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Articles

Review:

Soup kitchens in Cluj-Napoca in 1817

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Rezumat: Marea foamete din Transilvania dintre anii 1813-1817 a avut urmări majore pentru economie și societate. Creșterea numărului de oameni înfometați și consecințele foametei au pretins acțiuni din partea Guberniului din Transilvania și au pus orașele sub mari presiuni. Una din soluțiile pentru asigurarea hranei oamenilor înfometați a fost „supa Rumford". Lucrarea examinează modul în care administrația orașului Cluj-Napoca a încercat să diminueze foametea și discută crearea și modul de operare a „bucătăriilor pentru supă" în Cluj-Napoca în ultimul an al Foametei.

Cuvinte cheie: Cluj-Napoca, foamete, supa Rumford, „bucătărie de supă", Miklós Wesselényi

Abstract: The great famine in Transylvania between 1813 and 1817 had a great effect on the economy and society. The rising number of the starving people and the consequences of the famine demanded actions from the Transylvanian Gubernium and put the municipalities under great pressure. One of the solutions to provide food for the starving people was the Rumford soup. The paper examines the question of how the Cluj-Napoca city administration and the local population tried to curb the famine and discusses the establishment and operation of soup kitchens in Cluj-Napoca in the final year of the famine.

Keywords: Cluj-Napoca, famine, Rumford soup, soup kitchen, Miklós Wesselényi

Since 1813, weather anomalies have repeatedly hit Transylvania, which was already economically burdened by the Napoleonic wars.[1] In the

[1] For details on the 1813 war harvest services and serf services, see: Domokos Teleki, *Az 1817iki ínség és éhhalál Erdélyben*. [Famine and famishment in 1817's Transylvania] *Budapesti Szemle* 6/46–47 (1862), p. 311.; Zsolt Trócsányi, *Az erdélyi parasztság története 1790–1849*. [History of

first two months of 1814, unusually mild temperature were combined with a significant amount of rain, and due to the heat coming in March, agricultural work had to be started early. However, at the end of April, there were several days of snowfall that caused enormous damage to crops. In 1815 and 1816, there was a larger amount of rain than typically in the previous years which caused serious agricultural damage in Transylvania, and as a result, a severe food shortage occurred.[2] Access to the necessary food was made more difficult from January 1817 by the continuous and large increase in the price of grain, which was typical throughout Transylvania.[3] As a result of the famine, emigration started in Transylvania, and the starving people left in large numbers for the neighbouring Hungarian counties, as well as for Wallachia and Moldavia.[4]

Governmental attempts to end the famine before 1817

For the Gubernium, the famine was a double problem. In the initial phase, the measures and decrees were aimed at solving the food shortage, and later, due to the ever-increasing number of beggars, the organization of

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the peasantry in Transylvania 1790–1849.) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965) pp. 29–50. For the situation of serfdom and Transylvanian agriculture see: Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete din Transilvania dintre anii 1813–1817*. (Oradea, Editura Arca, 2007) pp. 89–106.

[2] Sándor Újfalvi, *Emlékiratok* [Memoires], edited by Samu Benkő, Aranka Ugron (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1990) pp. 190–191. Contemporary Transylvanian reports on weather phenomena confirm Sándor Újfalvi's recollections. Antal Réthly: *Időjárási események és elemi csapások Magyarországon 1801–1900-ig* [Weather events and natural disasters in Hungary from 1801 to 1900] (Budapest, Országos Meteorológiai Szolgálat, 1998) pp. 100–190.; Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete*, pp. 77–88.

[3] Teleki, *Az 1817iki* pp. 312–313.

[4] Trócsányi, *Az erdélyi* pp. 183–192. For the demographic datas, see: Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete,* pp. 186–205.; Mátyás Hodgyai: Ínséges évek Biharban 1814 és 1817 között [Years of famine in Bihor between 1814 and 1817] *Történelmi Szemle*, 33/1–2 (1991) pp. 59–69. On the relocation of serfs from Bihor County to Békés County: József Implom: *Olvasókönyv Békés megye történetéhez*. [Reader for the history of Békés County] vol. II. (1695–1848). (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács Művelődésügyi Főosztálya, 1971) pp. 193–194.; László Kósa: Adatok Gyula város művelődéstörténetéhez és történeti néprajzához (1801–1850) [Datas for the cultural history and historical ethnography of the city of Gyula (1801–1850)]. In: László Kósa: *Gyulai dolgozatok*. [Dissertations from Gyula] (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2012) p. 69. Péter Takács made an attempt to reconstruct the migration and death in Szekler Land at the local level. Péter Takács: Adalékok az 1813–1818-as székelyföldi éhínség történetéhez [Supplements to the history of the 1813–1818 famine in Szekler Land]. In: *Emlékkönyv Orosz István 70. születésnapjára*. [Memorial book for István Orosz's 70th birthday] edited by János Angi, Jr. János Barta. (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézet, 2005) pp. 121–130.

social care took on an increasingly significant role. The latter particularly affected Cluj-Napoca, where the starving poor from other parts of Transylvania came in large numbers during the years of the famine in the hope that they would be able to get enough food for themselves and their family in the city.

According to the tabular statement compiled from the reports received by the Gubernium, the weather anomalies of 1813 already caused severe damage to the crop. In the majority of counties and county seats, wheat, barley and rye were produced only in medium or small quantities, and according to the comments attached to the data, in the counties of Cluj-Napoca and Crasna, as well as in Țara Chioarului, famine appeared as early as 1813.[5] From the first months of 1814, requests from counties, cities and villages continuously arrived to the Gubernium. The Gubernium first wanted to solve the problem of food shortages with central lending. The legislative authorities and the settlements could primarily demand oats – this was available in larger quantities in the warehouses – the value of which was calculated at a central rate determined by the Gubernium and had to be repaid within a year. The second condition of the request mostly affected smaller settlements and expected the community to take responsibility, because in case someone was unable to repay the price of the demanded crop, the population of the settlement had to repay one's debt together.[6]

The opportunity provided by the Gubernium could not offer a substantive solution for several reasons. In many jurisdictions, oats could be purchased at local or neighbourhood markets cheaper than the centrally determined exchange rate.[7] On the other hand, even though it was ordered in all Transylvanian municipalities to show the serfs how to bake oat bread and other uses of oats, people were distrustful of the plant and did not accept it as a grain.[8] In addition to all this, the crops available in the warehouses also turned out to be an insufficient amount. Of the many surviving reports and requests, only two reports of Zsigmond Katona, chief captain of Țara Chioarului, are mentioned as an illustration. According to Katona's data, a total of 14,831 starving people were registered in the municipality he led, and according to his calculations, in addition to the grain requested and distributed,

[5] National Archives of Hungary [hereafter cited as: NAH], F 46 (Gubernium Transylvanicum in politicis), 3610/1814.
[6] NAH, F 46, 3878/1814.
[7] NAH, F 46, 4318/1814.
[8] NAH, F 46, 4076/1814; 4290/1814; 4750/1814.

they would have needed an additional 16,872 quintals.[9] In his next report, he sent bread made from corncobs and wood shavings to the governor of Transylvania, György Bánffy, to illustrate that the population was forced to eat this for lack of other food.[10]

In addition to the crop loan, the decrees of the Gubernium aimed to introduce and distribute plants suitable for human consumption, serving as an alternative to cereal crops, as another measure to alleviate the shortage. In the long run, the propagation of potato was the most successful, the cultivation of which was advocated by the Gubernium from 1814. Informative literature also played a key role in the wide spread of the plant, not only in dispelling prejudices and misconceptions, but also in introducing various methods of utilization. Ferenc Pethe regularly published articles discussing the cultivation and use of potatoes in the magazine *Nemzeti Gazda*, which he edited, and Zsuzsanna Rátz published her cookbook in three booklets between 1816 and 1818, which contained more than a hundred recipes for potato dishes.[11] The county of Middle Solnoc chose a different way of propagation, there the three villages producing the most potatoes were rewarded.[12]

Although the social problems arising from the famine had to be dealt with by the Cluj-Napoca magistrate from 1813 onwards, the first related submission to the Gubernium that survived is from December 1814, penned by the city's police director András Pál. According to this, even though begging in the city was regulated from 1813, and even though beggars arriving from elsewhere were expelled, the Transylvanian municipalities could not take care of their own deprived people, many of whom went to Cluj-Napoca.[13] By December 1814, the number of beggars, especially child beggars, had grown

[9] NAH, F 46, 5458/1814.

[10] NAH, F 46, 5516/1814.

[11] László Kósa, *A burgonya Magyarországon*. [The potato in Hungary] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980) pp. 39–50.; László Kósa, *„Búza szükségben felsegéllő jegyzések". A burgonya a magyarországi táplálkozásban a XVIII. század végén és a XIX. század elején*. [„Helping notes in the need of wheat". Potato in the Hungarian diet at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century]. In: László Kósa, *Nemesek, polgárok, parasztok*. [Nobles, civilians, peasants] (Budapest: Osiris, 2003) pp. 130–141.; Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete*, pp. 167–173.

[12] NAH, X 4556, 144. microfilm, Protocols of the County Assemblies of Middle Solnoc, 18 December 1817.

[13] Several decrees on the regulation of poverty and begging have been issued since Maria Theresa, but none of them could be fully implemented, so they were ineffective. For these decrees see: Andor Csizmadia, *A szociális gondoskodás változásai Magyarországon*. [Changes in social care in Hungary] (Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977) pp. 23–40.

so large in the city that, according to András Pál, the situation became unmanageable. The crisis was not only critical for the city administration in terms of public safety[14] and care, but also in terms of public health: the starving people arrived in the city sick and weakened, the city had to provide them with healthcare too. Several of these people died on the streets or at the homes of individuals who took them in. In his report to the Gubernium, András Pál recorded one of the tragic cases, the story of a family with four children who moved into an abandoned house at a peripheral part of the city. They found the father and mother unconscious next to the dead bodies of their four children. Despite the attempts, the mother could not be saved, and the father's condition was also critical at the time of writing the report.[15]

In March 1815, the new city police director, János Pákei, gathered and listed the beggars in the city, and among them he found that 140 of them were locals. He sent back the others to their respective municipality. However, the number of child beggars did not decrease, so the Gubernium ordered the city's police director to gather them and give them work under the supervision of an inspector.[16] The situation did not improve even after a few months passing by: at the end of November 1815, the chief judge of Cluj-Napoca, János Deáky, once again raised the problem with the city council, according to which children were begging and following the residents of the city in groups, thus making it impossible to have smooth traffic in the city. The magistrate saw as a cause of the problem the fact that some of the residents of Cluj-Napoca pitied these children and helped them, so they forbade the residents to support them, and ordered the citizens to collect the children and give them work in accordance with the previous instructions of the Gubernium.[17] Despite the

[14] The city council meetings in Cluj-Napoca show an example of the criminalization of beggars which has been typical since the 18th century. Although it had been hinted at earlier, in September and December 1816, the increased thefts in the city were openly blamed on the wandering beggars. National Archives of Hungary, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 23 September 1816, 28 December 1816.

[15] NAH, F 46, 12451/1814.

[16] NAH, F 46, 2729/1815. The contents of the instruction are remarkably similar to the institution of the workhouse, but this temporary institution has not yet been named as such. The first workhouse in Cluj-Napoca was established in 1826 by the Cluj-Napoca Noble Benevolent Women's Association under the leadership of János Jósika's wife, Rozália Csáky. For the history of the association see: Andor Csizmadia: *Szociálpolitika a reformkori Kolozsváron*. [Social policy in Cluj-Napoca in the Reform Era] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 1943),

[17] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 20 November 1815.

previous measures, the donation of grain received in the meantime, and the ticket revenue of the German theatre in Cluj-Napoca offered to the poor, the financial possibilities of the city's poor fund were still limited.[18] By the fall of 1816, the number of beggars coming from elsewhere had increased to an extent that the magistrate of Cluj-Napoca had to take action again, mainly due to financial reasons. In addition to the banishment of non-local beggars, the residents were forbidden to help the poor and hungry who were not from Cluj-Napoca with food or accommodation.[19]

The establishment and operation of soup kitchens

By April 1817, the number of deaths in the city had increased to such an extent that the guild responsible for funerals could no longer cope with the work, and they had neither time nor money left to provide food for themselves.[20] By this time, one of Gubernium's initiatives to set up soup kitchens and distribute Rumford soup, had come to fruition.

Bavaria was one of the important stops in the adventurous life of Benjamin Thompson (Count Rumford). He started his European journey from England in 1783 and arrived in the Electorate a year later. Thompson got on well with the Bavarian Elector Charles Theodor, in whose service he joined the Bavarian army, where he quickly rose through the ranks. He submitted several military reform proposals to Charles Theodor, and thanks to these, in 1788, Thompson was appointed Bavarian Minister of War. Although he did not achieve success as a military leader, his reforms in the field of reintegration of demobilized soldiers into society had noticeable results. He resigned from his ministerial post after the death of Charles Theodor in 1799 and devoted his days to scientific work. As a result of respect coming from his position as Minister of War, Thompson also held the position of Chief of Police in Munich, which gave him the opportunity to implement his social reform proposals. In 1789, he established state-owned workhouses for beggars in Mannheim and Munich, where uniforms were made for the Bavarian army. He created the recipe for the soup named after him to feed the workers here, the ingredients of which – barley, yellow peas, bread, salt, beer, water,

[18] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 9 February 1816, 6 April 1816.

[19] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 23 September 1816.

[20] Elek Jakab, *Kolozsvár története*. [The History of Cluj-Napoca] vol. III. (Budapest: Kolozsvár város közönsége, 1888) pp. 800–801.

potatoes – were selected in such a way that they had adequate nutritional value and the food provided enough energy for the daily work. Although he was proud of the fact that, according to his own words, those employed in the workhouse never bought additional food for themselves with their modest wages, it is clear based on the modern calory calculations that the Rumford soup did not provide the necessary nutrient intake for an entire day of demanding work.[21]

The idea of setting up soup kitchens appeared for the first time in Transylvania in the spring of 1815, although not on the part of the government, but as a grassroots initiative.[22] Farkas Cserey, the imperial and royal chamberlain, translated a German-language work into Hungarian under the pseudonym "a Transylvanian Patriot" about the benefits and preparation of the pauper meal. He sent the manuscript to his friend, the editor of the *Erdélyi Muzeum*, Gábor Döbrentei, with the request that he present it to the governor. According to the letter sent to Döbrentei, Cserey already used Rumford soup among his serfs at that time, in May 1815, and it is because of his own successful experiments that he wanted to establish the existence of soup kitchens throughout Transylvania.[23] Döbrentei personally handed over Cserey's manuscript to the governor,[24] but there is no indication in the surviving documents of the Gubernium that Bánffy paid attention to Cserey's proposal.

A year later, in 1816, the Viennese government and the Gubernium regarded the soup as a possible solution for the famine, after the recipe used in Leipzig was sent from Vienna to Cluj-Napoca.[25] Bánffy commissioned the gubernatorial councillor, József Teleki, to experiment with the Rumford soup recipe. At the end of September 1816, two gubernatorial clerks, József Tunyogi Csapó and Dániel Aranka, cooked fifty portions of soup for the

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[21] Fritz Redlich: *Science and Charity: Count Rumford and His followers.* International Review of Social History 16/2 (1971) pp. 187–196. On Benjamin Thompson's social actions and the preparation of Rumford soup (in detail) see: *Count Rumford's Experimental Essays, Political, Economical and Philosophical. Essay I: an Account of an Establishment for the Poor in Munich.* (Dublin: W. Porter and J. Archer, 1796) For Rumford's extensive work, see: Thomas Weidner: *Rumford. Rezepte für ein besseres Bayern*. (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2014).

[22] Zsolt Trócsányi: *Wesselényi Miklós és világa*. [Miklós Wesselényi and his world] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1970) p. 26.

[23] Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts [hereafter cited as: LICHAS DM], M. Irod. Lev. 4-r. 55. Farkas Cserey to Gábor Döbrentei, 4 May 1815.

[24] LICHAS DM, M. Irod. Lev. 4-r. 55. Farkas Cserey to Gábor Döbrentei, 2 June 1815

[25] NAH, F 46, 8058/1816.

inmates of the Cluj-Napoca prison. After a few small modifications, the final recipe was created during the next experiment on 3 November, and Teleki submitted his report to Bánffy on 12 December 1816.[26] In addition to the Cluj-Napoca experiment, the pauper meal was also tested in the prison of Gherla, but the results were not so positive. According to the report of the Gherla castle's captain, József Josinczy, since the prisoners did hard physical work from the dawn till night, the amount in the recipe was not sufficient for the whole day's work.[27] Nevertheless, Bánffy, based on the results of the Cluj-Napoca experiment, sent the recipe to all Transylvanian legislative authorities on 29 March 1817, and instructed them to set up soup kitchens, as well as to create committees responsible for the organization and providing the necessary financial background and the ingredients.[28]

In parallel with the action of the Gubernium, but even before the circular decree was issued, in March 1817, an initiative was started among the wealthier residents of Cluj-Napoca: a supportive action, thought out and led by Miklós Wesselényi, was launched to help the local people who were suffering from the famine. The 21-year-old Wesselényi was helped by his young aristocratic friends: Lajos Gyulay and his tutor, Gábor Döbrentei, Ádám Kendeffy, László Bánffy, Gergely Bánffy, Ádám Bethlen, József Bethlen, and György Wass.[29] According to their printed pamphlet, they undertook to supply 100 people of Cluj-Napoca in need with Rumford soup, for which they already had the necessary financial background when preparing their call. They expected monetary help, raw materials and firewood from the residents of Cluj-Napoca. Governor Bánffy welcomed the initiative and supported the aid campaign with enough money to feed ten people for a month.[30]

The originator, Miklós Wesselényi, had several sources of inspiration. His maternal uncle Farkas Cserey, the first propagator of the Rumford soup, and his mother Heléna Cserey, who set up a soup kitchen for their serfs in the

[26] NAH, F 46, 760/1817.
[27] NAH, F 46, 2572/1817.
[28] NAH, F 46, 760/1817 .
[29] *Kazinczy Ferenc levelezése.* [Correspondence of Ferenc Kazinczy] Vol. XV. ed. János Váczy. (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1905) p. 151; Zsolt Trócsányi, *Wesselényi Miklós.* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1965), p. 41.
[30] NAH, F 46, 130/1817; Arhivele Naţionale ale României, Serviciul Judeţean Cluj [hereafter cited as: ANR SJC] Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/133. György Bánffy to Miklós Wesselényi, 30 March 1817.

centre of the family's estates in Jibou, were examples to follow.[31] Related to their family, sr. László Teleki noticed the boy's high degree of social sensitivity in early in his childhood.[32] This is confirmed by Wesselényi's letter to his mother in January 1815, according to which he sharply criticized the lack of interest and wastefulness of the aristocratic youth of Cluj-Napoca, while the number of people struck by the famine in the villages increased and the number of beggars in Cluj-Napoca was constantly increasing too.[33]

The young aristocrats' action to curb the famine started soon after the public call. By April 1817, their soup kitchen was already operating, where they took care of 100 starving people, and by the middle of May this number had risen to 146. Gábor Döbrentei and the renowned linguist and doctor Sámuel Gyarmathy also helped with the food distribution for several weeks, and another member of Wesselényi's close circle of friends, the later American traveller, Sándor Bölöni Farkas, also participated in the fundraising.[34] The list of the donators included nearly 40 names, and except for 3 individuals listed as unknown, all of them were aristocrats. 9 aristocratic ladies helped the initiative with donations, whom Gábor Döbrentei remembered in his epistle to his fellow poet, Emil Buczy.[35] The case in Cluj-Napoca is not unique, in May 1817, in connection with helping the starving people of Târgu Mureș, Governor Bánffy asked Sámuel Teleki, following the Western European model, to ask her wife to make the call to the ladies in his circle of acquaintance to participate in the subsidization.[36] Thanks to the significant monetary donation received, Wesselényi and his

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[31] NAH, F 37 (Gubernium Transylvanicum Praesidialia), 192/1817.

[32] At the mother's request, Teleki wrote an educational advisory piece, from which we get a detailed picture of 13-year-old Wesselényi's personality. Attila István Kárpáti: „Akit szeret, szive szerint szereti". Id. Teleki László Cserei Helénának írt nevelési tanácsai. ("Whoever he loves, he loves according to his heart". Sr. László Teleki's educational advice written to Heléna Cserei.) Fons, 23/3 (2016) pp. 305–336.

[33] ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond 250/159. Miklós Wesselényi to Heléna Cserey, 23 January 1815.

[34] *Kazinczy Ferenc levelezése,* pp. 151., 191.; Elemér Jancsó: *Döbrentei Gábor kiadatlan levelei Bölöni Farkas Sándorhoz. I. közlemény.* [Gábor Döbrentei's unpublished letters to Sándor Bölöni Farkas. Part I) *Keresztény Magvető*, 75/3 (1943) p. 91.; ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond 250/135. Gábor Döbrentei to Miklós Wesselényi, 28 September 1817.

[35] For the list of the donators see: ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/456. For Döbrentei's epistle see: LICHAS DM, M. Irod. Lev. 4-r. 3. Gábor Döbrentei to Emil Buczy, 2 April 1817.

[36] NAH, F 37, 180/1817.

companions were able to buy 30 pounds of meat per day for the Rumford soup in June 1817, and they took care of feeding 200 people every day. Following the closing of the soup kitchen in September 1817, they had 1,381 forints left, which Wesselényi, supplemented with his own contribution, offered to the Karolina Hospital in Cluj-Napoca.[37]

The magistrate of Cluj-Napoca was able to start the soup kitchen maintained by the city quite slowly, mainly due to the lack of money. As early as January 1817, various forms and ideas of the fundraising appeared continuously at the city council meetings. They hoped to obtain the necessary money through donations: on one hand, from the fundraising organized among the residents, and on the other hand, in accordance with the decree of the Gubernium, from donations at the ball venues at the beginning of the ball season.[38] Although on 9 April 1817, the magistrate already had Bánffy's decree and the recipe for Rumford soup, they were only able to buy the necessary dishes at the end of April, and presumably they were only able to set up the soup kitchen at the beginning of May.[39] Unfortunately, there is no record of the number of beneficiaries, only one piece of data is available regarding the urban poor: at the end of July 1817, 246 orphaned children were gathered in the city, for whom they tried to take care as much as possible.[40] The crisis also affected the prison seriously: the magistrate received reports seriatim about the problems of feeding the prisoners and the continuous deterioration of their health. In order to prevent the outbreak of the epidemic, prisoners sentenced to corporal punishment, who had committed petty theft due to starvation, were released, and the prison cells were all whitewashed and smoked out.[41]

From the point of view of the Cluj-Napoca city administration, the solution of the beggar issue was further urged by the visit of Emperor Francis I

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[37] For the tabulation of the young aristocrats' soup kitchen see: ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/456.; ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/133. György Bánffy to Miklós Wesselényi, 29 December 1818; NAH, F 46, 11480/1818.

[38] About the balls of Cluj-Napoca in detail, see: Gyöngy Kovács Kiss: *Kolozsvári bálok a bécsi kongresszust követő években.* [Balls in Cluj-Napoca in the years following the Congress of Vienna.] In: Gyöngy Kovács Kiss: *Megidézett múlt*. [The past recalled] (Kolozsvár: Komp-Press Kiadó, 2008) pp. 95–118.

[39] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 22 April 1817.

[40] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 2 August 1817.

[41] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 24 June 1817, 27 June 1817, 2 August 1817.

and his wife, Caroline Augusta, to Cluj-Napoca in August 1817.[42] From May 1817, the sick beggars were gathered in the hay storage building at the Central Gate under the direction of the chief city physician István Barra, and they were treated there. In July, healthy beggars were ordered to be collected from the streets and kept locked up under the constant watch of four guards, and in early August, this provision was extended to orphan children wandering the streets of the city.[43] Although it is not clear from the sources what was the exact reason behind the closing of the young aristocrats' soup kitchen, it is conceivable that the measures of the magistrate may have played a role in it. In July 1821, during István Széchenyi's trip to Transylvania, he learned in Cluj-Napoca that the activity of the society, which supplied 400-500 people a day, had been stopped by the Gubernium before the monarch's visit, and the starving and beggars had been locked up, "so that the emperor would not see the misery in the country".[44] It is not known how well-founded the count's hearsay information was; however, the coincidences in time allow us to conclude that there may have been a connection between the events. However, all the efforts of the magistrate to make Francis I satisfied at his arrival was all in vain. At the beginning of September, György Bánffy forwarded the ruler's complaints to the city, according to which he was sad to see that the orphans were kept locked away, that they were not provided with food and clothing, and wrote down his instructions regarding the organization of the care of the orphans.[45]

As we have seen, the city's soup kitchen in Cluj-Napoca struggled mainly due to financial problems, and due to the considerable number of people in need, the initiative of the young aristocrats was very necessary. They had a great advantage that, due to their better financial situation, they were able to start their soup kitchen earlier than the magistrate. In addition, based on the surviving data, similar figures can be seen in terms of the number of people served, as in other soup kitchens organized by the

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[42] For details on the monarch's trip to Transylvania and the events of the visit to Cluj-Napoca, see: Domokos Teleki: *Ferencz osztrák császár, magyar király és Erdély fejedelmének erdélyi útja.* [The Transylvanian journey of Austrian Emperor Ferenc, King of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania] *Budapesti Szemle*, 13/45 (1869) pp. 83–101.

[43] NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 9 July 1817, 2 August 1817.

[44] István Széchenyi: *Napló*. [Journal] Selected and edited by Ambrus Oltványi. (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1982) p. 231.

[45] NAH, F 46, 8189/1817.

magistrate. In May 1817, György Bánffy gave instructions to set up the soup kitchen in Târgu Mureș, which began operating on May 9 under the supervision of Sámuel Kemény. They received significant donations from noble families living in the city, as well as members of the Târgu Mureș court, and the local butcher's guild supported the soup kitchen with beef, the city with firewood.[46] However, residents of the city criticized the city council for what they felt was insufficient support for those suffering from the famine. As a result, a special aid fund was created under the leadership of the city councillor of Târgu Mureș, Vencel Peielli, whose 27 members took care of a total of 31 people in need every month. In May 1817, the number of people provided with Rumford soup increased from the initial 158 to 197, and on 8 June, 210 people benefited from it. The number of portions distributed peaked on 20 July, when soup was distributed to 214 people. From the end of July, however, the number of portions distributed continuously decreased, and by the end of August only 119 people went to the soup kitchen set up at the town hall.[47] Nevertheless, with the decrease in the number of beneficiaries, the operation of the soup kitchen was not stopped, and from August to November, the operation was financed from the donations received from Peielli's fundraising.[48] In addition to Târgu Mureș, soup kitchens were also set up in other Transylvanian cities. On 4 June 1817, the distribution of food among the starving began in Sibiu, where thanks to the donations of the citizens, they were able to give food to 100 people.[49] At the beginning of July 1817, István Haller, the lord lieutenant of Inner Solnoc County, established a soup kitchen in the town of Dej, where they were also able to feed 100 people.[50]

In the initial stages of the famine that affected Transylvania between 1813 and 1817, the Transylvanian Gubernium made several attempts to solve the crisis, but they were unsuccessful. The Rumford soup proposed by Farkas Cserey as early as 1815 provided a certain solution to the supply of starving people, who appeared in increasing numbers over time in the cities, including Cluj-Napoca. In the spring of 1817, following the decree of Governor György

[46] NAH, F 39 (Gubernium Transylvanicum, unregistered documents), Sámuel Kemény to György Bánffy, 14 August 1817.
[47] NAH, F 39, Vencel Peielli to György Bánffy, 1 July 1817.
[48] NAH, F 39, Sámuel Kemény to György Bánffy, 29 August 1817; Vencel Peielli to György Bánffy, 28 October 1817.
[49] *Hazai 's Külföldi Tudósítások*, 13/II/3 (1817) p. 18.
[50] NAH, F 39, István Haller to György Bánffy, 8 July 1817.

Bánffy, counties and cities throughout Transylvania began to work on the creation and provision of financial support for soup kitchens, and Cluj-Napoca was no exception from the situation. Besides the city council, the young aristocrats led by Miklós Wesselényi also operated a soup kitchen in the city. Due to their better financial background, they were able to start their charity campaign earlier than the magistrate of Cluj-Napoca and in terms of the number of people they supplied, their capacity was similar to the other institutes maintained by the magistrate. The distribution of the Rumford soup throughout Transylvania saved many people from starvation in 1817, the last year of the famine which; however, was the most struck by it.

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A Pope Coming from the East: John Paul II on the Situation of the Catholic Church in Romania (1978-1989)

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Rezumat: Instituționalizarea regimului comunist în Europa Central-Răsăriteană a generat, între altele, un val sistematic de persecuții, coerciție și cenzură împotriva diferitelor denominații religioase, bisericile Greco-Catolică și Romano-Catolică numărându-se printre principalele victime ale terorii comuniste. Recursul la coerciție și unele concesii, mai cu seamă începând cu anii 1960, a permis denominațiilor religioase să găsească anumite modalități de supraviețuire în confruntarea cu regimurile ideocratice. Dialogul angajat de Sfântul Scaun cu unele regimuri comuniste – în contextul destinderii internaționale - a avut rezultate contradictorii, România comunistă numărându-se între țările în care beneficiile dialogului pentru comunitățile catolice de ambele rituri au fost minore.

Cuvinte cheie: Comunism, represiune, Biserica Catolică, România, destindere internațională, minorități religioase, Sfântul Scaun, Ostpolitik, Papa Ioan Paul al-II-lea

Abstract: As was the case with the entire East-Central European region, the instatement of Communism in Romania brought an unprecedented wave of persecution, coercion, censorship of various religious denominations, with the Greek-Catholic and Roman Catholic churches counting themselves among the main victims of the abusive force unleashed by the newly installed regime. Weathering the storm of the brutal repression that characterized the early Communist years, the resilient religious minorities would find ways to resist the harsh persecutions directed against them, while at the same time attempting to take advantage of the limited opportunities brought by the internal evolution of the regime, as well as by the international developments of their time. On the background of a consistently strenuous relation between political authorities and minority religious communities,

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the election of John Paul II as Pope became an influential moment for the course of both Catholic rites in Romania, as they followed their way through the meandering final years of Romanian Communism.

Keywords: Communism, repression, Catholic Church, Romania, détente, religious minorities, Holy See, Ostpolitik, Pope John Paul II

The domination of the Soviet Union over East-Central Europe (ECR) after 1945 imposed a certain degree of uniformity to the religious policies in the area, especially in the Stalinist phase, even though, as several studies have argued, the ethnic and confessional diversity of the region, the political, cultural and national specificities, the relations between national and religious identities, the variations among distinct societies in terms of their level of modernization, their respective social disparities etc., had all determined Communist regimes to gradually adopt distinctive strategies in order to reach their intended goals.[1]

Catholicism counted itself among the most resilient opponents of the Communist regimes and naturally became the victim of continuous repressive policies, which came in various shapes. For instance, all Communist states sought, under different pretexts, to disrupt the connections between local churches and Rome, to cut all ties with the Holy See and to expel its diplomats, to seize the properties of the Churches, to suppress and censor the subsisting Catholic publications, to nationalize confessional teaching as well as the charitable institutions belonging to the Churches, to forbid religious education in schools etc. Furthermore, religious organizations created by clergymen or laymen willing to collaborate with the Communist regimes were encouraged, and the creation of "national" Catholic Churches was also pursued, a goal accompanied by the suppression of Greek-Catholic Churches.[2]

The foundation of these aggressive policies concerning religious institutions and organizations was twofold: on the one hand, there was Marxist-Leninist ideology, and its later permutations in the "national Communist" phase; on the other hand, there was the fact that, by their mere

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[1] Miklós Tomka, "Coping with Persecutions: Religious Change in Communism and in Post-Communist Reconstruction in Central Europe", *International Sociology* 13 (June 1998): p. 231; Ovidiu Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec previzibil. România și Sfântul Scaun în epoca pontificatului lui Paul al VI-lea (1963-1978),* București: Ed. Curtea Veche, 2004, p. 36.

[2] Ioan-Marius Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române (1918-1983),* Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2003, p. 138; Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, pp. 36-37.

existence, Churches offered an alternative value system to the official Marxist-Leninism. Moreover, Churches represented, to extents that differed from one country to another, the only autonomous legal organizations in Communist states.[3]

In Romania, a country with an Orthodox majority, Catholicism comprised the largest religious minority at the time of the Communist instatement, counting approximately three million faithful. As a result of specific historical circumstances, the Catholic Church in Romania was an ecclesiastical organization embodying three rites: Latin, Greek-Catholic and Armenian. As far as the ethnicity of its adherents was concerned, they belonged to the Romanian majority, particularly the Greek-Catholics, as well as part of the Roman-Catholics in the extra-Carpathian historical provinces, but also to the ethnic minorities, such as Hungarians (most of them Roman-Catholics and to a lesser degree Greek-Catholics), Germans (Roman Catholics), and Ruthenians (Greek-Catholics). The largest segments of Catholics among national minorities, as well as most of the Romanian Greek-Catholics, were living in the intra-Carpathian provinces of Transylvania and Banat.[4]

The antireligious policies were inaugurated throughout 1948, in the general context of the institutionalization of the new regime. The Communist leaders in Bucharest proceeded, as did their East European counterparts, to nominate the Vatican as one of the foremost adversaries of the regime. In the following months, on the background of the discretionary relationship of the Communist state with the Churches in Romania, the measures directed against the Catholic Church were adopted with alacrity. In July 1948, the Concordat that had been signed in 1927 and ratified in 1929 was unilaterally denounced. A few weeks later, two laws directly affecting the status of the Churches were adopted: the first one was the law for education reform, which stated and applied the principle of state monopoly on education, as well as the separation of Church and education, while also providing the legal basis for the abrogation of confessional teaching and the confiscation of Church property; the second one, concerning the "general regime of religion", contained provisions which had a severe impact on the Catholic Church in Romania. As various authors have noticed, the laws were far from expressing a genuine separation of Church and State, instead reflecting the

[3] Steven Saxonberg, *The Fall. A Comparative Study of the End of Communism in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Poland,* London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 213.
[4] I.-M. Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române*, pp. 49-50, 60-61.

