained by the fact that Ukraine has a long history of failed reforms. High-ranking diplomats and officials describe Ukraine's political system and institutions as being characterized by widespread corruption and oligarchic control. The ongoing conflict in the

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25 *Traian Basescu, la finalul summit-ului NATO: Toate obiectivele au fost atinse. Romania va gazdui un comandament NATO, centru de antrenament naval la Marea Neagra si va fi natiune-cadru pentru siguranta cibernetica a Ucrainei, 5.09.2014, http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-18042680-live-text-traian-basescu-face-declaratii-doua-summit-ului-nato.htm, accessed on 3 March 2016.*

26 *Romania defending Ukraine's cyberspace, 13.05.2015. http://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/241889-romania-defending-ukraines-cyberspace, accessed on 12 June 2016.*

27 *Romania Turns Hacking Crisis Into Advantage, Helping Ukraine, Voice of America, 13 May 2015. http://www.voanews.com/content/romania-turns-hacking-crisis-into-advantage-helping-ukraine/2765654.html, accessed on 10 June 2016.*

Donbas will add additional obstacles to the process of reforms. The two unrecognized entities, "DNR" and "LNR", have the potential to block Ukraine's European path – "the Donbas has captured Ukraine". Battles among oligarchs, disputes between political actors in Kyiv, and the relative stability of the government are other issues feeding Bucharest's skepticism.

Romania has made a modest financial contribution to the process of reforms in Ukraine (the Assistance for Development Program and cross-border projects). Romanian funds are granted for scholarships, projects aimed at strengthening civil society, and institutional capacity building (grants for the National Guard of Ukraine). Romania has also provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine.[28]

Romania is also a modest contributor to the EU budget (1.08%). However, Bucharest was a constant supporter of the EU's frameworks for cooperation with its eastern neighbors (European Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership). Romania advocates the "more for more" principle.[29] Bucharest is interested in reconstructing the Eastern Partnership. Calin Ungur, adviser to the Romanian Prime Minister, recently stated: "The Association Agreements and visa liberalization decisions were two objectives with maximum traction. Nowadays, Eastern Partnership needs new instruments to stimulate the reforms in the associated countries".[30] Strange as it may sound today, the prospect of EU membership can be this kind of instrument.

Romania's main contribution to the process of reforms in Ukraine could be in the area of justice (as an expertise provider).

Romania's main contribution to the process of reforms in Ukraine could be in the area of justice

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[28]   *For 2014, the total amount was 463,000 euros, http://www.roaid.ro/page/regiunea-extinsa-a-marii-negre-75 .*

[29]   *'More for more' principle in action – EU rewards Moldova, Georgia and Armenia with €87 million to boost reforms, http://eap-csf.eu/en/news-events/news/more-for-more-principle-in-action-eu-rewards-moldova-georgia-and-armenia-with-%E2%82%AC87-million-to-boost-reforms/, accesat la 1.04.2016.*

[30]   *Călin Ungur, adviser on foreign policy for Dacian Ciolos, Romanian prime minister, Dezbatere: România – Pivotul Euroatlantic al regiunii, Fundația Univresitară a Mării Negre și New Strategy Center, Bucureti, 28.03.2016, București.*

After its accession to the EU, Romania has performed very well in building extremely efficient institutions and implementing anti-corruption provisions. Romania is now perceived as a very good performer when it comes to fighting corruption. In this regard, an action group for reforming the justice system with the support of Romania and the USA (Germany and Poland) could be useful for Ukraine. Head of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau Artem Sytnyk learned about the experience of his Romanian counterparts during a study trip to Bucharest.

The Association Agreement, especially its economic part, could help boost trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, while cooperation has left more to be desired until now. Romania's trade in goods and services with Ukraine has remained at low levels after 1991. Between January and September 2015, the turnover fell by about 42%.[31] According to the website of the Embassy of Ukraine in Romania, the main items of Ukrainian exports to Romania in January-September 2015 were ferrous metals, wood and wood products, as well as ores, slag, and ash, while Ukraine bought crops, fuel, oil, and oil products from Romania. Romanians are not quite interested in investing in Ukraine. The Bilateral Chamber of Trade did not have a significant level of activity in the past. Romania's economic relations with Ukraine have also been marred by the unsolved dossier of the Kryvyi Rih steel plant.

Ukrainian diplomats intend to find alternative markets for Ukrainian products that were subject of the embargo imposed by Moscow. Although Romania is a small market, its consumers have memories of goods produced during the communist era. Since 2014, a limited number of Ukrainian goods are sold in Romanian supermarkets. Romania is among ten biggest importers of the Ukrainian goods in the EU (see Graphic 2). On the other hand, there are no Ukrainian investments in Romania. Both Romanian authorities and companies are still skeptical when they are invited to cooperate with Ukrainian investors. The rather corrupt business environment in Ukraine is not attractive
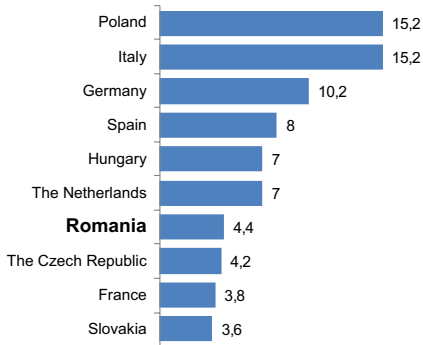
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[31] *Starea cooperării economico-comerciale şi a activităţii investiţionale dintre Ucraina şi România, http://romania.mfa.gov.ua/ro/ukraine-ro/trade, accesat la 13.04.2016.*

for Romanians. By contrast, Romania with its significant success in fighting corruption can be of interest to Ukrainian businesses.

