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UKRAINIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS AT THE BACKGROUND OF RUSSIA'S REVISIONIST POLICY

The purpose of this article is to analyse relations between Ukraine and Romania in the post-communist period. It provides a deep insight into the evolution of these relations in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

The study gives a general overview of the bilateral relations between the two neighbouring countries since the collapse of USSR and restoration of Ukraine's independence in 1991, focusing on a wide range of irritants both great and small.

Further, the research highlights turbulent relations between Kyiv and Bucharest from the historical and socio-cultural perspective.

Another neuralgic issue analysed in this paper is Russian illegal annexation of the Crimea and its aggression against Ukraine, which not only destabilised the security balance in the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East by establishing a large anti-access/area-denial exclusion zone but also caused the greatest threat to the national security of Romania. In fact, with Russia being its direct maritime neighbour Romania cannot cope with this threat alone.

Furthermore, the study shows that Russian aggression against Ukraine resulted in intensifying rapprochement between Ukraine and Romania since 2014. Subsequently, Romania condemned the Kremlin's aggression and became one of the Ukraine's advocates within the international organisations like the EU, NATO, and the UN.

Finally, it is also noteworthy that summit meetings between Kyiv and Bucharest reveal the new phase in their bilateral relations based on the "security first" approach.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Romania, Russia, Black Sea, the EU, NATO, history, foreign policy, security.*

УКРАЇНСЬКО-РУМУНСЬКІ ВІДНОСИНИ В КОНТЕКСТІ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ РЕВІЗІОНІСТСЬКОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ

Стаття присвячена дослідженню відносин між Україною й Румунією в пост-комуністичний період. Здійснюється аналіз еволюції цих взаємин у контексті агресії Росії проти України.

Подається узагальнюючий огляд двосторонніх відносин між сусідніми країнами починаючи з розпаду СРСР і відновлення незалежності України в 1991 році з акцентом на широкому спектрі проблемних питань.

У статті висвітлюються контрверсійні взаємини між Києвом та Бухарестом з історичного та соціокультурного поглядів.

Іншим важливим питанням, що аналізується, є незаконна окупація Криму Росією та її агресія проти України, внаслідок якої не лише порушено баланс сил у регіонах Чорного, Середземного морів і Близького Сходу, а й зросла загроза національній безпеці Румунії. По суті, маючи Росію своїм прямим морським сусідом, Румунія не може впоратись із цією загрозою самотужки.

Більше того, дослідження показує, що агресія Росії проти України призвела до зближення між Україною й Румунією починаючи з 2014 року. Румунія засудила агресію Кремля й стала одним із адвокатів України в міжнародних організаціях, зокрема в ЄС, НАТО та ООН.

Також слід відзначити, що зустрічі на найвищому рівні між Києвом і Бухарестом розкривають новий етап двосторонніх відносин на основі підходу «безпека насамперед».

Ключові слова: Україна, Румунія, Росія, Чорне море, ЄС, НАТО, історія, зовнішня політика, безпека.

Russian violation of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty is the gravest challenge to the European order in over half a century¹ and serves as an essential precondition for gauging relations between Ukraine and its direct neighbours.

This article aims to reveal Ukrainian-Romanian relations in historical perspective, explore new avenues of cooperation between the two states and analyse the prospects for sustainable dealings in future. It also focuses on the

impact of Russian illegal annexation of the Crimea and its active support of the secessionist enclaves in South-Eastern Ukraine on both countries.

This research is propped up by the works of Anghel V., Dobrjanskyi O., Gerasymchuk S., Kotyk V., Matiychyk Y., Racheru I., Rendiuk T., Solodkyy S. and Veselova V.

Special attention is given to the studies on Romanian foreign policy and Ukrainian-Romanian relations under the supervision of Vidnyanskyi S., Chief of the Department of International Relations and Foreign Policy of Ukraine of the Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

The relations between Ukraine and Romania from the restoration of Ukraine's independence until 2014 were troubled with a wide range of controversial issues and political tensions even though the parties' assured each other of their readiness "to strengthen good-neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations".

Romania was one of the first countries that recognised Ukraine as an independent state and established diplomatic relations with it in 1992. Yet, Romania was one of the last neighbouring countries to formalise the frontier with Ukraine. In 2009, the International Court of Justice in the Hague (ICJ) settled final territorial disputes between Ukraine and Romania². A deeper retrospective analysis of bilateral relations lies beyond the scope of this research, which mainly focuses on the most sensitive and troublesome issues between the two countries.

