



## **Priorities of the Ukrainian Foreign Policy. Mapping Areas of Common Interest of Ukraine and Romania**

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A stylized red magnifying glass icon with a white circular lens, positioned to the left of the main title text.

# The Romanian - Ukrainian Civil Society **Forum** for Dialogue and Cooperation

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*Cover photo: Hennadiy Maksak, Foreign Policy Council ”Ukrainian PRISM”*

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## **Introduction**

The bilateral dialogue between Romania and Ukraine is a complex one. This feature is generated by the multitude of different interests that the two neighboring states have established over time. Often, the definition of these interests has set the ground for complicated situations, difficult to be appreciated, accepted and solved by the political actors.

Following the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, and subsequently the commencement of military operations in Eastern Ukraine, the situation in the region has changed greatly. Vulnerabilities and challenges became more evident, and threats increased in number and complexity. Under these circumstances, Romania has chosen to support the democratic principles as well as the processes of European integration of Ukraine. This type of approach - more responsible and vigilant, has been and is still needed. But it cannot produce results without a responsible approach from all actors involved in diplomatic negotiations, communicating messages or implementing joint initiatives.

Between January - July 2019 the Association of Experts for Security and Global Affairs in partnership with the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian PRISM", supported by the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project of the German Marshall Fund, has implemented the project "The Romanian – Ukrainian Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation". Within this project we had as a aim to revive the dialogue between Romanian and Ukrainian experts at civil society level, by resuming bilateral meetings in bilateral or trilateral format (extended to the Republic of Moldova), to advocate through government initiatives in solving problems, to propose a set of recommendations and solutions to encourage the transition to a new stage in the bilateral dialogue between Bucharest and Kyiv, in which the stereotypes no longer have control over the content.

Together with our partners, we chose to organize a bilateral forum on the latest challenges in the regional context, that affect both countries - hybrid threats, information war, misinformation, and then continue with a complex analysis of how we have promoted cooperation and dialogue over the last 30 years within different bilateral formats of political, security and economic cooperation. The Forum served as a platform to facilitate the dialogue between experts, government representatives, academia and media from both countries.

The experts' perspective although was a critical one, was oriented towards our foreign policies, to draw public authorities' attention to the opportunities that the analytical environment can generate for improving the bilateral dialogue. Such a perspective allows the elimination of subjectivity from the evaluation of the content of bilateral policies. Another objective was to identify the challenges and areas where cooperation is possible, but the political will is lacking. The third, and most important, objective was to develop a

set of recommendations, accompanied by an initial plan of activities or a road-map of actions for the next period, that would allow decision-makers to reflect on the common benefits that can be achieved during at a whole new stage in the political and economic dialogue in our countries.

In the following, we propose to reflect with us on the most important challenges, but also opportunities at the same time, for the bilateral dialogue between Ukraine and Romania.

Experts from both countries, who contributed to the development of the two country papers, set as a priority to promote advocacy activities, to continue monitoring the dialogue between authorities, but also to contribute to the implementation of proposals and recommendations at the end of each chapter of the study, so that the implementation of the roadmap of civil society becomes an effective tool for promoting dialogue and cooperation in different fields of mutual interest.

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# CHAPTER 1.

## **Priorities of the Ukrainian Foreign Policy Highlighted by the Ukrainian Key Political Actors and Mapping Areas of Common Interest of Ukraine and Romania**

Sergiy Gerasymchuk

### **Introduction**

Quite often the presidential or parliamentary elections in a certain country affect its domestic agenda and foreign policy priorities. The elections in the neighboring countries are even more important and always draw great attention of experts and politicians since they may lead either to the reload of the relations, breakthroughs in the negotiations or, otherwise, may result in protracted problems and downgraded relations.

Interestingly, the parliamentary elections in Romania in 2016 were perceived with concerns by the Ukrainian expert community. However, elections in Romania did not play a crucial role since the president, as the head of state, was responsible for the foreign policy, and consequently, the results of the parliamentary elections did not lead to the changes in policy applied by Romanian towards Ukraine. Moreover, as it was rightly mentioned by the Romanian experts<sup>1</sup>, the fact Social Democrats came into power (which had been perceived as a challenge by some of the Ukrainian experts) did not change the Romania's policy towards Ukraine. To the contrary, this policy pursued the same course. One of the reasons was that foreign policy issues was not politicized in Romania and the party's leadership rather relied on expertise and promoted competent ministers to deal with foreign relations.

The situation is quite different in Ukraine in 2019. First, Ukraine faced both presidential and snap parliamentary relations that consequently resulted in full rotation of the ruling elites. Therefore, sustainability of the domestic and foreign policy is uncertain. Besides, both the new president Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the majority of the members of the new parliament have little political experience. Almost 80% of the mandates in the parliament will belong to the individuals who have never served as members of parliament. Such circumstances create certain obstacles for reliable forecasts on the priorities of the new parliament, new government and new president. It's also unclear to what extent new state's leadership will rely on the expertise while shaping foreign policy of Ukraine.

This study is a modest attempt to analyze the attitude of the previous state's leadership towards Romania and to check if there are any politicians active in the field of Ukraine-Romania relations who will remain in the new parliament. Such approach gives an opportunity to assess the chances for the sustainable foreign policy.

By analyzing the program documents of the new parliamentary parties and content

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<sup>1</sup> Anghel, V., Gerasymchuk S., The Relations between Ukraine and Romania: Old and New Perceptions. Cooperation Outlooks, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", [http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/The\\_Relations\\_between\\_Ukraine\\_and\\_Romania\\_Old\\_and\\_New\\_Perceptions\\_Cooperation\\_Outlooks.pdf](http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/The_Relations_between_Ukraine_and_Romania_Old_and_New_Perceptions_Cooperation_Outlooks.pdf)

analysis of the statements and declarations of the parties' top figures, we will try to define their priorities and preferences in the field of foreign relations. Furthermore, the study will outline which political forces share Romanian vision on the priorities of the regional policy including security policy.

Special attention will be paid to the statements directly mentioning Romania and the connotation of these statements.

