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Between Transdniestria and Serpent Island: The Evolution of Romanian Policy Toward Ukraine

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Introduction

Romanian policy toward Ukraine is best understood in the context of Bucharest's core international goals. Three domains of activity are evident, and have generally been mutually reinforcing. First, the lodestone of Romania's international efforts is integration into Western economic and security structures. Second, the construction of a network of regional associations and bilateral relationships designed to bolster security and advance the countries economic interests. Third, Romania has sought to resolve regional conflicts that have the potential of producing intervention (notably by Russia) potentially detrimental to its security interests.

The efforts of Romanian diplomats to achieve these goals has been constrained by the interests of competing states and by the Romanian's own limited resources. In the post-communist period, issues arising from the domestic political environment have also complicated Romanian foreign policy.

The relationship between Ukraine and Romania clearly has the potential for conflict. Both the territorial issues and the nationality politics endemic to the region are present in the Romania-Ukraine relationship. Furthermore, nationalist sentiments have played a strong role in post-communist Romania's domestic politics. In the following paper, however, I will argue that despite differences Romanian policy toward Ukraine has evolved along generally positive lines in the course of the past decade. This is largely a consequence of two factors. First, changes in the international environment created a situation in which the benefits to be gained in pursuit of Romania's core goals through cooperation with Ukraine vastly outweighed any benefits of confrontation. Second, changes in Romanian domestic politics during the mid-1990s marginalized ethnic extremists, clearing the way for reorientation of the country's foreign policy in a direction favorable to developing positive relations with Ukraine.

Romania's Foreign Policy Framework

If Romania's history with regard to international affairs has been markedly turbulent, the principle forces that shape it have been equally and markedly consistent. In essence, the Romanians find themselves in a highly volatile region, with limited domestic resources, and subject to intervention.

The principalities that preceded modern Romania suffered recurrent intervention as a consequence of their geographic position, which placed them at the crossroads between competing powers that are more powerful than themselves. An already difficult geo-strategic situation was further complicated by the Romanians' self identification as a "Latin" people situated within a predominantly Slavic demographic zone. Outsider status increased Romanian elites' perception of ethnic threat.

Following the country's full independence in 1878. Romania's position in the international arena was tenuous and conflict prone.[1] Regional instability led to its involvement in the Second

Balkan War. After seeking to remained neutral at the beginning of the First World War, Romania's political leaders entered that conflict on the side of the Allies in 1916. This move was rewarded with the acquisition of territories that approximately doubled the size of the country. Expansion, however, did not bring peace. Rather, the increased heterogeneity of "Great Romania's" population destabilized domestic politics and generated irridentist claims by neighboring states that put the country at immediate risk of renewed conflict. Much as in the current period, in an effort to counter threats against its sovereignty Bucharest sought support from Western Great power patrons, especially France It also entered into a system of regional alliances. The Little Entente of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia was formed in 1922, largely as a check against Hungry. In 1934 the Balkan Pact, which included Greece Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Romania, was formed as a defense against Bulgarian territorial claims.

None of these efforts, however, could stave of disaster in the face of the twin threats of Germany's resurgent nationalism and the entry of the Soviet Union as a powerful actor in Central Europe. Caught between these competing hazards Romanian diplomats wavered, pinning their hopes on support from the more distant democratic great powers. Disappointed in their expectations of Western assistance, and facing increasingly threatening internal challenges, in the late 1930s Romanian elites shifted into an increasingly pro-German stance. The territorial concessions demanded of them, parts of Transylvania, Bessarabia, and northern Bukovina, were accepted inevitable and unavoidable. While the latter two of these territories were briefly reclaimed in the course of the Second World War, the alliance with Germany failed to secure Romania interests. The shifting tide of battle led to a final desperate alteration in foreign policy in 1944. Romania belatedly renounced its alliance with Germany and entered the war on the side of the Allies, losing Bessarabia and northern Bukovina once again as a consequence, but regaining Transylvania from the Hungarians.

Communism aggravated Romania's national insecurities. It has been argued widely that communism failed to resolve, or even make progress in resolving, the nationalist animosities that characterize much of Central and Eastern Europe. In Romania's case, one can go a step further: the distortions of Romania's communism actively aggravated conditions, promoting xenophobia as a mechanism of regime legitimization. The Romanian Communist Party's unresolved internal factionalism during the 1940s retarded efforts to restructure the country's economy, and enabled a "national communist" faction to survive the Stalinist period in place.[2] Avoiding Khrushchev's reforms, the ascendant Gheorghiu-Dej leadership in Romania undertook an independent "Stalinist" industrialization strategy. This was further reinforced by his successor, Nicolae Ceau escu, in the second half of the 1960s.

