Romania and The United Kingdom
The Special Relationship after Brexit
Policy Report

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Building a UK-Romanian Special Partnership after Brexit
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The report focuses on four scenarios for how Brexit could affect the foreign policy of the United Kingdom (UK) and its relationship with Romania. It outlines a series of recommendations focused on the policies that Romania should employ in order to mitigate the effects of Brexit, as well as developing a deep and special partnership with the UK.

Romania may struggle to pursue a totally independent course of action in foreign, security and defence policy. The revamping of diplomatic relations with post-Brexit Britain would allow Bucharest increased actorness in Europe and enhance Romania’s agency in the making of foreign, security and defence policies in the EU. The scenarios outline four different ways in which Britain will interact with the EU (or Romania): Global Britain, European Britain, American Britain and Island Britain.

**Key policy recommendations**

1. Romania should focus on developing a new deep and special partnership with the UK based on its current contribution and commitment to the transatlantic order. Moreover, it is in Romania’s interest to keep the UK engaged in key parts of the order such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the promotion of liberal values, or tackling Russia’s perceived threat to security on the European continent.

2. Romania should push for enhanced military cooperation with the UK. This could, for example, follow the model of the recent defence cooperation between the Poland and the UK.

3. Bucharest should engage in actively lobbying the British government to build a deep and special partnership that entails Romania being a bridge for the UK to in the post-Soviet space.

We propose that the new reference point for the deep and special partnership between the UK and Romania would be a focus on the Wider Black Sea and the Balkan Peninsula, with an aspiration to enhance the ability of the two countries to project power and diplomatic influence in these regions and the immediate neighbourhood.
Building a UK-Romanian Special Partnership after Brexit?

Summary..................................................................................................................................................02

Key policy recommendations.................................................................................................................02

Foreword.................................................................................................................................................04

Introduction.............................................................................................................................................05

Why a deep and special partnership?.....................................................................................................08

Romania as a pathway for strengthening Transatlanticism.................................................................10

Shared foreign policy priorities.............................................................................................................13

The post-Soviet space...............................................................................................................................13

Tackling the ‘Russian threat’....................................................................................................................15

Support for Democratisation..................................................................................................................17

EU and NATO enlargement....................................................................................................................18

Britain’s foreign policy and its relations with Romania after Brexit: likely scenarios..........................21

Global Britain..........................................................................................................................................21

European Britain....................................................................................................................................23

American Britain....................................................................................................................................25

Island Britain..........................................................................................................................................26

The most convenient scenario for UK-Romania relations: Hybrid Britain, 'Out, but in'........................28

The implications of Brexit for Romania’s foreign policy......................................................................29

Key policy recommendations................................................................................................................31

Appendix: Analysing Romania’s voting patterns in the UN General Assembly..................33
The repercussions of the UK’s decision taken by referendum on 23 June 2016 to ‘Leave’ the European Union will make themselves felt for generations to come. At a time when many global forces are rewriting the rules of international relations, ‘Brexit’ adds great uncertainty into the mix. The furthest-reaching consequences are likely to flow from the UK’s post-Brexit choices in foreign policy and security. Winners and losers will emerge from the UK’s current strategic alliances, and new relationships will undoubtedly form. The time-scale is the long-term, but the UK’s friends and neighbours need to prepare now for the risks and spoils of Brexit for European and global stability.

It is most timely then that the report led by Dr Nitoiu’s on the UK-Romania ‘special partnership’ after Brexit analyses four possible scenarios for leaders and policymakers in both countries. Based on a wide range of scholarship and evidence, the report identifies foreign policy goals that are currently shared between London and Bucharest, or where, at the least, interests and values overlap. On the basis of that inventory, the report demonstrates the risks and opportunities of ‘Global Britain’, ‘European Britain’, ‘American Britain’ and ‘Island Britain’. The recommendation is that the UK and Romania plan for a hybrid Britain which engages with Romania over shared interests in the Wider Black Sea and the Balkan Peninsula.

Dr Nitoiu joined the Institute for Diplomacy and International Governance (IDIG) in July 2018. IDIG was established in July 2017 under the directorship of Professor Helen Drake. The Institute conducts world-class research into many aspects of today’s global challenges, and is committed to shaping real-world solutions to contemporary problems of international relations. It has specialist expertise in the different dimensions of ‘Brexit’, and welcomes the contribution this report makes to scoping the futures of post-Brexit UK and Romanian relations.

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Brexit is without a doubt one of the most significant post-Cold War political developments on the European continent. It is bound to influence almost every aspect of the way the UK interacts with Europe and the European Union (EU). To a large extent, Brexit, as well as its consequences, had a noticeable effect immediately after the June 2016 referendum. Brexit has altered the balance of power in Europe and the EU, and has triggered deep and convoluted internal political dynamics in the UK, which is leading to changes in the foreign policy priorities of the country.

It is likely that the UK will have a more limited presence in the global arena, as budget constraints together with the need to divert funds towards domestic policies will affect the amount of resources allotted to British foreign policy.[1] Moreover, we may witness a more selective use of the instruments to manage security and defence matters.

Romania has not enjoyed an especially advanced and deep form of relationship with the UK during the post-Cold War period.[2] This, however, opens the door for London and Bucharest to revamp their bilateral relationship. Furthermore, Romania currently holds the presidency of the Council of the EU, during which time the UK will probably exit the Union. This makes the issue of a potential post-Brexit deep and special partnership between Romania and the UK a very timely one.

Theresa May has spoken of the need for the UK to develop a ‘deep and special partnership’ with the EU as a whole, something that opens the possibility of a special bilateral relationship with Romania. Apart from the necessity to agree on what makes a partnership ‘deep’ and ‘special’, both states need to creatively seek ways in which to highlight its added value, given the fact that Romania may be easily accused of adopting an ‘autonomous’ approach within the EU.

