



UNDERSTANDING COLOMBIA – UKRAINE RELATIONS: MODERN DEVELOPMENTS AND A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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***Abstract.** This study analyses the evolution and current dynamics of bilateral relations between Colombia and Ukraine. Since Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the relations existing between the parties still focus on those areas of cooperation to be partially developed when the country was a part of the Soviet Union. Taking into account institutional cooperation established between the states in recent years, this research outlines the promising collaboration in the sectors of their common interest and its potential impact on the regional relations in Europe and Latin America, as well as on the global system of international interactions as a whole. The authors used comprehensive methodology including both general and specific scientific research methods. Historical analysis allowed determining the dynamics of relations between Colombia and Ukraine in retrospect. Comparative analysis and synthesis helped to identify priority areas of the parties' relations that are confirmed by the available quantitative and qualitative data given by the state institutions and the media. System analysis allowed determining the essence of relationships existing between the countries and their influence on the regional and global systems of international relations, and the forecasting method helped to contemplate the potential consequences of intensification of these interactions on the world arena. The analysed information proves that Colombia and Ukraine should deepen not only their practical cooperation but also strengthen its*

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regulatory framework, and the article provides relevant recommendations. The parties should intensify cooperation at the global level, as their common position on the international stage could strengthen their role in the world and confirm their status as the important elements of the contemporary international system. Since the essence and development of bilateral relations between Colombia and Ukraine are hardly considered in both Ukrainian and international political science, their analysis and forecasting allow forming a new scientific concept to explore interactions between these states on the international arena that would take into consideration their regional and global significance, as well as determine progressive areas of cooperation in view of its intensity nowadays.

Keywords: *cooperation; drug trafficking; security; economy; diplomatic relations.*

1. Introduction

Determining its current foreign policy course, Ukraine is trying to diversify relationships with various states and, therefore, to move away from its Soviet past and to prove that it can become a reliable and promising partner for countries located in different regions of the world. Active interactions between the international actors demonstrate that the Latin American countries are playing an increasingly prominent role in modern world processes, while working with their political and economic, as well as their security, humanitarian, and other components (Arnson & Tickner, 2016). In the context of globalization, the potential of this region has allowed it to become an important partner of global leaders (Kyrychenko, 2004) and of those actors who are forming networks of their relations on the world arena. Hence, the study and analysis of Colombia – Ukraine relations are extremely important: the two states are intensifying their interactions, but authors need to identify their common interests and spheres where their cooperation could make significant progress.

The Republic of Colombia recognised the independence of Ukraine on 27 May 1992, and diplomatic relations were established between the two states on 18 August 1992 (Political relations between..., 2020). According to the Protocol No. 170_001 “On the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Colombia” (1992), the two parties have agreed to develop bilateral relations being of their common interest and to contribute to the strengthening of international cooperation and global peace. However, diverse visits and meetings at the highest level to have subsequently been held by the leaders of the two countries during their negotiations on various international platforms, such as the United Nations (UN), did not contribute to the deepening of cooperation between Colombia and Ukraine. Only in 2017, the states finally agreed to expand their collaboration at the interparliamentary level and recognised the need to identify and adopt priorities for the development of their relations in order to realise their national interests in various areas of common interest (Political relations between..., 2020). Consequently, this article focuses on the analysis of current relationships between Colombia and Ukraine, while striving for determination of their essence and potential in order to identify the ways of implementing the key foreign policy priorities of the parties through deepening their

cooperation. Authors are not only defining historical prerequisites for the development of collaboration between the two states, but also trying to figure out the challenges affecting its extension and to identify the areas being mutually beneficial for Colombia and Ukraine at the national, regional and global levels (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017).

The present article is divided into two main sections. The first one outlines the conditions for bilateral cooperation between Colombia and Ukraine when the latter formed part of the Soviet Union and the prospects for development of relationships between the states after the proclamation of independence of Ukraine in 1991. In addition, this section presents some historical events that actually demonstrate interactions between the countries even in the absence of real Ukrainian statehood in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This analysis is essential for the perception of Ukraine as a democratic state, since democratic values are crucial for present-day ties being built by the official Kyiv with other countries in the world. The second section deals with the main areas of cooperation between Colombia and Ukraine, as this collaboration might be significant for the internal political development of the countries and for the strengthening of their positions on the world stage. Based on this information, authors formulated a number of conclusions outlining practical steps which should be taken by the parties to intensify their interactions and, therefore, proving the possibility and necessity of further strengthening the partnership between Colombia and Ukraine.

2. A Brief History of Colombia – Ukraine Relations: Finding Common Ground

Despite an active development of all spheres of its activity, Ukraine still remains a young state. This country was able to achieve statehood by leaving the USSR in 1991 but its territories had also been part of the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary for several centuries before this date. Accordingly, Ukraine could establish its full-fledged bilateral and multilateral international interactions and collaborate with other countries in the world on equal footing only at the end of the 20th century. However, Colombia had long not been a *terra incognita* for Ukrainians. The Latin American Wars of Independence not only became the most important event for countries in the region, as they allowed them to embark on the independent path of political and social and economic development, but also came to the notice of the general public in Europe. In particular, news on the national liberation movement in Colombia greatly influenced the poor Ukrainian landowner Mykhailo Rol-Skybytskyi whose further military and political activities were directly related to the Colombian independence (Bobylyev, 1984). Mykhailo Rol-Skybytskyi was born in the village of Korchivka of the Volhynian Governorate of the Russian Empire (now the village of Korchivka of the Khmelnytskyi Region of Ukraine) in 1793. Having close ties with the democratic Polish intelligentsia and, therefore, maintaining progressive attitudes, Mykhailo Rol-Skybytskyi applied for a document to travel abroad in the 1810s. When Mykhailo Rol-Skybytskyi received his passport, he went to Sweden, then to England, and he ended up in South America. Upon his arrival in South America, Mykhailo Rol-Skybytskyi joined Simón Bolívar's

military as an enlisted member and went under the name of Miguel Rol. After the Wars of Independence, he served in the General Staff of the Gran Colombian Army and provided significant assistance in training the engineer troops, developing the project of the inter-oceanic canal, and organising topographic surveys in the Orinoco River Basin. In view of all these activities, he was awarded many prizes and conferred high military ranks (Strelko, 1980).

