THE HISTORICAL AND CURRENT STATE OF ROMANIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS
Established by Margaret Thatcher, New Direction is Europe’s leading free market political foundation & publisher with offices in Brussels, London, Rome & Warsaw.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Russian Influence in Romania</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Romania in a Changing Global Context: Relations with the US and Russia</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Russian Influence in Romania</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Is Romania a 'Natural' Enemy of Russia</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Russia has been a significant neighbour and regional actor for Romania since the end of the Communist regime in 1989. Russia has been perceived in Romania as a threat for much of its history. The annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine have strengthened concerns in Romania over Russia’s intentions and its scope of presence and influence in the Balkans.

This report by New Direction on the Russian Regime’s influence in Romania comes at a very important time period, especially in light of the increase in support for political parties with neutral feelings towards Russia and the never-ending hybrid war in Ukraine led by President Putin. Using its old divide et impera tactics, Russia is challenging the unity of the EU Member States by taking full advantage of different factors, including economic links and support from political parties with especially strong ties to the Kremlin.

If Ukrainian conflict teaches us something, it is that the Russian regime has recently diverted much of its resources and focus from mobilising hard power in protecting its interests to soft power, including funding media outlets and political parties. These Romanian cases precisely identify this new aspect of Putin’s influence across the EU. These studies describe in detail the on going game played by the Russian regime and neatly sum up its current policy towards its former ‘Soviet Republics’ and its attempts to undermine European unity through energy interests, political funding and media (dis)information.

Russia exerts a firm influence by ‘generously’ funding Balkan media outlets at both the local and national levels. Ethnic minorities still use Russian media (mainly TV channels) as their main source of information. There is a strong correlation between time spent watching Russian RV channels and perception of Putin’s policies in a more positive light. The recent propaganda multimedia project called Sputnik, I believe poses a threat to information security in the Balkans’ and challenges their sovereignty.

Moreover, due to historical ties, it is much more difficult to grasp the Russian regime’s influence in the Balkans than it is to grasp its influence in other EU Member States. The Kremlin can play the Soviet nostalgia card as a way to influence public opinion. The same logic is behind the funding of political parties that are mostly supported by Russian-speaking populations.

After New Direction’s study on Russian Regime’s Influence in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, policy advisers and politicians should use this new research by New Direction to better understand the Russian Regime’s behaviour and reshape their policy towards Russia.
Historically, what did Romanian-Russian relations look like?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: There is a certain stereotype that Orthodox societies will always like each other and will have close relations. Despite being isolated, which took place earlier, the Romanian-Russian relations start as late as the beginning of the 18th century. At that time joint Moldovan-Russian undertakings appeared, some of which succeeded while others did not. There was Dimitrie Cantemir, a Moldovan hospodar and eminent scholar, who bound his fate with Peter the Great. In this arrangement, Russia seemed to be a patron of Christian societies in the Balkans and Middle East thanks to the Orthodox faith. In the case of Romania, however, the relations weren’t that simple. When Russia, at Turkey’s expense, started to acquire the first parts of the territory in the Balkans, it did so at the expense of duchies, which now compose modern-day Romania. In 1812 Russia divided the Principality of Moldavia into two parts, thus ruthlessly annexing Bessarabia into the Russian state. However, the first annexation attempt was made earlier by Catherine the Great. Later, during the Crimean War, Russians lost a part of Bessarabia. It later regained the territory as a result of the next Russian-Turkish war, which brought independence to Romanians and Serbs, as well as autonomy to Bulgarians.

There is a certain oversimplification that assumes if Bulgarians and Serbs are pro-Russian, then all Orthodox Balkan nations must be pro-Russian. Until World War II, the relations between Romania and Russia were sometimes good and sometimes bad. In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Romania pursued a multi-vector policy with the help of Austria-Hungary, Prussia and France to prevent being reduced to mental vassalage by Moscow. Romanian historians emphasise that in the 18th and 19th century, Russia waged war in the territory of the Romanian duchies ten times, thus contributing to war-related damage and devastation. For various reasons common people, aristocracy and intelligentsia were disappointed by Russia. During World War I, the countries were close allies, but it didn’t translate into lasting relations.

The relationship between Russia and Romania started to change after World War I. During the war for the territory left by the Russian Empire, both Romania and Poland fought for the shape of their future borders. Without much difficulty Romania managed to occupy Bessarabia, which the Bolshevik Russia and, subsequently, the Soviet Union refused to concede. The Soviet Union also refused to return Romania’s gold reserves (approximately USD 5 billion at today’s prices), as well as other valuable items that had been taken from Romania during World War I. Romania was
the only country in that region that didn’t sign a peace treaty with Russia during the interwar period. From the USSR point of view, the land taken by Romania was occupied territory, which meant that Romania and the Soviet Union were formally still at war.

When the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact took effect, Russians together with Germans forced the weakened Romania — who had lost France as its ally — to give back Bessarabia. The Soviet Union then partially joined Bessarabia with other territories like Bukovina to Ukraine and partially to the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which it earlier created from former Ukrainian territories. That was the beginning of the subsequent turbulence in Romanian-Russian relations.

During World War II tensions between Romania and Russia mounted due to Romanian mass propaganda advocating for war with the Soviet Union and territorial expansion to the east. When Marshal of Romania Ion Antonescu was overthrown in 1944, Romanians thought that they would cease to participate in the war at a small cost. However, they once again lost their eastern territory to Russia and became subject to the communist system. Since World War II, Romanians have had a permanent aversion to Russia because they see Russia as a country that takes territories away. Until the war, such territorial changes didn’t influence the public opinion in the long-term, but the loss of their land following World War II and the communist period preserved Romanians’ negative attitude towards Russia, though it was forbidden to voice any claims against the Soviet Union during the communist period.

Soviet troops withdrew from Romania in 1958, and since the beginning of the 1960s, no socialist state’s troops have entered Romania’s territory. After the 1960s Romanian troops refused to participate in military exercises of the Warsaw Pact. At the same time Romania eliminated so-called ‘Russian agents’ from its army. In 1961 ‘Russian’ street names were changed, and in 1963 Russian language classes ceased to be obligatory at Romanian schools. Romania, as the only Warsaw Pact member, didn’t support the Soviet Union in their conflict with China and abstained during the vote at the UN General Assembly on the resolution calling for the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Afghanistan.

Nicolae Ceauşescu, who succeeded Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej as general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, preferred to buy raw materials, such as crude oil, on the global market. But when he tried to buy from the Soviet Union, Romania was asked to pay global prices. Throughout the communist period, there was friction on numerous occasions during which Romania’s communist authorities didn’t shy away from using anti-Soviet and anti-Russian emotions to their advantage.

When the political system changed in Romania after the overthrow of Nicolae Ceauşescu, the power was taken by communist elites. The next president, Ion Iliescu, was one of the leading communist activists and a beneficiary of the previous political regime. Though Romanians weren’t particularly interested in looking for any interests in the East, the government took advantage of the anti-communist wave and sought to sign a treaty of good neighbourship with the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union disintegrated before relevant activities were finalised.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Romania has not attempted to increase positive Romanian-Russian relations. During the post-Soviet era, Russia wasn’t important to Romania and Romania and vice versa because both countries had their respective problems and priorities. If Romanians looked at the post-Soviet area, they did it only from the point of view of their closest neighbours, Moldova and Ukraine. Romania continues to have difficult relations with both countries due in great part to resentment regarding Romania’s lost territory, as well as petty border disputes with Ukraine that have yet to be fully solved (e.g. the dispute for islets on the Danube or the recently solved dispute about Snake Island on the Black Sea). Bucharest has problems with Kiev, Chișinău and Transnistria. Russia appears in the context of the latter, but it’s as distant to Romania as Kazakhstan to Poland. Russians likewise have not been too willing to strengthen relations with Romanians.

Economic relations between Romania and Russia are not crucial to either country’s prosperity, apart from the fact that Romania imports Russian gas. Russia’s position as a trade partner to Romania varies each year from around fifth most important to tenth or beyond. However, Romania is more and more closely connected to the West, and the Romanian political forces are focused on that. Romania has sought to build good relations with Latin countries and the West. They joined NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007. During this time there were minor squabbles between Russia and Romania, but none of significance.

Russians were frustrated with Romania for helping NATO bombard New Yugoslavia in 1999 over the Kosovo crisis. Romania closed its airspace to Russia, preventing any transport of military aid to Serbia, but opened their airspace for NATO. However, Bulgaria also sided with NATO over Russia, which Russia relied on much more heavily. Consequently, there haven’t been any intense relations between Romania and Russia – neither very bad, nor very good.

**Agata Supińska**: *Studying the Russian influence in Romania, we assume that there has been a significant influence. Can we then identify, when Russia’s interest in Romania began? When Russia first tried to control or influence Romania’s internal situation? Was it the annexation of Crimea in 2014, or did Russians realize even earlier Romania’s important position in southeastern Europe?*

Stanisław Górka, PhD: This issue has been poorly researched for the most part. Romanian politicians, media persons, think-tanks and academics alike have not explored in detail this issue prior in time to Crimean’s annexation. Nobody was particularly preoccupied with that question, which is why it’s difficult to know when the issue of the Russian influence became so important. We can’t explicitly deny Russian attempts to pursue interests in Romania at the end of the 1990s or at the beginning of the 21st century, as the subject hasn’t been properly researched. We are, however, able to indicate the episodes in history during which the tension between Russia and Romania has intensified.

In the 2000s, after George W. Bush came to power, the situation between Romania and Russia became tense because of the anti-missile shield project. At that time, Romania was indicated as one of the places where the anti-ballistic missile base was to be located. When President Barack Obama resigned from the base in Poland, a decision was made to construct an alternative base – of the Aegis Ashore type – in Romania. In 2010, Americans struck that deal with Bucharest very smoothly and fast, without much haggling, doubts or publicity on the Romanian side. The Deveselu Air Base was completed as one of the places where the anti-ballistic missile base was to be located. When President Barack Obama resigned.
Romania. Though before Crimea’s annexation, Russia didn’t have the same success in joining NATO than supporters, even in the Lviv region. and over the course of Yushchenko’s presidency, protests organised by Ukrainian circles and supported by the West, but the government was met with effective means problems that would raise a lot of emotions in Poland often pass unnoticed there.

Russians tried to prevent the construction of the anti-missile base in Romania, but they did it quite clumsily and without imagination, using mainly protests and threats that building the shield would make Romania a target country for Russia, as if it wouldn’t become one without the shield. In comparison to Romania, Russia was able to masterfully exert influence in Ukraine to prevent Western alliances in the region. During the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine aspired to join NATO and cooperate closer with the West, but the government was met with effective protests organised by Ukrainian circles and supported by Moscow. Russia aimed to influence public opinion, and over the course of Yushchenko’s presidency, they succeeded for there were more opponents to joining NATO than supporters, even in the Lviv region. However, Russia didn’t have the same success in Romania. Though before Crimea’s annexation, Russia had not fully spread its wings yet or grown into the Russia we know today.

Undoubtedly Russia has made many attempts at exerting influence in Romania, but they have yet to achieve anything spectacular. Russia has tried to win over individual politicians, media people or intellectuals, but the process isn’t organised or large-scale in nature. Some notable examples include the post-communist, former president Ion Iliescu and former prime minister Adrian Năstase – both members of the Social Democratic Party. Though Russia succeeded in making part of the Romanian political scene willing to develop good relations with them for the benefits it would provide, this goodwill did not change Romania’s pro-western position.

In 2000, after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Russia lost much of Romania’s trust. In response to the revolution, Russia ‘turned off the tap’ of their gas pipeline, which provided fuel to Ukraine. However, Russia did more damage to the Balkan countries by turning off the gas tap than in Eastern or Western Europe, because the Balkans were dependent on that single pipe. After it was turned off, they lost everything. Prior to this event, Romania imported nearly half of its gas supply from Russia, and Bulgaria imported as much as 100%. Being left without fuel was a cold shower to Romanians and a signal that something needed to be done because Russia couldn’t be trusted. In response, Romania’s current gas imports from Russia never exceed 10% of their demand. Not only has Russia failed to sway Romania from their pro-western policy, but it has strengthened Romania’s allegiance to the West as a result of the careless steps it has taken.

However, Romanians have started to change their attitude towards Russia in connection with the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Bucharest’s official policy has not changed, but Russia has managed to influence Romanian society and some politicians to such an extent that many have started to doubt whether their choice to be pro-western was right, considering the context of an aggressive Russia. Romanians doubt whether NATO will defend their country in the case of a threat. NATO has said that it won’t, and the alliance won’t do as much as Romanians would like it to do. Such dilemmas with international alliances appear also in Poland. Russia has succeeded in undermining the trust Romania and Poland have in their alliances with the West through the EU and NATO. Russia’s political campaign to influence Romanian politics has succeeded in that regard, and it acts in this area with ease because Romania’s doubts in their Western alliances have genuine grounds. The alliance isn’t as reliable as it was in the 1950s. Romanians fear that Western alliances won’t do anything to protect them, and their fear is shared by Poland and other Baltic states.

Agata Supińska: Does Romania take any preventive actions to resolve its fear and lack of trust in the effectiveness of Western defensive tools? Or does it remain passive about it?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: Romania has taken actions aimed at strengthening its defensive potential and at making allies more interested in it, similar to what Poland has done. Romania and the Baltic states believe that the more countries in the region that emphasise the plausibility of the Russian threat, the better. Despite the fact that Romania objectively seems to be in a better position, since it has already modernised its S-300 missiles, and the United States has said that it won’t, and the alliance won’t do as much as Romanians would like it to do. Such a position of the eastern European countries has influenced NATO’s actions since the 2014 Newport Summit in Wales up until the Warsaw Summit today. Poland and Romania have been strengthened by the presence of the Americans and other allies, and the process will continue.

Since the end of 2015, the headquarters of the Multinational Division Southeast has been stationed in Bucharest. It was created mainly on the base of the Romanian Dacica Division, but it also includes officers from Bulgaria and 12 other countries. And since the end of 2015, Romanians have had in their territory the American Aegis Ashore base with Standard Missiles (SM-3). This base makes Romanians feel more secure in their main ally’s involvement in their country. The American Black Sea Area Support Team operates in the territory of Romania and Bulgaria, which has sparked Russian protests. Apart from US involvement in the country, other Western nations have also taken a greater interest in Romania in recent years. In 2017 four British Eurofighter Typhoons were temporarily stationed in Romania. NATO Force Integration Units are currently operating in Bucharest and Sofia, as well as in Poland and other Baltic states. Their main objective is to improve the coordination and cooperation between the countries and NATO, and their presence in Romania provides greater security in the event that the country must quickly deploy troops.