Romania has, like the UK, been accused of being an American Trojan horse in the EU, acting to limit efforts aimed at further European integration.[3]

Nevertheless, Romania’s geographical position in terms of proximity to the Balkans and the Black Sea region make it a good candidate for the UK in its efforts to revamp its foreign, security and defence bilateral relations post-Brexit. Moreover, the presence of a large Romanian diaspora in the UK strengthens the case for the need to enhance relations between Bucharest and London.

For the UK and Romania to find common positions to foster new diplomatic relations and to refocus on the defence realm will be difficult in Europe’s fast-challenging security and political environment. However, post-Brexit, they will have the opportunity to draw on their shared transatlantic inclinations, and push for further coordination of foreign and defence policies between the two countries and the United States (US).

Currently there is considerable willingness on the Romanian side for forging a post-Brexit deep and special partnership. For example, in February 2018, the Romanian Deputy Prime Minister, Anna Birchall met with UK Ambassador to Romania Paul Brummell and ‘discussed the need to update the Romania-UK post-Brexit partnership (…) by identifying new ways of cooperation and promoting a broader agenda’, to develop ‘a broader vision’ in order ‘to bring up-to-date their strategic partnership.’[4]

Furthermore, Romania has stated that it desires a ‘post-Brexit accord with the UK that keeps them as close as possible to the European Union.’[5] This may very well have been prompted by the fact that Romanians living in the UK represent the second largest non-British national group in the UK.[6]
Introduction

The UK has recently expressed its interest to continue its work to promote liberal values through cooperation in regions where Romania shares common objectives such as the Western Balkans, North Africa and the Eastern Neighbourhood,[7] as well as striving for ‘closer cooperation to promote stability and resilience in Europe’s neighbourhood.’[8] In this context we identify a series of avenues that may lead to a more developed bilateral foreign, security and defence relationship between the UK and Romania.

The report focuses on a series of four scenarios outlining how Brexit might affect the foreign policy of the UK and its relationship with Romania: Global Britain, European Britain, American Britain, Island Britain. We argue that a hybrid scenario that combines aspects of all four would assist the development of a deep and special partnership between the UK and Romania. The next section outlines the case for a deep and special partnership between Romania and the UK post-Brexit. This is followed by an overview of the shared foreign policy priorities between Romania and the UK. The bulk of the report then discusses four possible scenarios. In the final section the report outlines a series of recommendations regarding the policies and strategies that Romania should employ in order to mitigate the impact of Brexit and develop a deep and special partnership with the UK.

[7] In this report we use the terms ‘the post-Soviet space’ and ‘the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood’ interchangeably.
Why a deep and special partnership?

The post-Brexit environment in Europe opens the space for enhancing the limited foreign policy relations that currently exist between the UK and Romania. In this sense, there are three routes to a future potential deep and special partnership between the UK and Romania: preserving European security, jointly acting in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood (especially the Black Sea region) and strengthening the transatlantic alliance.

Keeping the UK engaged in the European security architecture

We argue that it is in Romania’s interest to keep the UK engaged in European security. This has two important drivers: the need to tackle the perceived ‘Russian threat’ (and preserve stability in Eastern Europe), together with the opportunity for the UK to work with Romania to voice mutual interests in the EU and shape the Union’s foreign and security policy.

Firstly, as Romania shares a deep interest with the UK in tackling what it perceives to be the Russian threat to European security, the government in Bucharest should aim to develop a sustainable partnership with the UK aimed at preserving the security order on the European continent. This would be primarily fuelled by the concern that not keeping the UK engaged in the security architecture of the European continent as a key actor might provide increased incentives for Russia to develop an aggressive approach towards Eastern Europe.

The biggest worry for Romania resides in the fact that the gradual US disengagement from the European continent and the Middle East as it pivots to East Asia, may lead the UK to reconsider its immediate threats perceptions regarding its national security and refocus its military capabilities toward the Indo Pacific region.
Why a deep and special partnership?

Nevertheless, despite the rhetoric of a ‘Global Britain’[9] often made by some UK politicians, we contend that following Brexit Romania should strive to convince the UK to refocus its military weight towards Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), in order to enforce European security and prevent NATO from slipping into irrelevance. This could be achieved through such efforts as the European Defence Initiative.[10]

Secondly, Brexit will lead to a significant decrease in the UK’s ability to influence the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Here Romania might work with the UK to voice its opinions and help shape EU policy.

Coordination between the UK and the EU on foreign, security and defence matters may be challenging for both parties. Nevertheless, the EU cannot deny the central position of Britain in Europe’s security architecture, and most likely make certain arrangements in order to enhance security cooperation with the UK. Indeed, this has already been pointed to as part of the negotiations over the UK’s withdrawal. This gives Romania the potential to play a key role in the short to medium term in constructing new EU foreign policy and security arrangements that target cooperation with Britain: e.g. a potential new defensive pact.

It is also important to remember that the only European countries that are able to autonomously and effectively project power outside of Europe are France and the UK. Hence, plans for the EU to be a truly global actor without working in concert with the UK are unsustainable, at least for the foreseeable future.

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[9] British Prime Minister Theresa May presented the concept of ‘Global Britain’ during her speech at Lancaster House on 17 January 2017. She argued that: ‘I want us to be a truly Global Britain – the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too. A country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike.’ See https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech
Why a deep and special partnership?

The UK has consistently assessed the world as becoming ‘more uncertain and volatile’, with the threats facing the EU and UK like to ‘continue to intensify and evolve.’[11] And yet, UK participation in CFSP and CSDP remains subject to ‘a case-by-case’ analysis which points to ‘cherry-picking’ (on the part of both Britain and the EU) and brings into the strategic context significant contingency.