Dating back to the end of the 19th century, Ukrainians started massive migration to North and South America in view of the economic challenges faced by inhabitants of the Western territories of Ukraine which were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Landlessness and low living standards prompted people to move large distances to South America having free land and favourable social and economic conditions for its development. Later, Ukrainians migrated to this region after World War I but they mostly settled in coastal areas of Brazil and Argentina: even considering the secondary migration of Ukrainians from other Latin American countries, their number in Colombia has always been and still remains very small (Zastavnyy, 1991). According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2020), only 7 people went from Ukraine to Colombia and only 30 people came from Colombia to Ukraine in 2019. In light of this, the two countries are currently trying to increase the level of bilateral migration and the number of tourist trips, as both states have significant tourism and recreation potential. Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Colombia on mutual abolition of visa requirements for holders of ordinary passports and other travel documents (2019) was concluded. According to Article 1 of this document, the nationals of these two states who have valid travel documents may enter, leave, pass in transit or stay in the territory of Colombia or Ukraine without obtaining a visa up to 90 days in any 180-day period. So, the task of reviving people-to-people contacts is one of the highest priorities for both countries.

Whereas Ukraine became one of the original constituent republics of the Soviet Union in 1922, it lost almost all the tools for independent communication with the external world, including the Latin American countries. In the early days, this region was not a priority in the USSR foreign policy doctrine in view of its considerable geographical remoteness; cultural differences and ideological incompatibility between the Soviet and Latin American peoples; and the absence of states to become serious rivals to the Soviet Union on the world stage. Moreover, this area could not become a vital source of raw materials for the USSR: the Latin American countries actively cooperated with Great Britain and the United States (US) which used massive capital flows to finance their expansion to international markets. As a result, the relationships between the Soviet Union and the Latin American states were developed very sluggishly and, thus, were represented by the sporadic trade exchanges. Colombia and the USSR were able to establish diplomatic relations only in 1935, i.e., after the Soviet Union had joined the League of Nations (Sizonenko, 1976). In 1944, the USSR republics were granted the right to establish direct contacts with other countries: so, their opportunities to get involved in international affairs not only through the all-Union diplomatic missions but also through their own foreign policy bodies were substantially expanded (Zaliskiy, 1986). A significant contribution to the fight against fascism during World War II, as well as an active development of science, technologies and humanitarian affairs allowed

Ukraine to participate in the international cooperation, even being part of the Soviet Union. The official Kyiv was empowered to deepen partnership with Colombia in the fields of culture, science and public relations.

The emergence and development of bipolarity in international relations after World War II, however, induced Soviet officials to consider Latin America as the US “strategic backyard”. Being the main rival of the USSR at the global level, the US permanently captured attention of Soviet leaders, and its relationships with the Latin American states could prevent the USSR from establishing cooperation with these actors. On the other hand, even insignificant communications set up between the USSR and Latin American countries always had substantial consequences for global international relations, as the United States had to take into account the increased or diminished value of the Latin American region on the scale of Soviet geostrategic interests (Mujual-Leon, 1989). In consideration of its close historical connections with the United States, Colombia subsequently severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1948, after the Cold War had begun (Sizonenko, 1976). In the 1950-ies, economic cooperation with the Soviet Union became quite important for many Latin American countries. The USSR, in its turn, was striving for expanding its ideological influence in the region. So, relationships between Colombia and the Soviet Union began improving in 1955 when 629 tonnes of Colombian coffee were exported to the Soviet territory (Sizonenko and Bobrovnikov, 1978), and the states resumed diplomatic relations in 1968. By the way, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics (Ukrainian SSR) began participating in the Soviet-Colombian meetings and negotiations conducted at the highest level in the early 1970-ies that increased its engagement in all kinds of cooperation between the parties against a background of their work on the United Nations (UN) platform (Zaliskiy, 1986).

According to the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1977), the Ukrainian SSR was recognised as a sovereign Soviet socialist state which had the right to enter into relations with other countries, to conclude agreements and to exchange diplomatic and consular representatives therewith, as well as to participate in international organizations (Zaliskiy, 1986). As a result, Colombia and Ukraine increased their bilateral trade and intensified scientific and cultural exchanges. Colombia began importing Soviet (in particular, Ukrainian) equipment (electrical, laboratory, energy, printing and other machines), as well as different products of the USSR automotive industry. The Colombian leaders noted that the Soviet equipment could also be used in the search for oil and natural gas deposits, construction of power plants and various industrial enterprises. At that time, the official Moscow considered imbalances of bilateral trade with Colombia to be a significant obstacle to its further development: The Soviet market experienced more buying volume (mostly coffee) than selling volume (Sizonenko, 1976), and the USSR tended to explore economic potential of Soviet republics when launching cooperation with proper Colombian companies. In the 1980-ies, Ukrainians exported some products to Colombia and conducted research on the South Atlantic Area and the Caribbean by collaborating with their Colombian counterparts under a number of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programmes (Zaliskiy, 1986). But Ukraine did not have significant contacts with Colombia when it gained independence in 1991. Bilateral

relationships between the states remained occasional and regarded certain areas of cooperation. The two actors had to build their relationships from scratch.