State's eagerness to exercise an excessive and severe control over the Church.[5] Among others, this law offered the Communist government the opportunity to drastically decrease the number of dioceses belonging to the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church alike. As far as the Greek-Catholics were concerned, the government had another plan, which was put into practice in the autumn of the same year, involving the suppression of its legal existence through a so-called return of the priests and the faithful to the Orthodox Church. The act of "religious unification", as it was referred to in state documents, imposed by way of violence and abuse, was legally sanctioned on the 1 December 1948.[6] The bishops, who were arrested at the end of October, were detained in different prisons, based on the administrative orders issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Numerous theologians, professors and priests shared this fate, while many other clerics were the victims of judicial show trails. Outlawed by Communist authorities, harassed by the infamous Securitate (the Romanian Communist secret service) and by the Ministry of Cults (reorganized as the Department of Cults in 1957), the Greek-Catholic Church managed to survive these years of harsh persecution.[7] The loyalty that the bishops and a significant part of the clergy and the faithful showed towards Rome, publicly affirmed between 1955 and 1956 in the context of a superficial and short lasting de-Stalinization process and in the form of an ample petition movement echoing beyond the Iron Curtain, became grounds for severe punishment later on, with the applied sanctions following the repressive path familiar to the Bucharest regime.[8] In turn, the Roman Catholic Church confronted its own wave of persecution. Since its last two bishops who remained free refused to elaborate, as the new legislation required them to, a new statute of the Roman Catholic Church, more favorable to the interests of the regime, the two were eventually arrested in June 1949. However, the

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[5] Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist,* București: Curtea Veche, 2003, p. 190; Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române*, pp. 196-201.

[6] C. Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin*, pp. 192-202; I.-M. Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române*, pp. 202-220.

[7] C. Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin*, pp. 212-226.

[8] Ovidiu Bozgan, "Mișcarea petiționară greco-catolică din 1956", în *Studii de istoria Bisericii,* ed. Ovidiu Bozgan, București: Editura Universității din București, 2000, pp. 168-178; Ioan-Marius Bucur, *Culpa de a fi greco-catolic. Procesul episcopului Alexandru Rusu (1957),* Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut and MEGA, 2015, pp. V-XLII.

expectation of the authorities that these arrests would decrease the resistance of the Church, which was faced with the prospect of its transformation into a compliant institution, were, in part, proven wrong. The appointment by the bishops of substitute ordinaries allowed the Church to withstand the increasing pressure of Communist power, which sought to create a Roman Catholic Church that was obedient to the regime.[9] The offensive against the Roman Catholic Church was also pursued in other fields: its social, medical and charitable institutions were confiscated, and fifteen religious orders and congregations were outlawed, while the members of others were politically persecuted, on the grounds of supporting Catholic resistance against the government's policies of subordination and control.[10] Furthermore, the Catholic press was banned, and religious literature became scarce as a result of the strict control the Department of Cults held over its circulation. The reduction of the number of students allowed to attend the only theological institute recognized by the Communist government, as well as the massive arrests of priests at the end of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s, deprived numerous parishes of pastoral care.[11] An additional issue was that of jurisdiction since, based on the law of 1948, the government only acknowledged two out of the five dioceses that existed up to that point, namely the archdiocese of Bucharest and the diocese of Alba Iulia, in Transylvania. Moreover, following the successive arrests of several substitute ordinaries, the regime attempted to impose, through force and blackmail, the appointment in administrative positions of more obedient clerics, who were either regarded with great suspicion or contested by priests throughout the country, without being recognized by the Vatican either.[12]

Although by the end of the 1950s Catholic communities in Romania were in a rather precarious situation, several internal and international events that took place in the course of the 1960s fueled hopes towards the improvement of their situation. At the beginning of the 1960s, the emergence of the national-communist ideology brought on significant internal shifts. The Communist leaders in Bucharest took advantage of the anti-Soviet stance of the Romanian people in order to attract popular support in their strife against

[9] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, pp. 40-43, 51.
[10] Ibidem, pp. 77-78.
[11] Ibidem, pp. 79-82.
[12] Ibidem, pp. 38-55. For the situation of the Bucharest archdiocese, see Marius Oanță, "Situația canonică din arhidieceza romano-catolică de București (1948-1964)", în *Studii de istorie ecleziastică*, ed. Marius Oanță Craiova: Editura Siteh, 2018, pp. 233-248.

Moscow.[13] The new approach initiated by some leaders of the "old guard" was continued by Nicolae Ceaușescu. Claiming autonomy from Moscow, Ceaușescu encouraged, throughout the first years of his regime, economic policies meant to improve the standard of living, a certain degree of pluralism in the internal debates within the Communist Party, as well as a limited and short lived liberalization of the cultural sphere. Although his reforms never attained the scale of those implemented in other socialist countries of East-Central Europe, Ceaușescu nonetheless managed to create a favorable image of himself in the West, namely that of a reformer whose actions were inconvenient for Moscow. For instance, his speech following the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia substantially increased his popularity in the country as well as his international notoriety, as he came to be perceived as an approachable figure by Western governments.[14]

The new regime also made minor concessions towards the legally recognized Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, merely tolerated under Communist rule since it was lacking a statute acknowledged by the government, as pertaining to the 1948 law. For example, in the case of Márton Áron, the only Roman Catholic bishop also recognized by the Holy See, the communist authorities had his house arrest lifted and allowed him to travel to Rome.[15] A small number of theologians were granted permission to study in Rome, after being thoroughly checked by the Securitate.[16] Beginning with the 1970s, Western charitable organizations, including the Catholic ones, were permitted to send material and financial aid to churches in Romania, albeit under the strict supervision of the Department of Cults and the specialized structures of the Securitate.[17] The reception of the representatives of the legally recognized cults in Romania organized by Ceaușescu on the 29 February 1968 was meant to reinforce his positive image both internally and internationally. As stated above, the concessions were rather limited, the Greek-Catholic case

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[13] Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc,1948-1965,* Iași: Ed. Polirom, 2001, p. 218.

[14] Cristina Petrescu, *From Robin Hood to Don Quixote. Resistance and Dissent in Communist Romania,* București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2013, pp. 68-69.

[15] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, p. 188.

[16] *Ibidem*,p. 82.

[17] The activity of Catholic organizations supporting the Catholic communities in Eastern Europe was also surveilled by the Securitate. One of the many available examples can be found in Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, (ACNSAS), Fond Documentar, 69/2, pp. 162-169.

being the most relevant in this regard. As opposed to Czechoslovakia, where the Dubček regime allowed the reinstatement of the Greek-Catholic Church, Ceaușescu never considered the recognition of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church. However, Greek Catholic priests holding church service at their homes stopped being arrested, as they had been in the 1950s, and Greek-Catholic bishops clandestinely consecrated were not imprisoned or sent to Orthodox monasteries anymore for pleading the cause of their church. However, administrative investigations, warnings, house searches and the dismantling of active groups who asked for the reconsideration of the Greek-Catholic church status would continue until the fall of the Communist regime.[18]

Another telling example of the limited nature of the concessions made by the Ceaușescu regime on matters of religious freedom can be identified in the dialogue between Romania and the Holy See, which took place, with several interruptions, between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s. As it is well known, the dialogue initiated by the Holy See with the Communist regimes of East-Central Europe, also known as the "Vatican *Ostpolitik*", launched by Pope John XXIII and intensified by Pope Paul VI, set as one of its main goals the normalization of the situation of local Catholic Churches which were, without exception, the victims of repressive policies meant to transform them into instruments controlled by the Communist regimes and to diminish the spiritual, cultural and social importance of religion. As the authorities in Bucharest eventually abandoned their project of creating a "national" Roman Catholic Church, they gradually turned to a position perceived by the Roman Curia as a "limited détente".[19] It was in this context that Monsignor A. Casaroli engaged in informal talks with diplomats from the Romanian embassy in Rome. The issues that were approached referred to the situation of the Catholic communities, the possibility of filling the vacancies of the Roman Catholic bishoprics and the prospect of resuming diplomatic relations. Communist leaders in Bucharest initially adopted a cautious stance, based on the analyses and evaluations of the Department of Cults. One of the arguments against this prudent, if not outright suspicious stance, was a matter of prejudice, widely shared by all Communist governments, concerning the supranational nature of the Holy See, with a potential agreement being regarded as a

[18] C. Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin*, pp. 275-276.

[19] Achile Silvestrini, "La Santa Sede nella Ostpolitik e nella OSCE", in *Politica internazionale della Santa Sede, 1965-1990*,ed. Giovanni Barberini, Perugia: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1983, p. 50.

"violation of national sovereignty". Nevertheless, one year later, probably under the influence of the fact that other Communist countries were also negotiating with the Vatican, the leadership in Bucharest accepted the initiation of "unofficial and confidential contacts" between the ambassador of socialist Romania in Rome and the Vatican.[20] Although the talks did not register any significant progress, following Monsignor Casaroli's suggestion the Romanian Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were granted, during an official visit in Rome, a private audience to Pope Paul VI, on 24 January 1968. In their brief encounter, the Prime Minister insisted on the issue of the people's unity based on Communist rule, while also noticing that the two churches, Orthodox and Greek-Catholic, had previously been a matter of dispute, definitively settled in 1948.[21] At the end of the same year, the first visit to Bucharest of a representative of the Holy See in nearly four decades took place. The envoy of the Vatican, Monsignor Giovanni Cheli, was also received by Patriarch Justinian. Their meeting was uncontroversial, as the litigious subject of the Greek-Catholic Church was not explicitly tackled, although the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church stated that his church would not admit any divisions, "neither on political, nor on religious grounds", being "close to the rulers of the country on this matter".[22] The delegates were not allowed to meet the clandestinely consecrated Greek Catholic bishops, but they were allowed to visit the Greek-Catholic bishop Iuliu Hossu, the only survivor among the bishops of 1948. The dialogue between Monsignor Chelli and the representatives of the Department of Cults continued on the occasion of further visits in 1969 and 1970, yet the differences between the two parts persisted, as reflected in the divergent strategies pursued by the Vatican and the Communist government. While the priority of the Bucharest regime was to elaborate a statute of the Roman Catholic Church according to the law of 1948, the first concern of the Vatican was the matter of the religious hierarchy and the dioceses disbanded by the government.[23] These discrepancies led to the postponement of a substantial dialogue between the two sides. Before contacts were resumed, Ceaușescu was granted an audience by Pope Paul VI on 26 May 1973. The disagreement between the two became clear as soon as the Pope brought the issue of the Catholic Church into discussion. For Ceaușescu, the matter of the

[20] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, pp. 246-247, 249.
[21] C. Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin*, p. 263; Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, p. 262.
[22] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, p. 203.
[23] *Ibidem*, pp. 266-272.

Greek-Catholic Church was "irrevocably closed forever". Nonetheless, he was favorable to providing a statute based solution to the problem of the Roman Catholic Church. The subject of bilateral relations was not mentioned.[24] Finally, negotiations began in January 1975, but it soon became obvious that the two sides were still divergent. While the priorities on the agenda of the Holy See diplomats were related to the naming of an archbishop in Bucharest, the number of dioceses and the naming of bishops, the religious activities and the matter of religious orders and congregations, for the Department of Cults the main concern was elaborating a statute of the Roman Catholic Church. The following rounds of negotiation, carried in October 1976 and July 1977, did not prove more fruitful.[25] Although, according to the evaluation of the Department of Cults prior to the final talks, Monsignor Luigi Poggi had expressed optimism about the dialogue with the Romanian state in the aftermath of the Final Act of Helsinki, at the end of the talks Monsignor Poggi disappointedly noted that "we might say that we have wasted our time from 1975 until today".[26] Nevertheless, the Holy See chose not to abandon the talks, and in January 1978 it sent a statute project to Bucharest, which had been previously discussed with the ordinaries within the country. However, after being analyzed by the Department of Cults, the project was rejected in April, yet the Department agreed with the continuation of the talks based on a new one.[27] Given the circumstances in the Vatican in the fall of the same year, the delegation's return with a new project was postponed.

As it is well known, 1978 was "the year of the three popes". After the death of Pope Paul VI, the head of the Catholic Church elected by the College of Cardinals was Albino Luciani, who took the name of John Paul I, and whose election brought great hope. His unexpected death was a shocking event for the cardinals, who were once again summoned to find a successor. Certainly, the choice of cardinal Karol Wojtyla was a great surprise, yet he was not an unknown figure to the cardinals, nor to the Catholic hierarchy and the dignitaries of the Roman Curia. In fact, he had also received a few votes in the previous election.[28] The reaction of the world press was focused, as expected, on the novelty of electing a non-Italian pope. At the same time,

[24] *Ibidem*, pp. 282-283.
[25] *Ibidem*, pp. 292-318.
[26] *Ibidem*, p. 319.
[27] *Ibidem*, pp. 321-326.
[28] George Weigel, *Martor al speranței: Biografia Papei Ioan Paul al II-lea, 1920-1950,* Târgu Lăpuș: Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, 2007, pp. 301-306.

several commentators observed that the election of a Polish Pope could have unexpected consequences for the development of the Cold War. Among the Communist leadership in Moscow, as well as in several East-Central European socialist countries, the election of Pope John Paul II was perceived as alarming. In the first evaluations requested by the Kremlin, he was described as being of a right wing orientation and having antisocialist convictions, and it was anticipated that his criticism of Communist countries on matters of human rights would be harsh. Furthermore, it was expected that he would not hesitate to defy both the legitimacy of the Communist regimes and the Soviet hegemony in ECE.[29] As far as the Romanian Communist regime is concerned, the research on the matter has not identified any particular reaction of the authorities in Bucharest after Pope John Paul II was elected. However, the reports of the Securitate indicated that the active Catholic milieus were expressing their hope that a Pope coming from a Communist country would revitalize the activity of the Catholic Church and would adopt a stronger stance in the dialogues initiated with socialist countries.[30]

In July 1979, Monsignors Poggi and Bukovsky, the delegates of the Holy See in negotiations with Romania, handed in the text of the new project of the statute of the Roman Catholic Church and asked for Ceaușescu to receive a personal message on behalf of Pope Wojtyla. In the first part of his letter, John Paul II expressed hope that the new project would contribute to providing a solution to the "serious problems" of the Catholic Church of Latin rite in Romania. Further on, he mentioned the existence of the Greek-Catholic Church, its historical merits for the spiritual and cultural progress of the Romanian people, the circumstances in which it was suppressed in 1948 by violation of the legal provisions pertaining to religious freedom, and the fact that Romanian citizens did not enjoy their rights as stipulated in the Constitution of 1965, as well as in the international pacts and treaties ratified by the Romanian state. Conclusively, the Pope expressed his faith that the problem of the Greek-Catholic Church would find "a suitable solution, in short time".[31] Ceaușescu's reply was unequivocal: the matter of the Greek-Catholic Church had been closed forever in 1948, and any further talk on that issue would only jeopardize „the collaboration between churches,

[29] Felix Corley, "Soviet Reactions to the Election of Pope John Paul II", *Religion, State and Society*, 22 (1/1994): p. 41.

[30] ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, 6928, pp. 189-189v, 196.

[31] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, pp. 433-436.

based on mutual trust and respect".[32] Denying the Greek-Catholic problem did not mean that the Communist authorities were unaware of its existence. In the 1970s, in accordance with the directives it received from the head of state, the Securitate continued to carry a wide range of actions against Greek-Catholic communities. The particular targets were the bishops and priests who were actively manifesting, such as those who wrote memoirs to the authorities, for their Church to regain legal status.[33] The Securitate reports registered the fact that, in the post-Helsinki period, as well as after the election of Pope John Paul II, bishops and clerics became more active, and were joined by some intellectuals. Furthermore, on the general background of increasing dissatisfaction with the abandonment of limited liberalization in favor of a neo-Stalinist regime with nationalist overtones, as well as that of noticeable discontent regarding the poor economic performances of the regime and their major social effects, a series of initiatives and groups claiming the observation of the legal commitments assumed by the Romanian state through the ratification of the Helsinki Accords started to appear.[34] The Ceaușescu regime replied by extending the attributions of the Securitate and by initiating a massive internal and international propaganda campaign meant to hide the realities within the country.[35] Some of the actions undertaken by the Securitate abroad, sometimes in collaboration with the Department of Cults, endeavors that were also related to the Vatican, sought to improve the image and promote the interests of the Communist rule. In that regard, agents recruited from the Catholic clergy of both rites were being used. For example, in the group comprising both priests and faithful that went to Rome as participants to the beatification ceremony of the Capuchin monk Jeremiah of Wallachia, which took place on 30 October

[32] *Ibidem*, pp. 436-438.

[33] For the reaction of the Securitate to the memoirs received by the Communist rule from the consecrated Greek-Catholic bishops after 1948, see ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, 69/14, p. 35; 69/28, pp. 6-18, 43.

[34] For instance,The Comittee for the Salvation of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, which, beginning on 12 August 1977, disseminated several „appeals" in favor of the legal recognition of the Greek-Catholic Church; ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, 69/6, pp. 44-47; pp. 87, 92-95; 69/28, pp. 132, 176-177, 189, 231-234.

[35] For example, "The Program of Measures for the Prevention and Countering of Hostile Activity Carried Out against Our Country under Religious Cover", drawn by the Department of State Security on 16 May 1981, sent to the Directions and County Inspectorates of the Securitate. The document was published in Marius Oprea, *Banalitatea răului. O istorie a Securității în documente 1949-1989,* Iași: Ed. Polirom, 2002, pp. 459-467.

1983, eight Roman Catholic priests and three Greek-Catholic priests were informers for the Securitate.[36] In other cases, the publication in the Western Catholic press of articles favorable to the Communist regime in Bucharest, written by priests, was also encouraged.[37]

On this background, the negotiations between Romania and the Vatican reached a deadlock, since the Romanian authorities did not communicate to the Holy See any reply to the project of July 1979, although at the end of December 1980 a version of a counter-project had been finalized.[38] Nonetheless, the authorities did not intend to suspend their dialogue with the Holy See, being aware of the political opportunities and image costs involved.[39] When he returned to Bucharest in June 1981, Monsignor Poggi presented the Pope's response to Ceaușescu's message concerning a possible collaboration on the occasion of the Security and Cooperation Conference in Madrid. The Holy See was willing to cooperate with Romania as long as the regime was willing to regulate the status of the Roman-Catholic Church.[40] The discrepancies between Ceaușescu's international ambitions and his internal policies became increasingly evident, as the latter turned more restrictive on matters of human rights in general and religious freedom in particular, and the constrains on national minorities were now more obvious both to the Vatican and to the Western states. Western criticisms of the Communist regime in Bucharest, coming from governments and international organizations alike, including religious groups that were advocating for the observation of human rights, were interpreted in Bucharest as an offensive directed at socialist countries in general and Romania in particular. In a documentary material elaborated by the Securitate in 1983, whose language resembled the early Cold War rhetoric, it was stated that, on the background of an intensifying world crisis, "religious ideologies" were allied with subversive, anticommunist forces, and multiple centers and organizations, including several of a religious nature, were being reactivated, in order to pursue specific purposes: amplifying anticommunist propaganda, instigating to claims for a "so-called freedom of consciousness", or misinforming public opinion on the "so-called restriction of religious

[36] ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, 69/31, pp. 15-15v.

[37] For example, the article published by the Roman Catholic priest V. P., in the West German Catholic publication *Das Heilige Land*, December 1987, in ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, 69/31, pp. 21-24.

[38] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, p. 334.

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 335.

[40] *Ibidem*, p. 336.

freedom".[41] Among the mentioned organizations, "Caritas" was described as an information agency meant to reactivate the Roman Catholic Church and restore the former Greek-Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Vatican was accused of intensifying its anti-Romanian activities by "inciting, in different ways, the Catholic believers to engage in actions of a harmful nature for the politics of the state".[42] The aggressive language found in many documents, reports and analyses elaborated by the structures of the party-state reflect the anxiety of the Communist leaders in Bucharest, shared by their Easter European counterparts, that the emphasis John Paul II placed on observing fundamental human rights, particularly religious freedom, human dignity or the freedom of association, turned the Church into a bulwark of legitimate values, in clear opposition to the party state.[43]

An event which took place in Rome at the beginning of 1982 offered a pretext for the Communist authorities to temporarily suspend the negotiations with the Holy See. On 6 January 1982, the consecration of the Greek-Catholic cleric Traian Crișan as archbishop took place, and he was concomitantly appointed as the secretary of the Congregation for the cause of saints. The declarations pronounced on this occasion by Pope John Paul II, supporting the freedom of the Greek-Catholic Church, determined the bitter reaction of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church who, a few days later, addressed a telegram to the Pope in which it described his declarations as a "prohibited intervention into the internal affairs of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) as well those of Romania, and independent and sovereign country".[44] Later on, Patriarch Justin of the ROC also sent a letter to the Pope, in which he reiterated the ideas expressed in the telegram of the Holy See. The telegram sent to Pope John Paul II was also published in a central daily newspaper, indicating that the conflict became public. The reaction of the ROC was organized at the initiative and with the support of the Communist authorities, who used this episode in order to prolong the discussions on the matter of the statute of the Roman Catholic Church.[45]

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[41] The Ministry of Internal Affairs/The Department of State Security, *Aspecte din activitatea ostilă desfășurată de elemente autohtone incitate de emisari ai unor centre și organizații religioase reacționare din străinătate. Măsuri întreprinse de organele de Securitate pentru prevenirea și contracararea acțiunilor dușmănoase desfășurate sub acoperirea religiei,* Serviciul Editorial și Cinematografic, 1983, p. 3. The publication is marked "top secret".

[42] Ibidem, pp. 5-6.

[43] S. Saxonberg, *The Fall*, p. 214.

[44] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, p. 110.

[45] Ibidem, p. 111.

However, several Securitate reports registered positive reactions brought by the declarations of the Pope in Greek-Catholic milieus, as well hopes regarding the relegalization of the Church following the intervention of the Vatican. In that regard, some bishops and priests were attempting to revitalize the Greek-Catholic clergy, seeking to convince young people to study theology in order for them to be secretly ordained.[46]

Two years later, when, following consultations between diplomats of the Vatican and the Romanian authorities, it was agreed that Ioan Robu would be appointed as head of the Roman-catholic archdiocese of Bucharest and his investment as bishop would take place in Rome, expectations regarding the prospect of resuming the negotiation of the statute of the Roman Catholic Church reemerged.[47] In the course of the discussions between the Romanian officials and John Paul II, as well as other dignitaries of the Roman Curia, which were carried in Rome on the occasion of the investment, as well as in the talks with the Holy See delegation that later took place when the bishop was installed in Bucharest, the importance of the continuation of bilateral dialogue was highlighted, as was the need to regulate the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Romania through the statute. Moreover, during a meeting with a Romanian official, the Holy See Secretary of State, cardinal Casaroli, assessed that the Greek-Catholic issue, which he did not consider an "inexistent problem", should not be prolonged *sine die*, nor make any dialogue impossible.[48] However, the Communist government in Bucharest kept utilizing the matter of the Greek-Catholic Church as a pretext to delay the negotiations that had been suspended in 1985. The Romanian Communist leaders, affected, as one Romanian historian has put it, by the international conspiracy syndrome, were not willing to make any concessions to the local church, nor did they want to continue the dialogue with the Holy See, probably realizing the tremendous discrepancy between their internal and international goals and the determination of Pope John Paul II to defend the rights of the Catholic Church and, in a more general sense, the rights of the people living beyond the Iron Curtain.[49]

At the beginning of 1989, an incident occurred, the significance of which has not been clarified up to the present day. While on his way to India, where he had been invited by the head of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the country, the delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church, led by Patriarch Teoctist, made a

[46] ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, 69/31, pp. 28-29.
[47] O. Bozgan, *Cronica unui eșec*, p. 340.
[48] Ibidem, pp. 342-343.
[49] Ibidem, p. 346.

brief stop in Rome, on 4 January, where it was expected by a delegation of the Holy See. According to instructions received from Bucharest, at first, Romanian diplomats in Italy opposed a meeting between the Patriarch of the ROC and John Paul II, which was supposed to take place the second day. After strenuous consultations with the authorities back home, the visit was approved by the Communist leadership. The second day, the delegation of Romanian hierarchs was received by John Paul II with great warmth. On this occasion, John Paul II had a private talk with Patriarch Teoctist, about which nothing is known. Information and photographs of the ecumenical meeting between the Pope and the ROC delegation were published in *Osservatore Romano* and *Corriere della Serra*.[50] Ten years later, the two protagonists of the aforementioned episode would meet again, in a deeply transformed Romania. On this occasion, hundreds of thousands of Romanians, regardless of religion, flooded the streets of Bucharest to hear and see the one who, from the moment of his election, embodied the hopes of numerous Eastern Europeans who lived throughout the 1980s – Pope John Paul II. Asked by a journalist about the role John Paul II played in the fall of the Communist regimes, the former National Security Advisor of President Carter, Z. Brzeziński, affirmed: "The dominant mood up until that point was the inevitability of the existing system. After his first visit in Poland, in June 1979, the dominant mood became that of the non-inevitability of the system. I believe this was a fundamental transformation".[51]

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[50] https://ioncoja.ro/4-ianuarie-1989-patriarhul-teoctist-in-vizita-la-papa-ioan-paul-ii/, accessed on 10 June 2023.

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Perspectives on the backsliding impact of Helsinki Accords on Romania's human rights policies

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Rezumat: Acordurile de la Helsinki și dispozițiile lor privind drepturile omului au fost considerate esențiale în promovarea rețelelor dizidente și îmbunătățirea drepturilor omului în Europa Centrală-Est. În România, cultura politică s-a caracterizat printr-un accent pe securitate în detrimentul libertăților individuale. În timp ce Acordurile de la Helsinki au fost menite să promoveze drepturile omului și cooperarea în Europa de Est, efectul lor în România a fost contraproductiv. Interpretarea Acordurilor de către regim i-a permis să mențină o poziție represivă, care, la rândul său, a izolat țara pe plan internațional. Conducerea comunistă română a văzut Acordurile de la Helsinki în primul rând ca pe un mijloc de a se proteja de interferența externă, eliminând în totalitate angajamentele privind drepturile omului conturate în acord. Această interpretare a permis regimului comunist să-și justifice politicile opresive, prezentând în același timp o fațadă de conformitate cu normele internaționale. Drept urmare, mai degrabă decât să favorizeze schimbări pozitive, Acordurile au contribuit la izolarea României pe scena internațională, mai ales că țara a devenit singura din Blocul de Est în care s-a observat o deteriorare a condițiilor drepturilor omului după semnare.

Cuvinte cheie: drepturile omului, Acordurile Helsinki, politici de protecţie ale drepturilor omului

Abstract: The Helsinki Accords and their human rights provisions have been seen as pivotal in fostering dissident networks and improving human rights in East-Central Europe. In Romania, the political culture was characterized by a focus on security over individual liberties. While the Helsinki Accords were intended to promote human rights and cooperation in Eastern Europe, their effect in Romania

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was counterproductive. The regime's interpretation of the Accords allowed it to maintain a repressive stance, which, in turn, isolated the country internationally. The Romanian communist leadership viewed the Helsinki Accords primarily as a means to shield itself from external interference, entirely sidelining the human rights commitments outlined in the agreement. This interpretation allowed the communist regime to justify its oppressive policies while presenting a façade of compliance with international norms. As a result, rather than fostering positive change, the Accords contributed to Romania's isolation on the international stage, particularly as the country became the only one in the Eastern Bloc to see a deterioration in human rights conditions post-signing.

Keywords: human rights, the Helsinki Agreements, human rights protection policies

The need for Helsinki Accords

The Helsinki Accords reflected a new fundamental principle of international relations and state sovereignty in the modern world, proclaiming that states have the legitimate right to define and defend their policies concerning their own citizens, including how they manage their internal affairs and govern the relationship between the state and its people. However, it also acknowledged a shift in the traditional concept of national sovereignty. In the past, sovereignty was primarily understood in terms of territorial integrity and the protection of a state's population from external threats. Or sovereignty was increasingly seen as involving a broader responsibility for upholding the rights and freedoms of citizens. Through the principles of the Accords, the state was tasked with defending its borders but also with ensuring that its citizens' basic human rights are respected and protected. This evolving view of sovereignty reflected the growing importance of international human rights standards and agreements, which have placed pressure on states to guarantee the civil, political, economic, and social rights of individuals within their borders. While states retained the right to manage their domestic affairs, the modern concept of sovereignty also require them to be accountable for safeguarding the rights and freedoms of their citizens, aligning with the broader principles of international human rights law[1].

[1] Mihai Alexandrescu, *Cetăţenia Uniunii Europene şi avatarurile sal*e, în *Cetăţenia Uniunii Europene, Statut, Identitate şi Perspective*, coord. Mihai Alexandrescu Edit. Presa Clujană Univarsitară, 2024, p. 13.

The 1975 Helsinki Accords, signed by representatives from 35 European states, the US, and Canada, aimed to improve relations between the Free World and the Communist Bloc, particularly regarding human rights. Although the Accords did not legally bind the signatories, they significantly influenced human rights discourse, enabling Eastern European societies, to leverage international norms. The Soviet Bloc, while accepting the principle of non-intervention in borders, viewed the humanitarian aspects as non-mandatory, fearing Western interference. The inclusion of human rights in Western foreign policy, particularly by the US under Presidents Carter and Reagan, invigorated dissident movements in Eastern Europe, leading to organized opposition groups such as Poland's Solidarity and others in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary.[2]

The preparatory talks in Helsinki marked a pivotal moment in East-West relations during the Cold War, revealing deep-seated tensions over issues of freedom of movement and state sovereignty. Western representatives advocated for increased people-to-people contact, arguing it was essential for meaningful détente. They believed that fostering connections among ordinary citizens was crucial to advancing international peace and cooperation.[3] As the European Communities (the precursor to the European Union) evolved, Western states recognized the increasing importance of establishing legal and political frameworks to protect the rights of their citizens. This realization stemmed from the growing understanding that, as integration deepened and cross-border cooperation expanded, citizens' rights needed robust protection against potential discrimination or unfair treatment. A key goal was to ensure that citizens of member states were treated equally and fairly, regardless of their nationality or status within the community. Ultimately, the idea was not just to prevent discriminatory practices but to foster a sense of security and trust among citizens, thus, the commitment to non-discrimination and the protection of rights became foundational to the broader European project, helping to build a sense of shared citizenship and solidarity among the peoples of Europe[4].

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[2] Jakub Tyszkiewicz, Human rights and political dissent in Central Europe: between the Helsinki Accords and the fall of the Berlin wall, pp. 1-6, in *Human Rights and Political Dissent in Central Europe Between the Helsinki Accords and the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, Edited by Jakub Tyszkiewicz, Routledge, 2022.

[3] Michael Cotey Morgan, The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War- The Final Act Princeton University Press, pp. 178-183.

[4] Mihai Alexandrescu, *The role of The European Parliament Member: between elections and Parliamentary Duties*, in *European Parliament: Between Elections and Actions*, Edited b Mihai Alexandrescu, Presa Clujana Universitara, 2024, pp. 9-13.

This represented a desiderate addressed also for the eastern citizens from the communist bloc, as necessity for the internationalization of the human rights policies agenda.

However, the Soviet Union and its Eastern bloc allies vehemently opposed this notion, asserting that peace must come first and that increased contact would undermine state sovereignty. As negotiations progressed, Western allies faced a dual challenge: pushing for freer movement while countering Soviet attempts to reassert control over the narrative. The Soviets agreed to a compromise that acknowledged some aspects of freer movement but included strict limitations on what could be discussed. The eventual agreement reflected a balance of interests but left both sides with mechanisms to justify their respective positions. Throughout the negotiations, Soviet leaders remained determined to protect their domestic policies, warning that any perceived Western interference would not be tolerated. Ultimately, after extensive negotiations and strategic maneuvering, a compromise was reached in Basket III that emphasized both state sovereignty and a commitment to freer movement. This agreement, although seen as a concession by the Soviets, allowed them to maintain a degree of control over how these freedoms were expressed within their sphere. The process demonstrated the complex interplay of diplomacy, ideology, and the struggle for influence during a critical period of the Cold War.[5]

The "Helsinki effect"

The Helsinki Final Act, resulting from the CSCE negotiations, was a landmark agreement that sought to address the complex landscape of East-West relations during the Cold War. It established a framework centered around four key "baskets" of issues, with the first basket outlining ten principles intended to guide interactions between states. These principles emphasized sovereign equality, refraining from force, inviolability of frontiers, peaceful dispute settlement, nonintervention, self-determination, cooperation among states, good faith fulfillment of obligations. One of the most important and debated principle was related to *Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. This principle specifically highlighted the need for respect for human rights, encompassing freedoms of thought, conscience, and belief.[6]

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[5] Michael Cotey Morgan, *op. cit*.

[6] Sarah B. Snyder, Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War, *A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network, Cambridge University Press*, pp. 16-33.