The Ceau escu regime's totalitarian course sharpened divisions between Romanian political elites and the rest of the population. Unable to rely on either support from the Soviet Union or the strategy consumer communism and demobilization that was evident elsewhere in Central Europe, the Romanian Communist Party turned to a "traditional" political strategy. The populism and intense nationalism that were conspicuous elements of pre-communist political culture were reinforced as central elements of RCP ideology.

During its communist period, Romania earned a well-deserved reputation as a foreign policy "maverick." Beginning in the early 1960s Gheorghiu Gheorghiu-Dej courted conflict with Moscow, ultimately declaring his intention to pursue a "sovereign" communist course. Nicolae Ceau escu, took an even more extreme position. While remaining within the Soviet Bloc, Romania refused to allow WTO exercises on its territory and resisted efforts by the Council for Mutual

Economic Assistance (CMEA) to integrate regional economies. In the early 1970s, Bucharest traded on its reputation as an "independent" communist state to gain Western economic and diplomatic support. Ceau escu also developed a strong network of relationships among developing countries, with which Romania engaged in economic and trade initiatives.

As the disintegration of the Soviet bloc approached, though, so to did Romania's painstakingly constructed foreign policy position. First, the increasingly extreme distortions of the Ceau escu regime made it impossible for even the most forgiving of its Western supporters to maintain positive relations. Second, the country's foreign exchange crisis in the late 1970s, caused Ceau escu to pursue a policy of intense domestic austerity linked to international autarky, further alienating its former foreign partners. A final blow came with the political opening in the East. When the USSR and its allies pursued glasnost and partial democratization beginning in the late 1980s, Romania found itself disaffected both from the West and within the Soviet bloc. Thus on the fall of communism, Romania was arguably more isolated than any of the post-communist regimes with the exception of Albania.

Setting the Stage for Ukrainian Policy: Romania Between East and West

Romania's initial policy toward Ukraine was formulated in the context of an ambiguous strategic environment, and a contentious domestic political transition. Conditions in both domains acted to limit Bucharest's immediate interest in promoting a close relationship with Kiev.

The nature of Ceau escu's dictatorship clearly worked against a smooth democratic transition for Romania. Furthermore, the Romania's revolution of December 1989 was even more abrupt than others, and unlike the rest of Central Europe, it was marked by significant violence. The hurried transfer of power left substantial elements of the communist apparatus intact, and created an environment of intense political distrust. Rapid action by members of the communist regime left no interval in which a democratic opposition could consolidate sufficiently to play an effective role in negotiating the transition to democracy. In sum these conditions produced transition situation that was easily exploitable by an aspiring authoritarian populist leader such as Romania's first post-communist President, Ion Iliescu.

While not a dominant element in Romanian politics, the extreme nationalists were a crucial, if problematic, element in the coalition that sustained the Iliescu regime through the early transition. Playing upon the population's insecurities, promising a strong guiding hand, and relying selectively upon the authoritarian-nationalists to counter liberal challenges to his rule, Iliescu was able to effectively control the reigns of power. Romanian politics became a contest played out between factions of the elite, punctuated periodically by mass mobilization along populist lines. Iliescu's own power base relied upon a coalition of former communists, organized first as the Democratic National Salvation Front and then as the Party of Democratic Socialism of Romania (PDSR), along with a coterie of right-wing ultra-nationalist parties, including the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR) and Romania Mare.

Even given the "successor communist" provenance of the Iliescu regime, Romania's early post-communist foreign policy was strongly oriented toward integration with the West. It did not, in most ways, deviated from the interwar formula of seeking security through regional affiliations and support from the liberal democracies.[3] In the immediate transition period, however, these goals were tempered by the Romanian political elite's links with the former Soviet Union. Ideological affinities between Iliescu and Gorbachev were evident. Furthermore, the Romanians were unwilling to undertake rapid reform at the pace required to satisfy Western leaders. Romania was

also hobbled in its relations with Western Europe and the United States by instances of violence that characterized Romanian political life in the early 1990s. In a clear signal of displeasure, the United States failed to extend Most Favored Nation Status to Romania. In the absence of massive economic reform and immediate access to Western markets, Romania remained highly depended on its economic ties with the Soviet Union, which was a provider of critical raw materials.