Having started with the mutual international support, Colombia and Ukraine are currently trying to coordinate their positions within intergovernmental organizations (During her visit..., 2018), to deepen their bilateral high-level dialogue, and to implement international initiatives which may efficiently resolve their political, social, and historical problems. For instance, the Resolution No. 079 (2007) adopted by the House of Representatives of the Congress of the Republic of Colombia condemned the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people, while noting that it had become the result of terror used by the totalitarian state to annihilate the Ukrainian people and had caused about 7 million deaths among children, women, men and the elderly. However, the significant geographical distance between the states and the absence of common border, as well as the relatively short history of bilateral partnership and the lack of the appropriate legal framework are still considered as the greatest obstacle to Colombia – Ukraine intensive collaboration. Here, authors will try to identify a number of areas where Colombian-Ukrainian cooperation could become a priority for both countries, since it affects not only their bilateral relations, but also their positions on the global political arena.

3. Spheres of Mutual Interest and the Ways to Encourage Cooperation

With growing global economic ties, outpacing the growth of developing countries, and increasing financial and economic instability, increasing weight in foreign markets is of strategic importance to both Colombia and Ukraine. As full-fledged subjects of international relations, these states have the opportunity to establish large-scale foreign economic relations, but to do so they must create a fundamentally new model of economic cooperation, which would increase their mutual economic benefits (Zinchuk & Romanchuk, 2013). The volume of bilateral trade between Colombia and Ukraine amounted to USD (United States dollar) 112.576 million in 2019. Ukrainian exports amounted to USD 31,385 million, Colombia imported goods to Ukraine worth USD 81,191 million (Foreign trade in 2019, 2019). The basis of Ukraine's exports to Colombia is ferrous metals (91.1%), as well as various appliances and equipment (3.7%). Colombia mainly supplies Ukraine with mineral fuels, oil, and products of its distillation (42.6%), edible fruits and nuts (37.6%), coffee and tea (8.8%), as well as various food products (Countries by commodity..., 2019). In 2019, bilateral trade in services between Ukraine and Colombia amounted to only USD 687.7 thousand, covering business and travel-related services (Geographical structure of..., 2019).

As a result, the establishment of strong trade and economic relations between the states currently requires considerable diversification of export-import operations and an increase in bilateral trade in goods and services. Colombia is one of the five largest exporters of coal and is increasing its oil production. Naturally, it could be interested in Ukrainian coal mining technologies and the latest developments in the field of mechanical engineering (Rodríguez, 2019). By diversifying its energy market and trying

to get rid of its oil and gas dependence on Russia, Ukraine could intensify bilateral cooperation with Colombia in this sector. Moreover, after Ukraine's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2008, both countries can operate in international markets, adhering to the same standards and requirements. According to Colombia's Deputy Foreign Minister P. Londoño-Jaramillo, Colombia would like to purchase agricultural machinery with high-yield processing technology: "We intend to increase agricultural production. Ukraine is well-known as the granary of Europe, and Colombia hopes to soon become the granary for Latin America." (Shkurko, 2011).

During a meeting with the Speaker of the Senate of the Congress of the Republic of Colombia Óscar Mauricio Lizcano Arango in May 2017, the Chairman of The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine A. Parubiy stated that Ukraine is interested in intensifying bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Colombia, since the latter constitutes one of the most promising partners of the official Kyiv in the Latin American region (The most promising..., 2017). For its part, Ukraine occupies a strategic geoeconomic position, as it borders the European Union (EU). On 26 June 2012, Colombia and the European Union (EU) signed the EU – Colombia/Peru Trade Agreement. In its turn, Ukraine is implementing the Association Agreement with the European Union, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and Ukraine, which was signed on 21 March and 27 June 2014. Both documents envisage procedures for facilitating bilateral trade between the parties; opening markets for goods, services, government procurement and investment; establishing better conditions for competitiveness and cooperation on innovation, production modernization, and technology transfer. So, the two countries and the EU gradually open markets on both sides and increase the stability and predictability of the trade and investment environment. As a result, Colombia and Ukraine have the opportunity to jointly develop mechanisms to deepen cooperation with the EU during the establishment of a free trade area with this organisation, to exchange relevant experience and developments. This would allow not only to deepen economic bilateral cooperation between states, but also to develop common positions on certain issues of international economic law and the global business system.

Manifestations of the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation (RF) in the international arena, aimed at restoring its imperial status, were reflected in the foreign policy of this state in 2008 during the Russian-Georgian war. However, in 2014, Ukraine felt the most cynical intrusion into the internal affairs of another state by the Russian Federation, fuelled by manipulation of public consciousness and political machinations. By annexing the Crimean Peninsula and occupying parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine, Russia continues its armed confrontation with the Ukrainian population, constantly adding local militants to its ranks and trying to unbalance the political situation inside Ukraine. Admittedly, the more than 50-year-old armed confrontation between the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), with all the hallmarks of an asymmetric war, differed substantially from the Ukrainian-Russian conflict provoked by Russia. By signing a peace agreement with FARC-EP on September 26, 2016, the Colombian authorities managed to end not only the longest (1964-2016) but also the bloodiest confrontation in the recent history of Latin America (Golovchenko, 2017):

more than 8 million were affected during the conflict and more than 200,000 Colombians died (Iryna Herashchenko: *Despite...*, 2018). However, despite the fundamental differences between the conflict in Colombia and the confrontation in Ukraine, the particular experiences of a peaceful settlement gained by the Colombian authorities may be useful for Ukraine as well. Especially since “major changes that have intervened inside Colombia’s security strategy are providing an interesting overview of how a country can recover from an internal conflict and design a strategy for current and future challenges, both domestic and international” (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017).