Graphic 2. Top 10 EU countries importing Ukrainian goods in 2015

Country	Value
Poland	15,2
Italy	15,2
Germany	10,2
Spain	8
Hungary	7
The Netherlands	7
Romania	4,4
The Czech Republic	4,2
France	3,8
Slovakia	3,6

Source: *Institute of World Policy (infographics), May 23, 2016. http://iwp.org.ua/eng/public/2058.html*

The most important Romania-Ukraine bilateral economic projects are those implemented in the framework of cross-border cooperation. Those projects have been implemented since 1999 in the framework of Euroregions (which have also included multilateral partnerships with Hungary, Bulgaria, and Republic of Moldova). Those projects have facilitated access to European financing for both Romanian and Ukrainian local authorities.

Between 2007 and 2013, cross-border cooperation was supported with a total budget of 35 million euros through the Joint Operational Program Romania-Ukraine-Moldova. The program has six priority areas: sustainable development, environment, public safety, combatting organized crime, border management, and people-to-people activities.[32] For the 2014-2020 programming period, cross-border coopera-

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[32]   *Joint Operational Program ENPI-CBC 2007-2013, http://www.brctsuceava. ro/programe/programul-operational-comun-enpi-cbc-2007-2013/ro-ua-md. html , accessed on 16 May 2016.*

tion is financially supported through the Joint Operational Program Romania-Ukraine ENI with 26 million euros. The priorities are the development of business and SMEs, support for education and research, social inclusion, support for good governance, energy security, and border management.

Through cross-border projects, local authorities from both Romania and Ukraine have been encouraged to access additional sources of financing. However, numerous challenges were faced during the implementation process – malfunctions related to political instability in Moldova and Ukraine, the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, and the excessive centralization of political decisions at the level of central authorities. Other obstacles were related to the poor administrative capacity of the local and central authorities.[33]

Romania is interested in developing border cooperation, above all, in order to support the large Romanian community residing in the border area. The Romanian and Ukrainian authorities have often been at odds regarding the issue of minority rights until 2014. The issue of the Romanian minority's rights was on the agenda of President Poroshenko's visit to Bucharest in 2016. The two decision makers have agreed on the resumption of the activities of the Romanian-Ukrainian Governmental Commission for ethnic minorities after a 10-year hiatus.

2.4. ENERGY SECURITY. REVERSE DELIVERY OF NATURAL GAS

Romania has the third largest natural gas reserves in the European Union.[34] Romania imports 15% of the gas it consumes from Russia (85% of its demand is met by domestic production). Meanwhile, Romania is the leading EU country (from among those that are forced
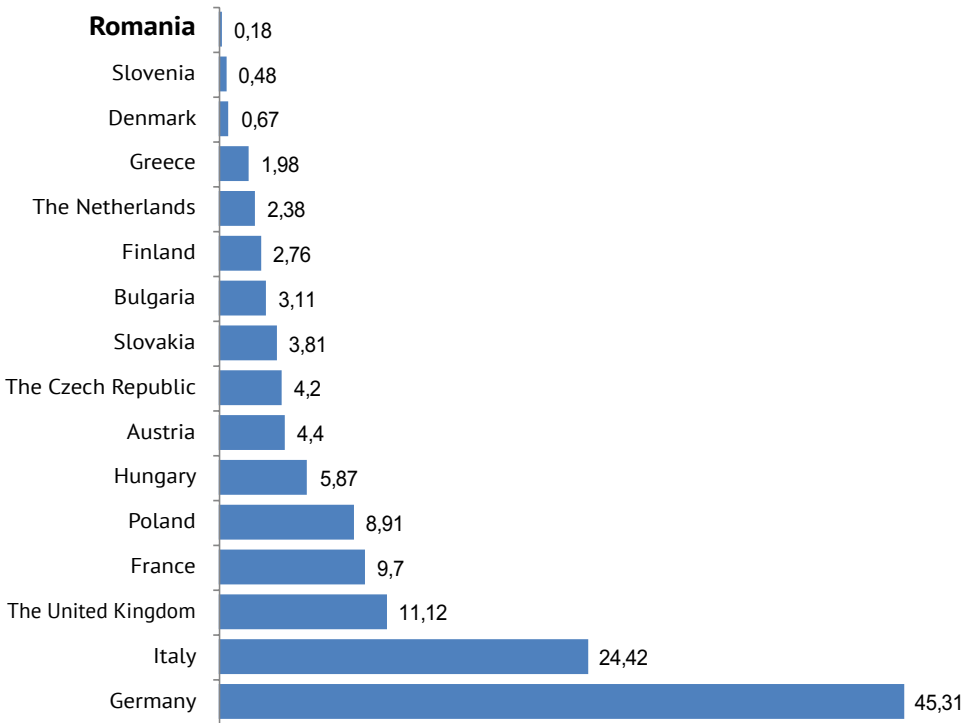
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[33] *Iordan Gheorghe Bărbulescu (coord), Mircea Brie, Nicolae Toderas, Cooperarea transfrontalieră între România şi Ucraina, respectiv între România şi Republica Moldova. Oportunităţi şi provocări în perioada 2014-2020, 2016, http://www.ier.ro/publicatii.html, accesat la 27.05.2016.*