*Generally, for better understanding turbulent relations between Kyiv and Bucharest they should be analysed from the historical and socio-cultural perspective*³. From the interviews given by Gerasymchuk S. in Bucharest, and according to the opinion of the Romanian historians, we may conclude that the shared history of membership in the same communist bloc did not favour mutual trust between the states. Moreover, Romania looked at Ukraine as a former Soviet Union state, which had close relations with Russia. Therefore Kyiv was perceived through the Moscow's prism, which added further venom to great and small irritants between the countries.

From the historical perspective, political legacy has determined relations between the two states. For example, collective memory about the Second World War has a great influence on both nations. At the beginning of the war, the countries were fighting on different sides. Romania sided with the Nazi Germany in the War, while Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union.

The Siege of Odessa (1941) is still considered by many historians and its citizens as one of the most dramatic military operations ever launched in

Ukraine during the Second World War. This operation was executed by the Romanian Government under the pressure of the Nazi Germany. It took the Romanian army three months to occupy the city. The period between 6 August and 16 October 1941 saw widespread loss of life. In certain local publications, Romanians are still perceived as Nazis — this being also the outcome of an intensive local campaign supported by the pro-Russian regime of the former Ukrainian president Victor Yanukovich, as confirmed by the interviews given by the experts in the rights of minorities to the Ukrainian and Romanian researchers in Kyiv⁴.

On the other hand, after the Second World War Romania lost northern Bukovyna, currently Ukrainian Chernivtsi region, and Bessarabia, a part of which represents southern part of Ukrainian Odessa region. As the result, territorial losses aggravated tension between the two countries, with Ukraine perceived by Romanians as a part of the Soviet Union and later an ally of Russia.

Moreover, *territorial issues* in Ukrainian-Romanian relations served as a delayed-action mine, which exploded at the beginning of the 1990s. Romania advanced territorial claims to Ukraine, which previously were addressed to the USSR. Relying on the Resolution of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR on the political and legal assessment of the 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty (December 24th, 1989) also known as Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact⁵, Bucharest insisted on the necessity to reverse the effects of the treaty and return Bessarabia and northern Bukovyna to Romania.

Further, on June 24th, 1991, Romanian Parliament unanimously passed the Declaration on the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and its consequences for Romania⁶. According to the Declaration, Romanian Parliament required from the President, Government and all political powers of the country to act in order to protect the legitimate interests of the population residing on the Romanian territories, annexed by force in collusion imposed by Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. On July 5th, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic made it clear that with this Declaration Romania made territorial claims to Ukraine attempting to revise post-war order in Europe⁷.

In addition, on November 28th, 1991, Romanian Parliament unanimously adopted the Declaration on the Referendum in Ukraine, planned for December 1, 1991⁸. Bucharest treated the referendum organized by the Kyiv authorities on the Romanian territories, which forcefully annexed these lands from Romania, as null and void.

On April 22nd, 1993, Romania via the note nr. 618 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Ukraine with reference to the collapse of the USSR, announced invalid the Treaty on state border signed between Romanian

Government and the Government of former USSR in Bucharest, February 27th, 1961. The Treaty served as a legal base for Ukrainian-Romanian boundary line. Bucharest confirmed denunciation of the treaty on a unilateral basis later in 1994⁹.

Maritime boundary was another insidious territorial problem, which prevented Ukraine and Romania from signing an important political treaty. In 1996, Romania denounced the Protocol on determination of the state border line between the People's Republic of Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics signed in 1948 in accordance with which Snake Island in the Black Sea came under USSR jurisdiction. From the correspondence between Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hennadiy Udovenko and Presidential Advisor, National Security and Defence Council Secretary Volodymyr Horbulin in 1996, it is evident that the questions of the territorial belonging of Snake Island and particular areas of the Danube Delta were considered open by Bucharest. Kyiv qualified such moves as an open denial of existing state border line and as those whetting Bucharest's appetite for related territorial claims against Ukraine.

However, seeing integration into NATO and the EU as the key priority of its foreign policy, Romania renounced territorial claims to its neighbours. This decision helped two countries come to terms on controversial territorial issues, and as the result, a political treaty was signed in 1997.

In 2003, the Border Regime Treaty was signed between Ukraine and Romania. Under the treaty, Bucharest recognised Ukrainian right to Snake Island in return for a commitment to deploy no offensive weapons on the island. However, at the same time Romanian diplomacy succeeded in avoiding the questions relating to the delimitation of the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone.

In other words, the parties agreed to settle the Black Sea dispute at the International Court of Justice in the Hague in case the bilateral negotiations didn't not yield an agreement. In 2004, Romania brought a case against Ukraine before the ICJ¹⁰. The Court delivered its judgment on this dispute in 2009,¹¹ establishing a single maritime boundary delimiting the continental shelf and exclusive economic zones of Romania and Ukraine and settled the 40-year maritime dispute in the Black Sea.