Realising the importance of ending the conflict in Ukraine as soon as possible for its population, as well as preventing the spread of Russian aggression in Europe to maintain stability within the European system of international relations and the world in general, Colombian authorities have expressed support for official Kyiv's foreign policy steps since 2014. On March 27, 2014, the Colombian delegation supported the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly No. 68/262 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine” (2014): together with 99 other UN Member States, the Republic of Colombia affirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, as well as called upon all countries, international organizations and specialised agencies not to recognise any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on the basis of the referendum held by the Russian authorities in Crimea on 16 March 2014 and to refrain from any action or dealing that might be interpreted as recognising any such altered status. During the United Nations General Assembly 69th Regular Session H.E. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia (2014) expressed solidarity between the people of Colombia and peoples of those countries which are suffering from war. According to him, Colombia is not oblivious to the suffering of those who live in Syria, Iraq, Libya, the Sahel and Ukraine but they could attain lasting solutions to overcome conflicts unless and until they completely respect the international law and the purposes and principles established in the United Nations Charter (1945). Indeed, at one time there was no alternative to a peaceful solution to the armed conflict in long-suffering Colombia (Golovchenko, 2017). However, according to Juan Manuel Santos, peace can only be achieved through significant sacrifices, including the political capital of people trying to achieve peace. Accordingly, the peaceful settlement of any conflict must be based on a tactic of combining negotiation and military pressure: “As long as the insurgents think they can win by force, they will not negotiate in good faith. Therefore, insurgent leaders must feel threatened. As long as they feel safe, it is difficult to agree on peace” (Erman, 2019).

Ukraine made a similar mistake in trying to reach an agreement with the militants: in 2014, the processes of peaceful settlement of the conflict in the East were concentrated in the Minsk format, which involved members of the Tripartite Contact Group for Peaceful Settlement in Eastern Ukraine (Plenipotentiaries of Ukraine, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Russia) and leaders of "independent" quasi-state entities ("Donetsk People's Republic" ("DPR") and "Luhansk People's Republic" ("LPR")), created in eastern Ukraine with the support of the Russian Federation. However, persistent violations of the terms of the agreements reached by

the militants and Russia's unwillingness to allow Ukraine to regain control of its own border have forced Ukrainian officials to act more decisively. As early as on January 27, 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine proclaimed the Russian Federation as an aggressor state, and the "DPR" and "LPR" supported by it as terrorist organisations. Furthermore, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) called on Ukraine's international partners to prevent impunity for crimes against humanity committed since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and to recognise Russia as an aggressor state that fully supports terrorism and threatens international peace and security and recognise the "DPR" and "LPR" as terrorist organisations (Resolution of the..., 2015).

This step can be considered logical, because, as claimed by the former President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, who took part in the 16th Yalta European Strategy Annual Meeting "Happiness Now. New Approaches for a World in Crisis" in Kyiv on 12-14 September 2019, "Only those participants who really want peace should be involved in the negotiation process" (Erman, 2019). Therefore, today, without abandoning the negotiation process, Ukraine is trying to put pressure on Russia, using all available multilateral mechanisms of the United Nations (UN), the OSCE and the Council of Europe and calling on its international partners to apply appropriate sanctions. But official Kyiv currently also faces the task of reintegrating those eastern zones that suffered from the war but were liberated from Russian occupation and of social and psychological rehabilitation of the population. Therefore, acquaintance with the experience of reintegration, transitional justice and implementation of post-conflict policy in Colombia has become one of the priorities of bilateral Ukrainian-Colombian cooperation at the current stage of development of relations.

In particular, during a visit to the Republic of Colombia on April 9-13, 2018, First Deputy Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine I. Gerashchenko and MPs of Ukraine during a meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia P. Londonno had the opportunity to learn about the successes and difficulties of the post-conflict period. Colombia related to the reintegration and implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC-EP. In addition, the parties exchanged views on issues that are relevant for both Ukraine and Colombia – the fight against terrorism and cybercrime, demining and mine action (During her visit..., 2018). On July 3, 2018, the Ukrainian Parliament hosted a meeting of the informal parliamentary group "Minsk Platform" with the participation of Juan Fernando Cristo – former Minister of Interior of Colombia, Plenipotentiary Negotiator of the Havana Negotiation Process between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP, which worked on the implementation of a peace treaty and introduction of legal reforms in Colombia (Iryna Herashchenko: Despite..., 2018). During this meeting, the Ukrainian side was able to fully learn about the specific features of the peace settlement in Colombia and outline those aspects of the peace process, the experience of which will be of practical value for ending the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

In particular, the issue of transitional justice and amnesty is currently important for official Kyiv. At present, there is no consensus in Ukrainian politics regarding a possible amnesty for participants in the war in the East. Pro-Russian political forces

emphasise the need for amnesty for all those involved in hostilities. Another group of high-ranking officials (including representatives of the Tripartite Contact Group for the Peaceful Settlement of the Situation in Eastern Ukraine and President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky) spoke in favour of approving a law that would not grant amnesty to perpetrators of serious crimes: furthermore, it is emphasised that such a document can be approved by the Parliament only after the elections and the establishment of local authorities in the occupied territories in accordance with Ukrainian law, which, obviously, Russia opposes. According to Article 22 of the Appendix I “Law on Amnesty, Pardon and Special Criminal Treatment” to the Agreement to Facilitate the Fulfilment of the Timetable for the Process of Laying Down of Arms Established by Means of an Agreement of 23 June 2016 signed on 20 August 2016 and confirmed by the Final Agreement to end the armed conflict and build a stable and lasting peace (2016), a person who conducted crimes against humanity, genocide, serious war crimes, hostage taking or other serious deprivation of liberty, torture, extra-judicial executions, forced disappearance, rape and other forms of sexual violence, child abduction, forced displacement and the recruitment of minors, as provided for in the Rome Statute, cannot be subject to amnesty or pardon in no case. Moreover, Colombia established a number of judicial panels for justice, including a Judicial Panel for Amnesty and Pardon and a Tribunal for Peace, to administer justice and investigate, clarify, prosecute and punish serious human rights violations and serious infringements of international humanitarian law. According to Juan Fernando Cristo, Colombian authorities have provided amnesty for those accused of committing political crimes or murder during the fighting, which has allowed it to investigate serious crimes more thoroughly and, ultimately, to pay reparations to numerous victims of the armed conflict (Iryna Herashchenko: “Despite...”, 2018).