### **The overview of the political actors' interest to Romania in 2015-2019**

In the last five years the interest of the political actors towards relations with Romania was relatively high. Romania was perceived by the Ukrainian politicians as the example of the country transforming in compliance with the European norms and standards. Back in 2015 the mentions about Romania appeared in the statements of the leader of the "Self-reliance" *Oleh Bereziuk*, who, in particular, proposed to use Romania's experience concerning "outsourcing the customs to Swiss, German, or even American customs services", and also in the declarations of the leader of the faction "People's Front" *Maksym Burbak*, who co-chaired the interparliamentary group «Ukraine – Romania».<sup>2</sup> During 2016 the allusions about Romania again appeared in declarations of the leader of the "People's Front" faction M. Burbak in speeches of the Chair of Committee on Foreign Affairs *Hanna Hopko*. Mentions had positive connotations. In particular, H. Hopko emphasized Romania's role in turning the Black Sea into the EU's sea although underlined the challenges of Russian militarization which eventually may convert the Black Sea into the Russian lake.<sup>3</sup> The interest was also expressed by that time speaker of the parliament of Ukraine *Andriy Parubiy* who appealed to four local authorities members of the Carpathian Euroregion and called them to unite around a single concept of the region development in a close cooperation with the neighbouring states, including Romania, to implement their joint projects, as well as to attract the EU funds for the infrastructure, tourism, etc.<sup>4</sup>

In 2017 Ukrainian parliament passed the Law on Education with its controversial Article 7 on the language of education and Romanian negative reaction to it had impact on the statements of the officials and representatives of the political parties. Maksym Burbak, inter alia, regretted a cancellation of the parliamentary delegation's visit led by A. Parubiy to Romania, whereas the chairman of the Radical Party *Oleh Lyashko* criticized some Romanian officials in regard of the Romanian autonomy possibility.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the 2018 Analytical Report to the Annual Address of the President of Ukraine to the VRU recalls that Bucharest clearly expressed its full support for the

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<sup>2</sup> Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2015, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", <http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/A5-prizma-eu.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Members of Parliament Regarding the Priorities of the Romanian Presidency in the EU Council, Strategy XXI, <https://geostrategy.org.ua/ua/kontakti/item/1555-round-table-priorities-of-romanian-presidency>

<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2016, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", [http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Scorecard-2016\\_eng.pdf](http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Scorecard-2016_eng.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2017, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", [http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/A5-prizma2017\\_eng\\_web.pdf](http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/A5-prizma2017_eng_web.pdf)

territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, as well as for its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. It also recalls that, at the initiative of Bucharest, amid the rising military tensions in the Black Sea region and aggression on the part of the Russian Federation, Bucharest put the problems in bilateral relations between Ukraine and Romania on the back burner. Chairman of the parliament Andriy Parubiy mentioned Romania in his statements, describing it as one of the states “on the front line of fight” against the Russian aggression.<sup>6</sup>

*Summarizing*, the political actors represented in the parliament in 2014-2019 perceived Romania mostly positively as the example of the country transforming in compliance with the European norms and standards. They considered joint projects in the field of infrastructure and tourism and appreciated Romania’s support to territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. Romania was called one of the states “on the front line of fight” against the Russian aggression. The only obstacle in upgrading relations to the level of strategic partnership was lack of consensus on the Article 7 of the Law on Education.

In 2019 the situation may change. The politicians who expressed explicit interest towards Romania due to different reasons will not have the same positions in the new parliament of Ukraine or even will not get their mandates at all. Maksym Burbak failed to get into the new parliament – instead the representative of the “Servant of the People” Valeriy Bozhyk was elected; the “Self reliance” and the Radical Party failed to pass threshold of 5%<sup>7</sup>; Hanna Hopko decided not to participate in the elections whereas Andriy Parubiy will be a member of parliament, however with the low chances to get any leading positions in the parliamentary committees.

The results of the snap elections to the parliament of Ukraine in July 2019 brought on the surface new political players who will be in charge of shaping foreign policy of Ukraine. Numerous newcomers and lack of information regarding their vision of the foreign policy priorities make it difficult to forecast the upcoming initiatives and priorities in the field of foreign policy. Certain unpredictability will remain in place until the respective parliamentary committees and groups of friendship are shaped and new government (including the minister of foreign affairs) is appointed.

However, the analysis of the programs of the parties that have passed the threshold to the parliament of Ukraine and their leaders’ statements and declarations give some clue regarding the key objectives of the new government and new parliament in the field of international relations, including the relations with the close neighbors e.g. Romania.

### **Servant of the People**

The political party the “Servant of the People” headed by Dmytro Razumkov is a brand new political phenomenon for the Ukrainian political landscape. The party that won the majority at the snap parliamentary elections in July 2019 (254 out of 450 seats<sup>8</sup>) is

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<sup>6</sup> Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2018, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”, [http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/A5-prizma2018\\_eng\\_web-2.pdf](http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/A5-prizma2018_eng_web-2.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The results of the 2019 parliamentary elections, Central Electoral Commission, <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/wp300pt001f01=919.html>

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

closely connected to the president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy whereas its unprecedentedly high results can be explained by high demand for “fresh blood” in politics (the members of the “Servant of the People” faction will be individuals who have never before had the experience of being the members of parliament).

The majority in the new parliament provides the faction of the “Servant of the People” with the high chances to head the majority of the parliamentary committees, including those responsible for the foreign policy dimension and European integration.

Although the party’s program provisions were rather vague the analysis of the key statements of its political leaders gave the clue about the party’s preferences in the foreign policy of Ukraine. Some of them make it possible to define the promising fields of cooperation between Ukraine and Romania that are likely to be prioritized in the coming years.

**Cooperation with the EU** is among the priorities of the political party. The “Servant of the People” expects to focus on the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU and further cooperation with the EU in the different areas. Besides, party will continue efforts aimed at enhanced cooperation with the EU in the field of hybrid threats by means of strategic communications. Such objective of the political party coincides with the views of the Ukrainian and Romanian expert community (in February 2019 the Romanian – Ukrainian Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation was also focused on the issue of hybrid threats) and therefore there is a ground for expecting cooperation in this field. Also, during the parliamentary campaign, the “Servant of the People” was exploiting a trendy issue of **fighting corruption**. That’s the field which is also appealing to Romanians and therefore it can be another field for fruitful cooperation and exchange of experience at the bilateral level. Moreover, if success, indirectly fighting corruption may result in attracting Romanian business to Ukraine (currently, the lack of the judicial reform and corruption are the main obstacles that prevents Romanians from getting more involved). Besides, “Servant of the People” was highlighting the issue of **the reform of electricity and gas market** and therefore cooperation with Romania in this field can become another priority or at least a topic to be discussed at the level of bilateral discourse. Companies that are likely to be interested in the development of the respective economic relations are oil and gas producers: “Romgaz”<sup>9</sup> (Romgaz is the largest natural gas producer and the main supplier in Romania. It is a joint stock company owned 70% by the Romanian State) and “Petrom”<sup>10</sup> (OMV Petrom is a subsidiary of OMV and the group is the largest oil and gas group in South-Eastern Europe. OMV Petrom is the main crude oil producer in Romania and supplies around half of the internal gas production – joint projects could be developed with “Naftogaz”. Cooperation with Transgaz<sup>11</sup> – a state-owned company, which is the technical operator of the national natural gas transmission system in Romania and Transelectrica<sup>12</sup> – an electricity transmission system should be considered as well.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.romgaz.ro/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.omvpetrom.com/portal/01/petromcom/header/Home>

<sup>11</sup> <http://new.transgaz.ro/en>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.transelectrica.ro/web/tel/home>

<sup>13</sup> Anghel, V., Gerasymchuk S., The Relations between Ukraine and Romania: Old and New Perceptions. Cooperation Outlooks, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”, <http://prismua.org/wp->

No less important for the “Servant of the People” is cooperation with *the United States*. According to Svyatoslav Yurash<sup>14</sup>, one of the elected members of parliament responsible for the foreign affairs dimension, strengthening relations with the US is among the priorities of for the “Servant of the People”. Party seeks for the higher level of American engagement in the regional affairs and does not exclude involvement of the US into the negotiations on ensuring peace in Donbas and de-occupation of the Ukrainian territories. Such approach coincides with the Romanian general strategy on strengthening transatlantic ties and ensuring American political and military presence in the Wider Black Sea region and joint efforts aimed at cooperation with the US can be another field of joint efforts of Romania and Ukraine that will gain the support of the “Servant of the People” in the parliament of Ukraine.

