

No 1 (47), 2026
new series

ETNOSFERA

Journal



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EDITURA ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE
BUCUREȘTI 2026

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GOVERNANCE, STATE OF EMERGENCY, AND INFORMATIONAL MONISM

Mihail Ungheanu¹

ABSTRACT

French thinker Baptiste Rappin offers us, in volume 2 of his work on organizational theology entitled *De l'exception permanente. Théologie de l'organisation*, vol. 2, Nice, Ovadia, 2018 (*On the Permanent Exception. Theology of Organization*, vol. 2), a deeper look into management and management sciences, placing it within the modern and post-modern metaphysical framework and showing how it corresponds to this framework. The *Theology of Organization*, a deeper look into management and management sciences, placing it within the modern and post-modern metaphysical framework, showing how it corresponds to this framework and how, starting from the obsession with the permanent exception, the crisis, the discontinuous, they build a new totalitarianism, made possible by this interpretation of reality. Whether in management, cybernetics, or politics, reality presents itself in such a way that all human existence and activities must be redesigned to become machines for preventing crisis and creating order out of crisis. This project is based on the cybernetic model of information-processing machines, which use feedback loops. In this context, the notions of sovereignty and autonomy disappear or are redefined, autonomy is no longer defined as the ability to make one's own laws, but rather to internalize and assimilate information to face the new challenges that the organism/organization is confronted with. This model also leads to a redefinition of human existence, which, to be effective, must constantly adapt and renounce any kind of roots or cultural references/heritage, any reference to the transcendent. Politically, this manifests itself as governance through chaos, through the provocation of crises, which become permanent and lead to the enhancement or restructuring of state order. An example thereof is the Patriot Act, which was issued by the USA after the events on September 11, 2001.

Keywords: management, cybernetics, totalitarianism, religion.

1. INTRODUCTION

In volume 2 of his work "On the Permanent Exception: Theology of Organization" [*De l'exception permanente. Théologie de l'organisation*], French author Baptiste Rappin offers a deeper look into the mechanisms that surprisingly underlie the current transformations of the social, political, and spiritual world. The first volume is entitled *At the Ground of Management. Théology of Organization*, vol. 1, Nice, Ovadia, 2014. The first volume is entitled [*Au fondements du management. Théologie de l'organisation, vol. 1*], which deals with the key ideas and concepts that make management theory and management sciences possible. It is

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about what is called management and the sciences of organization, describing and offering broader explanations of the concepts and ideas that secretly shape the contemporary world than the ones present in the first volume of his work. It spells out the underlying vision thereof. This vision of man and the world embodied by these management sciences was dubbed by another French Thinker, Jean-Francois Mattei, as “a new totalitarianism”², centered around several concepts, one of which is that of organization and organizing, an expression of typical Saint-Simonian industrialism³, which values efficiency and cooperation. Cybernetics and communication sciences form their backbone. It is a matter of exposing aspects of a process that is not at all conscious, namely the managerial revolution, a contemporary avatar of the permanent revolution and an expression of an anthropological revolution, and a kind technocratic Great Reset of humanity and society. These sciences of administration and management are part of the modern and post-modern metaphysical, mental, and ideological landscape, and Rappin speaks of a pan-organizational religion or a pan-organizational movement, which seeks to transform the world into a meta-organization of organizations⁴. These sciences of management and administration are part of the modern and post-modern metaphysical, mental, and ideological landscape, and one could even speak of a pan-organizational religion, rooted not only in Taylor’s ideas, but also in cybernetics. To better explain what really undergirds the managerial sciences, B. Rappin draws on arguments from the of Norbert Wiener’s and others, bringing to light a religious and mystical dimension of the whole managerial and organizational approach, which consists of a process that leads to the annihilation of difference and producing uniformity, albeit for cybernetics order represents the main enemy of the disorganizing process that entropy introduces in the universe. The sciences of management and organization have given rise to a movement known as “pan-organizational”, which aims to transform the world into a meta-organization of organizations – a process that, paradoxically, leads to the unification of the world and the elimination of differences. The good of this approach is purpose essentially the erasure of multiplicity and its dissolution into unity, which in practice contradicts the intention of the anti-entropy struggle.

The French author’s multidisciplinary approach can be considered a necessary undertaking in philosophy and political science, but it can also be classified as a study of different forms of religion without revelation and an exposé of the systemic evil that has engulfed the contemporary world. To combat the evil you face, you must identify and study it. The field of management and management sciences and everything associated with them represent a multiplicity that must be organized around a principle

² Baptiste Rappin, *Au fondement du management. Théologie de l’organisation [The Foundations of Management: The Théology of Organisation]*, Vol. 1, Nisa, Ovadia, 2014, p. 13.

³ Baptiste Rappin, *De l’exception permanente. Théologie de l’organisation [On the Permanent Exception: A Théology of Organisation]*, Vol. 2, Nisa, Ovadia, 2018, p. 339.

⁴ Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2014, p. 31.

of order and intelligibility. Rappin's approach is a critical one, trying to unmasking of the systemic evil that has engulfed the contemporary world. Despite the various theories and points of view associated with this domain, there is a common thread that gives them all identity and coherence, namely the category of the state of emergency, with management being, in fact, a form of governance of this kind of state⁵. What he describes is the mechanism of permanent exception, of crisis – a methodology of governance, a crisis that is deliberately provoked in order to undermine democracy and to introduce new measures meant to annihilate human freedoms; in the long run, this should lead to a form of governance that aims to transform human beings and society, going as far as to create what is called collective intelligence, and or a single world government, which is supposedly the only way to combat the problems brought about by globalization. The spread of management throughout the world and the organizational and cognitive colonization goes in this direction. Transforming it into an organization of organizations is just another way of implementing a new form of technocratic totalitarian tyranny, inspired by cybernetics and the belief that there is a complementarity between crisis/disorder and order that can be used to implement and intensify order under the pretext of combating the crisis. Such a methodology is based on the revaluation of the concept of disorder or noise in information and communication theory, the desired result being the transformation of the entire world into a cybernetic machine (organization are information processing systems in this view), centered on the anti-value of the technocratic system, on efficiency (and in fact on obedience, even if in a different way than currently understood, obedience here being given through the feedback loop, through the act of self-correction, of changing of one's behavior by adapting to the new circumstances).

2. PERPETUAL CRISIS

An essential concept in the scaffolding of the contemporary world, which is in a state of permanent crisis, is the notion of crisis, of unpredictability, of that which violates the norm. A saying drawn out of the work of the jurist and political philosopher Carl Schmitt argues that the sovereign is the one who decides the state of exception, the one who makes the law, but is outside it. The managerial mindset, and the series of related views, sees the world as a process of permanent transformation, of permanent revolution, in which the norm is set by so-called black swans and in which people, society, and organizations must constantly adapt and abandon everything that is traditional, all the frameworks that provide stability. Management is a revolutionary force, according to Peter Drucker⁶. Management as

⁵ Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2018, p. 237.

⁶ Peter F. Drucker, "The New Society of Organizations", in *Harvard Business Review*, 1992, (70), (5), pp. 95–100, Available at: <https://hbr.org/1992/09/the-new-society-of-organizations>, Accessed on: April 9, 2025.

such must be theorized as Revolution⁷. The exception becomes the rule in this world full of billions of interactions where the sudden and unexpected can happen at any time, so that man must give up his old habits and ways of thinking and adapt. Within organizations, since authentic institutions no longer exist, being by their very nature opposed to organizations, performance comes exclusively from adaptation. Management, hidden management of reality, and post-modern philosophy converge in organization, management theory and management sciences being post-modern philosophy, deconstructivism in action. Both deal with the systemic liquidation of the past⁸. The evacuation of reason, tradition, logocentrism, metaphysics, the fixity of ideas, etc. Basically, it is about recreating man, a man without horizon, without essence, something that can be made and remade, without landmarks, without an origin that sets rules and guidelines. It is about the liquidation of a vision of the world and man based on reason, on the idea of a cosmic law, and the construction of a new one in which there are no longer any grand narratives to guide man, a vision without landmarks, based on discontinuity, on meaninglessness, liberation from the tyranny of essences, the reign of process over being, etc. The new managerial philosophy of the world is nothing more than the symbolic continuation of the loss of the head (the decapitation of the king as illustrated by the French Revolution), of the act of decapitation through which a society loses its criteria and its ability to orient itself, to think, to pursue values. Managerial and post-modern philosophy reflect the symbolic gesture of beheading the king, namely beheading the social body, the connection with a transcendent and objective order and its demands, perpetuating this act and annihilating any height and depth of existence. The state, the individual, the being, the law, the One (in the generic sense of a principle and transcendent order that provides unity and coherence to the universe), and the idea of having an origin must be fought against, even eliminated in the name of celebrating singularity, multiplicity, and nomadic impulses⁹. According to the French author, decapitation has a strong ontological meaning, namely rebellion against the principle that subordinates the whole that constitutes a system, rebellion against any limits and definitions, even the denial of the notion of persons. It is also a struggle against man's ability to understand and grasp reality, that is, what is common and general, as opposed to the exception, the case that does not fit the rule. The head represents not only the principle, but also any extremity of the body, the limit or origin that gives form and shape to things, but also the finitude of man and the world. Rappin refers to the etymology of the word *caput* and its connection to the verb *capio*, to take to grasp. The head is the organ of what grasps and comprehends, of what understanding and comprehension mean – a word that contains the gesture of grasping/ comprehending, like the German *begreifen* or *fassen*. The concept – *der Begriff* – is an act of grasping/ to get a hold of something – *greifen, begreifen*. To understand

⁷ Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2014, p. 15.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

reality means to go over and capture it, to give it an image, a face – the reason that brings multiplicity into a concept – *con-cipio*. The exception designates the gesture of stepping out of the socket, out of subsumption to the general rule, that which escapes general principles, “ex” designating exit and separation. A decapitated world is a world in which only the permanent exception subsists, a world without landmarks, a world of permanent change, which is, in other words, a world in which constituent power undermines constituted power, that is, a world of perpetual change, of permanent choice, of continuous innovation, etc. In such a situation, no political, cultural, economic, social, etc. form can take root and serve as a bridge between generations. It is a world hostile to human existence and society. This is the world of permanent revolution. This new world/society is a structure based on the rejection of what in political philosophy is called the established/constituted power (power constrained by constitution and laws), appealing to and promoting constitutive power (power unconstrained by constitution or law, which can establish a new constitution or destroy existing political, social forms etc.) in its negative form, of annihilating existing and established forms, which the constitutive/revolutionary power construe as being always oppressive. The true revolutionary power does not seek to replace one social and political order with another. All fixed forms are kind of oppressive; an obstacle imposed on the flow/process of becoming. The true revolutionary, Rappin asserts, combats the very need for order, the substance of order as such. That is why he experiments with different alternative forms of life, the revolutionary becoming a master of the state of exception. A society organized according to this view is one in which a permanent state of exception is established and institutional forms are abandoned, one of the ways of promoting this being the sciences of management and organizations, as recognized and affirmed by Peter Drucker¹⁰. Modern society is a new type of society according to Drucker, a knowledge society, structured for the first time in history by organizations, i.e., structures aimed at efficiency and innovation, one of their tasks being the permanent abandonment of anything that hinders efficiency and continuous adaptation to the challenges posed by environment. Human existence is not organized around institutions anymore. Abandoning those is the fundamental institutional policy meant to free society from its dependence on the past and of stability, so that society should no longer be trapped under their spell and are open to the future, to permanent exception¹¹. That is, society must become adaptive, efficient, changing every second.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

¹¹ “Society, community, and family are all conserving institutions. They try maintaining stability and to prevent, or at least to slow change. But the modern organization is a destabilizer. It must be organized for innovation and innovation, as the great Austro-American economist Joseph Schumpeter said is ‘creative destruction’. And it must be organized for the systematic abandonment of whatever is established, customary, familiar, and comfortable, whatever that is a product, service, or process: a set of skills: human and social relationships; or the organization itself. In short, it must be organized for constant change”, in Peter F. Drucker, “The New Society of Organizations”, in *Harvard Business Review*, 1992, (70), (5), p. 96, Available at: <https://hbr.org/1992/09/the-new-society-of-organizations>, Accessed on: April 9, 2025.

In fact, a world in the hands of the managerial model is not a world in which institutions can exist, because the organization functions only according to the criteria of efficiency, optimization, adaptation, and, therefore, abandonment of all inherited forms or knowledge, institutions, etc., of heritage as such. It is a universal corrosive acid that infiltrates all institutions, undermining them without us even realizing it. Family, school, army, university, etc. fall under the spell of this way of being, undermining their constituent principles.

The concept of state of emergency is traditionally understood as a temporary situation in which, in the event of an emergency or war, the usual legal framework is suspended for a period. It is therefore understood as a legal framework that is limited in time. In contemporary times, this framework has been superseded, with the state of emergency no longer being limited, but becoming a permanent framework of life, without the need, from a technical point of view, to be declared as such. The introduction of the *Patriot Act* in the United States is an example of this, with the rule of law being suspended, which is also valid for various anti-terrorism laws involving identical procedures: terms that allow for subjective definitions (and therefore allow for arbitrariness and tyranny), surveillance measures, punishment of intent, the creation of legal inequalities, the absence of recourse for the accused etc.¹². It is a regime in which the lack of law becomes the rule and in which the institution or the idea of the institution as such is evacuated. The crisis or state of emergency is not limited to politics or economics; it encompasses the whole of society. It is consubstantial with modern/contemporary times, which can no longer anchor themselves in the past or the transcendent and try to justify themselves in a self-referential way¹³.

3. THE MODERN AND POST-MODERN WORLDVIEW

The emergence or irruption of the “exception” occurred in modern philosophy and science; it is not an event without history and imposes itself or evolves against a backdrop constituted by modernity. The exception shapes modern rationality, whether in mathematics, physics, or evolutionary theory, and has accompanied the transformation of human society from the old world endowed with meaning, which was part of a transcendent objective order – the cosmos, to the modern mass society of progress and technical devastation of nature and man. It is an era in which human existence is metaphysically defined as act, action, and in which being and whatever is considered to possess stability represent a remnant of action that must be repeated incessantly, and in which authentic action is defined as an absolute beginning, caused by nothing prior to it¹⁴. Being is reduced to act and mistaken for becoming. Even fields such as law and

¹² Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2018, p. 77.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

¹⁴ Franck Fischbach, *L'etre et l'acte [Being and Act]*, Paris, Vrin, 2002, pp. 9–30.

medicine are reshaped by this conception, fields in which crisis and exception are fully manifested in times of permanent crisis: technological, economic, social, environmental, etc. The crisis is being announced everywhere, but the media and the means of communication that show it to us mask its true face. One aspect of this crisis is the silent, tacit anthropological transformation that communication technologies have brought about in humanity, with the help of the convergence of various forms of knowledge present in nanotechnology, biotechnology, computer science, and cognitive sciences. The concept of emancipation, which has enjoyed a long career in politics, society, etc., expresses this crisis, which is modernity/post-modernity itself.

Crisis is a term originating in the realm of medicine, and it was used to denote a certain period of transition, of transit, the outcome of which is uncertain. The use of the term has expanded beyond the semantic field of medicine and is now applicable to collective and socio-political phenomena, being used to designate commercial, economic, and financial crises mostly. Its meaning is close to the literary and theatrical meaning of catastrophe, which designates the moment of a revelation that leads to the initiation of a narrative. It also approaches the concept of revolution, which combines the catastrophic dimension with the temporal dimension of cycles. Here, the crisis can lead to a revolution that is to a restoration of order based on standards other than those that existed before the catastrophe, before the crisis. What is fundamental is that it denotes the idea of an event as a break from the previous order, the introduction of discontinuity. If a process of permanent revolution sets in, then it would continue endlessly without establishing a new order since every emerging order would be immediately washed away.

Crisis stems from ancient Greek and is related to the verb *krisis*, meaning to separate, to distinguish, and by extension to divide, to choose, to decide¹⁵. The term also refers to what the ancient Greeks called *kairos* – the opportune moment or occasion, the opportunity. In medicine, this is a moment that the doctor must seize and use to save and heal the patient, the strategist to detect those circumstances that lead to the defeat of the adversary, etc. The moment of crisis is one whose outcome depends on the mastery of *kairos* – either catastrophe or revolution. Disagreement at this moment signifies a lack of judgment. In the field of prudence, it is a necessary element. The crisis marks a rupture, establishing a before and after, the moment after being necessarily different from what preceded it.

Modernity is itself a state of this kind and finds its contemporary expression in the managerial-cybernetic modeling of the world. It has brought with it a transformation in the way concepts such as norm and rule are understood, as well as the elimination of a transcendent referent to values and rules of human coexistence. The way humanity understood what order is has changed. The norm no longer embodies any transcendent or external ideal that regulates human activity. Instead, the norm, which would regulate an activity, would be deduced from activity meant to impose order upon. Now, the activity is going to be carried out without any

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

reference to something external, to any kind of transcendent standard or value. B. Rappin finds the expression of this revolution in the way the norm is understood in Nietzsche's conception of the will to power, from which it follows that something is good because of the activity of the one who does something and declares it as such¹⁶. Normativity and normality are becoming synonymous, leading to the conclusion in medicine that there is no norm called "health". In medicine, based on the patient's experience and not on medical knowledge, illness appears as an internal gap and not as a difference from a general rule, as it is impossible to find a threshold and establish criteria that clearly distinguish the two states. The pinnacle of this approach can be found in the work of Michel Foucault, and in the idea of multiculturalism, of a plurality of norms that guide everyday life, without referring to transcendent norms that would regulate them. This regime becomes the regime of permanent exception¹⁷, which is that of capitalism and permanent revolution, the supreme value of the bourgeoisie being permanent adaptation, concerned with the past, with what is established and overcome being the concerns of those who are behind the times. Being preoccupied with the past, with what is settled and gone, is regarded as being the concern of those who are behind the times.

4. METAPHYSICS OF PROCESS AND FLOW. THE PERPETUAL REVOLUTION

According to common belief, the object of science is the repeatable, the universal, the knowledge of the laws and causes that govern the world. However, appearances can be deceiving, and exceptions also have a place in scientific endeavors. Among those who dealt with exceptions were Newton and G.W. Leibniz, in a context determined by astronomy and the desire to calculate the orbits of the planets around the sun. Differential calculus falls into this category, with the object of mathematics becoming the variable and variations¹⁸. Here, the same interest in discontinuity and rupture is expressed as in post-modern philosophy, the travails of difference branching out into the spread of the difference of difference, which presents the risk of loss in regression and in the forgetting of fixed points and landmarks, including origin and final purpose, a postponement condensed into the concept of difference, postponement¹⁹. If in structuralism only the signifier-signified pair remains and the referent disappears, from now on the signifier must be replaced with new concepts that free humanity from the legacy of metaphysics and Logos, of reason. The signifier becomes a form of nomadism, a form of dislocation, a restless nomadism, a process that dislocates. In this context, writing and the concept of difference conveyed by

¹⁶ Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2018, p. 62.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 72–74.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

Jacques Derrida play the role of an antidote to metaphysics, that is, to the idea of the existence of a fixed identity, of relating to a meaning, as it is a permanent process that slips away, caught in a becoming without beginning or end, without origin. This produces a disaccording of Otherness from Identity. But this post-modern ideology has an anchor, as Rappin shows in modern philosophy and science, in the construction of a universe that is no longer unified by the power of analogy and hierarchy, being replaced by a universe based on process, on flow, a flow based on differentiation and variety. Everything liquefies and discontinuity becomes the law. Michel Montaigne expresses this modern vision, the world being, in his words, a permanent earthquake – *branloire perenne*²⁰. And even the human subject begins to dissolve new philosophical views on the self-coming to the for (D. Hume, for example) expressing the idea that it is just a collection of impressions held together by association or habit. This new modern universe is homogeneous, without qualitative distinctions, becoming the object of a unified science informed by a certain conception of movement as a modification of the relationships between things and not as a transition from potentiality to actuality. They remain indifferent to movement, which is no longer an internal process of actualization, of achieving a goal, as Aristotle defined movement. Movement itself is relativized, while the mathematization of movement paving the way for the mathematization of reality. And the study of movement ultimately becomes a study of variations and differences. What is true for mechanics is also true for electricity. The universe is described as intensity and acceleration, the new appears as movement of movement, continuous variation, a combination of multiple tiny rectilinear forces²¹. This worldview centered on the description of the existence as fluctuation, discontinuity, process has found its way and expression in biology, the theory of evolution being a manifestation of it. Biology is important for understanding religion or managerial “theology” and because it is the source of the concept of organization, as an internal structure that ensures functions and produces life, being one of the foundations of informational monism on which this vision of the world is built. Biology has become a transformist and nominalist vision of life. Life itself is redefined as an organization of interactive elements, a system in which function takes precedence over structure, and which depends on the environment in which it lives. The theory of evolution reflects the metaphysical structure of differential calculus²², and the tree of evolution appears as a set of series of exceptions²³.

Modernity as such represents a manifestation of permanent exception, negation, and discontinuity, being a denial of what makes the existence of humanity and societies possible, namely continuity and institutions. No human community can exist without the normativity and continuity that institutions constitute; it cannot live exclusively in the realm of utility, individuality, and discontinuity. This was emphasized by sociology in

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 98–99.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 105.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

the 19th century, a society needing to exist in reference to something that transcends social determination, whether natural or supernatural, the French author appealing to the notion of analogy that structured the universe in the medieval realist vision. A reference is needed that does not melt into the flow, into the process, and that opens society to something transcendent, otherwise falling into a reign of the primacy of the relationship over the subject, the work, and the substance²⁴. This vision corresponds to an epistemology of the state of exception, of the exception, of thinking without a central referent, of an order linked to chaos, dispersion, a purely immanent and horizontal order that excludes transcendence. It is a vision that excludes principle and hierarchy, a vision of instability and disruption. It is a conception that affirms that order can arise from chaos, that stability comes from its opposite, disorder giving rise to order. Even if postmodern thinking is quick to make metaphysical statements and conclusions based on scientific results that are not properly understood, etc., what matters is the insistence on valuing what escapes the power of any principle, any order, that is, pure difference, variation, deviation²⁵. Postmodern philosophy-modern philosophy is, and B. Rappin refers to a French author from the end of the 19th century, Alfred Jaury, and his invention, a discipline called “pataphysics”, a so-called science that values the atom over the world, the particle over the whole, the exception over the rule, abandoning the universal²⁶. It is, therefore, a science of accident, nonsense, or anti-sense (*Wiedersinn*). The principle of non-contradiction is excluded, and accidents are elevated to the rank of the universal. The accident cannot be subsumed under a rule, but if we abandon a causal and absolute point of view derived from ancient ontologies and replace it with a relative point of view, things change. According to A. Comte’s positivist explanation, the relative takes the place of the absolute, and the explanation of something concerns a connection established between various particular phenomena and some general facts, whose number would decrease due to the progress of science²⁷. The law formulated by science does not reflect an objective truth, but is a human construct, its effectiveness, attested by prediction, replacing truth. It expresses a temporal constancy, not a logical chain, expressing a contingent world, stripped of essences. The facts could always be different. The law here does not refer to any origin. It is a reversal of the ontological hierarchy and the science of simulacrum.

Humanity is in a state of permanent revolution, with the industrial revolution being only one visible manifestation of this. One of the consequences of this revolution is the standardization of being and existence, the erasure of boundaries and borders. It is a world of human annihilation²⁸, but also of life under the rule of pan-organizational movement, of the expansion of the technical system, of modern technology that encompasses and transforms everything and leads to the erasure of

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 130–131.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

the difference between life and artifice. What has made this development possible is cybernetics and the informational monism on which it is based. Man, animal, and machine are placed on the same level, being conceived and reduced to the role of control and communication systems. The fusion of man and machine is the ultimate stage of this indifference. Techno-science is an approach that is not neutral; it is, at best, ambivalent, with man and his nature becoming its targets. Drawing on Martin Heidegger's insights, Rappin highlights the process of the annihilation of difference at the ontological level that characterizes the techno-scientific approach, with nature and humanity becoming a sort of material repository, in which everything that exists is made available to humanity like items in an inventory or warehouse. It is the reign of the framework, of Heidegger's *Gestell*. Technology transforms nature, constituting an artificial environment that makes us live in purely technical conditions, thus producing an amalgamation between *physis* and *techne*²⁹, and the technical object, once inserted between things, loses its artificial character. Man is reduced to an engine, a machine, thus taking a step towards erasing the difference between man and technical artifice, between life and technology. The description and decomposition of the human body into human forces, to which calculations derived from physics are applied, lays the foundation for this process of dehumanization and standardization, whereby anything subjective and unquantifiable is cast aside. This continues a process of eliminating analogical language, initiated by the nominalist revolution of the Middle Ages, leads to the establishment of a univocal conception of being reflected in the formal and logical language of technoscience. A univocal language is formulated, corresponding to a technical and reductive approach to existence, in which reality is reduced to a map made out of scientific statements and descriptions, thereby being purified of its former richness, meanings, and ambiguities by imposing the requirements of clear, certain, and rapid communication. Words such as life, purpose, or soul have no place in such a language, according to Norbert Wiener³⁰. In this conception, what is commonly referred to as "the world" is reduced to a collection of atoms of circumstances perfectly defined by unambiguous scientific language, which, in the form of cyberspace and IT, creates a simulacrum of the world and of life³¹.