Therefore, given the experience of Colombia, the Ukrainian authorities could more clearly outline the issue of further amnesty for militants and the fate of victims of the conflict in the East. Furthermore, it should be announced that amnesty would apply only to members of military groups that were demobilised, surrendered arms, cooperated with the investigation, helping to end the conflict: similarly, Colombian officials have acted, emphasising that if these conditions are not met, the amnesty may be cancelled (Post-conflict settlement..., 2016). In addition, like their Colombian counterparts, Ukrainian officials should provide a mechanism for further adaptation of former militants to the new socio-economic conditions and the procedure of their involvement in the political process. After all, a considerable part of the population can glorify the insurgents, expressing latent aggression. This position is fully embedded in the worldview, where politics and war do not oppose each other, and war is considered as a continuation of politics by other means. Therefore, the possibility of perceiving armed violence as a means of legitimately achieving any goals must be completely eliminated: after all, war is never supported by an absolute majority of citizens. And the settlement of the conflict and the cessation of the activities of militant organisations are impossible without giving the latter a real opportunity to integrate into peaceful life.

The issue of protection of the rights of victims of conflicts, their psychological rehabilitation and further social reintegration remains important for both Ukraine and Colombia. Colombia still counts among the first nations in the world for the number of

internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – the UN Refugee Agency, almost 8 million Colombians were considered as IDPs and more than 10 million citizens were determined as the people of concern in 2019 (Colombia, 2020). As of 30 November 2020, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine reported about 1.5 million of Ukrainians to be recognised as IDPs (Internally displaced persons, 2020). The plethora of threats faced by these people explains why the conceptions of human security of the two countries “should be deeply multidimensional, including political, economic, social, health, and human rights-related concerns” (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017). To build the right effective approaches, the parties could exchange information and experience on providing essential relief items for the newly displaced individuals; shelter and legal assistance for the people of concern; opportunities to access the labour market for the IDPs; and even civil registration or identity documents to be legally issued for the returnees. Accordingly, Ukraine could investigate the mechanisms of Colombia's cooperation with UNHCR and other international structures in the reintegration of civilian population – IDPs and its further adaptation. Given the fact that Colombia is efficiently recovering after a conflict, Ukraine needs to deepen relations with that country and study its peace-making experience and post-conflict reconstruction initiatives, as official Kyiv does not currently have any clear plan for a final solution to the situation in the East, which would be supported by all parties to the negotiations in the Minsk format.

Since the fall of the Communist regime and the end of tight border controls in 1991 Ukraine has attracted criminal organizations from other countries being engaged into the drug trafficking networks. In the early 1990s, the Ukrainian democratic governments focused on fundamental political, social and economic problems and, therefore, did not pay significant attention to the international criminal activities taking place in the territory of Ukraine. As a result, Ukraine has quickly become a significant conduit for the Southwest Asian (Afghanistan and Pakistan), the Southeast Asian (Burma, Laos, and Thailand, i.e., the so called “Golden Triangle”), and the Latin American (Mexico and Colombia) supplies of drugs to the European markets (Layne et al., 2001). Inasmuch as the Ukrainian internal drug market is very poor but the country is located near the EU borders, the international traffickers of heroin and cocaine started using Ukraine as a viable transit point while smuggling narcotics to Europe.

According to the international analysts, Colombia supplies the lion share of the US heroin market, as 90% of the American demand is met by Colombia and Mexico (Layne et al., 2001). Moreover, “Colombia, along with Peru and Bolivia, are the three biggest producers of cocaine in the world, and this narcotic is either transported through the Caribbean or Central America to the US market, or to West Africa, and from there to Europe” (Sanchez, 2014). Given the high level of corruption that permeates virtually all parts of the state system, “cocaine barons” have huge financial resources and substantially affect the legal economy, public administration, the army, and the police (Halushka & Halushka, 2015.). In 2019, the Colombian authorities seized 433 tonnes of cocaine (Tons of cocaine..., 2020): however, it is not known exactly how much of the drug was produced in the country and how much was then transported for sale on international markets. In May 2019, for example, Ukrainian customs officers

detained a large consignment of cocaine in the Odesa port of Pivdennyi, which arrived in Ukraine from Colombia: identifying the cargo as "potentially high risk for possible drug trafficking", law enforcement officers initiated the selection of the necessary samples. Interestingly, the drugs were placed in containers with paints and varnishes; therefore, it was impossible to establish the contents of the cargo either visually or with the help of express analysers and dogs. As the total weight of the seized cargo was almost 19.5 tons, the Ukrainian State Fiscal Service (SFS) said that the number of pure drugs that criminals then planned to extract from building materials in the laboratory could be considered one of the record consignments of cocaine ever imported to Ukraine. (Odesa customs officers..., 2019).

Taking into account that Colombia and Ukraine both suffer from the rapid growth of illicit drug trafficking and should "provide special enforcement measures to reduce illicit cultivation, production and trafficking of drugs, and the diversion of chemical precursors" as the parties to the United Nations Convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (1988), these two states can take joint efforts to combat drug trafficking which is a global issue that affects both Europe and Latin America nowadays. In the mid-1990s, the countries faced the problem of selling the Ukrainian-designed planes to drug traffickers in Colombia. However, the state-owned "ANTONOV" COMPANY, the Ukrainian authorities stressed, was found not guilty because it had sold the aircrafts to the intermediaries: as there were more than 200 airline businesses in Colombia, the planes went to criminals without the state authorization (Rempel & Pyes, 1996). Moreover, a lot of Russian criminal syndicates possessing the ANTONOV-32Bs had strong ties with the FARC-EP and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) that were "taxing" the drug trafficking entities in Colombia at that time. The Russians supplied thousands of weapons, ranging from assault rifles to military helicopters and planes, to these narco-insurgent movements and received drugs being further transported to Europe, mostly to Russia and Ukraine.

As Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, combined with the country's deep social and economic crisis since 2014, has destabilised the security sector, official Kyiv is unable to securely guard Ukraine's borders and adequately counter drug trafficking unilaterally. Moreover, in the east of the country there are self-proclaimed pseudo-state formations – the so-called "DPR" and "LPR" – which contribute to the criminalisation of the situation, as they actively interact with transnational criminal syndicates from Russia and Europe. As the latter still have firm relationships with the Colombian drug traffickers, it is only natural that Colombia and Ukraine should promote greater security-related ties to combat this transnational security threat, while exchanging the proper security information and channelling more public resources into law-enforcement trainings and bilateral cooperation in this sphere (Sanchez, 2014).

4. Joint Cooperation Within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Framework

Despite the considerable territorial distance between Colombia and Ukraine and their involvement in different regional security systems (Latin American and European,

respectively), both countries are currently seeking to be considered as important pillars of the security system projected in the Western hemisphere. According to P. Tase (2014), Colombia occupies a strategic position in the Latin American region, since it has a large territory connecting North America with the South America, as well as enormous shores on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. This geostrategic advantage allows the official Bogotá acting as a “gate of entry” for South America in the economic context and positioning itself as an “important hub” in terms of regional defence and security: while boosting its domestic and international military training and capacity building, this state increases efforts to combat drug trafficking networks, terrorism, and other sources of transnational crime. In his turn, S.B. Cohen (1999) believes that states of the Central and Eastern Europe (including Ukraine) form a crucial “gateway region” lying between Europe and Asia, as they act as a link between these geopolitical mega-regions and can restore the balance of power in the world. Therefore, the strategic location of Ukraine transforms it into the key country lying between Russia and the Western world, which can help stabilise the security situation in Europe. Besides that, it holds a significant position due to its entrance to the Black Sea and long borders with the several EU Member States, which allows Ukraine to receive certain logistical and economic dividends and, consequently, increase its geoeconomic importance for both European and Asian partners (Girgin, 2015).

With substantial geopolitical weight and constant external pressure to determine their political priorities in the international arena, both Colombia and Ukraine must confront not only internal but also external security threats. Thus, along with overcoming the effects of internal conflict, the need to ensure national reconciliation, addressing the social and economic situation of internally displaced persons and respect for human rights, Colombia is currently facing a number of new challenges "emerging through globalisation, such as drug trafficking, transnational crime and money laundering, corruption, as well as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons" (Herz, 2010). In the new geopolitical environment, taking into account regional processes and the interests of the democratic world, Ukraine must also address a number of internal problems of socio-economic, political, and humanitarian development related to the need to combat corruption, rule of law, human rights and freedom of speech. However, in the course of confronting Russia's armed aggression in the East and countering the Russian occupation authorities in annexed Crimea, official Kyiv faced a number of new challenges related to the need to build up the Armed Forces, address internally displaced persons and diversify foreign economic ties, which until 2014 were based on relations with Russian counterparties. Still considered by official Moscow as a kind of "backyard" for the implementation of its "priority interests", Ukraine is at the epicentre of the struggle for geopolitical influence between Western countries and Russia. This leads to constant destabilisation of the territory of Ukraine and, accordingly, necessitates the involvement of the state in counteracting cross-border threats faced by its Western partners (combating terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), as well as protection of sea and land borders of the countries of the region.

In such circumstances, the governments, armed forces, and law enforcement agencies of Colombia and Ukraine could promote greater cooperation among themselves to

stand as a united front against the above-mentioned common transnational threats. Thus, the question arises as to their more active participation not only in regional collective security systems operating in Europe and Latin America, but also in global security systems. Since the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has already committed to a “360 degree approach” to deter threats (Statement by NATO..., 2015), Colombia and Ukraine should become major exporters of security and play greater roles in their regions to support the Alliance's efforts in promoting international peace and stability and, therefore, to obtain additional guarantees of their security in the face of regional and global challenges to their freedom, independence, and territorial integrity. As far back as 2000, the US Secretary of State M. Albright distinctly teased out Colombia, Indonesia Nigeria, and Ukraine as the actors to be “a major force for stability and progress in their regions, and each of these countries also is at a critical point along the democratic path” (Vikulina, 2000).

Thus, Colombia's and Ukraine's cooperation with NATO can not only help stabilise the security situation in Europe and Latin America, but also help promote democracy and human rights in countries that still use authoritarian mechanisms of power and support undemocratic transformation on a global scale. In particular, R. Helbig and G. Lasconjarias (2017) stress that NATO's partnership with Colombia could not only extend Alliance's global reach, by including a Pan-American bridge between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in its network of partners, but also be of critical importance at a time when Russia is expanding its influence in Latin America. Since close allies of the official Moscow in Latin America (Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua) and Europe (Armenia, Belarus and Serbia) have been allowing the RF to engage in the regions militarily, from arms sales to the presence of forces as part of military exercises, Colombia and Ukraine should strengthen dialogue and cooperation with NATO because it is “in the interest of the Alliance to support Western-minded nations in their balancing acts against states whose relations with Russia are linked to the Kremlin's global ambitions to expand its sphere of influence”.

