

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE ROMANIAN AND FRENCH MEDIA ETHICS CODES

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ABSTRACT. The current research, part of a larger study pertaining to the legal and ethical aspects of media coverage of presidential couples in France and Romania, lays the foundation for the qualitative analysis of the media representation of presidential couples' private lives. For this purpose, the article proposes an in-depth analysis of the relevant ethical framework in both Romania and France, as well as a comparison between notions and codes in order to identify main points of similarity and differences.

Keywords: public interest, intrusion into privacy, public image, fundamental duty of the journalist

The role of media self-regulation

In today's media institutions, that are more and more soulless, where young practitioners feel that their role isn't anything more than an interchangeable cog in the collective machine, it is hard to be emphatic and idealistic².

The balance between mass-media and private life is a present day problem in society, the complexity of the problem resulting from new technologies, from the commercial practices of the press and from communication policies. This is why the implementation of deontological and ethical codes was necessary for the development

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² Frank Deaver, *Etica în mass-media*, Editura Silex, București, 2004, p. 25.

of self-regulatory mechanism throughout the media sector, with the aim to ensure a more cohesive method of maintaining and improving ethical standards, to show a genuine responsibility towards the public and to protect the principles and practices of freedom of speech.

The deontological and ethical codes differ, depending on the country, as they are influenced by press legislation. Many times, they are not in accordance with the norms set by the state. For example, respect for an individual may lead to abstinence from taking a picture or writing an article, even when the law does not prohibit it. The majority of ethical codes in existence focus on certain principles: truth and precision, independence, correctness and impartiality, rigor and accuracy, respect and humanity, responsibility, protection of sources, freedom of information.

Self-regulation requires the implementation and consolidation of certain norms, with the final goal of improving the services offered to consumers, beneficiaries, în the case of mass-media, the general public. Self-regulation is maintained by jointly assuming, by the members of the build, the ethical and deontological values on which professionalism is built upon.

Self-regulation within mass-media can be efficient only within a legal environment that strongly supports the fundamental right that guarantees freedom of speech and access to information. The fundamental aims of the self-regulation is to offer protection to the members of the journalistic guild and to have the members themselves take responsibility in front of the media community and the institution to take responsibility in front of the public. The deontological codes that establish the standards that the members much respect do not have to be elaborated in accordance with national law, they must appease the journalists and the media organizations³. In this way, deontology and ethics help protect journalists from propaganda maneuvers, promotional and disinformation tactics.

³ Federația Internațională a Jurnaliștilor, *Libertate și responsabilitate: protejarea libertății de exprimare prin autoreglementarea presei. ARTICLE 19, Campania globală pentru libertatea de exprimare*, 2005, p. 4.

At the same time, ethical codes for mass communication are preserved. According to Dr. Frank Deaver⁴, it is often said that „if I am an ethical person, I don't need a code that defines my actions; if I am a person who lacks ethics, my actions will not be subject to any code of any kind.” However, despite this, in recent years there has been a proliferation of deontological codes in mass-media, from those with international circulation or national circulation, adopted by members of organizations from the communication's field, to those adopted at local levels, by mass-media institutions and agencies.

Ethics codes represent a declaration of the beliefs, principles and acceptable behaviors, made by individuals with a common profession. An important characteristic of any ethics code is that it must not be reinforced through the justice system. It does not represent a code elaborated by a legislative body and it can't be brought to court, however, in some professional groups, there may exist an internal punitive procedure for those who do not respect the codes. However, in most cases, those who do not respect the codes are often ignored or, at best, simply criticized.

In the following, I will examine the ethical regulations in Romania and in France.

Romanian media ethics regulation pertaining to privacy and public image of presidential candidates

Discussions regarding the ethics and self-regulation of the Romanian press have appeared as a result of several legislative initiatives and incidents in the last years, where it became obvious that the political elites had a tendency to control mass-media. The lack of respect for the free press and independence was shown in numerous cases where pressures were applied even on the management of private and public media institutions⁵.

⁴ Frank Deaver, *Etica în mass-media*, Editura Silex, București, 2004, p. 56.

⁵ Federația Internațională a Jurnaliștilor, *Libertate și responsabilitate: protejarea libertății de exprimare prin autoreglementarea presei. ARTICLE 19, Campania globală pentru libertatea de exprimare*, 2005, p. 41.