[34] *Europe's energy position past & future, https://www.energy.eu/publications/KOAE09001_002.pdf, accessed on 7 May 2016.*

to buy gas from Russia) in terms of independence from Gazprom supplies (see Graphic 3). Statistics about gas dependence are largely correlated with the political behavior of a country and its evaluation of Russian aggression against Ukraine. Thus, Romania's energy independence can be an additional factor for placing this country among the logical partners of Ukraine.

Graphic 3. Dependence on Gazprom in the EU[35] (billion m³)

Country	Value
Romania	0,18
Slovenia	0,48
Denmark	0,67
Greece	1,98
The Netherlands	2,38
Finland	2,76
Bulgaria	3,11
Slovakia	3,81
The Czech Republic	4,2
Austria	4,4
Hungary	5,87
Poland	8,91
France	9,7
The United Kingdom	11,12
Italy	24,42
Germany	45,31

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[35] *Gas supplies to Europe, Gazprom Export. The company's list, available on its website, excludes Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. http://www.gazpromexport. ru/en/statistics/, accessed on 12 June 2016.*

Ukraine counts on reverse gas supplies from Romania. However, Romanian companies still do not have such capacities due to a lack of gas export capacity (and until recently, also an actual export ban). The situation can change, because in June 2016 the European Commission applied antitrust law against Romanian gas companies that did not export natural gas to other member states. Obviously, the liberalization of the gas market can also ultimately allow Ukraine to buy Romanian gas. However, the antitrust procedures of European Commission may take a long time.

Ukraine has also offered Romania to build interconnectors between the gas transportation systems of the two countries. In Romania, the consumption of own natural gas is falling, and the country lacks storage facilities. The Ukrainian proposal may turn out to be quite interesting to the Romanian side. Currently, the groundwork for signing the respective agreement is being done. Such a deal would be beneficial for Romania in defending its position before the inspectors checking its companies for compliance with antitrust law – it would show Bucharest's commitment to changing the rules on the gas market.

3. WHO IS WHO?
INTERESTED PARTIES AND GROUPS OF INFLUENCE

3.1. PERCEPTIONS

Perceptions inherited from the Soviet period and promoted by the Russian media after 1991 have created the image of an "imperialist" Romania that intends to recover the territories ceded to the Soviet Union in 1940. These perceptions were widely shared by Ukrainian politicians and ordinary citizens. For an average Romanian citizen, Ukraine was just a shadow of Russia which posed security threats to Romania. Ukraine is not a tourist destination for Romanians who prefer Turkey or EU countries. Romania is not among the tourist destinations of Ukrainians.

Romanian minorities from Ukraine and Ukrainian minorities living in Romania are the two factors that ensure constant interaction between the two states. Moreover, the majority of Romanian academics and experts have focused their work on Romania's relations with the EU and NATO member states, so Romania is experiencing a lack of expertise on Ukraine. The Institute of World Policy is one of the few think tanks to start building bridges between the civil societies of both countries back in 2012 when the First Romanian-Ukrainian Forum was held in Bucharest.[36] The Second Forum was held in Kyiv, symbolically, against the backdrop of the Revolution of Dignity.[37]

Romanian minorities from Ukraine and Ukrainian minorities living in Romania are the two factors that ensure constant interaction between the two states

Overall, contacts among civil society entities from the two states have been limited to dialogue with the activists who promote the rights of Romanian minorities living in Ukraine. Furthermore, mutual distrust is fed by media messages derived from ill-informed accounts on the ground: "Unfortunately, there are no Romanian

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[36] *Photo report from the First Romanian-Ukrainian Forum, Bucharest, May 2012. http://iwp.org.ua/ukr/public/546.html, Accessed on 12 June 2016.*

[37] *IWP held the Second Ukraine-Romania Forum, 24 January 2014. http://iwp. org.ua/ukr/public/962.html, accessed on 12 June 2016.*

journalists specializing in political and social developments in the post-Soviet space. In 2014, only a small number of journalists had the necessary financial resources to document the events in Kyiv or Donbas. The experts invited to talk about Ukraine on TV shows have a large area of expertise in the field of international relations. Most of them are invited just because the public already knows them".[38]

The events of 2014 produced the first shifts in mentalities. Romanians perceived Ukraine as a victim of Russian aggression. However, according to a 2015 poll, 48% of Romanians said that they had "negative feelings towards Ukraine", while 41% mentioned "positive feelings" (see Graphic 4).[39] Ukraine is still a state divided between pro-EU and pro-Russia options for Romanian decision makers: "It is difficult to cut Ukraine off from Russia. Ukrainians have a poor European identity and share 'blood relations' with Moscow".[40] Moreover, the predictions about Ukraine's future are pessimistic, because there is an opinion that "Russia will decide the fate of the Ukraine".