5. CONCLUSION. THE FLOW AND THE PERMANENT STATE OF EXCEPTION. THE LIQUID WORLD

Since the world is redefined as being a constant flow and a state of exception, a new kind of governance is needed for this state of exception. This is where management comes in. And its expansion to the status of general governance is not

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 180.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 159–162.

as inexplicable as it seems. The principles of its expansion have been present from the beginning, even in the workshops where F. Taylor applied his ideas. The governance of the exception diversifies on several levels: change management, knowledge management, innovation management, risk management, collective knowledge and intelligence management. These are developments based on Taylorian doctrine, the foundation of which lies in the matrix of control science and governance science that is cybernetics³². The presence of the exception can be found right from the emergence of the managerial corpus, in Taylor's ideas. In his work *Shop Management*, the American author talks about the principle of exception, discussing how conflicts that arise in the workshop between workers and various managers can be mediated, appealing to the unwritten laws/code that govern the place in question. Management is not bureaucracy but must deal with what is informal and social. The exception here refers to the primacy of orality and informality, this unwritten code being at the heart of sociological theories of organizations and implying the adjustment of particular interests within the group. The exception is present in the most mundane and widespread activity, namely work, and since the principles of scientific management can be applied in all fields, the permanent exception becomes constitutive for any individual and collective action³³. In other words, it is not the written and general rule that prevails, but the exception. Ultimately, workers and managers must refer to this principle when regulations fail, and everyone must be adaptable, open to new situations, constantly learning, and constantly updating their knowledge, skills, and abilities, which, ironically, is necessary, otherwise there will be no performance³⁴. Openness to the new and constant innovation is not just a slogan, but a principle. This process of improving performance can also be described in terms derived from physics, reflecting the same vision of things. Optimizing speed increases productivity and performance, with speed being commonly derived in relation to time. It is the application of differential calculus at the root of the scientific organization of work, which subjects it to the imperative of optimization and improvement: always faster, higher, etc. Management, and therefore management sciences, participate from the outset in this modern temporality of the new, the engine driving human activity is, thus, technical-organizational. Information and information-processing become the heart and principle of managerial activity. Managerial cadres become the nerve centers of (human) activity, the focal points for dealing with exceptions and information flows, to use Henri Mintzer's descriptions³⁵. Here, too, the permanent adaptation regime is at work. This manage is the prototype of the organization's man, characterized by nomadism and mobility. He is the rootless man who can be everywhere, who can adapt to everything, because he has no attachments³⁶. He is the post-modern man,

³² *Ibidem*, p. 187.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 201.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

fluid and constantly on the move. This type of human being has not only descriptive value, but also a prescriptive value: he is the example to follow in order to achieve success and successful social integration³⁷. This type of human being, which Rappin refers to, is structured around a core of images linked to management and management sciences: namely, the driving images of the network and the digital world: connectivity, interactivity, self-organization, social networks, etc. The organizational man – manager or not – is an embodiment of the prophetism or religion of networks and communication, expressing thereby the theme of collective intelligence³⁸. Generation Y (or the Millennials), like the organizational man, represents the universal and transgenerational urge to immerse oneself and connect to collective intelligence and the era of networks or the matrix, i.e., permanent adaptation and real-time synchronization. It is an uprooted generation, the current image of the principle of exception, of the uprooted framework that can be neither a leader nor a transmitter of a legacy, which adopts a horizontal and lateral attitude that facilitates the fluidity and agility of the organization³⁹. This ideal is present and expressed by the ideal of the agile or adapted enterprise, open to new ideas and able to adapt to internal and external changes. Enterprises or organizations are designed according to a biological model, which can be understood as a jungle in which Tarzan (using the metaphor of the author Jerome Barrand⁴⁰) – the illustration of the manager – must cope, whose identity is given by capacity to adapt – the correct interpretation of noises and signals in the wilderness – and not by intelligence and depth. The criteria of culture and civilization are eliminated in favor of the exclusive adoption of Darwinian logic and efficiency – survival. Only the behavioral veneer remains of the human subject, with success being determined by the collaboration between various factors, i.e., sharing the manager’s vision and modifying behavior as a result of the feedback loop that requires adaptation. Adaptability and flexibility are not only the manager’s responsibility, but also that of each member, the organization, and the particular ecosystem, which constitutes every organization. Through communication and continuous training/education, change and adaptability are embedded or must be throughout the organization. In order to be adapted and up to date, the structures involved in this process of confrontation must be digitized, with an emphasis on portability, automation, and dematerialization, adaptation/flexibility being the ability to evolve in the digital regime of permanent exception⁴¹. Another step towards achieving the principle of exception and informality in organizations can be found in the idea of the “emancipated enterprise”. This illustrates, or should illustrate, the idea of getting rid of bureaucracy and authoritarian control, where written rules issued by management are replaced by unwritten oral rules. Here, the rule is the exception, and Taylor’s principle comes

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 204–205.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 207.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 208.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

back to light, as it is not something entirely new⁴². Similar ideas can also be found in the holocratic concept – from *holon* (whole) and *arche* (power, principle) of the organization. These would be organic and decentralized structures that address the challenges they face from a process/flow perspective to transform the organization not into something “evolved”, but “evolutive”, or evolving. Regardless of whether it is agile or holocratic, liberated or a network enterprise, what is central is the organization, the key to performance⁴³.

It is considered the key structure of our era – the era of organizations – being fluid, matrix-based, coordinated rather (or ideally) through mutual adjustments than through top-down imposed rules. Management and management sciences are also changing, undergoing transformations and changes and taking on new forms. There is talk of fluid enterprises, network enterprises, cross-cutting, hybrid, agile, or fluid enterprises, but they all have certain features in common. They all must be efficient and demonstrate adaptability, they must organize the “evolutionary nature” of their structure, and, thus, proving they’re as the connection to the ideology of the network. There is a core that defines their essential community, so to speak: flexibility, adaptability, horizontal coordination, information sharing, multifunctionality, mobility of people and teams, organizational apprenticeship, reduction of monocentric organization, etc.⁴⁴. Cross-cutting divisions and openness, as well as the use of networks and adaptability, are not inherent intra-organizational issues and characteristics, their presence, therefore, raising the question of their extension to the business environment or to society as a whole (IT networks, cyberspace). Here, the paradigmatic example is the network-enterprise or reticular enterprise, due to the fact that it represents the interface between the organic and the realm of telecommunications, between digitality and agility/adaptability/ capacity of evolving, interface that makes it possible for the organization to cope with the assault of the permanent exception. It is an example of reticular (industrial) religion, much praised by Saint-Simon and his followers, and to which project management corresponds. Activity, networking, and expansion become the primary values in such enterprises, with flexibility, access, autonomy, and adaptability being revered, whereby trainers, managers, and project leaders are elevated to the status of ideal images that people are encouraged to follow, as facilitators of the process. Adaptability, the ability to move from one project to another, and relational skills are paramount. Projects become opportunities/pretexts for relationships. This type of organization corresponds to the cybernetic-reticular logic that is becoming increasingly widespread in society.

This present-day world is a fluid world, a world of fluid individuals, whose identity can be described as being made up of hypertexts, with individuals finding themselves, like words in a hypertext, at the intersection of several social fields, *i.e.* multiple identities depending on the context considered, being able to move from

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 212.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

one context to another spontaneously. Therefore, it is all about mobility, permanent adaptation, fragmentation, and displacement. Fixity and roots are anti-values in this picture of perpetual movement between places, people, organizations, and ideas. The relationship with the world and with oneself is changing. Movement and mobility refer to a set of practices that cannot be reduced to spatial and geographical aspects, referring to all kinds of relationships, whether material, ideal, digital, etc. The way in which a career unfolds is changing. It is no longer a question of understanding it in the classical sense, as a vertical ascent, if not within the same company or job, within a profession, an ascent that requires loyalty and devotion, and therefore rootedness, but is becoming more horizontal due to new types of organization, types of financing, accelerated renewal of knowledge and areas of expertise, etc. Love and loyalty to the profession are destroyed in favor of a single objective: the transferability of skills that can be applied in all situations⁴⁵. Thus, employability becomes a primary value more valuable than job security, being an expression of adaptability and the capacity of evolution, freeing the individual from the substance of a profession and the set of ethical rules that came with it. The individual is reduced to being a capacity for movement and change, a kit of transferable skills and *savoir-faire*. This conception presents us with a human ideal type that shapes man only in behavioral-functional terms, robbing him of any roots and any meaning. Rappin brings up Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" as well as Günther Anders's concept of "planned obsolescence". It is a world made up of objects designed to disappear and be consumed, a world of objects and equipment which, like skills and knowledge, must be constantly renewed, improved, etc. Liquidity refers to liquidation and flow, to a continuous process of flowing, breaking, demolishing, and the incessant circulation of things, money, techniques, and people. The liquid world is no longer a world with stable social structures, fixed landmarks, and prohibitions, but one in which structures flow, decompose, and the individual becomes a consumer. It is important to note that political power is moving away from the national sphere, that solid structures are giving way to networks, etc., creating a climate of uncertainty and security obsessions⁴⁶. This logic of fluidity and flow is the logic of management, which was initially shaped by the biological image of blood flow. Another form it can take is the discipline of *Lean Management*, an extreme form of rationalization of the production process that also reflects the requirements of financial liquidity, both cases involving the elimination of any fixed points and attachments⁴⁷. Management thus finds itself in Carl Schmitt's geopolitical paradigm, which opposes land to sea powers⁴⁸ and is, as follows from B. Rappin's synthesis, one of the major instruments of social engineering and the fabrication of the new man, of the permanent restructuring of the world.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 221.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 224–225.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 226.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PROCESS OF EURASIAN UNIFICATION

*Cristi Pantelimon*⁴⁹

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to open a new perspective on geopolitical developments in the European and Eurasian regions. As in recent years (especially after 2020, and even more rapidly after 2022, the year marking the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine), geopolitical conflicts have shown that there are major tensions within the global power system, this paper proposes a possible hypothesis regarding the future evolution of the balance of power in the global geopolitical system. The central idea of the article is that U.S. hegemony is increasingly subject to pressures of disintegration and that this hegemony will most likely be replaced by a Eurasianist system in which the Russia-China alliance will ultimately connect with the structure of the European Union, along two geopolitical axes opposed to Washington: the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis and the Moscow-Beijing axis.

Keywords: Eurasianism, the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, the Moscow-Beijing axis, the European Union, Rhenish Europe.

1. INTRODUCTION

A geopolitical article is an account of a historical moment for a given geopolitical unit. In the following lines, we invite the reader to go through a series of ideas that we noted down approximately seven years ago. At the time, these ideas seemed bold or even risky; today, when we have already had four years of war in Ukraine and, for several weeks now, a new conflagration in Iran (the second in less than a year – let us not forget that in June 2025 there was a crisis episode manifested in a 12-day war between Israel and the United States, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other), of an intensity and geopolitical drama not seen before, these ideas – written down prior to 2022 (the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, in fact a U.S.-Russian conflict waged through the proxy in Kyiv) – have gained even greater relevance.

We will not leave the reader merely to “contemplate” what was written in 2019. We will intervene along the way to supplement where necessary, to nuance, to reinforce, or to refute certain statements. Broadly speaking, the main idea of the 2019 material remains valid. It “anticipated” a geopolitical evolution around a Paris-Berlin-Moscow-type axis, to which Beijing was also added. Today, this (potential) axis has strengthened. We already speak of BRICS, of the Shanghai Cooperation

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Organization, of a Turkey that is increasingly less compatible with American interests in the Gulf – especially in light of Israel’s interests – of an India which, despite an apparently balanced approach, still lies within the geopolitical sphere of BRICS, and of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that seems to be an isolated mini-continent within an increasingly hesitant American geopolitics in Eurasia. All these elements have since become clearer and continue to do so. We will attempt to insert them in their proper place, with the appropriate commentary. We ask the reader to excuse this “creation” born in two stages. Geopolitics, a discipline concerned with the shifting dynamics of power at the global level, never starts from scratch. The past is both its father and its mother. Therefore, let us begin as well with the picture of 2019, in order to continue with that of the present day.

The idea from which we depart is that there exists a trend toward an “objective” geopolitical unification – dictated by geography – but also a subjective one (driven by the desire to emerge from under what until recently was the almost unquestioned tutelage of American strategic dominance, through well-known global instruments: the dollar, SWIFT, NATO, etc.) at the Eurasian level, with two main engines: to the west, the EU; to the east, the Russia-China alliance. The reader may be surprised by the previous assertion. Is the EU a “Eurasianist” actor? In what way? With what antecedents? How exactly, as of 2026? These and other questions will shape the course of our updated article. We hope to be as objective and as neutral as possible in this endeavor, although complete axiological neutrality, in geopolitics as in other related areas of the human sciences, remains only a noble aspiration.

The European Union does not equate to Europe, which can be translated as meaning that it does not “exhaust” the concept of Europe. This statement is nothing remarkable; it is simply a factual reality. Not only does the EU not include all European states, but within the current Union there are also numerous forces seeking to reform the model of integration. Such forces have manifested themselves, as could be seen following the European Parliament elections of 1999, as well as those of 2024, both in states from the so-called “peripheral” zone of the EU (Hungary and Poland, which are leaders of the so-called Visegrád Group), and in major EU states such as Italy and France, and – to a lesser but still significant extent – in Germany. Europe and the EU are clearly going through a less-than-favorable period. For this reason, it is worthwhile to briefly review several geopolitical elements in order to identify possible future directions of development for the continent, as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

2. GEOPOLITICAL UNITY OR INTERNAL ECONOMIC DISSENSIONS?

A united Europe is a romantic dream dating back to the 19th century and even earlier, but it was only during the interwar period that the process of unification had both a plan and an actor who assumed it. That actor was Germany, and the definition

of a German Europe at the time limited its sphere of action to Western and Central Europe, up to the boundary of the Russian Orthodox space⁵⁰. In the terms of a geopolitical thinker such as Jordis von Lohausen, this was the so-called *Fränkisch Europa* (Frankish Europe), which we also find today in the famous “Franco-German couple”, to which was added – for obvious reasons – an eastern periphery supplying raw materials⁵¹. This “small” Europe, lacking geopolitical substance and strategic vitality, stands in contrast to the so-called *Eurasian Europe: a Very Great Europe* stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, envisioned by visionary geopoliticians such as Lohausen, Jean Thiriart, or even the highly atypical German national-bolshevik figure Ernst Niekisch⁵².

The Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok inherently contains the development of a geopolitical concept advanced as early as the beginning of the 20th century by French strategists, as a response to the rising power of the United States: the famous (though still relatively under-discussed) “Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis”, conceived by the French – sensitive to the geopolitical advance of the Anglo-Saxon world – as a counterweight to the United States and its counterpart, England⁵³.

Today, the so-called Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, although it sometimes manifests itself potentially, remains more intuited than realized, and most geopolitical analyses tend to ignore it. However, here is a case in which it is nevertheless invoked today, in the context of the Gulf war between the United States-Israel and Iran:

“Ukraine and Israel are two frontier states located in the Rimland, if we refer to Anglo-American geopolitical doctrines. This space can be divided into a European Rimland, in order to prevent an understanding on a European scale along the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, and a Near Eastern Rimland, in order to prevent an understanding along

⁵⁰ The reader may consult the well-known speech by the Reich Minister of Economics, Walther Funk, concerning the model for the reorganization of the European economy envisioned by the Nazi elite of the time. The speech dates from July 25, 1940. Unfortunately, the translation suffers in terms of clarity of ideas: http://www.eufacts.org/ro/roots/06_economic_reorganization_europe.html?fclid=IwAR3ovNSw6lc2EfaDcyFDNU3xe0w12_Ww8bm-fmTLaFH8-WcvCXc7TMxrKw.

⁵¹ Today, a leading Romanian commentator and specialist, Adrian Severin, refers to this Franco-German pair and its Europe as the “Rhenish Europe”, see Adrian Severin, *România și interesul național românesc în contextul dezordinii mondiale actuale. Proiect geo-politic [Romania and the Romanian National Interest in the Context of the Current Global Disorder. A Geopolitical Project]*, Bucharest, Oscar Print Publishing House, 2025, p. 254.

⁵² See Jean Thiriart, “Interview with Jean Thiriart, Part 1”, in *Counter Currents*, September 26, 2010, Available at: <https://www.counter-currents.com/2010/09/interview-with-jean-thiriart-1/>, Accessed on February 21, 2026.

⁵³ “In 1903, two colonels from the French intelligence services drafted a report on the growing power of the United States of America. They concluded that it possessed great industrial, agricultural, and commercial strength and that it would dominate the world in the years to come. The only way to oppose an American hegemony (according to the authors of this report) was to establish an integrated alliance comprising France, Germany, and Russia (therefore, a Europe stretching from Brest to Vladivostok...)”, in Herve Le Bideau, „Înapoi la visul spulberat al lui Nicolae al II-lea” [“Back to Nicholas II’s shattered dream”], in *Estica*, July 13, 2017, Available at: <https://www.estica.ro/article/inapoi-lavisulspulberat-al-lui-nicolae-al-ii-lea/>, Accessed on February 21, 2026.

the Iran-Russia and Iran-China axes. Iran occupies a strategic position in Western Asia, serving as a link between the Near East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Iran has access to the Caspian Sea to the north and to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to the south, extensions of the Indian Ocean. According to United States geopolitical strategy, control over Iran would allow the expansion of the Near Eastern Rimland into Asia and the weakening of the Shiite world⁵⁴.

But the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis has an interesting complement – and a competitor – in the Moscow-Beijing axis, which appears to be steering current events in the geopolitical space of the so-called Heartland, a region that seems more contested than ever today.

Here is an analysis that highlights the competition between Beijing's geopolitical plans (supported by Moscow) in the Heartland area (through the well-known Belt and Road Initiative) and Washington's alternative plans, which are far more limited in scope:

“The week of February 4–10, 2026, crystallized, in just a few days, a transformation that had already been underway. On the one hand, Tokayev and Sharif signed agreements in Islamabad for the Trans-Afghan corridor, integrating it into the BRICS network. On the other hand, Vance signed a strategic partnership in Baku and launched TRIPP as the Western node of the Middle Corridor.

The two architectures are not symmetrical. TRIPP is a targeted project, politically sophisticated, which links the region to American commercial interests. The BRICS network is a distributed system, broader and more complex, aimed at building a trade infrastructure independent of the West.

For Europe, the message is twofold and concerning. Washington shows that it still knows how to exercise its influence through economics and infrastructure, but it does so for its own interests, building routes that serve American energy diversification and access to critical minerals in Central Asia – priorities that do not necessarily align with European ones. BRICS, on the other hand, is building a world in which goods, energy, and capital can circulate without passing through Western financial and logistical infrastructures.

⁵⁴ “L’Ukraine et Israël sont deux États-fronts situés dans le Rimland si l’on se réfère aux doctrines géopolitiques anglo-américaines. On peut décomposer cet espace en un Rimland européen afin de torpiller une entente à l’échelle européenne sur l’axe Paris-Berlin-Moscou et un Rimland proche-oriental afin de torpiller une entente sur les axes Iran-Russie et Iran-Chine. L’Iran a une position stratégique situé en Asie occidentale et charnière entre le Proche-Orient, l’Asie centrale et l’Asie du Sud. L’Iran a accès à la mer Caspienne au nord et au golfe Persique et à la mer d’Oman au sud, extensions de l’Océan Indien. Selon la stratégie géopolitique des États-Unis, le contrôle de l’Iran permettrait d’élargir le Rimland proche-oriental vers l’Asie et affaiblir le monde Chiïte.”, in Pierre-Emmanuel Thomann, “Guerre Américano-israélienne contre l’Iran et le Monde Multipolaire: la Question américaine” [“The US-Israeli War against Iran and the Multipolar World: The American Question”], in *Eurocontinent*, March 8, 2026, Available at: <https://www.eurocontinent.eu/guerre-americano-israelienne-contre-liran-et-le-monde-multipolaire-la-questionamericaine/>, Accessed on March 10, 2026. We will note that most of the analyses on the platform cited above align themselves with this geopolitical interpretation of the need to oppose American hegemony in the world and in Europe through a Euro-Russian axis.

An old geopolitical saying held that ‘whoever controls the seas controls trade’. In the 21st century, the updated version is whoever controls the corridors – rail, energy, digital – controls global value chains. And in this game, the Caucasus and Central Asia are no longer peripheral: they are the center⁵⁵.

The game in the “heart” of the Heartland, now centered on the war in Iran, is a struggle for supremacy in Eurasia. Clearly, the European Union will have to consider the outcome of the dispute between Washington and the Moscow-Beijing axis in order to position itself, in turn, in relation to its broader eastern neighborhood, which we consider to be its appropriate geopolitical counterpart – namely, a BRICS-type synergy.

Thus, a “united Europe” may emerge either in the limited dimension of the current EU, or with the perspective of opening toward the Eurasian Heartland – considered by English and American theorists to be the geopolitical quintessence of the world⁵⁶ – for a possible interpenetration with China’s vast accumulation of economic and civilizational power, which could enhance Eurasian synergy.

As for ourselves, we have already ventured to suggest that, following NATO’s unacknowledged – yet not denied – failure in Ukraine, the United States may also face a defeat on the Middle Eastern front in the current conflict with Iran⁵⁷. The U.S.-Israel

⁵⁵ „Săptămâna 4–10 februarie 2026 a cristalizat în câteva zile o transformare care era în curs de ani de zile. Pe de o parte, Tokaev și Sharif semnează la Islamabad acordurile pentru coridorul transafgan, integrându-l în rețeaua BRICS. Pe de altă parte, Vance semnează la Baku parteneriatul strategic și lansează TRIPP ca nod occidental al Middle Corridor.

Cele două arhitecturi nu sunt simetrice. TRIPP este un proiect punctual, sofisticat politic, care leagă regiunea de interesele comerciale americane. Rețeaua BRICS este un sistem distribuit, mai vast și mai complex, care urmărește construirea unei infrastructuri comerciale globale independente de Occident.

Pentru Europa, mesajul este dublu și îngrijorător. Washington arată că mai știe să își exercite influența prin economie și infrastructură, dar o face pentru propriile interese, construind rute care servesc diversificarea energetică americană și accesul la mineralele critice din Asia Centrală, ceea ce nu corespunde neapărat priorităților europene. BRICS, în schimb, construiește o lume în care mărfurile, energia și capitalurile pot circula fără să treacă prin infrastructurile financiare și logistice occidentale.

Vechea zicală geopolitică spunea că «cine controlează mările controlează comerțul». În secolul XXI, versiunea actualizată este: cine controlează coridoarele – feroviare, energetice, digitale – controlează lanțurile valorice globale. Și în acest joc, Caucazul și Asia Centrală nu mai sunt periferie: ele sunt centrul.”, in Margherita Furlan, „Războiul coridoarelor: din Caucaz până în Asia Centrală, Washingtonul și BRICS își dispută rutele viitorului” [“The Battle for Corridors: From the Caucasus to Central Asia, Washington and the BRICS Nations Vie for Control of Future Routes”], in *Estica*, March 17, 2026, Available at: <https://www.estica.ro/article/razboiulcoridoarelordincaucazpanainasiacentrala-washingtonul-si-brics-isi-disputa-rutele-viitorului/>, Accessed on March 18, 2026.