The “Servant of the People” also supports the idea of “reload” of the relations with the Ukraine’s *neighbors in the West*. However, Romania does not belong to the priorities in this regard. The “Servant of the People” rather focuses attention on Poland and Hungary. However, party’s openness to “reload” concept can be helpful for updating bilateral relations with Romania as well and for setting Interparliamentary cooperation as well as for re-launching presidential dialogue. The key obstacle in this regard currently may be launching of the presidential campaign in Romania that will eventually shift the priorities of the Romanian leadership to the domestic affairs.

Despite generally positive expectations regarding the “Servant of the People” towards Romania there are also some “spoilers”. Among them the issue of double citizenship and Romanian passports issued to Ukrainians. This problem was highlighted by *Iryna Vereshchuk*<sup>15</sup> – newly elected Member of Parliament affiliated to the “Servant of the People”. Although she recognizes Romania as an ally of Ukraine still, she thinks that Western borders of Ukraine can be no less vulnerable than Eastern one<sup>16</sup>.

Besides, another member of the “Servant of the People” faction and diplomat by background *Bohdan Yaremenko* is well known for criticizing Romania for violation the occupied territory regime in Crimea and letting Romanian vessels coming into Crimean ports alongside with the Russian and Turkish vessels<sup>17</sup>.

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content/uploads/2017/01/The\_Relations\_between\_Ukraine\_and\_Romania\_Old\_and\_New\_Perceptions.\_Cooperation\_Outlooks.pdf

<sup>14</sup> Elections to Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2019, Foreign Policy Portal, <http://fpp.com.ua/partii/sluga-narodu/>

<sup>15</sup> “Hungarian Spring”: Alarming Forecasts Voiced, Obozrevatel, <https://www.obozrevatel.com/ukr/politics/ugorska-vesna-ozvucheno-lyakayuchij-prognoz.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Cautiousness or Paranoia: Was the Reaction of Matios to the Provocative Video Justified? Novoye Vremya, <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/oberezhnist-chi-paranoyya-chi-vipravdana-reakciya-matiosa-na-provokacyjne-video-z-rumuniji-50025016.html>

<sup>17</sup> Maidan of Foreign Affairs: Romanian Vessels Violate the Regime of the Occupied Territory of Crimea, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, <https://ua.krymr.com/a/26638697.html>

## **Opposition Platform – For Life**

The “Opposition Platform – For Life” (which won 43 out of 450 seats<sup>18</sup>) assembling pro-Russian politicians and headed by Yuriy Boyko is mostly interested in re-establishing close relations with the Russian Federation and pays less attention to the other dimensions of foreign policy of Ukraine.

Comparing to the “Servant of the People” the analysis of the program documents and statements of the leaders of “Opposition Platform – For Life” provides much less evidence of any points of common interest with Romania. The leaders of the respective political force emphasize that *European integration* of Ukraine is just a pure self-promotion of the politicians who support this idea. One of the leaders of the “Opposition Platform – For Life” Viktor Medvedchuk also highlights that joining *NATO* can jeopardize Ukrainian sovereignty<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, it’s hard to expect that the representatives of this political force will support at the parliament any kind of Ukraine-Romania cooperation under umbrella of the EU or NATO. Also, criticism of Viktor Medvedchuk towards the United States hints that any Ukrainian-Romanian initiatives supported by **the US** would not get the support of the “Opposition Platform – For Life”.

Noteworthy, the “Opposition Platform – For Life” does not pay much attention to the neighbors of Ukraine except for Russia and Belarus and thus it makes no sense to expect the involvement of the members of this political force into the productive discussion of the bilateral Ukraine-Romania relations and respective bilateral initiatives.

## **Motherland**

The “Motherland” headed by Yulia Tymoshenko is a political force with an extremely long-life span – in July 2019 it celebrated 20 years of existence. At the recent snap elections “Motherland” won 26 out of 450 seats in the parliament of Ukraine.

The party assembles heavy weighters of the Ukrainian foreign policy. Second number on the party list is Valentyn Nalyvaychenko, ex-deputy minister of foreign affairs of Ukraine in 2004-2005; third number is Sergiy Sobolyev, deputy head of the permanent parliamentary delegation to PACE; eighth number is Hryhoriy Nemyrya – member of the Ukrainian part of the parliamentary association committee and foreign affairs advisor to Yulia Tymoshenko and twelfth number is Ivan Krulko – deputy head of the permanent delegation to GUAM parliamentary assembly.

Such representation of the politicians experienced in foreign policy issues proves that the faction will be active in discussing foreign policy priorities and initiatives and the faction will be represented in the respective parliamentary committees.

The “Motherland” belongs to the group of supporters of *European integration* in the Ukrainian parliament and strongly favors proper implementation of the Association

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<sup>18</sup> The results of the 2019 parliamentary elections, Central Electoral Commission, <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/wp300pt001f01=919.html>

<sup>19</sup> Elections to Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2019, Foreign Policy Portal, <http://fpp.com.ua/partii/opozytsijna-platforma/>

Agreement with the EU. Moreover, the party's representatives are very precise in defining priority areas of integration focusing on economics, transport and infrastructure (including the development of the European transport corridors) and energy. The "Motherland" also is emphasizing the necessity to stop smuggling and this should be appealing to Romania as the neighboring state. These areas also are to be considered as the priorities of the bilateral Ukraine-Romania relations and potentially the "Motherland" can be helpful in promoting them.

Besides the "Motherland" also favors acquiring of the *NATO* membership action plan by Ukraine. In this regard it is likely that the representatives of this political force will not object cooperation between Ukraine and Romania under NATO umbrella.

The leader of the "Motherland" Yulia Tymoshenko also declares the need for the involvement of *the US* into the negotiations aimed at resolving the issue of the territories occupied by Russia. This fact indirectly proves that the "Motherland" does not object American political and military presence in the region which also coincides with the Romanian strategic approach towards the relations with the United States.

The "Motherland" leading politicians e.g. *Valentyn Nalyvaychenko*<sup>20</sup> and *Sergiy Sobolyev*<sup>21</sup> also admit Romanian progress in *fighting corruption* and therefore this topic can be exploited for the development of the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Romania, sharing experiences, good practices and lessons learned, promoting the respective interparliamentary initiatives.

### **European Solidarity**

The "European Solidarity" is a political party headed by ex-president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko (won 25 out of 450 seats). The party's strategy at the snap parliamentary election in July 2019 was claiming ownership over the main achievements of Ukraine in the field of European integration and getting closer to NATO.