The declaration's strength lay not in its legal bindingness, but rather in its moral and political weight, underscored by the signatures of participating leaders. The differing emphases on human rights between Western and Eastern states complicated its implementation, with Western nations prioritizing civil and political liberties, while Eastern countries leaned toward social and economic rights. Despite this tension, the Helsinki Final Act played a crucial role in shaping dialogue and fostering a climate conducive to the eventual end of the Cold War, illustrating the enduring impact of collective commitments to human rights and cooperation.[7]

The Accord emerged as a powerful phenomenon, influencing policymakers and activists alike in their pursuit of accountability and reform. Overall, the Helsinki Final Act's unique structure and commitment to ongoing dialogue and accountability allowed it to effectively shape human rights practices and contribute to the eventual end of the Cold War, fostering a climate in which transnational advocacy could thrive. The transnational network established around the Helsinki Final Act was crucial in promoting human rights and influencing East-West relations during the Cold War. In this sense, the Helsinki Final Act proved far more influential in advancing human rights during the Cold War than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for several key reasons.[8]

Unlike previous declarations, the Helsinki Final Act included provisions for follow-up meetings to assess its implementation. This ongoing evaluation process established a framework for accountability and dialogue, allowing human rights issues to be addressed in international diplomatic discussions. The Act provided a basis for Western governments and organizations to apply political pressure on Eastern Bloc states regarding their human rights practices. By framing these issues within a diplomatic context, it elevated their importance on the international stage. Also, the establishment of monitoring bodies and human rights groups, particularly in the United States and Europe, highlighted violations and mobilized public opinion. This advocacy not only influenced policymakers but also helped bring attention to abuses that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.[9]

The Act explicitly allowed CSCE states to exchange views on its implementation, which facilitated the emergence of a transnational network focused on monitoring and advocating for human rights. This created a platform

[7] *Ibidem*.
[8] *Ibidem*.
[9] *Ibidem*.

where activists, diplomats, and various organizations could collaborate across borders leading to a transnational network focused on human rights. Over time, a diverse coalition emerged, known as the "Helsinki network," which comprised human rights activists, ethnic nationalists and other civil society groups. This coalition worked collectively to promote adherence to human rights provisions, fostering a sense of solidarity and shared purpose. For example, Helsinki Watch was established in the aftermath of the Belgrade meeting, this NGO became a prominent organization dedicated to monitoring Helsinki compliance. It served as a crucial link between Eastern monitoring groups and Western NGOs, helping to formalize the network. Another example is the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) which emerged to coordinate the efforts of various groups advocating for human rights under the Helsinki framework, enhancing their collective influence.[10]

This network utilized a "boomerang" pattern, where domestic actors facing repression identified external allies to advocate for their concerns internationally. This approach enhanced the moral authority of activists, facilitated public shaming of violators, and framed grievances in a way that resonated globally. The effectiveness of this network was evident in its ability to shape discourse on human rights, mobilize support, and facilitate tangible changes in Eastern European practices, contributing to the eventual end of the Cold War and the transformation of Europe.[11]

Echoes in the *East*

The reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe emphasize the significant impact of the Helsinki network's agenda. One of the major aspects was that it framed the Human Rights debate, successfully highlighting human rights abuses, drawing international attention to the issue and framing it within the broader context of East-West relations. The publication of the Helsinki Final Act in Eastern Europe stimulated local movements and advocacy groups. This visibility motivated a wide range of actors—including politicians, journalists, and NGOs—to engage in efforts to hold their governments accountable to the commitments outlined in the Act. The Helsinki process not only unified domestic opposition within the Soviet Union but also provided incentives for reforms in Eastern Europe. [12]

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[10] *Ibidem*.

[11] *Ibidem*.

[12] *Ibidem*.

Activists capitalized on the commitments outlined in the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE agreements, which emphasized the importance of human rights and allowed for periodic assessments of implementation. The Moscow Helsinki Group, formed by Soviet activists soon after the Final Act was published, aimed to monitor compliance within the USSR. Its establishment highlighted the commitment of local activists to the principles of the Helsinki agreement and spurred the creation of similar groups across Eastern Europe. It was instrumental in securing ongoing commitment from high-level political leaders, both in the West and within Eastern Europe, reinforcing the human rights agenda at the diplomatic level. The collective advocacy from the network helped shape Mikhail Gorbachev's perspective on the importance of reform. This influence was crucial in the Soviet leadership's willingness to adopt policies that aligned with international human rights standards. The pressure from the Helsinki network, combined with the political and economic challenges facing the Soviet Union, influenced Mikhail Gorbachev to adopt policies of glasnost and perestroika, leading to significant reforms in Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Overall, the Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent network of activists played a pivotal role in fostering a climate conducive to reform, it created a platform for human rights activists to advance their agendas internationally, ultimately contributing to the end of the Cold War and thereby facilitating the transition to a post-Cold War Europe.[13]

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was a significant diplomatic event post-World War II, with varying expectations among participants. While the U.S. approached the talks with skepticism, Romania was more optimistic. Initially, the conference featured general discussions, but from February 1974, negotiations became more intense as drafting began. The requirement for consensus among a complex agenda led to lengthy negotiations characterized by alliances, bargaining tactics, and the need for strategic deal-making to resolve conflicts.[14]

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[13] *Ibidem*.

[14] Angela Romano, *Détente, Entente, or Linkage? The Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in U.S. Relations with the Soviet Union*, The journal of the societies for historians of American foreign relations, Diplomatic History, Vol. 33, No. 4 (SEPTEMBER 2009), Oxford University Press, pp. 703-722.

Romania's approach

Between 1945 and 1989, Romania's state organization was governed by the 1948, 1952, and 1965 Constitutions, which reflected the nature of the socialist political system at different times. While these Constitutions included provisions for basic civil rights, the communist regime, despite Romania's signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1955, did not fully respect these rights. Between 1948 and 1964, the government was highly repressive. The 1965 Constitution, however, introduced a degree of liberalization in civil rights, particularly in social and economic areas, though it still excluded rights like the right to strike or a decent standard of living. Despite these constitutional guarantees, the lack of adequate protection meant the population did not truly benefit from the proclaimed rights.[15]

During the discussions leading to the Conference on European Security, Romania actively supported the initiative and established clear diplomatic objectives. Romanian diplomats prioritized individual state presentations over the joint proposals favored by the Soviets, advocating for a consensus-based decision-making process and a rotating presidency for future meetings. However, Romania aligned closely with Soviet positions on human rights, often sidelining these issues. As the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) progressed, misunderstandings emerged regarding cultural cooperation directives, prompting revisions to proposals to avoid contentious phrasing. The Romanian delegation promoted educational agreements and media collaborations while remaining cautious on sensitive topics like religious freedom. Despite projecting an image of openness, actual practices often contradicted this, particularly regarding family reunification requests, which were frequently denied. Overall, Romania struggled to align its internal policies with international human rights expectations, resulting in increasing scrutiny and criticism from foreign governments and NGOs. These external pressures, however, had little impact on altering the repressive practices of the regime.[16] While Romania initially supported the inclusion of the principle of respect for human rights in the Helsinki Final Act, Romania's motivations were distinct and self-serving. They were not genuinely committed

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[15] Laura Magdalena Trocan, *The evolution of human rights in Romania*, Dny práva – 2010 – Days of Law, 1. ed. Brno : Masaryk University, 2010 http://www.law.muni.cz/content/cs/proceedings/, pp. 9-13.

[16] Paula Corpodean, *The Helsinki Accords and human rights in Romania*, Acta Musei Napocensis, 60/II, 2023, pp. 167–184.

to liberalization or human rights; rather, it aimed to manage internal pressures and maintain control, leading to a dismissive stance towards external criticisms regarding human rights abuses. [17]

The 1970s in Romania marked a return to more dogmatic policies with a growing cult of personality around the country's leader. This period saw an intensification of ideological control over culture, suppressing intellectual freedoms, and the erosion of many of the benefits that had previously been enjoyed by some intellectuals under the regime. During this time, the movement for human rights, which was gaining momentum in the Soviet Union and across Central Europe, provided some Romanian intellectuals with the opportunity to challenge the government's violation of citizens' rights. These intellectuals began to speak out against the state's disregard for the rights guaranteed by the Romanian Constitution and by international agreements, seeking to hold the authorities accountable for their actions. However, this was a risky endeavor, given the regime's tight control over dissent and the consequences for those who opposed the government.[18]

The Goma movement emphasized that the Helsinki Accords, rather than prompting genuine reforms, became a tool for the regime to negotiate its position without substantive change. The Hungarian community in Transylvania was among the first to articulate human rights violations in terms of collective cultural, educational and media rights. In contrast, the Romanian majority's approach to human rights was largely centered on individual rights, particularly freedom of expression. Many Romanian dissidents became writers who sought to navigate the restrictive cultural landscape imposed by the regime. The response to censorship was typically reactive, with writers addressing their specific professional concerns rather than engaging in broader political discourse.[19]

The regulations stipulated by the 1965 Constitution were maintained even after the Helsinki Accords in a very restricted approach, and in some cases even more rigorously. For example, freedom of press, of expression, of reunions were not supposed to *be used in purposes that are contrary to the socialist organization and to the interests of the working people*. The use of

[17] Cristina Petrescu, *Exit, voice, duplicity Human rights in Romanian understanding (1975–1989)*, pp. 80-90, in *Human Rights and Political Dissent in Central Europe Between the Helsinki Accords and the Fall of the Berlin Wall* Edited by Jakub Tyszkiewicz, Routledge, 2022.

[18] Ana-Maria Cătănuş, *A Case of Dissent in Romania in the 1970's: Paul Goma and the Movement for Human Rights*, Arhivele Totalitarismului, Volume XIX, No. 72-73, 3-4/2011, pp. 185-209.

[19] Cristina Petrescu, *op, cit*.

typewriters and other means of reproduction continued to be strictly regulated ensuring that they were not used to disseminate materials deemed harmful to the state or contrary to its ideologies. The second title of the 1965 Constitution of Romania enshrined several fundamental rights for citizens, including equality regardless of nationality, the right to work, the right to rest, social insurance for old age, illness, or work incapacity, the right to education, and the use of the maternal language by national minorities. It also affirmed gender equality and freedoms such as freedom of speech, press, and assembly. Despite the constitutional guarantees, these rights were often violated through discriminatory practices in hiring, job acceptance, and college admissions. Political and social membership, along with other personal factors, were used as conditions for eligibility. Certain professions and positions were reserved for individuals who met specific criteria, which excluded those with certain political views, individuals with relatives abroad, and even divorced people. This system of discrimination effectively undermined the principle of equality, as it restricted access to opportunities based on political loyalty or social status, rather than merit or ability.[20]

Moreover, various legal documents in communist Romania progressively restricted and eventually abolished individual property rights on land and housing. Law No. 59/1974, concerning the territorial fund, prohibited the sale or acquisition of land, except through inheritance, with significant limitations. Law No. 4/1972 restricted families to owning only one house and one vacation home. If they acquired a second property through any means (inheritance, purchase, donation), they were required to sell or relinquish one within a specified time frame. The property rights of those attempting to emigrate were also severely restricted. Emigrants had to surrender their personal property (homes) to the state in exchange for minimal compensation. If they left fraudulently or refused to return, their properties were automatically transferred to state ownership, and they were even required to repay the costs of their education.[21] The systematization policies implemented in Romania during the 1970s and 1980s involved moving rural population to urban areas, dismantling some older settlements with the aim of centralizing populations and further consolidating state control over rural and urban spaces. These policies aimed to align urban

[20] Laura Magdalena Trocan, *op. cit.*
[21] *Ibidem.*

development with the needs of the socialist state, often at the cost of cultural heritage and individual freedoms.[22]

The late 1980s saw an increase in international criticism, especially as dissidents began to forge transnational connections, culminating in resolutions from bodies like the European Parliament condemning Romania's human rights record. Ultimately, the irony of Romania's position lies in its initial support for human rights principles without a genuine commitment to their implementation. While the Helsinki Accords provided a framework for advancing human rights, Romania's leadership failed to recognize the changing priorities of the international community, resulting in a rigid and repressive domestic policy that led to its eventual isolation and the regime's collapse in 1989. The role of the Helsinki Accords in shaping dissent in communist Romania presents a stark contrast to their impact in other Eastern Bloc countries. Traditional interpretations suggest that the Accords encouraged regimes to make concessions to dissidents, providing them with a framework to articulate their grievances and resist state violence. However, this was not the case in Romania, where the leadership, particularly under Ceaușescu, embraced the Accords mainly for their principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs rather than for genuine respect for human rights.[23]

Conclusions

Helsinki Accords represented a significant moment in the Cold War, balancing state sovereignty with the increasing global demand for human rights protection. While the Accords did not immediately lead to sweeping changes in the Eastern Bloc, they laid the groundwork for future dissident movements and the eventual collapse of communist regimes. The principles of non-intervention and sovereignty were challenged by the growing importance of human rights, influencing both Eastern and Western policies for decades to come.

The 1965 Romania's Constitution introduced some liberalizing reforms, especially in social and economic rights, but the communist regime continued to curtail many fundamental freedoms. While the government outwardly

[22] Laura Demeter, *Transnational activism against heritage destruction as a human rights violation in Romania before and after 1989*, Revue d'études comparatives est-ouest vol. 51, no. 2/3, Transnational activism and the globalization of anti-communism after 1989 (septembre 2020), pp. 121-150, Presses universitaires de France, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27197404.
[23] Cristina Petrescu, *op. cit.*

engaged in human rights discussions, particularly during the Conference on European Security, these engagements were often self-serving, aimed at managing internal pressures rather than facilitating real reforms. Moreover, the 1970s marked a more dogmatic phase of Ceaușescu's rule, with a focus on reinforcing the cult of personality, intensifying ideological control, and further suppressing intellectual freedoms. Despite growing human rights movements in the Soviet Union and Central Europe, dissent within Romania was dangerous, and intellectuals who spoke out faced severe repercussions.

Romania's international stance on human rights was often at odds with its internal policies. While the regime participated in the Helsinki Accords, it viewed the principle of non-intervention as a tool to avoid external criticism rather than a commitment to reform. Although Romania outwardly supported the inclusion of human rights principles in international agreements, the government remained focused on maintaining its authoritarian control, leading to increasing international isolation and growing dissent within the country. By the late 1980s, Romania faced mounting external criticism, especially as dissidents began to form transnational networks. Despite this, the regime's repression continued unabated, and the state's failure to address human rights concerns would ultimately contribute to its collapse in 1989. The contrast between Romania's initial support for the Helsinki Accords and its actual practices exemplifies how the regime manipulated international diplomacy while maintaining a rigid and repressive internal policy ensuring that Romania remained an outlier in the broader Eastern Bloc context.

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The Restoration of the Monarchy: A Topic of the Romanian Presidential Elections of 1990, 1992, and 1996

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Rezumat: După Revoluția anticomunistă care a avut loc în România în decembrie 1989, noua putere a fost preocupată de realizarea unei tranziții cât mai rapide din punct de vedere instituțional, astfel că primele alegeri au fost programate la mai puțin de șase luni de la căderea regimului comunist. Campania electorală din 1990 a inclus dezbateri despre modelul economic pe care țara trebuia să îl adopte, despre orientarea politicii externe etc., dar și teme conexe, propuse mai ales de puterea neocomunistă, precum posibilitatea restaurării monarhiei, intenția partidelor istorice de a reveni la modelul societății interbelice, retrocedarea pământurilor către foștii moșieri, răzbunarea împotriva celor câteva milioane de români care au fost membri ai Partidului Comunist. Un subiect care s-a evidențiat, inclusiv la nivel simbolic, a fost cel referitor la statutul fostului rege Mihai I, iar cercetarea de față își propune să analizeze modul în care această temă de campanie a fost utilizată în cadrul alegerilor din 1990, 1992 și 1996, scopul pentru care a fost promovată, care au fost mecanismele de apărare sau de răspuns, respectiv în ce mod a influențat rezultatul votului. Pentru a ajunge la o concluzie, vom face apel la cercetările unor istorici și analiști politici, precum și la ziarele perioadei.

Cuvinte cheie: monarhie, republică, alegeri, post-comunism, politică

Abstract: Following the anti-communist revolution in Romania in December 1989, the newly-established government was preoccupied with facilitating an expeditious institutional transition and securing public legitimacy. Consequently, the inaugural elections were scheduled to take place within a mere six months following the collapse of the communist regime. The 1990 election campaign included debates

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about the economic model that the country should adopt, the orientation of foreign policy, and so forth. However, it also encompassed related themes, which were proposed mainly by the neo-communist power. These included the possibility of restoring the monarchy, the intention of the historical parties to return to the interwar model of society, the restitution of land to former landowners, and revenge against the several million Romanians who had been members of the communist party. A particularly noteworthy topic, including from a symbolic perspective, was the status of the former King Michael I. This study aims to analyse the manner in which this campaign theme was utilised in the 1990, 1992, and 1996 elections, the objective for which it was advanced, the defensive and responsive mechanisms employed, and the extent to which it influenced the outcome of the vote. In order to reach a conclusion, this study draws on the research of historians and political analysts, as well as newspapers from the period in question.

Keywords: monarchy, republic, elections, post-communism, politics

Theoretical Framework, Objectives, and Sources

Electoral campaigns often provide an opportunity to highlight, in a concentrated form, all the issues of interest that exist in a society at a given moment. In the case of Romania, the presidential and parliamentary elections held in the first decade following the anti-communist revolution of 1989 enabled the tracing of clear thematic directions. This was because the democratic process, which has resumed after forty years of communist dictatorship, resulted in the resurgence of political parties with historical roots in the interwar era, the most significant of these being the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the National Peasants' Party Christian and Democratic (PNȚCD), while new parties emerged, whose members originated from the former communist nomenclature, as was the case of the National Salvation Front (FSN).

In the early years of the post-1989 democratic era, debates encompassed a multitude of topics, including foreign policy, institutional and economic reforms, and the necessity for Romanian society to reconcile with its historical heritage. In this instance, we can discuss, on the one hand, the circumstances surrounding former Romanian Communist Party (PCR) members, particularly those who held prominent roles within the communist regime. The programmatic document known as "The Timișoara Proclamation" was the manifestation of straightforward anti-communist signals from society. In the first half of 1990, the 8th point of "The Timișoara Proclamation" sparked the most debate because

it suggested prohibiting former communist activists and Securitate[1] officers from running for office for three consecutive legislatures[2]. We now know that an article prohibiting those who had held positions in the communist regime—such as first secretaries, propaganda officers, Securitate officers, former heads of PCR sectors, ministers, ambassadors, etc.—from standing for election was included in the draft of the electoral commission that adopted the decree-law of March 14, 1990.3 On the day of the vote, Ion Iliescu—the then president of the Provisional Council of National Unity (CPUN)—announced that the executive bureau of CPUN[4] had decided to remove the passages referring to communists and the Securitate officers. On the other hand, the public debate also focused on how the communist regime was established in Romania, with the forced abdication of King Michael I on December 30, 1947, and the proclamation of the Romanian People's Republic, which in fact marked a brutal break with the country's political and monarchical traditions. In 1990, more than 40 years had passed since that moment, and the memory of the monarchy in Romania was still preserved only by the elderly. This was a concept that could barely had resonance with the general population after 1989, because throughout the communist era national history had been rewritten, eliminating all traces of the royal family, and young people had been schooled in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. A contributing factor to the problem was the lack of relatable individuals linked to that era, such as the late King Michael I, who lived in exile.

Alina Mungiu draws attention to an intriguing subtlety in the dichotomy of making references to the past, since any political message has a potential meaning, especially in such a complicated political and social context: the call to refer to interwar history only served to vindicate one side, while those who pleaded for the adoption of an apolitical attitude actually urged the

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[1] The State Security Department, also known as the Securitate, was the Romanian intelligence service during the period of communist rule. Created in 1948, the Securitate played a significant role in the process of Sovietisation of Romania, and subsequently in the maintenance of the communist regime. To this end, a sophisticated system of surveillance and repression was established.

[2] Domniţa Ştefănescu, *Cinci ani din istoria României: o cronologie a evenimentelor dec. 1989 – dec. 1994* [Five years in Romanian history: a chronology of events, December 1989 – December 1994] (Bucureşti: Editura Maşina de Scris, 1995), pp. 55–56; 451–456.

[3] Virgil Zamfirescu, *15 ani de tranziție* [Fifteen Years of Transition] (București: Editura România Liberă, 2004), p. 54.

[4] Its members were Ion Iliescu, as president, and vice presidents Radu Câmpeanu, Ion Caramitru, Karol Kirali, and Ion Mânzatu.

populace to demobilise in the fight against the post-communist regime[5]. This was only polarising the public discourse even more and making it difficult for the population to understand the real meaning of politicians' speeches.

By analysing the electoral campaigns between 1990 and 1996, we can see that the elections for the office of President of Romania attracted the most public attention, as the candidate was often the leader of the party he represented in the elections, and he was a message-bearer for the entire organization. Most of the sources we have chosen for this study relate to the presidential elections because they personify politics and make it easier for the electorate to understand the political struggle. In fact, even the media is concentrating more on the candidates than the parties. It is also important to analyse the presidential elections, especially because the possible restoration of the monarchy threatened to dismantle the office of president held by Ion Iliescu at the time. In order to analyse the most relevant perspectives, we will focus on a limited number of politicians and parties, according to their popularity in the elections: for 1990–Ion Iliescu (FSN), Radu Câmpeanu (PNL), and Ion Rațiu (PNȚCD); for 1992 and 1996–Ion Iliescu (Democratic Front of National Salvation; FDSN/Party of Social Democracy in Romania; PDSR) and Emil Constantinescu (Democratic Convention of Romania; CDR).

In light of these considerations, the purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which the restoration of the monarchy was an important topic in the elections held during the first post-communist decade, especially in the 1990, 1992, and 1996 elections; which were the main channels for conveying messages for or against; how did the political class's relationship with the royal family develop; and to what extent King Michael I impacted Romania's political arena.

We have consulted the studies of Romanian historians and political analysts, including Florin Abraham, Alina Mungiu, Lavinia Stan, Vladimir Tismăneanu, and Michael Shafir who looked into issues pertaining to Romania's political life in the post-communist era, in order to address these research questions and gain a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics and changes that Romanian society underwent at that point in time. Regarding the state of the monarchy in Romania following the 1989 Revolution, we consulted historians like Alexandru Muraru, who examines how events transpired over a decade, analysing on the basis of press sources how politicians have reported to

[5] Alina Mungiu, *Românii după '89. Istoria unei neînțelegeri* [Romanians after '89. The history of a misunderstanding] (București, Humanitas, 1995), p. 30.

the royal family, from the ban on the entry of the king in the country in 1990 to the moment in 2001, when King Michael I was welcomed in Bucharest by President Ion Iliescu. Tudor Vişan-Miu examines how the opposition to the governing power exploited the idea of restoring the monarchy as a motif in the early post-communist era and how King Michael's image was later used to advocate Romania's entry into the European Union. From a legal and constitutional point of view, to understand the specifics of the laws, decree-laws, and communiqués adopted by the new government, we consulted the works of Eleodor Focșeneanu and Lia Pop, as well as the corpus focused on the constitutional history of Romania, which is coordinated by Gheorghe Sbârnă. Finally, to test the research questions, we looked at the most relevant newspapers with the largest circulation throughout the studied era, like "Adevărul,"[6] "România liberă,"[7] and "Evenimentul zilei"[8]. The party newspaper "Azi" was also examined, as well as „Revista 22," a weekly journal of cultural news and political analysis that had a pro-monarchy and anti-political power stance through articles written by some of the most important intellectuals of the post-communist era.

Historical and legislative background to the change of regime

Shortly after the arrest, trial, and conviction of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, the issue of the country's form of government was settled by the Council of the National Salvation Front (CFSN), the revolutionary ruling body. This institution initially had enhanced powers, including similar prerogatives to a parliament: it appointed and dismissed the government, drafted decrees, appointed and dismissed the president of the High Court of Justice, approved the state budget, and ratified and denounced international

[6] "Adevărul" was the successor of "Scînteia", the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party. It had the largest circulation in the country, at 1.53 million copies in 1990. It was known for its biased attitude towards the FSN.

[7] Despite its publication during the communist period, beginning with the number 14.036 in 1989, the newspaper subsequently became known as "Newspaper of all patriotic and democratic forces in Romania" and later "Independent newspaper of opinion, information and reporting". Petre Mihai Băcanu was appointed as the newspaper's editor-in-chief. Despite lacking direct affiliation with any political party, the newspaper adopted a staunchly oppositional stance, criticising the policies of the FSN and Ion Iliescu.

[8] "Evenimentul zilei" was founded in 1992, becoming one of the most widely read newspaper in Romania, with Mihai Cârciog, Cornel Nistorescu and Ion Cristoiu among its founders. The newspaper stood out for its editorial policy, which was different from that of other dailies of the time: a mixture of news, politics, and tabloid-type information.

treaties[9]. According to Article 1 of a decree-law of December 27, 1989, signed by CFSN President Ion Iliescu, the country's form of government is a republic, while Article 10 states that "all the power structures of the former dictatorial regime are and remain dissolved."[10] Legal experts such as Eleodor Focșeneanu critiqued the ruling, arguing that the CFSN was not qualified to make decisions on constitutional issues as it was a provisional governing body[11]. In practice, the new authorities legitimised the form of organisation of the country established since December 30, 1947, when King Michael I abdicated under pressure from communists who were backed by the Soviet government through the army and advisors stationed in Romania.

There are various explanations that might be explored in relation to the post-revolutionary rulers' decision. First, certain authors, like Tudor Vișan-Miu, contend that the new authorities, who derived their legitimacy from the Revolution, could not have benefited from a legal annulment of the 1948–1989 state[12]. The claim is supported by the arguments offered by Alina Mungiu who offers examples from press articles published by the newspaper "Adevărul" in early 1990. One such article indicates, "The FSN Platform is written with the blood of the Revolution (...) against them (the supporters of the FSN) was fired in full in the cities and city squares of the Romanian martyrdom."[13] Even the journalists of this publication, such as Cristian Tudor Popescu, note this predominant theme when he says, "Ion Iliescu evoked, slightly nostalgically, the short history of the Front, not neglecting to specify—once again—its status as a spontaneous emanation of the revolution"[14]. The official statements invoked the same idea: "The legitimacy

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[9] Florin Abraham, *Romania since the Second World war: a Political, Social and Economic History* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 136.

[10] "Decret-lege nr. 2 din 27 decembrie 1989 privind constituirea, organizarea și funcționarea Consiliului Frontului Salvării Naționale și a consiliilor teritoriale ale Frontului Salvării Naționale" [Decree-Law No. 2 of 27 December 1989 on the establishment, organization and functioning of the Council of the National Salvation Front and the territorial councils of the National Salvation Front] in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Gazette], no. 4, December, 27, 1989.

[11] Eleodor Focșeneanu, *Istoria constituțională a României (1859–2003)* [Constitutional history of Romania (1859-2003)], 3rd Edition (București, 2007), p. 237.

[12] Tudor Vișan-Miu, "Regalitatea în republică: o prezență care dăinuie" [Royalty in the republic: a lasting presence], in *Panorama postcomunismului în România* [The post-communism in Romania], Liliana Corobca (ed.), (Iași: Polirom, 2022), pp. 184–185.

[13] Mungiu, *Românii*, p. 33.

[14] Cristian Tudor Popescu, "Cronica telealegătorului" [Televoter's Chronicle], în *Adevărul*, Year 1 (90), April 10, 1990: p. 2.

of the National Salvation Front cannot be questioned by anyone. It was given by the popular revolution"[15]. Secondly, we can also talk about a lack of reaction from the opposition, especially in the context of the creation of the CPUN, whose composition was unequal, as the FSN had as many members as all the other parties put together. Given that, as Alfred Bulai quoted by Teodora Stănescu-Stanciu says, "the political scene was complicated in the context in which the FSN was acting both as a party and as a legislative body, through the CFSN,"[16] we can refer to an "experiment" accepted by the leaders of the opposition parties, cloaked under the pretence of its provisional nature. For this reason, the CPUN structure was considered by Ion Rațiu as a "concession" and "a sign of good faith" by Ion Iliescu, while Radu Câmpeanu was satisfied that they "have achieved more than had hoped for at the beginning of the meeting"[17]. Therefore, both representatives of the historical parties, the PNȚCD and the PNL, accepted a compromise proposed by the authorities, who claimed legitimacy from the work carried out in the days of the Revolution.

The rallies organised by the FSN and historical party supporters led to the compromise. As a result, an agreement was reached on February 1, 1990, to establish the CPUN, an organisation that served as the initial model for a parliamentary. However, until the election of the new Parliament on May 20, 1990, its prerogatives were the same as those of the CFSN, which meant just a formal change of name and symbolically marked the representativeness of all political parties. The Decree Law of March 14, 1990, on the election of the Romanian Parliament and President also played the role of a "mini constitution," which established a bicameral parliament made up of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies in place of the unicameral parliament as was the CPUN. The executive office of the CPUN was eliminated, and a prime minister-led government was established in its place. The role of President of the Republic likewise took the place of President of the CPUN.[18].

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[15] "Comunicat din 25 ianuarie 1990 din partea Consiliului Frontului Salvarii Naționale" [Statement of January 25, 1990 from the Council of the National Salvation Front], in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Gazette], no. 15, January 25, 1990.

[16] Teodora Stănescu-Stanciu, „Constituția din 1991" [The Constitution of 1991], în *Constituțiile României. Studii* [Romania's Constitutions. Studies], coordinated by Gheorghe Sbârnă (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2012), p. 115.

[17] Ibidem.

[18] Abraham, *Romania*, p. 136.

Lia Pop argues that the office of President of Romania was established by a pre-constitutional act[19], but she does not evaluate the correctness of that choice. In contrast, Focșeneanu makes it clear that, according to constitutional principles, a constitution should have been adopted first and then elections for the office of President of the State should have been organized. Nevertheless, the same author also recalls the December 27, 1989, decision that calls for "the dissolution of the power structures of the former dictatorial regime" and concludes that the office of President of the Republic, which was established by the communist regime in 1974, should be among those to be dissolved. This meant an infringement of the CFSN Communiqué itself[20]. Under these conditions, as Varujan Vosganian says, "throughout the entire period of functioning of the CFSN and CPUN, Ion Iliescu, as their president, had quasi-discretionary powers."[21] Similarly, Lavinia Stan and Diane Vancea argue that the choice to keep the office of President of the Republic signifies a continuation of the communist government because it puts a great deal of authority in the hands of one individual soon after Nicolae Ceaușescu's execution. The two authors dispute as to the reasons for this choice, referring to ties to the previous regime of those who drafted the constitution, an intent to give Iliescu some leverage over the opposition, a refusal to work with anti-communist forces, and a wish to avoid the restoration of the monarchy[22].

Regarding the possibility of restoring the monarchy, Marian Enache, a member of the commission for the adoption of the 1991 Constitution and a member of the parliament from 1990 to 1992, states that "there was no proposal in the CPUN to reinstate the monarchy or to organise a referendum to determine the form of government" during the discussions leading up to the adoption of the decree-law of March 14, 1990[23]. Ion Iliescu advanced an

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[19] Lia Pop, *Despre Președinte în democrație* [About President in democracy], (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2014), p. 289.

[20] Focșeneanu, *Istoria*, pp. 238–239.

[21] Varujan Vosganian, "Echilibrul puterilor: Parlament versus Guvern" [Balance of powers: Parliament versus Government], in *Sfera Politicii,* Year 3 (13), January 1994: p. 6.

[22] Lavinia Stan and Diane Vancea, "House of Cards. The Presidency from Iliescu to Băsescu" in *Post-Communist Romania at Twenty-Five. Linking Past, Present, and Future*, Lavinia Stan and Diane Vancea (eds.) (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 194.

[23] Marian Enache, "Procesul adoptării Constituției din 1991 – o veritabilă școală a constituționalismului românesc" [The process of adopting the 1991 Constitution – A veritable school of Romanian constitutionalism], in *Juridice.ro*, https://www.juridice.ro/essentials/5084/procesul-adoptarii-constitutiei-din-1991-o-veritabila-scoala-a-constitutionalismului-romanesc#_ftnref15, accessed on July 19, 2024.

analogous argument in a 1992 speech, asserting that during the discussions for the 1990 Electoral Law, "there was no monarchist in Romania, so it was clear what was the spirit after the December Revolution and what was the political thinking of everyone"[24].

On the other hand, we can discuss a favourable attitude towards the royal family, especially on the part of the historical parties, and an unfavourable attitude on the part of the FSN, expressed mainly through articles in the press that supported the ruling party. As for Michael I, the exiled former king of Romania, in January 1990 he proposed that the 1923 Constitution—when Romania was a constitutional monarchy—could serve as a useful foundation for the newly elected parliament. In February 1990, he wrote to CPUN stating that he was in favour of holding a referendum to decide on Romania's form of government.[25]

Florin Abraham[26] appreciates that there were three distinct approaches to institution-building projects in the early 1990s: the first was drawn by the historical parties who sought to restore the pre-communist political order, a view that was abandoned due to popular pressure; the second concept, of liberal inspiration, considered that society could be transformed without a project by the elites, but by following an "invisible hand" of individual will; and the third perspective was that of a social engineering project, which was to be assumed and carried out by the elites through state institutions. Ion Iliescu was a key proponent of this idea.

The 1990 elections

The first democratic elections to be held in Romania in fifty years, the May 20, 1990, elections, were regulated by the March 14, 1990, electoral law. Political tensions, which manifested in rallies organised by historical parties against the FSN, preceded the campaign, as we have shown. During the two months of the campaign, social, ethnic, and political conflicts escalated, including interethnic tensions in Târgu Mureș[27], the occupation of University

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[24] "Preşedintele-candidat rămâne totuşi optimist – interviu cu dl. Ion Iliescu" [The President-candidate remains optimistic – interview with Mr. Ion Iliescu], in *Adevărul*, no. 194 (753), September 15, 1992: p. 2.

[25] Vișan-Miu, Regalitatea, p.184.

[26] Abraham, *Romania*, pp. 117–118.

[27] The interethnic conflict in Târgu Mureș was a significant confrontation between the Romanian and Hungarian communities. It occurred between 19 and 21 March 1990 in Târgu Mureș and was triggered by the dissemination of truncated or erroneous information, including rumours of a Hungarian plan to take over Transylvania.

Square[28] by the populace disgruntled with the way power was seized following the Revolution, and the establishment of a "neo-communist" regime.

The election campaign's central themes, which included fighting the effects of leaving the socialist economic system, liberalising prices, adjusting to capitalism, and institutional reorganisation of the state, were very much in line with the start of the shift to democracy and the market economy. However, a campaign of delegitimisation of the protest movements was launched in response to the increasingly vocal opposition. This led to the protests being classified by the authorities as actions intended to disturb public order, while the leaders of the historical parties were charged with seeking to avenge those who had ties to the communist party and take the nation back to the interwar period.

Ion Iliescu of the FSN, Radu Câmpeanu of the PNL, and Ion Rațiu of the PNȚCD were the three candidates who entered the race for Romania's presidency. Ion Iliescu had a beforehand moral advantage compared to the other two candidates because he was perceived by the public as the embodiment of the 1989 regime change and the transfer of power to the people, whereas the other two were less known by the Romanians: Ion Rațiu left the country in the 1940s, and Radu Câmpeanu left in the 1970s after a period of political imprisonment.[29]

Ion Iliescu emphasised the need for a break with the communist past, proposing a step-by-step transformation of the economy—and, by extension, therefore, of society—in order to avoid social imbalances. Throughout the two months of the campaign, he repeatedly reiterated a number of favourite themes in his speeches: criticising communism as a political system without mentioning those who had participated in it prior to 1989, advocating for a gradual transition to a market economy, and emphasising social issues and the steps that should be taken to address them. Throughout the two months of the campaign, the FSN leader made the most of his media endorsement and the notoriety he had earned during the Revolution.