We expect that the consequences of Brexit will be more visible at the strategic level rather than when it comes to the practical arrangements of the CFSP and CSDP (the UK has only modestly contributed to EU security and peacekeeping missions and operations). This in turn, provides increased opportunities for the EU and the UK to further collaborate at the strategic level, and for the British government to see Romania as a useful partner in shaping the strategy behind the EU’s foreign, security and defence policies.

**Romania as a pathway for strengthening Transatlanticism**

Brexit fits into a broader narrative of resurgent great power politics.[12] A contested strategic space has been created that has seen growing uncertainty surrounding NATO’s commitments and the alliance’s ability to act collectively defend its members. This has cast a light on weaknesses in the transatlantic community. When coupled with the unpredictable foreign policy of the current US administration and uncertainties surrounding its commitments to the wider liberal world order, Brexit may contribute to a further weakening of transatlanticism. Moreover, the order has already been significantly affected by the rise of populism in Europe.

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In managing Brexit, Britain might therefore take the opportunity to strongly reaffirm its commitment to the transatlantic relationship. It could do so by working with countries like Romania in order to push for stronger US engagement in the region and to encourage other European states to bolster their commitments to the alliance.

Reinvigorating transatlanticism in a post-Brexit setting would thus be one of the key aspects of a future deep and special partnership between Romania and the UK. The UK has already developed security cooperation with Poland outside of the CSDP in the context of a NATO deployment in Eastern Europe and as part of the Quadriga format which provides an opportunity for regular meetings between the Polish and British Foreign and Defence Ministers.[13] However, Romania has not yet benefited from such a unique strategic bilateral relationship with the UK, despite the Strategic Partnership that Romania and UK launched in 2003.[14]

In the context of the multitude of challenges to the current transatlantic relationship, Romania has stood as one of the best adherents to transatlanticism. While there is little public support for changes in the transatlantic relationship, there have been repeated calls from various political and intellectual circles for Romania to be recognised for its contribution to the relationship. A post-Brexit Britain in search of opportunities to bolster the transatlantic relationship could see in Romania a reliable EU partner to work with to maintain and develop the transatlantic relationship.

[13] See the UK/Poland: Treaty on Defence and Security Cooperation

Why a deep and special partnership?

**Romania as Britain’s leading partner in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood**

While the UK’s influence in the world order, as well as willingness and ability to shape it, has gradually declined over the last decade, it still plays an important role in contributing to the democratisation process of the post-Soviet space. To that end, it has supported the EU’s efforts in the region. Romania shares this interest in both democratising the Eastern Neighbourhood together with maintaining the stability of the region. This provides at the minimum, a common starting point for Romania and Britain to collaborate in the Eastern Neighbourhood following Brexit.

Romania has also focused since the end of the Cold War on developing expertise on the post-Soviet space (especially Moldova). Following its membership of the EU it has spearheaded several initiatives (such as the Black Sea synergy or the Black Sea NGO forum) that target the country’s goal to further European integration in the region. As Romania has focused on the Black Sea, the region can form the main geographical area where the UK and Romanian could collaborate post-Brexit. The Black Sea also holds significant interest for the UK due to its geographical position in the proximity of Russia, as well as the presence of natural resources (such as gas and oil).[1]

Similarly, Romania has been a key supporter of the development of the states in the Western Balkans in their goal to become integral members of the transatlantic community. While Romania cannot claim to have a similar level of expertise as it has with the Black Sea region (with other states like Bulgaria or Croatia being in a much better position), it can still complement the UK’s efforts in the Western Balkans following Brexit. Moreover, due to its experience of transition to democracy, Romania has a better understanding of the needs and challenges of the countries in the region. Post-Brexit Britain will find itself in a position of trying to find some opportunities from Brexit for its foreign policy. We envisage that this would push the UK to become more engaged in the post-Soviet space, and even try to compete with the EU for influence. Due to its geographical position as well as expertise, but also membership of the EU, we consider Romania to be a leading contender to be Britain’s leading ally in the region. Rather than trying to go at it alone, the UK would find it beneficial to work with partners like Romania.

Romania and the UK have shared a deep interest during the post-Cold War period in the development and geopolitics of the post-Soviet space. The region is considered by both countries to be central to upholding the security order on the European continent.\[16\] Even though following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Britain has chosen to refocus and downscale government departments working on the region, its embassies in the post-Soviet space are widely regarded as key sources of expertise.\[17\] To that extent, in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood, British embassies tend to have one of the strongest presences among the member states and are often consulted by stakeholders in the region.\[18\] Moreover, the UK government has provided various Overseas Development Assistance programs to the countries in the region, mostly focusing on promoting democracy, liberal values and economic development. \[19\]

Romania has had to rely on a more limited range of resources and tools in the region, as it does not have the human resources and financial capacity to sustain embassies similar to those of the UK.


Shared foreign policy priorities

At the same time, it has tried to develop specific expertise in the region, by creating various specialised departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and throughout the past decade of EU membership branding itself as a bridge between the rest of the EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood.[20] In most post-Soviet states, Romania has had to rely on the collaboration (and good will) of member states like the UK, Germany or France in gathering on the ground expertise in the region. On its part, research shows that, the UK has been rather unwilling to share expertise and information through its embassies in the post-Soviet space.[21]

Successive governments in Bucharest have been keen to share the country’s experience of accession to the EU, by sending experts to the countries in the Eastern neighbourhood and participating in various EU twining projects.[22]

The parliaments in both the UK and Romania have formed active friendship groups with the post-Soviet states which frequently meet (the UK has recently focused on developing post-Brexit economic cooperation through these friendship groups).

The EU has also offered a common platform for Romania and the UK to act in the Eastern Neighbourhood, especially through instruments such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or Eastern Partnership (EaP). While the two countries have not been at the forefront of the EU’s initiatives and actions in the region, they have generally supported the activities of the EU’s institutions.

