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## KONCEPCJA „WIELKIEJ RUMUNII” W KONTEKŚCIE RELACJI RUMUNII Z JEJ SĄSIADAMI

**Streszczenie:** W artykule omówiono kwestię politycznej koncepcji „Wielkiej Rumunii” oraz jej wpływ na bilateralne relacje ukraińsko-rumuńskie. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na formowanie koncepcji „Wielkiej Rumunii” na tle kształtowania się państwowości Rumunii w latach 1919-1940. W ciągu ostatnich dwóch lat idea wznowienia „Wielkiej Rumunii” dość szeroko naświetlana jest w mediach. Chodzi o zwrot Rumunii terenów Bessarabii (dzisiejsza Mołdowa oraz południowa część obwodu odeskiego i kilku powiatów obwodu czerniowieckiego) i Bukowiny Północnej (obwód czerniowiecki Ukrainy).

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rumunia, Ukraina, Republika Mołdowa, pretensje terytorialne, obywatelstwo rumuńskie

The break-up of the former Soviet Union, the uneven pace of change in the post-communist world, and the growing fluidity within the European Union make it impossible to predict the future shape of “Europe” and the new dividing line between “Central Europe” and “Eastern Europe”. With the end of the Cold War order, many countries throughout the world, in their search for a return to their “greater” past, began developing new relations and reinvigorating old antagonisms and affiliations. Politicians invoke and publics perceive as “greater”, cultural communities that transcend nation state boundaries, identified in the past by “Greater Germany” and “Greater Hungary” in Central Europe, “Greater Romania” in East Central Europe and “Greater Russia” in Eastern Europe, to enumerate only a few. But will future political and economic alignments always coincide with those of culture and civilization?

According to Samuel Huntington [Baleanu 2000, 28] the answer to this question is a categorical no, because the present balance-of-power considerations would lead to cross-civilizational alliances [Huntington 1996, 128].

In an era of global turmoil all sorts of ideas connected with the independence of some historical region come back to life, as well as shed the light on the peculiarities of organizational measures aimed at their implementation to return the “former greatness” of the country. One of such historical mirages is the idea of expanding the borders of Romania and restoring “Greater Romania”.

Significant attention is paid to the distinctive features of the process of emergence of the concept of Greater Romania (Romanian: România Mare) generally referring to the territory of Romania in the years throughout the First World War and the Second World War, the largest geographical extent of Romania up to that time and its largest peacetime extent ever (295,049 km<sup>2</sup>). To be more precise, it refers to the territory of the Kingdom of Romania between 1919 and 1940.

The issue of the Great Romania dates back to the period of the Russian-Turkish war (1828-1829) during which the Danubian principalities gained the status of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and Russia became their patron, the protector of the Christian population.

After the defeat of the Russian Empire in the Crimean War (1853-1856), St. Petersburg lost its special status in the Danubian principalities. Moreover it was forced, under the pressure from France and England (who would deny Russia’s access to the important European river – the Danube) to give back the South Bessarabia, the cities of Reni, Izmail and Bolhrad [*Мрії про* <http://wartime.org.ua>].

Significantly, in 1859, the principalities were united in the United principality of Wallachia and Moldavia, which retained a certain dependence on Turkey. Russia supported this process. During the Russian-Turkish War in 1877-1878, when the Principality fought on the side of the Russian army, the Turks suffered a crushing defeat and according to the San Stefano, and then to the Treaty of Berlin Romania became fully independent. Russia regained three counties of Southern Bessarabia, which had been ceded after the Crimean War: the Kahul, Ismail and Bolgrad counties. The Romanians were

against it, but they could not resist the Russian army. Instead, Romania received Dobrudja. In May 1881, the principality was transformed into the Kingdom of Romania, and it existed until 1947 [Bolovan, Pop 2005, 477].

In 1913, after the Second Balkan War, when the Romanians were against Bulgaria, Romania seized the southern Dobrudja previously belonged to the Bulgarians. In the end of the World War I Bucharest was a so called “defector” and first fought for the Entente, and then signed a separate treaty with Germany. After the German and Austro-Hungarian empires collapsing, Romania came back into battle with them, so that it secured significant territorial gains for itself in the Treaty of Versailles.

Then, Romania’s territory nearly doubled as the Romanian Parliament ratified the Union of Transylvania, Basarabia, Bucovina, Crişana, Maramureş, and portions of the Banat with the state of Romania.

Thus, “Greater Romania” included the lands which belonged to Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia. It should be noted that, the prewar Romania consisted of 53,000 square miles and 7.5 million people. Since, currently Greater Romania consists of 114,000 square miles and 18 million people [One Version <http://romerica.com>].