The relationship between journalism and society is ultimately the responsibility of the state, the journalist being the individual that exerts his right to freedom of speech and whose primary income source is his journalistic activity, be it as an employee or a freelancer, regardless of the medium (online, written press, audiovisual, etc.).

In Romania, the **Media Organizations' Convention** is responsible for ethical and deontological regulation. It was founded in 2001, under the guise of an informal group of 35 professional associations, in order to facilitate the implementation of common goals in a variety of subjects, such as calumny, protection of sources and the right to reply, on behalf of the journalistic community. The Center for Independent Journalism (Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent), The Press Watch Agency (Agenția de Monitorizare a Presei) and two NGOs maintain the secretariat and, to an extent, the management of the Media Organizations Convention, despite them not being members of the convention.

The current **Unique Code of Ethics** for mass-media was elaborated in 2009 by representatives of the associations and institutions, member organizations of the Media Organizations Convention (non-governmental mass-media organizations; syndicates; professional organizations; employers; members of public authority; representatives of academic fields, of the public), within confines of a meeting organized by The Center for Independent Journalism, by ActiveWatch – The Press Watch Agency and by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung -Media Program, with the title “Media Self-Regulation– Work Session III”. Also during this meeting, it was decided that a Group for Good Journalistic Practices should be founded, group that tried to ally all mass-media forces, from journalists and investors, to analysts and public, with the aim of reporting misconducts of deontological nature that journalists and press companies are responsible for by promoting educational programs in the field of journalistic ethics and media consumption.

The fundamental ethics problem of the mass-media system is the quantification of the responsibility of each part, thus identifying, in this case, three decision-making levels: the journalist (individual, the employee within media), the editorial staff he is a part of (viewed as a professional and collegiate structure) and the employer, as custodial entity.

The fundamental principles that lay at the foundation of the ethics code are: respect for the individual, veracity of information, loyalty (towards the public, towards the media institution, towards the journalistic community). Unlike legal norms, ethic principals are not absolute, they are simply suggestions, they ensure unity and coherence.

The Deontological Code, as an integral part of the Journalist's State, defines the role, rights and obligations of the journalists and what counts as professionalism. According to the code - "the journalist the individual that collects, takes pictures, records, redacts, edits and publishes information regarding local, national, international events that may concern the public, for the purpose of public dissemination, earning the majority of his pay from these endeavors."⁶

The stipulations regarding professionalism addresses the proper behavior concerning crime (innocent until proven guilty), respect for privacy, respect for minors, victims of accidents, as well as the journalists obligation to avoid discrimination of any kind, to separate facts from opinions, to try and present the view point of all those involved and to keep sources confidential. At the same time, the code makes mentions regarding corruption and conflict of interest, placing the right to reply solely on the journalist, recommending the immediate correction of errors and the publishing of a public apology when necessary.

A journalist's rights, as mentioned by this code, include the right to invoke the conscience clause that means the right to refuse any journalistic activity that is against the journalist's own principles or against ethical and deontological principles. At the same time, the journalist's right to refuse to apply for advertising contracts for the media institution he is working at is also mentioned.

However, the code does not present these stipulations in detail. The problem of inaccuracy and improper defining of these terms must be raised. We will explore the stipulations from the code relevant to the subject matter.

⁶ Convenția Organizațiilor de Media, *Cod Deontologic Unic*, 2009, at http://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2009-10-25-6353156-0-codul-deontologic-unic.pdf.

Article 5 deals with honesty, stipulating that: “5.1. The journalist that intentionally distorts information, that makes baseless accusations, plagiarizes, uses pictures or audio-video recordings without consent or slanders, commits professional deviations of the highest order”.

Thus, honesty represents a pillar of ethics when redacting journalistic material.

The Unique Code of Ethics contains, in article 6, stipulations regarding fact checking: “6.1. The journalist will undergo reasonable procedures to fact check before publishing. False information or facts that the journalist has valid reasons to believe they are fake will not be published”. We corroborate this with the following article, that covers rectifying errors: “7.1. The journalist has the responsibility to promptly correct any significant error that may appear in the publish works”, “7.2. The right to reply is granted when it is considered to be justified and reasonable. The right to reply must be published under similar conditions as the journalistic work in question, in the shortest time possible. The right to reply may be requested within 30 calendar days from the publication of the journalistic product”.

One can see that the terms used are not defined at all (for example: “reasonable procedures”, “false information”, “valid reasons”, “justified and reasonable”, “similar conditions”, “in the shortest time possible”), the code being very vague and loose.