The UK has not been as interested as Romania in shaping the ENP or the EaP, but its diplomats in Brussels usually play a key role in negotiations on behalf of the EU with the neighbourhood states. While influence has been rather indirect for Britain, Romania has shown little willingness to contribute to or shape the EU’s actions in the Eastern Neighbourhood.

In the initial phases of its membership it tried to spearhead a focus on the Black Sea region in EU foreign policy, but this strategy (translated in the Black Sea Synergy) was overshadowed by the activism of states like Poland and the Czech Republic.[23]

Romania is particularly interested in the situation in Moldova, due to the large Romanian speaking population in the country. Post-Communist Romanian governments have provided a wide range of financial development aid to Moldova and have generally aimed to keep the country out of Russia's sphere of influence.[24]

Consequently, Romania has played an important role in supporting democratic pro-European forces, helping them in 2009 overcome the pro-Russian Communist regime.[25] London, on the other hand, has primarily focused on countries that have problems with human rights, or are central to its own economic interests in terms of being sources of capital and migration to the UK. Notable countries in this regard are Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

**Tackling the ‘Russian threat’**

One of the most important foreign policy priorities shared for the past decade by Bucharest and London has been the need to counteract what they perceive as the ‘Russian threat’ to the security architecture of the European continent. Conversely, in the eyes of the Kremlin, Romania and Britain are considered to be the most hostile countries in the EU.[26] During the last decade both London and Bucharest have adopted a policy of lack of engagement with Russia, being more critical than the stance of the EU during the Russian-Georgian war of 2008 or the Ukraine crisis, by way of example.[27]

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More recently, the Skripal case added to the deep rift in relations between the UK and Russia, which are now at their lowest point since the end of the Cold War. NATO is seen by London and Bucharest as the main instrument for tackling the perceived threat posed by Russia. Accordingly, both governments have advocated a stronger NATO presence in Eastern Europe, as well as focusing on the cyber threat posed by the Kremlin.

The main strategy adopted by Britain and Romania in order to counteract Russia has been to try to convince the international community to marginalise and alienate the Kremlin. Despite tensions between the UK and EU in the Brexit negotiations, the UK registered a degree of success in its response to the poising of the Skripals when it managed to persuade a wide range of countries, including allies in the EU, to take diplomatic measures against Moscow and to expel Russian diplomats. Moreover, Bucharest and London have been unwavering in their support for the continuation of EU sanctions against Russia.

Nevertheless, Romania and the UK’s critical stance towards Russia is not completely reflected in their economic relations with Moscow. The city of London is notorious for welcoming a significant amount of Russian capital that has flowed out of Russia since the end of the Cold War. In Romania, several Russian multinational companies have invested in the oil and aluminium industries, as well as in real estate. Additionally, various British and Romanian politicians have developed links with Russia, some of which have translated into campaign sponsorship. These links may very well be one of the main reasons why following the Skripal case Britain decided not to take harsher actions against Russia than the expulsion of diplomats.

**Support for Democratisation**

Both the UK and Romania have striven throughout the last decade to aid the democratisation and economic development of Moldova. With Romania’s accession to the EU, Moldova became a neighbour to the Union, which prompted European countries to pay increased attention to political developments in Chisinau. London and Bucharest have generally supported the EU’s policy towards Moldova, which has been framed largely through the ENP and the EaP.

For much of the last decade Moldova was seen a model student by the EU. Recent corruption scandals and democratic backsliding have, however, underscored the fragile nature of the progress made by the country, together with the EU’s limited ability to influence sustainable transformations and reforms. London and Bucharest have used a series of carrots and sticks to help democratisation in Moldova. They have benefited from increased expertise in the region, with Romanian experts and policymakers especially possessing language and cultural abilities and links.

Strategies have included providing loans (and the withholding of them), support for the creation of an EU Association Agreement, the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area between Moldova and the EU, grassroots investment, naming and shaming Moldovan politicians, as well as the promise of visa free travel for Moldovans (even though the UK has had a cautious attitude towards migration). Romania has also provided citizenship to a wide range of Moldovans, attracting criticism from other EU member states that its citizenship criteria are not very strict.[32]

In practice, the UK has been a key supporter of tackling corruption in the post-Soviet space (as well as in Romania). It has supported a wide range of reforms, as well as funding civil society groups focusing on justice systems. Romania’s engagement, on the other hand, has been rather patchy, as government strategy has generally failed to be sustainable following changes in the governing parties.

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The current Romanian government advocated a revision and scaling back of the reforms to the justice system that have been implemented over the last decade. This limits Romania’s ability to push states in the post-Soviet space to pursue justice system reforms.

Finally, the spread of populism around Europe has shaped the politics of both the UK and Romania. In the UK populist attitudes and approaches have surrounded Brexit. While the UK remains committed to the spread of democracy and development, Brexit has dented the country’s focus on such efforts and raised questions about the UK’s ability to act as a model to others.

**EU and NATO enlargement**

During the last decade the UK has dramatically changed its stance towards EU enlargement. In the 1990s it supported extending European integration to the former Communist states from Central and Eastern Europe as a way to help secure their democratisation, as well as a way by which to weaken the power of Germany, France and the EU’s central institutions. The British government changed its position following the 2004 wave of enlargement, primarily due to the effects immigration from new EU Member States had on the UK’s labour market and public opinion. The UK’s initial stance was informed by the overall strategy of the UK to aid the democratisation of the states in the region, as well as the need to dilute the power and influence of Germany and France in the EU.