As well as the "Motherland" the "European Solidarity" has assembled foreign policy professionals in its list. The list is headed by Petro Poroshenko himself who has a rich record of foreign policy achievements. Second number belongs to Andriy Parubiy ex-speaker of the parliament, third – to Iryna Gerashchenko – ex-deputy speaker of the parliament. Also, vice-prime minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration Ivanna Klympush-Tsyntsadze is #10 on the party list. Volodymyr Aryev, Maria Ionova, Rostyslav Pavlenko who are also experienced in foreign policy issues also will represent the party in the new parliament.

Even the name of the party identifies that *European integration* belongs to its key priorities. The party is precise in prioritizing the European integration dimensions. The main focus is at joining energy and digital market and approaching Schengen standards (the

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<sup>20</sup> Valentyn Nalyvaychenko in a "Great Evening" with Panchenko, Newsone, <https://newsone.ua/uk/programs/bolshoj-vecher/valentin-nalivajchenko-u-velikom-u-vechori-z-panchenko-2802.html>

<sup>21</sup> The World is Celebrating Fighting Corruption Day, INTV, <https://intvua.com/news/politics/1481282371-svit-vidznachae-den-borotbi-iz-koruptsieu-chi-vidpovidatimut.html>

latter may be the issue of common interest for both Ukraine and Romania). Among the important issues of European and Euro-Atlantic integration there is also cooperation with the EU and *NATO* aimed at combating challenges in the field of *information security and cybersecurity, protection of borders, minimization of migration risks*. The aforementioned challenges also are on the agenda for Romania.

In cooperation with NATO the “European Solidarity” also suggests focusing on the issue of *militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov* and such priority also resonates with the issues of high importance for Romania.

*Andriy Parubiy* is also known as a supporter and promoter of the Black Sea – Baltic Sea axis.

Besides, the interest towards cooperation with Romania was also expressed by the leading figures of the party. While still being the president of Ukraine *Petro Poroshenko* warmly greeted Romania’s presidency in the EU Council in 2019 and expressed hope that ambitiousness and responsibility of the Romanian partners will help the EU to pass one of the most complicated periods of its existence, connected with the enhanced Russian confrontation with the West, BREXIT, elections to the European Parliament and Russian aggression against Ukraine.<sup>22</sup> In her turn, *Ivanna Klympush-Tsyntsadze* in the capacity of the vice-prime-minister echoed president’s approach, also greeted Romania’s presidency in the EU and requested Romanian side to push for the development of the Eastern Partnership and appreciated Romania’s key role in operating NATO Trust for cybersecurity.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time *Iryna Gerashchenko* is far more critical towards Romania and back in 2017 even blamed Romania alongside with Hungary in having hidden territorial claims to Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

Paradoxically, on the one hand, the representatives of the “European Solidarity” most probably will get their seats in the foreign policy related committees of the parliament of Ukraine and therefore potentially can become vis-à-vis for their Romanian counterparts. Also, they favor different issues and initiatives appealing to Romanian citizens and according to their statements mostly praise Romanian role in the region. But on the other hands some of them e.g. Petro Poroshenko, Andriy Parubiy and Iryna Gerashchenko will face the burden of brokering the adoption of the Law on Education and it’s controversial from the Romanian perspective Article 7 which hampered bilateral relations. Moreover, the likelihood that the members of the “European Solidarity” will be eager for compromises in

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<sup>22</sup> Poroshenko Reacted to the Beginning of the Romanian Chairmanship in the EU Council, ZIK, [https://zik.ua/news/2019/01/01/poroshenko\\_vidreaguvav\\_na\\_pochatok\\_golovuvannya\\_rumunii\\_u\\_radi\\_yes\\_1480371](https://zik.ua/news/2019/01/01/poroshenko_vidreaguvav_na_pochatok_golovuvannya_rumunii_u_radi_yes_1480371)

<sup>23</sup> Ivanna Klympush-Tsyntsadze: I Hope Romanian Presidency in the EU Council will give a new impetus to Eastern Partnership Initiative, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/ivanna-klympush-cincadze-spodivayusya-shcho-rumunske-golovuvannya-v-radi-yes-dast-novij-poshtovh-iniciativi-shidne-partnerstvo>

<sup>24</sup> Romania and Hungary Have Territorial Claims to Ukraine, UA1, <https://ua1.com.ua/politics/u-rumuniji-ta-ugorshchini-e-teritorialni-pretenziji-do-ukrajini-gerashchenko-35756.html>

this regard is low since on July 16, 2019 the Constitution Court of Ukraine proved that the Law on Education fully corresponds with the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine.<sup>25</sup>

### **Voice**

The “Voice” political party is another newcomer to the parliament of Ukraine. The party headed by famous musician and public activist and “Okean Elzy” frontman won 20 out of 450 seats<sup>26</sup>.

The party is lacking professional politicians as well as experts in the field of foreign policy. Generally, the **EU and NATO** are declared as foreign policy priorities of the “Voice”, however, the party’s leadership does not go too much into details in this regard.

Among the priorities outlined for cooperation with the neighboring countries the “Voice” suggests cooperation in the field of customs control.

The party’s foreign policy dimension is the least elaborated in comparison to the other parties that passed threshold.

### **Conclusions**

The new parliament of Ukraine will lack the politicians experienced in foreign policy and in relations with Romania in particular. The failure of Maksym Burbak to get into the new parliament will be a significant loss since for a long time he was co-chairing the interparliamentary group of friendship, has contacts in Bucharest and knows the region of Ukraine bordering Romania from inside. Also, the new parliament will be lacking foreign policy of expertise of Hanna Hopko.

The politicians with the foreign policy background are mostly concentrated in the factions of the “Motherland” and the “European Solidarity”. There are also some foreign policy professionals in the “Servant of the People”. However, none of them is specialized in Romania.

On the one hand, this fact may undermine the sustainability of Ukraine’s policy towards Romania. On the other hand, “fresh blood” may eventually open a window of opportunity and suggest alternative unbiased solutions to the protracted problems in bilateral relations.

Regarding the general trends, it appears that the issue of European integration and extended cooperation with the United States will remain sustainable since it is shared by most of the political forces. That’s also a good sign for the bilateral Ukraine-Romania relations since Bucharest is supporting European integration of Ukraine and supports closer transatlantic ties and enhanced engagement of the US into the regional affairs.

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<sup>25</sup> The Law of Ukraine on Education Corresponds with the Provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine – the Decision of the Constitutional Court, Constitutional Court of Ukraine, <http://www.ccu.gov.ua/novyna/zakon-ukrayiny-pro-osvitu-vidpovidaye-konstytuciyi-ukrayiny-rishennya-ksu-0>

<sup>26</sup> The results of the 2019 parliamentary elections, Central Electoral Commission, <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/wp300pt001f01=919.html>

Cooperation and integration to NATO is also frequently mentioned by the Ukrainian parliamentary parties thus it can be expected that cooperation with Romania under wider NATO umbrella will be supported by the Ukrainian side.

Another issue of common interest for both new Ukrainian parliament and Romanian leadership is fighting corruption. Since it is prioritized by the winner of the parliamentary elections the “Servant of the People” it can be expected that Romanian experience and good practices in this field will be demanded.