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[28] The University Square Phenomenon, also known as the University Square Demonstrations, originated from a general discontent with the evolution of political life in post-communist Romania. These mass events commenced on April 22 and concluded on June 15, 1990, during which protesters occupied the University Square in Bucharest.

[29] Marius Mureșan, *Destinația Cotroceni. Alegerile prezidențiale în România 1990-2014* [Destination Cotroceni. Presidential elections in Romania 1990-2014], (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2019), p. 24.

As for the other two candidates, Ion Rațiu proposed a political discourse centred around the concepts of freedom, prosperity, and national reconciliation; however, he encountered hostility during his electoral actions, and pro-FSN newspapers fostered mistrust regarding both his good intentions and his past and work done in exile. The FSN used the catchphrase "we are not selling our country"[30] to push this negative campaign, which was motivated by the years spent away from Romania's communist experience. This campaign led to chants at rallies in support of Ion Iliescu, attacks in the press close to the ruling party, and references to the Royal House, the latter being considered a danger to the country's progress. On the other hand, Radu Câmpeanu ran on a political platform emphasising adherence to liberal ideals[31]. Formally speaking, though not officially, the liberal agenda of 1990 was seen as a compromise between the PNȚCD's progressivism and the FSN's protectionism.

Although the two parties had a common history, being antagonistic during the inter-war period and collaborating during the Second World War, and both being victims of communism, there were some reservations among the PNȚCD about collaborating with the Liberals, due to the fact that Radu Câmpeanu was a member of the CPUN, together with Ion Iliescu, and because of some rumours that there was an agreement between the two before the start of the electoral campaign[32].

As for their views on the monarchy, the two parties disagreed with each other. While the PNȚCD publicly expressed their support for King Michael I, the PNL believed that the monarchy was not a principal issue for Romania in the context of the 1990 elections[33]. Radu Câmpeanu stated at a press conference that, despite having met the king in exile, he was unsure whether he supported or opposed the monarchy, because he believed that only the Romanian people should make that decision. Upon his return to the country in 1990, Câmpeanu assert without providing any supporting

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[30] Bogdan Teodorescu et. al., *Cea mai bună dintre lumile posibile. Marketingul politic în România – 1990–2005* [The best of all possible worlds. Political Marketing in Romania – 1990–2005] (Bucureşti: Editura Comunicare.ro, 2005), p. 43.

[31] Codrin Scutaru, *Partide politice românești între tranziție și criză: Partidul Național Liberal 1990-2010, Teză de doctorat* [Romanian political parties between transition and crisis: the National Liberal Party 1990-2010, PhD Thesis], (Timișoara: Universitatea de Vest, 2010), pp. 148–149.

[32] Ion Rațiu, *Note zilnice. În fine, acasă* [Daily notes. Finally, home], (Bucureşti: Editura Univers, 1999), p. 129.

[33] Paul Dobrescu, "Veşti importante de la Conferinţa pe ţară a PNL" [Important news from the PNL National Conference], in *Adevărul*, Year 1 (82), March 31, 1990: p. 3.

evidence that "he was surprised to see the rejection of the monarchical idea, a categorical rejection"[34].

Nonetheless, the ruling party's affiliated media attempted to lump the two parties together starting from their common history. A particular reading of the events that transpired in 1937—the signing of the "electoral non-aggression pact" between the PNȚ under Iuliu Maniu, the PNL's young wing under Gheorghe Brătianu, and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's "Totul pentru Țară" party—was provided by the journalists of the "Azi" newspaper. There is a warning—although not an explicit one—that the monarchy might be restored if the opposition wins the elections, which links the signing of the 1937 pact to the foundation of King Carol II's royal dictatorship in 1938[35].

Subsequently, the "Azi" editorial board raised some concerns about Ion Rațiu's background prior to 1989 and his involvement in post-communist politics through a series of questions regarding his 1940s departure from the country, about his financial situation, his activities while living in exile, his relationship with the former Securitate, the source of funding for his own party, the assets he will gain from privatisations and retrocedes, and his perspective on a republican system[36]. As in the case of Ion Rațiu, the PNL candidate was asked to explain the source of the financial support provided to his own party, the assets he will acquire as a result of privatisations and retrocedes, and the idea of Romania being a monarchy or a republic[37]. The same newspaper compared the behaviour of the PNȚCD in 1990 with that of the PNȚ in 1928, when it organised campaigns to overthrow the then liberal government, their action then culminating in the accession of Carol II to the throne, asking rhetorically whether a "sensational surprise" is in the making, culminating in the moment when "former King Michael will descend like a *deux ex machina*".[38]

A tense event that brought the topic of monarchy into political discourse occurred in April 1990, following reports of King Michael I's potential visit to Romania. Even Radu Câmpeanu, one of the opposition candidates, said on Romanian national television that the visit was inappropriate for

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[34] "Conferință de presă" [Press Conference], in *Tribuna*, No. 101, April 24, 1990: p. 3.

[35] CLIO, "Istoria ca martor" [History as a witness], in *Azi*, Year 1 (2), April 1990: p. 6.

[36] "Câteva întrebări pentru doi candidați la președinția republicii" [Some questions for two candidates for the presidency of the republic], in *Azi,* Year 1 (5), April 1990: p. 2.

[37] *Ibidem*.

[38] CLIO, "Mijloace vechi – scopuri noi?" [Old means – new goals?], in *Azi*, Year 1 (2), April 1990: p. 2.

the time[39]. However, the visit did not take place as the government decided not to grant a visa to the former monarch[40], asking him to postpone the visit until after the elections[41]. The government made public its willingness for the King to make a private visit to the nation in a statement to the press, but also stated that the announcement of the visit sparked "reactions of opposition from many political forces in the country," including those represented in the CPUN. Threats of violent protests and the King being "unwillingly involved in obscure manipulations that could affect his dignity"[42] were cited by the government as reasons for concern. In a 1992 interview, Ion Iliescu said about this moment that "I remember the very discussion about the first attempt of the king's return to the country, when everyone rejected it, including the representatives of the PNȚ and PNL (it was the eve of the elections), as a disturbing factor."[43]

In a telegram published by "Revista 22," the Romanian dramatist Eugene Ionesco conveys his profound sadness and grief over the decision, which he deems "shameful for Romania."[44] In his analysis, Andrei Pippidi refers to the pressures and the "real attitude of the government" considering the public's lack of awareness regarding the letter sent by King Michael I to the CPUN in February 1990. This letter is regarded as a "historic document." Similarly, the author asserts that the Romanian government's antagonistic stance is further evidenced by Prime Minister Petre Roman's remarks to the French channel Antenne 2, in which he described the monarch as "a relic of history."[45] Subsequently, the Prime Minister characterised the aforementioned letter as a "political action," interpreting it as a petition for a referendum from the King[46]. Regarding the public's disapproval of the monarchy, which the government has referenced, Pippidi recalls the government's call for the nation's citizens "to take

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[39] Andrei Pippidi, "Cel care vine" [The one who comes], in *Revista 22*, No. 13, April 13, 1990: p. 3.

[40] "Comunicat" [Statement], in *Revista 22*, No. 14, April 20, 1990: p. 6.

[41] Vișan-Miu, "Regalitatea," 185. See footnote p. 3.

[42] "Declarația Guvernului României" [Statement by the Government of Romania], in *Tribuna*, No. 12, April 12, 1990: p. 4.

[43] "Preşedintele-candidat rămâne totuşi optimist... ".

[44] See *Revista 22*, No. 14, April 20, 1990: p. 6.

[45] Andrei Pippidi, "Nu sînt monarhist" [I am not a monarchist], in *Revista 22*, No. 14, April 20, 1990: p. 6.

[46] Alexandru Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică? Regele Mihai, românii și regalitatea după 1989* [How does a monarchy survive in a republic? King Michael, Romanians and royalty after 1989], (București: Curtea Veche, 2015), p. 99.

to the streets and express their attitude towards the issue of the visit" at the conclusion of a government meeting on April 12[47]. A recent analysis by political analyst Alexandru Muraru posits that the government's opposition can be attributed to two factors: firstly, the emergence of a more popular discourse in Romanian society regarding the ideal form of government, and secondly, the lack of electoral legitimacy of the FSN.[48].

Public reaction to the government's decision included demonstrations in support of and against the proposal. Royalists questioned the legitimacy of the new power, while the Romanian Antimonarchic League declared its opposition to both historical parties and royalty. The PNL claimed that the political parties had no role in organising the two separate demonstrations, although Romanian television portrayed them as pro- and anti-monarchic and related to the election campaign. By expressing its disapproval of the evening news coverage of the 16 April rallies, the PNL is trying to distance itself from the label of being pro-monarchy. Through such media strategies, especially pro-authority television and newspapers tried to project links between the historical parties and their support for the monarchy.

The unfolding of events raises several questions regarding the potential political calculations of the ruling party. Was there ever any intention to grant the King a visa? What could the FSN have gained from this situation? If the first question is challenging to respond to, given the existence of advanced formal and informal discussions between the royal family and the Romanian authorities so we don't know where they got stuck, Paul Gheorghiu presents a potential key to elucidating the second question, which invokes a government diversionary tactic aimed at discrediting the most dangerous political opponents by associating them with the person of King Michael I. Conversely, upon recognising that the king could have benefited from popular support and thus initiate a new theme in the political campaign, the decision was taken to halt his return to the country[49].

Despite the responses in the domestic and foreign press to the government's decision to prohibit the return of King Michael I and the protests of some Romanian cultural figures, the topic did not emerge as a pivotal issue in the electoral campaign. This may be attributed, in part, to the

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[47] Pippidi, "Nu sînt monarhist": p. 6.

[48] Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, p. 98.

[49] Paul Gheorghiu, "Liga Monarhică – o nouă diversiune", in *România liberă*, Year 48 (14.131), New Series, No. 97, April 18, 1990: 6.

absence of reactions from the then-president of the CPUN, Ion Iliescu. Those who advocated for the decision were primarily Prime Minister Petre Roman and media outlets affiliated with the FSN. Nevertheless, some political figures, like Radu Câmpeanu, who was viewed as Ion Iliescu's main rival, were forced to retract their support for the monarchy, particularly given the circumstances surrounding his known relationship with King Michael during the exile.

The 1992 elections

Prior to the 1992 elections, Romanian society was confronted with several socio-political challenges, the most notable of which was the Mineriada of June 13–15, 1990[50]. Furthermore, in December of the same year, King Michael I was once again refused entry into the country. On December 25, the king arrived in Bucharest, whereupon he proceeded to the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, the final resting place of Romania's kings and queens since 1914. However, the authorities had organised a roadblock on the route, comprising an oversized truck and armed vehicles, which Princess Elisabeth, the King's daughter, described in an interview as a 'Kafkaesque sequence'[51]. The King's passport was confiscated, and he was expelled from the country by military plane.

Despite the private nature of the visit, the authorities invoked the same arguments as those used in April 1990. Alexandru Muraru has suggested that this moment marked the beginning of a symbolic struggle between the authorities and the return of the King to the country[52]. The polemics surrounding this decision were even more intense than those of April 1990. The authorities' decision was contested by numerous organisations, including the Civic Alliance, the Alliance of Former Political Prisoners, the World Union of Free Romanians, and several political parties, such as the PNL, PSD, and PNȚCD. Additionally, an influential group of intellectuals associated with the Social Dialogue Group, which published the journal "Revista 22," also expressed opposition. Prominent figures within this group included Andrei

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[50] The event in question occurred in June 1990 in Bucharest, when the police intervened in force against protesters in University Square. The name of the event derives from the miners who were called to Bucharest to assist the authorities in restoring order. The incident resulted in six deaths and more than 700 injuries, and President Ion Iliescu is noteworthy for a speech in which he thanked the miners for their response to the authorities' call.

[51] "El știe cine este. Scurt dialog la București cu Principesa Margareta" [He knows who he is. Short dialog with Princess Margareta in Bucharest], in *Revista 22*, Year 2 (1), January 11, 1991: p. 9.

[52] Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, p. 105.

Pipiddi, Andrei Cornea, and Vladimir Tismăneanu. Tismăneanu explains the decision of the authorities, noting that the King's visit represented a "defiance of their own claim to legitimacy" for Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman, as they positioned themselves as "guardians of national values."[53] On the other hand, the government adopted a clear-cut attitude, expressed by its spokesperson, who invoked the contempt with which the royal family had always treated the Romanian people[54].

On the other hand, one of the most significant changes in Romanian society has been the ratification of the new Constitution of Romania in September 1991, which established the republican nature of the Romanian state. As a result, the constitutional transition period ended in 1991, when the new fundamental act was approved by referendum. This delineated the principle of the separation of powers within the state apparatus, with the Parliament designated as the exclusive legislative authority, comprising two chambers with four-year terms. The initial intention of the Constituent Assembly was to establish a unicameral parliament; however, the decision was taken to adopt a bicameral system. Following the elections held on May 20, 1990, a debate began concerning the definition of the political regime rather than the form of government. The presidential model was deemed unsuitable, as it was perceived to evoke the Ceaușescu regime. The parliamentary model was not favoured by Iliescu, who was aware that his political legitimacy would be diminished if he were elected by Parliament. It was therefore thought that the French semi-presidential regime would be the ideal model, as it also corresponded to the traditional French influence in Romania. Furthermore, a soft model of semi-presidentialism with an elected president was also used in former communist states such as Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine[55].

From a political perspective, between 1990 and 1992 a significant transformation of the political landscape took place, indicating a growing interest in participatory democracy as well as the maturation of politicians and the establishment of more distinct ideological boundaries. The most significant and unexpected changes involved the FSN itself, which in 1990 resembled a monolithic entity until splitting into two groups in February

[53] Vladimir Tismăneanu, „Pălmuirea istoriei" [Slaping the history], in *Revista 22*, Year 2 (1), January 11, 1991: pp. 8-9.
[54] Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, p. 107.
[55] Abraham, *Romania*, p. 144.

1992, one associated with Petre Roman and the other with Ion Iliescu[56]. The formation of the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR), a diverse coalition of opposition parties led primarily by the PNȚCD[57], was the second significant development. Its rise to prominence prior to the 1992 local elections coincided with the FSN's internal issues, which helped it secure most seats in local government. It also made a solid reputation for itself as the leading political opposition group.

Another significant event occurred between April 25 and 27, 1992. King Michael and Queen Anne, in response to an invitation from the Archbishop of Suceava and Rădăuți, attended Easter celebrations at Putna Monastery. This visit was strictly private and not a political one. In the following days, the itinerary included visits to Bucharest and Curtea de Argeș. Following this visit, Radu Câmpeanu, the leader of the PNL, proposed to the king that he should run for president of Romania. This proposal was rejected by the monarch, which resulted in a cooling of relations between the Liberals and the King, as the latter had not been consulted beforehand[58]. However, it provided the party that had won the 1990 elections with new political tools. Additionally, in August of 1992, a new visit by the King was scheduled, also in private and still under the pretext of attending religious events. In light of the imminent electoral campaign, it is noteworthy to examine the stance of the political parties. The FDSN highlighted the danger of a coup d'état, whereas the PNL, while expressing reservations about the King's itinerary, urged a more mature approach towards King Michael I from the political elite. Despite negotiations between the Royal House and government representatives, the decision was taken not to permit the King to proceed with the visit[59]. Once again, the government's proposal was to postpone the visit until after the elections, as was the case in 1990. Given the popularity of the King during the April 1992 visit and the CDR's consistent support for him, it was evident that the Coalition would have benefited the most from this event.

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[56] Anne Jugănaru, Alexandru Radu, *FSN – Un paradox politic (1989–1992). România postcomunistă. O istorie a partidelor politice în interviuri şi documente* [FSN – A political paradox (1989–1992). Postcommunist Romania. A history of political parties in interviews and documents], Volume I (București: Editura Pro Universitaria, 2013), pp. 123–124.

[57] Dan Pavel, "O analiză asupra Convenţiei Democratice din România" [An analysis of the Democratic Convention in Romania], in *Sfera Politicii*, Year 1 (1), December 1992: p. 6.

[58] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

[59] Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, pp. 114–115.

Regarding the electoral campaign, Ion Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu emerged as the most significant contenders upon entering the second round of the presidential elections. Ion Iliescu and the FDSN discussed topics that had been effectively addressed in the previous campaign, including the monarchy, the landowners' issue, which was connected to CDR supporters, Hungarian irredentists, and the activities of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) in the nation and among its supporters overseas[60]. The main contender to succeed Ion Iliescu as president was Emil Constantinescu, the CDR candidate. He had no prior political experience and came from an academic background, being unknown to the public in 1992. The parliamentary campaign was strongly associated with the presidential campaign, partly due to Constantinescu's lack of popularity and partly because the CDR had already secured a significant victory in that year's local elections[61].

Considering the more robust positioning of the CDR in comparison to the divided opposition in 1990, the themes through which this coalition and its candidate were assailed were markedly more resonant. They were advanced by a multitude of supporters of the FDSN, in addition to Ion Iliescu himself. Moreover, the subject of restoring the monarchy played a more pivotal role than in previous elections.

In "Adevărul," a newspaper that mostly upheld the same positive view of the ruling party, Constantinescu was referred to as a puppet of the PNȚCD leaders, and it was stated that the CDR's objective was unquestionably the restoration of the monarchy[62]. Ion Iliescu actually embraced the same line of argumentation when attempting to convince the Romanian people that the true goals of the united opposition were those published in an analysis of the French press: "the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, the restitution of real estate and land to former owners and their successors, and unlimited privatisation in all areas of economic life."[63] In fact, both Ion Iliescu and the FDSN brought up a number of historically significant topics during the four weeks of the campaign, including: the monarchy (by bringing up

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[60] "Campania electorală – Ion Iliescu" [Electoral Campaign – Ion Iliescu], in *Adevărul*, No. 202 (761), September, 24, 1992: p. 5.

[61] CDR won the elections in big cities (Bucharest, Timișoara, Brasov, Craiova, Iasi, Pitesti, Targu Jiu, etc.), while FSN won important majorities in small towns and rural areas.

[62] Andrei Alexandru, "Campania electorală – Ion Iliescu" [Electoral Campaign – Ion Iliescu], in *Adevărul*, No. 186 (745), September 5–6, 1992: p. 3.

[63] Ion Iliescu, "Campania electorală – Ion Iliescu" [Electoral Campaign – Ion Iliescu], in *Adevărul*, No. 202 (761), September 24, 1992; p. 5.

the idea of a referendum on the type of government); landlords (by stating that the CDR intended to revive the inter-war Romanian society model); and Hungarian irredentists (by talking about the activities of the UDMR against the Romanian state).

In an electoral debate held at the editorial office of the newspaper "Adevărul"[64] during the final week of the campaign, Ion Iliescu identified three distinct categories of political parties in Romania. He described the first as "the forces of restoration," which he defined as parties aligned with the CDR. He further elaborated that this category of parties seeks to return Romania to the socio-political and economic conditions that prevailed during the interwar period. He concluded that such a return would inevitably lead to significant discrepancies in Romanian society. The second category, as identified by the President, comprises parties that advocate the implementation of Western models. This approach, in his view, would result in significant discrepancies between a wealthy minority and an economically disadvantaged majority. The final category is represented by centre-left parties, the only ones seeking to achieve equilibrium within a dynamic, modern, and competitive market economy.

A document purportedly belonging to the FDSN, published by the newspaper "România Liberă," outlines the party's electoral strategy, which included the promotion of specific themes: the CDR advocates the restoration of the monarchy and the return to the interwar democracy model; in its rhetoric, the past is invoked as a means of seeking revenge against the communist period; the coalition leaders are trained in their activity by "an aggressive and primitive anti-communism." Given the focus of the campaign on the presidential race, it was simple for Ion Iliescu's campaign team to establish a network of associations between the CDR and a range of labels, including "PNȚCD supporters," "monarchists," "right-wing," "landlords," and "violence."[65]

The fact that this was a political discourse held during an electoral campaign that revolves around specific campaign themes, such as the threat of "restoring the monarchy" and the implications of King Michael I's presence in Romania, exposes the FDSN politicians' obsession with and fear of this idea. As Alexandru Muraru also asserts, it is paradoxical that the party in question refers to the extremely small number of supporters of the monarchy,

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[64] "Viitorul preşedinte faţă în faţă cu viitoarea politică" [Next president face to face with future politics], in *Adevărul*, No. 202 (761), September 24, 1992: pp. 2–3.

[65] Pavel, "O analiză asupra Convenţiei": p. 7.

yet "when it came to granting a visa for the monarch and his family to enter the country, things immediately rushed," which hyperbolised the subject of the king's return[66].

As a result of the political attacks and media pressure, Emil Constantinescu was compelled to adopt a defensive stance, although he did not consistently succeed in articulating a clear and unambiguous position. In an interview published by the newspaper "Adevărul" on September 15, the candidate provided his views on several current issues, including his overseas visits, the proposed change of form of government, his stance on communism, the national debate, interethnic tensions, and economic challenges. In response to the question of the monarchy, he declined to provide a direct answer, asserting that a president is duty-bound to respect the democratic system and that any such decision must be made by referendum, reflecting the will of the majority. However, Constantinescu was compelled to qualify his answer, finally emphasising that the past 45 years of history could not be disregarded and that the circumstances of December 1947 could not be reinstated[67].

Concurrently, CDR leaders have articulated in press conferences that the Coalition holds the Constitution in high regard and that the form of government can only be determined by the collective will of the Romanian people, as evidenced by the referendum that approved the Constitution[68].

In mid-October 1992, King Michael I made a further attempt to visit Romania, but the government refused to grant him a visa, citing the electoral process. This refusal followed a critical article published by King Michel I in the publication "The European," in which he questioned the legitimacy of the regime in Bucharest, spoke of an imposed Constitution, and claimed that Ion Iliescu was a political leader who, while calling himself the head of state, thanked the miners for the violent actions of June 13–15, 1990[69].

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[66] Alexandru Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, p. 112; p. 114.

[67] Constantin Lupu, "«Voi fi un preşedinte al celor ce m-au ales, dar în special al celor ce nu m-au ales» – interviu cu dl. Emil Constantinescu, candidat din partea Convenţiei Democratice din România la preşedinţie" ["I will be a president of those who elected me, but especially of those who did not elect me" – interview with Mr. Emil Constantinescu, candidate of the Democratic Convention of Romania for the presidency], in *Adevărul*, No. 194 (753), September 15, 1992: p. 1.

[68] "Un apel la logică şi eleganţă" [A call for logic and elegance], in *România liberă*, Year 50 (14.780), New Series, No. 746, September 15, 1992: p. 3.

[69] Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, p. 118.

Ultimately, the presidential elections were won by Ion Iliescu. Many analysts and historians were intrigued by the circumstances surrounding Emil Constantinescu's defeat, particularly given the CDR's apparent advantage following the local elections and the recent split within the FSN. The anti-communist message that had been conveyed in the 1990 elections was reiterated two years later, but at that time, the electorate was more preoccupied with economic concerns than with the fact that Iliescu was a member of the Communist Party. Mara-Ileana Galat and Mircea Kivu highlight that in the latter stages of the electoral campaign, Iliescu put forward a plan for change based on combating corruption and fostering job creation, whereas Constantinescu confined himself to criticising the trajectory of the initial post-communist years without proposing a viable alternative[70].

As for the subject of monarchy, it has been approached in several research studies. On the one hand, argues Alina Mungiu, the monarchist discourse, used by some politicians of the historical parties as a solution to solve problems, was idealistic rather than pragmatic. On the other hand, the CDR's message was quite easy to dismantle, because although they were perceived as "democrats," they were labelled as trying to bring the monarchy on an unholy path; although they were considered "patriots," their reference to foreign political and economic models was questioned[71]. Also, Gabriel Ivan argues that shortly after the regime change, the feeling of insecurity can become a collective experience; thus, nostalgia for communism intervenes, while the CDR promoted not only democracy but also the restoration of the pre-war situation, a period when many people were lower on the social ladder[72].

The 1996 elections

The 1996 elections were organised at the end of the four years of Nicolae Văcăroiu's term as Prime Minister and Ion Iliescu's term as President. During this period, when the PDSR held exclusive power, Romania experienced an economic crisis and a lack of progress in the implementation of reforms. One of the reasons for this was the implementation of a program of economic transformation in extremely gradual stages, with the intention of

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[70] Mara-Ileana Galat, Mircea Kivu, "Schimbarea care nu s-a produs" [The change that didn't happen], in *Sfera Politicii,* Year 1 (11), November 1993: p. 21.

[71] Alina Mungiu, "De ce am pierdut alegerile" [Why we lost the elections], in *Sfera Politicii*, Year 1 (1), December 1992: p. 11.

[72] Gabriel Ivan, "În căutarea normalităţii" [Searching for normality], in *Sfera Politicii*, Year 1 (1), December 1992: p. 8.

preventing social imbalance and thus alienating specific social groups. From a diplomatic perspective, Romania has made notable progress, including consensus among political leaders on the country's accession to NATO and integration into the European Union. The normalisation of relations with neighbouring countries, such as Hungary, has also been a crucial factor in the success of these two projects.

Tensions between the royal family and the political establishment persisted during this period, as evidenced by the King's repeated travel bans, even though the electoral argument that had been raised in 1990 and 1992 had theoretically vanished. When the King intended to visit the country in April 1993, the government referred to the likelihood of strikes and protests. In the autumn of 1993, the King wanted to take part in the celebrations organised on December 1st, the Romanian National Day, but he was criticised by the authorities for having kept May 10 as the date for the celebration of the Romanian National Day, so the government claimed that in granting a visa to Michael I, he would be receiving a special treatment, different from that of an ordinary Romanian. In April 1994, a few dozen opposition MPs called for national reconciliation during the Easter holidays, claiming that the King would not challenge the constitutional order on his return to the country—despite negotiations between the government and the royal house, the visit was eventually cancelled, with officials alleging that the King might be in danger as security forces were reportedly overwhelmed by possible clashes between supporters and opponents of the monarch. In the summer of 1994, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of August 23, 1944, several organisations sent invitations to the King to visit the country; the authorities intervened preemptively, trying to minimise the King's and Romania's contribution to the end of the Second World War, and the King was turned back at the airport. Furthermore, in the autumn of 1995, when the funeral of Corneliu Coposu took place, the King was not allowed to enter the country[73].

A distinctive feature of the 1996 elections was the formation of political coalitions, although the most influential entities remained the PDSR, representing the incumbent government, and the CDR, representing the opposition. Despite the presence of sixteen presidential candidates, the primary contenders were Ion Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu, as in 1992.

[73] Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică*, pp. 133; 137; 146; 163.

President Ion Iliescu's image changed during his four years in office. The Western press praised him for Romania's foreign policy, which was clearly directed towards the West. First among the former communist nations to sign NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994, Romania also filed its application for membership in the European Union in 1995[74]. In addition, reform and modernisation characterised domestic policy, with a focus on privatisation—a notable change from earlier years—as well as support for agriculture, among other things.

The pre-election opinion polls showed a decrease in support for candidate Ion Iliescu[75], which might be the explanation for why the PDSR's electoral marketing strategy included a significant negative campaign against the other candidates. This time, the topic of "restoring the monarchy" was pushed even harder and with more approaches, including speeches by party leader and prime ministerial candidate Adrian Năstase, television commercials, posters, flyers[76], leaflets dropped from aircraft[77], and phone campaigns disguised as opinion polls.

The foreign press took note of the electoral campaign's use of "media violence," with "France Presse" highlighting a broadcast by Romanian TV

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[74] "Reuters: «Iliescu a renunțat la limbajul epocii comuniste»" [Reuters: 'Iliescu has abandoned the communist-era rhetoric'], in *Adevărul*, No. 1963, September 4, 1996: p. 2.

[75] Mureșan, *Destinația Cotroceni*, pp. 115–116.

[76] As the electoral campaign drew to a close, a series of messages were distributed in Bacău, a provincial city, which sought to draw parallels between the current political situation and historical events. These messages, which were disseminated through electoral materials, highlighted perceived similarities between the current political landscape and that of the past, particularly in relation to the monarchy, the Constitution, and the restoration of large properties. One such message read, "After 50 years, history repeats itself: the former King Michael, Emil Constantinescu, and the PNȚCD are once again handing us over to Russia." Another stated, "They want monarchy; they want the Constitution annulled; they want the restoration of the boyar estates and the recovery of the large properties." See: Cristina Roșca, "La Bacău au fost răspândite foi volante în care se spune că: «Ex-regele Mihai, Emil Constantinescu şi ţărăniştii ne dau din nou pe mâna Rusiei»" [In Bacău, flyers have been distributed saying that "Ex-King Michael, Emil Constantinescu and the PNȚCD are once again handing us over to Russia"], in *Evenimentul zilei*, Year 5 (1325), October 30, 1996: p. 5.

[77] During a CDR electoral rally held in Revolution Square in Bucharest, the area was subject to leaflet drops from aircraft, which distributed printed material outlining the potential "dangers" of a CDR government. The material in question highlighted concerns regarding the monarchy, the possibility of land being reclaimed, pensions, and the prevention of the purchase of nationalised houses. See: Oana Iurașcu, "În Piața Revoluției, CDR a ținut mitingul certitudinii victoriei" [In Revolution Square, CDR held the rally of the certain victory], in *Adevărul*, No. 2013, November 1, 1996: p. 3.

stations that aired in the advertising space reserved for candidate Ion Iliescu and the PDSR. "Constantinescu's face is displayed on the screen and gradually transitions to that of the former King Michael, who was forced to abdicate by the communists in 1947 and has been residing in exile in Switzerland ever since." [78] On the same episode, Ion Iliescu's image director, who later resigned from this position, Eugen Mihăiescu characterized the clip as offensive, "banal, tasteless, and cheap," appreciating that "this is what happens when you let go of primitive ideas, unfiltered through the act of creation"[79]. On the other hand, the CDR responded with a similar clip in which the figure of Ion Iliescu turns into that of Nicolae Ceaușescu[80]. Despite these circumstances, as observed by journalists such as Cristian Tudor Popescu, the anticipated media effect did not materialise. This was because the population was not preoccupied with the matter of restoring the monarchy; instead, their concerns centred on the high cost of living and the prevalence of corruption. Consequently, the monarchist coup d'état foreseen by Adrian Nastase did not occur, and the rhetoric that instilled fear of the "return of the landlords and the king" failed to exert any discernible influence on the political or electoral landscape[81]. The same politician also invoked the figure of Corneliu Coposu[82], who he said, "made a contract with His Majesty King Michael to bring him back to the country," and the CDR would be the executors of the former PNȚCD president[83].

Another highly controversial moment related to the PDSR and Ion Iliescu's campaign emerged in the press in early October 1996. Several journalists, in collaboration with representatives of the "December 21"

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[78] "France Presse consideră campania electorală din România «de o violenţă mediatică fără precedent»" [France Presse calls Romanian election campaign "of unprecedented media violence"], in *Evenimentul* zilei, Year 5 (1325), October 30, 1996: p. 1.

[79] Răzvan Mitroi, "Războiul clipurilor electorale" [The war of election videos], in *Adevărul*, No. 1970, September 12, 1996: p. 3.

[80] *Ibidem*.

[81] Cristian Tudor Popescu, "Trei, Doamne, şi toţi trei!" [Three, Lord, and all three!], in *Adevărul*, No. 1964, September 5, 1996: p. 1.

[82] Corneliu Coposu served as president of the PNȚCD from 1990 to 1995, as well as the leader of the CDR. He was a prominent figure within the party, with close ties to its interwar history. He had been imprisoned in communist political jails and emerged as a leading opponent of Ion Iliescu after the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Additionally, he was a vocal supporter of King Michael I's return to Romania.

[83] Lia Bejan, Răzvan Mitroi, "Din lipsă de «combatanţi», defilarea PDSR-iştilor a fost anulată" [For lack of "combatants", the PDSR-ists' parade was canceled], in *Adevărul*, No. 2013, November 1, 1996: p. 3.

Association, made an incursion into a space where, according to official data, an opinion poll was being conducted. The telephones used were provided by Romtelecom, a state-owned enterprise. This information is relevant because the questionnaire used by the employees included nine questions, three of which enquired about voting intentions, and the remaining six were designed in a way that prompted the interlocutor to learn about a negative aspect of the other candidates and then be asked to opine on the matter[84]. One of the questions addressed the subject of this study and was phrased as follows: "Constantinescu, president of the CDR, has stated that his first act upon becoming president would be to reinstate King Michael to the throne. Considering this assertion, would you say that your confidence in Emil Constantinescu has increased or decreased?"[85]

Emil Constantinescu's campaign in 1996 differed from his previous one in several respects. The anti-communist rhetoric that had previously characterised his campaign was absent, and the issue of the rural world played a significant role in his program. The four years spent in opposition allowed Constantinescu to identify himself with the idea of a "united opposition candidate," thereby becoming a fully-fledged politician and being perceived as such [86]. Regarding the matter of the "restoration of the monarchy," a topic that the PDSR has sought to link with the CDR candidate, each time the question was posed to Constantinescu, he provided a definitive response. From these statements, two key elements emerge: firstly, that should the king return to the country, he would do so as a citizen, not as a monarch; and secondly, that there is no intention to hold a referendum on the form of state[87]. It is noteworthy that the opposition candidate has demonstrated a greater inclination to disseminate the positive aspects of his campaign program. This has involved a focus on the reform projects he intends to implement, coupled with a minimal engagement with the campaign themes of the PDSR and Ion Iliescu.

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[84] Marius Mureșan, "Politică și presă: reflectarea campaniei electorale din 1996 în ziarul «Evenimentul zilei»" [Politics and press: the 1996 election campaign reflected in "Evenimentul zilei" newspaper], in *Revista Philohistoriss*, New Series, Year 2 (4), December 2016: p. 87.

[85] "PDSR manipulează electoratul pe firul scurt" [PDSR manipulates the electorate on the short thread], in *Adevărul*, No. 1986, October 1, 1996: p. 1.

[86] Camelia Beciu, *Politica discursivă. Practici politice într-o campanie electorală* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2000), pp. 71-72.