The rise of migration from the EU as a topic in British public debate and the increased prominence of populist parties such as UKIP has pushed the UK government towards a negative approach to further EU enlargement, with warnings of further enlargement to states such as Serbia and Turkey contributing to the UK’s vote to leave the EU[33]. On the other hand, following its accession, Romania has been a key supporter of moving the EU’s borders further east in the post-Soviet space, with a specific focus on Moldova.[34]

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[33] Ker-Lindsay, J. (2017) The United Kingdom and EU enlargement in the Western Balkans: from ardent champion of expansion to Post-Brexit irrelevance, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 17 (4): 555-569.
The Ukraine crisis of 2013 gave NATO a new lease of life by focusing on tackling the Kremlin. Both the UK and Romania have been at the forefront of efforts to reinvigorate NATO’s presence in the so-called ‘Eastern Front’. Besides organising joint exercises with other NATO member states in the Black Sea, Poland and the Baltic states, Bucharest and London were also in 2018 among the few countries to meet NATO’s 2% defence spending pledge.[35] Moreover, with the freeze of UK-Russia relations, the British government has increased its efforts to convince other NATO member states of the need to tackle the threat posed by the Kremlin. Unlike EU enlargement, when it comes to NATO both the UK and Romania are enthusiastic supporters of the membership bids of states such as Georgia or Ukraine.

In 2003 Romania and the UK launched a Strategic Partnership that was further enhanced by the 2011 Joint Statement on Enhancing the Strategic Partnership.[36] Military cooperation has included the deployment to Romania of around 150 people and RAF Typhoon aircraft as part of NATO’s enhanced Southern Air Policing mission,[37] 1,000 British troops taking part in NATO exercises in Romania, and the visit of Royal Navy destroyers to Romania as part of NATO deterrence measures.[38] By doing so, the UK has affirmed its recognition of Romania’s role in the NATO alliance and a commitment to an enhanced bilateral defence relationship. Moreover, Romania was one of the first countries to meet the 2% defence budget figure agreed by the NATO member states at the 2014 summit in Wales (the UK was one the of the key drivers behind the initiative). [39]

[39] https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm
**Collaborating outside of Europe: the case of the United Nations**

The most important setting outside of Europe where the UK and Romania have collaborated in the post-Cold War period is the United Nations (UN). As shown in the analysis set out below (for a more detailed analysis see the appendix) of the voting patterns of the UK and Romania in the UN Security Council (UNSC) and UN General Assembly (UNGA), both have shown considerable similarity and complementarity since the end of the Cold War.

Following 1989 Romania was a member of the UNSC in two periods: firstly, in 1990-1991 and then in 2004-2005. In 1990/1992, on each of the fifteen occasions that the UNSC voted, Romania always voted the same way as the UK. In 2004-2005, the UNSC voted only six times. On two occasions (on the Arab-Israeli conflict and on Sudan), Romania voted the same way as the UK, France and Russia, while the US abstained. On two other occasions (both on Sudan), Romania voted the same way as the US, UK and France, while Russia abstained.

More revealing is to look at voting patterns in the UNGA (between September 1990 and December 2018). The UNGA currently issues around 300 resolutions per year. Every country in the UN can participate in the UNGA voting. Germany is the country with whom Romania has voted mostly similarly. Apart from the first part of the 1990s, the UK follows as a close second.

This is not very surprising, given the considerable coordination between EU member states over UN votes. Like other regional blocs at the UN, EU member states meet regularly in New York to coordinate their activities (including how to vote). Hence, we find considerable coordination in the framework of the EU between Romania and the UK when developing both countries’ positions in the UN.
Britain’s vote to leave the EU has challenged long-standing debates about the strategic choices the UK faces. In this background, we identify in this section a series of potential scenarios for how the UK might move forward in its international relations. While the most likely outcome is a mixture of each (i.e. the Hybrid Britain scenario outlined at the end of the section), each scenario is set out below in its pure form in order to highlight the pressures on UK foreign policy.

**Global Britain**

British foreign policy since 1945 has sought to maintain a global role for the UK, whether through military and diplomatic commitments and/or maintaining and developing economic and cultural links. This is a product of legacies such as the British Empire, the UK’s permanent seat on the UNSC, and public and elite ideas of how powerful and important the UK is and that it is not simply a European power but a global one. It also, in part, reflects the continued needs of the UK as a modern, developed Western economy that has global links in a wide range of areas of the world.

A post-Brexit ‘Global Britain’ foreign policy would prioritise the development of global links in all areas, with the aim of putting the UK at the heart – as a global hub – for a range of foreign, security, economic and political issues. It would require the UK to commit resources – not least financial and political willingness – to back this. It would be an ambitious strategy that, as with any strategy, would require some choices over the ends, ways and means.

The ends sought could be the upholding of certain Western – and therefore also to some extent European – norms, institutions and power. Those norms could be those supported by the political left or right, albeit with a degree of overlap. Conservative governments may prioritise the role of the UK as a security and defence player, with significant commitments in defence spending such as in nuclear weapons and an ability to project military forces globally.
A Labour government, on the other hand, could seek to ensure the UK remains a global power in areas such as international development (where currently the UK is a global leader) and on such issues as the environment, immigration and in public diplomacy and soft power.

Whatever direction is taken, this strategy would be ambitious in terms of costs and both public and political commitment. Britain has struggled since 1945, and to some extent long before that, to uphold its pretensions to being a leading global player that stands alone and makes its own choices. In pursuing this role the UK also risks overlooking the importance of Europe. Debates about British foreign policy have long been divided between committing to Europe and committing to a global role, a divide that reflects two narratives in British history: between being a global or European country. It is debatable, however, whether the UK can commit to a global foreign policy without also thinking disproportionately about how this links back to the state of the EU.