⁵⁶ The best-known geopoliticians of the Heartland are the Englishman Halford John Mackinder, with his 1904 work *The Geographical Pivot of History*, then the American Halford Mackinder with *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919), and, more recently, the influential American strategist of Polish origin, Zbigniew Brzezinski, with *The Grand Chessboard*, whose original edition dates from 1997.

⁵⁷ Cristi Pantelimon, “Le précédent iranien. L’échec des États-Unis en Ukraine signifie également la perte du Moyen-Orient” [“The Iranian precedent. The U.S. failure in Ukraine also means the loss of the Middle East”], in *Forum des résistants européens Euro-Synergies*, March 11, 2026, Available at: <http://eurosnergies.hautetfort.com/archive/2026/03/11/le-precedent-iranien-l-echec-des-etats-unis-enukrainesignifieegalement-l.html>, Accessed on March 12, 2026.

conflict with Iran, the latest in the series following the reannexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 (the first step in Russia's Eurasian reconquest, increasingly supported today by China), is no less a conflict between the United States and the Moscow-Beijing axis and, we dare say, an undeclared one with the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis (the two axes thus share a common point: Moscow). This is evident *прежде всего* from the clear support that Moscow and Beijing provide to Tehran, something that has not escaped analysts:

“Strikes on Iranian infrastructure, particularly the port of Bandar Abbas, threaten to collapse the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), on which Russia and China rely to bypass maritime routes controlled by the West.

Moscow and Beijing have moved from being diplomatic allies to becoming ‘technological anchors’, supplying Iran with advanced S-400 air defense systems, Su-35 fighter jets, and the BeiDou-3 navigation system to counter Western stealth and jamming capabilities.

If Russia and China fail to move beyond technology transfers toward active deterrence, they risk a ‘credibility deficit’ that could signal the failure of the multipolar world order and deter potential partners from the Global South (...)

By providing the ‘connective tissue’ of Iran's defense – particularly high-resolution imagery and jam-resistant targeting systems – these allies (Russia and China – author's note) have ensured that Iran does not fight in isolation. Ultimately, the survival of Iran's revolutionary government is tied to the viability of the INSTC corridor and the energy corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative. The true measure of this conflict is whether this discreet infusion of strategic technology can preserve the vital bridgehead of Russia and China against Western military pressure.

However, in the high-stakes world of geopolitics, perception is often as powerful as military force. If Moscow and Beijing allow a key node such as Tehran to be dismantled without a visible escalation of support, they risk a ‘credibility deficit’ that could alienate other potential partners from the Global South.

There is a critical inflection point at which technological anchoring is no longer sufficient. For the Kremlin and the leadership in Zhongnanhai, the conflict has reached a stage where passive support risks being interpreted as strategic paralysis. If the Western-led coalition succeeds in degrading Iran's essential infrastructure despite these technological injections, the narrative of a ‘multipolar alternative’ collapses.

No regional power will opt for a security architecture that fails at its first major test. If Russia and China do not move beyond the role of suppliers toward more assertive forms of deterrence – whether through offensive electronic warfare deployments or explicit naval demonstrations – they risk being perceived as unreliable guarantors.

Although U.S.-China dynamics are currently strained by tariff wars and disruptions in raw-material supply chains, and Russia remains focused on the Ukrainian theater, none of them can afford the سقوط of Tehran. A collapse of Iran would represent a definitive checkmate against the Eurasian land bridge.

Consequently, we are approaching a ‘minimum credibility threshold’. To maintain their status as viable counterweights to the West, Moscow and Beijing must ultimately reduce the gap between supporting Iranian resistance and actively protecting it. By failing to take this ‘extra step’, they would not only cede the Middle East to Western hegemony but also signal to the rest of the world that the Russo-Chinese security umbrella is purely transactional and lacks the firmness required for direct confrontation.

The strikes of 2026 against Iran mark more than a simple regional escalation; they threaten the very architecture of a multipolar Eurasia.

Although some analysts interpret the lack of direct military intervention by Russia or China as abandonment, this interpretation overlooks a deeper strategic reality. Moscow and Beijing have moved from the status of diplomatic partners to that of ‘technological anchors’. However, the conflict has reached a point where continued passive support risks being interpreted as strategic paralysis.

Therefore, Moscow and Beijing must move beyond mere risk avoidance and carefully calibrate the next phase of escalation in order to prevent the total collapse of their regional credibility”⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ „Loviturile asupra infrastructurii iraniene, în special asupra portului Bandar Abbas, amenință să ducă la colapsul Coridorului Internațional de Transport Nord-Sud (INSTC) și al Inițiativei Belt and Road (BRI), pe care Rusia și China se bazează pentru a ocoli rutele maritime controlate de Occident.

Moscova și Beijingul au trecut de la statutul de aliați diplomatici la cel de «ancore tehnologice», furnizând Iranului sisteme avansate de apărare antiaeriană S-400, avioane de vânătoare Su-35 și sistemul de navigație BeiDou-3, pentru a contracara capacitățile occidentale de stealth și bruiaj.

Dacă Rusia și China nu reușesc să treacă dincolo de transferurile de tehnologie către o descurajare activă, riscă un «deficit de credibilitate» care ar putea semnala eșecul ordinii mondiale multipolare și ar putea îndepărta potențiali parteneri din Sudul Global (...)

Prin furnizarea «țesutului conjunctiv» al apărării Iranului – în special imagini de înaltă rezoluție și sisteme de țintire rezistente la bruiaj – acești aliați (Rusia și China – n. C. P.) s-au asigurat că Iranul nu luptă în izolare. În ultimă instanță, supraviețuirea guvernului revoluționar iranian este legată de viabilitatea coridorului INSTC și a coridoarelor energetice ale Inițiativei Belt and Road. Adevărata măsură a acestui conflict este dacă această infuzie discretă de tehnologie strategică poate păstra capul de pod vital al Rusiei și Chinei împotriva presiunii militare occidentale.

Totuși, în lumea geopolitică cu mize ridicate, percepția este adesea la fel de puternică precum forța militară. Dacă Moscova și Beijingul permit ca un nod-cheie precum Teheranul să fie dezmembrat fără o escaladare vizibilă a sprijinului, riscă un «deficit de credibilitate» care ar putea îndepărta alți potențiali parteneri din Sudul Global.

Există un punct critic de inflexiune în care ancorarea tehnologică nu mai este suficientă. Pentru Kremlin și pentru conducerea de la Zhongnanhai, conflictul a ajuns într-o fază în care sprijinul pasiv riscă să fie interpretat drept paralizie strategică. Dacă coaliția condusă de Occident reușește să degradeze infrastructura esențială a Iranului în ciuda acestor injecții tehnologice, narațiunea unei «alternative multipolare» se prăbușește.

Nicio putere regională nu va opta pentru o arhitectură de securitate care eșuează la primul său test major. Dacă Rusia și China nu trec dincolo de rolul de furnizor către forme mai ferme de descurajare – fie prin desfășurări ofensive de război electronic, fie prin demonstrații navale explicite – riscă să fie percepute ca garanți nesiguri.

Deși dinamica dintre SUA și China este în prezent tensionată de războaie tarifare și blocaje în lanțurile de aprovizionare cu materii prime, iar Rusia rămâne concentrată pe teatrul ucrainean, niciuna dintre ele nu își poate permite căderea Teheranului. Un colaps al Iranului ar reprezenta un șah-mat definitiv împotriva podului terestru eurasiatic.

For the time being, the EU appears to be little more than a set of promises in economic terms, under the scepter of a bureaucracy that does not seem prepared to face the major geopolitical challenges ahead.

However, we should be fair and acknowledge that the EU does, from time to time, display certain “geopolitical flashes”, which are quickly dissipated in struggles for supremacy within the supranational Brussels bureaucracy. Among these flashes we may mention the idea of a common European army – an idea firmly opposed by the United States, as it would clearly lead to a divergence in the geopolitical destinies of Europeans and Americans – or the idea of opening relations with Russia, which France and Germany have, in fact, pursued. The recent example of the Nord Stream gas pipeline is more than telling. Beyond these elements, however, the European continent remains divided – not only by the hegemonic powers that ought to work toward its unity, but also for reasons related to Europe’s internal structure, including the Russian world or the space of the former USSR, as a result of the recent history of the postwar period.

The current European Union is, in essence, the product of the defeat of that *Fränkisch Europa* (French Europe) following the “unnatural” American–Russian cohabitation during the Second World War. This cohabitation led to the emergence of the Iron Curtain, the division of Europe, and, even more gravely, the alienation of the peoples of Southeastern Europe from Moscow.

After Hitler’s adventure of a purely German, anti-Russian Europe ended with the defeat of the Third Reich, Europe was traversed by two entirely different currents of opinion and will. While the Westerners, dominated by American influence, looked toward Moscow as a possible ally for a future unified Europe – in the manner of de Gaulle, who would have gladly replaced American tutelage with a Moscow friendship, in the sense of the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis—the Easterners, disturbed by the geopolitical pressure of the USSR, simply wished to throw themselves into the arms of an American-Western European mirage, painted in the vivid colors of prosperity and perfect democracy. Even today, this mirage has not exhausted its

În consecință, ne apropiem de un «prag minim de credibilitate». Pentru a-și menține statutul de contraponderi viabile la Occident, Moscova și Beijingul trebuie, în cele din urmă, să reducă diferența dintre sprijinirea rezistenței iraniene și protejarea ei activă. Nefăcând acest «pas suplimentar», ele nu doar că ar ceda Orientul Mijlociu hegemoniei occidentale, dar ar transmite restului lumii că umbrela de securitate ruso-chineză este pur tranzacțională și lipsită de fermitatea necesară unei confruntări directe.

Loviturile din 2026 asupra Iranului marchează mai mult decât o simplă escaladare regională; ele amenință arhitectura fundamentală a unei Eurasii multipolare.

Deși unii analiști interpretează lipsa unei intervenții militare directe din partea Rusiei sau Chinei drept abandon, această interpretare ignoră o realitate strategică mai profundă. Moscova și Beijingul au trecut de la statutul de parteneri diplomați la cel de «ancore tehnologice». Totuși, conflictul a ajuns într-un moment critic în care sprijinul pasiv continuu riscă să fie interpretat drept paralizie strategică.

Prin urmare, Moscova și Beijingul trebuie să depășească simpla evitare a riscurilor și să își calibreze cu rigurozitate următoarea fază de escaladare pentru a evita prăbușirea totală a credibilității lor regionale”, in Silvia Boltuc, „Cum susține tehnologia rusă și chineză profunzimea strategică a Iranului” [“How Russian and Chinese Technology Supports Iran’s Strategic Depth”], in *Estica*, March 6, 2026, Available at: <https://www.estica.ro/article/cumsustinetehnologiarusasicinezaprofunzimea-strategica-a-iranului/>, Accessed on March 12, 2026.

appeal, three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but tensions within the NATO alliance, visible in recent years, have now taken on dramatic dimensions. Just these days, the American president is accusing European NATO allies (including the United Kingdom...) of betrayal, due to their passivity in participating in the U.S. war effort in the Gulf⁵⁹.

Perceiving, even before the changes of 1989, this deadlock in Europe – indeed, this apparently inexorable fate of disunity – the geopolitician Jean Thiriart asserted that a Fourth Reich was no longer possible, instead announcing the eventual emergence of a united Europe, a combination of Western Europe and the USSR. Thiriart, whose entirely unorthodox thinking – unbound by conventional labels – could shock, was also a critic of the idea of a confederal Europe, in which each state would retain its sovereignty, in the manner envisioned by Charles de Gaulle. Yet de Gaulle, despite his merits, is an ancestor of today's unified Franco-German duo, rather hostile to the Eastern periphery (de Gaulle famously said that Europe means France and Germany, and the rest of the states are “vegetables” – this mindset contributed to the disastrous fate of Hitler's European adventure; it also led Haushofer, otherwise a great geopolitician, to regard Italy as a second-rate country, incapable of comparison with the northern states – a source, one might say, of Salvinian revolt at the EU level, etc., etc.).

If the powerful Western states sometimes view Eastern or Southern Europe critically, and Russia with considerable indulgence – inviting it, naturally, to be a partner in the process of emancipation from American tutelage – the states that were themselves under Moscow's tutelage are far more hesitant about this project, feeling somewhat threatened (a sentiment, it must be said, stoked from the American side!) by Russia's return to the European or global geopolitical game.

Thus, a united Europe – or what we might call the “Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis” – must contend with the anti-Russian sentiments of Eastern Europe and with the challenge of balancing and redistributing the EU's shared economic resources. In a Europe economically dominated either by Germany and its zone of influence, or by France and Germany together⁶⁰, it is difficult to claim the full consensus of those who do not share equally in the benefits of the European common project.

⁵⁹ Agerpres Editorial Staff, „Donald Trump: NATO, «un tigru de hârtie fără SUA»; aliații din NATO, «lași»” [“Donald Trump: NATO, ‘a paper tiger without the U.S.’; NATO allies, ‘cowards’”], in *Agerpres*, March 20, 2026, Available at: <https://agerpres.ro/politicextern/2026/03/20/donald-trump-nato-un-tigru-de-hartie-fara-sua-aliatii-din-nato-lasi--1539621>, Accessed on March 20, 2026.

⁶⁰ It should be noted, in passing, that not all commentators agree on the solidity of the so-called “Franco-German couple”. Recently, the French philosopher Alain de Benoist questioned this geopolitical alliance, subtly accusing Germany of flirting with the U.S. It is worth mentioning that Alain de Benoist advocates for a special relationship between Europe – and particularly France – and Russia, and he criticizes American “imperialism” and the excessive geopolitical influence of the U.S. in Europe: Alain de Benoist, “Le ‘couple franco-allemand’ est un mythe!” [“The ‘Franco-German partnership’ is a myth!”], in *Bvoltaire*, June 13, 2019, Available at: <https://www.bvoltaire.fr/alain-de-benoist-le-couple-franco-allemand-est-un-mythe/>, Accessed on February 20, 2026.

The problem is historical in nature. In the interwar period, taking Romania as a case in point, the process of “accepting” German domination of Europe went through dramatic phases. Romania suffered from the economic “exploitation” of the German center relative to the resource-supplying Eastern periphery. The great Romanian economist Mihail Manoilescu built his entire economic theory on highlighting the necessity of relatively eliminating the economic potential differences between center and periphery through political will, so that the periphery could withstand the center. Although a convinced supporter of a united Europe (Manoilescu was friends with Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, whose ideas he believed in), the Romanian economist wrote at the time, in response to German promises that the periphery would not be neglected by Europe’s German industrial center:

“Nor can we deny that such a plan is possible and achievable. But is it enough to simply draw up plans in order to change the world? We, the peasants of the Danube, remain skeptical. Over the centuries, we have learned not to trust even what we see with our own eyes, let alone simple promises”⁶¹.

This issue will soon arise with regard to Russia as well – a country with enormous resources and significant economic potential, but which suffers from low economic efficiency. Recently, an economic agreement between Germany and Russia, apparently unprecedented in scope, called the “Agreement on Deepened Economic Cooperation”, was signed on June 7 during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, signaling a new period of openness in German–Russian relations. But will Russia not feel “colonized” by the penetration power of German capital, such that this agreement – heralded as a major victory and a sign of cooperation between the two countries – could eventually become an apple of discord between Western technology and Eastern resources? The European Union will have to pass this test as well as many others that we will not have time to explore here.

Turning again to the most pressing current reality after 2022, when American sanctions on Russia forced Europe to seek alternative sources of oil and gas outside of Russia, today, after a period in which the U.S. increased its sales of liquefied gas to the EU, there is a noticeable tendency to return to Europe’s old energy “ally”, Russia. Specialized press reports indicate that the EU purchased everything available in liquefied gas from the Yamal Arctic extraction, with an almost laughable justification:

“February figures tell a harsh story. Every shipment from Yamal went to Europe. Russia had no alternative clients and remained completely dependent on access to EU ports”, said Sebastian Rötters, a sanctions activist at Urgewald. Remarkably,

⁶¹ „Nici noi nu putem contesta că un asemenea plan este posibil și realizabil. Dar este suficient oare să stabilești planuri pentru ca să poți schimba lumea? Noi, țărani de la Dunăre, suntem neîncrezători. În decursul secolelor am învățat că nu trebuie să ne încredem nici măcar în ce vedem cu ochii noștri, cu atât mai puțin să ne încredem în simple promisiuni”, in Mihail Manoilescu, „În chestiunea industrializării țărilor agricole” [“On the issue of the industrialization of agricultural countries”], in „Lumea nouă” [“The New World”], No. 11-12/1938, p. 241.

zero shipments were delivered to China or other Asian markets, compared with four shipments sent to Asia in February 2025”⁶².

3. EUROPE AND “AMERICAN COLONIZATION”

The project of a united Europe suffers from what seems to be a fixed idea, endlessly waved by Western Europe: Europe is colonized by the U.S., Europe is vassalized by the U.S., etc. The critical register against America, of course, conceals definite European interests – again, within what we have called the “Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis” (to which Rome can be added, depending on context, also interested in good relations with Moscow) – but it is also a real mindset, rooted in the period at the end of the Second World War.

American intervention in Europe at the end of the last war was not perceived in Western Europe in the same way as it was in the East. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Anglo-American landing in Normandy on June 6, 1944, a French website specializing in geopolitical analyses wrote bluntly: “D-Day, June 6, 1944: The American Empire Invades France”⁶³. The article, citing numerous significant historical references, describes how the American army bombed Norman towns without reason, causing approximately 20,000 civilian casualties; how American soldiers raped young French women; and how the Americans supposedly preferred to coexist with the Vichy regime – which had been sufficiently submissive to Hitler – rather than work with the far more patriotic de Gaulle. In other words, the image presented was entirely inverted from the naive historiographical narrative of France’s “liberation”.

This article is nothing more than a continuation of a mindset – an anti-Americanism that began with D-Day and persists today, in both scholarly and journalistic expressions.

From this perspective, a French author like Hervé Juvin represents the typically French reaction to what we have called the “colonization” of Europe by the U.S. In a series of works dedicated to the economic and geopolitical relations between Europe (with a focus on France) and the United States, Juvin – an economist by training, but also a politician engaged in the Gaullist-style patriotism of the Le Pen sphere – argues that, despite predictions suggesting an inevitable acceleration of American decline in recent times, in reality the U.S. still knows very well how to defend its global interests and maintain Europe under its tutelage. Naturally, such tutelage must disappear in

⁶² Malte Humpert, “EU Buys 100% of Russian Arctic LNG Just 9 Months Before Planned Gas Ban”, in *G Captain Daily*, March 9, 2026, Available at: https://gcaptain.com/eubuy100ofrussianarcticlngjust9monthsbeforeplannedgasban/?fbclid=IwY2xjawQs39JleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzIxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeIH9k0PANZhCRh4ppQdOdKw50EQf8aYoKTBxbHWkWnflgOSTM7TLC5PRsg28_aem_840DPZpOJilrJL72BswGUg, Accessed on March 9, 2026.

⁶³ Egalité et Réconciliation Editorial Staff, “D-Day, 6 juin 1944: l’Empire américain envahit la France” [“D-Day, June 6, 1944: The United States invades France”], in *Egalité et Réconciliation*, June 6, 2022, Available at: <https://www.egaliteetreconciliation.fr/DDay6juin1944lEmpireamericain-envahit-la-France-55014.html>, Accessed on March 5, 2026.

Juvin's view, where he aligns himself as a continuator of Charles de Gaulle. His tone is more than categorical: either the European Union becomes an independent geopolitical actor, casting off American tutelage and thus ensuring a balance of power among the world's major centers of strength (the U.S., China, Russia as a military actor), or it must be abandoned, because it fails to fulfill its mission:

“The hyperpower of America has not yet been ended. It remains our essential adversary, in the sense Mao Zedong gave to these words: the one who threatens the foundations of our existence. If Europe is not the means through which a balance of powers can be realized, if it is not the instrument to free us from a Westernism leading to a Third World War, according to the detestable neoconservative scheme ‘us against all’, France must exit a Union that destroys it and follow, alongside others, the path of resistance”⁶⁴.

Although he sometimes tempers his critique of American superpower, Juvin does not hesitate to highlight the failings of the current European Union: its geopolitical impotence; its excessive focus on human rights rhetoric and disintegrating individualism; its mimetic copying of the free-market mystique of Anglo-American origin; and its inability to effectively counter what he calls the “extraterritoriality of American law” – that is, the American tendency to extend U.S. jurisdiction over all economic (and geopolitical) processes within the dollar's sphere of influence, which gravely harms other geopolitical actors. A relatively recent example is the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear agreement with Iran, which forced the EU to invent a sophisticated mechanism to circumvent American sanctions on that country. Reports of major European companies leaving the Iranian market under the threat of U.S. sanctions demonstrate the high stakes reached in the economic struggle among “Western partners”.

Hervé Juvin is a lucid thinker. He proposes a European construction defined within Europe itself, in an equal partnership with other geopolitical powers (without neglecting Russia), rather than in an obedient, submissive, or timid manner. He advocates, somewhat in a Third Worldist key, for liberation from the tutelage of the American global empire, for resistance, and for intellectual “arming” and struggle. But an interesting and important point: elected as a Member of the European Parliament in the last European elections on Marine Le Pen's party list, when speaking about Europe, Juvin places France first. In every European stance he takes, the French “national preference” is evident – natural, patriotic.

Somewhat in the same spirit and from similar positions, another French author, Ivan Blot, writes. The title of his book signals nothing cheerful: “*Europe Colonized*”.

⁶⁴ „Încă nu s-a pus capăt hiperputerii americane. Ea rămâne adversarul nostru esențial, în sensul în care Mao Zedong îl dădea acestor cuvinte: cel ce amenință fundamentele ființei noastre. Dacă Europa nu este mijlocul prin care să se realizeze un echilibru al puterilor, dacă nu este mijlocul de a ne elibera de un occidentalism care conduce la un al treilea război mondial, după detestabila schemă a neoconservatorilor, «noi împotriva tuturor», Franța trebuie să iasă dintr-o Uniune care o distruge și să urmeze, alături de ceilalți, altfel, calea rezistenței”, in Hervé Juvin, *Zidul de Vest nu a căzut [The Berlin Wall did not fall]*, Chișinău, Popular University Publishing House, 2017, p. 52.

This time, the author's preference for a strategic relationship with Russia becomes clearer, framed through the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, which he states categorically:

“The Europe-Russia couple, with a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, is in fact highly complementary in energy and economic terms (...) The interests of this couple are increasingly diverging from American interests, and the latter are suffering the consequences (...) Economically, Europe and Russia are highly complementary, whereas the United States and Europe are competitors (...)

From an economic perspective, there are two major blocs: the European Union and the more recent Eurasian Union. Politically, there is no longer a total opposition between East and West, although American diplomacy sometimes artificially tries to reignite the Cold War”⁶⁵.

In the same work, Blot, a former MEP, describes the comedy of European parliamentarism: how “voting” takes place in the European Parliament, how the European Commission “makes and unmakes” all the games at the EU level, etc. It is an insider critique of the disastrous bureaucratism that suffocates the European body. The solution? Again, geopolitical in nature, but this time with a broader perspective, which Jean Thiriart would have applauded:

“(…) the Eurasianist axis is the axis of future growth: our most promising partners remain China and Russia, even India. This is why we should think of a ‘Great Europe’ of economic growth from Brest to Vladivostok, rather than today’s limited Europe, struggling for breath. Great Europe will respect national sovereignties. Russia’s presence will serve as a guarantee against any attempt at bureaucratic federalism and will rebalance Anglo-Saxon hegemony”⁶⁶.

4. HOW CHINA SEES EUROPE: EURASIA FROM EAST TO WEST AND BACK

Equally interesting is China's perspective on Europe. Although much more discreet in its expression, China sees the EU as a kind of natural extension of its geopolitical style, based on the ideas of multipolarity and peaceful cooperation.

⁶⁵ „Cuplul Europa-Rusia, cu o axă Paris-Berlin-Moscova, este de fapt foarte complementar în plan energetic și economic (...) Interesele acestui cuplu se îndepărtează din ce în ce mai mult de interesele americane, iar acestea din urmă suferă consecințele (...) Din punct de vedere economic, Europa și Rusia sunt foarte complementare, în timp ce Statele Unite și Europa sunt concurente (...)

