

A sacred obligation

As we celebrate 135 years of diplomatic relations between Romania and the United States, let me pause for a moment to appreciate the extraordinary partnership the two nations have today.

I have experienced it firsthand. I was the First Secretary at the Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., when Romania was invited to join NATO. My four years there were a very special time in U.S.-Romanian diplomacy.

We can all agree that Romania looks to the United States for peace and security through NATO. Defense is one area where Romania can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with America. Perhaps no one has spoken of that bond between the two nations better than U.S. Vice President Joe Biden did in May 2014.

“America’s commitment to collective defense under Article 5 of NATO is a sacred obligation in our view – a sacred obligation not just for now, but for all time,” Biden said in addressing participants in the joint U.S.-Romanian Carpathian Spring military exercises. Rarely do we hear world leaders speak of “sacred obligations.”

The word “sacred” is most frequently used in religious contexts as a synonym for “holy.” Used in a secular context, it means “highly valued,” “important” and “worthy of great respect.” Let’s focus on the secular application as Biden used it.

If being allies under NATO confers a sacred obligation to defend each other, can we have a sacred responsibility on all other aspects of our partnership? I dare say that we can.

Biden offered other meaningful assurances. “You can count on us. Period,” he said. “We do what we say, and we mean what we say,” he said in his Bucharest speech 14 months ago.

Every Romanian should take great comfort in Biden’s words. And the pledge



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he made should be reciprocal, not just on a governmental level but also within the private sector. Our partnership with the United States now grows best where both nations need it the most – at the commercial level. Business leaders need to know that they can count on the support of central and local Romanian governmental leaders as well as Romania’s people and organizations. They need that assurance to have the confidence to persuade American investors that Romania is open for business and to establish a presence here.

It is fundamental that Romania grasps this point. If the highest echelon of American leadership tells us that Washington values our relationship highly, that it is important and worthy of respect, Bucharest needs to show that the feeling is mutual, and that Romania is willing to back its words with actions.

Romanians living in the United States and elsewhere play a vital role in helping foster a partnership, founded

in trust, between the two nations. They should make their voices heard within the American political framework and influence Congress to broaden U.S. support for Romania beyond defense.

Yes, it’s a challenge, but it’s an achievable challenge worthy of the effort.

It will take time, too, as all great endeavors do, but there is value in that. Day by day, Romanians and Americans of good will from all callings and stations in life can add to the growing partnership between our nations in education, business, law, culture, science and emerging technologies – even pursuits not yet envisioned. They can watch with satisfaction as this relationship grows, flowers and yields fruit.

As a Romanian who has been educated in the United States and who has lived and worked in both nations, I see a unique and fleeting moment when momentum and opportunity converge.

Let’s seize it.

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