Following Brexit, the EU is likely to invest further in NATO and try to give more weight to the organisation in international politics. The British government would see NATO as a way of enhancing its own role in the world, as well as in Europe. NATO would remain the only avenue through which the UK could have a formal institutionalised say on pan-European security matters. We also expect the UK to advocate for the expansion of NATO in both members and roles. Britain might also pursue the support of non-EU countries in the UNGA and UNSC along with strong connections inside the EU caucus of states, which might open the door for enhanced cooperation with Romania.

Outside the EU, Britain will be forced to develop relations with a series of partners, and more importantly prove its ability to influence the international agenda as a non-EU state. This could pave the way for Britain to increase its support for democracy promotion in areas like the post-Soviet space or North Africa.

Particularly in the case of Moldova, but also the post-Soviet space as whole, the UK might view Romania as the leading partner for relations with the region. Moreover, tackling the perceived Russian threat will continue to be the most important shared foreign policy priority between Bucharest and London.
Engaging with likeminded states such as Romania would be crucial for the UK to successfully muster support for marginalising the Kremlin in world politics.

Romania was one of the key driving forces behind the creation of the Chinese-led ‘16+1 initiative’ in Eastern Europe.[40] As Global Britain will seek to enhance to focus more closely on working with China, Romania can play a key part in fostering cooperation between the London and Beijing in Eastern Europe.

**European Britain**

A European focus for UK foreign policy would see it prioritise relations with its European neighbours, both bilaterally and through multilateral relations such as the European side of NATO or some privileged relationship with the EU. On the one hand, this would symbolise that Britain is a European power and not a global one with its major economic and security interests to be found in Europe. As such, the UK’s best hope of shaping its place in the world – in terms of security, prosperity and ability to promote its values – would rest more in relations with Europe than in pursuing some global role.

Pursuing this scenario would present the UK with several challenges and opportunities. In terms of challenges, the UK would need to identify with whom it seeks to build close relations and how this will be done. Non-membership of the EU limits the UK’s voice and power within Europe’s predominant organisation for politics, economics, social matters and non-traditional security matters. While the nature of the new UK-EU relationship remains deeply uncertain, there have been positive discussions on both sides about a close working relationship in foreign, security and defence matters. However, positive words will need to overcome practical and legal obstacles on such matters as the sharing of data.

[40] See http://www.china-ceec.org/eng/ldrhw_1/2013bjlst/hdxw1/t1410529.htm
Furthermore, the level of trust either sides shows may depend on the wider UK-EU economic and trading relationship, and the domestic willingness of both UK and EU decision makers to commit to a long-term close partnership. By contrast, the ‘special relationship’ with the US rests upon a close working relationship between UK and American officials and military personnel in the areas of nuclear weapons, special forces and intelligence gathering. It remains unclear whether the UK and the EU could develop a similar core of a relationship, where trust and working patterns can survive temporary strains in relations brought about by fallings out between political leaders or on such matters as trade.

In this scenario Romania and the UK would continue to work together similarly to their interactions within the framework of the foreign policy of the EU, as well as within the UNGA and UNSC. The main difference would be that Britain is likely to lose influence on the EU decision-making processes, and thus need to devote increased effort to collaborating with individual member states. Here, Romania as a self-declared expert on (and bridge to) post-Soviet space might become the leading partner for British actions and influence in the region. Moreover, Romania would be a useful ally and spokesperson for the UK’s own foreign policy interest in the EU. This is not a new discussion, as on the eve of its accession many analysts claimed that Romania would act as American Trojan horse inside the EU.

Britain will be tempted to adopt a divide and rule policy, and try to play member states against each other in order to gain more influence on the EU, something it has been accused of trying to do during the Brexit negotiations. It is likely that other CEE member states such as Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary will compete with Romania for a more privileged relationship with the UK in its approaches to Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space.

As with Global Britain, the UK government will need to invest increased resources in tackling Russia and enhancing security cooperation within NATO. Romania and the UK will thus continue to share common ground within NATO. It is also likely that Bucharest would welcome enhanced leadership from the UK on dealings with Russia and preserving the security order on the European continent.
The UK-US relationship, sometimes referred to as a ‘special relationship’ has been a central part of UK foreign policy since the first half of the twentieth century. It has been pursued with two aims in mind. First, to bolster the UK’s global influence through seeking to influence the superpower of the US. Until the 1950s British policy makers thought of the UK – backed by the British Empire and Commonwealth – as an equal to the US. This has inevitably been revised to reflect the relative decline of the UK. But whether as equal partners or unequal partners, British decision makers have generally believed that one of the best ways that they can affect global change is through working with the US.

Second, British policy makers have sought to maintain and develop the US commitment to Europe. Whether through maintaining a US commitment to NATO or support for European integration, the stability, security and prosperity of Europe generated by these commitments have benefitted the UK. Europe, as Winston Churchill once argued, is ‘where the weather comes from.’ The two World Wars, and afterwards the Cold War, saw the UK look increasingly to the US to help control the weather by asserting and maintaining a favourable balance of power in Europe. The decline of the British Empire and Commonwealth added to this by leaving the US as the primary non-European power to which the UK could turn for assistance in this approach.

If Brexit means Britain wishes to turn its back on the rest of Europe then one way in which this could be achieved would be through developing an even closer working relationship with the US, albeit in terms of pursuing relations elsewhere in the world. As noted above, the core of the relationship today rests in cooperation in nuclear weapons, intelligence and special forces. Further military relations could be developed with a view to deepening the relationship on matters outside of Europe, such as in the Middle East or Pacific. Depending on the nature of any new UK-EU relationship, the UK could also commit to aligning its economy more with the US and North America than with Europe.
As such, one of the aims of UK foreign policy would be regulatory alignment with the US rather than the EU.