As one of the republics of the Soviet Union for almost 70 years, Ukraine was able to establish cooperation with NATO only after gaining independence and the collapse of the bipolar system of international relations in 1991. Starting its dialogue with the Alliance, Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace Programme in 1994. However, during the 1990s, the Ukrainian leadership attempted to pursue a so-called "multi-vector policy" in the international arena, cooperating both with the West and with Russia insofar as it did not provoke objections from the Russian Federation. At the turn of the 2000s, NATO's attention was focused on resolving the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq; thus, Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration was not a priority for the Alliance, especially since Putin came to power in Russia in 1999 and clearly outlined the scope of "top-priority interests" of Russia and its views on the further development of the Ukrainian state. Accordingly, only after the change of power and a number of democratic transformations in Ukraine, carried out after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, as well as after the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of Russia's armed aggression in eastern Ukraine in 2014, “NATO adopted a firm position in full support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders” and

even added Ukraine to the list of the “Enhanced Opportunity Partners”, that made particularly significant contributions to NATO operations and other Alliance objectives under the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, on 12 June 2020 (Relations with Ukraine..., 2020).

In an effort to clearly outline Ukraine's foreign policy intentions to further expand cooperation with NATO, on February 7, 2019, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine amended the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), stipulating in its text the need to implement the country's strategic course towards full membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. According to the text of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine determines the principles of implementation of the strategic course of the state for full membership of Ukraine in the EU and NATO (Article 85), the President of Ukraine is the guarantor of its implementation (Article 102) and the Cabinet of Ministers ensures the implementation of this strategic course (Article 116). However, being clearly divided for ideological reasons, Ukrainian society still does not fully support such a policy of the authorities: the presence of Russian armed groups on the territory of Ukraine, as well as active propaganda of Panslavism (unity of all Slavs in the world under the auspices of Russia) among the Ukrainian population on the part of Russian propagandists significantly complicates the movement of the state to NATO. Moreover, some of the Ukrainian political forces in power still support the idea of unity with Russia and pursue a policy of destabilising society from within in order to eliminate the possibility of developing a common monolithic position of the population on Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Despite the fact that Colombia has a “long history of contributing to international stability operations, from the Korean War to various United Nations missions in the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean” (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017), its steps towards rapprochement with NATO and participation in Alliance-led operations often have a fair number of critics within the society and some political forces. Given the government's long internal confrontation with the FARC-EP and the ELN and the need to address a number of domestic issues, Colombia began its rapprochement with NATO by signing the Security of Information Agreement (2013). Despite the fact that the document only sets the basis for NATO and Colombia to explore future cooperation and consultation in areas of common interest, a few nations like Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela expressed a high level of concern and declared that the Brussels – Bogotá accord would make Colombia a “NATO beachhead” within Latin America (Sanchez, 2014). Moreover, the country's rapprochement with the Alliance is often opposed by the Colombian opposition, which seeks to manipulate the issue in an effort to gain political support among the population and gain some power dividends. In this regard, NATO has not formally recognised Colombia as its partner inside the Alliance's traditional partnership frameworks but has included it into the list of countries beyond the Euro-Atlantic area – often referred to as “Partners across the Globe” – with which NATO is developing relations (Relations with Colombia, 2018). Together with other global counterparts (namely Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan), Colombia can participate in different NATO-run activities, however these issues should be considered by Allies on a case-by-case basis.

The successful exchange of information between Colombia and NATO served as a trust building measure while constructing closer relations between the parties and working towards common strategic goals. In May 2017, NATO signed the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme with Colombia which opened access to the full range of cooperative activities and allowed the parties developing common approaches to global security challenges such as cyber security, maritime security, and terrorism and its links to organised crime; supporting peace and security efforts, including human security; and building the capacities and capabilities of the Colombian armed forces (Relations with Colombia, 2018). The move was preceded by a rapprochement of partners in a number of areas of mutual interest: it was the implementation of the Alliance's global initiatives that allowed Colombia and Ukraine to join forces in tackling global challenges and threats under NATO's umbrella. Since 2013, Colombia and Ukraine, together with other NATO partners, have implemented the Building Integrity Programme which had provided practical assistance and advice for strengthening defence institutions, as the latter should have ensured transparency and accountability of their activities under democratic control. Within the framework of the NATO Building Integrity Policy, which was endorsed at the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, and the Building Integrity Action Plan, which was agreed in December 2016, the Alliance provides the two countries with diagnostic tools and tailored support to reduce the risk of corruption and “to promote good governance and implement the principles of integrity, transparency and accountability, in accordance with international norms and practices established for the defence and related security sector”, that is “fundamental to stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond, and is essential for international security cooperation” (Building Integrity, 2021). So, Colombia and Ukraine are simultaneously contributing to the realization of the three core NATO tasks: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.

From 17 August 2009 to 15 December 2016, the Alliance conducted the Operation Ocean Shield focused on at-sea counter-piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden, off the Horn of Africa and in the Indian Ocean. In order to protect vessels and to help increasing the general level of security in the region, Australia, Colombia, New Zealand and Ukraine became the NATO partner countries contributing to the Operation. In particular, Ukraine deployed its Frigate UPS (United Parcel Service) Hetman Sahaidachnyi to deter and disrupt pirate attacks in the region in 2013 (Counter-piracy operations..., 2016). Colombia sent the Ocean Patrol Vessel (OPV) ARC 7 de Agosto to undertake the counter-piracy training with the NATO partners and Member States near the Horn of Africa in 2015. Accordingly, Colombia and Ukraine managed not only to expand the practical experience of conducting military operations on the water to manage seaborne terrorism, but also to expand the possibilities of their cooperation with NATO in the maritime domain to strengthen naval interoperability and information-sharing. At present, such experience is especially important in the context of achieving regional stability in both Europe and Latin America, as Russia's engagement in the regions “can be regarded as a revitalization of Cold War partnerships to counter US leadership across the Americas, and even in reaction to NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe” (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017).