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[38]   *Interview with Matei Dobrovie, a journalist specializing in foreign policy.*

[39]   *Barometrul INSCOP- Adevărul despre România, Simpatie tări-conflictul din Ucraina, http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/INSCOP-02.2014-Simpatie-tari-si-situatia-din-Ucraina.pdf, accesat la 2.04.2016.*

[40]   *Interview with a former high-ranking Romanian official.*

Graphic 4. What emotions do countries evoke in Romanians?[41]

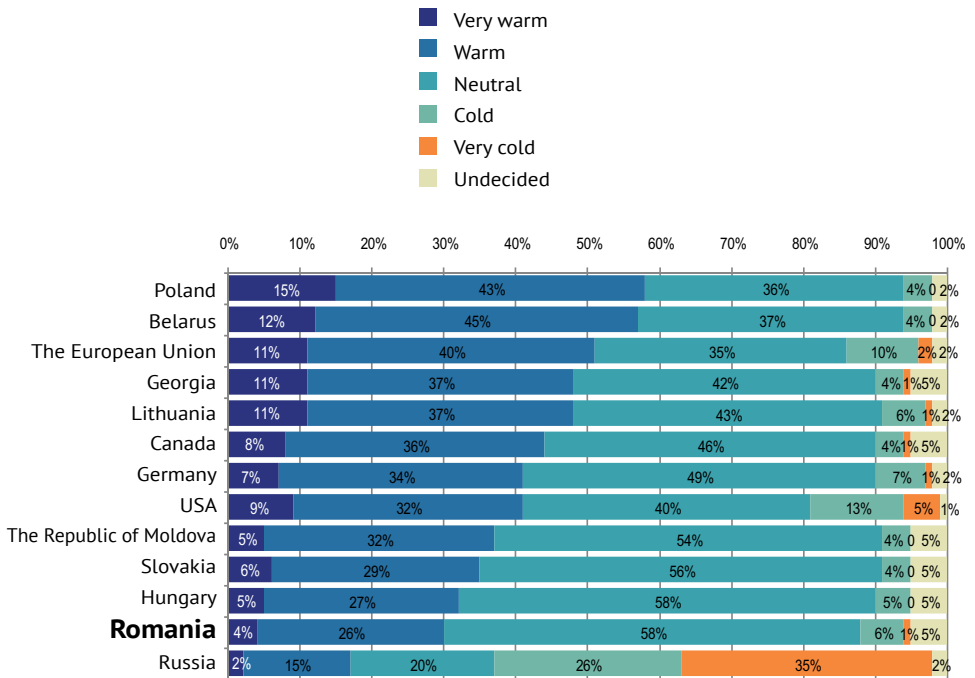|	rather positive	rather negative	difficult to answer
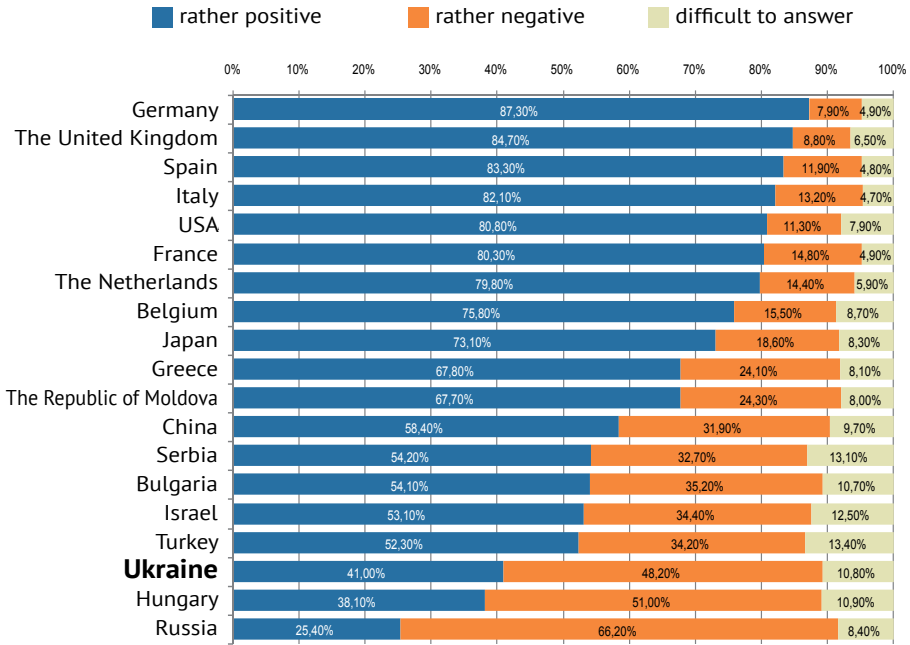
Ukrainians have similar perceptions of Romanians (see Graphic 5).[42] Romania's reaction to the events of 2014 and the rejection of Russian invitations to take part in the territorial division of Ukraine have raised hope that the two countries will move in the direction of mutual understanding and accurate perceptions. The improvement of Romania's image in Ukraine is also due to the Romanian assistance in treating soldiers who were injured in the counter-terrorist operation.