Ukrainian project on *the Danube-Black Sea Deep Water Navigation Canal* (the "Bystroe Canal Project") has been one of the topical questions on the Ukraine-Romania bilateral relations agenda for over a decade. Romania has urged Ukraine to stop this project, given the fact that the new 10-kilometre connection between the Danube and the sea passes through the Danube Delta

and violates a number of international conventions in the field of environmental protection¹².

On May 26, 2004, the Government of Romania made a submission to the Implementation Committee of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) expressing concerns about Ukraine's compliance with its obligations under the Convention with respect to the Danube-Black Sea Deep-Water Navigation Canal in the Ukrainian Sector of the Danube Delta¹³.

In its turn, Ukraine argues that Romania's claims are only a tool by which a neighbouring state impedes the completion of the project, pursuing its own economic interests in the region¹⁴. In addition, the canal facilitated control of the Danube's mouth by a non-NATO member¹⁵.

Construction of the canal started in 2004. From 2004 to 2006, it functioned under experimental conditions. In December 2008, the Deep Water Navigation Canal was put into operation in accordance with the technical characteristics of the Phase I of the project.

In November 2007, Ukraine approved the Final Decision on the implementation of the Deep Water Navigation Canal project for full development (Phase II), which was adopted in violation of a number of procedures of the Espoo Convention. As a result, Ukraine was forced to stop the implementation of Phase II of the project, to revoke the Final Decision and to take measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention¹⁶.

Currently, in order to ensure implementation of and compliance with the Espoo Convention the Implementation Committee prescribes that Ukraine should adopt the relevant draft legislation and bring the Project into full compliance with the Convention by the end of 2018. Ukrainian government is also obliged to submit a report on concrete legislative measures adopted by the end of each year.

Apart from that, Ukraine should inform Romania about existing monitoring of the overall project results and consult with Romania on the post-project analysis. Finally, Ukraine and Romania are encouraged to develop the bilateral agreement for improved implementation of the Convention¹⁷.

The rights of the Ukrainian minority in Romania and of the Romanian minority in Ukraine is another sensitive issue in Kyiv and Bucharest relations. The 2011 population census revealed 50,900 ethnic Ukrainians in Romania. They live in Marmaroshchyna (Maramureş), Timish (Timiș), Suceava, Carash-Severin (Caraș-Severin), Tulcea, and Galats (Galați), the regions near the border with Ukraine¹⁸. Since 1990 Romanian legislation has provided parliamentary representation for ethnic minorities ensured through the system of special mandates — ex officio (one mandate for each officially recognised

ethnic minority), independently of the number of votes. The candidates are nominated by the organisation that protects the rights of the Ukrainian ethnic minority (the Union of the Ukrainians of Romania). Only organisations represented in the Council of National Minorities can nominate candidates. These organisations 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.

There are no special legislative provisions for the minority representation at the local level. Further, Romanian political parties do not pay any special attention to the situation with the Ukrainian minority, because this issue is considered to be a task assigned to non-governmental organisations (NGO) representing the minority¹⁹.

According to Rendiuk T., Ukrainian minority is hit by Bucharest assimilation policy which splits it into Ukrainians, Ruthenians and Huzuls. Furthermore, Rendiuk argues that the Union of the Ukrainians of Romania was turned into “front” organisation controlled by the Romanian authorities and was used to criticize Ukrainian position on key interstate questions until 2005²⁰.

In their turn, both central and local Ukrainian authorities have maintained a strict distinction between ethnic Romanians and Moldovans since 1991 to the apparent consternation of Bucharest.

According to the last population census in 2001, 151,000 Romanians and 258,600 Moldovans live in Ukraine forming compact communities of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia, and Odessa regions²¹.

There has been a general trend for the number of Romanian-language schools in Ukraine to decline steadily. Mainly it was caused by the lack of interest from both Ukrainian authorities and parents.

The Ukrainian authorities have been reluctant to encourage the Romanian language studies to avoid putting additional pressure on the multi-ethnic character of Ukrainian state.

Ethnic Romanians, especially typical of the Odessa region, are also perceived with suspicion by the Ukrainian authorities because of their Russophile sympathies. This emotional adhesion resulted from Russian propaganda, nostalgia for the USSR, and Ukraine’s poor economic performance. What is more, the churches frequented by the Romanian minority are subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate.

It is also noteworthy that the Romanian community is very divided. Given limited financial resources allocated by Bucharest to its diaspora since 1991, most of them have been spent almost exclusively on maintaining “emotional” relationships with Romania. Money is mainly spent on folk festivals and publications covering historical themes.