Given the difficulties that Romanian diplomacy was encountering in the West and Romania's dependence on Russian raw materials, it is unsurprising that President Iliescu acted quickly to consolidate his relationship with Moscow through an agreement that, among other things, recognized the territorial status quo between the two countries. While by no means turning away from the efforts in the West, President Iliescu signed the Romanian-Soviet Treaty of Cooperation, Good Neighborliness and Friendship, with President Gorbachev, in April 1991.

Establishing formal state to state relations was among the most immediate foreign policy tasks facing all post-communist leaders. For many, negotiating such agreements proved contentious in both the domestic and foreign policy arenas. Contested borders are the historic legacy of Central Europe. On its independence, Romania's boundaries with Hungary and the USSR both clearly presented potential disputes. In the case of, the USSR four territories were at issue; northern Bukovina and Herta, southern Bessarabia, and Serpent Island were attached to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as a consequence of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Bessarabia proper, also lost to Romania, was established as the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, now the Republic of Moldova. The Soviet-Romanian bilateral treaty, which seemed to legitimate Ribbentrop-Molotov, touched off a firestorm of opposition in Romania.[4]

Rejection by the extreme nationalists of any foreign policy moves that called the status of "traditional" Romanian territories into question was a matter of first principles. While not a large part of the entire electorate, the views of the extremists were disproportionately significant for Iliescu, because of the role that the nationalist parties played in supporting his leadership. Nor was opposition against overtures to Moscow was not limited to extreme nationalists. Romanians of nearly all political stripes hold deep feelings regarding the illegitimacy of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. In addition to concerns raised by the territorial issues, the bilateral treaty also generated antagonism based on the signals that it gave regarding the ideological direction of the regime. Both the liberal parties in Romania and Western governments expressed misgivings that the association with Moscow indicated a "neo-communist" strategy hostile to the democratic transition in general.

Finally, whatever the intentions of the Iliescu regime might have been, the collapse of the USSR and increasing disarray in the Russian Federation precipitously limited the gains to be achieved in through an "eastern strategy." Bucharest's economic relationship with the Soviet Union suffered rapid decline since the late 1980s. In 1991 and 1992, however, it saw a near free fall. Both imports and exports plummeted to approximately half of their 1989 levels by 1993 (see Table 1).

Changing External Parameters: Abandoning the Eastern Strategy

The Iliescu leadership's initial inclination appears clearly to have been the pursuit of a dual strategy. It sought improved relations with the West, but at the same time approached Moscow as an supplementary partner on the diplomatic level, and potentially as a primary economic partner, given the obstacles that confronted it in the West. The political break down in Moscow that led to the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev and the succeeding dissolution of the USSR fundamen-

tally reshaped Bucharest's foreign policy calculus, and set the stage for the development of its current relationship with Ukraine. With little alternative at hand, Bucharest acted quickly to reorient its international strategy. Romania initiated a policy of recognition of the other successor states of the former Soviet Union. It became the first foreign government to recognize Moldovan independence, which restored at least some of its credibility with its nationalist critics. Romania again made overtures in the West, suggesting that it was worthy of increased support as a key bulwark against destabilization in the region.

The effort to achieve acceptance in the West met with substantial success. An association agreement with the European Union was signed on February 1, 1993, and on February 1, 1995, Romania became an associate member of the EU. In June 1995 Romania submitted its formal application to become a full member. Romania was admitted as a full member of the European Council on October 7, 1993. On January 26, 1994, it became the first country to join the Partnership for Peace program. France, Italy and Canada supported Romania's bid to become member of NATO in the first wave of accession.

Unfortunately, with respect to Ukraine, efforts to reorient foreign policy were complicated by nationalist sentiments, by territorial claims and by competing economic interests in the Black Sea. The controversy over Romania's bilateral treaty with the Soviet Union clearly stimulated public awareness of the territorial and ethnic issues involved in the fate of Bessarabia and Bukovina. On the dissolution of the Soviet Union, much of the substance of the dispute was simply transferred to the domain of Romanian-Ukrainian relations. Fortunately, Ukraine's possession of the contested areas was effectively "delinked" from the negative sentiments associated with responsibility for their transfer. These continued to be directed primarily at the Russians, who are held culpable. Despite this fact, once reopened, the territorial issue became a constant impediment to improved relations.