Romania’s security, however, was strengthened much before the Russian annexation of Crimea. Americans have used the Romanian MK Air Base since 1999.

In 2003, because of the US’s involvement in Iraq,
Americans were using four Romanian bases for their military operations. In June 2004, at the Istanbul NATO Summit, decisions favourable to Bucharest were taken in The Euro-Atlantic Partnership - Refocusing and Renewal report. In connection with the activity of the US and NATO forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the main vector of interest was shifted away from eastern Europe, including the frontline countries Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland, to southeastern Europe, i.e. the eastern Balkans, Turkey, southern Caucasus, and as far as Central Asia. The US became more interested in Romania and Bulgaria earlier than we noticed, and it happened not because of the location of the anti-missile shield there, but rather in connection to the US’s activity in the broader Middle East. Consequently, Romania enjoys a long tradition of good cooperation with the US.

Agata Supińska: We can see that Romania has made efforts to strengthen its security. However, what do the actions aimed at strengthening its economy look like? Does Romania try to make its economic bonds with the West stronger to push off the risk of the Russian influence in the Romanian economy?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: It’s often pointed out that Romania, like Bulgaria, is a country with high levels of corruption. Because of this, implementing bigger economic projects in Romania goes less smoothly. When it comes to economic issues, we can’t see signs of significant efforts in Romania. The country’s dependence on Russian gas is gradually decreasing compared to Bulgaria, where dependence on Russian gas remains a serious problem.

What’s more, construction of interconnectors is underway in the eastern Balkans, which is likely to bring some stabilisation in the region. In the case of Romania, it’s the Arad–Szeged pipeline, which connects its system with the Hungarian one. Bucharest focuses on using gas from its own resources, in particular on the Black Sea shelf, and is constructing an LNG terminal. Romania is open to regional initiatives to construct pipelines, in particular those which go from south to north, such as the previous SRUA (Bulgaria–Romania–Hungary–Austria) project, the Eastring initiative ensuring connection with the Austrian gas hubs, the Vertical Corridor project, the Eastern Corridor project connecting Romania and Bulgaria with a Greek LNG terminal, the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP).

Romania also expected to contribute to the idea of the NABUCCO pipeline, at the same time blocking the Russian projects. Bucharest objected to the construction of the Russian South Stream pipeline, whereas Sofia and Budapest were interested in the pipeline’s construction due to Russian influence. At the level of strategic decisions, Romania focuses on blocking Russian projects that would deteriorate the joint regional energy security. It’s difficult, however, to pinpoint any success of the diversification increase policy or Romania’s independence regarding energy resources. What’s important is that Romanians certainly know where their interest lies.

Agata Supińska: We can see Russian influence in Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria and Serbia. Are Russia’s actions in the region aimed at creating a sort of ring around Romania? Do Romanians perceive Russian efforts in neighbouring countries as an intentional attempt at surrounding Romania with countries that succumb to the Russian policy?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: I think that initially there wasn’t any idea of a ring surrounding Romania, because Romania wasn’t particularly important to Russia. Russians were more active in places that favoured their presence. Russia was interested in the countries which were open to cooperation with Moscow, e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Croatia and Slovenia to some extent, and in certain periods Moldova or Ukraine. Consequently, in those territories Russians implemented their projects – from business and private ventures to those that were supported by the state. Private and state projects created greater potential for Russian involvement in the country and fostered potential for friendship and better relations.

Romanians weren’t interested in such a deal, so Russians weren’t too keen to enter the country. They also had other areas to take advantage of, and they did not have the same opportunity as the Chinese or Americans did to get involved in politics absolutely everywhere. Currently, Romania is encircled indeed, and the ring is somehow loosened in the east. In Moldova and Ukraine there are anti-Russian governments, creating tensions between the two countries and Russia. In contrast, Hungary and Slovakia now closely cooperate with Moscow. Although Slovakia and Romania don’t share a border, Slovakia’s Russian ties directly influence the pro-Russian ring around Romania. Though the ring isn’t closed yet, it is becoming more and more visible.

Though the ring was probably created by chance, that doesn’t mean Russia doesn’t take advantage of it. As it exists, dispassionate analysis suggests that it will be used. Romania’s anti-Russian stance may create problems between Romania and its neighbours, in addition to those it already has. Public opinion polls show neighbouring countries don’t like Romanians, and Romanians’ opinions about their neighbours are likewise rather negative. However, this complicated relationship between Romania and surrounding countries is not uncommon among Balkan nations. Though there’s currently no serious reason for such a state of affairs, there are many unresolved problems from the past that likely won’t change in the near future.

Agata Supińska: Can we say then that these negative relations between Romania and its neighbouring countries are caused by Russian influence?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: No, we can’t because Romania’s negative relationship with its neighbours is a permanent fixture. If Russia didn’t exist, Romania would still have poor relations with those countries. It’s determined by the unique nature of the whole region. The situation is similar in Hungary, where the animosity Hungarians have for Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs and Austrians is not from Russian influence, but their own history.

Agata Supińska: But Romanians don’t do anything to improve those relations?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: They don’t, but it’s because mending those relationships is not easy. If countries pursue a given policy that is populist to some extent, it can actually be more convenient to deteriorate the relationship even further for political reasons. When Hungarians play the anti-Romanian card, why shouldn’t Romanians play the anti-Hungarian one? If Romanians have grudges against Ukraine, and Kiev doesn’t know how to alleviate them, why should Bucharest reach out to Ukraine? Romanians don’t have the strategic thinking that Poland has evolved where they choose to support Ukraine at any cost. It seems now that independent Ukraine is Poland’s raison d’État. Romanians are happy that Ukraine is independent, but they don’t invest in it as much as Poles do.
limits the influence of Western liberalism. This limitation is exemplified by Georgian society, where the vast majority of people are against abortion and homosexuality, but no belligerent front has been formed with Russia in that area. Consequently, Russia can take advantage of those Orthodox bonds to some extent, but not as much as it would seem. In Romania there aren’t any mass movements for the re-Christianisation of Europe or for a return to traditional values. There is some potential to influence the internal sentiment in Romania, but it’s not strong enough to make Orthodox Romanians take action. Romanians’ religious conservatism, which is understood more broadly than religiousness itself, can be taken advantage of, and today it’s probably the strongest instrument of influence in Moscow’s arsenal, but it’s a limited one. This should be a matter of concern because it’s difficult to fight, and a direct pro-tolerance policy doesn’t bring good results. Care should be exercised in attempts at counteracting Russian influence on Romanian religious conservatism, as careless actions may lead to a more polarised society rather than a shift in sympathies.

Global Russian media, such as Russia Today, Sputnik, etc., in Moscow focuses its messages on criticising the West, which is received better than attempts at building Russia’s own positive image. Romania lacks strong environments to correct Russian abuse in the media war. Romanian media is much more passive, which has its advantages and disadvantages. Most mainstream Romanian politicians aren’t pro-Russian, although a big part of them are post-communist elites that now call themselves socialists or social democrats. However, they aren’t attracted by Russia, and they have cut their links to it because it no longer benefits them. They are pragmatic socialists who want Romania to have good economic relations with Russia, but they don’t personally seek out warm relations with the country.

Could special services exert any influence? And who could be an agent of influence? These are questions that have yet to be answered in Romania. Romanians haven’t done the work performed by Ukrainians or Poles and that’s underway in Germany and the US. There are probably numerous agents of influence in Romania, as the majority of the political elite has come from the post-communist era. During the communist time there was not mass opposition or numerous dissidents. There was also no mass emigration that would return to the homeland and set the tone, as was the case with Latvia or Estonia.

If there’s anything to be afraid of it’s the weakness of the Romanian state caused by corruption and unclear arrangements. Even without Russian interference, Romania may collapse without external pressure. The risk isn’t as high as in Ukraine, but it is clearly articulated, maybe with exaggeration, by foreign observers.

If the EU is afraid of anything, it’s that the countries in the region are inept, that they don’t reform themselves fast enough and that they are unreliable because of the black economy and corruption. At any moment a scandal may occur there turning over the whole political scene. Such a situation could happen, however, irrespective of Russia’s influence. This the nature of these countries because they have handled their past corruption and political capital less effectively. Russia may take advantage of this weakness, exacerbate it and play their cards, but the weakness itself is immanent, internal, and not the result of outside influence.

Agata Supińska: How does the EU perceive Romania? As a country being under Russian influence or as a temporary partner in southeastern Europe?

Stanisław Górska, PhD: Among the Balkan countries, Romania takes the most visible actions to counteract Russia. In Romania support for the sanctions against Russia or for actions aimed at preventing its influence are the easiest to achieve. However, these sanctions are not necessarily followed by economic decisions later. Romania is the champion of deterring Russia in the region, as is the case for Poland in Central Europe.

Agata Supińska: Could you describe and compare the instruments of the Russian influence in Moldova and Romania?

Stanislaw Górska, PhD: Moldova is a perfect example of how a few dozen years of Sovietisation can change an entire region. Moldova and Romania are at the opposite ends of the continuum. In Romania there’s no strong political force that is clearly pro-Russian. In Moldova pro-Russian sentiment is evident at various levels. First of all, Transnistria, being fully pro-Russian, holds in check the rest of Moldova, which would have to take decisions about resolving the conflict by force or lose its territory. Moldova can’t afford a radically anti-Russian or pro-western policy.
Secondly, the Moldovan elites in Transnistria are much more corrupt and depraved. The state has, in principle, collapsed there. It was first privatized by a group of oligarchs and is now controlled by one – Vladimir Plahotniuc. This is why it’s at risk for a genuine disaster, unlike Romania and Bulgaria. This state can, at some point, simply collapse, as was the case in 1990s when Albania suddenly collapsed. Furthermore, the political elites in the part of Moldova that isn’t controlled by Russia are in conflict.

There are elites that play the pro-Russian card – mainly social democrats and former communists – including Moldova’s president, who has few powers since Moldova is the only post-Soviet state with a parliamentary democracy. President Igor Dodon can, however, voice his opinion in the public discussion and play a role as a mouthpiece, which he does, travelling however, voice his opinion in the public discussion and parliamentary democracy. President Igor Dodon can, since Moldova is the only post-Soviet state with a mainly social democrats and former communists – controlled by Russia are in conflict.

The situation in Moldova limits Romania in a number of ways. Romanians, similar to certain Moldovan circles, are torn between integration aspirations, as the pro-integration movement is strong both on the Moldovan and Romanian side. On the other hand, responsible politicians know that if such plans were implemented, Moldova could not only lose Transnistria, but the country itself could disintegrate. It would lead to very serious turbulent on the Moldovan side. And, for the time being, the majority of Moldovan society – even excluding Transnistria – doesn’t want it. Consequently, they pursue neither the first nor the second policy.

Romania is a sort of Bogeyman to Moldovans, used by local politicians – not only the pro-Russian ones – by Transnistria and by Russia, who claim that one day Romania will annex Moldova’s territory. Supporters of that opinion protest against policy aimed at integration with the EU, as, according to them, it involves integration with Romania and the end of an independent Moldova. Ordinary people are, to some extent, susceptible to such slogans.

On the other hand, Russia threatens that if Romania does anything radical or too anti-Russian, it may affect the situation in Moldova or recognition of Transnistria’s independence by Moscow. Moldova holds Romania in check, and it is an unsolvable problem. On the other hand, Moldova is the antithesis of what we can see in Romania. The Romanian state is certainly weak, but in comparison with Moldova, it’s incredibly strong. In Romania, to some extent, we don’t know who is who, but recent decades show a stable willingness to integrate with the West, to identify with it and to an onrush to close contacts with Russia. In Moldova, we can’t see anything like that. Romania is a good example of the significant difference between the classical post-Soviet country that hasn’t succeeded in breaking with the past and a country that has left that past behind.

Agata Supińska: Though Slovakia and Hungary are pro-Russian, can Romania be a reliable ally for Poland in representing the eastern area at the EU forum?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: As far as political issues and security and defence are concerned, it can. Over the last few years, Romanians have shown that in this regard we can rely on them because they easily make such decisions. However, as for implementing them, the situation may vary. If Poland needs the Romanian voice to create a joint front in the EU to make the Western elites more sensitive to the Eastern threat, it already has it. However, if later on, the goal was to work hard to become independent of outside energy resources, we haven’t managed to encourage Romania to do so. Romania may support Poland in pushing for political decisions, and Warsaw can rely on that support, but Bucharest will probably do much less than Poles to implement these agreements. The reason for this is Romania lacks will and it is much weaker and less effective than Poland.

Agata Supińska: Would there be a U-turn in Romanian internal policy in the Russian context if Romanians took to the streets?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: It’s possible, but for the time being it’s unpredictable. The grass-root populist forces that have achieved a certain standing on the political scene in Hungary and Slovakia, and recently in the Czech Republic and Germany, haven’t become visible in Romania yet. That doesn’t mean, however, that there’s no potential for such a development. Disappointment with the political elites is very similar throughout the EU. For the time being, we aren’t able to indicate such a force, as the National Front in France, Alternative for Germany or Jobbik that Moscow could support in the case of the state’s collapse.

There is, however, potential for it in Romania because society hasn’t much choice in the elites, as all political parties there are, in fact, very similar. Russia can take advantage of it, and it’s obvious that populist forces and Russia will understand each other better. Moscow has tried to find such dissatisfied intellectuals who would look for a third way. The same has been done in Poland and in the West, and it is frequently associated with Aleksandr Dugin in Russia, as well as various politicians and oligarchs who support him, e.g. Vladimir Yakunin, who finances the Russian groups of influence in Europe. So far, however, this search in Romania hasn’t translated into anything concrete, but there may be a U-turn in the future. If a good opportunity arises, social sympathies will change in that direction. Russia takes certain actions in this area, but we still don’t know much about them, as they have been poorly researched.

Agata Supińska: If we assumed the worst-case scenario in which Russia strengthens its influence in the Baltic states, keeps or strengthens its presence in Ukraine and Moldova and visibly expands its influence in Romania, what would it mean for the EU and Poland?