Graphic 5. The attitude of Ukrainians to other countries (September, 2015)

- ■ Very warm
- ■ Warm
- ■ Neutral
- ■ Cold
- ■ Very cold
- ■ Undecided

Country	Very warm	Warm	Neutral	Cold	Very cold	Undecided
Poland	15%	43%	36%	4%	0	2%
Belarus	12%	45%	37%	4%	0	2%
The European Union	11%	40%	35%	10%	2%	2%
Georgia	11%	37%	42%	4%	1%	5%
Lithuania	11%	37%	43%	6%	1%	2%
Canada	8%	36%	46%	4%	1%	5%
Germany	7%	34%	49%	7%	1%	2%
USA	9%	32%	40%	13%	5%	1%
The Republic of Moldova	5%	32%	54%	4%	0	5%
Slovakia	6%	29%	56%	4%	0	5%
Hungary	5%	27%	58%	5%	0	5%
Romania	4%	26%	58%	6%	1%	5%
Russia	2%	15%	20%	26%	35%	2%

3.2. ROMANIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND UKRAINE

Romanian political parties do not pay particular attention to foreign issues when they draw up their electoral programs. The directions of Romania's foreign policy are laid down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Administration. The lack of interest of the political parties in Romania's foreign policy is also explained by the large consensus that Romanian society shares regarding the country's pro-European orientation. Furthermore, the topics of domestic policy are those which attract public interest.

However, since 2008 the situation of the Romanian communities living aboard has become a topic of debate during electoral campaigns

and Romanian citizens residing abroad have been represented in the Romanian Parliament. Ethnic Romanians living in Ukraine are represented in both chambers of the parliament.

References to Ukraine's deteriorating security were made by the two main candidates who ran for president in 2014. The electoral programs of the main presidential candidates in 2014 contained references to the situation in Ukraine. Iohannis and Victor Ponta had similar views regarding Russia's actions in Ukraine. Iohannis' platform[43] mentioned that the crisis over Ukraine changed the geopolitical situation of the Black Sea region. Romania faces the most serious security challenges since the end of the Cold War. Ponta[44] assessed Russia's actions in Ukraine as a big security risk for Romania.

3.3. UKRAINIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE ROMANIAN PARLIAMENT. UKRAINIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA AND ROMANIAN MINORITY IN UKRAINE

According to the last census conducted in 2011, there are 52,000 ethnic Ukrainians in Romania.[45] They live in Maramures and Bukovina regions near the borders with Ukraine. A total of 19 national minorities are represented in the Romanian parliament. Since 1990, Romanian law has included provisions regarding the representation of national

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43   *Klaus Iohnnis România lucrului bine făcut, http://www.iohannispresedinte.ro/ files/userfiles/Program-prezidential.pdf, accessed on 15 November 2014.*

44   *Victor Ponta: Federaţia Rusă reprezintă pentru România cel mai mare risc de securitate, Evenimentul zilei, http://www.evz.ro/victor-ponta-federatia-rusa-reprezinta-pentru-romania-cel-mai-mare-risc-de-securitate.html, 10.11.2014, accessed on 12 November 2014. Victor Ponta preşedinte, http://victorponta. ro/materiale/program-prezidential-victor-ponta.pdf, accessed on 15 November 2014.*

45   *http://multicult.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Ite mid=188&lang=ro 28 , accessed on 12 May 2016.*

minorities.[46] The representation is secured through a system of reserved seats – "ex officio" (1 seat for each government-recognized minority) regardless of the number of votes achieved. The candidates are nominated by the organizations that promote the rights of the Ukrainian minority. Only the organizations represented in the Council of National Minorities can nominate candidates. These organizations are registered as non-governmental organizations with the special status of political parties. The representation of minorities in the Romanian parliament is mainly symbolic. The votes of the MPs representing ethnic minorities are of importance only to minority governments.

The Ukrainian minority is also represented at the local level in the cities and villages where this minority accounts for a large share of the total population. There are no special legislative provisions for the minority representation at the local level. According to the statements of President Iohannis, the amount allotted by the Romanian state for the promotion of the rights of the Ukrainian minority rights is 1.6 million euros per year.[47] Romanian political parties do not pay special attention to the situation of the Ukrainian minority, because this issue is considered to be a task assigned to NGOs representing the minority. In its turn, the issue of the Romanian minority in Ukraine has been highly sensitive for the bilateral relations.

ROMANIAN APPROACH

After 1991, both central and local Ukrainian authorities have promoted the Soviet artificial division of the Romanian minority between ethnic Romanians and Moldovans. The Romanian authorities have

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[46] *Decretul lege nr 92/1990 pentru alegerea parlamentului și a președintelui României, art. 4, http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gy4dsojy/decretul-lege-nr-92-1990-pentru-alegerea-parlamentului-si-a-presedintelui-romaniei,   accesat   la 19.05.2016. Constituția României, art 62, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page ?den=act2_1&par1=3#t3c1s1sba62, accesat la 19.05.2016.*

[47] *Declarația de presă comună a președintelui României, domnul Klaus Iohannis, cu președintele Ucrainei, domnul Petro Poroșenko, 21.04.2016, http://www. presidency.ro/ro/media/declaratii-de-presa/declaratie-de-presa-comuna-cu-presedintele-ucrainei-domnul-petro-porosenko, accesat la 24.05.2016.*

constantly criticized these practices. Furthermore, the number of Romanian-language schools has dropped steadily. On the one hand, this was a general trend in Ukraine. On the other hand, Ukrainian authorities and parents have discouraged education in Romanian. The Ukrainian authorities have been reluctant to encourage Romanian language studies to avoid putting additional pressure on the multiethnic character of Ukrainian state. Parents thought that Romanian language studies would not be the best investment in the future.