In 1940, the Soviet Union reclaimed Bessarabia and Bukovina, Hungary seized Northern Transylvania and Bulgaria regained Southern Dobrudja respectively. Romanian elite was greatly offended by such state of affairs and went to the alliance with the Third Reich, determined to “restore” “Romania mare” due to the territories of the Soviet Union. Romanian army fought with the Red Army since June 22, 1941. Adolf Hitler allowed the Romanians to annex Bessarabia and Zadnistrov’ya where in the summer of 1941 they established Transnistria as a part of the Kingdom. It included the left-bank part of the Moldavian SSR and the parts of Vinnytsya, Odessa and Mykolaiv oblasts of the Ukrainian SSR. The capital of Transnistria was Odessa, and the governor was George Aleksyanu [Dobrinescu 1996, 106].

During this period there was a peak of ideas about “The Greater Romania”, the Romanian nationalist literature went about the facts that beyond the Dniester there lived the “Russified Romanians”. And the area from the Prut to the Southern Bug were incorporated into the kingdom in the end of the war.

After the success of the Wehrmacht, which entered deep into the Soviet Union, the Romanian nationalists' appetite was excited and they began to talk about a possible transfer of the territory to the Dnieper to Bucharest. Some have agreed that it was necessary to create a “Romanian empire up to the gates of Asia” that is to expand Romanian territories to the Ural Mountains. But the dream about the “Romanian empire” was grossly destroyed by the Soviet Army [Мпії про <http://wartime.org.ua>].

As a result, after the Second World War the Soviet government took great pains and managed to bring to power the Communist Party in the countries of the Eastern Europe (except for Czechoslovakia and Hungary) [Bolovan, Pop 2005, 606].

It is clear thus, that Romania has always sought to recover its territories lost during two World Wars. Despite being outdated this topic seems to surface in the political life quite often though. And over the past two years the idea of renovating of the “Greater Romania” is broadly highlighted by the press. Nowadays it refers to the intentions to recover the territories of Northern Bukovina (current Chernivtsi region of Ukraine) and the part of Bessarabia (current Moldova and Ukraine's Khotyn region and Southern part of Odessa).

However, inasmuch as due to the latest events which took place in Ukraine (in late 2013 – early 2014) Romanian ideas to take revenge seem irrelevant. And the official Bucharest undoubtedly supports Kyiv's democratic transformations and welcomes its European aspirations. Consequently, it can be concluded that currently Romania is more interested in annexing Moldova [Румыния <http://www.dni.ru>].

But, taking into consideration the Ukrainian-Romanian relations one can notice that throughout whole their history there were a lot of disputes around the territorial claims. The Romanian party has repeatedly initiated territorial issues at different sorts of the bilateral meetings: the scientific seminars, conferences, conventions and others.

However, in the context of the European and Euroatlantic aspirations of Romania its leadership had to change its sharp-elbowed behaviour to a more flexible position. To avoid charges of the international community, especially the NATO countries Bucharest was forced to move to a constructive

solution of the problems they faced in the Ukrainian-Romanian bilateral relations. It can be noted that the policy of Romania has shifted from the territorial claims to the protection of the Romanian minority's rights.

The consequence of these changes in the foreign policy of Romania was Treaty on Relations of Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between Ukraine and Romania signed in 1997 [Доробів <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/>], which bettered the bilateral relations.

Hence, there was recognized a mutual inviolability of borders, and economic, cultural and political cooperation between Ukraine and Romania has been intensified which made the interstate relations compliant with the international law and caused the normalization of the Ukrainian foreign policy on the southwest.

The basic consideration is, however, why Romania has so dramatically changed its expansive demeanor. The experts' opinions concerning this question are different. Some believe that in such a way Romania is trying to turn Ukraine into its ally in the issue of "conquering" Moldova. Others believe that the Romanian authorities, following Poland's example, try to increase their credibility within the European Union. However, almost unanimously Ukrainian experts are convinced that Romania still hasn't abandoned its idea to restore the "Romania Mare" by accession of Moldova and Transnistria [Парно <http://novaukraina.org>]. However, such an active policy of Bucharest towards Moldova as well as the territorial claims stated by Traian Bănescu concerning Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, stand in contrast with the principles of the Romania's membership in the European Union.

Hence, having made progress in the European integration processes and having joined NATO, the high-rank officials of Romania seem to return to a policy of early 90-ies. It can be seen in the political line of Traian Bănescu. The president of Romania has always approved of the revenge plans and has never concealed it. At different periods of his first mandate (2006 - 2011) in order not to lose the leadership position in his public speeches he occasionally urged to return Romania Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina [Козаков <http://numweb.ru>].

On one hand, this could serve as a "warming up" of the electorate in the country since the Second World War and the issue of unity is still topical

inside the Romanian society. On the other hand, it made T. Băseșcu popular with the foreign Romanians. For instance, it can be illustrated in the second round of presidential elections on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 when about 95 % of Moldavian Romanians (having Romanian citizenship) supported Traian Băseșcu.

Though, there are many opponents of the Romanization policy in Chișinău. As far as there is a possibility to restore the “Greater Romania” it jeopardizes the statehood of Republic of Moldova. Meanwhile, a great number of Moldavians lured by the opportunity to travel freely to the European countries continue to receive Romanian citizenship [Александров <http://ua-reporter.com>].