However, “the idea of preserving Romanian culture is outdated. There is a real need in European projects and trainings”.

Local leaders of the Romanian community are fiercely competing for the favours from Bucharest. Furthermore, those who identify themselves as Moldovans are hostile to any initiatives that come from the government of Romania. In addition, the Romanian community has also failed to promote a generation change at the level of leadership.

Local government executives from the regions inhabited by ethnic Romanians express distrust of Bucharest intentions and policies toward Ukraine, rejecting Romanian projects and social initiatives.

Moreover, bureaucracies in both countries are not very effective in implementing the provisions of concluded agreements²².

Bucharest’s decision to grant Romanian citizenship to those whose ancestors kept it during the interwar period and were deprived of it without their consent is another insidious problem, which affects Ukrainian-Romanian relations. According to the Ukraine’s Constitution (Article 4) “There shall be a single form of citizenship in Ukraine”²³. 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”²⁴. Romanian authorities refused to make public the real number of citizenship holders fearing pressure from the Ukrainian secret services while Ukraine suspects Romania of restoring the project “Great Romania”.

What makes Romanian citizenship appealing for the members of diaspora in Ukraine is the fact that they can seek employment in Western EU countries, with nationalist aspirations or patriotic feelings being of lesser importance in this case.

Investments in Kryvyi Rih Mining and Processing Works of Oxidized Ore in the eastern part of Ukraine is the largest Romanian foreign investment of all time²⁵ and another controversial question in Kyiv-Bucharest relations in the post-communist period.

The construction of the plant started in 1985 and was scheduled to be accomplished “on a turn-key basis” by the forces and resources of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) member states: German Democratic Republic, Socialist Republic of Romania, the USSR, the Hungarian People’s Republic, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the People’s Republic of Bulgaria. Payment was planned to be in the form of pellets for 10 years from the moment of its launch²⁶. Bucharest’s decision to get involved in the project was mainly economically motivated²⁷. According to the reached agreements,

Romania expected to receive 3 million tons of pellets per year for the Sidex plant in Galați²⁸.

In the 1990s, the construction of the plant was frozen. Following negotiations among the investors, Bulgaria and Germany left the project. The main shareholders remained Ukraine with 56.4 per cent of the shares, Romania — 28 per cent and Slovakia — 15.6 per cent.

In 2006, Romania demanded the return of its investment in the project (about 800 mln of USD), while in 2007 Slovakia announced its intention not to participate in the completion of KGOKOR.

In 2007, Romania planned to sell its stake in KGOKOR to steel and mining group ArcelorMittal on condition that the group doubled steel production at its Romanian plant ArcelorMittal Galați.

ArcelorMittal also made an offer to Ukraine for KGOKOR but a planned tender was cancelled unexpectedly following a face-off between the Ukrainian government and the then president of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko.

In 2010, the Ukrainian government announced a new initiative to sell off the unfinished plant²⁹.

It's highly likely that a new Ukrainian government formed in the wake of the Revolution of Dignity will be more open for negotiations with potential investors and will favour Romania in its wish to sell its stake in KGOKOR.

Unfortunately, mining activity in the region was hit by the Russia's open aggression towards Ukraine in 2014.

Russia's aggression committed against Ukraine started with illegal annexation of the the Crimea. Kremlin is further destabilising Ukrainian society with support to armed separatists in Donbas region.

According to art. 2 of UN Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) the “definition of aggression” (1974, December 14) is as follows: “The use of armed forces by the State on the first violation of the UN Charter is prima facie evidence of an act of aggression...”. According to art. 3 of Resolution for an armed attack, which was committed by one State against the other, to be qualified as an act of aggression, legally it does not necessarily matter whether the war was formally announced or not³⁰.

Therefore, February 27, 2014, a day when Special Forces units of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff and the 45th separate airborne regiment of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation under the guise of “self-Russian-speaking population of the Crimea” captured the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) and the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea and when troops of the Crimean Group of Armed Forces of Ukraine became the subjects of provocative attacks from Russian military bases positioned on the peninsula, should be considered a day of the beginning of the Russian aggression³¹.

In the morning of February 28, 2014, the territory of the Simferopol airport was occupied by the unidentified armed men, who were later called “green men”. Also, Sevastopol Belbek Airport was blocked, and roadblocks between the mainland and the peninsula of the Crimea were put up. It is noteworthy that at his annual questions and answers session in 2014, Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, declared that the “green men” were Russian military³².

On the same day, February 28, 2014, the State Duma’s deputy Sergey Mironov, introduced a bill on simplification of procedures for the adoption of new subjects to the Russian Federation.