The 9th article of the code contains stipulations regarding privacy. As such - “9.1. The journalist must respect privacy and the dignity of individuals (including aspects dealing with family, residence and correspondence). 9.2 Violation of privacy is acceptable only when public interest outweighs public image. In such cases, the journalist is allowed to publicly present facts and information about private matters”. In this article, uncertainty arises regarding justified public interested and regarding reasonable procedures when dealing with violation of privacy.

However, as researchers pointed out in a similar study⁷, the 2004 version of the Code of Ethics defines the "public interest" in the preamble as "any matter affecting the existence of the community"⁸ and clarifies that it is not limited to be political aspects but may also include any other circumstance which could be of any interest to the community. The preamble includes examples of what is considered "of major public interest": the manner in which the government, the authorities, the public institutions and any entities that use public funds act and function as well critique brought against a particular administration of power and of public services. Following the same principle, the preamble stipulates that "all words spoken, actions, omissions or gestures made by the dignitaries, politicians and other public officials with relation to the fulfilling of their duties are of major public interest."⁹

Within the same Preamble, Jurău and Ștefănel¹⁰ identify two hard limits of the notion of "public interest" that are clearly drawn: one regarding the extend of the acceptable intrusion into privacy and its motivation, namely a politicians private life can be considered of major public interest only when they are relevant to the fulfilling of their duties, and other one considering the protection of other fundamental rights, that stipulated that "when there is no clear public at stake, freedom of speech can only be limited by the interest of protecting another fundamental right."¹¹. Thus, the researchers underline¹² the valuable clarifications brought by the Preamble of the 2004 version of the Code of Ethics regarding the necessity of a clear

⁷ Ana – Iuliana Ștefănel, Sînziana Jurău, (Un)ethically Reporting the Case of Arrested Public Officials. A case study in *Studia UBB Ephemerides* 2/2016, p. 110.

⁸ Code of Press Ethics, established by the member organizations of the Media Organizations Convention and adopted in 2004.

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ Ana – Iuliana Ștefănel, Sînziana Jurău, (Un)ethically Reporting the Case of Arrested Public Officials. A case study in *Studia UBB Ephemerides* 2/2016, p. 110-111

¹¹ Code of Press Ethics, established by the member organizations of the Media Organizations Convention and adopted in 2004.

¹² Ana – Iuliana Ștefănel, Sînziana Jurău, (Un)ethically Reporting the Case of Arrested Public Officials. A case study in *Studia UBB Ephemerides* 2/2016, p. 111

link between the exercise of the public function and the politicians' private life, praising them for the clarity and precision with which they set the reasonable limits for intrusion into privacy of public figures.

Even if the Deontological Code adopted by the Media Organizations' Convention is considered to be the first step towards the establishment of a self-regulation system, it only represent the interests and values of media owners and is irrelevant to daily journalistic work. The development of a professional conscience among the journalistic communities is hindered by the absence of powerful associations.

The Deontological Code will not be respected at a large scale, needing a formal organization to implement it. Although managers ask their employees to sign that they will respect the Code, there is no system to implement it and no decisions regarding this have ever been made public.

There are other associations within Romania that have their own ethics code. One such example is the Romanian Press Club that has a code entitled **The Deontological Code of the Journalist**.

The Romanian Press Club is an apolitical non-governmental association, with the goal of creating "the general organizational framework needed to promote the professional, economic and legislative interests of its members, in order to develop institutionalized relations with state authorities, society and with other similar organizations from within the country and from abroad, in order to create activities and initiatives that promote professionalism, the moral values of the journalist and the social responsibility of this profession¹³".

Among the organizational principles of The Romanian Press Club what stand out are freedom of association, professional solidarity, deontology of the press and the lawfulness of actions and activities, while taking into consideration the recommendations and regulations of European journalism and press deontology institutions. "Any press society, legal founded form of association and any individual from within the country may become a member of The Romanian

¹³ Statutul Asociației *Clubul Român de Presă*, at <http://clubulromandepresa.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/statut.pdf>, Art. 2 alin. (1).

Press Club¹⁴. As such, initially there were journalists who were members of the club. The members of the association include media companies such as: Adevărul S.A.", „Agenția Națională de Presă AGERPRESS", „Societatea Română de Televiziune", „Societatea Română de Radio-difuziune", „PRO TV S.A.", „MEDIAFAX S.A.", „TV Antena 1 S.A." etc."

