

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF EUROPEAN STUDIES**

**DOCTORAL PAPER**

**ROMANIAN-IUGOSLAV RELATIONS  
FROM 1950 TO 1970**

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**Key-words:** communism, bilateral relations, Yugoslavism, Titoism, Stalinism, Khrushchevism, constructivism (social-constructivism and structurationist-constructivism), construction of reality, norms, perceptions, interstate interactions, communist elites, state agents, peaceful coexistence, inter-communist relations, state identity

My endeavour explores the evolution of Romanian-Yugoslav relations throughout the period 1950-1970. The approach is not a theoretic or synthetic one, but an analytic-explanatory one. Thus, I did not set as objective the formulation of a new theory on bilateral relations (which later on could be exemplified by the Romanian-Yugoslav relations), but rather I purposely selected these specific bilateral relations, I described, analyzed and explained their evolution. I deliberately chose the period 1950-1970 because it encompassed events which considerably and dramatically influenced the nature and dynamic of Romanian-Yugoslav interactions.

The scientific research methods employed are primarily those circumscribed to history (through the investigation of documents from the archives), but I also resorted to a certain conceptual framework developed by constructivist theorists (such as Alexander Wendt, Nicholas Onuf, Friedrich Kratochwil, Brent Steele) in order to explain the way in which Romanian-Yugoslav relations evolved. Therefore, this doctoral endeavour is centred on the analytic method of investigation and on comparative analysis. The empirical data are processed and interpreted through the lenses of constructivist conceptualizing. Each chapter is first a descriptive one and then an analytic-explanatory and interpretative one.

By examining the dynamic of these interstate relations and by observing certain patterns of behaviour, I reached the conclusion that a constructivist approach is the most adequate and the most prolific one, generating reliable explanations. Therefore, I did not set up for writing a plea for constructivism using the nature of Romanian-Yugoslav relations (and thus risking to “stretch” the theory on the case study), but rather, starting with the events which triggered and shaped a certain line for the foreign policy of the two states, I tried to prove the most convincing approach is the International Relation (IR) constructivist one.

The innovative character of this doctoral endeavour is, hopefully, corroborated by both the constructivist approach on Romanian-Yugoslav interstate relations during the Cold War and the revealing of relevant archive documents which support and strengthen my arguments.

Certain IR scholars who are preoccupied with constructivism have said the it “is not a theory, it does not claim to explain why things work as they do. Constructivism is simply an

alternative ontology, a redescription of the world.”<sup>1</sup> In my analytic endeavour I decided upon the same: to explain the role of ideas, practices, norms, interactions and social construction in shaping the Romanian-Yugoslav relations, to offer a redescription of the nature and evolution of these interstate relations using constructivist concepts.

The documentation for this doctoral paper was based on a three-fold research project: the study of archive documents, the relevant and necessary literature, and the examination of pivotal issues as portrayed by the media. The study of archive included:

1. The Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Archives (Central Historical National Archives) within the Romanian Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs – for the examination of the stand of Romania in the 1950's and 1960's *and*
2. Collections of documents published in Serbia and certain country reports of Radio Free Europe – the examination of the Yugoslav stand

As far as media is concerned, I singled out the two most relevant newspapers, namely the two communist parties' organs *Scânteia* and *Borba*. The study of *Scânteia* was more systematic.

The relevant literature includes both

- mainstream works on constructivism (such as Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, Onuf, Nicholas, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989, Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, Vendulka Kubálková, Nicholas Onuf, Paul Kowert, (eds.) *International Relations in a Constructed World*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY, 1998, Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations. Self-Identity and the IR State*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics”, *International Organization* 46, 2, Spring 1992, Alexander Wendt, “The agent-structure problem in international relations theory”, *International Organization* 41, 3, Summer 1987) *and*

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<sup>1</sup> Vendulka Kubálková; Nicholas Onuf; Paul Kowert, (eds.) *International Relations in a Constructed World*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY, 1998, p. xii.