March 16, 2014, there was held an illegal referendum to let the people of the Crimea decide whether the peninsular should remain part of Ukraine or instead secede and become part of Russia.

March 17, 2014, based on the results of the referendum, the sovereign Republic of the Crimea including Sevastopol was declared in a unilateral manner.

March 18, 2014, the Russian Federation and the Republic of the Crimea signed a treaty of accession of the Crimea to Russia, according to which the new subjects — so called “Republic of the Crimea” and Sevastopol as the “city of federal significance”, became part of Russia³³.

Since Russia annexed the Crimea in March 2014, the Ukrainian peninsula has become something akin to a “black box,” with little verifiable data on conditions available to counterbalance the official Russian narrative³⁴. However, according to the report by the Ukrainian Institute for the Future, Moscow’s annexation of the territory has been followed by a major, systematic expansion of Russia’s military presence there — and, by extension, in the Black Sea region³⁵.

The Russian Black Sea Navy military personnel grew from 12,500 service members in the early 2014 up to 25,000 service members in 2016 according to the Commander in Chief of the Russian Navy admiral V. Korolev, while the Ukrainian military intelligence estimates 24,000 servicemen — it exactly doubled, and there is a perspective for the further growth. Moreover, Russia managed to transfer to the peninsula a brigade of coastal defence and an individual artillery regiment (equipped with 152 mm howitzers and multiple rocket launcher systems Tornado).

The aviation follows the trend. 37th Mixed Air Regiment at the Gvardeyskoe airfield (SU-24M, SU25-SM aircrafts), 38th Fighters Air Regiment (SU-27P, SU-27SM, SU-30M2) in Belbek, 39th Helicopter Regiment (Mi-8, Mi-35M, Mi-24, Mi26 helicopters) had been deployed within the 27th Mixed Aviation Division (Sevastopol) of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army of the South Army Command of the Russian Military Forces.

In January 2017, 18th Sevastopol-Theodosia Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment (4th Air Force and Air Defense Army of the South Army Command of the Russian Military Forces) went on duty. It is equipped with the division of the latest Russian Anti-Aircraft systems S-400 Triumph (400 km range). Earlier, in the wake of the annexation in 2014, Moscow had deployed the S-300 PMU systems (150 km range) in the Crimea.

One of the main threats sparked in the course of militarization of the Crimean peninsula is readiness of Russian troops to deploy nuclear weapons there. Experts of the Ukrainian Institute for the Future refer to the tactical nuclear bombs carrying capabilities of the SU-24 aircraft, in particular. In theory, even X-28 missiles from standard equipment for the SU-24 can be equipped with nuclear warheads (in essence, X-28 was the first Soviet air-surface tactical missile capable of carrying the nuclear payload, it was developed for elimination of enemy anti-aircraft system radars). The “nuclear version” of these missiles was not used in the USSR (and in Russia later), therefore the experts were not concerned with its presence in the Crimea. However, in the context of discussions on perspectives for deployment of anti-aircraft systems in Romania, it would be expedient for the military and political command in Russia to deploy such kind of nuclear weapons in the Crimea.

Russian naval forces are also prepared to deploy nuclear weapons on ships and submarines. The flagship of the Russian Black Sea Navy cruiser “Moscow” is equipped with the anti-ship systems P-1000 Vulkan. The Vulkan’s missiles have a firing range of 700 km and are capable of carrying the nuclear warheads weighing up to 350 kg.

The same goes for the new six submarines and both frigates transferred to the Russian Black Sea Navy during the Crimea occupation. All those Project 636 Warshavyanka submarines are equipped with missile systems Caliber (four modules per submarine). The same missile systems are installed on the Project 11356 frigates (one module per ship). The missile system is capable of firing 3M14 missiles, which are suitable for carrying nuclear warheads. According to experts (exact performance characteristics are being concealed), its range is 2600 km for the water surface launches, and 1500 km for the submerged firing³⁶.

Russia has ultimately shifted the security balance in the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East by establishing large anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) exclusion zones. Russia can use A2AD to impede the ability of the US to defend its NATO allies by disrupting the ability of US air forces to access conflict zones in the event of a crisis³⁷.

After the illegal annexation of the Crimea, Moscow sent their armed forces under the guise of volunteers and “donated” military equipment to Donbas. Thus, the idea of “Novorossia” was launched into action.

Yet, Russian government failed to realise their coup de force strategy, which they succeeded with in the Crimea, for the second time³⁸.

The international community has not recognised the legitimacy of the Crimea annexation and condemned Russia's aggressive actions in South Eastern Ukraine.

In this context, it is to be noted that Russia's invasion within the Crimean and Donbas territories of Ukraine has had a great impact on the world order established after the Second World War. This military aggression against the neighbouring state might bring a new world, the true face of which is no one can yet predict.