Stanisław Górka, PhD: I’d rather see a different scenario. A certain status quo will be preserved in the Baltic states, as Russia isn’t able to keep strengthening its position there without using force. But that position doesn’t get weaker either. If the status quo is preserved in Ukraine, provided that the country doesn’t totally collapse, Russia won’t be able to strengthen their hold there for the time being between anti-Russian, anti-government and anti-president sentiment is strong. Other Balkan countries also have the potential to become much more openly pro-Russian. Russia has potential to be liked in the Visegrad Group, except for in Poland. Russia may take control of Moldova, which means that with the growing grass-root populist sympathies for Russia in the West, Poland and Romania may become isolated islands.

In such a scenario, Romania would be left alone in the Balkans, and, in addition, it would be cut off by the newly pro-Russian Moldova. Poland to a lesser extent would become more and more alone. Western countries would grow less willing to get involved in actions aimed at deterring Russia because of the inconvenience for Austria, Germany, Italy and France in the context of the internal politics. In such a scenario, Romania would be much more isolated than Poland, which doesn’t mean that Russia would immediately focus on it. Russia could keep ignoring it as a less important and harmless country.

This picture connects Poland and Romania’s futures, but it isn’t too optimistic. Let’s hope that the situation wouldn’t go so bad and that the hesitation demonstrated by other countries in the region between Russia and the West will take place within pragmatic limits.
This essay looks at how Romania’s relations with the US and Russia has evolved since 1989. Where they were at the beginning of 1990s, how they developed in the first post-communist decade, what were their main drivers in the following decade and what their status is today. The world is now a very different place compared to 25 years ago: there is more chaos, more challenges, and less stability. This article uses a historical perspective to highlight elements of continuity and those of novelty in Romania’s post-communist foreign policy. It identifies factors that define the current global context and helps to understand how Romania is positioning towards them. It also clarifies Romania’s present agenda, what the big international dossiers of interest are and how Romania views and manages its relationship with the two key stakeholders in the system: Russia (superpower in decline, current geopolitical challenger) and the US (current superpower, in retreat, no longer willing to step in to solve every crisis).

RELATIONS WITH THE US

The US BMD facility in Deveselu became officially operational on 12 May 2016. It is the embodiment of the US’s security commitment to the region as well as the ‘flagship project’ of the strategic partnership between Romania and the US. To many Romanian officials, the symbolism of the event was indicative of a certain mindset and of a broader strategic culture (‘deeply embedded conceptions and notions of national security that take root among elites and the public alike’) that shaped their expectations during the 1990s. This culture reflected an attitude profoundly rooted in the tragedies of regional history and geography. As the Romanian MFA State Secretary for Strategic Affairs explained at a press conference prior to the inauguration ceremony at Deveselu: “Since the end of the Second World War, for more than 70 years we were waiting for the Americans to come and save us from the ugly hands of communism. Now the Americans are here.”

Beyond its symbolism, this is a framework to enhance stability in times of renewed geopolitical competition, a guarantee that ‘we are not reliving the interbellum period. The United States is here and with us now, not like in the 1930s.’

After 1989, overall relations between the US and Romania can be segmented into three different periods, each reflecting the larger global trends of the international security environment: the 1990s, post 9/11 and since 2008 until today.

THE 1990S: A BALKAN-CENTRIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In the context of the chronic instabilities of the post-Cold War world, the US’s European arch-project in the 1990s aimed to secure the stability of the new democracies in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region by anchoring them firmly into the Euro-Atlantic community. The supporters of enlargement in the Clinton Administration argued that the implosion of Yugoslavia was an argument for ‘going forward’ with the project of expanding NATO. They persuaded skeptics that this was the best option for containing a potential contagion effect. It was not only a way of isolating them from the chaos and the ethnic conflicts that ravaged the Balkans at the time, but it was also an opportunity to
recognition of its regional leadership, pleading for Romania as a partner rather than an American military base on its territory in addition to a package of two billion dollars in economic assistance. For Washington this was definitely a bridge too far and ‘a reminder that Romania still had one foot in the Balkans’. In retrospect, the symbolic foundation of the strategic partnership between Romania and the US remains the visit that President Bill Clinton made after the Madrid Summit in 1997. Despite being rejected as a candidate to NATO in the first post-Cold War, 100,000 Romanians cheered President Clinton’s arrival on the streets of Bucharest. It was the first visit of an American president in Romania after the fall of communism. Later on Romania bolstered its Euro-Atlantic credentials during the Kosovo crisis when the political authorities in Bucharest decided to open its air space for NATO operations against the Milosevic regime. In a similar move, Romania rejected a Russian request for granting its planes free access towards Serbia. While not in NATO, Romania behaved like a NATO member by demonstrating solidarity and showing that it was a like-minded country.

THE POST 9/11 FRAMEWORK

The 9/11 attacks significantly altered US security optics. It was the beginning of a new era, the post-post-Cold War World (in the words of Richard Haass). The new principal aim of US foreign policy was ‘to integrate other countries into arrangements that [would] sustain a world consistent with US interests and values, and thereby promote peace, prosperity, and justice as widely as possible.’ Romania was at the forefront of the second round of NATO enlargement formally announced in Prague in 2002. In itself the expansion of the Alliance was a continuation of the role assumed in the first decade after the Cold War in helping democracy take root and maintaining stability in regions of Europe that [had] long suffered from political and social upheavals. At the same time the expansion of the

Alliance reflected also a different logic, a particular need, one adapted for an ‘out of area operations’ age. Most of the new NATO members were ready to support flexible coalitions of the willing around the US in military operations beyond Europe. In those years the American center of gravity seemed to shift eastward, as the Pentagon pushed for a revised European posture – one focused on lighter and quicker units where proximity to the battlefields of the ‘war on terror’ provided an unexpected strategic value.

It is in this new context that the profile of Romania, with its American military base significantly consolidated as part of the larger American framework ‘of lily pads for regional and global deployments’. In August of 2004, President Bush presented a new overseas posture that made the case for restructuring the heavy footprint deployed in Old Europe ‘while shifting some troops to smaller facilities in eastern Europe’, including the MK base in Romania. For Bucharest this was a unique window of opportunity. Traian Basescu, Romania’s new president, guided his foreign policy with the idea of a Bucharest-London-Washington axis. He saw the opening for advancing a new regional architecture in the Black Sea, one that would emphasize ‘an international balance, able to ensure the expansion and strengthening of freedom and democracy.’ But at the time, nobody in the region – especially not Ankara or Sofia – was prepared to support a ‘balance of power that favored freedom and democracy’ (terminology that framed the optics at the core of first US National Security Strategy after the 9/11 attacks) in the wider Black Sea.

The epoch would find Romania deeply embedded in the Rumsfeldian cleavage of the time, triggered by the 2003 Iraq War’s controversy opposing the Continentalists (especially Germany and France) in inner Europe to the Atlanticists in outer Europe, who were strong supporters of the US agenda. On 30 January 2003, the Wall Street Journal published the so-called ‘Letter of Eight’ reunifying leaders from Britain, Spain, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Portugal and the Czech Republic in expressing their solidarity with the US. This was followed soon after (5 February 2003) by another statement of solidarity with Washington signed by the Visnews 10 (the countries that in May 2000 made a common diplomatic front to join the Alliance - Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania). Despite the fact that its symbolism will not be lost in Paris, all these Eastern European countries were very keen to ‘demonstrate, especially to the United States, their credentials as strong Atlantic allies committed to the alliance and its values.’

5 Ibidem, p. 216.
6 Ibidem, p. 228.
8 Richard N. Haass, Director, Policy Planning Staff, ‘Chasing a New Course in the Transatlantic Relationship’, Remarks to the Centre for European Reform, London, UK, 10 June, 2002.
12 Ibidem, p. 132
THE RETURN OF GREAT POWER REVISIONISM

The Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 significantly changed the security optics in New Europe. Key countries like Poland started to plead for something that a few years later, after Crimea, would become a standard Euro-Atlantic discourse: strategic reassurance. Warsaw, in particular, was eager to convince NATO to revise its regional posture and to spread it ‘more evenly inside the Alliance between ‘the areas of higher and lower security’.13 In fact, Poland was articulating a worry that many countries in the region had at the time, ‘a doubt about the West actually coming to their defense in a crisis’ as Ronald Asmus would later point out.

For many in the region, the solidarity (pledges and forces that would actually materialize in a crisis) didn’t seem to be there. Of course everyone was aiming for the big prize: US boots on the ground, as the working assumption was ‘that countries that have US soldiers on their territory do not get invaded.’ In the end, the whole logic of this aspiration – widely shared in the region especially after Georgia happened – was about fixing the structural imbalance between Old and New Europe, a legacy of two successive Alliance enlargement rounds after the Cold War.

It was in this larger regional state of mind that Bucharest was searching for its own additional security guarantees via a more consolidated US presence on the Romanian territory. But at the time the Alliance as a whole didn’t see any real need and it was not ready to support an Eastern Flank pivot. After all we were in the first stages of the reset policy between Moscow and Washington. For Bucharest, the lucky compromise came when the Obama Administration decided to change the geographical distribution of the initial BMD architecture developed under the Bush administration – a move that pushed Romania at the forefront of the new realignment.

In hindsight, this project can be best understood as an indirect way to bolster the credibility of collective defense guarantees received by Romania (in the first stage) and by Poland (in the second phase) at a time when the Alliance had no priority or interest in correcting the existing imbalance on the Eastern Flank. This symbolism is well captured by Robert Gates, who suggests in his memoirs that while for Washington the BMD was a way to counterbalance ‘a rapidly evolving Iranian missile threat,’ for the CEE countries, ‘the goals were political, having everything to do with Russia: the U.S. deployments on their sole would be a concrete manifestation of U.S. security guarantees against Russia beyond our commitments under the NATO treaty.’

From this perspective, the year 2011 remains a milestone in the developing partnership between Romania and the US. The US BMD facility in Deveselu is the tangible, physical embodiment of a core relationship anchored in two essential documents: the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century Between the United States of America and Romania as well as the Agreement Between the United States of America and Romania on the Deployment of the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania. The corollary of both documents remains the solidarity embodied in the so-called collective defense pledge at the center of the NATO Treaty, the muscleeers’ clause under which ‘an armed attack against one NATO member shall be considered an armed attack against them all.’ Specifically, in this logic, the US is ‘firmly committed to defend Romania against a potential ballistic missile attack.’ All these key ingredients define Bucharest’s national security policy, for which the US presence as a European power remains ‘the strategic binder that gives consistency’ credibility and effectiveness to a North Atlantic Alliance perceived as providing the main security umbrella for Romania.

in Moscow, Vasile Sandru, Sandru’s indisputable professionalism and relationships with the Soviet Foreign Ministry and with activists in the international relations section of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party were guarantees for the success of his mandate.

In the first months of 1990, the Petre Roman government discovered the road to Moscow. The intensity of Romanian-Soviet contacts was exceptional. The visit by Soviet Deputy Premier P. Mastovoi on 13 February opened up a long list of Romanian ministers who took the road to Moscow, starting with Foreign Minister Sergiu Celac (8 March), continuing with Minister of Culture Andrei Plesu (21 March), Defense Minister Victor Stanculescu (9-10 April) and Foreign Trade Minister Al. Margaritescu (26-27 April), etc.

Some visits, such as that paid by a large military delegation headed by Minister Stanculescu, were very important. That is when they arranged to send officers to study at the major military academies in Moscow, preparing them to be liaison officers with the Warsaw Treaty. The moment when Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary recalled their students from the International Relations Institute with the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the first Romanian students from the Romanian Foreign Ministry started enrolling. It was clear that Romania was seriously in the process of preparing cadre in view of a solid collaboration with the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the communist regime in the former satellites of the Soviet Union generated a debate among analysts in Moscow (rather small in scope, actually) on the future of the Warsaw Treaty. The most likely scenario was that the Warsaw Pact had reduced its military importance, but ‘maintained its political value.’ Moreover, the Warsaw Treaty ‘is necessary to prevent the emergence of Balkanization elements in Eastern Europe’ (S. Karaganov, one of the best known analysts in Moscow). But the fate of the treaty was sealed, and most analysts agreed that the Warsaw Treaty was going to disappear ‘sooner or later’. Aside from Gorbachev, the only other leader interested in restructuring and keeping the Warsaw Pact alive was Romania’s president, Ion Iliescu.

The efforts made by Iliescu and Gorbachev were thwarted by the determination with which Hungarian Premier Antall called for the immediate dismantling of military structures. He announced that if an agreement could not be reached, Hungary would unilaterally leave the alliance by the end of 1991. Hungary was immediately joined by Czechoslovakia and Poland (USSR Foreign Ministry Activity Report, Nov. 1989-Dec. 1990, Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn, nr. 3, 1990). Moreover, the unification of Germany (October 1990) practically paralyzed the already dwindling activity of the pact’s military structures. Therefore, the decision made in late 1990 to dismantle the military structures of the Warsaw Pact by the end of the following year was quite logical.

On February 25, 1991, at the Duna International Hotel in Budapest, the document dismantling the military structures of the Warsaw Pact Treaty Organization was signed. The demise took place a few months later. On July 1, in Prague, the Warsaw Pact was officially laid to rest. To compensate for the loss of the Treaty, Moscow wanted to sign bilateral friendship and cooperation treaties with its former satellites, by which these countries were supposed to be kept away from NATO and CEE. In the end, Romania was the only country that took the course of the Soviet scenario.

Ion Iliescu – as Gorbachev believed – should have been an example for the other Eastern and Central European countries. The former Socialist countries were to become, according to the forecast of Sergei Karaganov, a ‘buffer zone’ between the West and the USSR (Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn, nr. 6, 1990, p. 92).

The collaboration, good neighborhood and friendship treaty between Romania and the USSR was signed in Moscow on 5 April 1991. The most important article, as far as the USSR was concerned, was Article 4: ‘Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics shall not take part in any alliance aimed against the other.

‘None of the Contracting Parties shall allow its territory to be used by a third party in order to commit aggression against the other Contracting Party.

‘None of them shall place at the disposal of a third party, for this purpose, its transportation and communications, as well as other types of infrastructure, nor will they grant any kind of support to such a state that may enter into armed conflict with the other Contracting Party.’

The treaty was announced at the last moment. Even the fact that the date was set for Friday 5 April, right before Easter, sparked suspicions. The central Soviet press dedicated total discretion in relation to the treaty; on 6 April Pravda published a few lines: ‘Upon invitation from the President of the USSR, Romanian President Ion Iliescu arrived in Moscow on April 4. He was met at the airport by USSR Vice President G. I. Yanaev, alongside other officials.’