Din punct de vedere economic, există două mari ansambluri, Uniunea Europeană și Uniunea Eurasiatică, mai recentă. Din punct de vedere politic, nu mai există o opoziție totală între Est și Vest, cu toate că diplomația americană încearcă artificial să reaprindă uneori războiul rece”, in Ivan Blot, *Europa colonizată [Colonized Europe]*, Chișinău, Popular University Publishing House, 2018, pp. 189-190.

⁶⁶ „(...) axa eurasiastică este cea a creșterii viitoare: partenerii noștri cei mai promițători rămân China și Rusia, chiar și India. Iată de ce ar trebui să ne gândim la o «Mare Europă» a creșterii economice de la Brest până la Vladivostok și nu la Europa limitată și cu răsufarea tăiată de astăzi. Această Mare Europă va respecta suveranitățile naționale. Prezența Rusiei va fi o garanție împotriva oricărei tentative de federalism birocrat și va reechilibra hegemonia anglo-saxonă”, in *Ibidem*, p. 48.

Recently, after January 2026, when the guidelines of Donald Trump's second term became clearer, relations between the EU and China experienced a noticeable push toward improvement⁶⁷. Even in Romania, this wave of rapprochement with the major Asian power was felt⁶⁸.

Even more intriguing are theoretical efforts to find in China a resonance of European sovereignty – the foundation of strategic autonomy, cultivated especially by France but not rejected by Germany – through a kind of Confucianist Gaullism:

“De Gaulle offered France everything Pétain claimed to offer – pride, sovereignty, national identity, the end of humiliation – but without collaboration, without racial laws, without deportations, without abandoning the soul. One path led to the shame that haunts France to this day, the other to liberation and renewal. Gaullism did not merely theorize a distinction from fascism – it defeated it on the ground when it mattered. If Europe needs proof that patriotism can be reclaimed from the hands of demons, the proof exists. It is not hypothetical. Gaullism already exists.

This is one of the great advantages of Gaullism: it is not a theoretical construct. It actually governed France for decades, has institutional memory, concrete historical achievements, texts and speeches that articulate its vision. It proved that it could work. And Gaullism does not wait to be revived – its central themes are alive and remain extraordinarily successful and relevant.

Many in the West today wonder whether they should emulate the ‘Chinese model’. But here is the immense irony: today’s China resembles De Gaulle’s France far more than current France resembles itself. The Chinese understood what works; Europe gave up.

Think about it: what is the ‘Chinese model’, really?

Obsession with sovereignty: checked!

A strong state that directs strategic industries, builds infrastructure, and creates national champions instead of letting the ‘market’ drain productive capacity: checked!

Long-term planning horizons, not quarterly capitalism: checked!

Formation of a meritocratic elite through rigorous examination systems (Gaokao and Party School in China; the grandes écoles and ENA under De Gaulle): checked!

Civilizational confidence without apology: checked!

The conviction that a people is real, has a character shaped over centuries, and deserves preservation: checked!

Non-negotiable strategic autonomy – the absolute refusal to outsource security or become dependent on a foreign power for anything existential: checked!

Checked, checked, checked, checked, checked, checked, checked!

Is it any wonder that the Chinese have boundless admiration for De Gaulle?

⁶⁷ China Briefing Editorial Staff, “EU-China Relations After the 2024 European Elections: A Timeline”, in *China Briefing*, April 20, 2026, Available at: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/eu-china-relations-after-the-2024-european-elections-a-timeline/>, Accessed on April 25, 2026.

⁶⁸ Romanian Cri Editorial Staff, „Ministrul Florin Barbu: România are o relație specială cu Republica Populară Chineză” [“Minister Florin Barbu: Romania has a special relationship with the People’s Republic of China”], in *Romanian Cri*, March 20, 2026, Available at: <https://romanian.cri.cn/2026/03/20/ARTI1774006904393951>, Accessed on March 22, 2026.

When De Gaulle died in November 1970, a day of mourning was declared across China – right in the midst of the Cultural Revolution! – something that had never happened for a Western leader and has never happened since. Mao himself personally expressed his condolences in a telegram to Madame De Gaulle, the only known written communication in which Mao expressed his unreserved admiration for a Western leader.

Guo Moruo – a famous Chinese author and at that time Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress – said after De Gaulle’s death, at a reception at the French embassy:

‘General De Gaulle is no more. But only his body is dead. His spirit remains alive. For the ideas he defended and embodied cannot die. I raise my glass to the immortality of General De Gaulle’s spirit!’

Truly extraordinary words from a high-ranking Chinese Communist official about a ‘capitalist’ Western leader, especially during Mao’s era.

To this day, the Chinese ambassador to France regularly lays flowers at De Gaulle’s tomb in the small rural village of Colombey-les-Deux-Églises, in the Haute-Marne department. When China wants to honor a relationship, it does not go to the Élysée or Brussels, but to the tomb of the only French leader who treated China as a sovereign nation treats another sovereign nation: with independence, respect, and refusal to seek Washington’s permission. This is what China honors – not sentimentality, but sovereignty. They recognize and admire this quality because they possess it themselves. And without doubt, as they lay flowers on that grave, they ask themselves: what happened to Europe that once produced such men?”⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ „De Gaulle i-a oferit Franței tot ceea ce Pétain pretindea că oferă – mândrie, suveranitate, identitate națională, sfârșitul umilinței – dar fără colaborare, fără legi rasiale, fără deportări, fără abandonarea sufletului. Un drum a dus la rușinea care bântuie Franța până în ziua de azi, celălalt la eliberare și reînnoire. Gaullismul nu s-a limitat la a teoretiza o distincție față de fascism – l-a învins, pe teren, atunci când a contat. Dacă Europa are nevoie de dovada că patriotismul poate fi recuperat din mâinile demonilor, dovada există. Nu este ipotetică.

Gaullismul există deja.

Acesta este unul dintre marile avantaje ale gaullismului: nu este o construcție teoretică, ci a guvernat Franța timp de decenii, are memorie instituțională, realizări istorice concrete, texte și discursuri care îi articulează viziunea. A demonstrat că poate funcționa.

Și gaullismul nu așteaptă să fie reinviat – temele sale centrale sunt vii și încă extraordinar de de succes și relevante.

Mulți din Occident se întrebă astăzi dacă nu ar trebui să emuleze «modelul chinez». Dar iată imensa ironie: China de astăzi seamănă mult mai mult cu Franța lui De Gaulle decât seamănă Franța actuală cu ea însăși. Chinezii au înțeles ce funcționează, Europa a renunțat.

Gândește-te: despre ce este, de fapt, «modelul chinez»?

Obsesia pentru suveranitate: bifat!

Un stat puternic care direcționează industriile strategice, construiește infrastructură și creează campioni naționali, în loc să lase «piața» să golească capacitatea productivă: bifat!

Orizonturi de planificare pe termen lung, nu capitalism trimestrial: bifat!

Formarea unei elite meritocratice prin sisteme riguroase de examinare (Gaokao și Școala de Partid în China, marile școli și ENA la De Gaulle): bifat!

Încredere civilizațională fără scuze: bifat!

Convingerea că un popor este real, are un caracter format de-a lungul secolelor și merită păstrat: bifat!

5. TOO MUCH EU OR TOO MUCH SOVEREIGN STATE? THE KEYS TO EU POWER

We must note that, regarding the EU, there exists a perfectly symmetrical critique – this time from the side of European federalists – who argue that the EU is not too powerful compared to nation-states; on the contrary, it is merely their puppet. This viewpoint is supported, among others, by a well-known commentator for the French liberal newspaper *Libération*, Jean Quatremer. The problem of the European Union, according to Quatremer (longtime correspondent to European institutions for the newspaper), is that it is nothing... but an emanation of the national states.

He points out, for example, that the EU's legislative contribution is not 80%, but only 20% on average, and this share tends to decrease. In conclusion, Quatremer believes (author of a book dedicated to this issue with the provocative title *Les salauds de l'Europe. Guide à l'usage des eurosceptiques* – Calmann-Lévy, 2017, *The Bastards of Europe: A Guide for Eurosceptics*) that the states tend to “throw” failures onto the EU while pocketing the successes for themselves.

The same desire to increase the EU's weight relative to national states, this time with a special ideological arsenal linked to Europe's pre-Christian roots, is found in the “Party of Europeans”, which dreams of nothing less than a single European citizenship, a unitary European state with a strategic reorientation toward Russia, the dissolution of

Autonomie strategică nenegociabilă – refuzul absolut de a externaliza securitatea sau de a deveni dependent de o putere străină pentru orice lucru existențial: bifat!

Bifat, bifat, bifat, bifat, bifat, bifat, bifat!

Este de mirare că chinezii au o admirație fără margini pentru De Gaulle?

Când De Gaulle a murit, în noiembrie 1970, a fost declarată o zi de doliu în întreaga Chină – în plină Revoluție Culturală! – lucru care nu se mai întâmplase niciodată pentru un lider occidental și nu s-a mai întâmplat de atunci. Mao însuși și-a exprimat personal condoleanțele într-o telegramă adresată doamnei De Gaulle, singura comunicare scrisă cunoscută în care Mao și-a exprimat admirația fără rezerve pentru un lider occidental.

Guo Moruo – un autor chinez celebru și, la acea vreme, vicepreședinte al Comitetului Permanent al Congresului Național al Poporului – a spus după moartea lui De Gaulle, în timpul unei recepții la ambasada Franței: «Generalul De Gaulle nu mai este. Dar doar trupul său este mort. Spiritul său rămâne viu. Pentru că ideile pe care le-a apărât și întruchipat nu pot muri. Ridic paharul pentru nemurirea spiritului generalului De Gaulle!». Cuvinte cu adevărat extraordinare pentru un înalt oficial comunist chinez despre un lider occidental «capitalist», cu atât mai mult în epoca lui Mao.

Până în ziua de azi, ambasadorul Chinei în Franța merge în mod regulat să depună flori în mormântul lui De Gaulle din micul sat rural Colombey-les-Deux-Églises, din departamentul Haute-Marne. Atunci când China vrea să celebreze relația, nu merge la Élysée, nici la Bruxelles, ci la mormântul singurului lider francez care a tratat China așa cum o națiune suverană tratează o altă națiune suverană: cu independență, respect și refuzul de a cere permisiunea Washingtonului. Aceasta este ceea ce onorează China – nu sentimentalismul, ci suveranitatea. Ei recunosc și admiră această calitate pentru că o posedă ei înșiși. Și, fără îndoială, se întrebă, în timp ce depun flori pe acel mormânt, ce s-a întâmplat cu Europa care a produs odinioară astfel de oameni”, în Arnaud Bertrand, „Poate gaullismul să devină confucianismul Europei?” [“Could Gaullism become the Confucianism of Europe?”], in *Estica*, January 16, 2026, Available at: <https://www.estica.ro/article/poategaullismulsadevinaconfucianismul-europei/>, Accessed on March 10, 2026.

NATO, the creation of a European army⁷⁰ that would ultimately integrate Russia's army (sic!), the elimination of all unelected European institutions, and respect for European diversity (with special reference to the Eastern European states that fear Russia and display a well-founded Russophobia – the Baltic states in particular). In the vision of the project's proponent, Thomas Ferrier, this would be the "New Athens"⁷¹.

Extremely ambitious projects! In truth, Europe has never lacked visionaries...

And yet! Europe is such a closed "club" that it sometimes sends shivers down the spine and produces a sense of helplessness in those seeking to uncover the secrets of power. One of the seekers of the true keys to current European power, former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, confesses in a book titled *Adults in Conversation: Behind the Secret Corridors of Europe* his experience with the Eurogroup, the EU's famous financial brain. Varoufakis describes how European officials simply lie, how you cannot rely on them, and how decisions made behind the scenes are not reflected at all in the official statements released at the end of meetings. Everything has the aspect of a perfectly opaque conclave, with officials obeying a parallel, silent, and implacable hierarchy. The abstruse nature of major financial decisions at the EU level is difficult to bear. Regarding the Eurogroup, which decides everything financially at the European level, the Greek minister writes:

"European treaties confer no legal status on it, yet this constituted body makes the most important decisions for Europe. Most Europeans, including politicians, do not know exactly what the Eurogroup is or how it functions"⁷².

These realities make the economic and financial influence struggles at the EU's real decision-making centers far more important than the publicly declared "European construction". Under such conditions, what can one expect from a body parasitized by its own financial and economic egotism?

⁷⁰ Plans to create a European army aimed at ensuring Europe's strategic independence are primarily promoted by Paris. Recently, a new initiative in the series of efforts to establish a European defense unit took place: the signing of a framework agreement between France, Germany, and Spain for the development of a European stealth aircraft by 2040: Teodora Ion, „«O zi mare pentru uniunea de apărare europeană». Franța, Germania și Spania au semnat un acord – cadru pentru construirea unui avion «invizibil» european până în 2040” [“A big day for European defense cooperation”. France, Germany, and Spain have signed a framework agreement to build a European ‘stealth’ aircraft by 2040”], in *Calea Europeană*, June 17, 2019, Available at: <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/o-zi-mare-pentru-uniunea-de-aparare-europeana-franta-germania-sispania-au-semnat-un-acord-cadru-pentru-construireaunuiavioninvizibileuropean-pana-i/>, Accessed on January 27, 2026.

⁷¹ The ideas of Thomas Ferrier, who is, moreover, a very knowledgeable observer of the political life in all EU states, can be found here: Thomas Ferrier, “Manifeste pour une vraie renaissance européenne” [“The manifest for a true European renaissance”], March 6, 2019 Available at: <http://thomasferrier.hautetfort.com/archive/2019/03/06/manifestepourunevraierenaissanceeuropeenne-6133866.html>. Accessed on January 27, 2026.

⁷² Yanis Varoufakis, *Conversation entre adultes. Dans les coulisses secrètes de l'Europe [Conversation Among Adults: Behind the Scenes in Europe]*, Éditions *Les liens qui libèrent*, 2017, p. 237, quoted by Georges Feltrin-Tracol, “À quoi bon l'Union européenne?” [“What's the point of the EU?”], Available at: <http://eurosnergies.hautetfort.com/archive/2019/05/28/georges-feltrin-tracol-a-quoi-bon-l-union-europeenne.html>, Accessed on January 27, 2026.

6. ROMANIA'S PLACE IN THE EU, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

As a conclusion, it is important to mention what Romania's current and future place might be in this highly turbulent European Union.

In recent times, Romania has attempted a double game, in line with its limited negotiating capacity, between the EU – ever more detached from the U.S. – and its “strategic” American partner. This strategy was motivated by the at least questionable behavior of major European interest groups (banks, transnational corporations) toward Romania. Discourse on sovereignty, on double economic standards, or on combating the excesses of Western corporations operating in Romania has predominated in recent years, but only until the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Somewhat in the manner of Matteo Salvini's Italy, Romania initially positioned itself along an ad-hoc axis, Washington-Tel Aviv (or at least tried to signal in that direction), in order to gain more bargaining power relative to Brussels. However, the 2019 European Parliament elections showed that Romanians are not yet ready for a fully sovereigntist discourse. Either they do not face the real problems of Italy – suffocated by immigration mainly caused by Berlin and Paris's permissiveness toward those crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe – or they fear the increasingly restless specter of Russia's return to the region. Romania, through its elite, preferred to sit more quietly in the Brussels boat.

Indeed, to continue the comparison with Italy, Salvini himself was criticized at home, with his “sovereignism” toward Brussels interpreted as mere desertion into the American camp: “Sovereignism without sovereignty”, headlined a well-known Italian geopolitics magazine defending the Eurasianist stronghold (and Europeanism) against American thalassocratic power⁷³.

In Romania, initially, no one criticized the older sovereigntist currents (PSD-ALDE) or the newer ones (AUR) for their at least apparent alignment with American, non-European interests. But it is predictable that as Europe asserts itself in the Eastern European periphery – including by drawing Russia into this unprecedented condominium – more critical voices toward American recipes (defense being by far the most sensitive area) will emerge, creating conditions for Romania to “commit” to the new strategic direction⁷⁴.

Currently, the SAFE program – a European-specific military armament initiative – although criticized by the domestic sovereigntist public, appears to be an option Romania is connected to. What a few years ago was hard to imagine is today

⁷³ Daniele Perra, “Soveranismo senza sovrانيتa: il caso salvini” [“Sovereignty without sovereign power: the Salvini case”], in *Eurasia*, June 18, 2019. Available at: <https://www.eurasia-rivista.com/sovrانيتo-senza-sovrانيتa-il-caso-salvini/>, Accessed on January 26, 2026.

⁷⁴ There are signals, so far only in the press, that Romania should not neglect European strategic elements, such as the future stealth aircraft: Cristian Unteanu, „Primul mare proiect în cadrul «autonomiei strategice europene». România are măcar o părere?” [“The first major project under ‘European strategic autonomy’. Does Romania even have an opinion on this?”], in *Adevărul*, June 18, 2019. Available at: https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/primul-mare-proiectcadrulautonomieistrategiceeuropene-romania-macar-parerep-1_5d088736892c0bb0c680cc5c/index.html, Accessed on January 27, 2026.

“heard” as a possible scenario: namely, replacing the American nuclear umbrella in Europe with a French one⁷⁵.

In this article, written – as mentioned – in two stages over six years, we have tried to highlight some elements related to the heavy geopolitical trends of the European and Eurasian continents and their relations with the U.S., while also drawing attention to specific signals of present and future directions, which in turn reveal older trends that have yet to fully manifest. The fog of the 2022 war in Ukraine, and events such as the U.S.-Iran conflict of 2025 and 2026, are dramatic circumstances that obscure a clear view of these trends.

Nonetheless, the author’s intuition (accepting the obvious risk of being contradicted by future events) is that the process of Eurasian unification, once begun, will continue. These lines are merely an introduction and an invitation to observe and follow this process. Clearly, the history being written before our eyes requires more chroniclers to be properly captured. We acknowledge that our limited resources may not have allowed us to be fully convincing – but we hope that our readers have been “alerted” by these pages to seek out on their own, other perspectives on the subject.

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⁷⁵ For more information see: https://www.mapn.ro/programul_safe/index.php, and for the French nuclear umbrella, see, among others: Euronews Editorial Staff, „Ce înseamnă «umbrela nucleară» a Franței și cum ar putea funcționa pentru Europa” [“What is France’s ‘nuclear umbrella’ and how might it work for Europe?”], in *Euronews*, March 5, 2026, Available at: <https://www.euronews.ro/articole/ce-inseamna-umbrela-nuclearafrantei-si-cum-ar-putea-functiona-pentru-europa>, Accessed on March 10, 2026.

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AGRARIAN REFORM IN TRANSYLVANIA (JULY 30, 1921) IN RELATION TO THE DISPUTE OVER THE HUNGARIAN OPTANTS

*Ioan Sabău-Pop*⁷⁶

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the legal and historical complexity of the Agrarian Reform of July 30, 1921, in Transylvania, set against the backdrop of the international dispute over the “Hungarian optants”. We hereby aim to highlight the fact that the reform was not merely an economic measure of modernization, but also an act of historical justice intended to rectify the centuries-old discrimination inflicted upon the Romanian population by feudal systems. At the center of the analysis is the legal dispute between Romania, represented by Nicolae Titulescu, and Hungary, supported by Albert Apponyi, a conflict resolved in the interwar period by converting the property rights of the large Hungarian landowners into claims. The study demonstrates that the Romanian state honored its compensation obligations through the Basel Agrarian Fund until 1938, at which point the matter was definitively settled. The paper sounds an alarm regarding post-December realities, criticizing the revival of restitution claims made by the descendants of optants. Ignoring the legal precedents and the payments already made by the Romanian state has led to serious judicial errors and unjustified double compensation, jeopardizing national interests. The study aims to reestablish the documentary truth regarding the unitary nature of Romanian agrarian legislation.

Keywords: Agrarian reform, Hungarian optants, Treaty of Trianon, Nicolae Titulescu, restitutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

After 1990, the historical dispute over property rights in connection with the agrarian reform in Transylvania, adopted by the Law of July 30, 1921, resurfaced. This relates to the claims of the descendants of the so-called “Hungarian optants”, as defined by the Treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920. It is well known that the public agenda of European countries after 1921 focused on the legal dispute between the Romanian state, represented by the team led by the illustrious diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, and the Hungarian government, represented by Albert Apponyi, regarding the alleged historical rights to the large estates in Transylvania.

The descendants of the large landowners (counts, barons) chose to leave Transylvania at the time of reunification with the motherland, Greater Romania. Ignoring the historical and legal realities of the interwar period and taking advantage

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of legislative confusion or the authorities' weaknesses, they revived claims regarding the restitution of properties held by their ancestors more than four generations ago. The Agrarian Reform Law of July 30, 1921, known as the "Law for Transylvania, Banat, and Crișana", was intended to rectify grave historical injustices. The Romanian-origin population of Transylvania had been subjected to social and economic constraints generated by the feudal arrangements of the temporary occupiers, who denied their existence and origins.

The Romanian National State, a historical and geographical outcome of the plebiscite of December 1, 1918, and subsequently confirmed by the Treaty of Trianon, had an urgent need for social organization and the establishment of the institutions necessary for the country's progress within the European context. The agrarian reform fulfilled one of the aspirations of the villagers who had borne the burden of foreign rule for centuries. They had been forced to work their ancestral lands for people of a different ethnicity, as these lands had been seized from them by the occupiers.

The dispute between the Romanian state and the Hungarian government, acting as the representative of the optants, was resolved through international proceedings. The Romanian state undertook the obligation to compensate the former Hungarian optants in accordance with the court rulings and the arbitration in Paris. Thus, payments were made into the Agricultural Fund in Basel between 1927 and 1938, at which point the payments were suspended under the dictatorship of King Carol II. What is certain is that the property right was then converted into a claim, and the matter was definitively settled.

Currently, since 1990, the administrative and judicial authorities of the Romanian state are once again facing restitution claims by the descendants of former optants. The situation has spiraled out of control, with the restitution or payment of compensation for hundreds of thousands of hectares of land having taken place once again. The contradictory rulings issued by administrative officials and the courts constitute, at the very least, an indication of complicity or betrayal of the interests of the Romanian state.

This study aims to provide a sequential analysis of the agrarian reform in interwar Romania and the related legislative measures. We will demonstrate that the agrarian reform for Transylvania was not a singular act, as has been erroneously claimed, out of ignorance, by today's decision-makers.

2. THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY

After the fulfillment of the Romanian people's centuries-old dream, the unification of the Romanian nation was achieved through the general enthusiasm that led to the moment of December 1, 1918, in Alba Iulia, the fortress that hosted this pivotal point of all the lands inhabited since the dawn of time, and the social and economic reorganization of the Romanian state was accomplished, both in the present and for the future.

The Great Union, the unification of the Romanian people within the new state, alongside the enthusiasm for national unification, was meant to bring about the fulfillment of aspirations that would address the backward state of the population living until then in different historical provinces, some of which had been under foreign rule during various historical periods. The old ways, some still in feudal forms under which the Romanian population was kept even in the first half of the 20th century – and we cite Transylvania as an example here, which had suffered the negative effects of Austro-Hungarian dualism since 1867 – and Bessarabia, liberated from the yoke of the Tsarist Empire through its accession to the Great Union on March 27, 1918, following the vote of the *Sfatul Țării*, demanded a new approach.

Amid the newly formed, emerging, or surviving European states and nations that emerged from the Great War, Romania had to find its footing, but above all, it had to respond through measures and socio-economic reforms to the immense expectations of the population, who had become part of the nation by acquiring Romanian citizenship within the context of the new national borders. Romania, thus unified and internationally recognized within its new geographical borders by the Treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920, suddenly found itself confronted with a patchwork of administrative structures, different laws, and cultural-historical customs existing in each province, generated by temporary foreign rule and which had become deeply ingrained in the collective mindset, including in Romanian communities, even the most homogeneous ones. The organization of secular and ecclesiastical authorities, legislation, and economic development varied, and a unified structure was required for the functioning of the Romanian state.

Among the major problems faced by United Romania was that of agrarian property, where, in addition to the accumulation of centuries-old injustices, the relations of production and economic distribution were disadvantageous to the vast majority of the peasantry. Given that the vast majority of the population lived in rural areas, in villages, with agriculture and animal husbandry being the traditional occupations, the long-standing aspiration for land ownership had to be fulfilled, which could only be achieved through the redistribution of agricultural property.