French media ethics regulation pertaining to privacy and public image of presidential candidates

One of the oldest deontological documents, entitled *Charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français*¹⁵ (*Charter of the professional duties of the French journalists*), was elaborated in France in 1918 and revised in 1938 by the National Syndicate of Journalists. Today, this document is a point of reference for the development and practice of journalism, both on French soil and in Europe. This ethics code, that was elaborated in a period of great tension, covered the modalities and assurances the press could engage in the act of power through a truthful and honest information of the public.

The supreme values mentioned in the code, freedom of speech and the citizen's right to truthful information, were a result of the influences exerted by the concepts of free press, democratic orientation, which were a positive influence on the early journalistic codes. We may draw our attention to the bibliographic reference from 1789, "The Declaration of Human Rights and of the Citizen", art. 11, which says that: "... Any citizen may freely speak, write and print as long as he takes responsibility for the consequences of this freedom, in cases clearly defined by the law."

¹⁴ *Idem.*, Art. 7 alin. (1)

¹⁵ Syndicat national des journalistes, *Charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français*, at https://mediasdeontologiedz.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/8_7_charte_devoirs_prof_journaliste_1918_france1.pdf.

The principles of this French code include responsibility, dignity in profession and freedom of communication, integration, response and honesty. It is stipulated in the code that the journalist must take responsibility for everything he writes (“Un journaliste digne de ce nom prend la responsabilité de tous ses écrits, même anonymes”¹⁶), must avoid calumny, groundless accusations, lying („tient la calomnie, les accusations sans preuves, l’altération des documents, la déformation des faits, le mensonge, pour les plus graves fautes professionnelles”¹⁷); must not accept money from various organizations („ne touche pas d’argent dans un service public ou une entreprise privée où sa qualité de journaliste, ses influences, ses relations seraient susceptibles d’être exploitées”¹⁸); must not plagiarize („ne commet aucun plagiat, cite les confrères dont il reproduit un texte quelconque”¹⁹); must not resort to illegal means of obtaining information („s’interdit d’invoquer un titre ou une qualité imaginaires, d’user de moyens déloyaux pour obtenir une information ou surprendre la bonne foi de quiconque”²⁰). In regards to dignity in profession, the code stipulates that the journalist will not sign articles that contain commercial or financial advertising²¹; the journalist will accept undertakings that conform with dignity in profession²²; will not request to take his

¹⁶ A journalist worthy of this title will take responsibility for all his work, including those unsigned.

¹⁷ Calumny, accusations without proof, doctoring of documents, distorting facts and lying are considered to be among the worse professional deeds one can make.

¹⁸ He will not accept / collect money from a public service or enterprise, where his status as a journalist, influences or professional relations are susceptible to exploitation.

¹⁹ He will never plagiarize, he will cite his brethren from which he reproduced the text, whoever he might be.

²⁰ It is forbidden to invoke an imaginary title or quality, to resort to dishonest means to obtain information or to deceive one's good faith.

²¹ Syndicat national des journalistes, *Charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français*, at https://mediasdeontologiedz.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/8_7_charte_devoirs_prof_journaliste_1918_france1.pdf. *Ne signe pas de son nom des articles de réclame commerciale ou financière.*

²² *Ibidem*, *n'accepte que des missions compatibles avec la dignité professionnelle.*

colleague's place and will not cause his relegation by offering to work in worse conditions²³.

In regards to freedom of speech, the journalist will not use the free press for personal use²⁴, will not reveal professional secrets²⁵, will have as a fundamental principle honesty in the publication of his works²⁶.

It is worth mentioning that the principles of the 1918 French code can be found in the majority of national profession regulations, as well as in international ones. Even if "La charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français" is a baseline document in regards to self-regulation of the French press, this code concerns only members of the National Syndicate of French Journalists and those who have joined it, while at the same time being a deontologic landmark in the French area.

A connection at a conceptual level with the previous regulations, including the 1918 code, is *Carta Munchen*, entitled *La déclaration des devoirs et des droits des journalistes*²⁷ (*The Declaration of a Journalist's Rights and Obligations*), adopted by the European Federation of Journalists in 1971. The national law considered it an ethics code, due to its authoritarian nature.