Moscow’s strategy for CEE was starting to bear fruit. Romania, as Gorbachev said then, ‘became the first country to show it was prepared’ to sign a treaty with the USSR after the downfall of the Socialist bloc. Soviet Foreign Minister A. A. Bessemertnykh was even more explicit in an interview with the Itar Tass agency: ‘The new treaty with Romania opens the road to signing similar treaties with other countries in Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia.’

Why on earth would Romania feel in danger after the Warsaw Treaty fell? It was the only former communist bloc country to sign a treaty with the USSR valid for 15 years – a treaty that practically removed any other security option. Had that treaty been ratified, Romania could have not been a member of NATO today.

Maybe the political leaders in Bucharest felt in danger. The U.S. News and World Report and the Times announced in early January 1991 that Iliescu would be removed from power by a ‘real revolution’. Maybe the Vishegrad Triilateral, formed by the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary on 15 February 1991, convinced Romanian dignitaries that they were powerless in a global reshuffle and the only umbrella under which there were some seats available belonged to the Soviet Union. Or maybe it is simple that Romanian diplomats, analysts and experts were surprised by the evolution of events, and didn’t understand that the USSR had one foot in the grave.

If security issues were settled in Article 4 of the Romanian-Soviet treaty signed in Moscow on 5 April 1991 by presidents Iliescu and Gorbachev, the issue...
of Bessarabia, of economic cooperation between Romania and the USSR, of the national treasury and of Serpent Island were issues on the agenda of talks between the two presidents.

The failed coup of August 1991, followed by the dismantling of the USSR in December of 1991, did not lead to a relaunch in relations between Moscow and Bucharest as it did with relations with the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. The first half of 1992 was marked by tensions between Romania and Russia because of the war in Transdniester. Bucharest embraced Chisinau’s cause, while Moscow supported the separatists in Tiraspol. Meanwhile Russia signed new treaties with the former satellites in Central and Eastern Europe, except Romania. In 1993, when negotiations resumed at the insistence of the Romanian side, Moscow’s condition for discussions to start was from the text of the April 1991 treaty signed by Iliescu and Gorbachev, suggesting that Bucharest would have nothing against ratifying that document, considering it had already been signed. This was the beginning of a long row of meetings that would last a decade, eventually leading to the signing of a foundation political treaty between Romania and the Russian Federation in 2003.

There was a moment, in April 1996, when the treaty was very close to being ratified. Sergei Krylov, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, visited Bucharest, April 3–4, 1996, preparing for that process. Public opinion knew that two issues were up in the air: Romania’s treasure and condemnation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Moscow was against mention of them being made in the text of the treaty, which is exactly what happened in the end. Unofficially, the deadlock was caused by the old Article 4, which potentially provided that the two parties could not take part in alliances that may be pointed against the other. This provision wiped out any perspective of Romania joining NATO. What is certain is that the April 28–29, 1996 visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Primakov did not result in the ratification of the fundamental political treaty between Romania and Russia.

The fact that the democratic opposition won the autumn 1996 elections was not seen with much enthusiasm in Moscow, which did not answer in kind to the wish manifested by the Romanian government to improve relations with Russia. Only when Romania was invited to join NATO did the negotiations on the political treaty start to progress. This in turn allowed the treaty to be signed by presidents Iliescu and Vladimir Putin in Moscow on 4 July 2003. The projects to relaunch political, economic, cultural and academic relations, announced at that point by President Iliescu and PM Adrian Nastase, were abandoned after 2005 by the new president, Traian Basescu, who made a name for himself by using an aggressive rhetoric towards Moscow and by favoring relations with the US, especially in defense and security.

Only when the Social-Liberal Union came to power (a coalition made up of the Social Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party) did the new PM, Victor Ponta, make special efforts to relaunch relations with Russia and China. In spite of the insistence with which he pursued an invitation to Moscow for an official visit, the details were discussed as late as February 2014, at the opening of the Sochi Olympics. The visit made by Premier Ponta to Moscow had been scheduled for the summer of 2014, and it was supposed to relaunch Romanian-Russian bilateral relations now that President Basescu’s second term was coming to an end. But the Ukrainian crisis, the occupation and annexation of Crimea, and EU sanctions on Russia caused the project of Ponta’s visit to Moscow to fail, along with the relaunch of Romanian-Russian relations.

A quarter century after the downfall of the Soviet Union, Bucharest still has difficulties in building a bilateral relationship with Moscow. It is not so much the historical legacy, most often invoked (meaning the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, annexation of Bessarabia or Romania’s treasure evacuated to Russia in WWI and never returned) that prevents an articulation of a better bilateral political relationship. It is rather about mistrust and the inability to formulate an agenda, especially considering that Russian investments in Romania are numerous and quite sizable, and Russian companies are very active in a variety of sectors of the Romanian economy. Only when Romania was invited to join NATO did the negotiations on the political treaty start to progress. This in turn allowed the treaty to be signed by presidents Iliescu and Vladimir Putin in Moscow on 4 July 2003. The projects to relaunch political, economic, cultural and academic relations, announced at that point by President Iliescu and PM Adrian Nastase, were abandoned after 2005 by the new president, Traian Basescu, who made a name for himself by using an aggressive rhetoric towards Moscow and by favoring relations with the US, especially in defense and security.

CONCLUSION

The 25-year relationship between Bucharest and Moscow was dominated by Romania’s malaise. Always in counter-stroke, Iliescu was the only leader in the former socialist bloc who rushed to sign a friendship treaty with Gorbachev, at a time when no one else would. When Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary were negotiating and signing bilateral treaties and were developing their relationship with Boris Yeltsin’s Russia, Romania had reverted to a hostile policy. When Basescu committed rhetorical excesses, freezing the bilateral relationship, Romania’s neighbors were rushing to do business with Russia. And, finally, when the Ponta government rushed to relaunch the relationship with Moscow, the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea thwarted the project. How does one explain this counter-step? Most likely it stems from an acute lack of understanding of the domestic situation in Russia and an inability to understand what mechanisms drive the Kremlin’s foreign policy.

On the other hand, the importance of the strategic partnership between Romania and the US has doubled down, especially since 2014. For many in Europe, Crimea’s annexation was a moment of truth, the end of the post-Cold War hangover, the return of raw, great power politics, a moment when everyone realized that ‘Russia has thrown the rulebook out of the window. The world is back in a zero-sum paradigm.’

It is in this broader tectonic context that the relations with both Russia and the US should be understood. From a regional perspective, the geographical proximity to the main theater of Russian revisionism makes Romania a frontline state. From a meta perspective, global politics is entering uncharted waters ripe for systemic shifts: ‘revisionist powers are on the move. From eastern Ukraine and the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea, large rivals of the United States are modernizing their military forces, grabbing strategic real estate, and threatening vulnerable U.S. allies. Their goal is not just to assert hegemony over their neighborhoods but to rearrange the global security order as we have known it since the end of the Second World War.’

Therefore, Romania should borrow a lesson from the history of the Cold War: détente works best only when it’s supported by a strong, credible and effective deterrent. The Romanian-US partnership should be ready to go to the next level: counterbalancing an intensive Crimean military build-up that evolved in a fully mature anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) bastion that risks enveloping the whole Black Sea. While historical in its decisions, readjusting significantly the posture on the Eastern flank, the Alliance didn’t go far enough at its latest summit in Warsaw. In fact, the Warsaw Summit has imposed a new strategic reality: the North and South of NATO’s Eastern flank are now in different solidarity leagues. The problem is that while the whole attention is focused on the Nordic part of the Eastern flank, the wider Black Sea area could rapidly become a sample of regional A2/AD probing. The unfinished business of NATO’s Warsaw Summit must be completed.

A few years back the now famous Gerasimov doctrine highlighted the centrality of the non-kinetic means to wage war in the 21st century. For Central and Eastern Europeans this was not news. In pursuing its aims, Russia has subjected Central and Eastern Europeans to various economic, energy, political and informational intimidation and infiltration even before the articulation of these principles. But it is mostly after the annexation of Crimea that asymmetric or hybrid warfare has become widely recognized as a threat to regional security and the entire trans-Atlantic Alliance.

Since then, awareness about the extent to which Eastern Europe is increasingly becoming a testing ground for new mind games. Also the competition over public perceptions and regional constituencies has augmented. Observers of Russian policy note the growing assertiveness of the Kremlin and its re-imperialization goals in a world that it sees as multi-polar. Moscow’s ‘anti-hegemonic’ pursuits are conducted both directly and through proxies (‘local spoilers on the ground’) in an attempt to discredit the West and deprive it of its ‘claim to normative superiority.’ Because of their more insidious destructive effects, actions by proxy – be it political and economic subversion, disinformation and propaganda – are seen by Russian military doctrine and foreign policy as part of the same strategy as the military component.

17 For the translation and explanation of the text see https://introsmocreshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/
18 For instance, in 2009 a group of Central and Eastern European leaders wrote a letter to US President Barack Obama warning about the Russian threat in the region and the dangers of American withdrawal: https://www.rferl.org/a/An_Open_Letter_To_The_Obama_Administration_From_Central_And_Eastern_Europe/1778449.html
For a while, this has pushed analysts (and policy makers) to look at Russian influence from the perspective of domestic governance challenges, which are effectively being exploited by the Kremlin. This has also amplified self-blame and denial within the Western alliance. But it has also prompted the policy community to move the conversation into the realm of national security. 22

Romania, while different in the regional configuration, makes no exception. For a very long time in its post-communist transition, Romania has seemed to be an unlikely target of Russian influence. Not only was the country insulated by geography (without a direct border with Russia) and its political inclinations and structure of alliances, but it also seemed immune because of a long history of enmity between the two countries. The two countries’ histories, minimal cultural affinities, the general anti-Russian sentiment among the population and fewer examples of Russian aggressive behaviour than in other countries have made Romania almost an outlier in the region. However, after the illegal annexation of Crimea, the Russian Federation became a direct neighbour of Romania (in the Black Sea), thus augmenting not only the perceived security threat but also the likelihood of foul play on behalf of Russia. In particular, the proximity of Russian military arsenal to Romania’s exclusive economic zone and offshore oil and gas fields creates anxiety in Bucharest. Similarly, the potential for subversion, mainly in terms of disinformation campaigns, has begun to worry Romanian analysts and policy makers.

WHAT IS RUSSIA’S INFLUENCE TOOLBOX IN ROMANIA AND WHAT IS IT TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

This paper will try to answer this question by looking at how typical instruments of influence and subversion may play out in a Romanian context. It will also show how past and present relations between the two countries make Romania a special case and are thus influencing the Kremlin’s ability to exert pressure over Bucharest. The recent history of Romanian-Russian relations shows that Moscow has not yet manifested any particular interest in shaping political events (like elections or security policies), and thus has had very limited capacity to do so.

The traditional avenues for Russian co-option23, coercion and influence – economic or energy pressure, corruption, political interference, cyber attacks, soft power (culture, religion etc.) and information manipulation – have been widely employed in some countries. These tools have also been tested, with questionable results, in Romania. One area with particular subversive potential is the use of disinformation and propaganda tools, which in recent years have proven to be an especially dangerous and effective tool across the Trans-Atlantic community.

In brief, as it appears from exploring the various avenues of power projection that the Kremlin is using in Romania, its goals are to detract Romania from its European path and from adopting Western values and participating in current alliance structures. Moscow would like to see a continuously corrupt Romania, doubtful of the benefits of being a part of the Euro-Atlantic institutions, distrustful of the security guarantees it receives as a member of NATO and more inclined to embrace its narrative and pursue an ambivalent relation with Russia (currently rather antagonistic). Romania is part of the bigger puzzle by which the Kremlin would like to see a weakened NATO and EU and a diluted attachment towards the two structures among European constituencies.

And thus, while Romania is less exposed than some of its allies in the region, there is an increasing apprehension towards the potential use of a variety of active measures (especially after the attempted coup in Montenegro and the involvement in the US elections, where online Kremlin-sponsored activism led to off-line actions). While Moscow has much fewer inroads into Romanian society, economics and politics, there is evidence that it is using a combination of hard power intimidation and manipulation of the information space in order to sow distrust and create a rift between Romania and its Western partners. The following chapters will explore the reasons for this apprehension, the potential reactions in Romanian society and some ways to address these risks.

23 For an analysis of Russian soft power and influence in Southeast Europe, see Dimitar Belchev’s Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe, Yale University Press, 2017.
That would play right into Russia’s hands, which, just as in Ukraine, would have the perfect opportunity to intervene and protect the Russian minority. This would lead to a potential new frozen conflict or even outright military confrontation as in eastern Ukraine. It would also validate the narrative about Romania being a revisionist state. The precedent was set during the war in Transnistria in 1992, which contributed to further complicating the Romanian-Russian-Moldovan dynamic. Romania offered political and military support to the Republic of Moldova (and against Moscow), which also contributed to a change of course in its foreign policy orientation. The fear of thawing the Transnistrian conflict and opening yet another conflict so close to the Romanian border is a major source of anxiety in Bucharest. This has been reinforced through propaganda and pro-Russian politicians (in the Republic of Moldova). Attempts to rewrite the Romanian-Moldovan history, especially in relation with Russia, are effective ways to exploit the complexity of the relationship. The Kremlin-style propaganda machine has all the elements to pit the two against each other and thus potentially kill two birds with one stone. If Romanian public discourse gets more unionist, the narrative of the imminent Moldovan “Anschluss” (as the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Dmitry Rogozin, put it in a recent interview) is reinforced, thus further straining the relation between the two countries. Russia would be happy if Romania became a revisionist state, seeking to alter existing borders and departing from the commitments it took upon itself when it joined NATO and the EU.

The interplay of history and politics leading to the negative sentiment towards Russia among Romanians also affects the very low approval ratings for Russia. Various polls show different figures, but overall Romanians are Western-oriented and very few would regard Russia as a partner.

It is only recently that some surveys have displayed interesting developments, in particular as far as the assessments of various world leaders are concerned. A recent GLOBSEC study shows that in Romania, as in other Central and Eastern European countries, the favourability of Vladimir Putin is on the rise. One can assume that this may be the result of propaganda efforts and, while it is far too early to talk about an opinion shift, such changes need to be monitored and taken seriously as potential future avenues for influence.