[87] Oana Iuraşcu, "Emil Constantinescu: Dacă regele va reveni în ţară, o va face ca simplu cetăţean" [Emil Constantinescu: If the King returns to the country, he will do so as a private citizen], in *Adevărul*, No. 1979, September 23, 1996:p. 1.

With the beginning of the campaign for the second round of elections, Michael Shafir observed a change in the tone of Ion Iliescu's messages. Iliescu presented himself as the only candidate capable of guaranteeing a balanced policy and counterbalancing the excesses of the government, thus playing the extremist and nationalistic card, mainly because the PDSR had lost the parliamentary elections, and most political parties chose to support his opponent[88]. The most notable shift in rhetoric occurred in a speech delivered in Alba Iulia towards the conclusion of the campaign. Media outlets widely disseminated this speech, which saw Ion Iliescu departing from his previously moderate stance and adopting a more aggressive tone. He vehemently criticised the opposition and Emil Constantinescu, citing concerns such as the autonomy of Hungarians and revisiting historical topics like monarchy, the issue of nationalised houses, and state pensions[89]. On the other hand, he referred to the association of Emil Constantinescu with Petre Roman, about the latter claiming that "he has no real roots among the Romanian people,"[90] a claim that was seen as being particularly controversial given Roman's Jewish origins. In analysing this episode, Ion Cristoiu identified a shift towards a more radicalised left-wing discourse and observed that the themes deployed in the previous elections were being reiterated, indicating a lack of capacity to present a positive electoral offer[91].

Conversely, Emil Constantinescu concentrated on a discourse concerning the necessity of constructing a new Romania[92], a constructive, future-orientated message designed to instill confidence. Consequently, the triumph of the CDR candidate was also influenced by a notable disparity between the two candidates' visions: Constantinescu's constructive and Iliescu's critical, unaccountable, and reminiscent of the campaigns of the early 1990s.

The 1996 presidential elections were won by Emil Constantinescu. Paradoxically, the PDSR and Ion Iliescu lost the elections on a political platform that was similar to the ones that had been successful for them in

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[88] Michael Shafir, "Alegerile din România: un sufragiu istoric" [Romanian elections: a historic vote], in *Sfera Politicii*, Year 5 (45), 1996: p. 27.

[89] Teodorescu, *Cea mai bună dintre lumile posibile*, p. 79.

[90] Shafir, "Alegerile din România: un sufragiu istoric": p.27.

[91] Ion Cristoiu, "De ce trebuie să nu mai fie ales Ion Iliescu" [Why Ion Iliescu should no longer be elected], in *Evenimentul zilei*, Year 5 (1338), November 14, 1996: p. 1.

[92] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Sfârșitul excepționalismului românesc: epitaf pentru a treia cale" [The end of Romanian exceptionalism: epitaph for a third way], in *Sfera Politicii*, Year 5 (45), 1996: p. 23.

1990 and 1992[93]. The approach of the opposition and its candidate changed. While in 1992 the CDR had no response to the intimidation tactics of the ruling party, in the 1996 campaign they opted for a rather positive message: one of the most visible solutions was the "Contract with Romania," modelled on the 1994 US Republican campaign, a document that promised to solve the problems of the country in 200 days, otherwise the government would have to resign. Gradually, with these changes, analysts have appreciated that the CDR proposed an even more left-wing program than that of the PDSR[94]. In other words, in the second round, Constantinescu's speech was addressed not only to the electorate that voted for him in the first round (large and medium-sized cities), but also to those who voted for Petre Roman, i.e., the rural areas, which led to important changes in his rhetoric, and the speech took on populist, symbolic accents[95].

Conclusions

As has been demonstrated, the political party that seized authority in Romania following the 1989 Revolution rapidly resolved the question of the country's form of government, including from a legal standpoint. In this regard, the CFSN Declaration of December 1989, the Electoral Law of March 1990, and the Constitution of September 1991 are of particular significance. Notwithstanding the aforementioned circumstances, the possibility of reverting to the monarchical traditions of the interwar period constituted a recurrent theme in the discourse of politicians affiliated with the ruling party, particularly during the electoral campaigns for the presidency. The research undertaken for this study underscores the perception of a lack of political and electoral legitimacy on the part of Ion Iliescu and his party.

In light of the numerous instances when King Michael I was forbidden from entering the country, and in alignment with the stances of Romanian politicians and intellectuals, a symbolic conflict emerged between the royal family and the political group led by Ion Iliescu. Consequently, two contrasting perspectives emerged, one perceiving the authorities' stance as a means of safeguarding the achievements of the revolution and the other, that of the opposition, viewing the conflict as a struggle between the neo-communist authorities and democratic parties.

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[93] Dan Oprescu, "Despre înfrânţi şi învingători" [About losers and winners], in *Sfera politicii*, Year 5 (44), 1996: p. 21.

[94] Shafir, "Alegerile din România: un sufragiu istoric": p. 25.

[95] Dan Oprescu, "Despre înfrânţi şi învingători": p. 22.

Despite the fact that the theme was referenced in 1990, 1992, and 1996, it is evident that the Romanian electorate has matured over time. Additionally, it can be observed that the population has become more concerned with immediate issues. With the advent of pragmatic problems of immediate necessity, such as economic problems—including a lack of jobs and difficult living conditions—as well as economic crises, the anti-monarchist discourse became less and less relevant. Similarly, the anti-communist discourse of the opposition lost its importance. In conclusion, the subject of the "restoration of the monarchy" was not a topic in itself, as the question of the form of government had already been settled. Rather, it referred to a return to a model of society specific to the first part of the 20th century. It was for this reason that another sub-theme was permanently linked to it, namely the retrocession of land to the former owners of the interwar period, who were referred to as "moșieri"[96] in communist discourse.

It is therefore evident that, despite the inability to ascertain the precise impact of the promotion of this theme on the political choices of the electorate, it played a role in the creation of a meticulously crafted scenario by the political party that held power between 1990 and 1996. This party successfully used specific themes and capitalised on the fears and anxieties of a population that had been held captive for four decades by the communist regime.

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[96] i.e. *Landlords*.

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The Balance of Power between Idealism and Pragmatism: The Dynamics of Spheres of Influence in the International System

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Rezumat: Acest articol investighează relevanța durabilă a teoriei echilibrului de putere în relațiile internaționale, examinând în mod specific dinamica dintre aspirațiile idealiste și considerațiile pragmatice în structurarea sferelor de influență. Explorează modul în care conceptul de echilibrare a puterii a susținut istoric negocierile marilor puteri, folosind Tratatul de la Versailles (1919) și conferințele de pace de după Al Doilea Război Mondial ca studii de caz principale. Aceste evenimente exemplifică modul în care statele au utilizat strategiile de echilibru de putere pentru a limita ambițiile hegemonice și a promova stabilitatea sistemică. Prin integrarea cadrului echilibrului de putere cu teoria Complexului de Securitate Regională (CSR), acest studiu evidențiază impacturile reciproce dintre structurile globale și practicile de securitate regionale, subliniind rolul crucial al sprijinului marilor puteri în susținerea alianțelor regionale, așa cum s-a văzut în Europa Centrală și de Est interbelică. Analiza demonstrează că, deși eforturile de echilibrare a puterii au ca scop promovarea unui sistem internațional stabil, legitimitatea și sprijinul complex din partea marilor puteri rămân esențiale. În cele din urmă, acest studiu susține că stabilitatea efectivă necesită nu doar o distribuție a puterii, ci și măsuri de securitate cooperativă, considerând că ordinea durabilă se bazează pe strategii incluzive care recunosc și respectă interesele de securitate atât ale marilor, cât și ale micilor puteri.

Cuvinte cheie: echilibrul puterii; Complexul Regional de Securitate; sfere de influență; conferințe, ordine mondială

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Abstract: This article investigates the enduring relevance of balance of power theory within international relations, specifically examining the dynamic between idealistic aspirations and pragmatic considerations in the structuring of spheres of influence. It explores how the concept of power balancing has historically underpinned major power negotiations, using the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and post-World War II peace conferences as focal case studies. These events exemplify how states have utilized balance of power strategies to curb hegemonic ambitions and promote systemic stability. By integrating the balance of power framework with the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory, this study highlights the reciprocal impacts between global structures and regional security practices, emphasizing the crucial role of major power endorsements in sustaining regional alliances, as seen in interwar Central and Eastern Europe. The analysis demonstrates that while power balancing efforts aim to foster a stable international system, legitimacy and comprehensive support from larger powers remain essential. Ultimately, this study posits that effective stability requires not merely a distribution of power but also cooperative security measures, assuming that a durable order relies on inclusive strategies that acknowledge and respect the security interests of both great and smaller powers.

Keywords: balance of power; Regional Security Complex; spheres of influence; conferences, world order

1. Introduction

Within the international system, the concept of the balance of power constitutes a fundamental element for understanding the dynamics of interstate relations, especially in a context marked by the absence of a dominant supranational authority. The balance of power functions as a regulatory mechanism, enabling states to prevent the hegemony of a single actor and to maintain international stability. This assumption frequently underpins state security policies, as states either seek to strengthen their own position or to moderate the power of other actors to prevent destabilization of the international order.

The role of international conferences in maintaining the balance of power and promoting stability within the international system has been, and remains, essential. In recent centuries, these conferences have allowed actors to negotiate security frameworks and legitimize new principles of interaction within the context of post-conflict transitions. This article aims to analyse how international negotiations have influenced systemic stability and the redefinition of the balance of power in critical periods of the 20th century through case studies, including the Versailles Conference (1919) and post-war conferences that established the post-1945 international order.

To this end, this article is structured to present the theoretical relationship between the balance of power and regional security theory, followed by an exploration of relevant historical moments. The case study of the Versailles Conference highlights the impact of legitimacy and organization on peace negotiations. At the same time, subsequent analyses show how decisions made during and after the Second World War laid the foundations for a divided international system. This cross-sectional approach allows for an integrated understanding of how the balance of power concept is applied in international negotiations, revealing both continuities and disruptions in the global order.

2. Theoretical Framework: Between Balance of Power and Regional Security Complex

The balance of power theory explains how states manage their security and influence on the international stage by adjusting power relations. In an anarchic systemic structure, states seek to prevent the formation and establishment of a hegemonic power that could threaten the sovereignty of other nations and compromise system stability.[1] To counteract the expansion of any actor, states may build temporary alliances and initiate balancing strategies that rely on augmenting their military, economic, and diplomatic capabilities.[2]

At the Versailles Conference (1919), the Great Powers endeavoured to apply this principle by imposing strict limitations on Germany to prevent a renewed German hegemony in Europe. However, these drastic measures, which lacked widespread support and agreement, left deep resentments, contributing to an unstable global order that eventually led to the Second World War.[3]

During the interwar period, several states in Central and Eastern Europe formed defensive alliances, such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact, to protect themselves against threats from Germany and the Soviet Union. These alliances sought to maintain a regional balance, yet without firm support from Britain and France, they remained quite vulnerable, thereby demonstrating the limits of the balance of power theory in the absence of genuine international backing.[4]

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[1] Holsti, K. J. *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*. Prentice Hall, 1995.

[2] Morgenthau, H. J., *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.

[3] Carr, E. H. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. Palgrave, 2001.

[4] Wandycz, P. S., The Little Entente: Sixty Years Later. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 59(4), 1981, pp. 548-564.

Another example of this balance in action was Winston Churchill's strategy during the Second World War. The British Prime Minister refused to negotiate separately with Germany, aiming to keep the Allies united against Nazism. Churchill's decision prevented German forces from concentrating solely on the Soviet Union and laid the groundwork for a post-war world order, illustrating how the balance of power can operate effectively when major actors act in concert.[5]

After the war, the peace conferences at Yalta and Potsdam (1945) established a new balance structure by dividing Europe between opposing blocs. Thus, NATO and the Warsaw Pact formalized this division, aiming to maintain stability based on a clear demarcation of spheres of influence. However, this bipolar balance generated a "cold peace," in which tensions remained, and the security of smaller states was often sacrificed in favour of the interests of major powers.[6]

However, I believe it is necessary to introduce the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory proposed by Buzan and Wæver into this analysis, as it helps us understand how security is organized at the regional level.[7] According to this theory, international security is not evenly distributed; states in certain regions develop close security ties to address local challenges. During the interwar period, alliances in Central and Eastern Europe—such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact—served as examples of regional security complexes.[8] These alliances aimed to limit the influence of Germany and the Soviet Union, but without real support from major powers, these security arrangements proved fragile and vulnerable to external pressures.[9]

We can consider the case of Romania, which, during the Second World War, sought to negotiate an exit from the conflict, attempting to avoid the extension of German and Soviet influence. This situation illustrates how smaller states within a security complex attempt to adjust their position when the context becomes too risky. However, the lack of concrete support

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[5] Lukács, J., *Five Days in London: May 1940*. Yale University Press. 1999.

[6] Roberts, G., *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War: Russo-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933-1941.* Palgrave Macmillan. 1999.

[7] Buzan, B., & Wæver, O., *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security.* Cambridge University Press. 2003.

[8] Alexandrescu, M., Central Europe as a regional security (sub)complex in the interwar period. *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Historia*, 67(1),2022, pp. 101-114.

[9] Wandycz, P. S., *op. cit*.

from the great powers limited Romania's ability to negotiate a favourable status, highlighting the vulnerabilities faced by states within unsupported regional complexes.[10]

The Yalta and Potsdam conferences consolidated the Eastern European security complex, subordinating this region to the Soviet Union. Under Moscow's influence, Eastern Europe became a unified security bloc subordinate to Soviet interests. This case reflects how a great power can control a regional complex, imposing rules and limiting the autonomy of states within the region.[11]

What connected post-war Eastern European states was the status quo created through the peace conferences of 1946–1947. These conferences laid the groundwork for an arrangement that provided the premises for a bipolar world order. Thus, Eastern Europe becomes a real laboratory, demonstrating that regional security can be entirely controlled by a great power, considerably limiting the options of small states, even if they are formally integrated within a regional security complex.[12] The security agenda was dictated by the Soviet Union, turning Eastern Europe into a regional security complex or Type II.[13]

The analysis of the balance of power and the Regional Security Complex reveals that international stability depends not only on the great powers but also on regional security, where smaller states strive to protect their interests. The Versailles Conference and interwar alliances underscore that the balance of power must be legitimized and broadly supported to be effective, and regional complexes require the backing of great powers to function.

Following the experience of post-war peace conferences and the Cold War, it becomes evident that a security complex controlled by a great power can offer stability but at the cost of member states' autonomy. From this analysis emerges an important lesson: the international order should be based on a combination of power balancing and cooperation rather than the imposition of a single great power's interests.

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[10] Alexandrescu, M., Refusal to negotiate: Britain's position and impact on the World War in 1940. *Transylvanian Review*, 33(1), Spring, 2024.

[11] Erickson, J., *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983.

[12] Buzan, B., & Wæver, O., *op. cit.*

[13] For further explanation, see also Alexandrescu, M., *Central Europe as a regional security...*

3. The Versailles Conference – Between Legitimacy and Pragmatism

The Versailles Conference of 1919 represented a major attempt to redefine the balance of power following the devastating First World War, with the goal of establishing a new European stability through a collective security structure. This event marked the beginning of a new era in international relations, dominated by the hope for lasting peace but also by tensions and power rivalries among states. The conference was influenced by the personalities of the attending leaders, particularly by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who played a central role in seeking to impose a set of moral and idealistic principles far removed from a strictly pragmatic approach.[14]

Wilson arrived in Europe with the ideal of acting as an impartial arbitrator, not as a head of state, hoping to redefine international principles through the establishment of the League of Nations and the imposition of the principle of self-determination. However, his position was weakened by a lack of internal political support, especially from the U.S. Senate. Colonel House, his personal envoy, criticized him for failing to create a favourable negotiation climate, refusing to include members of the Republican Party in the U.S. delegation. This decision reduced the chances of the treaty's ratification in the Senate, and disagreements between Wilson and his advisors undermined the coherence of the American position at the conference.[15]

From the perspective of negotiation theory, we might speak of "Wilson's fallacy," which demonstrates the importance of internal political coherence and diplomatic support in the negotiation process. Colonel House and other advisors suggested that Wilson could have avoided this error by including representatives from both political parties, thus ensuring the treaty's support in the Senate. Without this foundation, Wilson failed to transform the principles of self-determination and cooperation into viable policies, resulting in a significant failure for American foreign policy.[16]

In his memoirs, Lloyd George recalls that Wilson arrived in Europe with a series of ideals but without a clear implementation plan, which contributed to the inconsistency of the negotiations. This lack of strategy undermined not only the United States' position but also the prospects for long-term stability in Europe.[17]

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[14] Alexandrescu, M., Organizarea cadrului de negociere la Conferința de la Paris (1919). In M. Mureșan & M. Trufan (Coord.), *Multiculturalism in Transilvania după Conferința de Pace de la Paris*. Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2019, pp. 44-75.

[15] Seymour, C., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House.* Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928.

[16] Alexandrescu, M., *op. cit.*

[17] Lloyd George, D., *The Truth about the Peace Treaties.* Victor Gollancz, 1938.

The Versailles Conference laid the groundwork for legitimacy and stability in the international system. The treaty imposed severe conditions on Germany, including territorial losses, military restrictions, and reparations obligations, without offering a framework for its reintegration into the European system. These measures, theoretically aimed at maintaining a balance of power, were perceived by Germany as an illegitimate imposition, generating resentments that fuelled the rise of political extremism during the interwar period.[18]

The lack of a coherent plan and the exclusion of Germany from negotiations turned the treaty into a "dictate" rather than an authentic negotiation. Although the League of Nations was created as a mechanism for cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, it proved insufficient to guarantee European security, particularly amid the economic and political weakening of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, the conference established a weak foundation for the new global order: a fragile balance of power and an imbalanced international system incapable of preventing another world conflict.

The decisions at Versailles also impacted regional stability, leaving Central and Eastern Europe in a generalized state of insecurity. In such a context, states bordering Germany felt the need to protect themselves, forming defensive alliances such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact to counter revisionist threats.

However, without firm support from the Great Powers, these alliances remained vulnerable and insufficient to stabilize the region. The lack of solid commitment from Britain and France left Central and Eastern European states to manage their security independently. This situation favoured German revisionism and amplified political instability, ultimately contributing to the outbreak of the Second World War.

4. The Interwar European Security System: The Regional Security Complex in Central Europe

After the First World War, European leaders realized that to prevent another large-scale conflict, a security system was needed to maintain peace. In this context, countries in Central and Eastern Europe caught between the great powers, sought to secure their own safety by forming regional alliances such as the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact. These arrangements aimed to

[18] *Ibidem.*

protect the order established by the Treaty of Versailles and to maintain a balance of power within the region.[19]

The Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory, formulated by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, helps us understand why these regional alliances were so important for the countries in Central Europe.[20] The theory's central idea is that security does not function uniformly everywhere; instead, it concentrates on regions where countries share common interests and face similar risks. In the interwar period, the states of Central Europe collaborated to defend themselves against potential threats from Germany and the Soviet Union, thereby attempting to maintain a balance of power that would protect them.[21]

In this context, France was an essential supporter of these regional alliances, seeking to create a barrier against German expansion. However, Great Britain took a different stance, focusing more on economic security and avoiding military involvement in Central Europe. Without a firm commitment from a great power, these alliances proved vulnerable, being too weak to withstand external pressures on their own.

One of the major problems with this regional security system was the lack of a genuinely supportive great power. Although France was actively involved in supporting the Little Entente, it lacked the resources necessary to provide long-term protection. Great Britain, on the other hand, avoided direct involvement, preferring a policy of mediation and risk minimization, yet failing to offer any security guarantee to states in the region.[22]

In the 1930s, as Germany regained strength and became increasingly aggressive, these regional alliances began to feel the limits of their own security capabilities. Without solid external support, the Little Entente and other similar alliances failed to halt German expansion or counter the growing influence of the Soviet Union. This lack of stability demonstrated the difficulty small states face in maintaining security without the backing of a great power.

The year 1938 marked a turning point for these regional alliances. As Germany began to disregard international treaties and expand its influence, Central European states saw their efforts to maintain peace shattered. Their attempts to preserve a balance of power were overwhelmed by Adolf Hitler's

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[19] Wandycz, *op. cit.*

[20] Buzan, B. and Wæver, O., *op. cit.*

[21] Alexandrescu, M., *Central Europe...*

[22] Bakić, D., 'Must Will Peace': The British Brokering of 'Central European' and 'Balkan Locarno'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48(1), 2013, p. 24-56.

ambitions, and the region's security complex collapsed entirely. By 1940, with the Second World War fully underway, the European security system was effectively destroyed.

5. Analysis of World War II Negotiations: Great Britain's Refusal and Romania's Dilemmas

During the Second World War, the negotiations and strategic decisions of the great powers reflected an intense competition to maintain a balance of power in Europe. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill chose to reject any offer of a separate peace with Germany, considering that such a decision would weaken the alliance against Nazism and impact Europe's post-war stability. Churchill's strategic pragmatism guided this approach, as he understood that a firm alliance with the United States and the Soviet Union would be the best option for a sustainable balance in Europe.

Faced with an offer from Berlin, which included the return of colonies and recognition of German dominance over Central Europe, Churchill chose to reject the proposal. Instead of a negotiated peace, he favoured a strategy of depleting Germany's resources through a prolonged war, convinced that Hitler would never respect the terms of any agreement. Churchill knew that a separate peace would weaken the alliance and allow Germany to concentrate its forces against the Soviet Union, thus destabilizing the European balance of power.[23]

This choice was based on the idea that a united front and a common resolve to resist to the end were essential to defeating a hegemonic power. Churchill's refusal helped to strengthen Allied relations, contributing to a coordinated strategy that gradually weakened Germany and laid the groundwork for a new power structure in post-war Europe.

For Romania, the situation was much more complicated. After the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, Eastern Europe was divided into German and Soviet spheres of influence, and Romania found itself in a vulnerable position without real support from the West. In 1940, with France defeated and Britain focused on its own problems, Romania was forced to accept German influence and join the Axis.

Under the leadership of Ion Antonescu, Romania hoped that by aligning with Germany, it could preserve its territorial integrity and independence. However, as the war took an unfavourable turn for the Axis, Romania sought

[23] Lukács, J., *op. cit.*

to negotiate its exit from the conflict, trying to avoid Soviet occupation. Between 1943 and 1944, Romanian leaders initiated what could be called Romania's "diplomatic offensive," appealing to neutral countries like Turkey and Switzerland to facilitate indirect negotiations with the Allies.[24]

Ion Antonescu, though reluctant to accept an unconditional surrender, was pressured by the rapid deterioration of the Axis's military position and internal opposition. This complex situation reflected Romania's dilemma, as it sought a way out that would allow it to avoid the consequences of Soviet occupation and territorial losses.

The decisions of Britain and Romania during the war reveal two distinct perspectives on addressing the challenges of maintaining a balance of power in a global conflict context. Churchill adopted a strategy of alliances and collective resistance, recognizing that only through collaboration could the desired balance in Europe be maintained. On the other hand, Romania sought to maximize its options through diplomacy but was constrained by the limitations imposed by its alliance with Germany.

For Romania, negotiations with the Allies were complicated by the unconditional surrender clause decided at the Casablanca Conference in 1943. This condition dramatically complicated and limited the Romanian leadership's negotiating scope, which sought to avoid falling under Soviet domination as a core pillar of a RSC in the new post-war security context. Romania's efforts to negotiate an armistice succeeded only after the arrest of Antonescu on August 23, 1944, when a new government began official peace talks.[25]

6. The Post-war International Order: The Peace Conferences of 1946–1947 and the Splitting of the International System

After the conclusion of the Second World War, the great powers committed themselves to establishing an international order that would ensure peace while also securing each side's influence within its strategic sphere. The peace conferences of the late 1940s represented both attempts to institute a balance of power between the emerging blocs and to delineate spheres of influence, thereby creating a new structure within the international system. This process of division can be interpreted through the emergence

[24] Alexandrescu, M., *Refusal to negotiate...*

[25] *Ibidem.*

of regional security complexes in Europe, where each power bloc developed its own system of defence and alliances.[26]

The Yalta and Potsdam Conferences were key moments in defining the post-war balance, as they revealed the divergent interests of the great powers regarding Europe and global geopolitical control.[27] Specifically, the conferences established the principle of dividing Europe into two distinct spheres of influence, thereby outlining a precarious balance of power between East and West. This bipolar configuration was considered essential for global stability, with the idea that a precise balance between superpowers would prevent another confrontation.[28]

The United States and the Soviet Union deliberately structured this balance of power by consolidating alliance blocs—NATO and the Warsaw Pact—each bloc adopting its own strategy of collective defence and deterrence. This alliance system was, in fact, a means of formalizing each superpower's influence within its own extensive territory, ensuring that no rival power could penetrate a controlled space.[29] Thus, the peace conferences transformed the balance of power from an abstract concept into a formalized network of alliances and treaties designed to regulate interactions between the two blocs and prevent an escalation of tensions.

The division of the international system had an immediate impact on regional security, generating two security complexes in Europe: a Western one and an Eastern one. According to regional security complex theory, each region develops its own set of security mechanisms based on the proximity and interdependence of member states.[30] In post-war Europe, these complexes reflected the strategic and ideological alignments imposed by the superpowers, allowing each bloc to establish norms and defence measures within its sphere of influence.

The Western security complex, centred around NATO, was grounded in mutual commitments to collective defence and the strategic integration of Western Europe under the nuclear protection of the United States. NATO was not merely a military alliance but a mechanism for

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[26] Buzan, B. And Wæver, O., *op. cit.*; Kissinger, H. (1994). *Diplomacy*. Simon & Schuster.

[27] Trachtenberg, M. (1999). *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*. Princeton University Press.

[28] Gaddis, J. L., *The Cold War: A New History*. Penguin Press, 2005; Westad, O. A., *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[29] Kissinger, *op. cit.*; Roberts, *op. cit.*

[30] Buzan and Wæver, *op. cit.*

ensuring order and security against the communist threat, offering member states the assurance that any external aggression would be treated as an attack on the entire bloc.[31]

In contrast, the Eastern security complex relied on alliances imposed by the Soviet Union through the Warsaw Pact, which consolidated control over Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact functioned as a network of collective defence subordinated to Soviet strategy, aimed at ensuring stability within the socialist bloc and preventing any approach toward the West. This military alliance created a regional security system with a strict hierarchy, in which Eastern European states were integrated into unified defence mechanisms but under centralized coordination in Moscow.[32]

The division of the international system into two opposing blocs, each with its own security complex, created a relatively stable but fragile peace based on the balance of power between the superpowers. While both sides engaged in an arms race and constant displays of force, regional security structures enabled the superpowers to maintain control over Europe.[33] This bipolar structure provided stability through mutual deterrence, as each bloc possessed sufficient resources and capabilities to defend its sphere of influence and discourage any aggressive expansion by the rival.

Regional security complexes, especially those in Europe, served as a method of integrating balance of power policy into the long-term strategy of both superpowers. NATO and the Warsaw Pact were not only defensive alliances but also platforms for strengthening each bloc's identity and coordinating foreign policy, thereby contributing to the stabilization of the bipolar order. By maintaining robust regional security complexes, each bloc could control its member states and respond swiftly to any destabilizing threats, whether from within or outside its sphere of influence.[34]

7. Conclusions

The presented analysis reveals that the balance of power and regional security complexes played a crucial role in the great powers' efforts to stabilize the international system in a century marked by two world conflicts and deep ideological divisions. While the balance of power theory provides

[31] Gaddis, *op. cit.*

[32] Erickson, *op. cit.*; Wandycz, *op. cit.*

[33] Roberts, *op. cit.;* Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*

[34] Westad, *op. cit.*

a solid understanding of the dynamics among powerful states, the discussed case studies highlight that maintaining such a balance requires not only measures to limit unilateral expansion but also consistent support from a broad consensus among states.

The Versailles Conference exposed the difficulties of an imposed peace based more on constraints than on inclusive negotiations, contributing to a state of latent instability in interwar Europe. On the other hand, during and after the Second World War, the Yalta and Potsdam conferences reflected a pragmatic compromise between the great powers, but they also divided Europe into spheres of influence, perpetuating a bipolar system that became the foundation of the Cold War.

This analysis emphasizes the importance of regional security complexes in maintaining the balance of power. The defensive alliances in Central and Eastern Europe, though designed to ensure security against German and Soviet expansion, illustrated the limits of self-sufficiency when small states lacked the support of great powers. In turn, NATO and the Warsaw Pact formalized alliances that contributed to stability but also deepened divisions, highlighting the fragility of a peace based on deterrence and rigid boundaries.

In essence, the discussed case studies confirm that a stable international order cannot be achieved solely through force and counterbalancing. Cooperation, legitimacy, and respect for the interests of all actors, including small and medium-sized ones, are fundamental elements for durable stability. The experiences of the 20th century show that the balance of power and regional security must be combined with policies of dialogue and collaboration, providing a valuable lesson for future international configurations.

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"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). The Geopolitics of Spiritual Securitization: Christian Denominations in the Ruso-Ucrainian Conflict

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Rezumat: Evoluția relațiilor internaționale a găsit adesea religia, (geo)politica și războiul la intersecția intereselor cercetătorilor din științele sociale. Dacă aceasta nu este neapărat o noutate, ceea ce a atras atenția în ultimii ani în rândul cercetărilor de relații internaționale și studii de securitate, este un conflict convențional major pe teritoriul european între două state aparținând aceleiași confesiuni religioase: Creștinismul Ortodox Răsăritean. Studiul de față urmărește identificarea, descrierea și explicarea narațiunilor securitizării spirituale prezente atât în discursul liderilor politici și religioși, dar și discursul credincioșilor creștini ortodocși, catolici și protestanți, față de amenințarea valorilor moral-spirituale și dogmatice, dar și a comunităților religioase, în contextul războiului dintre Rusia și Ucraina. În acest sens, cercetarea de față propune un design de cercetare calitativ, bazat pe selecția documentelor ca metodă de colectare a datelor și analiza narativă ca metodă de interpretare a datelor. Rezultatele au evidențiat prezența mai multor tipuri de procese de securitizare spirituală, particulare comunităților religioase analizate.

Cuvinte cheie: Securitizare spirituală, Rusia, Ucraina, Biserica Ortodoxă, Biserica Catolică, Protestantism, Război

Abstract: The evolution of international relations have often found religion, (geo)politics and war at a crossroads. If this is not necessarily a novelty, what gained attention within the international relation and security studies literature is a major conventional conflict on European territory between two states belonging to the same religious denomination: Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The current study seeks to identify, describe and explain the narratives of spiritual securitization

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in the discourse of political and religious leaders and the discourse of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christian believers, towards the threat of spiritual and dogmatic values, but also of religious communities in the context of the war between Russia and Ukraine. In this regard, the research uses as data collection method the selection of documents and narrative analysis to interpret the data. The results highlighted the presence of several types of spiritual securitization processes, specific for the analyzed religious communities.

Keywords: Spiritual Securitization, Russia, Ukraine, Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Protestantism, War

Introduction

History emphasize that religion, geopolitics and war meet often at the crossroads of international relations through conflicts that have come to even define the very nature of international systems: the 30-year war, the Crusades, the Hussite Wars, the Reconquista and the Balkan conflicts of the 90s are just a few of such examples.[1] Despite these wars, never in the last 30 years have two Orthodox states fought a war, on the European continent, on the scale of the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. At the same time, while spiritual securitization became known especially in the efforts to protect religious values and dogmas in the context of secularization and globalization[2], there are no cases in which spiritual securitization is discussed in the context of a conventional war, from the perspective of Christianity.

Thus, the study aims to identify the narratives that underlie the securitization discourse of political and religious leaders, as well as believers, when it comes to the survival and protection in particular of religious values

[1] Mark Konnert, *Early Modern Europe: The Age of Religious War, 1559-1715* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Mitja Velikonja, "In Hoc Signo Vinces: Religious Symbolism in the Balkan Wars 1991-1995," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): pp. 25–40; Tal Dlngott Alkopher, "The Social (and Religious) Meanings That Constitute War: The Crusades as Realpolitik vs. Socialpolitik," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): pp. 715–738.

[2] Christopher Marsh, "Eastern Orthodoxy and the Fusion of National and Spiritual Security," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*, ed. Chris Seiple, Dennis R. Hoover, and Pauletta Otis (London: Routledge, 2012); Daniel P. Payne, "Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?," *Journal of Church and State* 52, no. 4 (2010): pp. 712–727; Georgios Karyotis and Stratos Patrikios, "Religion, Securitization and Anti-Immigration Attitudes: The Case of Greece," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 1 (2010): pp. 43–57; Isidora Stakić, "Securitization of LGBTIQ Minorities in Serbian Far-Right Discourses: A Post-Structuralist Perspective," *Intersections East European Journal of Society and Politics* 1, no. 1 (2015): pp. 183–206.

associated with the nation, the spiritual and dogmatic values of Churches and communities of believers that they represent, in the context of the war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. In this regard, the current research looks at the Christian Faith, from the point of view of the three major denominations active in Ukraine: Orthodox Christians, Roman and Greek Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians. From the methodological perspective, data collection is based on a selection of online documents available in English (e.g. World Evangelical Alliance's website, Vatican News, Angelus, Reuters). Data interpretation will be done by applying the narrative analysis method. Details can be found in the methodological section of this article.

From the point of view of the structure, the present study includes an introduction section followed by a section dedicated to the literature review that presents both the main concepts and debates about war, religion and geopolitics. This review section is followed by the methodology and next by the analysis section which comprises three major parts: the first dedicated to the Russian Federation and Ukraine and the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches, the second dedicated to the analysis of the position of the Vatican and the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches, and the third section in where are analyzed data on Protestant denominations. The final part is dedicated to the conclusions and the bibliography.

Frameworks in the study of war, religion and geopolitics: concepts and debates

Among the objectives of this section, one is to build a theoretical and conceptual framework that provides a thorough understanding of the concepts of war and securitization, religion and politics in relation to contemporary developments within the international system. At the same time, this framework examines how religion can both contribute to and mitigate conflict, exploring its role in justifying, motivating, and even resolving wars and political issues[3]. Studies on religious doctrines and war[4] highlighted three major conceptual

[3] Scott M. Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Dialogue, 2005); Hanna Staehle, "Seeking New Language: Patriarch Kirill's Media Strategy," *Religion, State and Society* 46, no. 4 (2018): pp. 384–401.