Information security and cybersecurity, reforms in the field of energy sector should be also considered as promising areas of cooperation.

### **Recommendations**

- The key task for the new parliament is re-launching the Ukraine-Romania group of friendship. It is worth to consider the experience of the previously existing group and to engage Maksym Burbak into the process of shaping the group and briefing its new members on the current state of bilateral affairs;
- The members of the group of friendship, foreign affairs committee and the faction leaders should be briefed on the promising areas in the field of bilateral relations as well as on protracted problems. For this purpose, the resources of the Ukraine-Romania International Experts Consortium, Romania-Ukraine Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation and Foreign Policy Portal can be used and respective educational courses can be launched for the Ukrainian MPs and their aids;
- The rotation of the parliamentary leadership should be used for unfreezing the bilateral dialogue at the level of the heads of the parliament: the head of the Romanian Senate should be invited to Ukraine and reciprocity visit of the speaker of the Ukrainian parliament to Bucharest should be organized;
- Ukrainian parliamentary leadership should also set a contact with the Romanian deputy representing Ukrainian minority in Romanian parliament Nicolae-Miroslav Petrețchi;
- Members of the Ukrainian parliament should be invited to the upcoming second edition of the Romania-Ukraine Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation. It will enable them to discuss the most relevant issues of bilateral Ukraine-Romania cooperation with the experts and public activists both from Ukraine and Romania.

Except for the parliamentary dimension attention should be also paid to other promising areas:

- Considering the growing role of media and topical issues of common interest that was indicated during parliamentary campaign in Ukraine and might be also articulated within presidential campaign in Romania joint media initiatives, as well as investigative media projects can be of added value. Thus, the mutual interest could be enhanced, common problems and jointly elaborated solutions could be

brought in the spotlight. The relations could be further promoted via the social media, Internet channels, etc. Also, civil society joint initiatives aimed at bringing together and training journalists from both countries can be beneficial for improving bilateral relations;

- Amidst the necessity to resolve the existing sensitive issues in the field of minority (e.g the issue of Article 7 of the Law on education) there are certain areas where minorities can serve as a tool for enhanced cooperation – a good opportunity in this regard in cooperation between the Crimean Tatars minority. Since it is present in both countries it can serve as a connecting tool;
- Finally, often underestimated economic sphere should be developed and for this purpose the activities of the Joint intergovernmental Commission on economic, technical and scientific cooperation between Ukraine and Romania should be enhanced.

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## CHAPTER 2.

### Ukraine and Romania in the Framework of the EU and NATO Cooperation

*Hanna Shelest, PhD*

For the last decade, Ukraine-Romania cooperation has been mostly considered on a bilateral level of relations between the neighbouring states. These years have witnessed ups and downs. The relations have intensified since 2014, however they are still lacking a strategic approach and a vision, which will not limit possibilities only by bilateral formats, or joint membership in regional organizations. While other Eastern European states such as Poland or Lithuania traditionally seen as locomotives for Ukrainian European aspirations, Romania is still to find its place. Romanian Presidency in the EU in 2019, as well as active voice on bringing NATO to the Black Sea open additional channels for Ukrainian-Romanian interactions.

#### **The European Union**

Romania firmly supports Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU.<sup>27</sup> Despite any difficulties in the bilateral relations, Romania never doubted or slow-down Ukrainian European aspirations. In July 2014, Bucharest became the first EU capital, which ratified Ukraine-EU Association agreement. Among top priorities of its 2019 EU presidency, it was stated: "A special focus must be placed on strengthening the concrete EU answers to the European aspirations of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia".<sup>28</sup>

Romanian own position within the EU is not always stable. Still being blocked from becoming a member of the Schengen zone, recent crisis due to the anti-corruption reforms and anti-corruption prosecutor appointment, does not add authority to Bucharest. At the same time, as one of the latest additions to the EU, with corruption as one of the stalemates, Romania is the very country for sharing experience and be an additional strong voice in support of Ukraine in Brussels.

Romania held its first presidency in the EU Council in the first half of the 2019. During this period, Bucharest proposed its own priorities for internal and external activities for member-states to decide. As for now, it is important that Romania would keep pace of its initiatives concerning Eastern neighbourhood and Ukraine within the EU aftermath.

The Presidency had some positive achievements on this track and some opportunities that were not seized. One should mention from the outset that presidency in the Council of the European Union is not a very influential tool to push for changes in a very bureaucratic mechanism of the EU decision-making. Unfortunately for Romania, it is

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<sup>27</sup> Romania firmly supports Ukraine's rapprochement with EU. 2017. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. <https://ue.mae.ro/en/romania-news/5288>

<sup>28</sup> Programme of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. 1 January – 30 June 2019. [https://www.romania2019.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/en\\_rogramme\\_ropres2019.pdf](https://www.romania2019.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/en_rogramme_ropres2019.pdf)

also coincided with some political difficulties on a national level and in the EU at large (European Parliament elections, Brexit negotiations, etc.). That narrowed space for manoeuvre and expected outcomes.

On a bilateral level, Ukrainian authorities did not harbour large expectations on the Romanian Presidency, as major communication with the EU was channelled via traditional contacts with relevant European institutions and buttressed up with personal good relations between the EU's and Ukraine's top officials.

Being a neighbouring state, Romania represents a natural partner for Ukraine and Moldova. That is why from the preparatory stage, Bucharest put a strong focus on the **Eastern Partnership**, as a dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, the Eastern Partnership was declared as one of the priorities of the presidency with a very rich calendar of official events to be held. Romania hosted a range of sectoral official meetings under the framework of the multinational institutional architecture of the Eastern Partnership. Ministerials and panels on digitalization, transport, SMEs, energy as well as Youth Forum and Business Forum were effectively organized in this time span.

A large number of the EaP official and public events have been organized in many EU and partner states dedicated to the 10th anniversary since the official launch of the Eastern Partnership Program, most of which were supported by the Romanian Presidency, despite the fact that back in 2009, Romania was not very enthusiastic about this Polish-Swedish initiative. The highest attention was drawn to the EaP High-Level Conference in Brussels in May 2019<sup>29</sup>, where Romanian representatives were welcoming participants, as it has started the official EU's consultation process on new horizons of the Eastern Partnership.

Bucharest advocated further and deeper implementation of the 20 deliverables in the Eastern Partnership region until 2020 as a joint road map for cooperation of the EU with partner-states. Officially approved during the EaP Summit in Brussels back in 2017, 20 deliverables focus predominantly on the bilateral tracks, connecting achievements of milestones in four priority areas with resources and financial programs available within the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

Progress monitoring, undertaken by the European External Action Service in April 2019, showed that very little progress was achieved in the EaP states in a period from October 2018 until April 2019. Only two deliverables indicated positive dynamics in approaching to the milestones of 2020, namely in support to the implementation of the public administration reform and harmonizing digital markets. Little success in some areas, especially when it came to Moldova and Ukraine, was attributed to the very intensive electoral processes, which changed drastically domestic political landscape in both countries. And while Ukraine embarked on positive track of implementation of the Association Agreement, Moldova downslided and weakened its profits as a leader in cooperation with the EU.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that with a new leadership in Ukraine and Moldova, the situation can change again, as new Moldovan Government has already

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<sup>29</sup> Eastern Partnership 10th Anniversary High-Level Conference. 14.05.2019. <https://www.eap-events.eu/ehome/late-comers-10-anniversary-conference/agenda/>

intensified its dialogue with the EU, while new Ukrainian President and Parliament have not formulated their position about the Eastern Partnership, and will it be among their priorities.