A first attempt to control Romania’s foreign policy (as well as that of other former satellite countries of the USSR) came soon after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Moscow tried to include in its good neighbourliness treaties a provision that would ensure Romania could not join the Western alliance. Romanian President Ion Iliescu and Mikhail Gorbachev signed such a friendship treaty early in 1991, which was meant to serve as a precedent for other countries in the region. The document was also used as a basis for future negotiations, but it was never implemented. Had the breakup of the Soviet Union not occurred right when the ratification of the treaty was supposed to take place, Romania would have been confined to an in-between position, neither aligned with the West nor the East and would be on a different course in history. Failure to sign the friendship and cooperation treaty between the two countries froze the relations for a few years (mainly on account of Moscow’s refusal to condemn the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and failure to return the Romanian treasury’s 94 tons of gold sent to Moscow for safekeeping in 1916 and 1917). In 2001 the negotiations for the basic treaty restarted, but the promising relationships became tense again only a few years later. A few high-level meetings happened throughout the years, alongside other efforts to create a more constructive relationship through the various bodies meant to enhance Black Sea cooperation. But few concrete results were achieved.

The last high-level visit happened in 2015, when Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister Titus Corlatean spent two days in Moscow. Soon after Russia annexed Crimea, and whatever woes had been made since NATO’s bombing of Serbia in 1999 were put aside. With the 1999 NATO campaign against

27 One example of such a propaganda effort was Moldovan President Igor Dodon’s visit to the Kremlin when he received as a present a map of ‘Greater Moldova’ (and against Moscow), which also contributed to a change of course in its foreign policy orientation. The tension and mistrust that characterize Romanian-Russian relations in general have also made it almost impossible to find common ground in diplomatic relations. While political discourse has mainly gravitated around ideas of dialog and pragmatic cooperation with Russia, this has not gone further than diplomatic superficiality: A rather cool relationship, unresolved agenda items and minimal engagement are the elements that define diplomatic exchanges between Romania and Russia.

Establishing a modus vivendi: Romania’s foreign policy towards Russia

The tension and mistrust that characterize Romanian-Russian relations in general have also made it almost impossible to find common ground in diplomatic relations. While political discourse has mainly gravitated around ideas of dialog and pragmatic cooperation with Russia, this has not gone further than diplomatic superficiality: A rather cool relationship, unresolved agenda items and minimal engagement are the elements that define diplomatic exchanges between Romania and Russia.

New Direction - The Foundation for European Reform www.europeareform.org @europeareform

31 http://nev.ro/node/20818
Belgrade, the relationship between Romania and Russia took a massive dip. To this date the opening of the Romanian airspace for NATO planes is utilized by pro-Kremlin propaganda to show the illegality of NATO actions and Romania’s unreliaibility as a neighbour (mainly in relation to Serbia).

Officially, Romania’s objectives in engaging with the Russian Federation involve economic, cultural and academic aspects, as well as Black Sea cooperation. But neither of the two countries seems to attach a lot of importance to the relationship. On the one hand, Romania appears to have been rather clumsy in dealing with Russia. On the other hand, Moscow pays very little attention to Romania because it doesn’t consider it to be an autonomous political actor on the international scene, but rather a vassal of the United States. As such Romania features very little in official discourses or documents (or not at all in the most recent foreign policy concept papers of the Russian Federation), with the exception of the rhetoric regarding the anti-ballistic defence system in Deveselu.

In comparison, both Romania’s National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the Defense White Book mention Russia as a threat (including asymmetrical ones) to regional stability and Romania’s security. The NDS notes the change of paradigm in the European geostrategic space, in particular in the NATO-Russia dynamic. The document makes it quite clear that the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia’s actions in the Black Sea region deeply affect the regional security environment. This is an important element of novelty introduced by the current strategy. The 2010 NDS mentions the Georgian-Russian conflict as a destabilizing factor and a warning sign for persisting tensions, but the main security challenges were deemed to come from military conflicts outside the European continent, mainly in the form of terrorism and weapons proliferation. Besides energy security, terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the NDS 2015-2019 also identifies threats to Romania’s security caused from the changed security environment inside and outside its borders: frozen conflicts and destabilizing actions (by Russia) in Romania’s immediate vicinity, cyber threats and informational hostilities.

With planned investments in new military capabilities and an ever-stronger orientation towards NATO and consolidating the relationship with the US, there seems to be little appetite or common ground for warmer interactions with the Russian Federation. No mainstream politician in Bucharest has ever supported lifting or relaxing the sanctions against Russia, including the current Republic of Moldova and the contentious situation of the Romanian treasury; were never fully mended and have marred the present relationship and will likely continue to do so. For Russia, these matters have become a way to show it has the upper hand in the relationship. They are tools to either ridicule Romania or manipulate various political contexts (such as the unionist emotions some parts of the Romanian public share). For Romania, they increase the antipathy towards Russia and the defensive posture. Also, it’s highly unlikely that the relationship between the two countries will warm up in the near future. Romania will clearly follow the path set within the EU and NATO, and, unlike some of its neighbours, it will not hesitate over the issue of sanctions. Also the focus on enhancing Romania’s own defence capabilities will continue to increase, while the potential for political engagement with Russia will likely remain minimal.

**SOFT POWER – AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN ROMANIA?**

One development that has been framed as a breakthrough in the relationship was the opening in 2015 in Bucharest of the Russian Center for Science and Culture. In reality, as this event came merely one year after the annexation of Crimea, it raised many eyebrows. Centrally located in the capital city of Romania, the centre has become a well-known (mainly among students) place for all sorts of events, which makes it a soft power tool to be watched in the future.

This complicated history and tense diplomacy make it difficult for Russia to squeeze Romania at a political level – other than over the Republic of Moldova as explained above. Historic tensions over lost territories, including the current Republic of Moldova and the contentious situation of the Romanian treasury; were never fully mended and have marred the present relationship and will likely continue to do so. For Russia, these matters have become a way to show it has the upper hand in the relationship. They are tools to either ridicule Romania or manipulate various political contexts (such as the unionist emotions some parts of the Romanian public share). For Romania, they increase the antipathy towards Russia and the defensive posture. Also, it’s highly unlikely that the relationship between the two countries will warm up in the near future. Romania will clearly follow the path set within the EU and NATO, and, unlike some of its neighbours, it will not hesitate over the issue of sanctions. Also the focus on enhancing Romania’s own defence capabilities will continue to increase, while the potential for political engagement with Russia will likely remain minimal.

One area that deserves some attention is Russia’s ability to manipulate Christian Orthodox values and solidarity among Orthodox nations in order to attain political goals. The complicated relationship between the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as propaganda campaigns based on traditional, social conservative and Christian values, have led observers to believe that a potential opening for Russian influence may lie within the Romanian Orthodox Church.

**ORTHODOXY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE**

Propaganda channels portray Putin’s Russia as the sole defender of Orthodoxy and traditional Christian values. Within Russia, the strong relationship between President Putin and the Orthodox Church has come to be an ideological (and geopolitical) tool for the Kremlin. As some observers have noted, religious and social conservatism are also becoming instruments of power for Russian influence all over Europe. It is still unclear, however, to what extent this is happening in Romania. In theory, the high approval ratings the Romanian Orthodox Church still enjoys – consistently one of the most trusted institutions throughout the past 27 years – would make it an important target for co-optation. But evidence in this regard is almost non-existent. At a very minimum, in Romania as in the other Orthodox countries, the Kremlin’s propaganda machinery manipulates people’s religious sensibilities to create a less favourable view of the West and its core democratic values.

---

32 A short description of diplomatic engagement between Russia and Romania can be found on the website of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mda.ro/note/RU
A recent study on Christian Orthodox identity in Central and Eastern Europe by Pew Research Center revealed interesting elements about how believers position themselves on various topics, including some of geopolitical relevance such as the expectation that Russia would protect Orthodoxy. Romania ranks high among the countries with the biggest share of the population declaring they are Orthodox (86%), with 74% saying that being Orthodox is an important part of being Romanian. This has been instilled in the Romanian mindset even in the way history is taught – children learn very early in school that princes who refused to renounce their Orthodox at the cost of their own lives at the hands of Ottomans were heroes, if not martyrs.

But the study also offers insights into a topic that has sparked attention among pro-Russian propaganda channels: the question of whether there is a value conflict with the West and whether Russia could serve as a buffer in that regard. In Romania 52% think there is a need for a Russian buffer, out of which 68% agree there is a value conflict with the West. 54% of Romanians say they feel a special bond with other Orthodox populations across borders.

This gives the Kremlin a lot of material to work with when it comes to creating disinformation and propaganda based on religious values and identities. The online media space has actually become an extremely rich environment for so-called Orthodox platforms and activists. While some are genuinely preoccupied with faith, many of them use it to disguise political agendas. It is very interesting to note how some of these are almost exclusively dedicated to political news and international affairs, and they often publish conspiracies about wars and world domination by the Western powers similar to stories found on Kremlin-backed channels.

At an institutional level, a potential rapprochement between the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches is unlikely. A recent visit by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, to Bucharest at the invitation of Patriarch Daniel, who was celebrating 10 years since he became the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, made some observers doubt the motives of the trip, especially because it was the first visit of this type in post-communist Romania.

However, there is very little available information about the extent to which Romanian-Russian church relations are being utilized by the Kremlin to advance its political agenda. There has been information about priests getting involved in mobilizing civil society to stop the project. But no substantial evidence was ever brought forth to show a direct connection between Russian involvement and social organizing by the priests, which gave little consequence to the story. Speculations about Russian meddling with some Romanian Orthodox priests continue to appear, but the official position of the Church is actually to refute any such influence. The Romanian Orthodox Church has also issued several statements along the years regarding websites that pretend to propagate Orthodox teachings, which are neither under its patronage, nor have received any sort of authorization.

One other recent controversy that the Romanian Orthodox Church has had to deal with is an initiative to change the Romanian Constitution in order to preclude same-sex marriages – at present the language of the Constitution is ambiguous in that respect. The initiative came from a broad coalition of Christians (not just Orthodox communities) and conservative organizations, such as the Coalition for Family. Working together they managed to raise three million signatures for the Constitutional modification proposal.

The problematic element of this is the participation of the Romanian coalition in the World Congress of Families (WCF), in which Russia has played a significant role from its inception. Russian billionaire Konstantin Malofeev, who is on the Russian sanctions list, who is on the Russian sanctions list, is a co-founder of the World Congress of Families and has also sponsored the event in previous years. While this is not to say the Kremlin controls the agenda for the WCF or that the Romanian Coalition for Family has been “infiltrated” (in fact there is no evidence for that), the anti-gay discourse aligns perfectly with some of the Kremlin’s favourite values. 38

---

38 http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/30/orthodox-christians-in-europe-more-likely-to-believe-than-practice-their-religion/
39 The narratives they publish use Christian values as a disinformation tool and are very much in line with pro-Kremlin disinformation: the moral decay of the West; Romania’s belonging to the Eastern spiritual space and its brotherhood with the other Orthodox nations; promote conservative values and bash the so-called anti-fracking groups; Russia’s secret funding protects Kremlin interests.
40 http://www.hotnews.ro/antifracking-groups-russia-secret-funding-protects-kremlin-interests
42 For instance, a recent concert held by the Red Army Choir in Constanta was organized with help from the local Orthodox Church. http://www.hotnews.ro/anti-fracking-groups-russia-secret-funding-protects-kremlin-interests
44 For instance, a recent concert held by the Red Army Choir in Constanta was organized with help from the local Orthodox Church.
anti-West narratives. In Russian propaganda’s view, the West is a place for moral decay and debauchery. They argue that Orthodox Christians (or in this case, Christians in general) need to stick together and fight the degradation of their values. This strikes to the core of people’s religious and even national identities – as this is quite obvious from the Pew study.

In brief, even if the Romanian Church itself is trying to stay away from such allegations (and evidence of direct influence is extremely scarce), utilizing Christian values and advocating the idea of Orthodox unity remain fearful ideological and geopolitical instruments in the Kremlin’s toolbox. Also, the rhetoric of defending Orthodoxy is increasingly becoming more anti-Muslim, conflating anti-refugee narratives with the fear and condemnation of Islam. By appealing to religious sentiments, conservative values and conspiratorial mindsets, the propaganda machine can reach a broad audience and place Russian) messages.

But it would be hard to talk about co-optation in Romania, where all politicians (with the exception of fringe nationalist ones) are pro-West. In fact, Romania never had any ambiguity regarding its foreign policy orientation in the past 25 years. Moreover, given the population’s anti-Russian sentiment, it would probably be political suicide for any politicians to be overtly pro-Russian.

This doesn’t mean that Russia is not making use of its soft power in order to consolidate even the frail relationships or positive image it may have in some circles of Romanian society. These attempts range from indirectly supporting rather unknown associations (such as Geopolitica Estului) and blogs to major events endorsed by media outlets or Romanian personalities. Two such gatherings took place in the first half of April 2017. The first was Aleksandr Dugin’s book launch in Bucharest, hosted in a well-known events venue. The second was a conference hosted by the Nicolae Titulescu Foundation, previously led by Ex-Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, on “European and regional security: the contribution of Russia and Romania to strengthening the climate of confidence in the Black Sea region.” The Dugin book launch was a rather scantly attended event, but it was massively rolled out on pro-Russian Facebook pages. Most importantly, even mainstream media gave Dugin – an already well-known character in Romania for his advocacy for a cultural and social Eurasian space to which presumably Romania spiritually belongs – the opportunity for more outreach by reporting about the event and even broadcasting interviews with him. The Black Sea event featured a former minister of foreign affairs and a former prime minister of Romania, as well as some well-known experts. Despite such examples, the connections remain very flimsy at both personal and ideological level. Corruption and the use of kompromat – typical weapons for the Kremlin – don’t seem to be in use in Romania. However, this is quite obvious from the Pew study.


47 Ukrainian journalists first exposed such links based on emails leaked by a group of hackers. Romanian media then picked up the story as well. http://advarul.ro/news/politica/prietenii-rusiei-romania-deconspirati-presa-ucraineana-dan-puric-mircea-dogaru-lista-1_547ef05da0eb96501e529010/index.html


49 For an investigation about the Coalition see https://www.vice.com/ro/article/gybxdj/legatura-dubioasa-dintre-itsy-bitsy-rusia-si-coalitia-pentru-familie

50 One of the main promoters (and translators) of Dughin’s work among Romanian speakers is Iurie Rosca, former unionist Moldovan politician turned pro-Russian sympathizer. http://iurierosca.md/romana/un-ganditor-rus-indragostit-de-cultura-romana-dughin-la-bucuresti.html/

51 The idea was to create an “influence group” that would be linked to Russia Today (now RT). One of these figures is former Social Democrat Prime Minister Adrian Nastase.