- major works on communism in general, and Yugoslav and Romanian communism in particular (such as Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc. Unity and Conflict*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960, Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, Bucureşti: Fundația Academia Civică, 2006, Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc. 1948-1965*, Iași: Polirom, 2001, Mary Ellen Fisher, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. A Study in political leadership*, Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989, Charles Gati (ed.), *The International Politics of Eastern Europe*, New York-Washington-London: Praeger Publishers, 1976, Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România*, Bucureşti: Editura Litera, 1994, Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development. The Case of Romania, 1944-1965*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971, Branko Lasić, *Tito et la révolution yougoslave*, Paris: Fasquelle Éditeurs, 1957, Ronald H. Linden, *Bear and Foxes The International Relations of the East European States, 1965-1969*, New York: East European Quarterly, Boulder, 1979, Ronald H. Linden, *Communist States and International Change: Romania and Yugoslavia in Comparative Perspective*, Allen and Unwin, Boston, 1987, John Michael Montias, *Economic Development in Communist Rumania*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1967, Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1971, Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity. A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia ant the Nonaligned World*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970, George Schöpflin (ed.), *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, London: Muller, Blond & White, 1986, George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1993, Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, London: Methuen&Co., 1952, Michael Shafir, *Romania: politics, economics and society*, London: Frances Pinter (Publishers), 1985, Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, Iași: Polirom, 2005, Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind. Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change*, New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 1971, Wayne S. Vucinich (ed.), *Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, Wayne S. Vucinich (ed.), *War and Society in East Central Europe. At the Brink of War and Peace: The Tito-Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective*, New York: Brooklyn College Studies, 1982, Fred Warner Neal, *Titoism in action. The reforms in Yugoslavia after 1948*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958).

Also, relevant articles from academic journal were thoroughly covered (*Problems of Communism, The American Slavic and East European Review, Yugoslav Survey, World Politics* and others).

The bibliography is organized on the following directions: general works on the history of communism and on the inter-communist relations within the East European bloc, works dedicated to the study of Yugoslav communism and Titoism, works which accurately analyze communism in Romania and the evolution of Romania during the Cold War, and works related to the constructivist theory in International Relations.

The aims of the study were centred on two types of research questions:

First of all research questions circumscribed to rational theories, such as *how? why?*, which in International relations are considered to be causal and which entail empirical observation of certain phenomena, their recurrence and the identification of patterns of behaviour:

*How did Romania and Yugoslavia behave after the Tito-Stalin rift from 1948? How did they behave and react to Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence?*

*What caused the Romanian rapprochement to Tito's Yugoslavia throughout the 1960's, and especially after 1965?*

*What are the behavioural patterns of the two states throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and what exactly caused the different shaping of behaviour?*

Secondly (though more importantly) I was preoccupied with the formulation of research questions which are considered by constructivist scholars as integrative part of constitutive theorizing, such as *how come? or what?* Which aim at variables and factors that contribute to the creation and constitution of certain phenomena:

*How was the transformation of Romanian-Yugoslav relations possible, ranging from overt forms of hostility, to engagement in common projects, and to intense cooperation and complete rapprochement?*

*What exactly constituted the states' identities, ranging from "enemies" in the early 1950's, "good neighbours" in the early sixties and "friends" in the late 1960's and later on?*

*How was it possible for two state agents to reproduce or alter the regional structure of the Soviet bloc?*

*How were the two states' identities constituted by this structure?*

*How did Romania and Yugoslavia contribute, as state agents, to the perpetuation or transformation of an interactional microstructure?*

This research aimed at investigating the evolution of Romanian-Serbian/Yugoslav interactions throughout different periods of time with the chief purpose of detecting the nature of bilateral relation and of identifying the factors (endogenous/exogenous, material/ideational, intentional/situational) which determined certain courses of action.

The doctoral paper is organized in six chapters.

In the *introductory chapter*, named *How does social-constructivism help us understand the evolution of Romanian-Yugoslav relations*, I synthesized the constructivist conceptual framework, on which I later built my arguments regarding the manner in which Romanian-Yugoslav relations evolved.

Even though the pivotal period of analysis is 1950-1970, a thorough investigation of previous historical phases and the identification of certain continuities and discontinuities in Romania-Yugoslav relations were necessary. Therefore, the next chapter, called *Prior developments in Romanian-Serbian/Yugoslav relations*, describes the nature and dynamic of Romanian-Serbian relations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to World War I, and also the Romanian-Yugoslav relations up to the establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