[4] Robert Jackson, "Doctrinal War: Religion and Ideology in International Conflict.," *The Monist* 89, no. 2 (2006); Ardalan Rezamand, "Use of Religious Doctrine and Symbolism in the Iran-Iraq War," *Illumine: Journal of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Graduate Students Association* 9, no. 1 (2011): pp. 83–107.

approaches when it comes to analyzing how religious faith and spirituality intertwine with war. Many religious traditions have developed doctrines to justify war under certain conditions. Among them, Christianity emphasize the "Just War Theory" outlining criteria like legitimate authority, just cause, right intention, and proportionality when involving in a war.[5] Before the just war theory some religions endorse towards political war the concept of "Holy War," where violence is considered divinely mandated, examples being both The Crusades in Christianity and The Jihad in Islam[6]. Finally, conversely, some religious traditions such as certain interpretations of Buddhism and Christianity, emphasize non-violence and advocate for pacifism.[7]

When considering war as a socio-political outcome and religion, one other important concept is that of religious identity. Religion often serves as a core component of individual and collective identity. It provides a framework for understanding the world, moral guidelines, and a sense of belonging within a community.[8] But because of all the above, same Faith in the form of religious narratives can strengthen the divide between "us" and "them," leading to dehumanization of the out-group and justifying violence against them[9]. Furthermore, religion can create symbolic boundaries that distinguish "us" from "them." These boundaries can foster a sense of unity within a religious group but also can exacerbate divisions between different groups, especially

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[5] Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven, "The Concept of Just War in Christianity," in *The Concept of Just War in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Georges Tamer and Katja Thörner (De Gruyter, 2021).

[6] Jonathan Fine, *Political Violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. From Holy War to Modern Terror* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

[7] Daniel A. Dombrowski, "Christian Pacifism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pacifism and Nonviolence*, ed. Andrew Fiala (London: Routledge, 2018), 11; Iselin Frydenlund, "'Buddhism Has Made Asia Mild' The Modernist Construction of Buddhism as Pacifism," in *Buddhist Modernities Re-Inventing Tradition in the Globalizing Modern World*, ed. Hanna Havnevik et al. (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 316.

[8] Pninit Russo-Netzer and Ofra Mayseless, "Spiritual Identity Outside Institutional Religion: A Phenomenological Exploration," *Identity* 14, no. 1 (2014): pp. 19–42.

[9] Dragoș Șamșudean, "Conspiracy Theories and Faith in Romania. What the Orthodox Bloggers Say?," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Studia Europaea* 68, no. 2 (2023): pp. 175–208; Dragoș Șamșudean, "Populism Religios În Federația Rusă. Analiza Discursurilor Online În Perioada 2008-2020," *Sfera Politicii* 28, no. 3–4 (2020): pp. 53–62; Cyril Hovorun, *Political Orthodoxies.The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018); Cyril Hovorun, "Orthodox Political Theology," in *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, ed. Brendan N. et. all Wolfe, 2023.

when religious identity is tied to political or ethnic identity[10]. A particular and relevant example to be discussed in the assembly of this research, taking into account the previously described, is the concept of spiritual securitization. Against the background of religious identity and some real or perceived conflicts, religious identity is put on the security agenda while religious dogma is transformed into an object of reference in the security area. The most eloquent case is that of the Russian Federation, which, in its defense and security strategies, identifies the Orthodox Faith and traditional moral-spiritual values as being directly threatened by the Western way of life.[11] All this highlights the mobilizing nature of the religious factor, in particular when it comes to war, political and societal changes.[12]

Religious leaders and institutions can play a significant role in mobilizing followers for war, using religious rhetoric to frame conflicts in terms of good vs. evil or divine will. Sacred texts and religious symbols are often invoked in order to legitimize war efforts, providing a powerful source of motivation and justification for combatants.[13] An eloquent example of religious mobilization through leaders is that of the Catholic Church which, over the centuries, through the voice of the Pope, called the Catholic Christian peoples to Crusades.[14] Another religious leader in the person of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow mobilizes Orthodox Christians from the Slavic world towards an ideological project of the Russian World[15], while the regime of the Ayatollahs in Iran interprets Shiite Islam in ways that mobilize the population towards support of permanent regional disputes with Israel and

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[10] Hovorun, *Political Orthodoxies.The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced*; Bruce Heilman and Paul J. Kaiser, "Religion, Identity and Politics in Tanzania," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2002): pp. 691–709.

[11] Payne, "Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?"; Marsh, "Eastern Orthodoxy and the Fusion of National and Spiritual Security."

[12] R. R. Valić-Nedeljković, D., Ganzevoort and S. Sremac, "The Patriarch and the Pride: Discourse Analysis of the Online Public Response to the Serbian Orthodox Church Condemnation of the 2012 Gay Pride Parade," in *Lived Religion and the Politics of (In)Tolerance*, ed. R Ganzevoort and S. Sremac (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 85–109, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43406-3.

[13] Hovorun, *Political Orthodoxies.The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced*; Hovorun, "Orthodox Political Theology."

[14] H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," *History* 55, no. 184 (1970).

[15] Șamșudean, "Populism Religios În Federația Rusă. Analiza Discursurilor Online În Perioada 2008-2020."

Saudi Arabia.[16] While all of the above highlight an approach from religion towards (geo) politics and war, some studies focus on the inverse relationship of the concepts discussed.

Some of the recent studies in the field of international relations highlight religion as a tool of geopolitics from the perspective of what the specialized literature calls soft power.[17] Religion can be used as a tool of soft power, where nations utilize religious influence to extend their geopolitical reach. For example, Saudi Arabia has used its status as the custodian of Islam's two holiest sites to wield influence in the Muslim world.[18] The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) often supports Russian foreign policy initiatives, framing them in terms of defending Orthodox Christians or promoting traditional values. For instance, the Church has backed Russian actions in Ukraine and Syria[19], portraying them as protective measures for Orthodox communities. The ROC plays a central role in promoting the Russian World by emphasizing the spiritual and cultural unity of Russian-speaking Orthodox Christians.[20]

In many countries, religion forms a core part of national identity. The Islamic Republic of Iran for instance, derives part of its legitimacy from Shia Islam, influencing both its domestic policies and foreign relations, especially with Sunni-majority countries.[21] Within the Christian World, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches often are involved in shaping societal and cultural polices towards the rights of sexual minorities and religious

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[16] Kamran Taremi, "Iranian Strategic Culture: The Impact of Ayatollah Khomeini's Interpretation of Shiite Islam," *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 1 (2014): pp. 3–25.

[17] Zikun Yang and Li Li, "Positioning Religion in International Relations: The Performative, Discursive, and Relational Dimension of Religious Soft Power," *Religions*, 2021; Gregorio Bettiza and Peter S. Henne, "Religious Soft Power.Promises, Limits and Ways Forward," in *The Geopolitics of Religious Soft Power. How States Use Religion in Foreign Policy*, ed. Peter Mandaville (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[18] Michele L. Kjorlien and Michele L. Michele, "State and Religion in Saudi Arabia," *The Arab Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (1994): pp. 36–43.

[19] Alar Kilp and Jerry G. Pankhurst, "Soft, Sharp and Evil Power: The Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 42, no. 5 (2022): 1–21.

[20] Alicja Curanović, "Russia's Mission in the World: The Perspective of the Russian Orthodox Church," *Problems of Post-Communism* 66, no. 4 (2018): pp. 253–267.

[21] Simon Mabon and Edward Wastnidge, "Transnational Religious Networks and Geopolitics in the Muslim World," *Global Discourse* 9, no. 4 (2019); A.R Norton, "The Geopolitics of the Sunni-Shia Rift," in *Regional Insecurity After the Arab Uprisings. New Security Challenges Series*, ed. E Monier (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

education.[22] A particular example comes from Romania, where, despite the minimal use of deliberative mechanisms such as the referendum, the religious organizations behind which the local Christian churches have organized a referendum to change the constitution in the context of expanding the rights of LGBTQ+ people.[23] Poland is another case in which the Catholic Church has expanded its discursive coverage of health policies such as abortion.[24] While the discussion about religion, (geo) politics and war can be extended to other levels of study, based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks above, the present article identifies two large areas of analysis in relation to the research problem proposed by the study: the concepts that explain religious identity in a geopolitical context and those that highlight the political nature of religion in the context of war and the nation-state. As a second objective of this section and before entering the data analysis regarding the research problem, alongside the conceptual framework, a review of the main debates that define the literature on ethno-religious conflicts in general and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in particular, is required.

When it comes to the ethno-religious type of war, different strands of literature arise. On the one hand, there are studies that emphasizes the key features that define such a war and turn it into a stand-alone category in the broader studies of war. Thus, there are studies that advocates the identity-based nature of such conflicts explaining that such wars are driven by a strong sense of identity, with religion and ethnicity playing a core role to the group's self-perception, the "us vs. them" mentality being prevalent.[25] In parallel with the previous idea, some studies highlight the historical nature of such conflicts and grievances. Many of the ethno-religious wars have deep

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[22] Stakić, "Securitization of LGBTIQ Minorities in Serbian Far-Right Discourses: A Post-Structuralist Perspective"; Mary S. Ford, "By Whose Authority? Sexual Ethics, Postmodernism, and Orthodox Christianity," *Christian Bioethics* 26, no. 3 (2020): pp. 298–324, https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbaa010.

[23] R. Dima, "Trends of Homophobic Activism in Romania, or 'How to Turn Religious Convictions into a Referendum and Still Fail," in *LGBTQ+ Activism in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. R. Buyantueva and M Shevtsova (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

[24] Dorota Szelewa, "Killing 'Unborn Children'? The Catholic Church and Abortion Law in Poland Since 1989," *Social and Legal Studies* 25, no. 6 (2016): pp. 741–764.

[25] Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts and the Elusive Quest for National Identity in Nigeria," *Journal of Black Studies* 44, no. 1 (2013): 3–30; Vyacheslav Karpov, Elena Lisovskaya, and David Barry, "Ethnodoxy: How Popular Ideologies Fuse Religious and Ethnic Identities," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 4 (2012): pp. 638–655; Sumit Ganguly, "Ethno-Religious Conflict in South Asia," *Survival* 35, no. 2 (1993): pp. 88–109.

historical roots where past injustices, both perceived by the parts or real, fuel contemporary tensions between social groups and even national states.[26]

Other strands of literature focused on ethno-religious conflicts are closed more to the theological debates of the issue, emphasizing that differences in religious practices, beliefs, and cultural norms can lead to tensions, especially when one group tries to impose its beliefs on another.[27] The tensions due to ethno-religious differences can be traced in the case of Transylvania, as an example of historical disputes as mentioned in the previous paragraph, but also dogmatic inter- and intra-confessional ones.[28] Another example of intra-religious tensions and even conflict in some cases, between two national churches, is the one between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church over the canonic territory of the Republic of Moldova.[29] The canonical territory can be, at least in the Orthodox world as the research conducted by Kormina and Naumescu also highlights, a major conflict factor especially in the context of Eastern Orthodoxy and Eastern European Christianity.[30]

From the perspective of the present study, the current conflict in Ukraine, which began in 2014 and continued as a conventional war through the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, is addressed in the specialized literature on international relations from the perspective of two major debates. On the one hand, there are the studies that follow the historical, geopolitical and military conflict entering into the wider research of conflict studies, international relations and security. From this perspectives, a recent research

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[26] C. A. Bayly, "The Pre-History of Communalism Religious Conflict in India, 1700–1860," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1985): 177–203; Lucas Luoma-Uhlik, "Reframing the Present: An Analysis of Competing Russo-Ukrainian Historical Narratives and Their Role in the Ongoing Ukrainian Crisis," *The General Assembly* 2, no. 1 (2021).

[27] Dragoș Șamșudean, "Digitalising the Church: Clergy's Attitudes towards the Church's Mission Online," *Culture and Religion* 00, no. 00 (2023): 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2023.2296087; Miloš Jovanović, "Silence or Condemnation: The Orthodox Church on Homosexuality in Serbia," *Družboslovne Razprave* 29, no. 73 (2013): pp. 79–95.

[28] Greta Monica Miron, "Confessional Coexistence and Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania. Case Study: The Movement Led by The Monk Sofronie in Dăbâca County," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Historia* 58, no. 1 (2013).

[29] Mihai-Dumitru Grigore, "»Orthodox Brothers«: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, National Identity and Conflict between the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches in Moldavia," in *Christianity and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Europe,* ed. John C. Wood (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

[30] Jeanne Kormina and Vlad Naumescu, "A New 'Great Schism''? Theopolitics of Communion and Canonical Territory in the Orthodox Church,'" *Anthropology Today* 36, no. 1 (2020): pp. 7–11.

made by Viktor Kakupec underlines the relevance of some moments such as 1994 Budapest Memorandum, the NATO 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration and "the Minsk I Agreement ratified in 2014 as a critical factor in international discussions aimed at resolving the long-simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine, and Minsk Agreement II signed in 2015 and its impact on Ukraine's sovereignty".[31] In particular, the last two documents from Minsk are highlighted by the author as a partial political failure in relation to the geopolitical stabilization of Eastern Europe.[32] Asmaa Elsherbiny better highlights the geopolitical and systemic component of the conflict. While its study focuses on the identification of the causes of the war, continuing the causal idea that Jakupec above also pursues, the research separates both towards the economic implication and the role of actors such as China and NATO as well.[33] Finally, the conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation is treated from the perspective of international law with a focus on the humanitarian component. Kyo Arai explains that the conflict in Ukraine highlights once again the need for harmonious application and in accordance with all international humanitarian legislation. At the same time, from the perspective of security, the author notes the role that narrative constructs can influence the application of international norms. The author adds that: "Russia justifies its own use of force as 'special military operations' and criticizes self-defense actions by Ukraine as 'acts of terrorism' showing that such self-characterisation of the use of force is easily apt to be misused as an excuse for a serious breach of international law".[34]

On the other hand, research on the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe and on the Russian-Ukrainian war, treats the conflict from the perspective of religious studies. Thus, as I mentioned before, the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine is seen as a historical ethno-religious conflict.[35] Another

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[31] Viktor Jakupec, *Political Complexities and Problematics of the Russo-Ukrainian War*, *Dynamics of the Ukraine War.Diplomatic Challenges and Geopolitical Uncertainties* (London: Springer Cham, 2024), p. 25.

[32] Jakupec, *Political Complexities and Problematics of the Russo-Ukrainian War*.

[33] Asmaa Elsherbiny, "Europe on Fire The Russo-Ukrainian War, Its Causes and Consequences," *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration* 10, no. 4 (2022).

[34] Kyo Arai, "Equal Application of International Humanitarian Law in Wars of Aggression: Impacts of the Russo–Ukrainian War," in *Global Impact of the Ukraine Conflict. Perspectives from International Law*, ed. Shuichi Furuya, Hitomi Takemura, and Kuniko Ozaki (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2023), p. 253.

[35] Duyile William Abiodun, "Ethno- Religion Cum Geo-Political Background to the Russo-Ukraine War," *Lakhomi Journal Scientific Journal of Culture* 4, no. 3 (2023): pp. 102–110.

author, Richard Gorban, believes that granting the Tomos of Autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, even if a religious, ecclesial act in its nature, represents the first step towards Ukraine's political victory in the conflict with Russia.[36] Other debates frame the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in theological terms describing it as: "A muddy torrent of quasi-theological apocrypha, dicta, narratives, and sermons" all of this contributing "to what the Russians euphemistically call the "special military operation" in Ukraine".[37] Against this background, in contrast to the image of the war defined by Hovorun, Viorel Coman claims precisely the need for the intervention of theologians and religious studies scholars to explain and deconstruct the religious narratives that argue and support a war like the one in Ukraine.[38]

Finally, from the perspective of geopolitics, religion and the ongoing war in Ukraine, few studies follow the impact of the conflict and the role that local Christian denominations have towards the conflict. One of the studies that deals with such issues is that of Pavlo Smytsnyuk. The author explains that on the one hand, the war exacerbates the tensions within the Orthodox world, while on the other hand the position of neutrality of the Holy See puts both Roman and Greek Catholic Christian communities of Ukraine in difficulty.[39] On the same debate of Christian denominations and war in Ukraine, Valentyna Kuryliak emphasize that "after February 22, 2022, Ukrainian Protestantism (Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists) left all Eurasian unions" highlighting the national character of Ukrainian Protestantism, beyond any Slavic geopolitical project.[40] Thus, although there several studies and debates dealing with the war in Ukraine both from a geopolitical and religious stand, few studies focuses the character and role of Christian denominations in Ukraine in relation to the ongoing conflict.

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[36] Richard Gorban, "Ethnic-Religious Identity in the Context of the Ukrainian-Russian War," in *Problem Space of Modern Society: Philosophical- Communicative and Pedagogical Interpretations. Part II*, ed. Lyubomira Simeonova Popova et al. (Varșovia: BMT Erida, 2019).

[37] Cyril Hovorun, "Deus Ex Machina of the War in Ukraine," *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu* 15, no. 3 (2023): p. 538.

[38] Viorel Coman, "Critical Analysis of the Moscow Patriarchate Vision on the Russian–Ukrainian Military Conflict: Russkiy Mir and Just War," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 76, no. 4 (2023).

[39] Pavlo Smytsnyuk, "The War in Ukraine as a Challenge for Religious Communities: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Prospects for Peacemaking," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai - Theologia Catholica Latina* 68, no. 1 (2023).

[40] Valentyna Kuryliak, "The Position of Ukrainian Protestants Regarding the War in Ukraine: Rebuttal of False Accusations of Eurasianism," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 43, no. 7 (2023).

This article aims to identify the main narratives in the discourse of Christian political and religious leaders from the Russian Federation and Ukraine in order to find out how religion is used as a tool in both conducting war and peacemaking. The innovation of this study is brought by the fact that it considers the Christian denominations in Ukraine as a set of actors acting in a unitary whole of the Christian world towards particular political aims such as spiritual securitization.

Methodology

The conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine is a representative case[41] for Eastern Orthodoxy and Orthodox states in conflict for several reasons. First of all, it stands out as a war between two states that share to a large extent the same identity and religious family, namely Slavic Orthodoxy. At the same time, historically both Ukraine and the Russian Federation shared the political borders of the same state for long periods, whether it was the Tsarist Empire or the Soviet Union. Thus, both parties involved in the conflict share a social, political and identity memory that goes beyond the simple linguistic similarities of the Cyrillic alphabet.[42]

Secondly, among the causes of the conflict between the two states there is one that is less common and particular: the declaration of independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Patriarchate. Although the roots of the conflict are political and found in the annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014, the independence of UOC is considered to be a factor that contributed to the escalation of the conflict.[43] At the same time, continuing the religious argument, the war in Ukraine involves most of the main Christian denominations and even branches of the same Faith as is the case of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches.[44]

Finally, the Russian-Ukrainian war represents the first major conflict on the European continent after the Second World War and after

[41] Jason Seawright and John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): pp. 294–308.
[42] Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (University of Toronto Press, 2008).
[43] Cyril Hovorun, "War and Autocephaly in Ukraine," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 7 (2020): pp. 1–25.
[44] Smytsnyuk, "The War in Ukraine as a Challenge for Religious Communities: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Prospects for Peacemaking"; Kuryliak, "The Position of Ukrainian Protestants Regarding the War in Ukraine: Rebuttal of False Accusations of Eurasianism."

the fall of the Soviet Union. Despite the tensions and ethnic wars in the Balkans[45], the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation opened a page of conventional war between two sovereign states. At the same time, although a conventional war, the post-modernity of the conflict imprint particularities in its turn: the presence of a major informational and hybrid warfare enhanced by social media and Internet[46], the diversity of actors (state and non-state actors)[47] involved in the conflict and the international dimension despite the regional character[48].

Given the significant religious dimension of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the current study aims to identify the narratives through which religious actors part of the conflict or caught in the middle of it, securitize the three different major Christian beliefs (Orthodox, Greek and Roman Catholic and Protestant) for the benefit of nation states or their own confessional survival. In other words, I highlighted how spiritual securitization becomes a tool in shaping the informational warfare for both political and faith survivor. In this regard, from the perspective of the data collection method I apply the selection of online documents, among which I list press articles, statements of the leaders of religious cults and political declarations from various leaders of the two states in conflict. As for the analysis method, in order to interpret the collected data, I will use the method of narrative analysis.[49] Table 1 below shows the coding procedure of the narratives selected within the dataset.

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[45] Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001).

[46] Sascha Dominik Dov Bachmann, Dries Putter, and Guy Duczynski, "Hybrid Warfare and Disinformation: A Ukraine War Perspective," *Global Policy* 14, no. 5 (2023): pp. 858–69.

[47] Johan Richter, "Milbloggers, Telegram, and the Russo-Ukraine War: The Role of Non-State Actors in Shaping Strategic Narratives during Global Conflicts" (Malmo, 2024), accesat la data de 13.09.2024, disponibil online la: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1867594&dswid=-3512.

[48] Adib Farhadi, Mark Grzegorzewski, and Anthony J. Masys, *The Great Power Competition Volume 5. The Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the Central Region* (Cham: Springer Cham, 2023).

[49] Anna De Fina, "Narrative Analysis," in *Research Methods in Intercultural Communication: A Practical Guide* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), pp. 327–342.

Table 1. Narratives of spiritual securitization in the Russian-Ukrainian war

Russian Orthodox Church **Russian Federation**	Those who opened fire still seeking to spread it to all the countries of the "Russian world", throughout the canonical territory of our Church Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture and spiritual space	Kiev continues to prepare the destruction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate The Ukrainian authorities have cynically turned the tragedy of the schism into an instrument of state policy
Ukrainian Orthodox Church **Ukraine**	They wash the brains of people with Russian support, and they are very dangerous for Ukraine. They sing songs in support of Russia, and that's horrible, here, in the center of Kyiv	strengthen our Ukrainian spiritual independence
Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine / Vatican	Please don't give up Ukraine	The Holy Father is not neutral in the moral level. This neutrality was given as an instrument of searching to alleviate the suffering of the people, and probably in the future some sort of channels of communication for a possible peace agreement
Roman Catholic Church of Ukraine / Vatican	Negotiate in time; look for some country that can mediate. Today, for example in the war in Ukraine, there are many who want to mediate	This visit is yet another expression of the Holy Father's concern for Ukraine and of his great hopes for peace

Protestant Churches in Ukraine	Dear brother, we have a war going on. A terrible war. And so many believers, brothers and sisters, are being killed. Little children are being killed. Help is very important to us	Among the Russian occupiers' most brutal assaults is the martyrdom of Pentecostals in Sloviansk World Evangelical Alliance-TRUST provides support for Ukrainian religious leaders and their local churches by: funding their relief work; strengthening grassroots leadership and national alliances and fostering and displaying the unity of the Body of Christ

Acting for the flock and nations: Christian denominations in Ukraine and their path to securitization during times of war

As stated before, within this article I want to find the narratives that are present within different political and religious leaders public discourses as well as believers' thoughts, aiming to securitize values, faiths and cultures in times of war. From Russia's violent securitization of the Russian World to Ukraine's normative shield towards that and from Vatican's neutrality to Protestant's cry for help, different types of spiritual securitizations unfold within the war in Ukraine.

A violent spiritual securitization: Russian Orthodox Church and Ukrainian Orthodox Church

When it comes to spiritual securitization on the part of the two Orthodox Churches representing the belligerent states in the Ruso-Ukraine war, both witnesses intrusive and even violent actions in some places, in order to protect and secure their own believers, nations and spiritual values. On the one hand, the Russian Orthodox Church stands out for its encouraging narrative towards the mobilization of citizens for war. The leader of RuOC, Patriarch Kirill, does not back down from emphasizing that:

> "The Church realises that if somebody, driven by a sense of duty and the need to fulfil their oath… goes to do what their duty calls of them, and if a person dies in the performance of this

> duty, then they have undoubtedly committed an act equivalent to sacrifice. They will have sacrificed themselves for others and therefore, we believe that this sacrifice washes away all the sins that a person has committed"[50]

This narrative is violent in two regards: firstly, because it instigates armed and physical violence, and secondly it is a form of violence against the very dogma of the Orthodox Faith by justifying killing and associating death in battle with martyrdom, which would ensure the washing away of all sins. However, from the perspective of securitization, the narratives indicate the justification of both the political act and the spiritual salvation for those involved in the war. Furthermore, the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church introduced special pro-war prayers asking God to "to help [Russian] people and grant [Russia] victory" against "those who want to fight [and] have taken up arms against Holy Rus, eager to divide and destroy her one people."[51] Finally, according to Al-Jazeera data, "Kirill instructed some 20,000 clerics from the Baltic to the Pacific to deliver a prayer "for peace" – and urged their parishioners to complain about any sermon they considered pro-Ukrainian."[52] This again shows the violent nature of the securitization narratives even at the dogmatic and liturgical dimension of the Russian Orthodoxy.

Alongside the religious dimension of the narrative of spiritual securitization led by the Russian Federation, there is also a narrative of religious geopolitical securitization practiced by the Kremlin regime. At the geopolitical level, Patriarch Kirill emphasizes the spiritual danger of expanding the war, stating: "Those who opened fire on the population of Ukraine sought and are still seeking to spread it to all the countries of the "Russian world", throughout the canonical territory of our Church: over Russia, Belarus, the Baltic states, over the Republic of Moldova, the Transcaucasian countries and those of Central Asia".[53] At the same time, as in the previous

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[50] Adrian Hilton, *Kirill's crusade against Ukraine is more jihadi than Christian*, accessed on 06.09.2024, available online at: https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/kirill-s-crusade-against-ukraine-is-more-jihadi-than-christian/.

[51] *Russian church introduces pro-war prayers in liturgy*, accessed on 06.09.2024, available online at: https://df.news/en/2024/04/01/russian-church-introduces-pro-war-prayers-in-liturgy/

[52] Mansur Milovalev, *'God of war': Russian Orthodox Church stands by Putin, but at what cost?*, accessed on 06.09.2024, available online at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/9/far-from-harmless-patriarch-kirill-backs-putins-war-but-at-what-cost.

[53] Cristina Mirca, *Patriarhul Kiril al Rusiei, declarații halucinante la adresa Republicii Moldova*, accessed on 13.09.2024, available online at: https://tvrmoldova.md/article/843ea35c0c632891/

statement, Vladimir Putin in turn, does not hesitate to call Ukraine part of the "Russian World", legitimizing both politically and spiritually (Ukraine as part of the canonical territory) the war. He emphasized in the broadcast immediately after the February 2022 invasion that "Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture and spiritual space."[54] Finally, in the same speech, regarding the geopolitical and religious dimension, Vladimir Putin states in order to justify the war:

> Kiev continues to prepare the destruction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. This is not an emotional judgement; proof of this can be found in concrete decisions and documents. The Ukrainian authorities have cynically turned the tragedy of the schism into an instrument of state policy. The current authorities do not react to the Ukrainian people's appeals to abolish the laws that are infringing on believers' rights.[55]

As mentioned, the "schism", from the perspective of the RuOC or the granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly by the Patriarchate of Constantinople[56] from the perspective of the UOC, represents a sufficient narrative to securitize, even through armed force, the canonical territory in Ukraine. Thus, the spiritual securitization and justification of the war at the same time, from the perspective of the Russian Orthodox Church, implies on the one hand a theological narrative dimension and on the other hand a religious geopolitical dimension based on the concept of the canonical territory and the intervention of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as a spiritual and political actor within the space of Slavic Orthodoxy.

On the other hand, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, together with the political authorities in Kiev, seeks too to spiritually securitize both the conflict and especially the nation and the community of Orthodox believers. In this regard, different from the predominantly discursive spiritual securitization

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patriarhul-kiril-al-rusiei-declaratii-halucinante-la-adresa-republicii-moldova.html?fbclid=IwAR1CiXShAHi9uUTJK9mrWJk-HFDSPsRvCgwO4kEZVamgJgXg_fXj9jj2pk4.

[54] Knox Thames. *Defending religion in Ukraine – Russia's Putin distorts shared Christian roots to justify war*, accessed on 13.09.2024, available online at: https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/defending-religion-ukraine-russia-putin-knox-thames.

[55] Knox Thames. *Defending religion in Ukraine – Russia's Putin distorts shared Christian roots to justify war*, accessed on 13.09.2024, available online at: https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/defending-religion-ukraine-russia-putin-knox-thames.

[56] James Sherr, *A Tomos for Ukraine's Orthodox Church: the Final Schism?*, accessed on 13.09.2024, available online at: https://icds.ee/en/a-tomos-for-ukraines-orthodox-church-the-final-schism/.

practiced by Russia, a normative spiritual securitization is noticeable on the part of Ukraine. This is often based on the outlawing of religious entities allegedly affiliated with the RuOC and the arrest of Orthodox priests, as well marked as alleged collaborators or supporters of the invasion, the Russian Federation and Patriarch Kirill. The most eloquent example is that of the total ban on the activity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - the Patriarchate of Moscow. Towards this, President Volodymir Zelensky declared: "I have just held a meeting -- a preparatory one -- regarding a decision that will strengthen our Ukrainian spiritual independence. We must deprive Moscow of the last opportunities to restrict the freedom of Ukrainians."[57] Thus, as the president of Ukraine himself expresses, the freedom of Ukrainians is also about spiritual independence from the Russian Federation. This was not a rush decision, President Zelensky speaking about the need to protect from internal enemies as early as 2022-2023, coinciding with the request of the Ukrainian authorities to the monks of the Pechersk Lavra monastery (belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate) to leave the Lavra. This monastery is considered to be the spiritual center of Slavic Orthodoxy.[58]

The normative spiritual securitization coming from Ukrainian authorities often embrace other practices than legislative one. Metropolitan Pavel, the head of Pechersk Lavra monastery, was put under house arrest "after Ukraine's top security agency said he was suspected of justifying Russian aggression, a criminal offense".[59] Also, the normative spiritual securitization of Ukraine gains common peoples support. On a protest in front of Pechersk Lavra monastery, an Ukrainian protester claims about the monks of the Lavra: "They wash the brains of people with Russian support, and they are very dangerous for Ukraine. They sing songs in support of Russia, and that's horrible, here, in the center of Kyiv."[60] According to data collected in 2024

[57] Reuters, *Zelenskiy suggests moves towards banning Orthodox church with Moscow ties*, accessed on 13.09.2024, available online at: https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-zelenskiy-suggests-moves-towards-banning-orthodox-church-with-moscow-2024-08-10/.

[58] Isobel Koshiw, *The enemy within? Ukraine's Moscow-affiliated Orthodox Church faces scrutiny*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/25/the-enemy-within-ukraines-moscow-affiliated-orthodox-church-faces-scrutiny.

[59] PBS News, *Orthodox leader in Kyiv ordered under house arrest by Ukrainian court*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/orthodox-leader-in-kyiv-ordered-under-house-arrest-by-ukrainian-court.

[60] PBS News, *Orthodox leader in Kyiv ordered under house arrest by Ukrainian court*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/orthodox-leader-in-kyiv-ordered-under-house-arrest-by-ukrainian-court.

"82% of Ukrainians don't trust Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate while 63% want it banned".[61] While the data above may not be representative for all the believers, the narrative of the protester expressed also above emphasized that, to some extent, not only the Ukrainian state but even the common Ukrainian Orthodox believers are involved in and need a spiritual securitization towards Russian Orthodoxy. While the Orthodox "brothers" are at war and propose a proactive securitization, others look towards other means in order to protect their faith and religious values in time of war.

Maintaining the balance: Vatican's neutrality as a form of spiritual securitization

Neutrality, was for a long time, a way of protecting values, people and countries facing war.[62] Thus, Pope Francis chose to use this instrument of international relations as a form of mediation between the two Orthodox Christian brothers who are in conflict, but also as a form of protecting the interests of the Holy See in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. In this sense, in March 2024 His Holiness stated:

> "On the occasion of a commemoration where I had to speak about peace and release two doves, the first time I did it, immediately a crow present in St. Peter's Square rose up, grabbed the dove, and took it away. It's harsh. And this is somewhat what happens with war. Many innocent people cannot grow, many children have no future. When you see that you are defeated, that things are not going well, it is necessary to have the courage to negotiate. You may feel ashamed, but with how many deaths will it end? Negotiate in time; look for some country that can mediate. Today, for example in the war in Ukraine, there are many who want to mediate. Turkey has offered itself for this. And others. Do not be ashamed to negotiate before things get worse."[63]

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[61] Ukrainska Pravda, *82% of Ukrainians don't trust Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, 63% want it banned*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2024/05/7/7454637/.

[62] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[63] Devin Watkins, Vatican News, *Pope on war in Ukraine: 'Do not be ashamed to negotiate'* accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-03/pope-francis-swiss-tv-interview-gaza-ukraine-wars.html.

His references to the war and the innocent (children) alongside the present narrative of the need for negotiation and the identification of a mediator highlight the neutral nature of the spiritual securitization that the Holy See carries out in relation to the conflict in Ukraine. In other words, we must protect others, but through negotiation and mediation that others (eg: Turkey) or maybe even us (n. Holy See) can do.

This reiteration of peace was also made by Cardinal Parolin, the Secretary of State of the Vatican. He states in connection with his visit to Ukraine and the fate of the conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation:"This visit is yet another expression of the Holy Father's concern for Ukraine and of his great hopes for peace. We talked about this at the recent Peace Summit in Bürgenstock [in Switzerland, ed.]. Therefore, closeness, prayer and hope that ways may be found to end this conflict as soon as possible".[64] He further was cited by Vatican News: "On behalf of Pope Francis and the Holy See, Cardinal Parolin once again expressed his concern for the situation in Ukraine and reiterated his commitment to find a solution to attain this just peace".[65]

At Church level, Greek-Catholics also emphasize the need for spiritual securitization. Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the worldwide Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church pleaded within a television intervention: "Please don't give up Ukraine! Each day, probably 200 Ukrainians are killed and any delay of the capability to receive the help to protect those people is paid with their blood". He also emphasized that "Ukrainian Catholic Church is a main actor in humanitarian action of assistance to the Ukrainian people, and I can testify that aid cannot be delayed."[66] This shows the fact that, at least in the field of humanitarian and social assistance, the Catholic Church has not remained completely neutral towards the material needs of its own believers. Despite this aspect, the narratives, including at the level of the Greek-Catholic Church in

[64] Mariusz Krawiec and Lisa Zengarini, Vatican News,*Cardinal Parolin: Holy See committed to just peace in Ukraine*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2024-07/cardinal-parolin-holy-see-committed-to-just-peace-in-ukraine.html.
[65] Mariusz Krawiec and Lisa Zengarini, Vatican News,*Cardinal Parolin: Holy See committed to just peace in Ukraine*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2024-07/cardinal-parolin-holy-see-committed-to-just-peace-in-ukraine.html.
[66] Peter Pinedo, *Head of Ukrainian Catholic Church: 'Please don't give up Ukraine'*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://angelusnews.com/news/world/shevchuk-catholic-church-ukraine/.