**2019 European Parliament Elections** brought 32 MEP from Romania, representing six political parties. Despite a raise of certain nationalism inside of Romania, as for now it has not influenced positions of different parties about Ukraine. Back in 2014, all Romanian MEPs voted in favour of Ukrainian Association Agreement. Later, there were no dissonance on their positions about sanctions or territorial integrity of Ukraine. The new Ukrainian Parliament will need not to hesitate to establish good working relations with new MEPs from Romania for continuation of this trend.

**The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)** was adopted on December 8, 2010 by the European Commission. The EUSDR aims to provide the infrastructure, environmental, socio-economic and institutional development of the region. Both Romania and Ukraine are covered by it. The Danube Region Strategy addresses a wide range of issues divided among 4 pillars and 12 priority areas (Waterways Mobility, Rail-Road-Air Mobility, Sustainable Energy, Culture & Tourism, Water Quality, Environmental Risks, Biodiversity & Landscape, Knowledge Society, Competitiveness of Enterprises, People & Skills, Institutional Capacity & Cooperation, and Security).<sup>30</sup> Each priority area is managed by two countries as Priority Area Coordinators. Romania is in charge of three PA - Waterways Mobility, Culture and Tourism, and Environmental Risks, while Ukraine did not take any responsibility.

Waterways Mobility Priority can be a good framework for Ukraine-Romania cooperation, as such targets as increase the cargo transport on the river by 20% by 2020 compared to 2010; solve obstacles to navigability, taking into account the specific characteristics of each section of the Danube and its navigable tributaries and establish effective waterway infrastructure management by 2020; develop efficient multimodal terminals at river ports along the Danube; implement harmonised River Information Services (RIS) and solve the shortage of qualified personnel and harmonize education standards in inland navigation in the Danube region by 2020 have a potential for development of Ukrainian Bessarabia. In 2019, a ferry line Orlovka-Isaccea across the Danube River should become the first project of private investments that can become a pilot one for closer Ukrainian-Romanian cooperation within Danube Strategy Waterways Mobility Projects. Unfortunately, its start has been delayed for some years, the latest due to the unreadiness of the Romanian pier.

**Transborder Cooperation.** Transborder cooperation between Ukraine and Romania is among the most controversial thus perspective fields of cooperation. Most of the transborder cooperation projects are financed by the European Union through its European Neighbourhood Instrument. As for now, there are two programs in a process of implementation: Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020 (60 mln euro budget)<sup>31</sup>, and Black Sea Basin

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<sup>30</sup> One Strategy - 12 Priorities. The Danube Region Strategy. <https://www.danube-region.eu/about/priorities>

<sup>31</sup> Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine. <http://ro-ua.net/en/about-the-programme/overview.html>

2014-2020 (54 mln euro budget)<sup>32</sup>. If the bilateral program is sponsored just through the European Neighbourhood Instrument, so the Black Sea Basin receives funding from the ENI as well as from the European Regional Development Fund and the Instrument for Pre-Accession.

Before 2013, there was Romania - Ukraine – Republic of Moldova program (127-mln euro budget),<sup>33</sup> which in 2014 was divided into two separate programs: Ukraine-Romania and Moldova-Romania.

Significant delays in projects evaluation and implementation, dominance of Romanian evaluators and assessors, as well as unreadiness of the Ukrainian side to co-finance projects of transborder cooperation - affected effectiveness of such programs implementation. Division of the Romanian-Moldovan-Ukrainian Program into two separate tracks also decreased a number of important projects that could be realised, especially in the environmental sphere. A lot of projects are currently in the progress with a mirror rather than a transborder effect that doesn't bring added value to the transborder interactions.

In the EU Presidency Programme it is stated that “Romania will reaffirm the importance of the Black Sea on the European Union agenda”<sup>34</sup> that is a reference to the well-forgotten **EU Black Sea Synergy** that has been needed a serious revise. In March 2019, the European Commission presented a review of this declarative document, confirming its practical value and positive contribution to regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.<sup>35</sup> The main problem is that countries of the region have never perceived the Black Sea Synergy as the EU Strategy towards the regions, as it lacked implementation plans, and was quite a general, leaving security issues behind.

On the 17 June 2019, the European Council adopted conclusions on the EU's engagement to the Black Sea regional cooperation.<sup>36</sup> The document emphasised both security issues and maritime cooperation, paying special attention to the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, adopted on the 21 May 2019 during a Ministerial meeting in Bucharest and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea, launched in Bucharest, on 8 May 2019 focusing on blue economy. Such documents widen a possibility of cooperation between Ukraine and Romania in the Black Sea besides the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

At the same time, transborder cooperation can be intensified not only through the EU financial instruments, and not to be limited to issues of environment, culture and ethnic minorities.

In September 2018, Ukraine joined the Romanian-Moldovan Galati Contact Centre,

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<sup>32</sup> Black Sea Basin 2014-2020. <https://blacksea-cbc.net/black-sea-basin-2014-2020/>

<sup>33</sup> Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova Joint Operational Programme. <http://www.ro-ua-md.net/en/>

<sup>34</sup> Programme of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. 1 January – 30 June 2019. [https://www.romania2019.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/en\\_rogramme\\_ropres2019.pdf](https://www.romania2019.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/en_rogramme_ropres2019.pdf) p. 17

<sup>35</sup> Joint Staff Working Document. Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2015-2018. European Commission. 05.03.2019.

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<sup>36</sup> Black Sea: Council adopts conclusions. European Council. 17.06.2019.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/17/black-sea-council-adopts-conclusions/>

where it will be represented by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine.<sup>37</sup> The goal of the Galati Contact Centre is the swift exchange of information between the border, customs and police departments of the participating countries to fight against international and transnational crime. The sphere of **transborder cooperation of law enforcement agencies** has high potential for bilateral relations, and can be implemented on bilateral, multilateral levels or within cooperation with international organizations. Integrated border management is another topic for practical cooperation.

Romanian authorities see real military and hybrid threats stemming from Russia. And here Ukraine obtained a partner in awareness rising initiatives as for hybrid challenges in the Black Sea region. However, while talking about security agenda, Romania prefers to use NATO framework rather than the EU.

From one hand, Romania, despite being a neighbour, is not a close ally of Ukraine in promoting its security concerns further on the EU's agenda, compared to Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, which were very engaged in supporting Ukraine. Quite telling is that during the Romanian presidency, it was Denmark that summoned a meeting of the EU Council to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemn the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. On other hand, Romania does not belong to the camp of the EU member-states calling for "business as usual" with Russia and lifting sanctions.