The status of the contested territories and their inhabitants are highly charged issues in the Romania political context. For extremists, such as those that support *Romania Mare* and the Party of Romanian National Unity, the goal of a state encompassing all "traditional" Romanian ethnic territories within its boundaries is a matter of first principle. Even for less extreme elements, the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement that underpinned the transfer of territory is symbolic of Russian intervention in Romania's domestic affairs. Given Romanians' highly negative attitudes toward Russia, acceptance of the territorial status quo, in legitimating the agreement, touches a very raw nerve.

Complicating the territorial issue is the presence of a Romanian speaking minority of approximately 440,000 within the confines of Ukraine. Based on figures at the time of the 1989 census 135,000 members of this population are categorized as ethnic Romanians, while the remainder are viewed as Moldovan. The treatment of Romanian speaking minorities living in Ukraine has been a source of tension. Romanian nationalists, who, forever wary of "Slavification," have focused intense interest on Kiev's cultural policy with regard to Romanian co-nationals living in Ukraine.

The status of Serpent Island presents a particular and relatively intractable problem in Romanian-Ukrainian relations. The island was transferred to the USSR by Romania in 1947 for use as a military base. As early as 1991, President Iliescu (too late) requested the return of the territory from Mikhail Gorbachev.[5] Otherwise relatively useless, the tiny island has taken on significant importance because of its role in delimiting the maritime boundary between the two countries, and because of potential oil and natural gas resources beneath the Black Sea. With up

to 2,800 square miles of territory potentially in dispute, the economic consequences of title are thus substantial. Following on Ukraine's independence, contention over Serpent Island was immediately transferred from Moscow to Kiev. The matter thenceforth was a continual obstacle to completion of a bilateral treaty. The significance of the issue for both sides was indicted by the fact that 1996 Ukraine had reached bilateral friendship agreements with all of its neighbors except Romania and Russia, despite the fact that all had potential territorial claims against it.[6]

Despite the obstacles , some progress was made in developing relations between the two independent states along mutually beneficial lines following 1991. Romania was one of the first three states to recognized Ukrainian sovereignty, and opened an embassy in Kiev in early 1992. A series of limited economic and cultural agreements were also concluded between the two countries from 1992 through 1996. These included agreements to promote economic cooperation and ease travel, particularly for residents in the border region.

Perhaps most significant instances of early Romanian-Ukrainian cooperation were based on the common interest of both countries in responding two the separatist crisis in Moldova. Civil conflict in Moldova dates to passage of the State Law on Language by the Supreme Soviet of Moldova on August 31, 1989. Russophone activists took this as a clear sign that Moldovan Communist Party and state authorities had succumbed to ethnic Romanian pressure and could no longer be depended upon to defend their interests. Separatist activity that followed on the left bank of the Dniester river was encouraged by Soviet military commanders who supported the formation of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic in mid-1990, and abetted the transfer of arms from 14th army stock piles to the separatist militia.[7] In early 1992 conditions took a sharp turn for the worse as a consequence of the Transdniestrians' attempt to consolidate control over the city of Bender (Tighina). Faced with this crisis, Moldovan President Mircea Snegur undertook to suppress units of the separatist militia by force. This attempt met with armed resistance, and by May 1992 the conflict had escalated into full-scale civil war.

Resolving the separatist crisis was profoundly complicated by the involvement of the Russian Republic and Romanian nationalist forces. Despite official support for conciliation, the record of Moscow's involvement in Transdniestria was ambiguous at best. The July 1992 a cease fire agreement which brought an end to the worst of the fighting in Moldova was reached with the support of President Yeltsin, but no final resolution of the conflict was achieved. Russian negotiators publicly supported a political settlement of the crisis based on substantial Transdniestrian autonomy within Moldova, but were not willing to impose this outcome on the Transdniestrian separatists.[8] The continued presence of Russian forces made the military suppression of the Tiraspol government impossible, and encouraged the Transdniestrians not to compromise.[9]

The 14th Army thus plays a central role in the Transdniestrian conflict, yet arrangements for removal of Russian forces, and weapons stockpiles, from Moldova have been markedly slow. On August 10, 1994 Russia and Moldova initialed an agreement, over the objections of Tiraspol, calling for the withdrawal of the 14th Army within three years. In a major concession, Moldova accepted that the troop withdrawal should be synchronized with a political solution to the separatist conflict. This agreement, which was immediately denounced by leaders in Tiraspol, was followed by months of controversy.