The “voyage” through different historical periods (from the moment Romania and Serbia gained their autonomy in the 1860’s to the creation of Great Romania and of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after World War I, to the dramatic transformations which occurred during World War II, culminating with the communist takeover) is meant to indicate the exogenous and endogenous factors that generated, shaped and perpetuated the relations between the two state units. Lord Acton said *Study problems, not periods!* Therefore, the problematic aspects selected by me concentrated on the constitution of Romania and Serbia/Yugoslavia states identities and the definition granted to the Other by the Self within the international structure that shaped the process of definition but which, at the very same time, was influenced by the existence and the interactions among the state agents comprising the structure. Thus, paraphrasing Alexander Wendt, the history of Romanian-Serbian/Yugoslav relations matters, since their interests and behaviour are not inherent or fixed; they emerge from certain contexts. In trying to emphasize the proclivity towards cooperation during the interwar period, I argue that Romania and Yugoslavia achieved identities of allied states; but, in so doing, it becomes so clear that these identities did not appear *ex nihilo*. They represented the cumulative effect of interactions between the political leaderships from Bucharest and Belgrade up to that moment.



My research indicates that the two states did not encounter insurmountable disputes and that they rather displayed predisposition towards joint actions and engagement in regional cooperation. This is why my assumption insists on the continuities in the constitution of good neighbourhood relations and (in certain phases) and, at times, on the creation of allied states' identities. The temporary disruptions/discontinuities (suspicion about the other's intention, regarding the relations with Bulgaria, for instance, which had territorial disputes with both Romania and Serbia, disengagement from the interwar alliance system triggered by Nazi Germany's threats) have interrupted the collaboration and have altered the relation of allied states, but Romania and Yugoslavia did not perceive each other as enemies, and the selfish identities (based on survival, self-help and maximization of power) did not prevail in Romanian-Yugoslav interactions. Consequently, my analysis insisted on the prominence of exogenous and situational factors when the Romanian-Yugoslav close relations were disturbed and on the fact that there was no endemic or self-perpetuating animosity.

Throughout the study of relations between Romania and Yugoslavia I identified four distinctive periods in-between 1950 and 1970: the first one (1948-1954) was characterized by hostility, the second one (1955-1959) evolved towards normalization, the third one (1960-1964) was characterized by the intensified interstate (though not interparty) relations and by the increased cooperation in various sectors, and a fourth period (1965-1970) which signals a reorientation of the Self towards the Other: in contrast to the manifest hostility from the early 1950's (corroborated by violent incidents at the borders), after 1965 Bucharest-Belgrade ties are centred on both interstate and interparty rapprochement.

The following four chapters correspond to the four periods briefly described above.

Therefore, the third chapter, named *The Romanian-Yugoslav Conflict (1950-1954). The Construction of Titoist threat and the imposition of the Soviet model*, tackles the relevant events which influenced the tense Romanian-Yugoslav relations (*i.e.* the Moscow-Belgrade rift) and comparatively analyzes the evolution of the two states in terms of Romania – “the loyal” (Soviet satellite) and Yugoslavia – “the rebel”. Special attention was given to the sudden occurrence of the Romanian-Yugoslav conflict, which cannot be understood through ossified state identities, but only through the lenses of identities assimilated by Romania after 1947 and by Yugoslavia after 1945. The Romanian-Yugoslav occurred on the premises of an identity of “people's democracy”, led by a fragmented, illegitimated elite, completely dependent on Moscow (in the case of Romania) and on the premises of an identity of post-war regenerated Yugoslavia, led by a united, legitimated, revolutionary communist party and by

the unifying political figure of Josip Broz Tito, who tried to reject the unicity of Soviet model and the Soviet intervention in Yugoslav domestic affairs.

Even though the main features of the history of Romanian-Yugoslav relations up the late 1940's were absence of perennial disputes, non-antagonizing behaviour and proclivity towards cooperation, after the communist regimes seized power the bilateral interactions were abruptly transformed. The animosity between the two communist elites is clearly and amply shown by the diplomatic activity (and archive documents fully indicate it). Therefore, in this chapter I emphasized the consequences of the Tito-Stalin rift and its impact on Romanian-Yugoslav interstate relations and I tried to prove that the Titoist threat was a construct and not the result of real, objective facts. The Romanian-Yugoslav tension from 1948-1954 was not the cumulative effect of a belligerent or irreconcilable nature of the relation between the two states, but the result of a regional configuration based on the aggregated attributes of Stalinism (thoroughly internalized by the Romanian communist elite) and on the blaming of the Yugoslav deviation. Thus, the Romanian-Yugoslav conflict was a temporary construct, it was not intentional, but situational and it was exogenous to the two neighbouring peoples. Moreover, the conflict was triggered by Moscow's imposition of a certain line of action, which represented for the Romanian elite objectified reality, whose attributes were supposed to be assimilated.

The fourth chapter, called *Normalization of Romanian-Yugoslav relations (1955-1960). Intersubjective meanings on the limits in accepting the Yugoslav model*, presents Moscow's new course, the impact of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU in Eastern Europe and its role in the revisiting of Romanian-Yugoslav relations, and also the significance of the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956. The excerpts from archive documents under scrutiny indicate a normalization of interstate relations.

The elimination of disruptive factors within the Belgrade-Moscow relation coincided with the normalization of Romanian-Yugoslav relations after 1954. The rules (both causal and constitutive in Friedrich Kratochwil's constructivist terms<sup>2</sup>) within the East European bloc have been altered by the dynamic of events from 1953 to 1958, and the Romanian-Yugoslav interactions were elevated from the one centred on conflict/enemy role-position (*magna ex parte* "fabricated" by the need of Romanian communist to adjust to Stalinist imperatives) to a status of normalization.

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<sup>2</sup> See Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

My intention was to prove that the understanding of the evolution of Romanian-Yugoslav relations is facilitated by resorting to the concept of *ontological security*<sup>3</sup>, namely that certain international crises directly perceived by Romania (such as the Tito-Stalin rift from 1948 or Khrushchev's "secret" speech from 1956) constituted threats to Romania's state identity within the socialist camp. Both events mentioned above have produced "dislocations of the self" of Romanian People's Republic and both have triggered what Anthony Giddens called the need of "the sense of continuity and order in events"<sup>4</sup>.

The years 1955-1956 provided a "critical situation"<sup>5</sup> for the states analyzed in this doctoral endeavour. The reconciliation with Tito's Yugoslavia (initially verbally imposed by Khrushchev, and then inherently once the repudiation of Stalinist crimes emerged from the "secret" speech) interrupted to a certain extent the "routinized actions" of Romania's foreign policy, especially in its relations with Yugoslavia. Up to that moment, Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had been trying to consolidate and secure his position by affirming loyalty to the socialist camp in general, and to the Soviet Union in particular; all these efforts involved an active line along maintaining hostility towards Yugoslavia and along contrasting self-identification. The corpus of transformations generated by Moscow (collective leadership, peaceful coexistence, rapprochement to Yugoslavia) represented a serious threat both to the "little Stalins" (namely the East European beneficiaries of Stalinist policies who had virulently condemned Tito's position), and to the ontological security of the states that East European communist leaders represented; the high ranking members of the Romanian People's Party were among them. I explain the threats to the ontological security in line with the following arguing: a Romania launched on the roads to socialism that proved devotion to the Soviet model had been appreciated within the socialist camp, and especially in Moscow; but a Romania represented by an elite which had consolidated its position on Stalinist conceptions and which would not accept the transformative attributes promoted by Khrushchev would have been suspicious, if not guilty of volatile commitment.

Therefore, the years 1956-1959 are characterized by the need of Romanian communist to protect Romania's state identity, and their actions are interconnected to the fragility of their own socialist self-identity, organically belonging to the dependence on the Soviet external factor.

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<sup>3</sup> Theorized by Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations. Self-Identity and the IR State*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Giddens, Anthony, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Steele, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

Another chapter, called *The “good neighbourhood” Romanian-Yugoslav relations. (1960-1964). Shared ideas regarding the policy of coexistence*, includes an analysis on Yugoslavia’s policy of nonalignment and on Romania’s autonomy within the Soviet bloc through the efforts of Bucharest in rejecting the role allocated by Moscow to Romania within the COMECON. The investigation of archive documents indicates intensified Romanian-Yugoslav relations (at diplomatic, political and economic levels). Special attention was given to the common project of the Iron Gates.

It was against the background of Sino-Soviet antagonizing, of vocal and manifest Albanian radicalism, of the dilution of Yugoslav revisionism’s malign influence, of peaceful coexistence (and implied economic ties with the West) that Romania revisited recent events, strengthened converging interests with the Yugoslav neighbours, and detected the components of similar conceptions in foreign policy (centred on the principle of state’s sovereignty and equality). This evolution, coupled with the principle of different roads towards socialist development (which was invoked by the communist leaders in the “April Declaration”) represents the incipient nucleus for the close, friendly relations from 1965-1970; still, I paid attention to the limits in Romanian-Yugoslav close ties, since Gheorghiu-Dej did not exhibit the will to emulate Tito (like Ceausescu would do later) or the intention to import the Yugoslav pattern of self-management or of other mechanisms developed by Belgrade communist after 1948.

As far as Romania’s attitude towards Yugoslavia is concerned, the attributes of peaceful coexistence represented facilitating key-elements for justifying intense cooperation and closer ties to Yugoslavia. In tight relation to this I identified Romanian and Yugoslav shared ideas regarding the bulk of peaceful coexistence. My constructivist analysis is built on the nature of Romania’s visibly improved relation with Yugoslavia (initiated by Bucharest in 1964) which displayed the attributes of a role-relation centred on rivalry characterizing the Lockean anarchic condition conceptualized by Alexander Wendt.<sup>6</sup>

Romanian-Yugoslav interactions from 1960 to 1964 were influenced by the meanings emerging from “peaceful coexistence” as “subject position” (set by the Soviet Union), built on the conviction that the war between “the capitalist camp” and “the socialist camp” is no longer inevitable and the belief that the Soviet system will triumph in its competition with the West.

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Throughout time the Stalinist *dichotomic vision of the world* and the Khrushchevist revised version of *peaceful coexistence* deeply marked the Romanian-Yugoslav relations. The first one contained hostility, the inevitability of war, extreme caution towards *the other which was perceived as enemy*, and all these were reflected in the Romanian-Yugoslav conflict from 1948-1953; this enemy Romanian-Yugoslav relation did not consist of endogenous or endemic components, based on the self-perpetuation of enmity between two neighbouring peoples, but merely exogenous elements: the subordination of Romanian communists to Kremlin, the *sensu stricto* imposition of the Soviet model, the recognition of enemies through Moscow's lenses.

In the case of the second conception, the elements of peaceful coexistence promoted by Khrushchev under the guise of "competitive coexistence" altered implicitly the relation with the Yugoslav neighbours: in Bucharest the attributes of peaceful cohabitation with the Yugoslav rivals, competitors was internalized, and the definition of Yugoslav enemies (associated with "imperialist spies") had been for long forgotten. The relation with Yugoslavia had been normalized starting with 1954, but it was only beginning with 1963-1964 that an elevation from normalization to "good neighbourhood" and to "taking the other one's interest into consideration" became visible. Briefly, Romania's relation to Yugoslavia was based on the subject-position of the *rival*, which is pivotal in the Lockean anarchic culture theorized by Alexander Wendt. Rivalry, in this sense, represented an interconnection of subjective beliefs of *the self* and *the other*, according to which the conceptions regarding the role of the party in domestic affairs, the internal development of society, and the mechanisms and methods employed for this aim could still distinguish the League of Communists in Yugoslavia from the Romanian People's Party, but as far as external affairs were concerned, Romania and Yugoslavia no longer perceived existential fears relating to the actions of *the other*, they identified common interests, and they shared beliefs stemming from the dictum *live and let live!*, which is pivotal according to Alexander Wendt to a relation centred on rivalry.

The last chapter, called *Friendly Romanian-Yugoslav relations. 1965-1970*). *From the significance of the Titoist enemy to the significance of the Yugoslav friend*, describes the transformations in Yugoslavia's domestic affairs and analyses the trend in Romania's foreign policy after Nicolae Ceausescu's rise to power. A whole subchapter is dedicated to the examination of events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and on the impact of the Prague Spring on Romania's relation with Yugoslavia. In this chapter I resumed the arguments related to the

Titoist threat (visible in the early 1950's) and contrasted it to the perception of Yugoslavia as allied states or friend (at the end of the 1960's). The autonomy initiated by Romania in 1964 (expressed in the April Declaration) was maintained throughout the 1970's and the 1980's and was inextricably linked to very intense Romanian-Yugoslav cooperation. The dynamic of cooperation in various fields, doubled by Romania and Yugoslavia's decisions to adopt similar stands towards events in international politics, clearly marked the defining elements of the Romanian-Yugoslav friendly relations.

The *Conclusions* tackle our final arguments and provide perspective to the subsequent evolution throughout the 1970's and the 1980's.