## NATO

Romanian role in the security support of Ukraine is usually badly known in Ukraine. With an artificially constructed image of Romania as a country that has territorial claims over Ukraine, that has been actively used before 2013, it is still problematic to persuade general public about constructive approach of Bucharest towards Ukraine. Territorial dispute over Zmeiny island despite its peaceful settlement in the ICJ, illegal issuing of the Romanian passports in border regions of Ukraine and statements of some Romanian politicians about Great Romania and Ukrainian Bessarabia - still influence perception of Romanian, and is well used by those supporters of the Russian Federation, who would like to demonstrate that it is not only Moscow who can be seen as a threat.

Romania constantly insists on the greater NATO involvement in the Black Sea Region<sup>38</sup>. Here vision of two countries are greatly coincide. While Turkey has always been opposing wider NATO presence in the Black Sea region, considering that only littoral states should bear responsibility for its security, Romania favoured bigger role for NATO as an organization in the Black Sea. This especially was vivid after the so-called Kerch incident on 25 November 2018, when Romania was one of few who insisted on widening NATO

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<sup>37</sup> Ukraine joined the Romanian-Moldovan Galati Contact Centre. Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. 28.09.2018. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-priyednalasya-do-rumuno-moldavskogo-kontaktynogo-centru-obminu-danimi-galac>

<sup>38</sup> Romanian President urges NATO to increase presence in Black Sea region. 17.02.2019. <https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/romanian-president-urges-nato-to-increase-presence-in-black-sea-region-37097.html>

presence to counter Russian aggressive actions, while other NATO member-states remained reluctant<sup>39</sup>.

A Romanian approach is close to Ukrainian one, NATO must strengthen its deterrence and defence potential on the eastern flank. And Eastern flank doesn't mean only Central-Eastern Europe, but the Black Sea, where security challenges are increasing.

**NATO Trust Fund.** Currently NATO is implementing projects within seven Trust Funds in Ukraine. Romania has assumed the role of Lead Nation for the Trust Fund created to support cyber defence in Ukraine, with contributions from several Allies. The Trust Fund was declared operational in December 2014. Its aims are to provide Ukraine with the necessary support to develop its strictly defensive, CSIRT1-type technical capabilities, including laboratories to investigate cyber security incidents. The project also has a training and advisory dimension with an adaptive approach that is based on the interests of both Allies and Ukraine.<sup>40</sup> After the end of the first phase, Romanian and Ukrainian authorities have continued working to structure its second phase and to attract additional financing.

When BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony - two naval initiatives – are not working anymore, Ukraine and Romania received a possibility to consider what other options of smart maritime defence they can develop.

It is important to emphasize that Romania is not only working on a bilateral level or within NATO itself to support Ukraine, but also tries to establish **multilateral formats** that can directly or indirectly facilitate Black Sea and Ukrainian security. There are two such formats that can be described as an example recently.

**Black Sea Fleet.** In 2016, Romania expressed idea of the so-called “Black Sea Fleet”, which could unite Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine's fleet. While Ukraine actively supported an idea of the new naval cooperation initiative, Bulgaria hesitated, being afraid to irritate Russia. An absence of the clear concept, how this initiative would look like, made President Iohannis to explain, stating that an initiative designed for cooperation in the area of joint exercises and joint training and should be deployed under the NATO umbrella, because all the three Black Sea countries — Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey — are NATO allies.<sup>41</sup>

As the idea of the Black Sea Fleet failed, Romania concentrated on the multilateral drills in the Black Sea. The latest are NATO multi-national Sea Shield 2019 naval drills that took place from April 5 to April 13, 2019. 14 Romanian warships and 6 warships from Bulgaria, Canada, Greece, the Netherlands, and Turkey with 2,200 troops carried out joint

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<sup>39</sup> EU, NATO React Coolly To Ukraine's Call For New Moves Against Russia. RFE/RL. 30.11.2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-nato-react-cooly-ukraine-poroshenko-call-new-moves-against-russia/29629488.html>

<sup>40</sup> Ukraine. Cyber Defence Trust Fund. June 2016. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160712\\_1606-trust-fund-ukr-cyberdef.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160712_1606-trust-fund-ukr-cyberdef.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> AGERPRES. 2016. “Iohannis: Black Sea naval initiative refers to joint training exercise; nobody creates NATO fleet.” 16.06.2016. <http://www.agerpres.ro/english/2016/06/16/iohannis-black-sea-naval-initiative-refers-to-joint-training-exercise-nobody-creates-nato-fleet-20-35-54>

combat tasks in the Black Sea region.<sup>42</sup> The scenario of the Sea Shield 2019 exercise aimed at planning and conducting a Crisis Response Operation in the context of a security environment characterized by symmetric and asymmetric threats.<sup>43</sup> It would be important Ukraine to join such NATO drills.

**Turkish – Polish - Romanian Trilateral Consultations.** In April 2019, Foreign ministers of Turkey, Poland and Romania met in Ankara for the fifth military-political trilateral consultations, where it was stated that *“Ukraine and Georgia should become members of NATO to help strengthen security in the Black Sea region which is being fundamentally undermined by Russian actions”*.<sup>44</sup> Such meetings happening annually between the three ministers steadily confirmed *“support to our partners - Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, with a focus on increasing their security and defence capacities and their resilience”*<sup>45</sup>. At the Forth meeting in Bucharest in 2018, the Romanian side managed to include a very sharp statement about Russia, what has been important due to the rapprochement in Russian-Turkish relations happening those days – *“We continue to follow with concern Russia’s increasing and visible offensive military posturing, including near NATO borders, such as repeated violation of NATO airspace, the continued military build-up in Crimea and Kaliningrad, Russia’s large scale military exercises and its continued violation of obligations and commitments on arms control and confidence building measures”*.<sup>46</sup>

With two close Ukrainian partners - Romania and Poland – encouraging Turkey for such a military dialogue, this format is very important for Ukraine, as allows keeping Turkey within positive security alliances in opposite to Russia in the Black Sea region. Though, it will be interesting to have similar meeting in Ukraine – Romania - Poland or Ukraine – Romania – Poland -Turkey formats.