On May 8th 1998, the Presidents of Moldova, Ukraine and Russia, along with Igor Smirnov, the leader of Transdniestria, signed a memorandum according to which Moldova and Transdniestria both agree to build their relations within the framework of a single state based on

Soviet era borders. This formulation, which had thus far been resisted by Smirnov, cleared the way for the reintegration of Transdniestria into a sovereign Moldovan state. As yet, however, no final resolution has emerged.

Ukraine's interest in the Transdniestrian conflict is evident. First, the conflict provides Moscow with a justification for maintaining a Russian military foothold on Ukraine's western border. The potential that fighting could renew, drawing large numbers of Russian troops into the region is inherently unwelcome. The unresolved status of the conflict therefore inherently provides Moscow with leverage in its relations with Ukraine. Second, apart from the conflict itself, there is a potential and unwelcome demonstration effect was well. The demands of the Russophone leaders in Transdniestria largely parallel those of pro-Russian forces in Crimea. Kiev can have no interest in a settlement that legitimates ethnic separatism. Ukraine's government has, therefore, consistently stated its opposition to any resolution that undermines Moldova's national sovereignty. Finally, the Transdniestrian conflict has produces substantial "governability" problems. During the height of the fighting, Cossack volunteers entered the region from other parts of the former USSR. The territory has proved a magnet for criminal activities, which complicates Ukraine's difficulties in sustaining the rule of law.

Romania's position on Transdniestria was more ambiguous at the outset of the conflict. There is some justification to the charge that Romanian nationalists (on both sides of the Prut) played a role in precipitating the conflict in Moldova. But quite quickly following the outbreak of fighting, government leaders in Bucharest began to appreciate the risks involved in dispute. Forced resolution in Moldova's favor almost immediately became unthinkable. One Moscow became involved, any escalation on the Moldovan side would clearly be outmatched by Transdniestria, and would simple draw Russia further into the region. Furthermore, the dispute heightened Western perception that Romania nationalism was a source of conflict in the region, complicating Bucharest's efforts to mollify Western critics. Similarly, the upsurge in nationalist fervor produced by it in Romania strengthened Iliescu's unruly right-wing allies. This imposed a further cost by reducing his flexibility in pursuing the country's more general interests.

The civil war in Moldova also, in the final instance, acted to reverse sentiment in favor of reunification between Romania and Moldova. On the side of the Moldovans, the war clearly illustrated the domestic political risks involved in the pursuit of a pro-unification course. It was a catalyst for the fall from power of pro-Romanian nationalists who played a dominant role in the early transition period, and the ascent of Petru Lucinschi's more independence oriented regime.[10] Indicative of the change of orientation in Moldova was the resolution of the Gagauz separatist effort through inclusion of an agreement that the Gagauz Autonomy has the right of secession should Moldova decide in favor of reunification with Romania. In Romania itself the conflict heightened awareness of the potential costs of an assimilationist strategy.

Thus, after some substantial reevaluation on the Romanian side, by 1992 Ukraine and Romania's had come to share, and continue to share, a strong common interest in containing the Transdniestrian conflict. In the active phase of the dispute, this shared interest was signaled by their joint deployment of observers to the region as part of the OSCE peacekeeping operation that brought the fighting to an end in 1993. While Romania has since taken a back seat in peacekeeping efforts, Ukraine has continued to play an active role in brokering negotiations between Transdniestria and Moldova on resolution of the conflict, and on the transfer of Russian weapons out of the region.

The dissolution of the USSR and the subsequent decline in the fortunes of the Russian

Federation for all intents cut of one potential line of international policy for Romania. Despite the difficulties that it faced in relations with the West, and despite the Iliescu regime's ideological congruence with post-communist rulers to the country's east, little could be gained through a pro-Moscow international stance after 1991. Yet complete normalization of relations with the Western powers continued to be hindered by Romania's reputation as a haven for extreme nationalism, and its failure to resolve outstanding problems with its neighbors, in particular, Hungary and Ukraine.