British-Romanian relations could be significantly changed in this scenario as successive governments in Bucharest have been staunch supporters of US foreign policy. Romania would therefore be interested in keeping the US engaged in Europe and would have to take steps to bolster relations with the US to compensate for the UK’s disengagement from European affairs. This might appear to bolster Romanian relations with the US over relations with the UK. This need not be the case if Romania were to push for European members of NATO to improve their capabilities in Europe as a way to allow the UK and USA to focus their resources elsewhere in the world and thus maintain US global leadership.

This might also imply that the UK will have less appetite for engaging in the EU’s neighbourhood or with individual member states. It might become an even more docile follower of American actions around the world. Hence, the British government will likely lose interest in cooperation with member states like Romania when it comes to influencing the politics of countries like Moldova in the post-Soviet space. For the short to medium term it is likely that America’s foreign policy priorities reside outside Europe. American Britain will have increased incentives to support the presence of the US in more remote areas such as the Pacific or the Arab Gulf, but also probably play a more active role in the UNGA and UNSC.

**Island Britain**

The least likely scenario would see the UK disengaging from global affairs and focusing solely on the territorial defence of the British Isles. This would be associated with an economic model that configures the UK less towards being an open, free trading liberal economy and more towards being a closed, protectionist and, to some extent, isolated country. This has sometimes been referred to as ‘Switzerland with nukes’, an idea based on an interpretation of Swiss neutrality, isolation and independence.
Britain’s foreign policy and its relations with Romania after Brexit: likely scenarios

Such an approach would be a radical departure in the UK’s international relations, which for hundreds of years has been based on the development of international connections in economics, security and politics.

This scenario would therefore require both significant change in terms of the outlook of UK decision makers and in the setup and nature of the UK’s economy, military and diplomacy. The idea is also based on something of a misreading of not only Switzerland’s foreign and defence policies. It also raises questions as to how much the UK could rely on others to allow it can abdicate any responsibilities beyond its borders. For example, Britain’s retention of a viable nuclear deterrent – and thus the ‘nukes’ in the above scenario heading – relies on close relations with the US.

Nevertheless, the pursuit of this option, or a reduced version of it that saw the UK disengage but not entirely withdraw and isolate itself, would lead to a UK whose leaders offer few ideas, show little interest in taking the initiative and do not seek to develop close working relations either bilaterally or in multilateral forums with allies, not least in Europe. At best, Britain would be present at the negotiating table but as a passive observer. This might sound far-fetched, but the UK has in recent years shown that it can be largely absent from debates, such as over the future of NATO, thanks to Brexit consuming the attention of its leadership and foreign policy community.

This scenario would present significant problems for Romanian-British relations. Investing in NATO, tackling the Russia threat, as well as aiding the democratisation efforts of the post-Soviet states would become marginal priorities for the UK. There could be some scope for increased cooperation with Romania if the UK sought to focus on bilateral relations over any form of supranational or multilateral frameworks. Romania would find it in its interest to engage with the UK, due to fear that post-Brexit NATO might not benefit from the support and efforts of the UK government. But the extent to which Bucharest could successfully engage with the UK in this scenario is rather debatable. CEE countries like Romania would experience an increased sense of insecurity thanks to the loss of a key opponent of Russian actions against the European security framework.
The most convenient scenario for UK-Romania relations: Hybrid Britain, ‘Out, but in’

We argue that the best-case scenario that would lead to the development of a deep and special partnership between the UK and Romania would be a hybrid of the above scenarios.

The UK would maintain its global ambitions, as well as developing closer cooperation with the US with a stronger transatlantic relationship remaining one of the defining goals. This would pave the way for greater cooperation between the UK and Romania, not least through the shared priority regarding the perceived Russian threat and preserve the European security order. The UK would also seek to enhance its wider network of bilateral relationships with various EU member states. In this sense Romania could play a central role in acting as Britain’s leading partner in the post-Soviet space both in NATO and EU frameworks. Moreover, the UK will show renewed interest in the post-Soviet space in order to highlight its foreign policy resilience and that post-Brexit it is not falling behind the EU in terms of promoting liberal values.
Brexit challenges many ideas about cooperation on the European continent, but also provides a space for creating new partnerships. The report has discussed four scenarios regarding the way Britain will construct its foreign policy following Brexit. We argue that all four cases present opportunities for Romania and the UK to find common ground and develop a series of joint initiatives.

Romania will need to recalibrate its bilateral relations with the UK as the latter emerges as an important non-EU actor in the European security architecture. This will entail working with the UK towards three areas which would underpin a deep and special partnership with Romania: the stability of the post-Soviet space (with a focus on the Black Sea region), strengthening transatlanticism, and preserving the European security architecture.

Firstly, in the post-Soviet space the government in Bucharest needs to ensure that the UK maintains its involvement in countries like Moldova in the post-Soviet space and supports their path to democratisation. However, given the current populist inclinations of both the Romanian and British governments (coupled with the recent rollback of justice system reform in the Romania), their legitimacy and ability to influence democratic changes in the neighbourhood has been limited. A deep and special partnership between the UK and Romania should aim to reinforce both countries' commitment to promoting democracy in the post-Soviet space, while also maintaining high democratic standards in their own political systems.

In practice, this may translate in the creation of a bilateral commission of experts and diplomats that meets regularly and develops joint initiatives aimed at promoting stability in the post-Soviet space.

Secondly, Romania needs to ensure that post-Brexit the UK remains deeply committed to transatlanticism. Successive governments in Bucharest have made significant efforts throughout the years in order to support transatlanticism. A less active Britain would thus weaken transatlanticism, and possibly provide less incentives for the US to engage on the European continent (or Eastern Europe). To that end, Brexit should be an opportunity for both the UK and Romania to reaffirm their transatlanticism.
The implications of Brexit for Romania’s foreign policy

In order to strengthen transatlanticism, Romania and the UK should aim to create a platform for discussing transatlantic cooperation both at the political and technical level. This would welcome the contribution of all European states.