52 See for instance http://www.rusia.md/node/173632

53 The Dugin book launch was a rather scantly attended event, but it was massively rolled out on pro-Russian Facebook pages. Most importantly, even mainstream media gave Dugin – an already well-known character in Romania for his advocacy for a cultural and social Eurasian space to which presumably Romania spiritually belongs – the opportunity for more outreach by reporting about the event and even broadcasting interviews with him.
Corina Rebegea

THE USE OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Another typical tool of Russian foreign policy has been the use of state owned enterprises or companies friendly with the Kremlin to advance its political agenda. Many times Russian investments in former Soviet and satellite countries were meant to co-opt or corrupt politicians and acquire strategic assets so as to control entire sectors of the economy (mainly in the energy field), thereby multiplying the levers by which Moscow could exert its political power. In Romania it was mostly the talk about economic relations that was used to soften the relations rather than actual commercial deals. However, Romania does display some features that would make it an interesting target for Russian influence, but the country’s strong Western orientation, politically and economically, and a wide-spread anti-Russian sentiment have created less opportunities for subversion. The overall Russian trade footprint in Romania is rather limited. In 2016 Romania imported $2.19 billion dollars of goods from Russia (2.9% of total imports) and exported $1.08 billion dollars of goods to Russia (1.7% of total exports). The National Bank of Romania’s annual ‘Foreign Direct Investment in Romania’ report lists individual nations that have invested more than €100 million in Romania, between the years 2004 to 2015, Russia was not listed individually as an investor. It may have been included in the broad, nameless ‘other’ category. In the 2016 report, Russia was listed for the first time, recording a total of €139 million (about 0.2% of total FDI inward flows).57

However, between 1998 and 2008, Russian companies targeted important sectors of the Romanian industry: iron and steel (TMK), metallurgy (ALRO Satina and ALOR Oradea) and oil refining (Lukoil). According to Mugur Isarescu, the Governor of the National Bank of Romania, while Russian capital has a significant presence (directly or via holding companies based in other EU countries)58 – referencing the companies mentioned above – none of the Russian-owned companies may be deemed of systemic importance. The governor also confirmed that there is no Russian capital in the Romanian banking system.59

Some of these companies were major actors in the market – such as Mecheh plants with over 8000 employees in Romania and covering 80% of the steel and concrete production in 2004. Buil and the company reached a dominant position within the Romanian economy and no political pursuits associated with these investments have been documented.

### Commercial exchanges between Romania and Russia (USD million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schimbi comerciale</td>
<td>3099,0</td>
<td>+18,2%</td>
<td>2810,9</td>
<td>+52,4%</td>
<td>3296,9</td>
<td>+33,1%</td>
<td>4347,9</td>
<td>+14,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export</td>
<td>2011,6</td>
<td>+11,5%</td>
<td>2594,6</td>
<td>+79%</td>
<td>2702,1</td>
<td>+84,4%</td>
<td>3070,8</td>
<td>+4,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>3977,4</td>
<td>-54%</td>
<td>715,2</td>
<td>+20,2%</td>
<td>1029,1</td>
<td>+33,1%</td>
<td>1812,7</td>
<td>+20,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold</td>
<td>4133,9</td>
<td>1378,3</td>
<td>1604,6</td>
<td>1509,9</td>
<td>1719,3</td>
<td>1307,4</td>
<td>1099,3</td>
<td>1105,1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


53 See the interview with Armand Gosu at http://www.ziare.com/vladimir-putin/rusia/rusia-a-iesit-deja-invingatoare-in-romania-ce-a-invatat-dragnea-de-la-
54 It is the Hungarian Far-Right Jobbik Party. Financial by Russia. 20 January 2016. http://hungarianspectrum.org/2016/01/20/is-the-hungarian-far-right-jobbik-
55 See the interview with Armand Gosu at http://www.ziare.com/vladimir-putin/rusia/rusia-a-iesit-deja-invingatoare-in-romania-ce-a-invatat-dragnea-de-la-
58 Some claim that Russian investments and their influence in Romanian economy is far greater than official figures show because they operate through European subsidiaries. http://www.kapital.eu/area/economics/pdf/2010/24/art01/Doc0-2.pdf
Romanian-Russian economic cooperation also includes more obscure projects, such as the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, a multilateral development bank of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Russia holds 16.50% of the shares and has already paid about €100 million into the fund. Romania seems to have benefited from six loans from this bank, but there is almost no other public information regarding the country’s participation in projects or interactions with the other member states, including Russia.

Lesser known is the Moscow-based International Investment Bank, a legacy development bank of the Soviet Union, to which Romania is a party (other states include Bulgaria, Cuba, Czech Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Slovakia and Vietnam). Romania seems to have benefited from six loans from this bank, but there is almost no other public information regarding the country’s participation in projects or interactions with the other member states, including Russia.

Romania’s exports to Russia - breakdown by product

- oil, petroleum products and related materials: 18%
- gas, natural and manufactured: 65%
- total, less mineral fuels and lubricants: 4%
- coal, coke and briquettes: 16%
- other: 3%

Romania’s imports from Russia - breakdown by product

- machinery and transport equipment: 65%
- manufactured goods classified chiefly by material: 59%
- chemicals and related products n.e.s.: 13%
- miscellaneous manufactured articles: 17%
- other: 7%

Source: Presentation by the Governor of the National Bank of Romania, Mihua Isarescu, 30 April 2014.

The discovery of rich gas reserves in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Romania in the Black Sea is the most significant prospect for the country’s future energy security. It also has the potential to stimulate more Russian activism on this front, particularly as Romania is working on becoming more interconnected with the regional market and become a potential supplier of gas to its neighbours.

**The Politics of Gas**

One important tool for Moscow’s influence all over Europe has been the politicization of gas. However, because Romania has the second largest gas market in the Central and Eastern European region, the conditions for such influence were always rather minimal. With important domestic resources and Romania’s intent to play more of a role in the interconnector projects, attracting investments in the field is a priority. If in other countries this could raise concerns about the nature and origin of such investments, in Romania the danger that Russia would have a stronger presence is low.

Romania’s low dependence on Russian oil and gas imports, as well as the tense political relationship, has made it less of an interesting partner. This is not to say there weren’t attempts to penetrate the market, take over existing companies or investments, both overtly and covertly, or undermine other potential projects (like in the case of the Chevron shale gas exploration project). Russia has also tried to drag Romania into bigger regional projects and in some cases it almost succeeded. For instance, Gazprom tried to strike a deal with Romania on South Stream and even signed a memorandum of understanding with Transgaz (the national transport company), but the deal never came through. Gazprom did establish a presence in Romania through its subsidiary, the Serbian NIS Petrol. On the other hand, the Russian company Lukoil entered the Romanian market in 1998 by buying the Petrotel refinery (accounting for roughly one fifth of the entire refining capacity of Romania) and establishing a small chain of gas stations. It was also awarded contracts for two gas fields in the Black Sea.


**Romania’s imports from Russia**

- 2006: 134,976
- 2007: 128,723
- 2008: 132,989
- 2009: 113,767
- 2010: 119,665
- 2011: 121,548
- 2012: 116,460
- 2013: 115,166
- 2014: 121,689
- 2015: 135,159

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/nrg_124a

Credit IFN SA (€10 million), and Eurohold (€15 million). https://www.iib.int/en/search/projects?query=romania


September 2017, after an investigation that started a year ago, Lukoil was indicted by Romanian prosecutors in a money laundering case.

67 Nordstream 2 has a similar goal, and it shows that geopolitics trumps economic considerations in Moscow’s decision-making.

Cooptation and murky deals haven’t really been a successful part of the Russian arsenal in Romania. There is no concrete evidence that Romanian decision makers had shown any interest in regional or national projects that might have favoured Russian interests or given any special treatment to Russian companies. But at the level of political discourse some Romanian officials have expressed interest in pursuing more Russian and Chinese investments. This has been met with criticism from Romanian civil society and media mainly because of business practices that they deem to be incompatible with EU ones. In fact, some Russian companies and their attempts to establish a stronger presence in Romania have received media attention, mainly because of the scandals they have been involved in. One such company is Lukoil, involved in a tax evasion and money laundering case.

68 Another recent example is a dubious deal in which allegedly the Russian company Tupolev was involved. The project was suspended under suspicions of money laundering. Such examples confirm concerns about conflicting business practices, but also speculations about Russian attempts to create more economic and political levers in Romania. For now, in the absence of evidence of subversion and corruption, Russia’s use of economic influence doesn’t seem to be a major risk for Romania.

67 For an analysis of how Romania’s Black Sea offshore gas discoveries play in regional energy security see https://www.ft.com/content/0b3f27b7-2a7d-4270-9653-288a47ab0457

68 For more research on this topic see articles on Romania published under CEPA’s Stratcom Program at http://infowar.cepa.org/Countries/Romania

In Romania, as in other East Central European countries, the Kremlin’s disinformation machine is widely opportunistic. It speculates and utilizes the socio-political context and stirs existing emotions or beliefs within various groups in society in order to make them more in tune with Kremlin-backed narratives. This is a relatively cheap investment for the propaganda apparatus, and it’s successful in creating confusion or panic and cultivating conspiracies and distrust in the Western system of values and democratic government.

This opportunistic behaviour is part of a complicated disinformation ecosystem. On the one hand, Kremlin-endorsed narratives and tropes get multiplied with the help of sensationalist, fringe and sometimes even mainstream media. On the other hand, pro-Russia media outlets and Facebook groups act as stimulants or amplifiers for fringe anti-American/anti-NATO/anti-EU voices and messages that do not necessarily originate in the Kremlin’s disinformation laboratories.

In both cases a wide range of media outlets and social media groups are lending a helping hand to Russian propaganda. RT and Sputnik – official Russian propaganda outlets – have, mainly through conspiracies and narrative laundering, launched topics that also appear on a multitude of fringe Romanian websites and social media. These websites seem to have multiplied in the past few years and continue to mushroom. In most cases it is difficult to determine where the stories originate (or who is behind the media platform propagating it), but the like-mindedness between Kremlin propaganda and some of these websites is noteworthy. This blurs the lines between the different actors and their goals, which in the end provides a perfect camouflage for Russian propaganda. It also showcases the Kremlin’s art of contextualization by tailoring its disinformation campaigns to various countries and constituencies.

THE ECOSYSTEM OF DISINFORMATION

Three main forces contribute to the spread of anti-West and pro-Kremlin narratives: (1) official propaganda channels, (2) social media and (3) fringe, obscure, conspiratorial or nationalist websites. As a bonus, they sometimes also receive a helping hand from mainstream media or public personalities, which could be qualified as ‘useful idiots’.

The official propaganda channels are a recent addition to the Romanian media space. After RT’s very short and
There are quite a few pro-Russian pages (most of which only covertly so) and given recent journalistic investigations into Kremlin-sponsored troll factories, this should elicit some level of concern. They don’t appear to have a huge impact in the social media sphere – with rather low followship and shares, in the order of thousands – but they offer good insights into the modus operandi of pro-Kremlin trolls. While information on the effectiveness of Russian propaganda on social media in Romania is scarce, Facebook is known as a very effective social and political organizing tool, and Russian trolls have already experimented with its potential for social mobilization (for instance during the US elections of 2016).

In Romania too, Facebook is a major civic activism breeder and is widely used. According to some sources there are about 9.6 million Facebook users in Romania, accounting for 85% of all Internet users and about 44% of the population. As an illustration of the power of Facebook news and community building, some of the most recent protests (also the biggest) in Romania have been mainly organised and broadcasted via Facebook. Social media has also been widely credited for fuelling protests during the Arab spring, Ukraine’s Maidan revolution and the street demonstrations in Russia on 26 March 2017. Moscow understands this potential, and we can expect some level of experimentation in disinformation and trolling from Kremlin-backed groups.

But the pro-Kremlin disinformation ecosystem is growing almost daily to include fringe religious, nationalist or ‘anti-system’ webpages and groups, which adopt narratives concocted in Kremlin-sponsored laboratories or at least ones that align very well with the Kremlin’s goals. These narratives distort the truth about the international climate and Romania’s geopolitical choices or even domestic policies (from membership in NATO and the EU to the fight against corruption). They question the western-liberal values to which Romania claims to adhere, spread panic about non-existent dangers and instil liberal values to which Romania claims to adhere, spread panic about non-existent dangers and instil

These three main components of the disinformation ecosystem get amplified in mainstream media by credible or popular voices, thus expanding the target audience beyond any credible expectations of the Russian propaganda machine. They become part of the noise created by the echo chambers of online media and especially social media, thus unwittingly providing Kremlin propaganda the perfect camouflage. It also blurs the lines between paid propaganda and disinformation agents (individual persons and media platforms), on the one hand, useful idiots with vested political agendas who understand how to manipulate certain narratives in their favour, and unsuspecting media producers (and consumers) who happen to favour the same points of view, on the other hand.

**EXPLORING THE ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES**

Creating the idea that the West is not an ally, but a disguised enemy is the main goal of the Russian disinformation machine in Romania. The main elements of the anti-Western narratives present Romania as a mere vassal of the West, an ‘American colony’ used as a mere battleground and as a source to extract resources and money. A few elements stand out.

First, NATO and the US in particular are portrayed as selfish and controlled by war-mongering elites. They are shown to be putting all the allies (Romania in particular) at risk of conflict with Russia through their bellicose attitude, but at the same time are not willing to defend their eastern partners. Lack of solidarity within NATO is frequently invoked by Sputnik News, which emphasizes that Western publics are not likely to favor an intervention to defend an ally. This is meant to amplify the rhetoric of disunity, undermine the confidence in the security guarantee posed by NATO and sow doubt in Romania’s geopolitical choices.

Second, Romania as a fully-fledged NATO partner is being ridiculed and considered a pawn in the West’s war games with Russia. The view of pro-Kremlin disinformation channels is that Romania remains an insignificant security actor and it is so vulnerable that it almost doesn’t present interest. An additional element is the idea that defence spending is both useless and counterproductive, leading to more insecurity. A constant component of this narrative has been the argument that by hosting the anti-missile shield elements, Romania is not only putting itself at risk (being only a tactical field for NATO) but also presenting a direct threat to Russia, which will then be forced to defend itself. And disinformation channels are flooded with stories about Russian military superiority to show that whatever defence investment Romania decides to make will not be of any real effect.