According to the experts of the Centre for European Policy Analysis, invading Ukraine Moscow aimed to reverse the transformations of the post-Cold War era during which Russia lost its satellites, withdrew military forces from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), forfeited its regional predominance, and curtailed its international power projection. Moscow's primary strategic objective is to create a Eurasian "pole of power" or a bloc of states under predominant Russian influence that will necessitate undermining and reversing NATO influence throughout Europe's east. Even where it cannot pressure or entice its neighbours to integrate in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Kremlin attempts to neutralize nearby states by preventing them from moving into Western institutions, particularly NATO and the European Union (EU)³⁹.

In the context of Russia's revisionist policy and being aware of common security threats, Ukraine and Romania intensified their bilateral relations.

Unlike other countries of the Eastern flank of the NATO and the EU, Romania is geographically located closest to the illegally annexed and militarised the Crimea and Donbas region invaded, de facto, by Russia.

Evidently, the greatest threat to the security of Romania is the Russian emergence in the North of the Danube Delta in Odessa region in addition to its military presence in the breakaway region of Moldova, Transnistria. Moreover, illegal annexation of the Crimea complicated the division of the Black Sea continental shelf and exclusive economic zones among riparian countries.

De facto, being a direct maritime neighbour of Russia, Romania cannot cope with this threat alone⁴⁰.

Against the background of Russian aggression in Ukraine Romania has few options but to look for new allies, seek further integration in European blocs and rely on support of America with Donald Trump in the White House⁴¹.

Analysis of the Romanian reaction to the Russian revisionist policy during the 2014–2017 period shows that Bucharest officially condemned Russia's

aggressive actions against Ukraine, did not recognise illegal annexation of the Crimea and accused Russia of supporting the secessionist enclaves in Donbas region violating sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Together with other world governments Romanian officials stressed the necessity of imposing sanctions on Russia, providing Ukraine with financial and material assistance to overcome the economic crisis and carry out structural reforms, and supported the rapprochement of Ukraine with the EU and NATO.

For instance, on March 1, 2014, at the press conference on the situation in the Crimea, Traian Basescu, President of Romania, declared that “Romania is unreservedly supporting Ukraine’s independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty and recognising the new Ukrainian authorities as the legitimate representatives of the country. Romania believes that any presence on Ukraine’s soil of troops of the Russian Federation without Ukraine’s consent and outside the limits of bilateral agreements means aggression against Ukraine”⁴².

On 29 September 2015, Traian Basescu’s successor, Klaus Iohannis, in his statement at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, noted that the Security Council and the UN inactions created the impression that unlawful territorial gains, such as those in Ukraine, were tolerated⁴³.

Further, on January 21, 2016, Klaus Iohannis, holding a speech at the annual meeting with the representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Bucharest contended that “Romania supports the efforts of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, as states within the Eastern Partnership, to finalise the reforms that will irreversibly place them on the European course. Moreover, Romania will continue to support the political and diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict in Ukraine, based on the principles of its territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty, as well as on the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements”⁴⁴.

On December 18, 2015, presenting the main conclusions of the Brussels European Council meeting and Romania’s position on the issues discussed, Dacian Cioloş, Romanian Prime Minister, said “I told her (Federica Mogherini, High Representative on Foreign Policy) that we regard in a very pragmatic way this relationship, it is important to invest now all necessary resources to stimulate and develop economic cooperation with those countries that signed the Partnership Agreement, it is important to put into practice Free Trade Agreement which gives certain advantages in trade exchanges with these countries, and to mobilize financial resources to stimulate the implementation of those decisions on the Free Trade Agreement”⁴⁵.

According to the Romanian Government press relations service, during his official visit to Brussels and the Hague on March 7–9, 2016, Dacian Cioloş raised the question of the security in the Black Sea area and called for greater

support for the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine providing better defence⁴⁶.

Support of Romanian Parliament to Ukraine in the ratification of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement on July 4, 2014 was a turning point in the relations between the two countries. It is important to note that Romania was the first EU-member state, which ratified the agreement.

Further, Romania worked energetically to increase US and NATO force presence in the Black Sea region. It intends to increase defence spending up to 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) as soon as possible. Bucharest has asked for a permanent NATO fleet presence in the Black Sea since 2014⁴⁷ and assumed responsibility to lead the Ukraine Cyber Defence Trust Fund, adopted during the 2014 Wales NATO summit to help Ukraine reform and modernize its defence capabilities⁴⁸.