The document emphasizes the journalists' and their employees' obligations, stretching over 10 articles, in relation to their rights, stipulated in just 5 articles. The reference points remain the same – freedom of information and truth – while complementing them with the duty of respect for truth, whatever the consequences; publication of information from known sources; rectifying published information that was proven to be inaccurate. At the same time, it guarantees unrestricted access to sources, the limits of editorial subordination

²³ *Ibidem*, ne sollicite pas la place d'un confrère, ni ne provoque son renvoi en offrant de travailler à des conditions inférieures.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, n'use pas de la liberté de la presse dans une intention intéressée.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, garde le secret professionnel.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, tient le scrupule et le souci de la justice pour des règles premières.

²⁷ Fédération européenne des journalistes, *La Déclaration des devoirs et des droits des journalistes*, Munich, 1971.

and the journalist's right to a personal contract are established, "that ensure his moral and financial security... as well as an adequate remuneration for his role in society and sufficient to guarantee his financial independence."

The Charter of Munich stipulates, from the beginning, that "the right to information, freedom of speech and freedom of criticism are fundamental liberties of every human being²⁸", and that "the journalist's responsibility in regards to the public supersedes any other responsibility, especially in regards to employers and public authorities²⁹".

The deontology and ethics of French journalism represent a more pragmatic development and not as restrictive as other states, such as Great Britain or the United States of America, which is an antithesis to the rationalism of French culture. The majority of journalists agree that deontology is a personal matter or, at best, a problem of each individual editorial.

Professionals reject certain initiatives that may impose deontology, claiming that it is an affront to the free press. Thus a paradox is created: although the means of communications dominate our lives, it monitors and influences them, them being for us a fundamental public service, journalists reluctantly agree, or even reject sometimes the idea of morality and deontology when practicing the profession.

Despite the antagonistic position occupied by the profession against a form of self-regulation, many intellectuals and mass-media experts support the idea, but up until the present there have been no palpable effects.

However, within the confines of self-regulation at company level, many measures were taken. Ethics codes were elaborated in the press, both at regional and national level.

²⁸ *Ibidem. Le droit à l'information, à la libre expression et à la critique est une des libertés fondamentales de tout être humain.*

²⁹ *Ibidem. La responsabilité des journalistes vis-à-vis du public prime toute autre responsabilité, en particulier à l'égard de leurs employeurs et des pouvoirs publics.*

Such a deontological initiative was the French daily „Le Monde”, published in 2002 a collection of professional and deontology norms, it being considered to be an attempt at coming clean with the aim of consolidating the relationship between the daily and its readers. The norms implement follow the principles of The Charter of Munich, without mentioning this fact, joined by principles specific to the written press.

Another example is the “20 minutes” newspaper, which published its ethics code in the same year, the ethics code having principles from both „Charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français” as well as from The Charter of Munich. At the same time, it also stipulated rules of engagement within the confines of the company, about work outside the editorial, about gifts, trips and conflicts of interest.

Another attempt at an ethics code was made in 1994 by the television channel TF1. The code entitled “18 Ethical Principles for TV Journalists” included concrete principles, focused on respect for the viewer: impartiality, objectivity, tact when presenting the material, respect for privacy, confidentiality of sources, presumption of innocence, prohibition of financial offers for certain actions.

Although these initiatives were appreciated within French society, they did not manage to change the deontological landscape, it continuing to be underestimated by mass-media.

The editorial policies and political and commercial pressures have a direct effect on journalistic materials and limit the public’s right at honest, complete, pluralist and independent information. As such, the importance of ethics and deontology within the profession is pronounced, it laying at the foundation of credibility.

Similarities and differences between the Romanian and the French media ethics provisions

In the following, I will compare the ethical and deontological landscape of Romania to that of France, more exactly, the Unique Code of Ethics, adopted by the Media Organizations’ Convention, and Charte

des devoirs professionnels des journalistes, adopted by the National Syndicate of Journalists.

Firstly, I will analyze how each code defines responsibility towards the public. The veracity of the information provided is stipulated in both the French and Romanian code. Both contain mentions regarding truthfulness, honesty and accuracy of information and about rectifying mistakes should they occur. Focusing on the sentences regarding truth, I believe both fail to provide meaning and justification: "The role of the journalist is to present the truth", however, what is truth? A series of true facts that, by word of mouth, are never transmitted? "The public has the right to know the truth.; "The public has the right to information": a right that has no basis within any of the codes in question.