By the mid-1990s sufficient grounds existed for the establishment of positive relations with Ukraine based on common interest in the Transdniestria issue, and on Romania's need to improve its reputation among the Western allies. Further progress, however, was dependent upon changing Romania's domestic political environment. In the meantime, the nationalist tenor of Romania's policy continued to take its toll. While some formal agreements were entered into, these remained largely formalities, generating little substantive activity. Efforts to address the outstanding territorial issues tended to actually aggravate conditions, punctuating the otherwise relatively quiescent relationship with periods of relatively intense recrimination. A low point was reached when Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu commented in the Romanian Senate that he doubted that the Island of the Serpents was in fact Ukrainian territory. Melescanu suggested taking the issue before international bodies for deliberation Ukraine's Foreign Ministry responded by characterising the statement as making a territorial claim against Ukraine, and announced that the Ukrainian Ambassador would be recalled for consultations.[11]

Transforming The Domestic Context of Foreign Policy Toward Ukraine

The contradictions in Romania's foreign policy were further attenuated as a consequence of the country's decisive 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections. These marked the first definitive change in power since the overthrow of the Ceau escu dictatorship in 1989. President Iliescu's strategy during the first six years of the transition was fairly typical of successor communist regimes elsewhere in the region. Like Miloševi in Serbia, his party also played to the nationalist sentiments that were evident within this segment of the electorate, forming a tacit legislative alliance with the extreme nationalist parties. In 1994 this coalition became explicit, when members of PUNR and Romania Mare entered into the cabinet. This was followed by the conclusion of an open agreement on co-operation with Romania Mare, PUNR, and the Socialist Labour Party in January 1995.

The Red-Brown coalition that allowed Iliescu to remain in power despite the PDSR's economic failures was extremely costly in foreign policy terms, and ultimately broke down. As Andrew Janos has noted, the Central European states act under severe international constraints.[12] In an international environment dominated by great powers whose elites are free market and politically liberal in orientation, it is extremely difficult for the leaders of small and dependent states to achieve their desired goals without some degree of ideological compliance. Achieving Romania's core goals remained problematic as the international community increasingly identified President Iliescu and the PDSR with nationalist extremism. This contradictory position became progressively more difficult to manage as efforts to mollify the West took on increased significance, and, in particular, as the Romanian government undertook to improve relations with Hungary and Ukraine in an effort to achieve this end. Hence even as the 1996 round of elections approached, the pdsr was forced to distance itself from its volatile nationalist allies, and finally causing a breakdown in the red-brown coalition.

The opposition coalition the Democratic Convention of Romania CDR), won decisively in the November 3 parliamentary and first round presidential elections. In the parliamentary race, the CDR took 53 senate seats and 122 seats in the chamber of Deputies, in comparison to the PDSR s 41 Senate and 91 Chamber of Deputies victories. Reformist forces successfully united behind Emil Constantinescu in the November 17 presidential runoff, displacing, Iliescu in a 54% to 46% victory.[13]

This transformation of Romania's domestic political landscape that followed the 1996 elections cleared the way for a substantial rationalization in the country's foreign policy position.[14] Freed from the necessity to mollify the nationalist political formations that had hobbled Ion Iliescu's efforts, and aided by a more positive reception in Western capitols, President Constantinescu redoubled efforts to gain Romanian integration into the West European political structures. This reorientation had an immediate effect on Romania's relationship with Ukraine. Foreign Minister Adrian Severin told Reuters in January 1997 the improving the relationship with Ukraine was at the top of Romania's agenda in order to improve the country's chances for entry into NATO. He also remarked that Romania had a "strategic interest in the consolidation of Ukrainian independence and statehood."[15] The shift in policy bore nearly immediate fruit, in the form of a Treaty on Friendship and cooperation between Romania and Ukraine, signed on June 2, 1997. Conclusion of the bilateral treaty was a major step for Romania. It recognized the inviolability of existing borders, and did not include a rejection of Ribbentrop-Molotov, as Romanian nationalists had earlier demanded. Negotiators were unable to resolve the problem of delimiting maritime boundary in the area of Serpent Island. The issue was explicitly put off for future discussion.[16] Through an exchange of letters concurrent with the signing of the treaty, it was agreed to resolve the issue within two years, after which either party could submit the issue to the International Court of Justice. In addition to renouncing territorial claims and the use of force, the treaty also undertook to protect the rights in each of the signatory's minorities in the other's countries.[17]

Despite the change in government, the bilateral Ukrainian treaty was not without its detractors in Romania. PDSR Deputy Chairman leader Teodor Melescanu, characterized the agreement as "over-hasty," as a consequence of the new government's rush to gain entrance into NATO. Corneliu Vadim Tudor, leader of Romania Mare, considered it an act of "national treason."[18] Nor were all of the document's critics to be found in the opposition camp. National Peasant Party-Christian Democrat Secretary General, Radu Vasile, insisted during the negotiations that the document must recognized the null status of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.[19]

Along with a similar agreement concluded between Romania and Hungary, the bilateral agreement served to fulfill one of the precondition of inclusion in NATO expansion, as part of highly public campaign for inclusion in the first round of NATO expansion at the Madrid Summit in July of 1997.[20] While the immediate effort failed, as NATO leaders decided to limit initial expansion to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, Romania's government was reassured that it would receive favorable consideration for later admission. This message was reinforced during as visit to Bucharest by President Clinton in early July. The effort itself set the tone for Bucharest's international activities in succeeding years.