There have also been developed alternative multilateral groupings, such as newly formed Bucharest Format that brings together nine NATO members under Romanian leadership to follow recent NATO commitments. These nine members also share concerns about Russia's military resurgence in the Crimea and advocate for NATO's continuous enlargement⁴⁹.

In addition, Romania is involved in monitoring the security situation in Ukraine (41 observers were sent under the auspices of the OSCE Mission in eastern Ukraine with a team leader in Chernivtsi). In general, the mission consists of 709 people; hence, the Romanian observers make up more than 5% of the total. This is a high number, considering that Romania trails only the United States and Great Britain, which have 62 and 44 observers, respectively⁵⁰.

Change of the political leaderships in both countries is an additional factor which led to the intensification of bilateral political cooperation between Kyiv and Bucharest. During the working visit of Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta to Kyiv, on October 2, 2014, the Agreement on small border traffic between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and Government of Romania was signed.

The agreement regulates the conditions on conducting the small border traffic, namely the frequent crossing of the Romanian-Ukrainian state border by the residents of Ukraine's or Romania's border area who plan to remain in the border area of the other state, mainly for social, cultural, family or economically-justified reasons, for a period not exceeding three months of uninterrupted stay.

The agreement applies to the inhabitants of an area of 30 kilometres on both sides of the common border, an area that can be extended to maximum 50 kilometres from the border where the administrative-territorial units are located beyond the 30-kilometre limit⁵¹.

On June, 7, 2014, the President of Romania participated in the inauguration ceremony of the new elected President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko.

The first Poroshenko's meeting with the new elected Romanian President Klaus Iohannis was held in Paris on January 11, 2015, during the march in solidarity with the victims of previous terrorist attacks⁵².

On February 13, 2015, the Presidents met in Brussels discussing development of the security situation in Donbas⁵³.

In several days, on February 17, 2015, Ukrainian Foreign Minister paid an official visit to Bucharest. During this visit, he had meetings with the President of Romania, the President of the Senate, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Romania, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania⁵⁴.

It is evident that the aim of this visit was preparation for the Romanian President official visit to Ukraine. Security issues and mobilisation of the ethnic Romanians in Ukraine's Armed Forces were among the items on agenda too⁵⁵.

In a month, on March 17, 2015, Klaus Iohannis paid the first official visit to Ukraine. It was the first presidential visit for the preceding seven years. Following the meeting, President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko stated the transition to the new phase of Ukrainian-Romanian relations. As a result of this meeting, the parties agreed to resume the activities of the Joint Presidential Commission and hold its next session in the course of the Ukrainian President visit to Bucharest.

New guidelines for cooperation in trade-economic, energy, environmental, transport, infrastructure and other areas were developed.

Moreover, sensitive issues of bilateral relations, including the issue of the Danube — Black Sea Canal were discussed. The governments agreed to continue constructive dialogue on these issues at bilateral level and at the level of international organizations.

An agreement on the necessity of substantial modernization of the security system in the Black Sea region was also reached.

Special attention was paid to the events in the Republic of Moldova, particularly in Transnistria. The Presidents agreed to coordinate their actions on Transnistria in order to facilitate the unfreezing of the given conflict and help sovereign and independent Moldova regain its territorial integrity and reintegrate the Transnistria region.

Significant progress in a small border traffic mechanism was reached too. Furthermore, it was agreed to restore direct air connection between Kyiv and Bucharest.

The Presidents also agreed on Romania's support of the introduction of the visa-free regime with the EU for the Ukrainian citizens in the course of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga.

The regional cooperation between Ukraine, Poland and Romania, in order to create a certain group of solidarity was another item on the Presidents' agenda⁵⁶.

The next meeting at the presidential level was held on February 12, 2016 during the informal EU summit and Munich Security Conference. The leaders discussed the fulfilment of the agreements reached during the visit of Klaus Iohannis to Ukraine in 2015 and shared views on topical regional security challenges and discussed the settlement of Transnistria conflict and the Russian aggression against Ukraine⁵⁷.

On April 21, 2016, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko paid official visit to Bucharest. During this visit the Ukrainian-Romanian Joint Presidential Commission resumed its work after nine years since the first and the second session in 2016. The session focused on the economic cooperation, bilateral agreements on local border traffic and opening Orlivka-Isaccea border-crossing point.

In addition, the leaders discussed the opportunity to sign the agreement on free-of-charge issuance of long-term national visas between Ukraine and Romania in return for the opening of the Romanian Consulate in Solotvyno.

The questions discussed during the talks concerned the prospect of supplying natural gas from Romania to Ukraine, terms and conditions for the further utilization of interconnectors of transit pipelines passing across the territory of Romania, and initiatives for new joint gas transport projects.