Thirdly, Brexit may be perceived as a sign of weakness and useful opportunity for states like Russia to reframe the European security architecture. In this context, Romania should aim to keep the UK engaged in NATO and maintain Britain’s critical stance in relation to Russia’s actions in the post-Soviet space. The UK might have increased incentives to be involved to a greater extent in counteracting Russia’s actions,[41] in order to highlight its foreign policy autonomy and reliance after Brexit.

An increase in the defence budget and spending of the two countries should aim to strengthen their resolve in maintaining the European security architecture. This increase can target the development of regular or permanent joint (Romania-British) military exercises in the Black Sea.

Nevertheless, we argue that a close and special partnership that is narrowly defined by the perception of the threat posed ‘Russia’ would be less productive and perhaps detrimental in the long run, as the two former great powers may get along under certain future circumstances.

However, developing a deep and special partnership following Brexit comes with a caveat. Romania will also need to be aware of two competing pressures within the EU. First will be the aim, pushed especially by the EU’s central institutions but also by some Member State governments, to maintain EU unity in the face of a post-Brexit Britain. This has been an especially strong pressure during the Brexit negotiations and is likely to remain so while the UK and EU continue their negotiations over a new UK-EU relationship. Second, at the same time there will be a desire – and degree of competition – by some EU member states to develop their bilateral relations with the UK.

[41] Currently, although the Salisbury attack was a trigger event for the UK to take a tougher stance towards Russia, Britain has not taken the initiative to create any multilateral efforts for dealing with the Ukraine crisis, leaving France and Germany to take the lead at such efforts. Moreover, its response to the chemical attack has been rather muted, as it has chosen not to go beyond naming and shaming coupled with the expulsion of Russian diplomats.
The implications of Brexit for Romania’s foreign policy

As things stand in the spring of 2019, there are no clear signs as to what new post-Brexit relationship the UK and EU will agree. However, even if we take as a working assumption that it will be nothing more than a ‘third country’ relationship framed through a Free Trade Agreement, one thing remains certain: that once the UK exits the EU it will need ‘to invest significant resources in Brussels and in Member States’ capitals, to maintain influence from outside the structures of the EU.’[42]

Key policy recommendations

1. Assuming that the UK will continue to invest in its ‘special relationship’ with the US in advancing the transatlantic order, then Romania would be an obvious partner for the UK in developing this. As Romania has been a strong supporter of transatlantic relations, the UK may decide to acknowledge Bucharest’s substantial and critical role, and further augment Romania’s role in the transatlantic community. Hence, Romania should focus on developing a new deep and special partnership based on its current contribution and commitment to the transatlantic order. Moreover, it is in Romania’s interest to keep the UK engaged in key parts of the order such as NATO, the promotion of liberal values, and tackling Russia’s threat to security on the European continent.

2. NATO shall remain in the short to medium term the only plausible deterrence arrangement on which Europe can rely. Hence, as one of the great supporters of NATO in CEE, the fear of possible US disengagement from NATO creates a need for Romania to push for enhanced military cooperation with the UK. This could, for example, follow the example of defence cooperation between Poland and the UK.

3. The UK and Romania may want to reshuffle bilateral relations given the repercussions that Brexit will have on pan-European politics. Hence, Bucharest should engage in actively lobbying the British government in order to build a special partnership that entails Romania being the leading partner for the UK in the post-Soviet space.

4. We propose that the new reference point for the deep and special partnership between the UK and Romania should thus focus on the Wider Black Sea and the Balkan Peninsula, with an aspiration to enhance the ability of the two countries to project power and diplomatic influence in these regions and in their immediate neighbourhoods.

Romania may be far from having the ability to pursue a totally independent course of action in global affairs, but the revamping of diplomatic relations with post-Brexit Britain should lead to a process which would allow Bucharest to achieve increased actoriness in Europe. This would enhance Romania’s agency in the making of foreign, security and defence policies in the EU and in the politics of NATO.
Appendix: Analysing Romania’s voting patterns in the UN General Assembly

Analysing how Romania voted in these ‘competitive’ resolutions can offer interesting insights on the country’s behavior within the UN system. Figure 1 presents the number of times (in percentage) that Romania has voted in the same way as the United States, Russia, the UK and Germany (Identity score). Figure 2 does a similar job, but it gives more refined information on the voting patterns of the various countries involved (Affinity score). On any UNGA resolution, a country can vote in favor (Y), against (N), or abstain (A); and the Affinity core aims to capture the distance between these three options.[43]

[43] If two countries vote Y and N, the score will be zero (as it is in the case of the Identity score). Yet, if a country votes Y (or N), and the other abstains, the score here will be 0.5 (whereas it is 0 in the case of the Identity score). There is also the possibility that a country does not participate in a vote. When this happens, we have considered it as a non-identical vote for the Identity Score, and as equivalent to abstention for the Affinity score.
We now look more closely at the voting patterns of Romania and these four countries (see Table 1). We divide the 1990-2008 period in 4 sub-groups: a) before Romania applied for EU membership (1990-1995); b) the accession period (1996-2007); c) the EU membership period (2008-2018); d) and the last two years (2017 and 2018) – which correspond to the period under which the Trump administration has been in charge of the UN voting.[44]

Table 1 UNGA voting patterns of Romania vis-à-vis the US, Russia, UK and Germany

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<thead>
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<th>United States</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Germany</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Affinity</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Affinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-1995</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>82.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996-2006</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007-2018</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>71.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>77</td>
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[44] Romania submitted the official application to join the EU in June 1995 and became a member state on 1 January 2007. The Trump administration took office on 20 January 2017. The great majority of the UN voting takes place between September and December of every year. As a result, the year 1995 has been considered part of the pre-application phase; the year 2006 part of the accession period; and the year 2016 responsibility of the Obama administration.