The agrarian reform could not be delayed any longer; it was, above all, a promise made by the crown to the peasant-soldiers at the start of the war in the Old Kingdom and had become a pressing issue in the other provinces as well, such as Transylvania and Bessarabia, after centuries of exile, injustice, and being kept in a state of social, national, and economic inferiority. The joy of the Great Union had to be accompanied by a complete abandonment of the burdens of the past; measures had to be taken without delay to eliminate injustices and shortcomings, as well as to provide social and economic satisfaction to those who bore the brunt of the events during the war (soldiers in the trenches and families left with countless hardships in the villages). The elimination of all the chronic shortcomings was also necessary, however, for the country's economic liberation, through the establishment of social and political relations that would lead to the progress of the Romanian nation. The time had come for the old property regimes, the vast estates, and the large holdings

owned by a small number of landowners – which no longer corresponded to the pressures of the times – to be abolished; the time had therefore come to abandon the remnants of the feudal relations that had given rise to them – in other words, to redistribute agricultural property. This concern was at the forefront of the minds of the leading intellectuals of the time and, of course, of the authorities of the new state following the union.

3. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL REFORMS IN ROMANIA

The aspiration for land redistribution had been a focus of attention and a source of hope for the Romanian people even before the First World War, but conditions became favorable after 1918, partly due to the context of European civilization. We will now outline the key milestones regarding agrarian reforms within the historical territory of the Romanian people.

Following the Union of the Principalities, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza enacted the Agrarian Reform Law of August 15, 1864. The law expanded the scope of entities from which agricultural land was expropriated, namely large boyar estates and endowed monasteries (following the law on the secularization of monastic property). Exceptions were made for the communal properties of the *moșneni* and *răzeși*, where productive activity was carried out in a form of joint ownership, that is, collectively, without any specific individual having a clearly defined plot of land. Through Cuza's reform, approximately 450,000–500,000 families were granted land ownership, and the land area subject to the reform amounted to about 2 million hectares⁷⁷.

Under the same law, peasants were relieved of feudal duties and obligations, such as *corvée* labor. Cuza's agrarian reform law displeased the large landowners, a fact that was indeed one of the reasons why the prince was removed from the leadership of the Principalities in 1866.

Another law was the one regarding the redemption of state-owned lands in April 1889, through which state property was transferred to local communities, benefiting a significant portion of the peasantry.

Furthermore, following the promises made by the King and the Romanian Government to the peasants who were conscripted into World War I, the 1918 Law on Agrarian Reform in the Old Kingdom was enacted, promulgated by Decree-Law 3697/1918, which, in essence, gradually reduced large estates until 1930.

For Bessarabia, agrarian reform was instituted following the votes of the *Sfatul Țării* on November 27, 1918, and enacted through recognition by United Romania via Decree-Law 1936/1920, largely ratifying the reform adopted by Bessarabia's representative body.

⁷⁷ Doina Rotaru and Doina Dunca, *Dobândirea proprietății imobiliare în România [Acquisition of Real Estate in Romania]*, Bucharest, Notarom Publishing House, 2020, p. 119.

For Oltenia, Muntenia, Moldova, and Dobrogea, the Agrarian Reform Law was enacted, approved by Decree 3093/July 14, 1921, following which an implementing regulation was also issued, based on expropriation decisions subject to a lengthy procedure. This law concerned the expropriation of estates larger than 100 hectares, regardless of who the owners were; of course, this law also contains some exceptions, without it being necessary to go into further detail. The law did, however, include measures to ensure the effective transfer of ownership, while ensuring that former owners were compensated⁷⁸.

Finally, the Law on Agrarian Reform in Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș, approved by Decree 3610/July 30, 1921, which we will analyze in particular, as it is the subject of this study.

4. SPECIFIC FEATURES AND CONTROVERSIES REGARDING THE LEGAL DISPUTE SURROUNDING THE AGRARIAN REFORM OF JULY 30, 1921

This agrarian reform was intended to redress the many historical injustices to which the Romanian population had been subjected for centuries. As historical precedents, we recall the peasant uprisings that were bloodily suppressed, namely the Bobâlna Uprising of 1437; the revolutionary movement in Transylvania led by the Szekler nobleman Gheorghe Doja in 1514, events that led to a series of measures following which the Romanian population was subjected for centuries to injustices, primarily through the denial of recognition as an independent nation and through brutal economic exploitation.

Underlying these measures, which aimed at the total impoverishment of the first and oldest inhabitants of Transylvania, was a policy promoted through the legislation known as the “Werboczy Tripartite” of 1517, and subsequently through the “Aprobatae Constitutiones” of 1653 and the compilations of 1669, these measures stripped the peasant, especially the Romanian peasant, of all rights, which led to the accumulation of social and material inferiority among this population.

Concerns regarding agrarian reform in Transylvania through the expropriation of the large estates of Hungarian counts and barons had been on the agenda of the Governing Council since its establishment; this body prepared the groundwork and contributed to the success of the Great Union of 1918. In the period leading up to this moment, under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, properties in Transylvania – specifically, assets held by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as an imperial state – fell into two categories: the first category belonged to the dual-

⁷⁸ Mircea Georgescu, *Reforme agrare. Principii și metode în legiurile române și străine [Agrarian Reforms. Principles and Methods in Romanian and Foreign Legislation]*, Bucharest, Institute of Agrarian Law and Agrarian Economics of Romania, „Bucovina” Printing House I. E. Toroușiu, 1943.

headed monarchy and was at the disposal of the Imperial Chancellery itself, and the second category consisted of assets belonging to Hungary as a constituent state of the dual-headed monarchy. This gave rise to the first difficulty in dividing the public property that existed prior to 1867, the year marking the emergence of dualism, since the assets in the second category were not formally transferred to Hungary, the dualist pact having at that time a purely political significance. Included in the empire's property are public institutions, military and border garrisons with their associated territories, and numerous properties built with public funds generated by entities established by Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II. These assets are today illegally claimed by fictitious entities⁷⁹.

After 1920, the Hungarian government made efforts to recover these assets or transfer them to private individuals of Hungarian nationality. It is certain, however, that these assets, which we would currently characterize as "public utility" and which were similarly treated during that period, located within the territory of Transylvania, officially became part of Romania's national patrimony with the obligation to pay the ancillary claims associated with these properties. This occurred in accordance with the international principle of state succession, meaning that the state that acquired a territory – in our case, Romania, which obtained the territory enshrined in the Treaty of Trianon – fully exercised its sovereignty over that territory, in which sense the public assets of the former predecessor state (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) are transferred to it, as well as the obligations associated with this transfer of ownership⁸⁰.

In contrast, the legal regime governing private property remains unchanged; the holders of property rights remain the same persons, namely legal entities, private entities, and natural persons. The Treaty of Trianon addresses two aspects relevant to the present analysis: the issue of Hungarian optants and expropriation through the agrarian reform carried out by the Romanian state.

As a result of the territorial changes following World War I and the disintegration and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the issue of citizenship for residents in the empire's successor states arose. In Transylvania, large estates were primarily owned by counts; specialized studies reveal that 80% of Transylvania's land holdings belonged to them, of course, on the basis of historical injustices. The Treaty of Trianon regulated the citizenship situation, in the sense that individuals who held Hungarian citizenship and resided in Transylvania were granted a six-month period to choose between Romanian and Hungarian citizenship. Most of the large landowners who considered themselves Hungarian opted for Hungarian citizenship, left Transylvania, and this is where the term "Hungarian optants" comes from.

⁷⁹ Dumitru Șandru, *Reforma agrară din 1921 în România [The 1921 Agrarian Reform in Romania]*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, 1975.

⁸⁰ Onisifor Ghibu, *Acțiunea catolicismului unguresc și a Sfântului Scaun în România Întregită. Raport înaintat M. S. Regelui Carol II [The Action of Hungarian Catholicism and the Holy See in Greater Romania. Report Submitted to His Majesty King Carol II]*, Cluj, „Ardealul” Institute of Graphic Arts, 1934.

As a result of the law on expropriation and the implementation of the agrarian reform of July 30, 1921, their properties were subject to expropriation by the Romanian state. These optants did not recognize the agrarian reform law, opposed the expropriation, and made persistent appeals to European courts and foreign governments to highlight the alleged injustice. It should be noted that the law was applied equally both to the individuals and legal entities subject to expropriation and to the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform. The latter were Romanian, Szekler, Hungarian, and Saxon peasants from Transylvania, all of whom received the same allocation of agricultural land. The property dispute, which initially began in Romanian courts, was resolved unfavorably for the claimants in the Courts of Appeal.

In the next phase, the Hungarian optants, under the auspices of the Hungarian government, brought cases before international courts, specifically the League of Nations and the Court of Arbitration in Paris, a legal process that unfolded through countless lawsuits that dominated the European agenda for over seven years. Essentially, the Hungarian optants argued that they had been discriminated against by law, that their property rights had not been respected, citing provisions of the Treaty of Trianon which indeed expressly stipulated that private/individual property could not be affected by measures taken by the Romanian state. The expropriation itself concerned the payment by the Romanian state of compensation equivalent to the value of the expropriated large estates, from which the former owners – specifically, the Hungarian optants – were to benefit.

This gave rise to a political and legal dispute centered on the claims of the Hungarian optants who, on the one hand, rejected the Romanian state's agrarian reform and, on the other hand, demanded compensation that was grossly disproportionate, exceeding the Romanian state's budget and, at the same time, far exceeding a fair assessment of the value of agricultural land, forests, pastures, and arable land. The main argument of the claim was the historical ownership situation, which drew the attention of many prominent figures in Europe to the dispute. The response given, for example, by French President Poincaré, from whom we quote: *"An unjust ownership, even if millennia-old, cannot be considered legitimate in law"*. This figure expressed a concept that represents an indisputable legal truth, applicable under the principles of domestic and international law.

In a few words, we will refer to the passionate dispute between the "two camps": on the one hand, the modern, civilized world, with liberal views and a forward-looking outlook, represented by the "team" of the Romanian lawyer, the liberal democrat Nicolae Titulescu, who had the support of Alexandre Millerand, the former Prime Minister of France, and the master of international law, who served on the commissions regarding the reparations convention following World War I, lawyer Sigmund Rosenthal; and on the other hand, Albert Apponyi, Hungary's representative – a refined and skilled orator, but one who adhered to a Hungarian nationalist, retrograde, feudal, and profoundly anachronistic and unjust conception for the modern times to which all of Europe aspired.

At the end of the conflict, of course, in the legal realm, regarding the Hungarian optants, the diplomat and jurist Titulescu said:

“When a state, in its daily, peaceful struggle, upholds a just cause with firmness and courtesy and puts at its service not mere national recriminations, but resistance based on the great, international principles that underpin current relations between states, its point of view ultimately prevails. Thus, before the French presidency and the European institutions of the time, Hungary’s voluminous, laborious, yet deceptive documentation failed to convince. The response of the President of France, H. Poincaré, from the height of his office, constitutes a rigorous rebuttal of the Hungarianist conception emerging from the mists of history and the duplicity uncovered when the documents regarding the situation of the Hungarian optants were analytically examined”⁸¹.

The optants were represented by the Budapest government, which, through its representative Albert Apponyi, argued that Hungary was being treated unjustly because its citizens were being deprived of their properties in Transylvania. Apponyi demanded differential treatment for the optants, that is, preferential treatment compared to other landowners expropriated through the agrarian reform in Romania. According to their privileged logic, if the expropriation were to remain in effect, compensation far exceeding that established by Romania’s Agrarian Law should be set.

In contrast to this, the issue arose that the Romanian state should take measures for social organization, for reforming the state of affairs in Romania, to develop its institutions and, in accordance with the civil rights that were to be known equally to all inhabitants of the country, so that, in the new modern historical context, it could progress – which, by its very nature, also entailed establishing property rights on the basis of modern legislation and principles of equality, something that could, of course, only be achieved through agrarian reform, including that for Transylvania. As a result of the disputes with the Hungarian government, which were recognized at the European level, the validity of the argument was upheld that the implementation of agrarian reform did not contravene the Treaty of Trianon nor the rights of former owners, including the optants who came forward with exaggerated and discriminatory claims, because a privileged situation could not be created for foreigners; the treaty was not intended to protect Hungarian optants over Romanian

⁸¹„Când un stat, în lupta sa pacifică, de toate zilele, susține o teză dreaptă, cu fermitate și curtenie și pune în slujba ei, nu simple recriminațiuni de ordin național, ci rezistența pe principiile mari, internaționale, cari stau la baza raporturilor actuale între state, punctul lui de privire sfârșește prin a se impune. Astfel că, în fața președinției Franței și a instituțiilor europene ale timpurilor, voluminoasa, laborioasa, dar mincinoasa documentație a Ungariei nu a putut convinge. Răspunsul președintelui Franței, Poincaré, de la înălțimea demnității sale, constituie o replică riguroasă la concepția hungaristă venită din negurile istoriei și duplicitatea descoperită atunci când analitic au fost cercetate lucrările privind situația optanților unguri.”, in Constantin D. Cutcutache, *Optanții unguri ai Transilvaniei și reforma agrară din România: un mare conflict internațional [The Hungarian Optants of Transylvania and the Agrarian Reform in Romania: A Major International Conflict]*, with a preface by Nicolae Titulescu, Bucharest, Geniului Magazine Printing House, 1931, p. 12.

citizens. This is because the expropriation of large estates and vast latifundia falls under the jurisdiction of the same regime, which, from a legal standpoint, must be unified, and because land distribution must provide equal treatment for impoverished peasants, both Romanian and Hungarian⁸².

Essentially, it is an indisputable legal fact that the property rights of Hungarian optants were transformed, following the Paris Agreement, into a claim, established through two agricultural funds in Basel (France). Romania made the payments it was obligated to make – and to which it had agreed – in Swiss francs and gold crowns. Between 1927 and 1934, Romania paid for all these properties out of its own funds, amounting to the equivalent of 4.8 tons of gold. Added to this are 87 million dollars in war reparations owed to Romania by Hungary, as per the Treaty of .⁸³ Romania did not collect this sum; it waived it so that it could be paid to the optants, and on top of all this, to definitively settle the dispute with a view to a peaceful future, Prime Minister Brătianu decided to offer an additional 10% on top of these payments as compensation. There are documents showing that Brătianu accepted and paid these additional sums for the so-called “property disturbance” for reasons of state and to close this historic dispute, with the aim of finally establishing normal relations with Hungary.

The agrarian reform of July 1921 was favorably received by European states and the entire civilized world, being recognized as the most progressive and significant step in this field on the European continent. Under these circumstances, the historical dispute was to be closed, and the so-called property issue rooted in the claims of Hungarian optants was to cease to exist⁸⁴.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Romanian-Hungarian dispute – the case of the Hungarian optants before the League of Nations – has been the subject of extensive research; prominent figures involved in studying the phenomenon and the legal dispute have highlighted Romania’s principled, democratic, and just position of Romania, and these figures contributed to the precise establishment of the Romanian people’s right to be the masters of their national territory.

In a future study, we will comprehensively address the issue of Hungarian optants, which has resurfaced following the events of December 1989. Although this

⁸² Codrin Munteanu (ed.), *Procesul optanților unguri. Mărturii documentare din arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al Republicii Franceze [The Trial of the Hungarian Optants. Documentary Evidence from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic]*, Bucharest, Stefanida Publishing House, 2018, p. 17.

⁸³ ***, *Agrarian Reforms in Romania. And the Hungarian Optants... [Agrarian Reforms in Romania. And the Hungarian Optants...]*, French Academy, Paris, 1927.

⁸⁴ Mircea Coșofreț, Ioan Sabău-Pop and Constantin Ceucă, *Reforma Agrară din România și optanții unguri din Transilvania [The Agrarian Reform in Romania and the Hungarian Optants of Transylvania]*, Iași, PIN Publishing House, 2018, p. 14 ff.

historical dispute was settled in the international courts of the time, it surprisingly resurfaced after 1990 when the fourth generation of optants began claiming the same “rights” that, following domestic and international proceedings, had been extinguished along with their outdated claims. However, under the guise of betrayal, confusing legislation, and the manner in which the legislative and administrative authorities of the Romanian state have treated and continue to treat this issue, a ridiculous situation has arisen in which a dispute that should have been definitively settled before the national courts and the European Court of Justice has been brought back onto the agenda. We will return to these issues in detail in a future study.

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE FORMATION OF THE ROMANIAN ACADEMIC ELITE IN COVASNA AND HARGHITA (1871-2025)

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the evolution of the formation of the Romanian academic elite around the present-day Covasna and Harghita counties during the period 1871–2025, using a prosopographic approach based on an extensive corpus of published and unpublished sources. The research aims to identify the main stages of the formation, development, and diversification of this elite, considering criteria such as the chronological distribution of doctorates, fields of specialization, universities attended, and the geographical origin of the recipients. The analysis highlights the nascent and restrictive nature of the formation of the academic elite during the Austro-Hungarian dualist period, when access to higher education was limited and the dominant fields were law, medicine, and theology. The interwar period marked a qualitative diversification and an opening toward the European academic community, without a significant increase in numbers. In contrast, the communist regime led to a substantial expansion of the academic elite, driven by the democratization of access to education and the development of higher education, alongside a diversification of fields, particularly in the exact and technical sciences. The post-1989 period represents a time of peak development, characterized by rapid growth in numbers, disciplinary diversification, and integration into the international scientific community. The study highlights the essential role of the academic elite in strengthening the cultural and national identity of Romanians within a multi-ethnic space, as well as its contribution to the institutional, educational, and scientific development of the region. Overall, the evolution analyzed reflects the transition from a small and marginal elite to a diversified, institutionalized one connected to the global dynamics of knowledge.

Keywords: elites, Covasna, Harghita, higher education.

1. PREMISES

Research on the Romanian elites of the former Three Seats region during the 18th and 19th centuries has been spurred by the publication of several seminal works on this subject. Among these, we mention: *The History of the Formation of the Romanian Intellectual Elite in Transylvania and Banat in the Modern Era*, by Cornel Sigmirean (Cluj University Press, 2000); *The Ecclesiastical Intellectual Elite. The*

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Priests of Blaj (1806–1948), by the same author (Petru Maior University Press, Târgu Mureș, 2007); *The Bicentennial Book of Emanuil Gojdu, 1802–2002*, a volume published by the “Gheorghe Șincai” County Library in Oradea in 2008. At the end of 2011, the book *Romanian Students from Transylvania at European Universities in the 16th–20th Centuries*, written by the Hungarian historian Szögi László, was launched in Târgu Mureș. Published by “Petru Maior” University Press, the edition was edited and prefaced by Cornel Sigmirean, with a Romanian translation by Zsolt Simon.

It can be observed that, beginning with the reign of Maria Theresa, the imperial authorities in Vienna paid increased attention to the organization and development of education, which was regarded as an essential tool for the modernization and administrative integration of the population, through the training of educated subjects who were aware of their role in supporting the state⁸⁷. This trend is reflected in the emergence and consolidation of a generation of Romanian intellectuals in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century.

Despite the difficulties encountered in their education and professional training, several prominent Romanian intellectuals from the Szekler districts made their mark on public life in Transylvania during the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. Historian László Szögi’s work lists the 1,886 Romanian students who studied at European universities between 1592 and 1919. Among them, Alexander Arbutina, born on February 10, 1832, in Cernatul de Jos, was a student at the Military Academy in Vienna⁸⁸, and Aron Boeriu (1834–1901), born in Ghidfalău, Odorhei County, attended secondary school in Blaj, and studied theology in Blaj and Vienna. Returning to Blaj in 1857, he was appointed high school teacher of natural history and Hungarian, a position he held until the 1871–1872 school year. From that year until the end of his life, he served as parish priest and archpriest of Aiud⁸⁹.

Access to higher education, supported in part by scholarships from foundations such as the “Emanuil Gojdu” Foundation, fostered the emergence of a Romanian intellectual elite in the second half of the 19th century. This elite, educated at universities in Budapest, Vienna, Cluj, and Brussels, played an active role in the cultural and political life of Transylvania and contributed to the affirmation of the national ideal, culminating in their participation in the achievement of the Great Union of 1918.

⁸⁷ Ioan-Aurel Pop, „Cultura românească (până la Școala Ardeleană)” [“Romanian culture (up to the Transylvanian School)”], in Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Nágler and András Magyari (coord.), *Istoria Transilvaniei, Vol. III (de la 1711 până la 1918)* [*The History of Transylvania, Vol. III (1711–1918)*], 2nd edition, Cluj-Napoca, Romanian Cultural Institute Publishing House, 2008, p. 114.

⁸⁸ László Szögi, *Studenți români din Transilvania la universitățile din Europa secolele XVI–XX* [*Romanian Students from Transylvania at European Universities in the 16th–20th Centuries*], Târgu Mureș, Petru Maior University Press, 2011, p. 133.

⁸⁹ Ioan Lăcătușu, Vasile Lechințan and Violeta Pătrunjel, *Românii din Covasna și Harghita. Istorie. Biserică. Școală. Cultură* [*Romanians in Covasna and Harghita. History. Church. School. Culture*], Miercurea-Ciuc, Grai Românesc Publishing House, 2003, p. 584.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on prosopographic research, grounded in the identification and systematization of information regarding Romanian intellectuals from the present-day counties of Covasna and Harghita who earned a doctorate in science between 1874 and 2025. The corpus of analysis consists of a database created by utilizing published and unpublished documentary sources, which allowed for the chronological and thematic organization of the available information.

The methodological approach aims to capture the evolution of the academic elite in this region based on several relevant criteria: the chronological distribution of doctoral degrees, fields of specialization, universities attended, and the geographical origin of the degree holders. The analysis integrates both the quantitative dimension, highlighted by the numerical dynamics of PhDs in science, and the qualitative dimension, reflected in the diversification of research fields and their integration into the national and international scientific community.

Furthermore, this research falls within the broader framework of the sociology of elites and social history, with the aim of identifying the mechanisms through which the academic elite is formed and established in a context characterized by distinct ethno-demographic and institutional features. In this regard, the analysis is not limited to a simple inventory of cases but seeks to highlight the structural trends and factors that have influenced the evolution of these elites in various historical contexts.

3. THE PERIOD OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARIAN DUALISM

The formation of the Romanian academic elite in the area now comprising Covasna and Harghita counties began in the second half of the 19th century, against the backdrop of the political and institutional transformations brought about by the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. During this period, access to higher education for Romanians was limited, though not nonexistent, and was facilitated in certain cases by support from ecclesiastical institutions and Romanian cultural foundations.

The number of intellectuals who earned a doctorate in science during this period was relatively small, reflecting both the socio-political constraints of the era and the nascent nature of the process of forming a Romanian academic elite in the region. Nevertheless, the existence of these cases indicates the emergence of a generation of pioneers, educated at prestigious universities within the Empire. Most of these intellectuals were trained in fields such as law, medicine, or theology – fields that offered opportunities for professional and social advancement in a context marked by ethnic and religious inequalities. At the same time, their university education contributed to the consolidation of a national consciousness and to the involvement of Romanians in Transylvania in public and cultural life.

Between 1871 and 1915 (a span of 44 years), a total of 28 Romanian intellectuals from the present-day counties of Covasna and Harghita earned doctorates in science, primarily at universities in Budapest and Cluj, but also at other European academic institutions: Dumitru Thodor (Vidacut), Doctor of Legal Sciences at the University of Budapest (1871); Ioan Bozoceanu (Araci), Doctor of Philosophy and Mathematical Sciences (1874)⁹⁰; Alexandru Ceușianu (Porumbeni), Doctor of Medicine in Budapest (1881); Elie Cristea (Toplița), author of a dissertation on the works of Mihai Eminescu, in Budapest (1895)⁹¹; Teodor Sbârcea (Toplița), Doctor of Medicine in Cluj (1897); Octav Popescu (Toplița), Doctor in Cluj (1900); Cornel Solnay (Tulgheș), Doctor of Law in Budapest (1901); Alexandru Nicolescu (Tulgheș), Doctor of Philosophy and Theology in Rome⁹²; Ghiță Popp (Poiana Sărată), Doctor of Law in Cluj (1906)⁹³; Constantin Sbârcea (Toplița), Doctor of Medicine in Cluj (1906); Simion Sbârcea (Toplița), Doctor of Law (1906); Szilard Moga (Vâlcele), Doctor of Law (1906)⁹⁴.