Great contribution was made to solving transport connection problems, particularly to the restoration of direct railway and direct air connection between the capitals of Ukraine and Romania, as well as bus connection between Chernivtsi and Bucharest⁵⁸.

According to the Presidential Administration of Ukraine, security enhancement remains the issue of top priority in Ukraine-Romania negotiations. It was declared that there cannot be any discussion about loosening sanctions against the country-aggressor until the aggression is terminated. Any partial loosening of sanctions in exchange for partial fulfilment of the Minsk agreements poses a direct threat to the resolution of the situation in Donbas.

In less than a month, on May 6–7, 2016, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin held a meeting with his Romanian counterpart Lazăr Comănescu in a region on a common frontier, Solotvyno (Ukraine) and Sighetu Marmăției (Romania)⁵⁹. During this working meeting, the Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of Romania on free-of-charge issuance of long-term national visas was signed⁶⁰. In practice, it was the Ukrainian price for the Romanian Consulate in Solotvyno opened on the same day, a step on which Romania insisted for a long time.

The next working visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to Romania took place on October 29, 2016. The visit began with the parti-

cipation of P. Klimkin in the opening ceremony of the bust of Taras Shevchenko in Sighetu Marmăției⁶¹. In the course of the visit a wide range of issues from cross-border infrastructure projects to sensitive political situation in Moldova were raised in the light of coming Presidential elections.

Another important issue which deserved keen attention was opening a new border crossing checkpoint at the Ukrainian-Romanian state border Shibeny (Ukraine) — Poienile de sub Munte (Romania), which could allow to connect Ivano-Frankivsk region with Maramureș, a region in Romania where the main part of the ethnic Ukrainians live.

The most significant event of Ukrainian-Romanian relations in 2017 became the Second meeting of the Ukrainian-Romanian Joint Commission on Economic, Industrial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, July 10–11. This Joint Commission was established in 2007 whereas the First meeting was held on April 10–11, 2012 in Kyiv.

The parties discussed the ways of the intensification of bilateral cooperation between Ukraine and Romania in the field of transport and infrastructure, including road and rail transport, navigation, as well as interregional and cross-border cooperation, the EU strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), and other topics of mutual interest.

Following the meeting, the protocol was signed. The parties agreed to activate some particular working groups in order to develop comprehensive cooperation in the spheres of mutual interest. In particular, it refers to tourism, modernisation of the checkpoint Solotvyno — Sighetu Marmăției, KGOKOR, the Bystroe Canal, navigation on the Danube and the development of transport infrastructure, especially in the framework of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T).

In addition, it was agreed to hold a bilateral meeting at the ministerial level with the purpose to analyse road transport and transport movements questions in September 2017, in Kyiv.

The next meeting of the Ukrainian-Romanian Joint Commission on Economic, Industrial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation is planned for 2018 in Ukraine⁶².

In conclusion, there is no easy, quick-fix solution to the problems in bilateral Ukrainian-Romanian relations, which were established in post-communist period. As the result, both countries need to come to terms with some heavy historical baggage.

Russian aggression against Ukraine forced the two countries to revise their relations even though the host of problems that were accumulated over more than 20 years of tense relations have not been settled yet. However, lately Ukraine and Romania have been developing trustful cooperation based on the security-first principle.

Thus, Romania condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine, did not recognise illegal annexation of the Crimea and accused Russia of support to the secessionist enclaves in Donbas region. Bucharest backed sanctions on Russia and provided Ukraine with financial and material assistance to overcome the economic crisis and implement structural reforms. Romania has become one of Ukraine's strongest advocates within NATO and the EU.

Security risks are the converging point of Ukraine's and Romania's interests. An awareness of common security threats caused by Russian aggression was the reason for intensifying bilateral relations.

Governments in Kyiv and Bucharest moved from the discussions and disputes with regard to questions of a sensitive nature to constructive cooperation, with the aim to strengthen security in the Black Sea and limit Russian dominance in Donbas, the Crimea and Transnistria.

It remains within the countries' fundamental national interests to promote further cooperation implementing mutually beneficial projects in the energy, transport and infrastructure sectors.

Another factor which opened up entirely new perspectives for ongoing cooperation between the two states was the change of leadership in Ukraine and Romania.

Yet in the context of high insecurity caused by Russian militarist policy Ukraine and Romania should seek more robust foundation for long-term bilateral relations in the spirit of partnership and mutual trust.

In the same vein, working out a clear multilevel mid- and long-term foreign policy strategy has become a priority for developing sustainable relations between the two states. By enhancing and coordinating the ties between foreign relations departments and national security institutions, increasing the team of competent and motivated specialists, Ukraine will ensure the implementation of the platform for the future effective deals.

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