The Romanian and Ukrainian authorities have also been at odds with Romania's decision to grant Romanian citizenship to those whose ancestors kept it during the interwar period and were deprived of it without consent. According to the provisions of Ukraine's Constitution (Article 4) "There shall be a single form of citizenship in Ukraine". Furthermore, in accordance with the Law on the Citizenship of Ukraine (Article 2.1), "If a citizen of Ukraine has acquired the citizenship of (allegiance to) another state or more than one other state, this person shall be treated only as a citizen of Ukraine in legal relations with Ukraine". The Romanian authorities refused to make public the real number of citizenship holders fearing pressure from the Ukrainian secret services. The Ukrainian authorities suspected that the decision would feed territorial claims from Romania. The issue was further politicized by fears that Moscow would promote similar policies. Since 2014, the issue of Romanian citizenship was not mentioned in official talks. The attractiveness of Romanian citizenship is due to the opportunity it offers for employment in Western EU countries and not to nationalist aspirations or patriotic feelings. The deteriorating security of Ukraine is an additional factor. A weak attachment to Romanian culture is manifested by ethnic Romanians living in the Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions in Ukraine.

Ethnic Romanians (typical of the Odesa region) are also perceived with suspicion by the Ukrainian authorities because of their Russophile cultural sympathies. Russian propaganda, nostalgia for the USSR, and Ukraine's poor economic performance are the main factors that explain this emotional adhesion. Another factor that should be mentioned is that the churches frequented by the Romanian minority are subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Romanian community is very divided and the lack of cohesion is not only the result of policies promoted by the Ukrainian authorities. Bucharest has distributed limited financial resources for its diaspora since 1991. Moreover, most of these resources have been spent almost exclusively to promote the "emotional" relationship with Romania. Most of the activities have consisted of folk festivals and publications focused on historical themes. However, "the idea of preserving Romanian culture is outdated. There is a real need for European projects and trainings".[48] Furthermore, fierce competition to be in favor with Bucharest has appeared between various local leaders of the Romanian community. The Romanian community has also failed to promote a generation change at the level of leadership: "I wanted to organize a meeting with ethnic Romanian students at the Chernivtsi University. The event was attended by a young woman calling herself ethnic Moldovan and 34 Ukrainians. Those young people have only scarce knowledge about Romania… For them, it is very difficult to make judgments about Romania just because the years ago they were told that Romania wanted to occupy Ukraine".[49]

The local authorities in Ukraine continue to describe Romania as Ukraine's enemy. Local government executives from the regions inhabited by ethnic Romanians still reject Romanian projects, including social initiatives. Furthermore, bureaucracies in both countries are not very effective in implementing the provisions of concluded agreements.

Today, the Romanian community in Ukraine needs European investments in road infrastructure. Common projects in this area could be a start-up contribution aimed at facilitating contacts between the two countries. They can also raise awareness in the Romanian minority about both Romania and the EU.

New dialogue can be launched by involving a young generation of the Romanian minority, experts, and civil servants from both Romania and Ukraine.

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[48] *Interview with Sergiu Dan, president of Asociatia Convergente Europene.*

[49] *Ibid.*

UKRAINIAN APPROACH

Representatives of the Ukrainian authorities have spoken against imposing identity on ethnic minorities. Those who identify themselves as Moldovans are hostile to any initiatives that come from the government of Romania. Ukraine cannot force an ethnic minority to identify itself differently than it identifies itself. The phenomenon of precisely "Moldovan identity" is not unique to Ukraine, which Romania suspected of a pro-Russian approach, but to Moldova itself, which has close relations with Bucharest. The Odesa region, home to a significant part of the minority identifying itself as Moldovan, is a multinational region. Ukrainians are a minority in many settlements, and there are areas where tensions are between the ethnic minorities themselves rather than between Ukrainians and ethnic minorities. For example, there are known cases of such tensions between the Moldovan/Romanian and Bulgarian minorities. Now this affects the process of decentralization as some minorities are reluctant to give up their rights to other minorities, referring to historical grievances.[50] External intervention in ethnic issues (particularly from the Romanian government) may upset the delicate balance in the region, especially at the background of a hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation. Aggravation of such issues could lead to new sources of security instability. Romania would do well to stop its pressure in this area, at least until the security situation becomes more predictable. (Moreover, Bucharest realizes that Moscow has not abandoned the Novorossia project.) The same applies to the issue of dual citizenship. The Russian Federation can launch a campaign of sweeping passportization in the region to eventually trigger a new phase of "protecting compatriots".