The list is rounded out by figures such as Pompiliu Nistor (medicine, Budapest, 1908), Mihai Dobrean (law, Cluj, 1908)⁹⁵, Victor Olah (law, Cluj, 1909), Gheorghe Negoiescu (law, Budapest, 1910), Romulus Olteanu (law, Cluj, 1910), Ioan Baltariu (law, Cluj, 1910), Ioan Iagedics (law, Cluj, 1910), Petru Muscă (law, Cluj, 1910), Octavian Popescu (law, Cluj, 1911), Dumitru Caltofeanu (law, Budapest, 1912), Vicențiu Rauca-Răuceanu (law, Budapest, 1914)⁹⁶, Miron Crețu⁹⁷ and Livius Titus Câmpean (medicine, Budapest, 1914), Dominic Gafton (canon law, Cluj, 1915)⁹⁸ and Grigore Păltineanu (political science, Cluj, 1915)⁹⁹.

The emergence of this elite must be understood within the specific context of a region where the Romanian population was in a minority and institutionally disadvantaged. Under these circumstances, earning a doctorate in science represented not only an individual achievement but also a form of collective affirmation for the Romanian community.

An analysis of this first generation of Doctor of Science reveals several defining characteristics. First, the predominance of legal and medical studies reflects the professional opportunities of the era and the need for specialists in fields with direct social impact. Second, the concentration of academic training in centers such

⁹⁰ Ioan Lăcătușu, *Personalități din Covasna și Harghita [Personalities from Covasna and Harghita]*, Cluj-Napoca, Carpatica Publishing House, 1998, pp. 27–30.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 69–74.

⁹² *Ibidem*, pp. 85–90.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 117–122.

⁹⁴ Ioan Lăcătușu and Erich-Mihail Broanăr, *Repere identitare românești din județele Covasna și Harghita [Romanian Cultural Landmarks in Covasna and Harghita Counties]*, 2nd edition, Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing House, 2019, p. 681.

⁹⁵ Ioan Lăcătușu, *quoted work*, 1998, pp. 97–100.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 137–140.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 75–80.

⁹⁸ Ioan Lăcătușu and Erich-Mihail Broanăr, *quoted work*, p. 681.

⁹⁹ Ioan Lăcătușu, *quoted work*, 1998, pp. 107–112.

as Budapest and Cluj indicates institutional dependence on the university structures of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Finally, the relatively small number of these intellectuals underscores the elitist and difficult-to-access nature of doctoral studies during this period, which confers upon these figures the status of pioneers of the Romanian academic elite in the region.

4. THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The integration of eastern Transylvania into the Romanian state after 1918 triggered a complex process of administrative, cultural, and symbolic reorganization. In the counties of Ciuc, Odorhei, and Trei Scaune – territories with a Székely majority – the formation of a functional Romanian elite required not only the imposition of a new legal framework but also the establishment of mechanisms for fostering loyalty and integration.

The interwar period marks a distinct phase in the evolution of the Romanian academic elite around present-day Covasna and Harghita counties, unfolding against the backdrop of Transylvania's integration into the Romanian nation-state and the reorganization of the educational system. However, in numerical terms, this period is characterized by relative stagnation, with only a few intellectuals identified as having earned a doctorate in the sciences between 1920 and 1939. Among them are figures such as Nicolae Colan, a native of Araci, who pursued doctoral studies in theology in Berlin (1920–1921)¹⁰⁰, Gheorghe Pop of Poiana Sărată, a Doctor of Law from the University of Budapest (1922), Bujor Teculescu, who completed doctoral studies in criminal law in Paris, Aurel Gociman-Oituz, a doctor of economic sciences from Cluj, and Aurel Grigore Bucur, a doctor of medicine from Bucharest (1939), who specialized in Lyon¹⁰¹.

This apparent numerical stagnation can be explained by several structural factors. First, the legacy of inequalities from the previous period continued to influence the Romanian population's access to higher education, particularly in peripheral and predominantly rural areas. Second, the postwar institutional reorganization took time to produce visible effects in terms of advanced academic training.

However, the interwar period brought about a significant qualitative shift. There was a diversification of the universities attended, with intellectuals from this region having access not only to universities in Romania, such as those in Bucharest or Cluj, but also to prestigious institutions in Western Europe, such as those in Berlin or Paris. This openness helped connect the local elite to the European intellectual circuit and facilitated the adoption of modern academic models. Furthermore, there is a diversification of fields of specialization, which extend beyond the traditional

¹⁰⁰ Ioan Lăcătușu (coord.), *Genealogia familiei Colan [The Colan Family's Genealogy]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing House, 2012, p. 152.

¹⁰¹ Ioan Lăcătușu and Erich-Mihail Broanăr, *quoted work*, p. 681.

spheres of law and theology to include economics and medicine. This evolution reflects the transformations of interwar Romanian society and the need to train specialists capable of contributing to the modernization of the state.

Despite their small numbers, the academic elites educated during this period played a significant role in strengthening Romanian cultural and educational institutions in the region. Through their professional and public activities, these intellectuals contributed to the affirmation of national identity and the integration of Romanian communities in southeastern Transylvania into the structures of the modern Romanian state.

In the first issue of the “ASTRA Bulletin of the Central Branch of Trei-Scaune County”, PhD. Ioan Vintilă, president of the ASTRA Central County Branch, writes the “Foreword”, in which he states the publication’s purpose: “to keep alive the flame of Romanian consciousness and culture” in this “region so neglected in cultural terms”¹⁰².

He conveys the idea of a Romanian cultural mission in a predominantly Szekler area.

The Program sounds the alarm regarding the existence of Romanian-speaking people who have been Magyarized and proposes their re-Romanianization through culture, using the Hungarian language as a transitional element:

“In the villages of Chichiș, Ozun, Lisnău, Sântionlunca, Comălău, Dobolii de Jos, Micfalău, Bicsad, Aita-Seacă, Aita-Medie, Căpeni, and Belin, where the Romanian population does not speak Romanian, conferences on Romanian topics will be held, with explanations in Hungarian, accompanied by slide shows and films”¹⁰³.

Also worth mentioning is the “National House” project, which involved the purchase of a building in Sf. Gheorghe; among its donors were: doctor Miron Crețu, PhD. Nicolae Crăciun (prefect), Lieutenant Valer Fenechiu, Captain PhD. C. Berbescu, Archpriest Aurel Nistor, Eugen Sibianu, and others. These figures point to the alliance between the state and culture, the cohesion of the administrative, ecclesiastical, and intellectual elites, as well as the institutionalization of cultural nationalism.

5. THE COMMUNIST ERA

The communist era marked a period of significant expansion of the Romanian academic elite in the areas that are now Covasna and Harghita counties, both in terms of numbers and structure. While the number of Doctor of Science was relatively low

¹⁰² „să întrețină vie flacăra conștiinței și culturii românești” în acest „ținut atât de neglijat sub raport cultural”, in ***, *Buletinul ASTRA [ASTRA Newsletter]*, Year I, No. 1, November 1929, p. 2.

¹⁰³ „În satele Chichiș, Ozun, Lisnău, Sântionlunca, Comălău, Dobolii de Jos, Micfalău, Bicsad, Aita-Seacă, Aita-Medie, Căpeni și Belin, unde populația română nu știe românește, se vor ținea conferințe cu subiecte românești și cu explicația în limba maghiară însoțite de proiecțiuni și cinematograf.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 5.

in earlier periods, this period saw a substantial increase, with 24 Doctors of Science identified, reflecting the profound transformations in the educational system and state policies regarding professional training.

This development is closely linked to the expansion of the higher education system and to policies aimed at promoting access to education for broader segments of society. Universities in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and other academic centers across the country are becoming the primary institutions for doctoral training, given that international mobility is limited and studying abroad is more of an exception.

In terms of fields of specialization, there is a significant diversification compared to previous periods. In addition to traditional fields such as law and theology, the exact, technical, and economic sciences are gaining an increasingly important share. Thus, fields such as physics, mathematics, engineering, geography, sociology, and economics are represented, reflecting the communist regime's focus on industrial and technical-scientific development.

In the field of exact and technical sciences, notable figures include Ioan Maxim (physical sciences), Ioan Brânduș (physical and mathematical sciences), Horia Colan (metallurgy)¹⁰⁴, Ion Mușcutariu (physics)¹⁰⁵, Octavian Sasu (mathematics), as well as Ioan Roșca, author of research in the field of operator equations.

The field of technical and engineering sciences is represented by Horia Colan, through his studies in metallurgy; Mihai Rafiroiu, with his research in the field of transportation systems and management; as well as Ioan Păstrăv, Vasile Bejan, and Gheorghe Moldoveanu, who specialize in mechanical engineering.

In the field of the social sciences and humanities, notable figures include Petru Pânzaru (sociology), Constantin Stanca (public opinion), Ion Ciurea (history and socio-political thought)¹⁰⁶, Pavel Mureșan (social psychology) and Alexandru Tohăneanu (philosophy and literature), whose contributions reflect a focus on analyzing society within the context of the era. Ștefan Vodă also falls within this humanistic tradition through his contributions to the field of philology.

The field of economic sciences is represented by Susana Geangalău and Alexandru Horia Munteanu, while geographical research is represented by Ioan Șandru, through his study on the Onești-Bacău depression.

Medicine and the biological sciences are represented by Maria Crețu's contribution, while the field of theology is represented by Gheorghe Papuc¹⁰⁷. The field of law also continues to be represented by works such as that of Matei Basarab.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the contribution of Valeriu Kavruk, through his research in archaeology and ethnogenesis conducted at Moscow State University,

¹⁰⁴ Ioan Lăcătușu, *quoted work*, 1998, p. 55.

^{105***} *Profesioniștii noștri 38. Prof. univ. dr. Ioan Mușcutariu – Cercetător și Om de știință, Fizica și Tehnologia Materiei Condensate, Patriot Român [Our Professionals 38. Prof. Ioan Mușcutariu, Ph.D. – Researcher and Scientist, Physics and Technology of Condensed Matter, Romanian Patriot]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatca Publishing House, 2023.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁷ Ioan Lăcătușu, *quoted work*, 1998, pp. 113–116.

which also reflects the existence of international academic connections, even within the constraints of that period¹⁰⁸.

Another important aspect is the integration of these intellectuals into the institutional structures of the state and the academic system. Many of them became university faculty members, researchers, or specialists in various fields of economics and administration, contributing to the development of Romania's scientific and educational infrastructure. At the same time, it must be emphasized that their professional development took place within a restrictive ideological context, which influenced the focus of their research and academic freedom.

At the local level, this generation of intellectuals played a vital role in strengthening educational and cultural institutions and in maintaining a Romanian academic presence in a region characterized by ethnic diversity. Through their teaching, scientific, and professional work, they contributed to the training of new generations of specialists and to the affirmation of Romanian cultural and scientific values.

6. THE POST-DECEMBER PERIOD

The post-December period marks the most significant phase of development for the Romanian academic elite in the areas that are now Covasna and Harghita counties, characterized by a significant increase in the number of Doctor of Science, the diversification of research fields, and integration into the international academic community. This evolution was facilitated by the liberalization of access to education, the expansion of the university network, and the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies both domestically and abroad.

In terms of fields of study, there has been an unprecedented diversification. In the fields of economics and law, notable figures include Nicolae Ciangă, Valer Dorneanu, Susana Geangalău (who continues her work), Alexandru Horia Munteanu, Laura Oltean, Lucian Bunghez, and Traian Chindea.

The exact and technical sciences have seen significant development thanks to the contributions of Alina Stancu (U.S.), Nicolae Cotfas (PhD.s from Bucharest and Grenoble), Felix Furtună, Mihai-Tiberiu Lateş, Ilie Pentelescu, and Raluca Lateş, as well as through interdisciplinary research in the fields of computer science, physics, and engineering¹⁰⁹.

In the field of natural and biological sciences, Ion Micu, Elena Glodeanu, Luiza Mike, Cecilia Farcaş, Dan Ciobanu, and Ana Maria Lazăr stand out, whose research reflects a focus on the study of the environment and natural resources. Medicine is represented by Horaţiu Suciu, as well as by the applied research in public health conducted by Mihaela and Paul Nicolae Suceveanu.

The social sciences and humanities, as well as cultural fields, play an important role. In this regard, the contributions of Ioan Lăcătuşu and Codrina Şandru in

¹⁰⁸ Ioan Lăcătuşu and Erich-Mihail Broanăr, *quoted work*, p. 682.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 683.

sociology, and those of Alexandru Popa, Marius Ciută, Liviu Boar, Iosif Marin Balog, Magdalena Ștefan, Ana Dobreanu, Dorel Marc, Nicoleta Ploșnea, Costel-Cristian Lazăr, and Sebastian Lucian Pârvu in history are particularly noteworthy.

The fields of philology and literary studies are represented by Nicolae Bucur, Florina Truță-Matei, Doina Biturcă, Luminița Cornea, Marianne Iliescu, Catinca Agache, Ramona Lazăr, Cristina Bucur, Viorica Macrina Lazăr, and Cristina Nemeș, while philosophy and theoretical reflection are represented by Alexandru Surdu and Marius Dudan.

The field of theology has also seen significant development, thanks to the contributions of figures such as His Eminence Ioan Selejan, His Grace Sofian Brașoveanu, His Grace Andrei Moldovan, His Grace Ignatie Trif, Romeo Negrea, Cristian Groza, Petru Căținean, and Laurențiu Gabriel Panciu, highlighting the Church's ongoing role in shaping the intellectual elite¹¹⁰.

Archaeology and ethnography are represented by Valeriu Kavruk (continuing his work), Dan Buzea, Victor Sibianu, Adela Kovács, and Nicoleta-Paula Mazăre, while the field of international relations and European studies is represented by Mihai Alexandru Croitor.

It is also worth noting the presence of interdisciplinary and applied research in the fields of public administration (Codrin Dumitru Munteanu), mass media and interethnic relations (Claudiu Bădescu), as well as urban and social policies (Gina Gheață).

A defining feature of this period is the internationalization of academic training, as evidenced by studies conducted at universities in the United States (Alina Stancu, Alin Adrian Stancu, Romeo Măciucă), France, Germany, Greece, and Israel, which indicates the integration of the local elite into the global scientific community.

At the same time, there is also a new generation emerging, represented by PhDs such as Nicu Lazăr, Marius Banciu, Cristina Hadâmbu, Andreea Popa, Marius Dudan, Tatiana Scurtu, and doctoral candidate Florentina Teacă, as well as researchers involved in academic and cultural activities, which indicates the continuity of the process of shaping the intellectual elite in the region¹¹¹.

7. THE VITAL ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC ELITE IN STRENGTHENING THE CULTURAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY OF ROMANIANS IN COVASNA AND HARGHITA

This analysis draws on the findings of a broader study focusing on Romanian intellectuals in Covasna and Harghita counties, based on an updated version of a previous bibliography and studies published since 2012. The volumes published by

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 684.

¹¹¹ The database used in this study is not exhaustive; the information is being continuously supplemented and updated as new documentary sources are identified.

Eurocarpatica Publishing House and its partner publishers make a significant contribution to documenting the history and culture of Romanians in southeastern Transylvania, helping to fill a gap in local and regional historiography.

When analyzing the local elites in Covasna and Harghita, one must also consider the concept of “ethnic elites”, as the leaders of these institutions are, at the same time, representatives of the ethnic communities in the area. Sociological studies indicate a distinction between the elite level – where interethnic tensions may arise – and the general population, which is primarily concerned with socioeconomic issues. Through their scientific and cultural contributions, Romanian intellectuals in Covasna and Harghita counties are helping to build and strengthen a genuine “identity” for the Romanian community in southeastern Transylvania.

An analysis of the development of Doctor of Science from the present-day counties of Covasna and Harghita between 1871 and 2025 reveals a complex process of formation, consolidation, and diversification of the Romanian academic elite in a region characterized by distinct historical, social, and ethno-demographic particularities.

During the Austro-Hungarian period, the first core groups of this elite began to take shape, despite limited access to higher education and significant institutional constraints. The small number of Doctor of Science and their concentration in fields such as law, medicine, and theology reflect both the limited opportunities of the era and the fundamental role of these professions in the social and national affirmation of Romanians in Transylvania.

The interwar period brought about greater openness within the Romanian and European university systems, though this did not result in a significant increase in enrollment. Instead, there was a diversification of educational pathways and greater integration into the Western intellectual sphere, which gave the academic elite a more complex profile better suited to the needs of the modern nation-state.

The major transformation took place during the communist regime, when, against the backdrop of the expansion of higher education and policies aimed at democratizing access to education, there was a significant increase in the number of Doctor of Science. This phase marked the institutionalization of the academic elite and the diversification of fields of specialization, particularly through the development of the technical and exact sciences. At the same time, the evolution of this elite was influenced by the ideological constraints specific to the regime.

The post-1989 period represents the phase of maturity and peak expansion for the academic elite, characterized by rapid numerical growth, disciplinary diversification, and internationalization. Free access to academic mobility and integration into the European and global research landscape have enabled the emergence of a generation of intellectuals attuned to new scientific and cultural paradigms. At the same time, there is a continued interest in the study of the identity, culture, and history of Romanians in southeastern Transylvania.

Overall, the evolution of this academic elite reflects the transition from a small, select group – formed under difficult conditions and concentrated in traditional fields

– to a diverse elite that is well-integrated into institutions and connected to the international scientific community. In this sense, the intellectuals analyzed represent not only individual achievements but also the expression of a collective effort to assert and consolidate the Romanian community within a multi-ethnic space.

At the same time, the study confirms that academic elites played a vital role not only in scientific and professional development, but also in preserving and promoting cultural and national identity. Through their educational, scientific, and public activities, they contributed to the construction of a genuine “identity” for Romanians in Covasna and Harghita counties, ensuring the continuity of cultural values and their integration into the broader context of Romanian and European society.

An important aspect of the academic elite’s work is reflected in the topics of their doctoral dissertations, which highlight a consistent focus on the study of the Intra-Carpathian region and the historical, social, and cultural realities of the Romanians living there. In the field of history and archaeology, notable works include:

- *Stone Structures in the Sântana de Mureș–Cernjachov Cultural Area [Construcții de piatră din aria culturii Sântana de Mureș – Cernjachov]* (Alexandru Popa);
- *The Beginnings of the Early Neolithic in the Transylvanian Intra-Carpathian Region [Începuturile neoliticului timpuriu în spațiul intracarpatic transilvănean]* (Marius Ciută);
- *Romanians in the Ciuc, Giurgeu, and Cașin Districts in the 19th Century [Românii din scaunele Ciuc, Giurgeu și Cașin în secolul al XIX-lea]* (Liviu Boar);
- *Southeastern Transylvania (1900-1914): A Socio-Political Study [Sud-estul Transilvaniei (1900-1914). Studiu socio-politic]* (Ana Dobreanu).

Research in the field of geography and environmental studies includes studies such as:

- *Tourism in the Eastern Carpathians [Turismul în Carpații Orientali]* (Nicolae Ciangă) and
- *The Small Depressions in the Central Group of the Eastern Carpathians [Depresiunile mici din grupa centrală a Carpaților Orientali]* (George Bogdan Tofan);

while the field of sociology is represented by works such as:

- *Ethnic and Confessional Structures in Covasna and Harghita Counties [Structuri etnice și confesionale în județele Covasna și Harghita]* (Ioan Lăcătușu) and
- *Social Networks of Local Elites in Harghita and Covasna [Rețele sociale ale elitelor locale în Harghita și Covasna]* (Codrina Șandru).

Furthermore, research in the fields of cultural identity and ethnography is exemplified by works such as:

- *Ethnocultural Aspects Specific to the Toplița and Mureș Regions [Aspecte etnoculturale specifice zonei Topliței și Mureșului]* (Dorel Marc) or
- *Romanian Churches, Schools, and Rural Communities in Covasna and Harghita [Biserici, școli și comunități rurale românești din Covasna și Harghita]* (Nicoleta Ploșnea);

while theological and ecclesiastical history studies include topics such as:

- *The Romanian Orthodox Church in Eastern Transylvania after World War II [Biserica Ortodoxă Română din estul Transilvaniei după al Doilea Război Mondial]* (Costel-Cristian Lazăr) or
- *The Religious Life of Romanians in Northern Harghita County During the Horthy Occupation (1940-1944) [Viața religioasă a românilor din nordul județului Harghita în perioada ocupației horthyste (1940-1944)]* (Valentin Florin Vatamanu).

At the same time, the thematic diversity is illustrated by works in the fields of exact sciences, economics, and technology, such as:

- *Hochschild cohomology and derived categories [Cohomologie Hochschild și categorii derivate]* (Alin Adrian Stancu);
- *The Effectiveness of Promoting Technical Progress in the Food Industry [Eficiența promovării progresului tehnic în industria alimentară]* (Lucian Bunghez); or research on the optimization of technical and energy systems conducted in Romanian and international academic settings.

8. CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, this research remains open to further additions and in-depth analysis, given that the identification and analysis of academic elites is a dynamic process, dependent on access to new documentary sources and contemporary developments in the academic and scientific environment.

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LOSS OF ROMANIAN CITIZENSHIP BY RESIDENTS OF BESSARABIA AND NORTHERN BUKOVINA

*George-Damian Mocanu*¹¹²

ABSTRACT

The process by which the inhabitants of the historical provinces of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina lost their Romanian citizenship in the context of their annexation by the Soviet Union is relatively little known. The resistance of the Romanian authorities to the Soviets' intention to deport all persons originating from these provinces to the Soviet Union manifested itself in a legal confrontation that took place between 1944 and 1945, which resulted in the majority of refugees being spared from deportation. In this article, we propose an analysis of the reasons for contesting Romanian citizenship for people from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and the evolution of the legal confrontation between Romania and the Soviet Union.

Keywords: Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, Romania, Soviet Union, loss of citizenship.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of the loss of Romanian citizenship by the inhabitants of Bessarabia is presented in the public sphere as a kind of abandonment by the Romanian state of its own citizens in 1940. This framing implies an inability and a lack of will on the part of the Romanian state to protect its own citizens. A detailed examination of the historical process through which the inhabitants of Bessarabia lost their Romanian citizenship shows that the issue stems from the Soviet Union's refusal to recognize Bessarabia's union with Romania, the lack of an internationally recognized regulation regarding the transfer of sovereignty, followed after World War II by a diplomatic confrontation in which the Romanian government attempted to do everything possible to offer Romanian citizens in Bessarabia the option to choose their citizenship.

The debates at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference placed particular emphasis on issues related to the transfer of sovereignty over territories in Eastern Europe, including those concerning the transfer of citizenship. The basic principle was that of choice; citizens of territories subject to a transfer of sovereignty were to be given a sufficiently long period (12 months) during which they could choose either the

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citizenship of the former state to which they belonged or the citizenship of the new state to which they would belong after the signing of the peace treaties. Discussions regarding the transfer of citizenship established that the wife and children under the age of 18 would follow the husband's choice, and renouncing the old citizenship was not to result in the loss of real estate in the former state, while movable property could be transferred without being subject to taxes¹¹³.

At the end of World War I, Romania united with territories that had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Transylvania, Banat, and Bukovina) and the Russian Empire (Bessarabia). Provisions regarding the transfer of citizenship were included in the peace treaties signed with the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: Austria (the Treaty of Saint-Germain of September 10, 1919) and Hungary (the Treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920), thus clearly regulating the citizenship of persons from the former Austro-Hungarian provinces. The situation of the inhabitants of Bessarabia remained unclear because no treaty was signed with the Soviet Union.

2. ROMANIAN SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS, 1920–1924

The recognition of Bessarabia's union with Romania represented one of the most difficult issues for Romanian diplomacy during the interwar period. A potential treaty to this effect was discussed at the Paris Peace Conference in early 1920 with the support of France and Great Britain. U.S. representatives opposed the signing of this treaty throughout 1920; it was ultimately signed by France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan on October 28, 1920. The governments in Kiev and Moscow announced that they did not recognize this treaty¹¹⁴.