The thawing of relations that followed ratification of the Friendship Treaty was signaled through a presidential visit by Leonid Kuchma to Romania in June 1997, and a return visit by Emil Constantinescu to Ukraine in May 1999.

In addition to improving bilateral ties, in order to promote its own western agenda and

promote the stabilization of Ukraine as a buffer against the Russian Federation, Romania has also become engaged with Ukraine in a complex network of regional groupings. These, taken as a whole are fundamental to Romanian diplomat's core international goals of integration into Western diplomatic and security structures, and regional stabilization. Romania has almost obsessively constructed a network of sub-regional alliances. Of the five agreements that have been formed to date, two link Romania and Ukraine. The Romania, Ukraine Poland Agreement, signed on November 26, 1997, seeks to promote security and economic cooperation between the three partners. A second agreement, signed in July 1997, links Ukraine, Romania and Moldova to similar ends. In addition the Ukraine-Moldova-Romania agreement calls for the development of a multi-cultural university in Cernau i, and is the basis of a free trade zone in the Gala i-Giurgiule ti area.

Romania has been active in the formation and functioning of broader regional initiatives as well. Five such groupings have been established, three of which also include Ukraine. The most significant and broadest of these is the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), established in 1992. The eleven members of BSEC include Western NATO states, Greece and Turkey, as well as post-communist countries. It maintains a permanent secretariat, and supports a number of subsidiary institutions. Of all the associations to which both countries belong, BSEC is clearly the most significant in the Romania-Ukraine relationship. Both Romania and Ukraine consider the BSEC to be of crucial importance in the economic and political development of the region.[21]

The Central European Initiative (CEI), established in 1996, is a broad regional association designed to promote economic reform among member states and to promote European integration. The CEI was established in 1996, and like the Black Sea grouping, includes both Romania and Ukraine among its 16 members. Similarly, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), with 16 member state from the region, is also dedicated to promoting regional cooperation and facilitating integration in European economic and political structures. Its working groups have focused on several basic infrastructural issues of interest to both Romania and Ukraine, including transport, the state of the regional electric network, and the natural gas distribution network.

Despite the promotion of bilateral and multi-lateral relations, tensions have recurred in the "post-Iliescu" context. In mid-1999, a fifth round negotiations failed to produce agreement on the Serpent Island issue.[22] By all indications, the questions of exploitation of natural resources on the continental shelf and demarcation of the border between the two countries remain at issue. Despite their differences, both sides appear to be committed to negotiating a settlement, and both are agreed not to submit the matter to the International Court of Justice.

Implementation of articles of the 1997 bilateral treaty regarding the treatment of minorities has also produced friction in the Romania-Ukraine relationship. In particular, Romania's pressure for the establishment of a "multi-cultural university" to serve the needs of Romanian speakers in Ukraine has generated ill feeling between the two governments.[23] Ukrainian diplomats, on their side, have pointed out that Romania demands treatment of its minorities in Ukraine that Romania has been unwilling to provide for the Hungarian minority within its own borders.

Conclusion

In general Romania's foreign policy interests since the end of the communist period have been consistent with those of Ukraine, and have developed in a mutually beneficial direction.

This is the case despite the necessity of addressing potential points of conflict. These include most prominently border issues and the status of minorities in both countries.

These points of competing interest, however, have been outweighed by motivations to co-operate. The importance that the relationship with Ukraine has assumed in Romania's quest for Western integration is obvious. Similarly, Bucharest has a strong strategic interest in the existence of a stable and independent Ukraine as a buffer against Russia's influence in the region. Finally, Ukraine is increasingly a partner in the range of multi-lateral economic and security agreements through which Romania is seeking to consolidate its position in Southeastern Europe.

The combined weight of these mutual interests has not erased the legacy of nationality politics and border disputes (Serpent Island has not disappeared). But mutual interest, epitomized by common concerns regarding resolution of the conflict in Transdniestria, has displaced them from the center of state to state relations, allowing progress to occur in other domains.