It is also important to realize that the Romanian government cannot demand different policy than Romania itself implements on ethnic minorities. Thus, the analysts Drago Dinu and Octavian Milewski (Romania) point out that Romanian politicians criticized the Ukrainian parliament in February 2014 for a possible repeal of the law on regional languages, "even though Romania does not extend the

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50   *Henova, Yevhenia. "Detsentralizatsiia v Bessarabii: yaki novi zahrozy?", 9 June 2016. http://day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/podrobyci/decentralizaciya-v-bessarabiyi-yaki-zagrozy, accessed on 14 June 2016.*

same rights to the Ukrainian minority living in its territory or any ethnic minority in Romania, for that matter".[51]

3.4. "FRIENDS OF UKRAINE" IN ROMANIAN POLITICS

Although there is a general lack of knowledge about Ukraine, Romania is developing its expertise and is currently having interested actors at all levels. First of all, one should mention officials and former officials that have a genuine interest in sharing their expertise and experience, but also in following events in Ukraine. Perhaps one of the most widely known in narrow circles is Bogdan Aurescu, former minister of foreign affairs and current adviser on foreign relations to the President of Romania. In Ukraine, Aurescu is mainly known because of his leading role in making the case for the Snake Island. Another public figure connected with the presidency (serving for former president Traian Basescu) is Iulian Chifu, a fierce critic of Russian aggression in Ukraine who writes about Ukraine on a permanent basis. Russia has put him on the black list, prohibiting him from entering the state.

Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos has Cristian Ghinea, an adviser on European affairs who has been extensively interested in Ukraine since heading a leading Romanian think tank. His Center co-partnered with the IWP in organizing the Ukrainian-Romanian civil society forum in 2012 and 2014. Another former official often raises the issue of Ukraine in Romania is Armand Gosu, who served as an adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2010-2012. Moreover, nearly all former foreign ministers are quite sensitive about Ukraine. For instance, former minister Teodor Baconschi was present at the Ukraine-Romania civil society forum. Sergiu Celac, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs in the post-Ceauseascu Romania, has also shown similarly high interest in Ukraine. A very important public figure that has a say on Romania's policies towards the Republic of Moldova

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[51] *Dinu Dragos, Milewski Octavian, Strenghening Cooperation on the Romanian Minority Issue in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine, http://www.crpe.ro/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Policy-Brief-38-Romania-Ukraine-Cooperation-on-minority-issue-post-Euromaidan.pdf, accessed on 16 June 2016.*

and Ukraine is Dan Dungaciu, a powerful academic and thinker. The same is true of the MPs from the Romanian parliament and Romanian MEPs.

Overall, the Romanian political elite is quite sensitive about Ukraine, with some critics who are mostly concerned with the pace of reforms in Kyiv. Particularly interesting is the fact there is few media outlets systematically covering Ukraine. However, one could single out the Dilema Veche, Revista 22, The Epoch Times, Evenimentul Zilei, Adevarul, etc. Among the TV channels that are broadly focused on domestic issues, the most active one is Digi24. Its journalist Alina Matis often raises issues related to regional security.

The Romanian political elite is quite sensitive about Ukraine, with some critics who are mostly concerned with the pace of reforms in Kyiv

Remarkably, civil society organizations are quite interested in Ukraine. Most of the NGOs used to focus initially on the Republic of Moldova but then developed their ties with Ukrainian counterparts, especially after the Revolution of Dignity. Such foundations such as GMF Bucharest office headed by Alina Inaeh and the Foundation for the Development for Civil Society are classic civil society stakeholders interested in Ukraine.

4. EXISTING RISKS AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

4.1. NEW DISPUTES RELATED TO THE RIGHTS OF THE ROMANIAN MINORITY

Romanian authorities have criticized the decision of Ukrainian parliament to repeal the law granting regional rights to minority languages.

Probability   *Low to medium*. There is a risk that nationalist discourse will reemerge during the campaign for the parliamentary elections in Romania.

How to avoid?   The nationalist voices from both countries should be marginalized in the public discourse. Ukraine needs to implement platforms for dialogue at all levels – public, parliamentary, and governmental – to prevent any manipulations of information and demonstrate the absence of any threat to ethnic minorities in Ukraine. Existing problems need to be solved through the mediation of international organizations (Council of Europe, OSCE).

4.2. INTEREST IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WILL FADE

Probability   *Medium*. The Romanian authorities are skeptical about Ukraine's capacity to conduct reforms. Ukrainians will focus their efforts on the Donbas conflict and new negotiations with the EU and the IMF for additional funding. The bilateral agenda will evolve in the pattern of low diplomatic interaction.

How to avoid?   Romania should make use of its presidency in the European Council (second half of 2019) to put issues it shares with Ukraine on the EU agenda. Both states should engage in an active process of socialization through the Governmental and Presidential Commission. The National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine

should be more active in adopting the experience of the Romania's National Directorate for Combatting Corruption. Bilateral cooperation can thus be filled with success stories, dispelling old suspicions.

4.3. STABILIZATION WILL CAUSE THE NEGLECT OF UKRAINE

The conflict in eastern Ukraine will evolve into a Transnistrian scenario. A gray area with relative stability, controlled by the Russia politically and military, will be established.