The Kremlin knows that Romanians have always feared Russian aggression. By speculating this fear and repeating the idea that the West is provoking Russia, the pro-Kremlin propaganda machine foments an anti-Russian sentiment, but paradoxically an anti-West sentiment in Romania. Reading between the lines of the disinformation machine, the West can become a bigger enemy to Romania if it throws the country in an open conflict with its historical enemy, Russia.

Third, Western investments, in particular American ones, are described as acts of spoliation – very much in line with the neo-colonial narrative. According to Kremlin-sponsored narratives, Romania is handing over its resources while also spending a lot of money on useless military equipment. This echoes with some ingrained narratives that the Romanian society had to fight in the early 1990s, when the first waves of privatizations were starting and a populist leitmotif was “we won’t sell our country.”
PLAYING THE NATIONALIST CARD

One interesting illustration of the disinformation ecosystem ensuring the propagation of Kremlin-backed narratives is Romanian nationalism. They are naturally intertwined with the anti-West narratives and appeal to various emotions within Romanian society – from fear of occupation, dismemberment, foreigners, minorities etc. - to pride (stemming from a ‘glorious’ past, unequalled by the grim present). The same survey (shown in the second figure) shows that 67% of Romanians are confident that NATO would defend them in a potential conflict with Russia.

It must be said that in the past 15 years, nationalism has become a rather marginal trend in Romania. With the main nationalist party (Greater Romania Party – PRM) out of the political game, nativist (centred on ethnic concepts of Romanianess), right-wing (some going back to the inter-war fascist movement) and nationalist (of the irredentist or economic protectionism type) tendencies have kept to the margins of public debate. They have also remained outside of the mainstream political game. In the past few years, however, some of these tendencies have found their way back into various corners of the Internet and even some mainstream media (through the voices of some opinion leaders) and social media. Such platforms create a particularly fertile ground for Kremlin-favoured narratives.

The main narratives of Romanian nationalism have a few distinctive elements: a return to a glorious past – one of the most prominent being the constructed mythology of the heroic Dacians (pre-Roman inhabitants of present-day Romania); a return to traditional values, mainly Christian Orthodox; nostalgia for communism and its supposed grandiose achievements coupled with an anti-EU/anti-West discourse; and a fear of losing territory (mainly Transylvania) combined with aspirations to expand Romania’s borders (including the Republic of Moldova, for instance). A favourite topic of many anti-Western web platforms is the failing economic model that Romania has embraced by joining the capitalist camp and the EU. This type of narrative has become quite frequent on a number of blogs and Facebook pages as well, and it blends with the narrative “Romania – a colony of the US/West”.

While there is still not enough data as to the level of penetration of these narratives, regional surveys may be pointing to worrisome trends. Recent data gathered by GLOBSEC shows interesting tendencies among Central and Eastern Europeans, including Romanians (among which Vladimir Putin seems to have the highest approval rating in the region). But in Romania, where the pro-Western and pro-American sentiments are still very high, such worries are typically dismissed by analysts or policy makers.

While sentiment regarding the EU and NATO continues to be positive, the undercurrents that that Kremlin-backed narratives are manipulating need to be taken seriously. More research is still needed regarding the circulation and effectiveness of disinformation. Also, more transparency as to who is funding many of these disinformation-based Internet platforms would help public opinion become more aware of the attempts to pollute the information space. Out of all instruments of influence that the Kremlin is using against Romania, disinformation is the most insidious and hard to fight back. But transparency, education and responsibility of mainstream opinion leaders are good steps to prevent it from becoming a truly subversive force in Romania.

CYBER WARFARE

In many instances the weaponization of information goes hand in hand with cybernetic attacks. In recent years such attacks on both organizations (such as the Democratic National Convention in the United States) and individuals (such as hacking the emails of journalists or activists critical of the Kremlin) have been used to fabricate disinformation campaigns and manipulate public opinion. But cyber attacks have also been used against critical infrastructure and government institutions – in countries like Georgia, Ukraine, Estonia, Germany, etc. In Romania information about such attacks is rather scarce.

The best-known example is the ‘Red October’ attack. In October 2012, Kaspersky, the Russian-based anti-malware company revealed that the ‘Red October’ network was conducting a 5-year-old cyber espionage against Romania and other former communist states from CEE and Central Asia. The espionage was considered the ‘hardest cyber attack on Romania in the last 20 years’, according to the spokesperson of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Sorin Sava, in 2013. The hackers targeted both public and private institutions, and foreign diplomatic missions aiming to collect confidential information related to national resources, foreign policy and geopolitics, or Black Sea policies. Kaspersky identified the perpetrators as Chinese and Russian nationals.

Since 2012, the special cyber defence unit within the Intelligence Service has reported hundreds of such attacks, most of which have been caught before producing damage. In many of these cases the perpetrators were identified as nation states (including Russia). For lack of detailed data on this issue, it’s hard to assess how potent cyber weapons can be against Romania and what their main targets might be. Romania takes pride in its IT prowess and is leading NATO’s efforts to support Ukraine’s cyber defence. But domestically, the country is still struggling to put its cyber defence strategy and how to best implement it. The level of exposure to Kremlin-backed cyber attacks is hard to estimate, but based on other countries’ experiences, Romania is not far from facing similar risks and needs to consider this in its security calculations.

76 Some research regarding the spread and type of sentiment regarding NATO exercises in Romania has been conducted by the Center for Civic Participation and Democracy at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest.


**Conclusion**

Russia has limited abilities – in economic, cultural and political terms – to influence events in Romania. Even ideologically, an area where the Kremlin has established many inroads into European politics (including by tapping into mainstream debates), Romania has become disconnected from Russia as far back as the communist era. However, as the offensive in the information space clearly shows, the opportunities for Russia to insert, shape and augment anti-Western narratives are numerous and varied. Disinformation is a larger potential area of influence than any other.

By exploiting the sources of disaffection (be it economic, political etc.) that already exist in Romanian society, the Kremlin-backed disinformation machine can work its way into the centre of the problems that people care about. From there, various other channels of influence can be developed under the false perception that the public is anti-West, and other geopolitical options should be sought out. This is not such a far-fetched possibility, as other narratives are numerous and varied. Disinformation for Russia to insert, shape and augment anti-Western narratives is a larger potential area of influence than any other.

This points to a few steps that are necessary in response to this changed security and political environment:

- Admitting there is a problem and that it endangers Romania’s security, together with its future political development, is crucial. In fact, naming and defining the danger needs to happen at a trans-Atlantic level as well. Russian ‘active measures’ have to become a more solid preoccupation for analysts and policy makers, who need to include this in their policy planning and strategic documents.

- The Orthodox Church, given its effect on public opinion, should not be excluded from the policy conversation. We may even conceive a role for it in educating churchgoers about the true values it upholds and how they fit in a European context so the public doesn’t become estranged from Western democratic values under false pretences put forth by the Kremlin.

- Romania, like many other nations in Europe (and to a certain extent like the EU itself), needs positive narratives. In the years before NATO and EU accession, there was a strong aspirational dimension of public policy and politics that is now missing. Without positive narratives about the advances that Romania made as a result of its integration with the West, the likeliness of disinformation to succeed is much higher. The construction of positive narratives will require not only stronger cooperation between public and private organizations, but also financial investment into education programs and independent, professional journalism.

But Romania is only one piece of the puzzle of Russian influence in Europe, and it is not the most important one. As pointed out above, European nations need to work together on many of these policy dimensions that would help increase resilience in the face of Russian influence. This involves solidarity and common action on a variety of agendas, from anti-corruption and anti-money laundering to energy diversification and strengthening the European energy market (by building interconnectors, implementing the third energy package etc.); from increasing political pressure (such as energy diversification or cyber security cooperation); from intelligence sharing and cyber security cooperation to more effective attempts at strengthening the fringes of the EU and its neighbours. •
Zuzanna Chorabik

IS ROMANIA A ‘NATURAL’ ENEMY OF RUSSIA?

Rumania, a state that bridges the East and the West, has a rich, unique history, which was strongly influenced by other countries. Because of that the country escapes simple schemes and judgments. This diversity can be easily observed on the basis of the Romanian language, which belongs to the group of Romance languages but manifests common features (like structures and words) with, for example, Slavic languages that are widespread in the region. Despite the turbulent history, Romanians managed to find their place on the map. Today they no longer have to prove that they deserve existence.

Over time Russia (both Tsarist and Soviet) has become one of the most important ‘players’ in the region. Russia had a considerable influence on the Wallachian peoples (which, during their history, adopted the common name ‘Romanians’). An interesting issue is the image of one nation – the Russian nation – and Russia in the eyes of Romanians based on the sum of all these experiences and mutual relations. But first of all, it is worth noting briefly the most important facts connected with Russian-Romanian relations.

In the Middle Ages, the Wallachian population and the Eastern Slavs found themselves in the circle of influence in the Orthodox Church. Religion was one of the first factors shaping the foundations of identity of both the ethnic groups. But at that time they did not have many contacts with each other. The ancestors of present day Romanians certainly had a greater problem with Hungarians, for they competed with them for Transylvania, the area recognized by Romanian historiography as historical lands of Romania. Finally Transylvania fell to the Kingdom of Hungary, and in the 16th century it was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. It then became a part of the Habsburg monarchy at the turn of the 18th century. Similarly, the small states of Modova (in historical sense covering the larger area than today’s Moldova) and Wallachia (divided into Oltenia and Muntenia – Bucharest being the capital of Muntenia) remained under the Hungarian and Polish influence and became dependent from the Ottoman Empire. The former Moldovan state, which was under the influence of Hungary and Poland, became more important than the present state of Moldova and Wallachia. Also smaller regions like Banat and Crișana (in present western Romania), Maramureș and Bukovina (in the north), and Dobrudja (in the south-east) were subordinated to the strongest states in the region.
INTENSIFICATION OF ROMANIAN-RUSSIAN CONTACTS

Until the 18th century, contact between Romania and Russia was quite rare. Of course, one can mention family connections (as in the case of Stephen the Great, the Moldovan ruler whose daughter married the son of tsar Ivan III of Russia) or religious relationships (e.g. Peter Mogila – the Metropolitan of Kiev from the Moldovan boyar family) between the Wallachian states and Muscovy – but, as already mentioned, they did not matter much. Regional power was at that time under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and that was the power that supported or attacked the Wallachs. The impulse to strengthen relations with Moscow was the common enemy – in this case the Ottoman Empire. Already from the mid-17th century, Romanian boyars (noblemen), especially those from Moldova, perceived the Muscovian rulers as their allies (since they were the natural enemies of the Ottoman Empire), and they asked them for help (e.g. in 1711 the Moldovan hospodar Dmitri Cantemir made a political alliance with Russia). It should also be mentioned that the Russians supported the Romanians against the policy of Vienna, which aimed at converting the population to Catholicism (by the Greek Catholic church). We see here, therefore, a certain community of Orthodoxy. It is worth noting that the Greek Catholic Church, supported by the Habsburgs, had a significant influence on Romanian consciousness, creating the so-called Transylvanian school, which promoted the Romanian national revival.

On the other hand, Russia was building its power and demonstrated an increasing ‘appetite’ for Romanian lands – as early as 1739 the Russians occupied Moldova as a result of the Russo-Turkish war. Similarly Russia strengthened its influence in Moldova and Wallachia as a result of one of the subsequent Russo-Turkish wars from 1768 to 1774 and the peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (the Austrians, in turn, gained a part of Bukovina inhabited largely by Romanians). Initially, the Romanian population eagerly supported Russian anti-Turkish activities, but as Neagu Djuvara, a Romanian historian, describes these events, the behaviour of Russian troops were sweeping through the territories of Moldova and Wallachia. The conflict ended with the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812. Considering the relations between Romania and Russia, the most important fact was that the Russian Empire took over Bessarabia (as the large, eastern part of historical Moldova was called) – and this circumstance has been fraught with consequence until today. Romanian journalist Lulea Marius Dorin in his article “Why we DON’T love Russia?” believes that the process of denationalizing the inhabitants of Moldova at that time was ‘a continuum and represented the crime of Russia against the Romanian people.’ Other parts of Romania – the rest of Moldova and Wallachia – gradually became independent from the Ottoman Empire, but Russia remained a kind of guarantor in this process. Transylvania was still part of the Habsburg Empire.

It seems an interesting motive that the Romanians took over the accession to Russia from other nations. Mirnda Trandafir points to the contacts between Moldovan and Wallachian emigrants in Paris and the Polish emigration circle gathered around Prince Adam Czartoryski, famous for its hostility towards Russia.82

ROMANIA BECOMES A STATE

In the 19th century, the development of Romanian national consciousness accelerated. In 1831 and 1832 in Wallachia and Moldova, the so-called Regulament Organic (Organic Regulation) was enforced. It was a quasi-constitutional law, and Russian military administrator Pavel Kiselov was one of the people who introduced it. Romania too did not avoid the Spring of Nations in 1848, when the revolutionary troops of Avram Iancu supported Russian troops in their fight against the Hungarians led by the Polish general Józef Bem.

In 1859 an unprecedented event occurred in the history of Romania – the Principality of Moldova and Wallachia united under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. This event is today referred to as the so-called Small Union. A specific manifestation of the pro-Western tendencies at that time was a gradual change of the Romanian script – from Cyrillic to Latin (for some time a mixed system was introduced).

In 1877 the Russo-Turkish war broke out. Romania proclaimed independence from the Turkish supremacy and actively participated in the fight on the Russian side, taking part, among others, in the Siege of Plevne. As a result of the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin signed in 1878, Romania gained a part of Dobruja but lost to Russia further fragments of Moldova (southern Bessarabia). This caused a lot of bitterness among Romanians. Constantin Bacalbasa wrote at that time: ‘From that moment, the Romanian friendship for Russia is over. Since now in our country there are anti-Russian feelings. The Russians are now received with cold and hostility…’ Russia’s case in Romania is lost forever.83 The Romanians learned finally that Russia treated them instrumentally. And according to Romanian diplomat Take Ionesco, Russia has become a ‘natural enemy’ of Romanians.

Romania participated also in the Second Balkan War (at that time Russia supported Serbia and Bulgaria), and it declared that in case of a conflict between Romania and Bulgaria, the Russians would assist the latter) and took advantage of the situation, gaining control over the southern Dobruja.