According to Kremlin Watch: Romania explicitly identifies Russia as a threat to its national security in the realms of information warfare, cyberattacks, and other hybrid tactics. Despite this acknowledgement, Romania’s strategic capabilities with respect to these threats are still relatively underdeveloped.<sup>47</sup> Building resilience of its member-states and partners recently became a top-priority for NATO. That is a sphere, where Ukraine can be not just a recipient but also a provider of experience and best practises in cooperation with

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<sup>42</sup> NATO to hold multi-national Sea Shield 2019 drills in Black Sea. UNIAN. 03.04.2019. <https://www.unian.info/world/10504107-nato-to-hold-multi-national-sea-shield-2019-drills-in-black-sea.html>

<sup>43</sup> “SEA SHIELD 19”- THE LARGEST NATO EXERCISE FROM THE BLACK SEA REGION-BEGINS. Ministry of National Defence of Romania. 02.04.2019. [https://english.mapn.ro/cpresa/5081\\_%E2%80%9CSEA-SHIELD-19%E2%80%9D--THE-LARGEST-NATO-EXERCISE-FROM-THE-BLACK-SEA-REGION-BEGINS](https://english.mapn.ro/cpresa/5081_%E2%80%9CSEA-SHIELD-19%E2%80%9D--THE-LARGEST-NATO-EXERCISE-FROM-THE-BLACK-SEA-REGION-BEGINS)

<sup>44</sup> Foreign ministers of Turkey, Poland and Romania advocate in favor of Ukraine joining NATO. 20.04.2019. UAWire. <https://uawire.org/foreign-ministers-of-turkey-poland-and-romania-advocate-in-favor-of-ukraine-joining-nato#>

<sup>45</sup> Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Romania and Turkey. Joint Press Statement. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. 08.25.2017. <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/42917>

<sup>46</sup> Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Romania, Poland and Turkey. Joint Press Release. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. 09.11.2018. <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/46865>

<sup>47</sup> Romania. Kremlin Watch Briefing. 2019. <https://www.kremlinwatch.eu/countries-compared-states/romania/>

Romania.

So far, these concerns have entered official government strategy documents in Romania but have not been effectively put into practice.<sup>48</sup> Ukraine on its turn developed both documents and action plans, as well as active practise, even though a lot of work is still to be done.

## **Conclusions**

It is possible to make a conclusion that despite positive developments in Ukrainian-Romanian relations in recent years, they are still predominantly using mechanisms of the bilateral relations, while cooperation via instruments of the international organizations such as the EU and NATO is still underperformed. Positive trends triggered by the Romanian EU Presidency and NATO catch of attention towards the Black Sea are still to be developed and facilitated for real potential performance. Good practises of the project's positive implementation in security, maritime, blue economy, waterways mobility and other spheres will build a next level of the bilateral relations. However, a lot will depend on a political will from both sides, how much foreign policy will remain a top priority of the Ukrainian new leadership, and shared perception of threats assessment.

## **Recommendations**

1. To analyse possibilities for Joint Romania-Ukrainian projects within PESCO. As a new initiative and with “windows” left open for the UK involvement, Ukraine and Romania can study possibilities for joint projects especially in Research and Development military domain or joint navy developments.

2. To evaluate and reshape transborder cooperation financial instruments – ENI joint operational programs. First of all it is necessary to evaluate and audit previous financing cycles, including setting priorities mechanism, responsibilities of managing institutions and assessors, transborder effect of the projects, co-financing process, etc. After evaluation, a new consultation mechanism can be needed to involve more civil society and local authorities' representatives, less central governmental control. It is also necessary to study a possibility to return back to Ukraine – Moldova - Romania trilateral program implementation.

3. To analyse new possibilities of cooperation within Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, as well as new EU approaches towards Black Sea cooperation. With decreasing role of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the EU can receive more possibilities for involvement interesting for its member states and association countries. Blue economy, waterways mobility, development of cruise shipping,

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<sup>48</sup> Romania. Kremlin Watch Briefing.2019. <https://www.kremlinwatch.eu/countries-compared-states/romania/>

protection of the sea natural resources and responsible fishing policy are those spheres where Ukraine and Romania can joint efforts for cooperation and attraction of the EU financing and resources.

4. To revise Ukrainian participation in the EU Danube Strategy and possible projects for cooperation with Romania within respective priority areas. Ukraine has neglected the EU Danube Strategy and Danube cooperation for quite a long time, As Ukraine and Romania not only share Danube but have a river border between them, neighbouring each other, there are more option for cooperation from environment to waterways mobility, development of tourism and natural resources protection.

5. To jointly promote drafting a coherent NATO Black Sea Strategy. Since 2014, Ukraine and Georgia are insisting that NATO should finally have a complex and coherent vision about its role in the Black Sea region. This issue has been raised at each NATO summit since then. However, even that it got to the texts of Final Declarations, the real policy development is still missing. While Ukraine and Romania are sharing an idea of greater NATO involvement in the Black Sea region, they can become a locomotive of drafting such a strategy. It would be advisable to attract a wide range of experts from interested states to participate in such drafting that can be similar to a process of the EU Global Strategy development.

6. To consider a possibility of smart defence or smart maritime defence development between Ukraine and Romania with emphasis on the Danube and the Black Sea region. Considering limited possibilities of both Ukraine and Romania in military sphere but shared threats, as well as shared river and sea borders, it is worth studying experience of the Northern European states in the development of smart defence practises that can involve both NATO and non-NATO states. This also can allow attracting Moldova to some spheres of cooperation.

7. To study a possibility of the joint Ukrainian-Romanian battle group or battalion, similar to existing Ukrainian-Polish-Lithuanian format. Ukrainian-Polish and Ukrainian-Polish-Lithuanian joint brigades demonstrated efficiency both for increasing interoperability of forces, sharing experiences and joint participation in peacekeeping operations. Establishing of the similar format between Ukraine and Romania will allow to build trust, which is lacking, and to improve operability of forces both for defence of the Northern Black Sea and Danube and participation in crisis management operation out of Europe. Navy group can be an innovative and perspective format.

8. To develop not only cyber security component within NATO, but pay stronger attention for building resilience and sharing experience and best practises in this sphere. Since 2018, NATO pays special attention to building resilience, especially in the Black Sea region. This sphere can be important for exchange of experience (as due to ongoing conflict Ukraine has a significant experience), development of joint response mechanisms, sharing best practises and protocols, analysing ways of assistance or joint response in case of transborder effects of the threats.

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## **Project Description:**

The Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association, Bucharest, and its partner, Ukrainian Foreign Council "Prism", Kyiv, has launched in January 2019 a new project with the title

"The Romanian – Ukrainian Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation".

The project was supported by the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project of the German Marshall Fund.

The development of formal discussions between Romanian and Ukrainian experts in an organized form – a bilateral Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, aims to provide continuity of the dialogue among different actors interested in the development of the bilateral partnership on specific, pragmatic and relevant issues for both sides.

For the first meeting, that took place in February 2019 we have chosen to debate a topic with a high-level priority: "Perceptions of Hybrid Threats and Informational Warfare in Romania and Ukraine. How to Align Interests and Options?"

Our aim through the first edition of the Forum is to address threats and common challenges to our national interests.

The strategy for developing the Romanian – Ukrainian Civil Society Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation is based on two elements:

1. The constant meetings of a working group consisting of experts who deal in their analyses with the Romanian-Ukrainian dialogue, which will have the mission to identify solutions and recommendations for common challenges;
2. To organize public thematic meetings, depending on the priorities of the bilateral dialogue, identified as such by the working group.

The third element relates to the external work of this working group, namely, to communicate transparently to the interested public new elements of the bilateral dialogue, as well as to positively influence the cooperation between the public institutions of both states.

The Project goal is assistance in the increase of the potential of cooperation and political influence/role of expert community and civil society actors, elaboration of common perception of goals, objectives and threats in the region, further strengthening and widening of the contacts between the experts and civil society activists and sharing best practices in tackling the aforementioned issues by reloading the format of the annual bilateral Romania-Ukraine Civil Society Forum.

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