The Unique Code of Ethics, in addition, stipulates diversity and plurality of information, the objective nature of this information, the need to fact-check the authenticity of the events and the sources. If we are to focus only on the clarity of information, a concept stipulated by both codes, the French code emphasizes the prohibition of selective or erroneous narratives, unlike the national code that emphasizes the divide between facts and opinions which is not mentioned in the French code. With regards to protecting public rights, only the Romanian code stipulates the duty of supervision over the powers of the state; freedom of speech, commentary and critique and respect for human rights and dignity. Both codes cover responsibility on the matter of forming public opinion. As such, the French code stipulates that the journalist bears responsibility for everything published unlike the Romanian code that stipulates that discrimination based on race, sex, religion, etc. is forbidden; forbids the instigation of crime or violence and promotes common values.

The second principle of ethics and deontology in journalism is responsibility for sources and references, a principle stipulated both by the Unique Code of Ethics and by the Charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français. This principle refers to obtaining and presenting information and the integrity of the sources. As far as the French

ethics code is concerned, in regards to obtaining and presenting information, it stipulates that the basis for veracity is obtaining information from various sources; respecting copyright and citation laws; it forbids calumny and baseless accusations. Apart from these principles, the Romanian code also mentions the right to reply. Thus, it covers the confidentiality of sources; trade secret; special mentions when presenting crimes, accidents, etc.; special mentions when taking interviews with minors, mentally handicapped individuals, etc.; innocence until proven guilty. The French code only mentions trade secret and innocence until proven guilty.

Integrity is the next principle the codes in question define. Both codes cover general rights and prohibitions, such as bribes and other benefits being prohibited, activities that go against ethics. The French code, however, also stipulates that foreigners are prohibited from influencing journalistic work while the Romanian code also stipulates freedom of investigation. Only the Romanian code contains articles that cover protection from public authorities, more exactly combating censorship and trade secrets. The conscience clause, in regards to employers' and public agents' protection, is stipulated by both the French and Romanian code. In regards to the same protection, the Romanian ethics code also mentions the right to refuse work that contradicts other ethics codes; a journalist's copyright; separation between announcements and editorial materials.

The last principle in question regards the protection of status and professional integrity. Both codes emphasize the need to protect the journalist's status, focusing on the special status of the profession and avoidance of conflict of interests, the incompatibility of journalism and other activities. In regards to maintaining solidarity within the confines of the profession, the French code covers both copyright and citation laws, as well as professional solidarity and the laws concerning loyal competition, unlike our national code that covers only copyright and citation laws.

Thus, apart from characteristics specific to each society, religion and culture, for the most part, we find the same fundamental principles.

If we were to examine the differences, every code defines itself in regards to precision. Unlike France, in Romania there is a real concern in regards to adopting a universal code, which generates a tense situation due to various social contexts.

According to Dr. Frank Deaver³⁰, in order to serve the interests of mass-media's public, practitioners must help the members of the public to understand the variety of divergent messages that are circulating haphazardly on the waves or I written press. To achieve this, the messenger must take serious note of the world around him to understand, as best as possible, the systems that make it work so that he may properly choose the position her wishes to take when communicating the message.

The majority of codes, especially the ones analyzed thus far, have vague rules that are never set in stone. Deontology is expressed at two levels: fundamental and ordinary. The role of the means of communication in society must be inoculated, discussed and integrated over a large period of time. No one code can cover for all situations. Often times, common sense, or a "moral sense" born from contemplation, must be called upon. Neither one can escape the political and religious tradition of a nation³¹.

Because of their usefulness, the codes require a counterpart to complete them: the deontological education of journalists. Young individuals must be made aware of the situation, then they must be taught how to solve ordinary problems and to adapt to all situations. Thus, journalists must choose, without ideological prejudice, while understanding that they risk drawing the public's hatred.

In conclusion, we may state that the right to privacy represents a juridical concept, based on philosophic, moral and social considerations. The norms that at present define this right can be seen as general outlines for the notion of private life, necessary for creating and preserving a civilized society. Not all aspects of private life have risen to the rank of a

³⁰ Frank Deaver, *Etica în mass media*, Ed. Silex, București, 2010, p. 25.

³¹ C. J. Bertrand, *Deontologia mijloacelor de comunicare*, Institutul European, Iași, 2000, p. 93.

legal guarantee; only those that are considered essential for the development of a free and autonomous individual are accepted as such. Private life is being seen as a condition while the right to privacy represents one of the fundamental rights whose importance have been recognized by society.

These structural elements of the right to privacy that have been analyzed before will help me analyze the media representation of presidential couples' private lives. As we have seen in this study, the right to privacy is based on the balance between the interests of the individual and general interests, being, at the same time, the basis of several ethical and deontological stipulations.

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