Table 1. Romanian Trade with Selected Regions: Percent of Total World Trade*

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Former Soviet Union									
Imports	31.2	23.4	17.7	15.3	15.3	17.5	15.2	15.1	14.5
Exports	21.9	24.2	22.2	13.6	8.7	5.8	4.9	4.2	5.7
European Union									
Imports	13.8	21.5	28.7	41.3	45.3	47.7	48.9	51.5	52.5
Exports	32.8	33.3	36.7	35.1	41.4	48.2	54.1	56.6	56.6
Eastern Europe									
Imports	14.7	12.3	7.6	6	5	4.7	5.4	5.3	5.9
Exports	10.7	9.2	7.1	6.4	5.3	5.9	4.2	4.5	4.6

** Date is drawn from the 1997 International Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1997 (New York: The United Nations, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Statistics).*

Footnotes

1. For a comprehensive account of Romania's place in the Balkan political arena see Barbara Jelavich's *History of the Balkans*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

2. See Ghita Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania: 1944-1962* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

3. On this point Walter Bacon "Security as seen from Bucharest," in Daniel N. Nelson, ed., *Romania After Tyranny*, (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1992), p. 192

4. For two views of the 1991 bilateral treaty with the Soviet Union, see Walter Bacon "Security as seen from Bucharest," in Daniel N. Nelson, ed., *Romania After Tyranny*, (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1992), p. 192, and Sorin Mircea Botez, "An Alternative Romanian Foreign Policy," in Daniel N. Nelson, ed., *Romania After Tyranny*, (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1992), p. 267.

5. *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, February 2, 1993

6. Paul D'Anieri, Robert Kravchuk and Taras Kuzio, *Politics and Society in Ukraine* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999), p. 225.

7. See the account of Charles King "Eurasia Letter: Moldova with a Russian Face," *Foreign Policy*, Number 97 (Winter 1994-1995), pp. 106-120.

8. Moscow also long held out for an agreement on long term basing rights for the 14th Army on Moldovan territory, a provision that Moldova flatly rejected.

9. On Moscow's role in supporting the Transdniestrian separatists see Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to ethnic war: elites, masses, and Moscow in Moldova's civil war," *International Security* (Fall 1996) vol. 21, nr. 2, pp. 108-138.

10. On the role of the conflict in Moldova's electoral politics, see William Crowther "The Politics of Democratization in Postcommunist Moldova, in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., Democratic changes and authoritarian reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 282-329.

11. *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, December 7, 1995.

12. Andrew Janos, Continuity and Change in Eastern Europe: Strategies for Post-Communist Politics, *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1994), p. 131.

13. For a complete discussion of these elections see William Crowther "Romania," in Sten Bergland, Frank Aarebrot, and Tomas Hellen eds., Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe (London, Edward Elgar Publishers, 1998), pp. 295-334.

14. On the significance of the transfer of power to the liberal opposition see Michael Shafir, Romania's Road to Normalcy," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8 (April 1997), pp. 144-58.

15. *Transitions: Daily Digest*, January 28, 1997

16. Lege pentru ratificarea Tratului cu privre la rela iile de bun vecin tate *i cooperare dintre România i Ukraina, semnat la Constan a la 2 iunia 1997* (L nr. 129 publicat in Monotorul oficial nr. 157 din date: 16/07/1997).

17. That interest in reshaping Romania's relationship with Kiev extended beyond this one issue was evident in the brut number of decisions relating to Ukraine passed by the Romanian legislature; 16 from 1990 through 1996, and more than double that number, 34 from 1997 through 2000. Records of the *SUPERLEX* Romanian Parliamentary Data Base.

18. *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Daily Reports*, May 5, 1997.

19. *Adevurul* February 4, 1997.

20. Thomas M. Leonard, "NATO Expansion: Romania and Bulgaria within the Larger Context," *East European Quarterly* (Winter 1999), Vol. 33, Issue 4, pp. 517-545.

21. On the importance of the organization to Ukraine see Sergei Vlasov, "Ukrainian Foreign Policy Between Russia and the West, in Brun Coppieters, Alexi Zverv and Dmitri Trenin, eds., *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), p. 146.

22. *Itar/Tass News Agency* June 14, 1999, p. 1008164t0080

23. See Michael Shafir, "Breakthrough in Ukrainian-Romanian Relations," *End Note: RFE/RL Newsline*, February 23, 1999.