Granting Romanian citizenship to Moldavians and Ukrainians is a well thought out policy. Recently, the Republic of Moldova had to pass a new law that allowed dual nationality because it was revealed that the one-third of the population has already gained Romanian passports. It should be recalled that at the referendum in 1990-ties the majority of Moldavian citizens opposed the unification with Romania.

Romania was said to lose its influence both in the Republic of Moldova and among its foreign backers. But Romania didn't give up. It was unable to revive the “Greater Romania” immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, now it is trying to do it using other methods [Мельничук <http://ua-reporter.com>].

The political events in the Republic of Moldova during the last parliamentary elections in April 2009 can be the actual proof of this statement. According to the foreign experts one of the factors that contributed to the aggravation of the political confrontation was the irredentist policy of Bucharest towards Moldova aimed to reduce Moldova's national and state identity. To carry out this kind of policy Romania expands its presence in Moldova and massively issues Romanian passports to the residents of this country [Григорян <http://news.bbc.co.uk>].

Speaking of the Ukrainian-Romanian relations it is worth mentioning that at the current stage they continue to be unequal. Romania tries to benefit its EU and NATO membership and the potential of these organizations in a full extent to strengthen its positions and to obtain unilateral advantages in the

interaction with Kyiv. That is to achieve maximum positive outcomes for itself in the course of solving the existing problems in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres of the bilateral cooperation.

Peculiarities of diplomatic competition around the issues of territorial appurtenances of Bukovina to Romania are vigorously disputed. One of the tools to influence Ukraine and to create a powerful lobby here Bucharest considers granting (or restoring) Romanian citizenship to the residents of Ukraine from among ethnic Romanians in Chernivtsi, Odessa and Transcarpathian regions despite the official position of Ukraine. This process took off in June 2002 when Romanian government adopted the Resolution №68 in addition to the Romanian Law „On Citizenship of Romania”.

There was made an additional paragraph, in particular: “Former Romanian citizens who until December 22, 1989 lost their citizenship for different reasons, and those who were deprived of their citizenship against their will or other reasons may acquire a Romanian citizenship” [Румунські <http://bukovynaonline.com>]. Thus these categories of people may acquire Romanian citizenship whether they live in Romania or abroad. Accordingly, the citizens of Ukraine especially of Romanian origin acquire Romanian citizenship, but at the same time they remain to be the citizens of Ukraine. And in this issue particularly the Ukrainian legal system has a lot of weak points that have to be considered.

Thus, the fact that Romania uses historical issues dealing with Ukraine concerning the territorial affiliation of Northern Bukovina, Hertza, Khotyn, Akkerman and Izmail districts of Bessarabia not only prevents the bilateral relations to be conventional but also makes them strained. Providing Romanian passports to the ethnic Romanians of Ukraine Bucharest tries to integrate these areas culturally, economically and politically and to create the ground for its national interests. According to the unofficial (but confirmed) data of the competent authorities about 50 thousand citizens of Ukraine have received the second passport [Александров <http://ua-reporter.com>].

In spite of objective and subjective setbacks, Romania’s nexuses with its two northeastern neighbours, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, have advanced in a positive manner, principally after Romania’s latest elections. In particular the political and military relations, as well as forthcoming projects,

can be visualized as a valuable approach to “anchor” Ukraine to the virtual space of Euro-Atlantic democracy and market economy.

Finally, to speak whether the idea to restore the “Greater Romania” is realistic enough to stimulate the Romanian revanchist ideas is difficult. But, to crown all above mentioned, it should be opined, that notwithstanding the fact that in the conditions of a latter-day principles of international law it is impossible to change the borders or to occupy the territory of another state, Romania still hasn't abandoned the idea to regain its “former greatness” and to recover its boundaries of 1918. And it should be said that Bucharest's stance is rather well-grounded as any country fights for its national interests and strives for being powerful. This issue is more than topical especially in the context of the Black Sea leadership where Ukraine's and Romania's interests have collisions as well.

Thus, in the context of the interstate relations with its neighbors Ukraine has to take pains to face all the problems occurring nowadays. The only hope is that Romania being the EU and NATO member will always be consistent with the international principles and diplomatic ways to solve the problems.

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## THE CONCEPTION OF “GREATER ROMANIA” IN EVOLVING ROMANIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS’ RELATIONS CONTEXT

**Abstrakt.** The article discusses the political concept of “Greater Romania” and its influence on the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Romania. Special attention was paid to the concept of “Greater Romania” in 1919-1940 when Romanian statehood was being created. For the last two years the idea of reviving the concept of “Greater Romania” has been widely highlighted in the media. The concept implies the return of Bessarabia (contemporary Moldova and the northern part of the Odessa Oblast and a few communes of the Chernivtsi Oblast) and Northern Bukovina (the Chernivtsi Oblast of Ukraine).

**Key words:** Romania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, territorial claims, Romanian citizenship

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