Ukraine, align themselves with the message of peace that does not choose one side and that has even created some disturbances among believers:

> "The Holy Father is not neutral in the moral level. He is with us and he confirmed that many times. This neutrality was given as an instrument of searching to alleviate the suffering of the people, and probably in the future some sort of channels of communication for a possible peace agreement," he added. "So, in a certain sense, we do have a good ally."[67]

According to Angelus Agency, "Shevchuk praised the pope for using his neutrality to help gather humanitarian aid and to work toward peace between Russia and Ukraine. He said that when speaking to Ukrainians about the Vatican's decision to remain neutral he makes the distinction between diplomatic and moral neutrality."[68] Thus, at the level of the Catholic Church in Ukraine, there is a spiritual securitization through neutrality. The public discourses of both Roman-Catholic and Greek-Catholic leaders highlight the need for protection through calls for peace, negotiation and diplomacy, the proactive involvement appearing only at the social and material level towards the physical needs of their believers.

Relating on others: Protestant Churches and their need for being securitized

Finally, while Orthodox Churches and Catholic ones can take care of themselves securitizing their own values, dogma and believers, there are also those who call for a securitization through assistance. In this case, it is about the Protestant churches that, in the absence of power centers to represent them and in the absence of communities well rooted in Ukrainian culture and society compared to the Orthodox and Catholics, call for external aid from Christian networks across the World. One such example is the Evangelical Church that established "The Response – Ukraine Special Taskforce (TRUST) to coordinate efforts with Evangelical communities and strengthen responding churches in Ukraine and neighboring countries." According to World Evangelical Alliance's website, TRUST provides support for Ukrainian religious leaders and their local churches by: funding their relief work; strengthening grassroots leadership and national alliances and fostering and displaying the unity of

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[67] Peter Pinedo, *Head of Ukrainian Catholic Church: 'Please don't give up Ukraine'*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://angelusnews.com/news/world/shevchuk-catholic-church-ukraine/.

[68] Peter Pinedo, *Head of Ukrainian Catholic Church: 'Please don't give up Ukraine'*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://angelusnews.com/news/world/shevchuk-catholic-church-ukraine/.

the Body of Christ". World Evangelical Alliance stated that: "We are currently working with 10 Ukrainian partners (7 denominations and 3 NGO networks) and 10 partners in the neighbouring countries".[69]

The same situation is the same with other Protestant denominations. According to a Christian website dealing with Christians in Ireland and UK, The Baptist Union of Great Britain has a web page with information for those interested in sponsoring Ukrainian refugees, including a response form to enable the organisation to keep in touch with Baptists exploring refugee sponsorship/support.[70] A Baptist believer delivering a speech to the US Congress stated:

> "Dear brother, we have a war going on. A terrible war. And so many believers, brothers and sisters, are being killed. Little children are being killed. Help is very important to us. Especially military help because if there were a missile to shoot down that drone, the drone wouldn't have flown in our house,"[71]

Data shows aggression towards Pentecostals too by the Russian Authorities. According to The Hill News Agency:

> "Among the Russian occupiers' most brutal assaults is the martyrdom of Pentecostals in Sloviansk. In June 2014, four members of the Transfiguration of the Lord Church, including two deacons, were captured and executed by fighters aligned with Russia. There is also the near-fatal beating of Pastor Oleksandr Salfetnikov, who had remained in occupied Balaklia to assist several church members who were unable to relocate."[72]

As the data shows, differentiated from Orthodox and Catholics, Protestants rely on external securitization, whether it is physical protection against the violent Russian Federation and famine, or whether it is protecting religious identity.

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[69] World Evangelical Alliance's website, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://worldea.org/crisis-response/.

[70] Churches Together, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://ctbi.org.uk/church-response-to-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/.

[71] Tatiana Vorozhko, *Statistics, prayer, personal stories: How Protestants helped bring Ukraine aid to US House floor*, accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://www.voanews.com/a/statistics-prayer-personal-stories-how-protestants-helped-bring-ukraine-aid-to-us-house-floor-/7597424.html.

[72] Andriy Yermak, *Ukraine's evangelicals need US support* **,** accessed on 22.09.2024, available online at: https://thehill.com/opinion/international/4574352-ukraines-evangelicals-need-us-support/.

Results and Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the narratives of spiritual securitization in the case of the three major Christian denominations in Ukraine: Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. Following the analysis of the data, three major types of spiritual securitization emerged that the nation states (Ukraine, Russia, Vatican) and religious actors such as the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches and the various Protestant Churches, propose and apply in order to protect their own believers, dogmas and values, in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Table 2 below summarizes these types of spiritual securitization.

Table 2. Types of Spiritual Securitization in the Russia-Ukrainian War

Russian Federation Russian Orthodox Church	Violent Spiritual Securitization	Violent securitization due to the use of the Orthodox Faith, as dogma and canonical space, to justify the invasion of Ukraine
Ukraine Ukrainian Orthodox Church	Normative Spiritual Securitization	Normative securitization through the attempts of the Ukrainian state to outlaw the priests and the Churches affiliated to the Moscow Patriarchate
Vatican Ukrainian Roman Catholic Church Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church	Spiritual Securitization Through Neutrality	Spiritual securitization through neutrality considering the Vatican's calls in majority, for negotiation and diplomatic peace missions.
Protestant Churches in Ukraine	Spiritual Securitization Through Assistance	Spiritual securitization through assistance considering the need to involve other actors (Churches outside Ukraine, NGOs) to ensure physical and spiritual protection.

Thus, this article primarily contributes to the explantion of the meanings of the concepts of securitization in general and spiritual securitization in particular, in the specific context of a conventional military conflict marked by Christian plurality of actors.

From a geopolitical stand, the contributions of this study lie with the presence of a mosaic of actors trying to wage an unseen war within a war. The different types of spiritual securitization bring to light a wide range of actors involved. On the one hand, the duality of the Vatican as both a political and religious actor wanting to be involved both in protecting the faithful, but also in identifying a way of peace and ending the war. On the other hand, the Russian Federation and the Russian Orthodox Church whose missionary (Moscow the Third Rome) and political (Russian World) interests are threatened by the political-military and spiritual resistance in turn (by the declaration of autocephaly and the support of the Patriarchate of Constantinople) of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Finally, as important geopolitical actors stand out the European Christian networks and not only that collaborate to support philanthropically and religiously the Protestant Christians in Ukraine. More than that, the fact that the religious actors and their believers and leaders leave the dogmatic and theological discourse traditional for their mission and approach notions of "just peace", "need for military aid" "borders", "Holy Rus" and "negotiations" shows the geopolitical character of the Churches and their leaders and followers.

It is difficult to predict what will be the result of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, but the collected data highlight the presence of an informational warfare for the spiritual securitization of faiths, waged by both political and religious actors in the name of their nations and Churches. While the current article has only scratched the surface regarding securitization and geopolitics, future research may look at each denomination separately. Also, studies can be carried out on the regional implications of spiritual securitization or even research the theological level of the securitization process, an issue treated little within this study.

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Communicating with the Public in the Digital Era: An analysis of Romanian Intelligence Services' Social Media Presence in 2024

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Rezumat: Acest articol explorează prezența serviciilor de informații pe rețelele sociale, utilizând netnografia ca metodă de cercetare. Studiul se concentrează pe prezența online a Serviciului de Informații Externe (SIE) și a Serviciului Român de Informații (SRI) pe trei platforme cheie: Facebook, Instagram și LinkedIn. Prin analizarea conținutului, frecvenței și a modelelor de interacțiune ale postărilor, cercetarea identifică strategiile folosite pentru a comunica cu publicul, a spori transparența și a promova obiectivele instituționale. Rezultatele evidențiază rolul rețelelor sociale în cultivarea încrederii publice, implicarea unor audiențe diverse și abordarea provocărilor precum dezinformarea și preocupările legate de confidențialitate. Acest studiu contribuie la înțelegerea modului în care serviciile de informații se adaptează tendințelor de comunicare digitală, păstrând în același timp echilibrul delicat între secretul operațional și dialogul cu publicul.

Cuvinte cheie: platforme social media, servicii de informații, comunicare digitală, Serviciul Român de Informații, Serviciul de Informații Extern

Abstract: This article explores the presence of intelligence services on social media, employing netnography as a methodological framework. The study focuses on the online presence of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE) and the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) across three key platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. By analyzing the content and frequency, the research identifies the strategies used to communicate with the public, enhance transparency, and promote institutional goals. The findings highlight the role of social media in fostering public trust, engaging diverse audiences, recruitment and addressing challenges such as

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misinformation. This study contributes to understanding how intelligence services adapt to digital communication trends while navigating the delicate balance between operational secrecy and public outreach.

Keywords: social media platforms, intelligence services, digital communication, Romanian Intelligence Service, Foreign Romanian Intelligence Service

The main objective of the intelligence services is to protect national security and the fundamental values promoted by the state and society. They act in accordance with the interests of the state and ensure that the rights and freedoms of citizens are respected, using specific methods.

The objectives of intelligence services vary according to the geopolitical context, domestic legislation and national priorities of each state. Traditionally, intelligence services are responsible for safeguarding national and international security, preventing and combating espionage activities and providing relevant information to decision-makers to support their decision-making. Intelligence services around the world have as their primary objective the protection of citizens, while maintaining a balance between security and respect for fundamental rights[1]. As part of the institutional architecture of every state, intelligence services are accountable to citizens and must maintain a balance between the transparency necessary for any institution working in a democratic system and the operational discretion - so necessary for institutions of this nature.

Transparency and accountability of intelligence services are components that build public trust. These elements ensure that intelligence services operate within a legal framework, serving the interests of states without becoming oppressive or politically controlled instruments. The transparency of intelligence services in democratic systems is limited by the nature of the activities that these institutions carry out, activities that involve considerable sensitivity and classified information. However, democratic systems have created ways to maintain openness. Transparent intelligence services publish annual reports in which they provide information about their activities, objectives and results achieved, without compromising operations while at the same time presenting the institution's strategic priorities. The second essential component in

[1] Martin Alessandro, Bruno Cardinale Lagomarsino, Carlos Scartascini, Jorge Streb, Jerónimo Torrealday, „Transparency and Trust in Government. Evidence from a Survey Experiment", *World Developmen*, Volume 138, February 2022.

building transparency is communication with the public. Communicating with citizens involves on the one hand, informing citizens about major threats, security risks or preventive measures and on the other hand, organizing awareness campaigns.

Intelligence services communicate with citizens through a variety of channels and mechanisms, tailored to the information needs of the public and national security requirements. The aim of this communication process is to provide transparency, prevent risks and cultivate public trust, while maintaining the confidentiality specific to intelligence activities. In terms of the forms of communication, the communication services choose to address the public through: (a) official communiqués or press conferences, (b) build and maintain their official websites and online platforms, (c) collaborate with the media to convey information but also to clarify certain situations[2] and last but not least, (d) develop social media pages where they post relevant information, security alerts or prevention messages[3].

The evolution of technology and the emergence of social networks have significantly contributed to the development of communication channels in society. Social media is an open space without too many strict barriers that provides a perfect place for developing channels of communication with the public. The presence of information services on social media can bring multiple benefits, both for the institutions and for citizens. The specialized literature does not discuss the role of social media in the work of intelligence services in much detail. However, numerous studies look at how social media has altered the way other types of government institutions reap the benefits of the social media space [4] [5]. Extrapolating, we can say that intelligence services use social media for:

a. *Effective communication with the public*. This is due to the fact that social media is a space that allows for the rapid dissemination of relevant information, such as security warnings, awareness campaigns or crisis updates.

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[2] Cristian E. Guerrero-Castro, "Strategic Communication for Security & National Defense: Proposal for an Interdisciplinary Approach", *Connections*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 2013), pp. 27-52.

[3] Chris Wells, *The Civic Organization and the Digital Citizen – communicating engagement in a networked age*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

[4] Liam McLoughlin, Stephen Ward, and Daniel W.B. Lomas, "'Hello, World': GCHQ, Twitter and Social Media Engagement," Intelligence and National Security, vol.35, no. 2, 2020, pp. 233–251.

[5] Marijn Janssen and Elsa Estevez, "Lean Government and Platform-Based Governance-Doing More with Less," *Government Information Quarterly*, vol.30, no. 1, 2013, pp. S1–S8.

Moreover, through the messaging elements that most social platforms have, intelligence services can communicate directly with citizens. This communication becomes direct, sometimes instinctive, and the informal method can contribute constructively to increasing trust.

Social media can be used to encourage citizens to report suspicious activity through private messages or redirects to official communication platforms and in the case of emergencies, citizens can receive alerts and instructions directly on social platforms.

b. *Demystifying the activity of the services.* Social media platforms can create a space in which the mystery surrounding the intelligence services can be explained or, depending on the objectives of the services, maintained. Posts made by institutions can explain, in outline or in more detail, the role and mission of the intelligence service, helping to create a positive and accessible image. Through social media platforms, intelligence services can construct various discourses that make citizens more aware of the nature of the activities carried out by these institutions. Beyond discourses and historical elements, on social media platforms, intelligence services can present the success of certain missions and the contribution those missions make to national security.
c. *Recruitment*. Given that the target audience for recruitment campaigns is most likely to be online, in recent times, intelligence agencies have realized that social media is an ideal venue to highlight employment opportunities and the benefits of security work can attract young and talented candidates.
d. *Education and public awareness*. Through educational or awareness campaigns, intelligence services can help citizens to identify various risks such as cyber fraud, radicalization or espionage thus contributing to the development of a security culture[6].
e. *Image of the institution*. Social media is a mouthpiece through which you can not only explain to users the institution's activities or run educational campaigns but also build a brand, an image of a modern institution adapted to the dynamic society in which it exists. Active presence, well thought out, attractive content can modernize their image.

[6] Michael Landon-Murray, „ Social Media and U.S. Intelligence Agencies", *Journal of Strategic Security,* no. 3 Suppl. (2015): pp. 67-79.

Beyond these aspects, we can mention that intelligence services will also use social media as part of their processes and activities. Social media has become an information-rich source that intelligence services have been exploiting for some time. This process of gathering information from social media is called social media intelligence (SOCMINT)[7]. Without going into too much detail, Social Media Intelligence proves to be particularly useful for identifying individuals, tracking behaviors (such as radicalization) or observing public perceptions of certain events.

The presence of intelligence services on social media is a relatively recent phenomenon. This is the effect of the extraordinary evolution that technology has undergone in recent times, which has generated the development of digital platforms. Specialists attribute this development to the concept of *user generated content*, which assumes that the user is no longer just a consumer of information but also a producer of it.

Because social media platforms developed on the North American continent, the first intelligence services to choose to have a presence on social media platforms were American. During the Obama administration, federal agencies in the United States emphasized social engagement and openness to public relations. They made their appearance on social networks, the most popular being Facebook and Twitter. In 2014, the Central Intelligence Agency launches the first tweet on the official Twitter account of the intelligence establishment. Their message is in a typical of the secrecy register that pervades the work of these types of institutions: "We can neither confirm nor deny that this is our first tweet." Then the Federal Bureau of Investigation follows the same path and launches its presence on social media. During this period, the services' main concern was to improve their public image by communicating their mission[8].

Over time, observing how social media platforms are changing the communication channels and becoming aware of the role these platforms play in the everyday life of the citizen, more and more intelligence services have chosen to *meet people where they are*[9] and therefore to become active on

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[7] Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, "A Balance Between Security and Privacy Online Must Be Struck...", *Demos Report*, <https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/ uploads/ 2017/03/intelligence-Report.pdf>, 2012.

[8] Michael Landon-Murray,*op.cit.*

[9] Liam McLoughlin, Stephen Ward, and Daniel W.B. Lomas, "'Hello, World': GCHQ, Twitter and Social Media Engagement," Intelligence and National Security, vol.35, no. 2, 2020, pp. 233–251.

social media platforms, mainly Twitter and Facebook. The content of information services has been diversified. They have gone from discussing their purpose and mission to organizing recruitment campaigns to attract candidates or activities to combat online misinformation or even campaigns to disseminate information about public safety (especially after the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015).

Lately, intelligence services have also been consolidating their presence on new platforms in response to their popularity with the public. Facebook users have migrated to Instagram which is why intelligence services have developed a presence there too. Taking advantage of the development of a space for professionals, LinkedIn, intelligence services have chosen to develop their recruitment campaigns on this platform as well.

A study looking at the presence of European Union intelligence services on social media platforms shows that in the case of the European intelligence services, out of the 69 analyzed structures, 20 own and maintain a Facebook page. Most of the time, domestic and foreign intelligence services are present on Facebook. Military intelligence institutions do not develop or administrate Facebook pages. Some European countries are very active on Facebook like: Germany, Romania or Estonia. In the case of these states, the internal and external information services are active and interact with Facebook users. A brief analysis of the information posted by them shows that, most of the time, the content disseminated is related to security challenges, awareness or recruitment. Regarding Twitter, the same research states that only 10 intelligence services „tweet" about their activity. The country with the most Twitter accounts is Germany. The information services are also present on Twitter in other countries such as Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Estonia and Finland. At the European Union level, only 10 intelligence agencies have an Instagram account. Instagram is used by intelligence services in Germany, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain while only in eight states the information services have a LinkedIn page. These countries are: France, Germany, Romania and Finland[10].

Social media platforms and intelligence presence will continue to evolve in the future. We can anticipate that current and future trends are likely to see the integration of artificial intelligence elements to streamline the dialog process or to help develop content that will reach a larger number of users.

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[10] Raluca Lutai, „European intelligence services "just signed up" on social media. An analysis of secret services and social media platforms" în *Studia Europea*, 2/2022, pp. 213-215.

The possibilities to integrate video, audio or what is called visual storytelling will contribute to the development of the messages and the content conveyed. Messages, content and direct communication will remain on the already popular platforms but will certainly migrate to the new platforms that are becoming more and more popular. We are referring here, of course, to TikTok the place where the younger citizens of societies are present.

Method

This paper will follow two representative cases: the social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) of the Romanian Intelligence Service and the Foreign Intelligence Service. Beyond the easy linguistic framework, the two intelligence institutions have been selected because they represent the largest and most representative intelligence institutions. They have a constant presence on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. The time period analyzed is January - December 2024. The method by which we aim to collect the information is netnography. Netnography is a virtual form of survey. This form of data collection started to be used since the mid-1990s initially for the field of marketing and business research, and later it was introduced to other disciplines as well[11]. Netnographers analyze data about people's social behavior online. Netnographic analysis can provide insights into the practices, culture and commonalities of online consumers[12]. In terms of analyzing the data collected, we will try to identify the directions in which the two intelligence services use social media platforms.

Analysis

The *Romanian Intelligence Service* (SRI) is the main intelligence agency in Romania, responsible for ensuring national security. Its main activities concern the defense of constitutional values, the prevention and combating of organized crime and terrorism, counter-espionage activities, cyber security and economic protection[13]. Currently, SRI is present online on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

The Romanian Intelligence Service had an active presence on social networks throughout 2024. Whether we are talking about Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn the communication team of SRI sent monthly messages to the users of these networks.

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[11] Ce este netnografia? Ce este netnografia | Navigating Social Worlds.

[12] Robert Kozinets, „Netnography 2.0", 21 decembrie 2006, pp. 6–8.

[13] Misiunea și viziunea SRI - Serviciul Român de Informații.

In the context of the electoral process that took place in Romania, and which was marked by several discussions about the involvement of foreign powers, the Romanian Information Service posted warning messages about fake accounts and attempts to manipulate public opinion: "Identify the signs of a fake account! Online misinformation can influence important decisions. Together, we can prevent manipulation." or "Pay attention to the source of election information! Misinformation is a powerful weapon, but so is accurate information."

For the sake of transparency and accountability, SRI showcases its community engagement and public events on its platforms. For example, various educational projects are presented (Launch of a program dedicated to preventing radicalization and violent extremism in schools. "Education is the first step to a safe society.") or participation in technology exhibitions with demonstrations of counterterrorist equipment, robots and artificial intelligence solutions.

Another consistent component of the messages that the SRI transmits to the public through social networks is the special messages dedicated to certain events. Over time these types of messages have proven to be very popular with the public. SRI manages every time to surprise through intelligent messages, adapted to the institution's activities, and full of humor. An example in this sense can be the post dedicated to Dragobete days in which using a famous Romanian expression - the eyes that are not seen are forgotten - the Service emphasizes the vigilance with which the institution follows carefully every activity built a secure Security environment. In the play on words, the verb „se uita" changes its meaning from "to look" "to survey". In the post dedicated to March 1, the coming of spring is greeted with a reference to the daily activity of the service and an exhortation to check information in multiple sources "The little apple symbolizes rebirth. Likewise, well verified information also revives truth. In our work, information from multiple sources is essential. Use it wisely!". On the occasion of March 8 the ladies are praised as being much better at carrying out stakeouts "Happy birthday to our colleagues! They redefine excellence in discretion. With perseverance and professionalism, they make every day a successful mission. Respect to all the women who choose to protect Romania from the shadows". On April 1, the content posted by the institution emphasizes information and disinformation and the SRI's mission to protect the truth "regardless of the date on the calendar".

Moreover, we could appreciate that the SRI builds a perception of a very closed national system of public order and security. The institution sends birthday messages to divers, the Navy, the Special Protection Service, colleagues in the Gendarmerie or the Romanian Police. The institution's day, Romania's national day, the date of NATO accession and other similar moments are also celebrated.

In addition to information campaigns and celebrations of relevant events, the Facebook page also includes real recruitment campaigns. The recruiting messages emphasized the discretion and dedication required of an intelligence officer: you won't be in the spotlight, but you will be a pillar of national security." Attracting new recruits is an obvious need also emphasized on Children's Day when they are offered a career in the secret service: "What do you want to be when you grow up? We have an answer for the brave: protector of the country. We're waiting for you at our events dedicated to the little ones, where curiosity becomes superpower." Other recruitment activities include participation in job fairs, such as those organized by universities, where analyst and operative officer positions were promoted as well as the launch of the dedicated "Careers in SRI" page which contains testimonials of employees and descriptions of specific challenges as well as a form that can be directly accessed by those who wish to apply for a job.

Through its work on the Facebook platform during 2024, SRI was able to stay close to citizens by communicating relevant, educational and engaging messages. The public had the opportunity to discover a human and engaging side of an institution often perceived as inaccessible.

Instagram and LinkedIn

The official account of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) on Instagram has been a focal point of the institution's communication, managing to attract 34.5k followers through visually captivating, informative and visually engaging content tailored to the young audience. With more than 180 posts, SRI has shown that it can combine specific discretion with modern visual language.

The topics covered are not different from those we have identified on the Facebook platform - with minor exceptions that are not notable. In other words, the posts made on the Facebook account are taken to Instagram where they are adapted with the hashtags specific to this platform.

SRI's Instagram account in 2024 demonstrated how a public institution can become accessible and modern while maintaining its specific discretion. Through a combination of information, education and visual interaction, it strengthened the connection with young audiences and those interested in national security.

In terms of the cyberspace provided by LinkedIn, in 2024, the Romanian Intelligence Service exploded to attract talented professionals and communicate directly with an audience interested in national security careers. With over 14,000 followers, the account has positioned itself as an information hub for recruitment, events and professional development. Interesting and at the same time clever is the cover image of the page which continues an engaging and targeted message: "Curious? Very good. Discreet? Even better.", basically, two of the necessary elements for an employee of such an institution.

The content promoted by the institution on the LinkedIn page focuses on the area of recruitment campaigns and, as with the Instagram platform, the content is not very different from what we see on Facebook. The core elements of the service's activity are discussed. The posts highlight the multiple roles in the SRI: analysts, cybersecurity experts, linguists, sociologists, etc. "At the SRI, every profession counts. Whatever your professional background, you can contribute to national security. Apply now!" These posts are sometimes complemented by testimonials from employers who emphasize the challenges and rewards of a career in SRI: "My work is not visible, but its impact is real. At the end of the day, I know that I have done my best for Romania - Maria, operational analyst"

The recruitment campaign is complemented by postings of the job and internship fairs at which the institution presents itself and the programs for the personal and professional development of young people that the institution runs: "SRI invests in education. Through seminars, courses and direct interaction with our specialists, we are building the next generation of experts. Thanks to all the students who visited us at this year's events!". This type of content demonstrates that the institution's communication strategy is audience-oriented, an audience that needs to see the openness of the institution and that can always choose to join.

In our opinion, SRI's LinkedIn account is an example of effective use of the platform for recruiting, educating and building a strong institutional brand tailored to professionals and young aspiring professionals.

The *Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE*) uses its official Facebook page SIE Human Resources, LinkedIn and Instagram to communicate directly with the public and attract talented candidates. With an accessible tone and diverse content, the Human Resources department page has become a central point for information and recruitment. We chose to discuss the analysis of the three platforms in a condensed way because we noticed that there was no variance in content depending on the platform. In other words, messages that are posted on Facebook are also posted on Instagram and LinkedIn.

During 2024, the SIE carried out explicit recruitments for various roles: operational officer - "If you have courage, emotional intelligence and the desire to make a difference, the career of operational officer in the SIE is for you. Apply now for a unique role in the service of Romania. #RecrutareSIE" and non-commissioned officer. The page contains informative articles such as "5 steps to prepare for a career in foreign intelligence." but also testimonials from those who work there "Working in SIE means contributing, discreetly, to everyone's safety. Every day brings a challenge, and in the end, the satisfaction is immense. - Andrei, operational officer."

The storytelling is humorous sometimes, with users being invited to apply for linguist jobs - for some less familiar languages, through various posts in those languages. Of course, the figure of the super-secret agent James Bond is not missing either - "Do you want to be the next James Bond? Have you ever dreamed of being James Bond? Maybe we won't have spectacular gadgets, but we will certainly have equally important missions. We are waiting for you in our team! #RecrutareSIE"

The posts about open positions are complemented by the activity that the service carries out to get closer to future employees. Thus, the events that SIE organizes within several university centers in Romania are announced, in which they present the activity and career prospects in this institution. For high school students, SIE addresses them in a similar way with presentations developed within high schools: "A secure future starts with a solid education. Apply now for our post-secondary military education programs and discover a career in the service of Romania. #MilitaryEducation".

SIE understood the need to talk more and more often with the general public and participates in recruitment and career events. The institution's page announces and presents its presence at Career Days, an event organized by the University of Bucharest, or other career fairs such as Top Employers. The institution posted an image from the SIE stand:

"National security needs top people. We are waiting for you at Top Employer 2024 to discuss your future in our team. #ExternalSecurity #TopEmployer".

In addition to the recruitment and career-related content, messages from festive moments such as December 1 – national day or the feast of Saint Nicholas are also added.

SIE's presence on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn platforms in 2024 was an example of strategic communication, combining professionalism with a friendly touch and meaningful interactions. Its messages inspired trust, attracted candidates and educated the public about the institution's mission.

Conclusions

The year 2024 represented a period of consolidation of the presence of Romanian intelligence services in the digital environment, marking a significant adaptation to contemporary communication trends through social media platforms. The two most important intelligence services in Romania, the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) and the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE), showed, through their online presence, that their activity can be both transparent and close to the public that they continue to serve with the same discretion and professionalism. Both institutions used platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to address multiple communication directions: recruitment, education, public information, but also to strengthen the institutional image. The campaigns carried out combined creativity with professionalism, demonstrating that these services are capable of using social media as an effective channel for dialogue with citizens. Facebook proved to be a central platform for broad communication, including recruitment campaigns, festive messages and awareness events. Instagram, with its focus on visual content, brought added accessibility, attracting a younger audience. Recruitment and festive messages were presented with a creative and modern tone, reinforcing the perception of a 21st century SRI and SIE. LinkedIn, on the other hand, was used mainly to attract talented professionals, providing details about available roles and employee testimonials. The page managed to create an image of trust and highlight the diversity of professions within the services.

The use of social media by SRI and SIE reflects a strategic approach, designed to demystify their work, attract new talent and educate the public

on the importance of national security. In a global context marked by disinformation and cybersecurity risks, these initiatives demonstrate a commitment to transparency and dialogue, while maintaining the necessary discretion.

The online activity of these institutions in 2024 represents an example of good practice for adapting traditional structures to contemporary realities, in which digital communication is essential to meet public expectations and ensure long-term relevance.

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The Role of Competitiveness in Economic Security - Understanding the Concept in Romanian Economy

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Rezumat: În era globalizării, conexiunile dintre economii și creșterea competiției au făcut din competitivitate un element un element fundamental pentru supraviețuirea și dezvoltarea companiilor pe piața internațională. Aceasta se manifestă pe mai multe niveluri, atât între state, cât și între economiile lor naționale sau în cadrul companiilor private. Pentru a progresa, statele trebuie să atragă investiții, să crească productivitatea, exporturile și locurile de muncă, și să susțină antreprenoriatul, inovația și dezvoltarea tehnologică. Această situație subliniază importanța unei strategii integrate pentru a promova competitivitatea în toate sectoarele. Astfel, competitivitatea, un atribut esențial al securității economice, depinde atât de decidenții politici și măsurile luate de aceștia, cât și de managementul companiilor din sectorul privat și abilitățile acestora de a se adapta și a evolua în contextul globalizării economiei.

Cuvinte cheie : securitate economică, securitate națională, competitivitate

Abstract: In the era of globalization, the inter-linking of economies and increased competition have made competitiveness a fundamental element for the survival and development of companies in the international marketplace. It manifests itself at several levels, both between countries and between their national economies or within private companies. To make progress, states need to attract investment, increase productivity, exports and jobs, and support entrepreneurship, innovation and technological development. This underlines the importance of an integrated strategy to promote competitiveness across all sectors. Thus, competitiveness, an essential attribute of economic security, depends as much on policy makers and the measures they take as on the management of private sector companies and their ability to adapt and evolve in a globalizing economy.

Keywords: economic security; national security; competitiveness

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1. Introduction

It is the World Trade Organization that regulates the behaviour of national governments with regard to international trade in goods and services, sets the rules for global trade, reducing barriers and eliminating discrimination; this organization has no policies on competitiveness, neither on promoting it nor on imposing obligations or restrictions on its members.[1]

According to some authors, economies are now in hypercompetition, i.e. a level of excessive competition that creates permanent instability and disruptive changes generated by companies developing offensive strategies to gain market advantage or to increase their performance.[2]

The existence of a large number of competitors requires the creation of complex strategies for companies, as well as the possibility to adapt them. Paying attention to what is happening in the competitive environment is mandatory, as changes are constant and competition is excessive.

The global economy is a reflection of the hyper-competitiveness of the business environment and companies need to make serious efforts to assess the markets in which they operate and where they meet their competitors.[3]

Globalization has led to an increase in performance standards, from operational efficiency to productivity, quality or costs, and companies need to be competitive in both domestic and international markets as consumers have easy access to goods and services produced worldwide.[4]

Both globalization and competitiveness are determined by market forces and market changes, and the responsibility for controlling these forces lies on the one hand with private actors and on the other hand with national governments.[5]

The World Economic Forum produces reports on the competitiveness of the world economy. The latest was published in 2020, entitled "The Global Competitiveness Report. How Countries are Performing on the Road to Recovery", and covering topics such as international markets, human capital,

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[1] Tran Van Hoa, *Competition Policy and Global Competitiveness in Major Asian Economies: An Overview*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003, pp. 14-15.

[2] Michael A. Hitt et al, *Strategic Management. Competitiveness and Globalisation*, Cengage Learning, 2017, p. 7.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 8.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 9.

[5] Ricardo Ernst, Jerry Haar, *Globalization, Competitiveness and Governability. The Three Disruptive Forces of Business in the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 2.

innovation, disruption and resilience.[6] It presents the issue of competitiveness as a fundamental underpinning of the global economy, but also points to disruptions in some markets that are failing to be productive or competitive, blaming this on a lack of information[7] and poor resilience. The report explains the importance of opening up economies and the need for innovative policies to reap the benefits of international trade, while limiting internal divisions between regions where world-class firms are located, and supporting regions that suffer as a result of globalisation.[8]

In order to maintain a high level of competitiveness, companies also need legislation, regulation and the involvement of the authorities of the countries from which they originate, as policy makers are obliged to devise measures to manage the domestic economic environment and increase its competitiveness; this can be achieved by increasing the competitiveness of actors operating within the national economy.

Thus, the microeconomic strategies of companies, together with the macroeconomic strategies of the state, must be focused and aligned with the aim of gaining advantages from globalization.[9]

But in addition to private and state economic actors, there are others whose influence is strong in globalization and competitiveness. There are political organizations whose competences transcend state barriers - such as the European Union, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, etc. - and whose legislation is binding (e.g. anti-dumping law), with implications for markets and able to change the principles of globalization.[10]

Non-governmental organizations (e.g. Greenpeace) also have a strong involvement, influencing certain environmental decisions, for example with implications for industries and the economic environment.[11]

Competitiveness therefore depends on policy-makers, who have to adapt and design, according to the specificities of national economies, measures to increase the level of competitiveness; these depend on variables such as

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[6] World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report. How Countries are Performing on the Road to Recovery, 2020 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2020.pdf*, accessed on 11.05.2024.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 28.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 49.

[9] Ricardo Ernst, Jerry Haar, *op. cit*. pp. 8-9.

[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 9-10.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 10.

macroeconomic structure, geopolitics, resource structure or international relations.[12]

In addition to these factors, competitiveness is in itself an attribute of companies, and their success, progress or failure depends on their strategies. In designing a strategy, account is taken of the economic environment (a stable one that encourages investment and innovation), but also of access to resources (including financial or human resources), sustainability, growth opportunities and the competitive environment.