During World War I, Romania initially remained neutral and joined the war only in 1916 on the side of the Entente – the same side as Russia. Unfortunately, after the counterattack of the Triple Alliance forces, Romanian troops were forced to move towards Moldova for some time. Bucharest was captured and Romanians decided to evacuate the National Bank of Romania. At the time Russia was considered the safest, closest and most practical location. The so-called Romanian Treasure contained, among other things, documents, bank shares, old coins and gold. Shortly thereafter, the October Revolution broke out in Russia and the treasure was never returned. Afterwards, subsequent governments of Romania tried to regain the treasure, but they only achieved a small success. Even till this day, this matter remains controversial.

83 L. M. Dorin, De ce nu iubim Rusia? http://adransor.ro/cultura/culegere-de-adrasor-1_3.txt?c=789599654912941/index.html; access: 3.01.2018
GREATER ROMANIA

On 1 December 1918, the so-called Great Union of Romania took place. Romanians from Transylvania and other minor regions inhabited by Romanians – such as Banat – declared their union with the Romanian Kingdom. The ultimate confirmation of the Union of Romania was the Treaty of Trianon (which, in fact, was a partition of Hungary) in June 1920. It is worth noting that during the interwar period Bessarabia – strongly russiaed after 1812 – was also attached to Romania (known at that time as the Great Romania).

Already at the beginning of the interwar period, Romania spoke openly against Bolshevism Russia, perceiving it as a threat. This attitude was proved, for example, by establishing an anti-Bolshevik alliance with Poland (confirmed by numerous treaties) and by military support offered to Poland during the Polish-Ukrainian War. This military support aimed to establish the common border

...the military support offered to Poland during the Polish-Ukrainian War. This military support aimed to establish the common border... By 1934, the two countries signed a protocol on the mutual respect of independence and sovereignty. But there were people who warned against the Russian-Soviet threat, among them a politician and historian Nicolae Igor (“We must avoid like a plague the irritation of the Russians because, firstly, we are too close to them, secondly, because the Russians are like elephants: they never forget’) and politician Ion Brătianu, who said:

CALAMITIES OF WORLD WAR II

On 23 August 1939 the USSR and Nazi Germany signed the so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, in which the Soviet Union emphasized its interest in Bessarabia. (The Pact also delineated the spheres of interest between the two powers in the Baltic States and Poland.) Romania felt the threat even though in October the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR assured the Romanian ambassador in Moscow that Romania could feel safe. On 26 June 1940, the USSR government issued an ultimatum in which it demanded from Romania that Bessarabia and northern Bukovina be given away. King Carol II of Romania announced the rejection of this ultimatum, but the Crown Council he called was not so determined to defend Bessarabia. Due to the unclear position of Romania, the Soviets issued a second ultimatum, which was accepted and resulted in Soviet occupation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. The Soviet aggression not only meant the loss of 49,600 square kilometers of territory and 3,600,000 people, but it also created a dangerous precedent for it allowed Hungary, which was allied with the Axis powers, to take advantage of Romania’s weakness and occupy Transylvania, and it enabled Bulgaria to regain southern Dobrujda under the Treaty of Craiova signed by the two countries. The population of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina was subjected to persecution – many people were killed, displaced or sent to labor camps. Quality of life deteriorated – the lack of food was particularly severe. Most of the territories captured by the Soviets from Romania were converted in 1940 into the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (today Moldova), in which the occupants tried to develop a society of ‘Moldovians’ speaking the ‘Moldovian’ language (if not Russian).

ROMANIAN PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC

From 1941 to 1944 Romania fought on the side of the Axis powers. Romanian troops took part, among other things, in the campaign against the USSR, and they temporarily regained Bessarabia as a result of Operation München. Romanian soldiers participated also in the fighting for Crimea and Stalingrad. In August 1944 Romania suspended war against the Allies and instead declared war on Germany, which enabled the Red Army to enter its territory and strengthen its Soviet influence. The newly arrived ‘allies’ ‘distinguished themselves’, among other things, by destroying the Sturzdza Palace in Miiclăuşeni and deporting Romanian soldiers to gulags. Romania, with the approval of Western countries (especially Great Britain and the US), found itself in the Soviet sphere of influence. In 1947, under the Treaty of Paris, Romania was returned to the borders of 1940 – thus regaining Transylvania. However, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina remained within the borders of the Soviet Union. From 1947, Romania remained under the exclusive control of communists. Initially, until 1965, the Soviet power was held by Gheorghe Ghiorghiu-Dej, and then from 1967 it was held by Nicolae Ceauşescu.

In communist Romania persecutions started. Romanian anti-communist guerrillas (so-called Haidui) fought against the communist authorities until the 1970s. Religion also turned out to be an enemy – among the well-known priests persecuted by the communists were Orthodox priest Arsenie Boca and Greek Catholic priest Alexandru Todea. Since the cultural development was restrained, many artists were forced to emigrate. In Piteşti one of the most cruel ‘re-education’ camps in the whole Eastern Bloc was in full swing.

While analyzing Romania during the communist era, the country hidden behind the so-called Iron Curtain and very much in opposition to the Western countries, one cannot forget about its particular policy of autonomy. In spite of being in the same ‘camp’, Romania did not always submit to the ‘Big Brother’. In the 1960s an anti-Soviet and anti-Russian turnaround took place in Romanian politics, and thanks to that the communists received to some extent the support

85 In original: “Dacă voi fi eu la guvern, nu vom răspunde ruşilor; dacă vor fi alţii şi aceştia vor comite greşeala să răspundă, îţi spun de pe acum ce se întâmplă: vom fi...”

of Romanian intelligentsia. Even the Romanian communists preferred nationalism to the Romanian-Soviet friendship. A certain curiosity was the existence of a special section to combat the intelligence of socialist countries within the Securitate (Romania’s security service). Soviet troops left Romania in 1958. The aftermath of this peculiar independence from communist Romania was the deprivation of sufficient support from other countries of the Eastern Bloc in 1989, which had the Romanian communists had to face during this new Spring of Nations.

INDEPENDENT ROMANIA

The last decade of the 20th century was a new chapter in the history of Romania. Romania wrote its own history by taking a pro-Western course and joining NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007. And even though the transformation was not always easy (e.g. the so-called Mineria or a series of violent demonstrations and riots by miners, provoked and instrumented by the post-communists), the boundary marked by the Iron Curtain was becoming more and more blurred.

However, it does not mean that the Romanians are forgetting their own history. Russia will be seen differently by a Romanian and, let’s say, to a French person. Florian Bichir, historian and author of the book Russian Messianism and Its Faces (Mesianismul Rus şi Chipurile Sale) makes an interesting observation: ‘I am sorry but I cannot talk about Russia in the same categories as Depardieu, even if I would like to. The French did not have Bessarabia and Bukovina, they did not have hundreds of thousands of Romanians buried in Siberia, they experienced neither the love of Muscovy nor the whip of its civilization.86 And even though a positive image appears here and there – as the image of a Russian woman (but not necessarily of Russia itself) in the book titled Russian Woman by Gib Mihăescu or in the community of the Orthodox Church (Russia as a defender of traditional values) – some memories are too vivid, especially in the east of Romania. There are instances of reluctance towards ordinary Russians who travel in Romania caused because of a history of anti-Russian family stories.

A certain anti-Russian feature in the mentality of Romanians may be caused by Romanian pride – a Romance nation surrounded by the mostly Slavic ocean that withstood Pan-Slavism and Russia as its main propagator. It was noticed in the 19th century by Mihai Eminescu, a Romanian romantic poet, who wrote an article ‘Romania in the fight with Pan-Slavism’ (‘România în luptă cu panslavismul’). As in the popular saying, Romania has only two friends: the Serbs and...the Black Sea.

In the survey conducted in 2015 by the INSCOP public opinion poll center87, respondents were asked to give their opinion on Russia. From the results they found that 26.8% had positive feelings and 61.7% had rather negative feelings about Russia. Even the Hungarians performed better in this survey. For comparison, Spain enjoys the greatest liking in Romania – 84.3% of respondents had rather positive feelings for it, which is perhaps a result of large Romanian emigration to Spain.

The attitude towards Russia is apparent also in jokes and anecdotes – as in the poem attributed to Constantin Tease:

‘It was hard with ‘der, die, das’
But it’s worse with ‘gimme watch’

From Dniestre to Don
Gimme watch, gimme coat
Gimme watch, Gimme land
all right, comrade

(‘Rau era cu ‘der, die, das’
Da-i mai rau cu ‘davai ceas’
De la Nistru, pan ‘la Don
Davai ceas, davai palton
Davai ceas, davai mosie
Haraso tovarsie’)

*modernized later – ‘iPhone’
instead of ‘coat’ etc.

Russians depicted in the jokes remind barbarians from a distant, cold country.

TURBULENT REGION

It seems, however, that there is a chance for these conflicts to slow down since Romania does not share a border with Russia. Especially helpful might be a rapprochement between Romania and the US (e.g. Romania is hosting elements of an anti-missile shield on its territory). The question of Moldova may appear the possible cause of still smouldering conflicts. Many Romanians would like this land to be returned to Romania, and the unification movement is also visible in Moldova itself (e.g. demonstrations organized on Romania’s national holiday, the 1st of December. On the other hand, there exists a strong ‘pro-Moldova’ movement, and the question of Moldovan identity, especially ‘Moldovan language’, remains open. Many people are trying to prove, often ‘by force’, that Moldovans cannot unify with Romanians, (e.g. the broadly commented ‘Moldovan-Romanian’ dictionary by Vasile Statu). Another problem is the high degree of Russification, or rather, Sovietization of the local population. The Russian language is still very popular and sometimes even dominant. Many Russians and Ukrainians live in Moldova, especially in the Transnistria region, a self-proclaimed and internationally unrecognized state that belongs to Moldova according to international law. Transnistria is supported by the Russian Federation, and Russian troops are still stationed there. The symbols of this small state still refer to the Soviet era. Separatist tendencies in this area were caused by attempts to introduce the Moldovan language as the only official language. Today this situation is still destabilizing the region and causing tensions with both Moldova and Ukraine.

So what is the image of a Russian in the mentality of contemporary Romanians? Is it unambiguously negative? Is Russia a ‘natural’ enemy of Romania? There are numerous indications that it is so, in a sense, with the latest history being the reason for the situation. It is hard to expect that Romanian attitudes towards Russians will change significantly; they may fade, however, provided that peace is maintained in Central and Eastern Europe. But peace is extremely fragile, as the example of Ukraine shows. Romanians are not panicked. They do not hate Russians nor do they care for relations with them as they do for relations with other countries, such as Poland or Lithuania. However, every aggressive Russian move can instantly activate those dormant feelings.
### Foreign-born population of Romania from 2012 to 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>115,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>182,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>211,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>281,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>350,753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Share of Russian gas in consumption

EU-28 (%), 2012 data (Gazprom and BP Statistical Review 2013)

### Defence expenditures

(million US dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2452</td>
<td>2520</td>
<td>2633</td>
<td>2684</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Defence expenditure

(as a share of GDP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Romanian Military Strength

- Air Force
  - Manpower available: 11,050,000
  - Fit-for-service: 9,060,000
- Aircraft strength: 134
- Combat tanks: 827
- Armored Fighting Vehicles: 1,456
- Towed Artillery: 413
- Rocked Projectors: 189
- Navy Strength: 46
- Total: 21,599,736

Natural Resources (Petroleum)
- Production (Barrels Per Day): 4,400
- Consumption (Barrels Per Day): 21,599,736
- Proven reserves (Barrels): 600,000,000

Sources:
# Parliamentary elections 2016

## Senate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of votes</th>
<th>Election results (%)</th>
<th>Mandates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
<td>3 221 786</td>
<td>45,68</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Liberal Party</td>
<td>1 440 193</td>
<td>20,42</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save Romania Union</td>
<td>629 775</td>
<td>9,22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania</td>
<td>440 409</td>
<td>6,24</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats</td>
<td>423 728</td>
<td>6,01</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Movement Party</td>
<td>398 791</td>
<td>5,65</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Romania Party</td>
<td>207 977</td>
<td>3,95</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Romania Party</td>
<td>81 568</td>
<td>1,81</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecologist Party of Romania</td>
<td>77 218</td>
<td>1,09</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Romania Alliance</td>
<td>66 774</td>
<td>0,95</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Socialist Party</td>
<td>32 808</td>
<td>0,47</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanist Power Party (Social-Liberal)</td>
<td>3 066</td>
<td>0,04</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Romania Party</td>
<td>2 349</td>
<td>0,03</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Unity Bloc</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Party</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACT</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Vrancea Party</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Roma Party</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party of Romania</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>21 395</td>
<td>0,30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chamber of Deputies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of votes</th>
<th>Election results (%)</th>
<th>Mandates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
<td>3 204 484</td>
<td>45,48</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Liberal Party</td>
<td>1 422 377</td>
<td>20,04</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save Romania Union</td>
<td>625 354</td>
<td>8,87</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania</td>
<td>435 969</td>
<td>6,19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats</td>
<td>396 386</td>
<td>6,62</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Movement Party</td>
<td>376 891</td>
<td>5,55</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Romania Party</td>
<td>365 377</td>
<td>2,73</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Romania Party</td>
<td>73 264</td>
<td>1,04</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecologist Party of Romania</td>
<td>62 444</td>
<td>0,89</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Romania Alliance</td>
<td>61 206</td>
<td>0,87</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Socialist Party</td>
<td>24 580</td>
<td>0,35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of the Roma</td>
<td>15 106</td>
<td>0,18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Forum of Germans</td>
<td>12 375</td>
<td>0,18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Union of Slovaks and Czechs in Romania</td>
<td>6 545</td>
<td>0,09</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of the Lippovan Russians</td>
<td>6 960</td>
<td>0,09</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenic Union of Romania</td>
<td>5 817</td>
<td>0,08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Turkish Union of Romania</td>
<td>5 536</td>
<td>0,08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Macedonians of Romania</td>
<td>5 332</td>
<td>0,08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Serbs of Romania</td>
<td>5 468</td>
<td>0,08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania</td>
<td>5 069</td>
<td>0,07</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Armenians of Romania</td>
<td>4 868</td>
<td>0,07</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League of Albanians of Romania</td>
<td>4 640</td>
<td>0,07</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian Union of Banat-Romania</td>
<td>4 542</td>
<td>0,06</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Croatians of Romania</td>
<td>3 532</td>
<td>0,05</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Italians of Romania</td>
<td>3 486</td>
<td>0,05</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Poles of Romania</td>
<td>3 355</td>
<td>0,05</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Union of Ruthenians of Romania</td>
<td>2 824</td>
<td>0,04</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prime Minister: **Sorin Grindeanu**