The first article of the Treaty of Bessarabia stipulated that "The High Contracting Parties declare that they recognize Romania's sovereignty over the territory of Bessarabia, bounded by the present frontier of Romania, the Black Sea, the course of the Dniester from its mouth to the point where it is crossed by the old boundary between Bukovina and Bessarabia, and this old boundary"¹¹⁵.

¹¹³ George Damian Mocanu, *Cum s-au trasat granițele României la Paris în 1919. Procesele verbale ale Comisiei pentru studierea chestiunilor teritoriale referitoare la România, [How Romania's Borders Were Drawn in Paris in 1919. Minutes of the Commission for the Study of Territorial Questions Relating to Romania]*, Mușătești, Tana Publishing House, 2024, pp. 178–180.

¹¹⁴ Mihai Țurcanu, "Atitudinea SUA față de problema Basarabiei la ultima etapă a Primului Război Mondial și în timpul Conferinței de Pace de la Paris (1917–1920)" ["US attitude towards the Bessarabian issue at the end of the First World War and during the Paris Peace Conference (1917–1920)"], in *Revista de Istorie a Moldovei*, 3–4/2019, pp. 75–85.

¹¹⁵ „Înaltele Părți Contractante declară că recunosc suveranitatea României asupra teritoriului Basarabiei, cuprins între frontiera actuală a României, Marea Neagră, cursul Nistrului de la gura sa pînă la punctul unde este tăiat de vechiul hotar dintre Bucovina și Basarabia, și acest vechi hotar”, in ***, *Treaty between the Principal Allied Powers and Roumania Respecting Bessarabia*, signed at Paris, October 28, 1920, Treaty Series, No. 15, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922.

The remaining nine articles established the procedures for demarcating the border on the ground, the respect for minority rights, the procedures for acquiring and renouncing Romanian citizenship, the transfer of the mouth of the Chilia River to the jurisdiction of the European Commission of the Danube, and Romania's assumption of Bessarabia's proportional share of Russia's public debt, as well as the Russian state's other financial obligations. Romania sought to obtain international recognition and legitimization of the union with Bessarabia through two channels: the ratification of the Bessarabia Treaty by all signatory parties and direct negotiations with Soviet Russia.

In February 1920 in Copenhagen, the Romanian side requested that the Soviet Union recognize the union with Bessarabia as a condition for the resumption of diplomatic relations, a request that was rejected. The leadership of Romanian diplomacy in the years 1920–1922 fell to Take Ionescu, who believed that international recognition of Bessarabia's union with Romania would be sufficiently guaranteed by the 1920 Treaty of Bessarabia, without the need for negotiations or an agreement with Soviet Russia, especially since Take Ionescu did not believe the Bolshevik government would pass the test time¹¹⁶. A new diplomatic meeting between the Romanians and the Soviets took place in September 1921 in Warsaw: the Romanian side proposed as topics for a Romanian-Russian diplomatic conference the issue of the treasure confiscated in Moscow and the settlement of the practical aspects of Bessarabia's union, while the Russian side demanded discussion of Bessarabia's union. Romania refused to remove the issue of the treasure from the agenda and to agree to discuss the union of Bessarabia, which would have nullified the 1920 Treaty; the Soviet representative's reply was, "If you want Bessarabia, you will have to pay"¹¹⁷. The Soviets' final proposal at the 1921 Warsaw Conference was that, in exchange for recognizing the union of Bessarabia, Romania would renounce the treasure remaining in Moscow and conclude a non-aggression treaty with Soviet Russia.

The next opportunity to discuss the Bessarabia issue was at the Genoa Conference (April 10-May 19, 1922). This was preceded by the ratification of the Treaty of Bessarabia by Great Britain, which hoped that this gesture would strengthen Romania's position in discussions with Soviet Russia¹¹⁸. The Genoa Conference was effectively nullified by the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo (April 16, 1922) between Germany and Soviet Russia, a treaty that enshrined the international recognition of Soviet Russia and through which the two countries

¹¹⁶ Dov B. Lungu, "Soviet-Romanian Relations and the Bessarabian Question in the Early 1920s", in *Southeastern Europe*, 6, 1 (1979), pp. 29–45.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

¹¹⁸ Mihai Pițigoi, *O oportunitate ratată. Marea Britanie și ratificarea Tratatului de la Paris privind Basarabia [A Missed Opportunity. Great Britain and the Ratification of the Paris Treaty Regarding Bessarabia]*, *Analele Științifice ale Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași, History*, 64/2018, pp. 401–413.

renounced any mutual claims, establishing in a secret annex the beginning of military cooperation that would last throughout the interwar period.

In December 1922, a meeting in Lausanne between Soviet Foreign Minister Chicherin and Romanian diplomat Constantin Diamandy established that discussions regarding Bessarabia would resume along the lines agreed upon a year earlier in Warsaw. The Romanian-Soviet conference would not take place until March 1924, and Moscow's position would become increasingly less inclined toward negotiations.

The Romanian-Soviet conference in Vienna from March 27, to April 2, 1924, marked the end of exploratory talks along the lines of negotiation pursued up to that point (the return of the Romanian treasure from Moscow, the conclusion of a Romanian-Soviet non-aggression pact, discussion of Bessarabia's union with Romania) and recorded the failure of all discussions initiated after the conclusion of the Paris Peace Conference. The mandate for negotiations with Romania established by the Political Bureau of the PC(b)R stated in its first point that "Bessarabia cannot under any circumstances be ceded to Romania", the manner of negotiation was to demonstrate a desire for a peaceful resolution of the dispute, the request to organize a referendum in Bessarabia was to become the central issue of the discussions, and the conference was to be transformed into an opportunity for propaganda in favor of the Soviet viewpoint on the Bessarabian question¹¹⁹.

Although the referendum argument had been used before in connection with Bessarabia, this time the mission of the Soviet diplomats was to repeat it ad nauseam – knowing it would be rejected. On the other hand, the Romanians wanted to separate the issue of the treasure from the question of recognizing Bessarabia's union, being ready to sign a non-aggression treaty with Soviet Russia – but these issues, which the Soviets had strongly demanded in previous discussions, were now of no importance to Moscow. The Vienna Conference was doomed to failure from the outset, and for the Soviets it had a single purpose: international propaganda regarding the Bessarabian issue in the context of a referendum on union contested by the authorities in Bucharest¹²⁰. From this point on, for the Soviets, the Bessarabian issue became secondary from a diplomatic standpoint: according to Maksim Litvinov, Russia could afford to wait for a favorable opportunity to resolve the dispute, as the disputed border sector was far too narrow compared to the length of the Soviet borders, and the lack of a trade agreement with Romania was not likely to harm the Soviet economy.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Gheorghe Cojocaru, *Cominternul și originile moldovenismului. Studiu și documente [The Komintern and the origins of Moldovenism. Study and documents]*, Civitas Publishing House, Chișinău, 2009, doc. 7.

¹²⁰ Marcel Mitrașcă, *Moldova: A Romanian Province Under Russian Rule*, Algora Publishing, 2002, pp. 119–120.

¹²¹ Dumitru Preda, *Relații româno-sovietice. Documente 1917–1934 [Romanian-Soviet relations. Documents 1917-1934]*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 283.

3. ROMANIAN CITIZENSHIP AND THE ANNEXATION OF BESSARABIA IN 1940

Prior to the start of the Vienna negotiations regarding the recognition of Bessarabia's union, Law No. 724/1924 on the Romanian citizenship was adopted in Bucharest on February 24, 1924¹²². Under Article 56, this law granted Romanian citizenship by right to all residents of Bessarabia who were domiciled within the province on March 27, 1918, as well as to those who, although not residing there at that time, were born in Bessarabia. At the same time, under Article 47, the law provided for the possibility of waiving its benefits, that is, the right to opt for another citizenship. The granting of citizenship by operation of law did not eliminate the need for registration, the compilation of lists, and the issuance of certificates of nationality. In practice, it was precisely at this stage that difficulties arose: a significant number of people were left off the final lists, either due to administrative negligence or because of local circumstances.

The second key moment was Law No. 86/1939, adopted specifically to address the gaps left by the previous regime. Still, after the finalization of the citizenship lists, numerous people remained outside the official registry. The new law extended the registration deadline to February 1, 1940, under the same conditions, thus offering a new opportunity for those who had not managed to finalize their legal status. With regard to Bessarabia, the 1939 law did not represent a new basis for citizenship, but rather an extension and completion of the regime that began in 1924.

The major rupture occurred in June 1940, with the cession of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union. From that moment on, the issue of citizenship was no longer merely one of conferral under Romanian law, but also one of the practical affirmations of political and legal affiliation in the context of a change in sovereignty. From the perspective of the principles of international law, the annexation of a territory could not automatically result in the total and unconditional absorption of the entire population into the citizenship of the annexing state, without considering the individual's actual connection to the territory and without allowing for the possibility of choice. The annexation of Bessarabia occurred following a Soviet ultimatum on June 28, 1940; this annexation was not officially recognized by Romania, as the negotiations concerned exclusively the withdrawal of the administration and the army, without any discussion of the transfer of citizenship or the possibility of choice. The withdrawal from Bessarabia triggered a wave of refugees whose exact numbers are impossible to estimate; what is certain is that the Soviet authorities did everything in their power to prevent the flight of Romanian citizens who did not wish to remain under Soviet rule.

In the case of Bessarabia, a large number of residents demonstrated their attachment to Romania through evacuation or repatriation in 1940, that is, by leaving the province and settling on Romanian territory. This movement cannot be viewed

¹²² Monitorul Oficial No. 41/1924.

merely as an act of flight, but also as a concrete expression of the will to remain under Romanian authority.

Another important factor in this development was the issue of Soviet passports distributed to the inhabitants of Bessarabia in the fall of 1940. The receipt of such documents cannot be automatically interpreted as a valid and freely expressed choice of Soviet citizenship. Given the conditions of occupation and rapid administrative reorganization, the distribution of passports was of a general nature and did not necessarily imply genuine individual consent. Furthermore, the fact that Soviet authorities continued to approve repatriations to Romania even after this stage suggests that the issue of definitive allegiance was not, in practice, fully settled. The existence of these repatriations demonstrates that leaving the occupied territory and returning to Romania remained, in fact, ways through which a portion of the population continued to identify with Romanian citizenship.

4. ARTICLE 5 OF THE ARMISTICE CONVENTION

The dispute between Romania and the Soviet Union regarding the citizenship of Romanians in Bessarabia centered on Article 5 of the Armistice Agreement of September 12, 1944. This article obliged Romania to immediately hand over to the Allied High Command all Soviet and Allied prisoners of war, as well as all Soviet and Allied citizens interned or forcibly brought to Romania. At the same time, the article stipulated the Romanian state's obligation to provide for the maintenance, medical care, and transportation not only of these categories but also of displaced persons and refugees, until their repatriation. It was precisely this wording that gave rise to a conflict of interpretation. From the Soviet perspective, Article 5 constituted sufficient grounds for identifying and repatriating to the Soviet Union a very broad category of persons considered Soviet citizens. From the Romanian perspective, the text could not be automatically extended to all Bessarabians who had taken refuge in Romania, and the inclusion of "refugees" within the scope of the article did not equate to legitimizing forced and indiscriminate repatriation. The implementation of the armistice was overseen by the Allied Control Commission, which was in fact under Soviet control, meaning that the legal debate took place within a profoundly unequal political context¹²³.

The first transport of persons subject to repatriation, organized from Bucharest on October 23, 1944, showed that the refugees' willingness to return to the Soviet Union was low. Some of those on the lists did not show up for boarding. For the

¹²³ George Damian Mocanu, "Presiunile Moscovei pentru deportarea românilor basarabeni în Uniunea Sovietică la sfârșitul celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial" ["Moscow's Pressure for the Deportation of the Bessarabian Romanians to the Soviet Union at the End of the Second World War"], in Iulian Boldea, Cornel Sigmirean and Dumitru-Mircea Buda (eds.), *Literary discourse today. Dialogue and multiculturalism*, Section: History, Political Sciences, International Relations (Târgu-Mureș), 2022, pp. 139–144.

Soviet side, this was interpreted as the result of obstruction by the Romanian authorities; for the Romanian side, on the contrary, it demonstrated that these people did not consider themselves Soviet citizens and that their wishes had to be considered. Thus, as early as the fall of 1944, the dispute centered on two incompatible conceptions of citizenship. The Soviets proceeded from the premise that citizenship was determined by territorial control and the internal legislation of the USSR; the Romanians argued that a change in sovereignty could not nullify a person's right to choose a particular state affiliation.

At the same time, administrative pressure from Soviet authorities had been evident since September 1944. The prefectures reported to the Ministry of the Interior the interventions of Red Army representatives aimed at repatriating Bessarabian refugees who did not wish to leave. The Ministry of the Interior's response, formulated in General Aldea's circular of October 4, 1944, stated that refugees from Bessarabia could not be forced to return to the Soviet Union. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported this position, asserting that Bessarabian refugees in Romania could not be automatically classified as Soviet citizens. Nevertheless, on October 6, 1944, Colonel Borisov, on behalf of the Allied Control Commission, requested the compilation of a nominal register of Soviet citizens in Romania, without providing a precise definition of this category. The lack of a clear legal definition was not accidental but allowed for a broad interpretation favorable to Soviet claims. The escalation of Soviet pressure became evident in early November 1944. On November 2, General Vinogradov informed the Romanian government that the application of Article 5 was "entirely unsatisfactory", reproaching the Romanian authorities for failing to provide complete data on Soviet and Allied citizens and for obstructing their repatriation. At this point, the legal dispute had already turned into a political accusation: Romania was suspected not only of interpreting the armistice differently, but of sabotaging it.

On November 8, 1944, Colonel Nicolae Hagi-Stoica, a magistrate, drafted a report in which he systematically articulated for the first time the essential issues of the dispute. He raised the issue of precisely defining the concept of a Soviet citizen and pointed out the unclear legal status of several categories of people: Bessarabians and Bukovinians who had taken refuge in Romania, Romanian officials of Bessarabian origin, refugee priests, people who had never been under Soviet rule, but who came from territories claimed by the USSR, as well as Soviet citizens originally from within Russia who had married Romanian men or women and wished to remain in the country. In November 1944, the pressure took on an increasingly brutal dimension. Soviet officers demanded lists of students of Bessarabian origin from schools and lists of civil servants from Bessarabia from public institutions. There were reports of the abduction of Romanian citizens originally from Bessarabia, who were taken away without legal procedure and transported to the Soviet Union.

An important milestone in clarifying the Soviet position was reached on November 28, 1944, when Soviet Colonel Borisov stated that all Soviet citizens –

whether from Bessarabia, Bukovina, or other regions of the USSR – must be repatriated, citing a Soviet decree from March 1941. According to this interpretation, all Bessarabians who themselves or whose parents had been citizens of the Russian Empire prior to November 7, 1917, and who had resided between 1940 and 1941 in territory controlled by the USSR, held Soviet citizenship. The problem, however, was that the Soviet side applied these criteria in an expansive manner, going so far as to include people who were not of Bessarabian origin but had happened to be in Bessarabia at the time of the 1940 occupation.

The Romanian government's response was based on two major principles. The first was that seeking refuge in Romania constituted an expression of the individual's will to remain under the authority of the Romanian state. The second was the right to choose citizenship in the event of a change in territorial sovereignty, a principle enshrined in international law. Following this logic, Bessarabians who had left the territory occupied by the USSR could not automatically be considered Soviet citizens. It was precisely on this basis that, on December 8, 1944, Prime Minister Nicolae Rădescu asked Savel Rădulescu to secure a suspension of repatriations until the concept of a Soviet citizen was clearly defined.

The meeting on December 15, 1944, between Savel Rădulescu and General Vinogradov revealed with particular clarity the true scope of the Soviet objective. On that occasion, Vinogradov stated that the USSR sought to "obtain" 140,000 Bessarabian refugees in Romania. Even more significant is the fact that, when the Romanian side invoked the right of option, Vinogradov replied that these people were Soviet citizens and that the Soviet state needed them. A pivotal moment for the formulation of Romania's legal defense was the acquisition, on December 30, 1944, of the text of the Soviet decree of March 8, 1941. Based on this, the Romanian jurist Alexandru Danielopol formulated a restrictive interpretation, according to which the acquisition of Soviet citizenship required the cumulative fulfillment of three conditions: the person must have been a citizen of the Russian Empire on November 7, 1917, must have resided in Bessarabia on June 28, 1940, and must not have left the territory within the timeframe set by the Soviet ultimatum. This interpretation meant that not everyone who happened to remain in Bessarabia could be considered a Soviet citizen – neither those who had requested repatriation to Romania, nor those who had not had permanent residence there between 1917 and 1940. General Vinogradov, however, refused to accept the Romanian position and referred the matter to the authorities in Moscow for resolution.

The response received from Moscow on March 3, 1945, dashed hopes for a negotiated solution based on balanced legal grounds. Colonel Borisov announced that all Bessarabians who had acquired Soviet citizenship under the decree of March 8, 1941, were to be repatriated regardless of their choice. Furthermore, the Soviet interpretation went so far as to consider a Romanian citizen born in Romanași County, who was found in Bessarabia on June 28, 1940, to be a Soviet citizen simply because he had been on territory occupied by the USSR. At the same time, the Soviet

authorities demanded that a complete census of all Soviet citizens in Romania, according to their own definition, be conducted within ten days.

5. PARTIAL RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

On May 22, 1945, a Romanian-Soviet meeting was held at the Soviet Legation in Bucharest aimed at resolving the issue of the Bessarabians and Bukovinians¹²⁴. Representing the USSR was Minister Pavlov, the USSR's extraordinary envoy to Romania; representing Romania were Mihail Ghelmegeanu, president of the Romanian Commission for the Implementation of the Armistice, Minister Ciuntu, and lawyer Alexandru Danielopol; Magistrate Gane served as interpreter. This meeting was of utmost importance because it marks the Soviet side's acceptance of a partial right of option for Bessarabian refugees in Romania; for this reason, we will present this document in detail.

The preserved minutes show that the meeting had three main objectives. The first was to establish a specific method for identifying and registering persons considered or presumed to be Soviet citizens. The second was to define the categories of Bessarabians and Bukovinians who were to be registered on the lists. The third was to find an administrative formula through which the Romanian government could carry out Soviet demands without causing, at least on the surface, an immediate and mass deportation. Pavlov clearly tells Ghelmegeanu that the new Soviet communiqué "supplements" the previous instructions and "definitively" establishes the Soviet position on the identification and registration of Soviet citizens. After registration, individuals were to be asked whether or not they wished to return to the USSR, and if they cited "valid reasons", representatives of the Allied Control Commission would not have compelled them to return. Here, Pavlov also introduces the only clearly formulated concrete exception: women married to Romanians, with children and a household established in Romania, whom the Soviets declare they will leave in Romania so as not to break up families.

Pavlov requested that the Romanian government completely rewrite the administrative instructions regarding the registration of the persons in question, not merely add a supplement to the previous circulars. He insisted on "a single, complete, and definitive communiqué". Moscow sought to eliminate any previous Romanian formulations that might have left room for interpretations more favorable to the Bessarabians. Second, Pavlov demanded that persons who had arrived in Romania between June 28, 1940, and June 22, 1941, be placed on a special list, presumed to be Soviet citizens, while those who arrived after June 22, 1941, were to be included on the lists of actual Soviet citizens, provided they met the conditions of the Soviet decree. Third, he wanted the registration to be carried out without

¹²⁴ Marin Radu Mocanu, *România și armistițiul cu Națiunile Unite. Documente [Romania and the Armistice with the United Nations. Documents]*, Arhivele Statului din România, 1995, pp. 252–262.

publicity, through internal administrative channels, without the press or radio, and even demanded that the penalty for failure to appear be maintained, as a “threat to the public” and to the “prestige of the Soviet Government”.

This request to maintain secrecy is one of the key points of the document. The Soviets wanted complete lists, drawn up quickly, without public opposition and without political agitation. A second reason was to avoid mobilizing those targeted. Ghelmegeanu and Ciuntu immediately noted that, if the document were not public, individuals would not know the terms and conditions of registration, and if they found out through unofficial channels, panic would ensue. Another reason was to maintain control over interpretation. If the text remained internal, the ambiguous formula of “simple record-keeping” could be applied flexibly: it was presented to Romanians as an inventory, but in practice it could become a pretext for the subsequent roundup of individuals. Ghelmegeanu says exactly this: even if they are not deported, the mere fact that they are listed means that “the Soviet government, having their lists, can arrest them whenever it wants”. Pavlov does not respond with a solid legal guarantee but merely repeats that individual cases will be examined.

Essentially, Pavlov proposed a two-pronged approach: an apparent renunciation of immediate mass repatriation, but the maintenance of a complete mechanism of control over the people. He expressly states that, unlike the Soviet demands of March 1945, identification is no longer linked to the dismissal of officials and workers, nor to mass repatriation. Ghelmegeanu thanked him for this concession, which, however, was only apparent; Moscow was abandoning immediate brutality and shifting to a gradual approach: inventorying, listing, individual interrogation, filtering based on grounds accepted by the Soviets, and then eventual repatriation.

During this meeting, each situation received a specific Soviet interpretation. The first category consisted of people who were not in Bessarabia and Bukovina on June 28, 1940, nor did they have permanent residence there. For these, Pavlov agreed that they should not be included on the lists. The second category consisted of people who had arrived in Romania between June 28, 1940, and June 22, 1941. For these, the Soviets maintained a “presumption” of Soviet citizenship, but without immediately establishing their citizenship definitively. The third category consisted of people who arrived in Romania after June 22, 1941; for them, Pavlov states that if they had been former subjects of the Russian Empire in 1917 and fell under the provisions of the decree, they were “undoubtedly” Soviet citizens. The fourth distinct issue concerned individuals who were not in Bessarabia on June 28, 1940, but had registered with Soviet consulates by May 1, 1941; Pavlov considered them subject to the requirement of being included on the lists. The fifth issue concerned the Bukovinians evacuated between June 28, 1940, and June 22, 1941, regarding whom Ciuntu and Ghelmegeanu insist that the decree of March 8, 1941, exempted them, while Pavlov wants at least a separate record of them.

In response to each of Pavlov's positions, the Romanian representatives offer precise counterarguments. Ghelmegeanu insists that mere inclusion on the list is dangerous, as it provides the Soviets with a concrete tool to subsequently arrest those "in dispute". Danielopol criticizes the lack of criteria for admitting "valid reasons": without fixed criteria, Soviet assessment becomes arbitrary. He requests that a Romanian representative also participate in the interrogations conducted by representatives of the Allied Control Commission, possibly through joint commissions; otherwise, the entire operation would remain exclusively in the hands of the Soviets. Pavlov rejects this request for the time being, stating that the issue of joint commissions will be discussed "later".

Minister Ciuntu pointed out that people would inevitably become frightened, especially if they learned about these lists through indirect channels. Regarding the Bukovinians, he noted that they did not fall under the provisions of the Soviet decree and that their inclusion would cause "unimaginable panic", as it would be perceived as a preliminary measure for repatriation. Ghelmegeanu supported him and requested either the removal of the passage regarding the Bukovinians or its transfer to a "supplementary order", accompanied by the phrase "mere administrative record". Pavlov agreed only partially, ultimately proposing a third special list for Bukovinians who arrived between June 28, 1940, and June 22, 1941. The issue regarding the Bukovinians was that their citizenship was guaranteed by the 1919 treaty with Austria and that they had never been part of the Russian Empire. Following this meeting, the process of repatriating refugees from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union was based on the written consent of the individuals concerned to leave Romania.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Given the circumstances of World War II, archival sources are imprecise regarding the exact number of people affected by the developments described above. The 1941 census recorded 68,953 refugees from Bessarabia in Romania, a significant number given the administrative chaos and the extremely short timeframe in which the Soviet Union's annexation took place. On August 15, 1944, 690,473 refugees from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were registered on Romanian territory, of whom 456,331 came from Bessarabia. Their number may have been higher, given that population movements continued for some time after August 15, 1944¹²⁵. Alexandru Danielopol recalled that approximately 50,000 of these individuals

¹²⁵ Mihaela Teodor, „Problema cetățeniei basarabenilor refugiați din România, aspect al luptei pentru păstrarea identității naționale” [“The Citizenship Issue of Bessarabian Refugees from Romania: An Aspect of the Struggle to Preserve National Identity”], in ***, *La frontierele civilizațiilor. Basarabia în context geopolitic, economic, cultural și religios* [At the Frontiers of Civilizations: Bessarabia in Geopolitical, Economic, Cultural, and Religious Context], Galați University Press, 2011, p. 264.

returned to the Soviet Union¹²⁶; the tables preserved at the National Archives in multiple files and periodically updated mention a figure of 58,000 people.