2. Competitiveness on a European scale

At the level of European policy, competition is upheld and protected, so that Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome (Treaty establishing the European Economic Community) forbids "any concerted practice which has as its object the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the common market, and in particular any concerted practice which:

- directly or indirectly fixes selling or purchase prices
- limits or controls production, marketing, technical development or investment
- allocates contracts or sources of supply
- applies unequal treatment to trading partners, thereby placing them at a disadvantage
- makes the conclusion of contracts conditional on the acceptance by the parties of additional services which, by their nature or according to commercial usage, have no connection with the subject-matter of such contracts."[13]

In addition to this regulation, there are others at European Union level, which show a concern to encourage competition and prevent unlawful forms of competition. Competition is considered to be "an essential instrument for achieving a free and dynamic internal market, promoting general economic welfare".[14]

The principles of competition, like those of competitiveness, have evolved and changed in recent years due to the accelerated processes of

[12] *Ibidem,* p. 12.

[13] TRAITÉ instituant la Communauté Économique Européenne et documents annexes, Les règles communes, *LES RÈGLES DE CONCURRENCE*, Article 85, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11957E/TXT, accessed on 11.05.2024.

[14] Parlamentul European, Politica în domeniul concurenței, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/ro/sheet/82/politica-in-domeniul-concurentei accesssed on 01.03.2024.

globalization and political, social and economic interdependencies. The interconnected relationships between national economies and between actors within them (in terms of resources, investment, trade, etc.) are defining for the way the world economy looks today. Interdependencies bring a number of advantages, stimulating economic growth and development, but they can also produce disadvantages through the risks they entail and increased vulnerabilities. They are dealt with on the basis of strategies, which must be implemented by every company.

"Increasing competitiveness can be ensured by implementing the following measures: lowering the cost of production, using alternative energy, increasing labor productivity, using advanced technologies, anti-trust policies, improving the quality of the workforce and in general, the quality of education".[15]

Contemporary society is now in the *information age*.[16] Information is therefore an important attribute for the competitiveness of companies, which are increasingly oriented towards obtaining and exploiting information.

Strategic decisions in particular, and strategies in general, are being formed based predominantly on a set of information aimed at maximizing opportunities and success.[17]

More important than the information itself is the process of managing it. This refers to "knowing what to do with the information collected, what is important and what is not, what can be discarded and what should be kept, knowing how to make valuable information accessible so that it is not lost".[18]

3. Economic security

"Security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values and, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that these values should be attacked".[19]

The concept of security is an intensively studied one with a multitude of meanings and approaches. At a basic level, we understand security as the absence of dangers, regardless of their nature: personal, national, informational,

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[15] *Ibidem*, p. 70.

[16] Michelle Cook, Curtis Cook, *Competitive Intelligence. Create an Intelligent organization and compete to win*, Kogan Page, 2000, p. 1.

[17] Jay Liebovitz, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[18] George Friedman et.al, *The Intelligence Edge. How to Profit in the Information Age*, Crown Publishers, 1997, p. 2.

[19] Arnold O. Wolfers, „National Security" as an Ambiguous Symbol in Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 67, Nr. 4, 1952, pp. 481-502.

economic, etc. At a macro level, it can be ensured through the implementation of appropriate preventive policies and measures, laws and regulations, technologies and international cooperation, with the ultimate goal of reducing risks and vulnerabilities and creating a stable environment.

3.1. Economic security in Romania: a conceptual framework

The ways of ensuring security differ from one country to another, from one point in time to another. Thus, for Romania, the National Country Defense Strategy (2020-2024) stipulates that, "in order to guarantee a high level of security and prosperity for citizens [...] the Romanian state should make sustained efforts to strengthen the administrative capacity of its institutions, so that they can act in concert to ensure a high-performance, dynamic and competitive economic environment, in terms of investment and entrepreneurship, as well as the financial and budgetary stability of the state; ensuring a predictable, competitive, high-performance and attractive economic environment in terms of investment and entrepreneurship".[20] In addition, the action guidelines for the economic dimension concern:

- "Comprehensive development and promotion of policies to ensure the reduction of development gaps between regions of the country;
- Promoting free enterprise and strengthening indigenous capital;
- Protection of public and private property;
- Ensuring the competitive framework and competitiveness by reducing factors that affect the smooth functioning of the business environment;
- Ensuring the transparency of domestic markets and their interconnectedness with external markets, including by expanding strategic partnerships and cooperation in the economic field."[21]

We can therefore observe the importance given by the Romanian state, with a view to the country's defense, not only to military security but also to economic security.

The aim in this respect is to create a competitive environment in which Romanian entrepreneurship and capital are supported to develop, and the aim is to reduce the existing gaps between the country's regions and, at macroeconomic level, to reduce the gaps with competing national economies.

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[20] Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării 2020-2024, https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf accessed on 01.09.2024.

[21] *Ibidem.*

Economic security is a basic, fundamental component of the national security of states. Along with the disintegration of the USSR and the Communist Bloc, the outlook for the international economy is changing dramatically. Whereas before 1989 we were dealing with two large blocs, the capitalist and the communist, which were fundamentally different and did not engage in significant economic exchanges except within their own borders, the early 1990s brought major changes.

The liberalization of markets (including capital markets), the emergence and development of new markets, the reorganization of customs tariffs, all led to the need to give greater importance to economic security. The interdependence of states now depends on their ability to work together, to trade and to influence each other from an eminently economic perspective. They understand that their security now also depends on their domestic economic environment, their trade relations, but also on the international situation or state of affairs. It is important to note here that one of the early arguments for European integration was the bringing together of the heavy industries - coal, steel, nuclear - and replacing independence with interdependence of states in this regard.

From a different perspective, however, one of the principles of economic security is that we start in any analysis from the premise that economic agents work more competitively in an insecure market. It is understood that in the economic environment we cannot speak of perfect security and equilibrium. So, uncertainty increases competitiveness, stimulates the creative spirit, analytical and forecasting capacities.

The economic environment is the foundation without which a state could not function and without which political, military or social objectives could not be achieved, being an essential factor of sustainable development that ensures the resources and the dynamic balance of the entire national security system. Thus, economic security is reported in terms of economic interests, on the one hand, and risks, threats and vulnerabilities, on the other.

A national economic security system must encompass all the human, administrative, legislative and technological resources of the state, resources that contribute to the development of state power and its elements. The Copenhagen School re-conceptualizes security, giving it, in addition to the traditional military dimension, four other dimensions (sectors): political, economic, societal and environmental.[22]

[22] Barry Buzan et al. Securitatea. *Un nou cadru de analiză*. CA Publishing, 2011, pp. 48-52.

"The economic sector is rich in objects of reference, from individuals to classes and states, to abstract and complex global market systems"[23]. Economic security must therefore be seen as a complex, globalized system, in a relationship of dependence and symbiosis with the other security sectors; it is difficult to define and analyse it independently of them. We can approach economic security from two perspectives: the reporting of states and the reporting of companies on it.

" […] (F)irms disappear as economic actors and become bankrupt if they do not play the economic game successfully; states cannot disappear"[24]. From the point of view of the states, economic security is one of the aspects that add up to national security.

Article 1 of Law 51/1991 stipulates that Romania's national security is the "state of legality, equilibrium and social, economic and political stability necessary for the existence and development of the Romanian national state, as a sovereign, unitary, independent and indivisible state, the maintenance of the rule of law and the climate for the unrestricted exercise of the fundamental rights, freedoms and duties of citizens in accordance with the democratic principles and norms established by the Constitution"[25].

Economic security is therefore fundamental to the functioning and very existence of states, encompassing a range of institutions and bodies and systems, such as the financial-banking system, the trade, energy, agricultural, industrial, energy, etc.

According to Laurence Martin, "security is the assurance of future well-being"[26], and states are therefore concerned with it, ensuring the prerequisites for economic development and growth designed to secure that well-being.

Moreover, economic stability depends on the functionality of its economic structures and can lead to vulnerabilities in relation to other security sectors - a state's military capabilities can be affected by the state of the national economy.

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[23] *Ibidem,* p. 148.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 153.

[25] Parlamentul României, Legea 51/1991 https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/1517 acc. l05.09.2022.

[26] Martin, Laurence, *Poate exista securitate națională într-o epocă nesigură?*, 1983, Apud Barry Buzan *op. cit.*, 2011.

The main objectives of the economic security strategy are therefore to ensure the sustainable growth and development of the national economy and to ensure a high standard of living for citizens.

From the point of view of economic agents, economic security is a state of balance and harmony. One of the principles of economic security is the assumption that economic agents operate more competitively in an uncertain market. It goes without saying that in the economic environment we cannot speak of perfect security and equilibrium. So, uncertainty increases competitiveness, stimulates creativity, analytical and forecasting capacities. This leads to prosperity and better living conditions for a country's citizens and ensures a sustainable level of growth for society.

According to Samuel D. Porteous, "economic security is the maintenance of those conditions necessary to encourage the long-term sustenance and improvement of labor and capital productivity and thus a high and rising standard of living for the nation's citizens, including the maintenance of a fair, secure and dynamic business environment conducive to innovation, local and foreign investment and sustainable economic growth"[27].

"Security - as a state and as action constitutes the environment for the economy, just as the economy - as potential and activity constitutes the environment for security."[28]

While for states, economic security implies a reduction (or absence) of vulnerabilities, for private companies this is an elusive goal.

As far as private companies are concerned, economic security is dependent on the creation of new opportunities through cooperation and analysis of market potential, access to scientific knowledge, and a better understanding of the economic, scientific and technological capabilities of competitors and partners.

Each company aims to strengthen its position in the market; obviously the objectives proposed are different, as are the strategies implemented, but the final goal is the same. Businesses are thus obliged to constantly relate themselves to the needs and aspects of the market, to continually self-assess and to anticipate competitors' strategies.

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[27] Samuel D.Porteous, "Economic Espionage: Issue Rising from Increased Governmental Involvement with Private Sector," *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 9, 1994, No.4, p. 736.

[28] Traian Anastasiei, *Consideraţii privind corelaţia dintre securitate şi economie*, în volumul seminarului cu participare internaţională al Centrului de Studii Strategice de Apărare şi Securitate „România - membru al Alianţei Nord-Atlantice, 3-4 iunie 2004, Editura UNAp, Bucureşti, p. 100.

In Dumitru I. Popescu's view, modern management is that which offers a sustainable outlook for the company and plays a decisive role in its development, involving safeguarding the company's ability to generate revenue, maintain profitability and sustain its operations in the long term. [29]

For companies, economic security means, on the one hand, being able to manage risks (internal or external) and, on the other hand, being able to adapt and innovate. Technological advances are in full swing, as are market fluctuations and consumer demands. The ultimate aim is to develop resilience and to cope with the uncertain environment in which they operate, the ability to adjust and adapt to change. In the digital age, adaptation often means the integration of digital technologies, which are particularly important in gaining competitive advantage.

As mentioned above, economic security is - per se - the foundation of a state's national security, as the capacity of the economy is best able to ensure the country's sovereignty and geopolitical status, independently determine state policy and achieve foreign policy goals. But for the economic environment security is not in itself guaranteed; it must be obtained, maintained and used to achieve objectives.

In an era of globalization, national security issues are interdependent with economic power, even more so than with military capabilities, and the link between the economic and the geopolitical is more than visible, and economic warfare is an integrated part of the economic domain; economics and politics are joining forces in new war scenarios, far removed from traditional military conflicts, scenarios that are becoming more complex and sophisticated with each passing day. In this sense, we find the concept of economic intelligence as a set of coordinated and focused actions, both internally and externally, to investigate, process and distribute information, which is particularly useful in economic decision-making, both for the state and the private business sector, in the context of the challenges that companies face in today's internationalized market.

The need to defend economic interests, on the one hand, and on the other hand the need to gain economic advantages against competitors - at the level of private or state-owned businesses - have been decisive and sufficiently important drivers for the development of powerful economic security instruments at the disposal of national interests and powerful transnational

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[29] Dumitru I Popescu, *Managementul modern al organizațiilor*, Editura Fundației România de Mâine , 2005, pp. 11-16.

companies, which today control and influence the global economic scene, with influence and strategic communication becoming key elements of economic security.

3.2. Economic security in the Romanian economic framework

According to the National Bank of Romania, in November 2022, the peak of the inflationary cycle was reached, with an inflation rate of 16.76%.[30] According to a report prepared for this purpose, there are increased pressures on the wage costs of enterprises, due to the increase in the minimum wage on the one hand, and on the other hand, there is an oversizing of the aggregate demand surplus in the economy. The same report argues that the war in Ukraine (and the sanctions associated with it) is continuously generating instability and uncertainty and influencing the decisions and confidence of the population and investors.[31]

"In Romania, official statistical data indicated a higher-than-expected resilience of the economy in the fourth quarter of 2022. In contrast, more recent developments, particularly at the sectoral level, seem to point to a slowdown in economic activity in the first half of this year. The assessment reflects, on the one hand, the concomitant moderation in the dynamics of the economies of Europe's trading partners, a key driver of the performance of the local economy, and, on the other hand, the spillovers, with a cumulative constraining impact, of the normalization of monetary policy and the continuation of the fiscal consolidation process, respectively."[32]

Uncertainty risks remained severe not only in our country but also globally in the context of the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic, another report published by the NBR shows.[33]

"Faced with a war in its immediate vicinity, volatile energy prices and massive investments in clean technologies worldwide, Europe needs to step up its efforts. The Single Market has been our main asset to bring prosperity to citizens and businesses, but also to help us deal with crises such as pandemics, climate change or the economic consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine. We can be proud of this, and we must do all we can to

[30] Banca Națională a României, Raport asupra inflației, May 2024. file:///C:/Users/adina/Downloads/ RaI%20mai%202023.pdf , accessed on 05.05.2023

[31] *Ibidem* p. 10.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

[33] Banca Națională a României, *Raportul anual 2021*, file:///C:/Users/adina/Downloads/ RAPORT%20ANUAL%202021.pdf , accessed in May 2024

ensure that the Single Market retains and consolidates its strength. We must also make sure that we have administrative and regulatory frameworks that respond to the needs of business. In the future, we will be guided by a set of key performance indicators that can tell us whether Europe's economy is really becoming more productive and competitive. Because only what gets measured gets done."[34]

As a result of the precarious economic situation caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, the European Union established in early 2020 a recovery plan, entitled Next Generation EU.[35] Through it, EU Member States can access funds for recovery and resilience, following a predefined set of rules:

a) "consistency with country-specific recommendations under the European Semester;

b) strengthening the growth potential, job creation and economic and social resilience of the Member State;

c) contributing effectively to the green and digital transition (national plans should allocate at least 37% of the budget to climate and biodiversity and at least 20% more to digital measures)."[36]

Our country's proposed plan was adopted in October, 2021. According to the Ministry of European Investments and Projects, Romania should be allocated €14.248 billion in the form of grants and approximately €14.935 billion in the form of loans (resulting in a total of €29.2 billion).

The rule laid down in the proposed Regulation (still under negotiation at European level) is that 70% of the grants must be contracted by the end of 2022, with a deadline for accessing the remaining 30% of the grants being December 31, 2023. "In addition, payments for projects to be included in the national recovery and resilience programs must be made by December 2026."[37]

In line with the principles of good governance, the Ministry of Investment and European Projects organized debates on the changes to the NRRP with the business community, entrepreneurs and NGOs. These were public, and covered a wide range of topics, from bridging the rural-urban divide, to anti-poverty solutions and digitization or economic competitiveness.

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[34] Ursula von der Leyen, Președinta Comisiei Europene, disurs public, 16.03.2023.

[35] Consiliul European, Plan de redresare NGEU, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/eu-recovery-plan/ , accessed on 05.06.2024.

[36] *Ibidem.*

[37] Ministerul Investițiilor și Proiectelor Europene, Planul Național de Redresare și Reziliență (PNRR), https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr/ , accessed in June 2024.

Thus, we see the term *competitiveness* not only in relation to the private sector and the actors operating within it, but also in relation to the national economy as an important pillar for its recovery and resilience.

Moreover, the European Commission's official website provides for actions to support the building of competitive economies and through this, support for reforms to help the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, boost trade and investment.[38]

Examples of support:

- ”Designing digital one-stop-shop solutions for traders interacting with authorities;
- Developing internationalization strategies for lagging regions to reap the benefits of globalization;
- Analyzing the Member State's regulatory framework, identifying obstacles and determinants of foreign direct investment and trade and strengthening the administrative capacity to attract investment and stimulate trade;
- Developing an action plan for the introduction of artificial intelligence in investment and trade agencies"[39]

It is important to note the importance that the European Union structures attach to small and medium-sized enterprises in the development of competitive economies, as they are attributed a key role in the structure of the current economic environment; moreover, their importance is also due to the fact that they provide two out of three jobs, at a European level[40].

"Romania has performed very well in terms of catching up with the EU economic structure in terms of GVA of economic sectors, being the only one to have recorded sustained growth over the last 10 years (compared to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary). The results are all the better as Romania started from a very low level of structural convergence compared to the rest of the countries”.[41]

However, our country still has important steps to make in the direction of digitalization, decarbonization and circular economy, which are

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[38] Comisia Europeana, Competitivitate, https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/competitiveness_ro , acc. 06.06.2024.

[39] *Ibidem.*

[40] *Ibidem.*

[41] Lucian Liviu Albu (coord.*), Impactul aderării României la Uniunea Europeană asupra economiei românești. Analiză sectorială (industrie, agricultură, servicii etc.),* Institutul European din România, 2018, p. 25.

absolutely essential to build a competitive economy on the European and international plenum.[42]

The evolution of the digital economy and society is reflected in a general increase in economic efficiency and an improvement in all areas. It is of paramount importance that the progress of the digital society is constantly monitored for a vision of the fulfillment of the pursued strategies."[43]

In order to determine the level of digitization of an economy, the *DESI* (Digital Economy and Society Index) indicator is used; an analysis made on it reveals that Romania's situation is worrying, compared to the other European Union countries. Thus, the performance of the digital economy is low, being rather at an early stage of this process.[44]

The Romanian Government launched in April 2020 the *National Strategy on the Digital Agenda for Romania*, which adapts to the situation of our country the elements of the Digital Agenda for Europe, one of the seven pilot initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This strategy defines four areas of action: E-Government, ICT in Education, Culture and Health, ICT in e-Commerce and Broadband and Digital Infrastructure Services.[45] The implementation of this strategy is expected to lead to total investments of around €2.4 billion, a 13% increase in GDP, 11% more jobs and a 12% reduction in the cost of administration.[46]

"The concrete measures foreseen in the Strategy will lead to:

- Ensuring citizens and organizations access to electronic public services (e-Government services);
- improving internet access by increasing the coverage of high-speed broadband electronic communications networks;
- increasing internet usage;
- promoting e-commerce;
- increasing the number of cross-border electronic public services;
- increasing digital content and developing ICT infrastructures in education, health and culture;

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[42] *Ibidem*, p. 148.

[43] Eleonora Tudora, et.al., *Analiza evoluției indicatorilor DESI și SNADR ai societății informaționale*, Romanian Journal of Information Technology and Automatic Control, Vol.30, No.2, 2020, p. 121.

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 131.

[4545] Guvernul României, *Strategia Națională privind Agenda Digitală pentru România, 2020, https://gov.ro/ro/print?modul=sedinte&link=strategia-nationala-privind-agenda-digitala-pentru-romania-2020#null , accessed on 06.06.2024*

[46] *Ibidem.*

- supporting the growth of ICT sector added value by supporting ICT Research & Development and innovation."[47]

The aim of this strategy is to develop the Romanian economic system, which lags behind other European countries in terms of technologization, in order to make it competitive and to increase the level of adaptability and innovation.

In order to reduce the identified gap with the other European Union countries, Romania must accelerate investment attractiveness, provide predictability, support creative industries, research and development and protect the skilled local workforce.[48]

"From a digital economy and society perspective, Romania ranks marginal in most of the indicators that make up the composite DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index). Romania continues to face significant shortcomings in terms of the development of digital society, economy, education and services. Romania's participation in the Digital Single Market, an opportunity for the Romanian state, entails exposure to certain commercial and technical risks, intellectual property protection requirements, protection against cyber-attacks and protection of electronic identity, including those relating to making payments and exchanging goods or services, and quality assurance."[49]

The EU Digital Agenda Progress Report (EDPR), country profile: Romania, tracks Member States' progress in digitization and is structured in five chapters: connectivity, human capital, internet use, digital inclusion, digital public services. Of these the most problematic are:

a. human capital, whose digital skills are below the European average, which is the reason why, in 2017, subjects such as ICT or programming were introduced in the middle school curriculum;

b. integration of digital technology - Romania is in last place among EU countries in terms of the integration of digital technology in business, but there has been progress in the number of companies using social media platforms and SMEs selling online. But companies see technology as an additional investment rather than a condition for business success;

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[47] *Ibidem.*

[48] Viorel Nicolae Gaftea (coord.), *România și Piața Unică Digitală a Uniunii Europene. Oportunități si provocări,* Institutul European Român, Studii de Strategie și Politici SPOS 2017, p. 10.

[49] *Ibidem,* p. 13.

c. digital public services - The use of e-Government services is the lowest in Europe, with public administrations facing difficulties in attracting ICT specialists and implementing the necessary programs to digitalize the public sector. [50]

Thus, the awareness of the importance of technological growth and development concerns both the public and private sectors in Romania, as our country needs urgent increases in this field in order to develop the economic environment and make it competitive at European and international level.

4. Conclusions

Economic security is directly influenced by political stability and, as mentioned above, is interdependent with all sectors of state security. It is reflected in regulatory and legislative aspects, as well as in socio-cultural aspects, traditions, education or technological or scientific advances.

Clearly, economic power is not entirely dependent on a state's economic capabilities, but it is strongly influenced by them, from the allocation of resources to their acquisition. Economic security, on the other hand, is also directly influenced by defense capabilities, without which it is difficult to maintain social order and to act to manage the risks and threats that may arise. There is a direct relationship between economic security, the level of performance of an economy and the funds that it can direct to the defense sector, the optimal level of such spending being difficult to calculate and determine on cost-benefit assessments.

In an era of globalization and interdependencies, the creation and implementation of a strategy is mandatory and for economies to develop and evolve, a constant adaptation of the managerial process is necessary.

Competition and competitiveness are standard attributes of today's global economic environment. Competition can, however, be found in a multitude of areas and is not an attribute specific to the economy alone. Competitiveness, on the other hand, cannot be dissociated from economics, as it refers to gaining an advantage over the competition, and can be found both at the macro level of national economies and at the micro level, at the level of companies and their products.

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[50] Raport intermediar privind sectorul digital din UE (EDPR), profil de țară: România, file:///C:/Users/adina/OneDrive/Desktop/edpr-2017_ro_44332.pdf , accessed on 02.06.2024.

Technologizing the Romanian economy can bring a number of competitive advantages. On the one hand, encouraging investors, who are looking for markets with modern infrastructure and highly skilled labor. On the other hand, the implementation of advanced technologies allows companies to improve the efficiency of production processes, leading to an increase in labor productivity. At the same time, technologization in service sectors such as telecommunications, transport and health leads to a better quality of life for citizens and modern technologies can contribute to sustainable development by optimizing resources and reducing environmental impact.

As we have shown above, it is imperative to raise awareness of the need for technological growth and development in both the public and private sectors in Romania, as our country needs urgent growth in this area in order to develop the economic environment and make it competitive at European and international level.

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Review of the movie 21 Rubies

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Motto:
"There is no democracy in the Church...
only obedience!"

The movie *21 Rubies* represents, as a cinematic genre, a drama released on November 3, 2023, directed by the Romanian priest and filmmaker Ciprian Mega. I chose to write this review because watching this film made me reflect on my relatively recent past, specifically my high school years. There are many films that evoke various emotions in people's hearts, with some of the most well-known being *Titanic* and *Gladiator* and what *21 Rubies* has in common with these two cinematic masterpieces is that it draws inspiration from reality, even though there is an apparent intent to maintain silence regarding the functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) as an institution.

The subject of the film is relevant because it aims to highlight the situation within the hierarchy and educational system of the Romanian Orthodox Church, on one hand, and the political games at the top levels of the state, on the other hand, and how all these lead to the inefficiency of justice and the failure of the rule of law. The two-and-a-half-hour film unfolds on two timelines: one set chronologically at the end of 2022, and the other during the governance of the Romanian Democratic Convention (1996-2000). Although the two developments of the action seem initially entirely distinct, they intersect notably in a symbolic moment when one of the film characters hands to Nina, the film main prosecutor a watch with 21 rubies, this act triggers a wave of sorrowful memories for her, recalling the tragic events that happened during the Convention's governance, where her parents and brother were among the victims.

As I mentioned earlier, this production took me back in time. The reason lies within my graduation from the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Caransebeș and, implicitly, the contact I had with the lower clergy and the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Orthodox Church since my teenage years. Currently, in addition to being a master's student at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, I am also a newly enrolled undergraduate student in pastoral Orthodox theology, a decision that brings me back to the Church's courtyard after a three-year hiatus. Unlike the storyline of the film, I chose this path on my own, despite opposition from those around me who believed I deserved a better high school where more academic rigor could be found. Through this film, I rediscovered many moments from my adolescence, such as my admission to the Orthodox Seminary, my first interactions with the new colleagues, the favoritism shown to some for reasons that had to remain strictly confidential, the lack of freedom to express contrary opinions, and the role of the protopope in the selection process. These were not entirely pleasant experiences but certainly shaped my perspective on the Church as an institution.

Returning to the film chronicle, a main event is represented by the speeches delivered at the beginning of the cinematic screening, which focus on the main issues around which Romania's current domestic and foreign policies revolve: combating fundamentalism, intolerance, and extremism; fostering diversity; supporting democracy; and, perhaps most importantly, motivating the aid for Ukraine. These themes remain as significant as ever, perhaps even more relevant today. Romania has recently faced unprecedented events in its post-communist history, namely the recounting of votes from the presidential election and the annulment of these elections due to Russian interference aimed to influence the voting process. In the current political and electoral context, the message from the U.S. Secretary of State highlights the primary criticism of those opposing to the aid for Ukraine - that the conflict is not our concern - while emphasizing that a negative outcome would not only be disastrous for Ukraine, but also for Romania and the entire free world ("we will smell the same poison"). Back to the film, all the speeches during the National Day reception, held at a synagogue, were addressed to an audience that included the Patriarch, who, in his characteristic manner, maintained throughout the evening an uncertain and slightly disapproving demeanor toward what he heard.

During Radu Vasile's government (1998-1999), the main character, Nina, was a student, while her parents lived in a rural area. Their wish was to enroll Nina's younger brother in the theological seminary, despite being aware of the challenges this endeavor would entail. The young boy and his close friend were advised by the retired village priest, Alexie, who was not in agreement with the way of church hierarchy, that attending the seminary would bring them no benefit. This stance later triggered a conflict between the father and the priest. The father's limited familiarity with the church environment led him to seek help from the Mideni village mayor. The mayor, displaying a phlegmatic attitude, contacted the protopope to assist the father in finding a solution for his son.

At a party organized by the mayor to celebrate his election victory, the protopope is also invited. At the end of his speech, the mayor praises the church's support for his re-election, further suggesting that the Orthodox Church is now in a position of power unlike ever before in its relationship with the State. Politicians are now the ones who need the clergy, rather than the other way around, as it was the case during the interwar period, when the principle of symphony between Church and State was invoked, and the Church was in a subordinate position - a reality that became even more evident with the inauguration of right-wing dictatorial regimes before and during the Second World War. The protopope is nothing more than a free spirit, indulging in life's small pleasures, such as music, drinking, and smoking. Nevertheless, he has an honest conversation with the family of the aspiring theology student, mentioning the "law of obedience," which operates as follows: the orders in the Church come from the top to down and are treated as law, while money flows from the bottom up to the higher up, representing the submission of the lower clergy to the hierarchy.

The protopope does not teach at the seminary, which leads him to direct the family toward the music teacher-priest from there. The young man's path to the seminary becomes a burden; his father falls into the vice of alcoholism and doesn't know where to find more money to make his son a priest. During the audition, the young man has no musical talent, but he is taken under the protection of the music teacher because of the money provided by the family, which is a reality in many cases. The increasing number of theological seminaries within the Romanian Orthodox Church and the decreasing interest of adolescents in this profession have led to the admission of many students with little knowledge of the field, and who had modest

grades during middle school, but who can enter at vocational high schools without being conditioned by their National Evaluation scores. Even if they will graduate from the theological seminary and possibly enrolling in a theology faculty, most of them remain with deficiencies in both theologically and, unfortunately, spiritually knowledge.

Even though the bishop had his favorites who were to be admitted and wished to reject the priest music teacher protégé, he quickly understands from the priest music teacher's gestures what the situation is and requests the addition of one more spot to the available positions from that year, to admit him as well. By chance, the theology aspirant overhears a conversation between his parents and some relatives, from which he observes their desperation, the deepening debt, and the lack of solutions. This leads him to leave for the train station to return home. He loses his father's watch with 21 rubies, which he had received from him when he left to take the seminary entrance exam, during a gamble, then spends a night in a police station, but ultimately reaches the retired priest, who informs his family. The panic caused by the burden he placed on his family's shoulders and the loss of the gift his father had given him leads him to take his own life.

The topic of corruption takes place on two levels: first is represented by the BOR simoniacal practices in relation with some priesthood candidates, that presuppose offering various material benefits, including bribes, in order to obtain a position as a church servant; second one is represented by the prosecutor analysis of files certifying this kind of practices, a fact well-known to the patriarch. The desire to attain a higher position leads her to confront with the corruption that exists within the state system. It is necessary to pass through the political filter, then by the American diplomatic mission in Bucharest, headed by Mickey Mandovanis, and last but not least, through the Church.

If there is no significant opposition from the first two, the Patriarch wishes to find another person, precisely because of the files she was investigating, emphasizing that she did not have the friendliest attitude toward the Church, being therefore distrusted. In delicate matters, the Orthodox Church seeks, through the voice of the Patriarch, to remain cautious and consistent. For example, in the interview held in the final part of the film, the Patriarch responds briefly and concisely regarding the vaccination campaign against Covid-19 and aid for the Ukrainian people. However, when the issue of supporting the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church is raised, he becomes extremely reserved and offers no response, mentioning only that this matter pertains to the

politics within the Autocephalous Churches, which include both the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate. The subject has been on the agenda since 2017, when the Ukrainian Church was granted autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, and it was further intensified by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

There are certain subtleties over time that deserve to be highlighted. Mickey Mandovanis, although at first glance he doesn't resemble a diplomat at all, represents the American society distorted by the fierce struggle between various political ideologies that have emerged in recent years. His discourse represents the vision of the Democratic Party and the Biden administration on the Eastern conflict, even though he is originally from Texas, a stronghold of the Republican Party. The hunting trip brings him as a trophy a deer, which is a symbol of dignity and harmony in human relationships, values that he disregards throughout the two and a half hours of the film.

Given the lack of electoral scrutiny in the proximity of the time in which the action takes place, the discussion about the right to abortion is brought back into the spotlight, a sensitive subject both for Romanian society and for the one across the Atlantic. While in Romania, the wounds caused by the banning of abortion during national-communism period are still felt, in the United States, which serves as a model for Romania in many ways, the question arises whether women's right to abortion should fall under presidential administration or be decided at the state level, another bone of contention between Democrats and Republicans.

The involvement of Patriarch Daniel in state politics, well outlined during the film in his meetings with political and diplomatic figures, represent another key point. The title of the latest work by Swiss historian Oliver Jens Schmitt begins with the question "State Church or Church in the State?" The answer seems to be "Church in the State," as the official position of the BOR is sought in the context of important political events on the Romanian stage. For example, in recent days, the Orthodox Church's stance on the presidential elections was eagerly awaited. The response pleased some and disappointed others, as the Church institution limited itself to merely stating that it supports Romania's membership in Western structures (EU, NATO). This recent event is compounded by the fact that at each government meeting with religious representatives, the Patriarch's figure is by far the most prominent, always sitting at the center, which for many is not defining, but not for a theologian. The priest who stands *protos* (serving in front of the Holy Altar) coordinates

the unfolding of the religious service. The same applies to a service with bishops if their administrative positions are the same.

The participation of the prosecutor, together with her husband, at a party organized by a politician, with the attendance of the American secretary, leads her to take a step back, abandoning her promotion, not because of the demands made, which she had tacitly accepted, but because she caught her own husband with another woman. The fact that she knew how the system worked and was no longer susceptible to blackmail this posed as a danger to those at the top of the state's pyramid, which is why she is carefully searched, loses her job, and ends up living in seclusion.

From the files she analyzed, the only one who admitted to offering a bribe to become a priest was the friend of her brother, the other disciple of priest Alexie. Another symbolic parallel with the past is represented by her meeting with the mayor, who gives back to her the watch with 21 rubies, the one which the young brother had lost in the past. The film ends with a call for reflection: the watch ends up back in the hands of its original owner, who, at the beginning of the film, was a woman in power, but by the end, she is admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

I would like to commend the fact that priest and filmmaker Ciprian Mega portrays in this cinematic production a simplistic and schematic representation of the relationships between the institutions of the Romanian State and its Western allies, alongside the power dynamics and the hierarchy-lower clergy relationship within the Romanian Orthodox Church. Many priests are aware of these issues but only speak about them in whispers, and only to trusted individuals, such as church cantors or sacristans, who essentially belong to the same category of Church servants. Until now, I have not seen a film that highlights these aspects of Church life; I have only read some articles and books that discuss the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian State and how Romanian political life has influenced the situation within BOR.

The theme of this film remains relevant and could even serve as a starting point for initiating other similar projects. I was pleasantly impressed, particularly by its focus on the behind-the-scenes dynamics of the relationship between bishops and the priests under their authority.

In this review, I aimed to highlight the main events depicted during the film, correlating their concise presentation with insights from prior readings or personal experiences. I sought to organize them in chronological order for

greater clarity of those reading this review. Finally, I believe that the Orthodox Church should take note of the issues raised by this production, ensuring that access to its archives is not restricted solely to insiders—a point advocated by researchers and historians. The hierarchs in question should acknowledge their collaboration with the Romanian State Security Department, following the example of the late Metropolitan bishop of Banat, Nicolae Corneanu, and should reconsider the "law of obedience."

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