Probability   *Low to medium*. Even the increasingly Transnistrian nature of the conflict will not reduce the threat emanating from Russia. Romania, Poland, and the Baltic States have a real interest in limiting Russia's claims on Ukraine's territory and Moscow's influence on their borders.

How to avoid? The Ukrainian authorities should organize an international campaign to raise awareness of the risks of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Romania, Poland, and the Baltic states could create a group of support for Ukraine.

4.4. THE PROBLEMS OF THE EU ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN UKRAINE

Probability   *High*. The EU now faces at least five problems: refugee crisis, terrorist attacks, possible Brexit, authoritarian tendencies, and new economic problems in Greece.

How to avoid? Ukraine has limited abilities to reduce this risk. However, both Romania and Ukraine can make proposals aimed at reconstructing the Eastern Partnership. Ukraine should show dramatic results of reforms in order to turn from "another problem of Europe" into the first success story in a series of constant crises.

4.5. SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA WILL FAIL IN THE LONG RUN

The process of consensus building was very difficult.

Probability   *Medium.* The leaders of many German enterprises strongly reject the extension of the sanctions. Greece and Hungary are flirting with the idea of lifting the sanctions.

How to avoid? Ukraine should provide the international community with regular accounts of the gross violations committed by the Russian Federation in the Donbas and Crimea. Ukraine may involve Romania and other EU partners to assist Ukraine in its endeavor.

4.6. THE PROCESS OF REFORM WILL FAIL

Probability   *Medium.* Experts have already express concerns over the oligarchs' efforts to delay or block the indispensable justice and economic reforms in Ukraine.

How to avoid? Romania should lobby in Brussels for more pressure on the new Ukrainian government in order to prevent any rollback of reforms. Ukrainian civil society activists should press the Ukrainian government to accept Romanian advisory groups to assist Ukraine in its endeavor to fight corruption.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Relations between Ukraine and Romania, despite the recent improvement, still need to be developed, especially by solving the most pressing issues on the bilateral agenda. While Russian aggression in Ukraine has re-energized Kyiv-Bucharest relations, it should be acknowledged that relations driven by a common threat could not last long and be efficient. Therefore, it is important to explore new avenues of cooperation between the two states, so that their bilateral relations are fully independent of Russian factor. To this end, a series of recommendations could be considered:

1. SAFETY AND CYBERSECURITY. Ukraine should actively participate in Romania's security initiatives. It is important to maintain dialogue on the creation of the Black Sea flotilla which would include at least one Ukrainian ship and a military brigade jointly with Romania and Bulgaria (following the example of a similar brigade formed with Poland and Lithuania). Meanwhile, Sofia might become a weak link in these strategic calculations. Participate in military exercises aimed at fighting in the conditions of a hybrid war and overcoming external threats. Adopt experience in cybersecurity.

2. UKRAINE-POLAND-ROMANIA TRIANGLE. Promote Romania's regional initiatives on coordinating efforts in foreign policy, particularly establishing the Ukraine-Poland-Romania triangle. This project is likely to move slowly due to bilateral misunderstandings between Kyiv and Warsaw.

3. EXPERIENCE OF REFORMS. Maintain close sectoral contact with Romania, particularly in combatting corruption. Organize active exchange of experience between Ukrainian and Romanian agencies for fighting corruption under the aegis of the EU.

4. ENERGY SECURITY. Implement mutually beneficial projects in the energy sector. Continue dialogue (learn the technical capacities) on the reverse delivery of Romanian gas to Ukraine as a priority project.

5. SETTLEMENT BY ARBITRATION. Resolve existing problems in bilateral relations in the spirit of partnership as much as possible. If an understanding cannot be achieved, involve third parties, such as arbitration and international organizations (OSCE and the Council of Europe).

6. MINORITIES. Ukraine should ensure the necessary conditions for promoting the cultural rights of the Romanian minority. The activities of the Ukrainian side cannot be less than those implemented by the Romanian side regarding the Ukrainian minority. All misunderstandings should be resolved with the involvement of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

7. NOT BY PRESIDENTS ALONE. Support the development of dialogue at different levels – not just between the presidents and governments, but also and especially at the parliamentary and civil society level. The two states should financially support conferences, workshops, and business aimed at facilitating mutual contacts.

8. CONDITIONS FOR TRADE. Both countries should focus their efforts on creating favorable conditions for the development of economic cooperation. Success in combatting corruption (using Romanian experience) could also encourage investors from Romania to enter the Ukrainian market. A series of business forums should take place between the two states in order to enhance economic cooperation at the level of SMEs.

9. MOLDOVAN FACTOR. Deepen cooperation with the Republic of Moldova and Romania to exchange views on reforming and preparing new ideas to strengthen the Eastern Partnership project.

10. TRANSNISTRIAN FACTOR. Continue dialogue regarding Transnistria settlement in the context of a common interest to limit Russia's influence on the security situation in the region. Consider the creative approach of jointly ensuring the security of Moldovan air space provided that Chisinau agrees to this.

11. TRANSPORT CONNECTION. Contribute to solving transport connection problems, in particular regarding the launch of Kyiv-Bucharest flights.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS