

Habilitation thesis

*Romania and the Great War: between history and theory of the international relations*

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Abstract

This paper represents a synthesis of the main scientific achievements since 2008, when I defended my PhD thesis. In accordance with the required standards, the work consists of three parts. The first, the most consistent, is a review of our historiographical contributions on this subject and analyzes them from the perspective of the theory of international relations.

The second section defines, synthetically, the main directions' development of scientific, professional and didactical career, which we intend to follow in the future. The third part contains bibliographical references related to the first two sections.

Romania's foreign policy, especially the Romanian-French relations with the Allies (mainly Russia), has been the subject of two books by author, which were published after the public presentation of the doctoral thesis: *Relații politico-diplomatice și militare ale României cu Franța în primul război mondial* (Political-Diplomatic and military relations of Romania with France during World War I) and *România și Aliații (1915-1918)* (Romania and Allies 1915-1918)

Both have enjoyed a good visibility being included in the International Bibliography of Historical Sciences, History of International Relations Section. To both volumes were added studies and articles (some of them in foreign languages), published in scientific journals (mostly indexed in international databases and classified by CNCS), in collective volumes and scientific conferences. Among the most important studies we mention "Romania's relations with France and Russia and Bucharest's fears concerning a Bulgarian offensive (Fall of 1915-August 1916). Some French Documentary Evidence" in *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, a journal published by the State University of St. Petersburg and "Projects Concerning the Creation of Military units by Transylvanian Romanians, Former Prisoners of War or Emigrants to the United States of America (1917)" in *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XIX, Supplement No. 4, 2010. The sources used in drafting our papers consisted mainly of archive documents, mostly unedited, coming from the French archives (Archives du Ministère des

Affaires étrangères, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre) and the Romanian ones (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Military archives of Romania, Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale). Our researches were focused particularly on political and diplomatic official relations of Romania. Our interest was directed at the same time on some topics of military history (such as the supply of Romania with war materials from abroad), of some matters concerning the public opinion, the collective memory, the communist historiography and Romania's participation in the war.

The thesis has, in its first part, a theoretical basis. We tried to articulate, to outline a theoretical framework as consistent as possible, even if it is mainly a research of history of international relations.

Therefore, we used and applied to the theme concepts (national interest, national power, balance of power, regional hegemon, neutrality, bandwagoning, alliances, conflict, war, balancing, national security, the arms race, buffer zone, pan-Slavism and pan-Orthodoxism, public opinion, heartland, realism, neorealism, idealism, Marxism, constructivism and others) from the sphere of international relations theory, geopolitics or geostrategy. At the same time, we put in debate some historiographical outlooks concerning Romania's participation in the war. Approaching the subject, we can say that all foreign policy actions of Romania in the early years of World War I were conducted under the sign of realism. The Romanian political class aimed the achieving of the national interest. The national interest was being identified with the pursuit of territorial and national unity which would, implicitly, lead to the increase of the country's international prestige. We have demonstrated that the Romanian state has performed as a rational actor, deliberately delaying the intervention in the war. We showed that the authorities were aware of the precariousness of military instruction, of the low level of competitiveness and, especially, the poor supply with war materials and munitions. In fact, through its foreign actions regarding the supply of the army with advanced materials (subject treated in our studies), the Romanian state took care of strengthening an essential element of the national power in the realist conception, namely military training. We noticed and we outlined that policy makers in Bucharest decided the involvement in the Great Conflagration only when they considered that the entry into action will require, if possible minimal risks and losses in the same time with maximum benefits. We proved that Romania's decision to join the Entente was delayed also because of the presence of Russia in this alliance, even if France has

tended to assume the role of mediator during the Russo-Romanian negotiations, especially during 1915. Then, the Romanian diplomacy strove to obtain the recognition of all its claims regarding the future frontiers of Romanian state. We have emphasized the reasons of Romanian Kingdom's apprehensions to the great power of the East. These apprehensions originated in the historical precedents and in pan-Slavic and pan-Orthodox policy of Petrograd.

We have shown that states are generally inclined to fear more other state actors whom they present as potentially threatening than countries that are major economic or military powers. Based on this reasoning, Germany was far superior to Russia in economically and militarily terms at the beginning of World War I. The Kingdom of Romania was perceiving with a much greater acuity the possible threat from its neighbor to the East. In the case of the wartime alliance between Romania and Russia, we cannot talk about the so-called "ideological solidarity" (Hans Morgenthau), a concept that refers to countries with the same policy, with a similar culture or other common features. We could rather qualify this alliance between Russia and Romania, as a "temporary marriage of convenience" (John Mearsheimer). We have also shown that under critical circumstances of armistice from Focșani and of peace in Bucharest, the decision makers should have established as a fundamental objective the survival. In fact, survival is a key concept of neorealism.

Researching the issue of the Romanian public opinion and its manifestations of sympathy for France at the beginning of the Great War we underscored the role and importance assigned to public opinion by interwar idealism. The idealist theory has even emphasized the importance of the domestic public opinion, its power to influence foreign policy decisions. From our point of view, the interventionist public opinion in the Kingdom of Romania has not played a decisive role in influencing the final decision of the government, but its manifestations reveal the undeniable rapprochement between Romania and France.

Moreover, emphasizing the close link existing between Communist historiography and Marxism in international relations, we highlighted the manner imbued of ideology in which the historiography of the communist regime (both during Gheorghiu-Dej and the "Ceaușescu's Era") perceived Romania's participation to war. The historical writing from socialist Romania materialized the Marxist thesis concerning the permanent social conflict, uncircumscribed to states' borders. We have shown that there are differences of nuance involving in how the

historiography of the two stages mentioned before relates to the World War I and also the Romanian involvement in the conflict.

In the next period, we plan to continue and deepen the directions of the earlier scientific research, especially of those concerning Romania and the Great War and, equally, the transition from communism to democracy in Romania, subject to which we have already dedicated several studies and articles. In this regard, we intend to proceed at the beginning of a documentation as solid as possible, through the study of 1990-1991' years press (especially democratic newspapers from left *Azi*, *Adevărul*, *Dimineața*, but also those that were opposing to the power, like *România liberă*, *Dreptatea*, *Liberalul*), with the purpose of publishing a book.

We want, in the near future, to publish a book about Romania's supply with war materials and munitions from abroad between 1915-1917, a book of author which aims to be based mainly upon documents from the French archives. We also intend to valorize the documentary collections of Military Archives from Pitești. Considering that belletristic literature is a valuable source for historical writing and taking into account the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches we propose in the same time, to realize an anthology of belletristic texts about World War I. We might try, to the possible extent, to gradually turn the attention on the cultural history of World War I.

As regarding teaching, we will try to proceed to an update of courses and university handbooks as constantly and systematically as possible. We aim to achieve a revised and enlarged edition of *Relații internaționale în secolul XX: concepte fundamentale, școli de gândire, repere istorice* (*International Relations in the twentieth century: fundamental concepts, schools of thought and historical aspects*) due to the fact that international relations are not an unchanging field. Moreover, we aim to develop a new university manual for the use of students entitled *The European integration. Historical evolutions and theoretical perspectives*. On one hand, we will proceed to a diachronic approach of the European integration's matter, starting with the idea of Europe, until the Treaty of Lisbon (and possibly even until Brexit's moment, with all the implications involved). On the other hand, we will discuss analytically the main theories of the European integration.