Thus, after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation, Ukraine faced problems with the passage of ships through the Kerch Strait from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, as this strait is now controlled by Russia. Due to the Kremlin's conduct contrary to international maritime law, NATO has strengthened its presence on land, sea and in the airspace of the Black Sea region by increasing air patrols and the presence of Allied naval vessels in waters of the Black Sea. On 15 March 2019, Colombia's International Demining Centre (CIDES) became the 34th element of the network of NATO Partnership Training and Education Centres (PTEC). Today, Colombia and Ukraine have the opportunity to contribute to the development of viable, efficient and resilient defence institutions in the countries across the globe: CIDES will provide the education and training of personnel from NATO Member States and partners in the crucial area of humanitarian and military demining (Colombia's demining centre..., 2019) and the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre (IPSC) (2016), established in Ukraine in 2007, will continue helping in the training of personnel from the foreign state military units which provide forces to peacekeeping missions and in the fight against terrorism.

As a result, by taking part in joint military cooperation activities, multinational NATO-led exercises, as well as peacekeeping operations and missions, Colombia and Ukraine will be able not only to improve their image in the international arena, but also to strengthen their bilateral dialogue and cooperation to address security challenges in a number of areas of shared concern. The two countries are still carrying the image of unstable, conflict-hit areas that need to reorganise their armed forces and political landscape to overcome a number of problems related to internal and external security, organised crime, drug trafficking, internal displacement and trafficking in human beings, human rights, and infrastructure and institutional capacity. Thus, NATO could use the experience of transformation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to assist Colombia in the reorganization of its military and law-enforcement structures to overcome the above-mentioned issues, as the official Bogotá stands ready to implement all NATO standards. Colombia could also “benefit from gaining further experience in multinational operations and assistance in building capacity for humanitarian aid and disaster relief, in addition to maintaining readiness in peacetime” (Helbig & Lasconjarias, 2017). Ukraine, in its turn, could acquire the Colombian skills in air policing, landmine clearing, fighting organised crime, as well as experience in peaceful conflict resolution and further social reconciliation. Dealing with the increased Russian footprint in all regions of the world, NATO will cooperate with Colombia and Ukraine, as these countries have a strong geostrategic position and have proven that they can act as credible partners in the global fight against transnational threats. In the case of these two countries, the key question is the direction in which they choose to orient themselves: their decisions on the further cooperation with NATO should be free of pressure from any outside party, as the Alliance offers “partnership without imposition, and assistance with reforms without any requirement for political fealty” (Appathurai, 2014). Surely, Colombia and Ukraine should meet all the NATO standards when it comes to democracy and justice, but even in the process of carrying out appropriate reforms that will expand further cooperation with this organisation, the Alliance must have a part to play.

With the most synergies in the economic sphere, Colombia and Ukraine should focus on increasing mutual trade through the establishment of sustainable mutually beneficial trade and economic ties; deepening the economic presence, in particular through the establishment of trade and economic missions in Colombia and Ukraine, respectively; as well as expanding the range of exports and imports of goods and services in the conduct of economic transactions in practice. Representatives of the government of both countries could ensure their rapprochement through targeted advertising campaigns (e.g., advertising forums, exhibitions and road shows), as well as active cooperation of analytical and information centres to support and support business abroad. In addition, Colombia and Ukraine could cooperate to establish joint ventures to work on technology cycles developed and implemented in their territories that ensure the production of goods and services that are strategically important to both countries (e.g., military-industrial sector products or information technology). If this idea is successfully implemented, business circles of the countries would be capable of establishing industrial cooperation under the scheme "raw materials – production – joint sales in third country markets", which would strengthen the influence and cooperation of countries at the global level. To this end, the Colombian and Ukrainian authorities could launch permanent sea and air freight lines, as well as air passenger services, based on the use of the country's existing transport infrastructure and the production of new means of transport.

Accordingly, representatives of the business community and the general public could be involved in deepening the bilateral dialogue between Colombia and Ukraine, creating permanent business associations and NGOs. The latter could contribute to the rapprochement of societies of states in practice, leading discussions on topics relevant to states at some point in time. Furthermore, exchanges of students and teachers should be intensified, transferring the existing experience in the implementation of national and international educational programmes. In addition, such activities would contribute to the mutual dissemination of national cultural heritage and their history, while reducing the significance of negative content about Ukraine, which is distributed in Latin America by Russian media such as Sputnik or Russia Today (RT), which broadcast content in Spanish and Portuguese languages. Admittedly, during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Colombia and Ukraine could also cooperate in the field of healthcare, cooperating in combating the spread of the disease, as well as tuberculosis, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and other dangerous diseases. To this end, scientists from both countries could be involved in basic research and exchange of experience gained during the difficult confrontation with epidemics.

5. Conclusions

Given the intensity of relations between Colombia and Ukraine at the present stage, as well as the areas of cooperation in which countries could cooperate, benefiting from such cooperation, it should be noted that for this, first of all, appropriate political and legal conditions must be established. The leaders of both countries express the political will to establish bilateral cooperation, but historically its absence has greatly complicated the process of rapprochement and its intensity. Accordingly, the

authorities of the two states must now implement a number of administrative measures that would help to establish cooperation between these actors in international relations.

First of all, Colombia and Ukraine must create the preconditions for cooperation and mutual support in the international arena through clearer coordination of their positions on world political and economic processes and approaches to solving existing world problems by introducing a system of regular bilateral and multilateral political consultations at various levels. In addition, states should improve the legal framework of bilateral cooperation, as the limited number of documents governing their relations hinders the development of cooperation between states and deprives them of the opportunity to create appropriate practical mechanisms for cooperation.

As a result, both Colombia and Ukraine currently face a number of problems in various spheres of public life, which countries could solve by working on them together. But even their limited cooperation suggests the substantial mutual interest of countries in cooperation. In principle, the proposed steps to establish bilateral cooperation should be effective, but it will take time. However, having the political will to deepen relations, the leadership of both countries is capable of ensuring this process, because, evidently, cooperation between Colombia and Ukraine is important for regional international relations in Europe and North America and for the system of cooperation in the world in general.

Authorship

All the authors contributed equally to the study. N.F.S. was responsible for overall project supervision. I.A.T. and A.P.S. conceptualized and designed the study.

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