The loss of Romanian citizenship by Romanians in Bessarabia was a complex process, the main cause of which was that the Soviet Union did not recognize Bessarabia's union with Romania in 1918. The citizenship status of people in Bessarabia was not guaranteed by international treaties, as was the case with the other provinces (Transylvania, Banat, and Bukovina). Even so, the Soviets effectively contested the acquisition of Romanian citizenship by Bukovinians through the Treaty of Saint-Germain – without, however, doing so explicitly. The confrontation between the Romanian and Soviet authorities between 1944 and 1945 regarding the repatriation of Bessarabians and Bukovinians was an unequal one; it was a confrontation between the force of law and the law of force. Even so, the Romanian authorities' insistence on the right to choose regarding citizenship meant that less than 10% of the refugees from Bessarabia and Bukovina were sent to the Soviet Union.

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¹²⁶ Liviu Vălenaș, *În culisele negocierilor cu Uniunea Sovietică, 1934–1947. Convorbiri cu Alexandru Danielopol [Behind the Scenes of the Negotiations with the Soviet Union, 1934–1947. Conversations with Alexandru Danielopol]*, Bucharest, Vremea Publishing House, 2001.

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THE ROMANIAN CONSULATE IN MONASTIR (BITOLA), 1892–1915. AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

During the reign of Carol I, the Kingdom of Romania's interest in the Romanian communities of the Balkans reached its peak. Between 1880 and 1904, consulates were established in Thessaloniki, Monastir, and Ioannina, with the primary objective of maintaining ties with the Aromanians in the region. On June 1, 1892, a new career consulate was opened in Monastir/Bitolia during the administration of Lascăr Catargiu. The choice of this city was motivated by the presence in the region, and specifically in Monastir, of a significant Aromanian population, as well as numerous schools and churches supported by Romania for the Aromanian communities in the area.

Keywords: Monastir, Romania, Aromanian, Diplomacy, Bitolia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Age of Consuls begins in Bitola¹²⁸ (Monastir during the Ottoman period) in October 1851, with the arrival of Friedrich Westermayer, Austria's first vice-consul. In 1852 and again in 1854, representatives from England and France were sent to the city. In 1859, the French representative withdrew, and in the same year a Greek consul arrived in Bitola, followed by a Russian consul in 1861. Serbia opened a consulate here in 1888–1889; France reopened it in 1894, Italy in 1895, and Bulgaria in 1909 (having opened a commercial agency in 1897). No German consul was appointed; the Austro-Hungarian consul was tasked with representing the interests of German, Spanish, and Swiss citizens as well. American interests were represented by the British consulate. During the wars of 1897 and 1912–1913, Greek interests were defended by France, while Serbian and Bulgarian interests were defended by Great Britain between 1912 and 1913. The consular corps in Bitola was divided into two major groups: one consisting of the five representatives of the Great Powers – Austria-Hungary, Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy – and another consisting of representatives of the Balkan states (Greece, Serbia, Romania, and

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¹²⁸ A city currently located in the Republic of North Macedonia, it was part of the Ottoman Empire and the seat of the Monastir Vilayet from 1892 to 1913; after 1913, it became part of Serbia. Due to the war and the proximity of the military front to the area, the Romanian consulate ceased its activity in 1915.

Bulgaria). While the former were observers, the latter group was directly involved in the national rivalry in the region. All were designated as consuls, although technically the representatives of the Great Powers generally held the title of vice-consul. The Balkan countries frequently maintained consul and a vice-consul in Bitola. The appointment to this post was not viewed with much enthusiasm by diplomats, given that numerous consuls had been assassinated in these regions. Most of those sent to Bitola already had professional experience in the Balkans, and particularly in the Ottoman Empire, before arriving in Bitola¹²⁹. Romania, the only country that did not share a border with the Ottoman Empire, proposed a policy of intervention in the region aimed at protecting and preserving the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Aromanian communities, known at the time as Macedo-Romanians. During the reign of Carol I¹³⁰, the Kingdom of Romania's interest in the Romanian communities of the Balkans reached its peak. Between 1880 and 1904, consulates were established in Thessaloniki, Monastir, and Ioannina, with the primary objective of maintaining ties with the Aromanians in the region.

Toward the end of the 19th century, Dimitrie Brătianu, Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, a fervent defender of Romanian schools in the Balkans and a leading member of the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society, advocated for the establishment of new consulates in addition to the one just founded in Thessaloniki. In a letter addressed to the same V.A. Urechia, the Romanian diplomat emphasized the following points:

“Work hard with the deputies to secure a more substantial subsidy for us. Pursue with determination the matter of establishing connections with the schools in Macedonia. Secure the establishment of consulates in Ioannina and Bitola; even if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lacks the funds for this, we will do what we can”¹³¹.

This case also confirms the role played by the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society as a driving force behind Romanian foreign policy in the Balkans, as well as its involvement in establishing diplomatic missions south of the Danube – an effort aimed at protecting the Aromanian communities.

2. THE OPENING OF ROMANIA'S CONSULATE/DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN MONASTIR/BITOLIA

On June 1, 1892, a new career consulate was opened in Monastir/Bitolia during the administration of Lascăr Catargiu. The choice of this city was motivated by the

¹²⁹ Bernard Lory, “Un poste consulaire en Macédoine, Bitola-Monastir 1851–1912” [“A consular post in Macedonia, Bitola-Monastir 1851–1912”], in *Cahiers Balkaniques*, 2011, pp. 38–39, passim.

¹³⁰ Although the first Romanian schools were opened in the Balkans during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the movement did not gain significant momentum until King Carol ascended the throne.

¹³¹ „Lucrați bine pe deputați ca să ni se acorde un subsidiu mai însemnat. Urmăriți cu bărbăție chestiunea legăturilor făcute școlilor din Macedonia. Dobândiți înființarea consulatelor în Ianina și Bitolia; chiar de n-ar avea fonduri pentru aceasta Ministerul de externe, vom face ce vom putea”, in Simion Țovaru, *Problema școlii românești din Balcani* [*The Question of the Romanian School in the Balkans*], Bucharest, 1934, p. 32.

presence in the region, and specifically in Monastir, of a significant Aromanian population, as well as numerous schools and churches supported by Romania for the Aromanian communities in the area. The first consul of this consulate was Spiru Constantinescu, a staunch supporter of the Conservatives¹³².

His perspective on the organization of the Aromanian issue was diametrically opposed to that of Inspector Apostol Mărgărit (supported by the Liberals), a fact that led to a series of conflicts which ultimately prompted the ministers of public instruction and foreign affairs, Take Ionescu and Alexandru Lahovari, respectively, to attempt to dismiss the influential inspector. King Carol's opposition, however, was decisive. As a result of the tense situation between the inspector and the consul, Take Ionescu decided that the subsidy for the teaching staff would no longer be distributed by the inspector, but by the consulate¹³³.

When the Liberal cabinet returned to power in October 1896, Consul Constantinescu was recalled from his post, although the new Minister of Public Instruction, Spiru Haret, stripped Inspector Mărgărit of his unlimited powers, while formally retaining him in his position¹³⁴.

When Spiru Constantinescu assumed consular duties in Monastir in 1892, this first-class consular office had the following staff: a head of office holding the rank of consul with a salary of 800 lei per month, a chancellor with 400 lei per month, an interpreter earning 350 lei per month, and a doorman earning 120 lei per month. The rent for the premises was set at 2,000 lei per year, with 600 lei for office expenses and 300 lei for heating the building. When the first Romanian consul took office in Monastir, the consulates of Austria-Hungary, Russia, England, Serbia, and Greece were already in operation¹³⁵.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the consuls of the Balkan powers were increasingly attuned to the interests of local communities and their internal disputes; indeed, they were increasingly approached by the local population, who submitted petitions, memoranda, and other similar documents.

3. LIST OF ROMANIAN CONSULS IN MONASTIR/BITOLIA

June 1, 1892-1896 – Spiru Constantinescu
1898 – C. I. Alexianu
1900–1901 – Spiru Constantinescu
1901–1904 – Alexandru Pădeanu.

¹³² Max Demeter Peyfuss, *Chestiunea Aromână [The Aromanian Question]*, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1994, p. 73.

¹³³ Simion Țovaru, *quoted work*, p. 33.

¹³⁴ Max Demeter Peyfuss, *quoted work*, p. 74.

¹³⁵ Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bucharest (further A.M.F.A.B), Constantinopol Fund, Vol. 46-Spiru Constantinescu, unpage; A.M.A.E., Fund Problema 77, Vol. C-33-Constantinescu Spiru, unpagged.

1904–1905 – Dimitrie Georgescu
1905–1906 – Constantin Contzescu
1906–1907 – Dimitrie Penescu
1907–1911 – Constantin Brăileanu
1911–1912 – G.C. Ionescu¹³⁶
1913–November 1915 – Emanoil Piteșteanu

3.1. Spiru Constantinescu

He was born in Bucharest, on December 19, 1855, and held a Law degree at the Law School in Bucharest. Constantinescu went through all the stages of a diplomatic path, from copyist within the Ministry's central apparatus (November 1, 1875), office deputy head (May 20, 1878), office head, second-class, chancellor within the Consulate in Ruschuk (not sworn into office) (September 23, 1879), head of the consulate general in Thessaloniki (September 6, 1886), transferred to the Central Administration (June 15, 1887), chancellor (director) of the general consulate in Thessaloniki (April 9, 1888), vice-consul and chancellor of the general consulate in Budapest (September 1, 1889), seconded, in the same capacity, to Sofia (November 1, 1890). On May 29, 1892, Romania's Consulate in Monastir was established, by means of a Royal Decree, whose first chief was Spiru Constantinescu. He stayed in Monastir until 1901 (with a longer break between 1897-1900), being subsequently transferred to Thessaloniki until April 1904. In June 1905, he was arriving in Constantinople holding the same position of consul of the office, a position he held until the end of March 1912. As of April 1, 1912, he took over again the position of head of the consulate in Thessaloniki until October 1913, decision of the foreign minister, Titu Maiorescu¹³⁷. He was awarded from the very beginning of his career with a number of honors: The "Faithful Service" Medal, first class (1881), office of the "Medgidie Order" (1888), knight of the "Star of Romania" Order (1888)¹³⁸. On May 9, 1911, while working as a consul in Constantinople, he was awarded by King Carol, the "Crown of Romania Order" as Commander¹³⁹.

3.2. Christu I. Alexianu

He was born in Crușevo (Krusevo-North Republic of Macedonia) as an Ottoman citizen. In 1899, his appointment as Romanian consul in Bitolia was denied by the ottoman state. D.A. Sturdza proposed him for the position after Spiru Constantinescu became unavailable, describing him to the king as the former prosecutor at the Court of Appeals in Craiova.

¹³⁶ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinopol, Vol. 46-Spiru Constantinescu, unpaget.

¹³⁷ A.M.F.A.B., Constantinopol, Vol. 46, Spiru Constantinescu, unpaget; A.M.F.A.B., Fund, Problema 77, Vol. C-33-Spiru Constantinescu, unpaget.

¹³⁸ ***, *Anuarul Diplomatic pe 1891 [Diplomatic Yearbook for 1891]*, Bucharest, 1891, p. 25.

¹³⁹ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinopol, Vol. 46, Spiru Constantinescu, unpaget.

“Mr. Minister, [...] I have the honor to inform you that, due to circumstances beyond my control, I am unable to accept the position you have kindly offered me”¹⁴⁰.

Nevertheless, he was listed in the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as consul in Bitolia from December 15 to 31, 1898¹⁴¹.

3.3. Alexandru Pădeanu

He was born on January 7, 1853, in Brussa (Burssa), Ottoman Empire. He held a law degree and was a graduate of the Higher School of Oriental Languages in Constantinople. In 1880, he was hired as a Turkish translator at the State Printing Office, and a year later he held the same position at the Ministry of the Interior. In 1890, he was the official Turkish translator for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Between April 1, 1893, and September 1896, he served as chancellor at the Romanian Consulate in Constantinople¹⁴² and Thessaloniki (from July 1, 1893)¹⁴³ from October 1, 1896, until January 1897, he was appointed vice-consul in charge of managing the Romanian Diplomatic Agency in Sofia. From Sofia, he was transferred to the same position and later served as manager at the consulate in Monastir until September 1900, when he returned to the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁴⁴. In Monastir, he was tasked by his superiors at the ministry with working alongside Apostol Mărgărit on matters concerning the situation of the Aromanian communities. The recommendations from Bucharest also included a call for unity, given that the area where Pădeanu was to carry out his work was the scene of intrigues that were severely disrupting the Aromanian community¹⁴⁵.

In April 1901, he was appointed consul in Bitola, and in March 1904 he was transferred to Ioannina to serve in the same capacity as head of the consular office. His final diplomatic post was in Ruse between August 1, 1905, and April 1, 1916, when he resigned and applied for his pension benefits¹⁴⁶. Decorations received: Officer of the Order of Medgidie (1886), Knight of the Order of the Crown of Romania (1887)¹⁴⁷.

3.4. Dimitrie Georgescu

He was born on January 8, 1865. He graduated from the Law School¹⁴⁸. He made his debut within the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs holding the position of copyist in

¹⁴⁰ „Domnule Ministru, [...] subsemnatul am onoarea a vă face cunoscut că, din împrejurări de natură, așa că nu-mi stă în putință a le înlătura, nu pot primi postul ce ați binevoit a-mi încredința”, in A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. A-28-Christu I. Alexianu, unpaget.

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴² A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. P. 45, Alexandru Pădeanu, unpaget.

¹⁴³ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinopol, Vol. 54, Alexandru Pădeanu, unpaget.

¹⁴⁴ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. P. 45-Alexandru Pădeanu, unpaget.

¹⁴⁵ Georgeta Filitti, “Alexandru Pădeanu”, in *Biblioteca Bucureștilor*, IX, No. 4/2006, pp. 10-12.

¹⁴⁶ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. P. 45-Alexandru Pădeanu, unpaget.

¹⁴⁷ ***, *Anuarul diplomatic pe 1891 [Diplomatic Yearbook for 1891]*, Bucharest, 1891, pp. 35-36.

¹⁴⁸ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinopol, Vol. 53, Dimitrie Georgescu, unpaget, A.M.F.A.B., Problem 77, Vol. G-24-Dimitrie Georgescu, Part. II., unpaget.

1885, subsequently getting the positions of register officer (1888), second class bureau chief (1889), chancellor of the general consulate in Odessa, seconded member of the ministry as navigation bureau chief (1890)¹⁴⁹. In 1891 he was working within the consulate in Ruschuk and the same year he moved to Thessaloniki. In 1892 he was transferred to Ismail, and in 1894 to Ruschuk. Since March 1, 1896, Dimitrie Georgescu, from his position of bureau chief within the commercial and consular department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Central Administration he was appointed vice-consul and chancellor of Romania's consulate in Constantinople, replacing Jeronym Leon. Starting with February 1, 1901, he was transferred as consul to Ruschuk. Between September and November 1903 he was temporarily seconded to Constantinople, where he held the position of general consul director. Starting with April 1, 1904, he was appointed full consul to Monastir, replacing Alexandru Pădeanu, transferred to Ioannina. Since April 1, 1905, he was transferred to Thessaloniki as general consul¹⁵⁰. In September 1906, he was sent back to Ruschuk, as general consul. In 1908, he worked as general consul in Chernivtsi. He returns in 1916 to the central apparatus of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in 1917, he went on a mission to Chernivtsi. Since December 1, 1919, he was appointed director of the Minister's Office¹⁵¹.

At the beginning of his mandate in Thessaloniki, an assassination attempt against him, against the vice-consul Trifon, against inspector Lazăr Duma and against professor Cionga was organized. On this occasion, only Lazăr Duma was badly injured¹⁵². Starting with September 1, 1906, he is sent back to Ruschuk as holder of the office¹⁵³.

3.5. Constantin Contzescu

Constantin Contzescu belonged to an old noble family from Wallachia, mentioned as early as the 17th century. His father was Matei Contzescu (1814-1884), his grandmother was Zinca Mavrodin. Constantin was married to Polixenia Filality¹⁵⁴. In 1894 he was an archivist within the Accounting Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From here, he was transferred to the position of editor within the Commercial and Consular Affairs Directorate¹⁵⁵. Constantin Contzescu was promoted from Monastir to the consulate in Thessaloniki, also acquiring the rank secretary of legation¹⁵⁶. In 1897, while he was a legation attaché to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was in charge of the consulate's affairs in Ruschuk during the vacation of Tomescu,

¹⁴⁹ ***, *Anuarul diplomatic pe 1891 [Diplomatic Yearbook for 1891]*, Bucharest, 1891, p. 28.

¹⁵⁰ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinopol, Vol. 53, Dimitrie Georgescu, unpagued.

¹⁵¹ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. G-24-Dimitrie Georgescu, Part. II., unpagued.

¹⁵² Constantin Papanace, *Originea și conștiința națională a aromânilor, [The Origin and National Identity of the Aromanians]*, Bucharest, Predania Publishing House, 2012, p. 50.

¹⁵³ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinopol, Vol. 53-Dimitrie Georgescu, unpagued.

¹⁵⁴ Octav George Leca, *Familiile Boerești Române. Istoric și Genealogie, [Romanian Noble Families: History and Genealogy]*, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1899, p. 173.

¹⁵⁵ A.M.F.A.B., Problema 77, Vol. M-48, Victor Mărgăritescu, unpagued.

¹⁵⁶ Stoica Lascu, "The situation of the Balkan Roumanians reflected in 'Revista Macedoniei' (Bucharest; 1905-1906)", in *Analele Universității din Craiova, History Series*, XIX, No. 2, 26 (2014), p. 71.

the full consul¹⁵⁷. He managed to get the second-class secretary position within the central administration, and from this position he moved to the diplomatic office in Paris. Starting with May 1904, he was transferred to Constantinople. From April 1, 1905, he was appointed consul in Monastir, replacing Dimitrie Georgescu¹⁵⁸. Only one year after he was transferred as consul in Thessaloniki until 1907, when he was promoted to first class legation secretary. After a three-year break, he returned to the consulate in Thessaloniki, between 1910 and 1912. Later on he was called back to the central apparatus of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for a legation councilor position¹⁵⁹. According to other information, he even got the position of legation councilor in Athens. In 1914 he was legation councilor in Paris. Awards received: the “Crown of Romania” Order, as Officer, in May 1911¹⁶⁰.

3.6. Dimitrie C. Penescu

He was born in 1874. He graduated the Law School at the University of Bucharest. He took all the hierarchical steps until he acquired the position of plenipotentiary minister, second class, in 1920. In 1900, he worked as third class legation secretary in Athens. In 1903, he was a legation secretary in Belgrade¹⁶¹, and one year later he was second-class legation secretary within the central apparatus of the Ministry¹⁶². Between 1906 and 1907, he was appointed consul in Monastir. From 1907 until 1910, he worked as consul in Thessaloniki¹⁶³. Following a prior familiarization with the Italian diplomatic environment, as a legation councilor in Rome, he was subsequently appointed Romania’s plenipotentiary minister attached to the Holy See between 1920 and 1928¹⁶⁴. He ended his diplomatic career from the position of Head of Mission in Stockholm¹⁶⁵.

3.7. Constantin Brăileanu

He was born in 1867 in Bilca, Suceava. His father, George Brăileanu, was a teacher and the principal of the village school. After graduating from high school in

¹⁵⁷ ***, *Epoca*, II, No. 557 (September 1897), p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ A.M.F.A.B., Constantinopol, Vol. 53-Dimitrie Georgescu, unpagued.

¹⁵⁹ A.M.F.A.B., Problema 77, Vol. C-13-Contzescu Constantin, unpagued.

¹⁶⁰ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Constantinople, Vol. 46-Spiru Constantinescu, unpagued.

¹⁶¹ A.M.F.A.B., Problem 77, Vol. P-15-Dimitrie C. Penescu, unpagued.

¹⁶² A.M.F.A.B., Problema 77, Vol. M-48-Mărgăritescu Victor, unpagued.

¹⁶³ A.M.F.A.B., Problema 77, Vol. P.-49-Emanoil Pitișteanu, unpagued.

¹⁶⁴ ***, *România-Vatican. Relații diplomatice. I. 1920–1950 [Romania-Vatican. Diplomatic Relations. I. 1920–1950]*, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2003, pp. 3–4; For his activity to the Holy See, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Cristina Elena Brăgea and Dimitrie C. Penescu: “Biographical aspects of the first Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania to the Holy See (1920–1928)”, in Adrian Vițalaru, Ionuț Nistor and Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu (eds.), *Romanian Diplomacy in the 20th Century. Biographies, Institutional Pathways, International Challenges*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021, pp. 17–64.

¹⁶⁵ Adrian Vițalaru, “Romanian Diplomats in the Scandinavian Countries”, in *Revista Română de Studii Baltice și Nordice [The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies]*, Vol. 6, 2 (2014), pp. 147–167.

Suceava, he enrolled in the Faculty of Forestry in Vienna in 1886. He did not complete his university studies because his family could no longer afford to support him financially. In 1890, Constantin Brăileanu arrived in Bucharest, and his knowledge of German helped him secure a position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1892, he began as a copyist, and in 1892 he was promoted to calligrapher at the recommendation of Minister Lahovary. In 1894, he was deputy head of the Division of Personnel, Protocol, and the Secretariat of Orders; in 1896, he became head of that division; and from 1903, he served as head of the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Between 1891 and 1895, he attended the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. In 1899, he received his bachelor's degree in law and letters. On August 4, 1905, he joined the consular corps and was appointed consul in Ioannina, a post he held until May 1, 1906. He was then transferred (01.03.1907) to the consulate in Monastir, where he remained until October 1911. In March 1912, Constantin Brăileanu was sent as consul to Constantinople, a decision made by Minister Titu Maiorescu. He held this position until April 1920, when he was delegated to serve as general inspector for the counties of his native Bukovina in the efforts to integrate this new province into the structure of the Romanian state. He was also drawn to parliamentary politics, running for the position of deputy for the Siret-Rădăuți constituency. In December 1920, he returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters as consul general in the Border Division, serving on the joint commission for establishing the borders between Romania and Czechoslovakia¹⁶⁶. Awards received: "Faithful Service" 1st Class (1893), "Crown of Romania" in the rank of Knight (1897), "Crown of Romania" in the rank of Officer (1904), "Crown of Romania" in the rank of Commander (1921), "Manhood and Faith" (1913), "Osmania" (1903), "Saint Anne" (1898)¹⁶⁷.

3.8. Gheorghe Constantin Ionescu

He was born on January 18, 1870, in the locality of Cojasca, Dâmbovița County. He graduated the Teacher Training School in Bucharest, in 1891, led by Alexandru Odobescu and the Teacher Training School in Paris – Auteuil, in 1895. He worked as a schoolmaster in Bucharest, from September 1, 1896, he was schoolmaster of the Romanian School in Sofia, and between 1906 and 1908 he was a school inspector, school organizer for the minorities in Dobrogea and for the "Csangos" in the area of Bacău. He was proficient in French, German and Bulgarian. From August 2, 1902, until 1906, he was seconded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as vice-consul in Monastir. Starting on February 1, 1910, he was appointed chief of the Romanian School and Church Service in Turkey and Bulgaria within the Central Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a 550 lei salary per month. By means of a Royal Decree dated December 5, 1911, he was appointed starting on

¹⁶⁶ According to the website www.scoalabilca.ro, Accessed on April 23, 2025:

¹⁶⁷ A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. B-40- Brăileanu Constantin, unpaginated.

January 1, 1912, consul of Romania in Monastir, replacing Constantin Brăileanu, transferred to Constantinople¹⁶⁸. From November 1, 1913, G. C. Ionescu was transferred from Monastir to Thessaloniki¹⁶⁹, replacing Spiru Constantinescu, who retired. Six years later, in 1919, he was appointed general consul and commissioner of the government in Sofia, and since December 1, 1920, he was general consul in Constantinople until 1932. Since 1924, he represented Romania within the Turkish-Romanian Court of Arbitration, created following the Treaty of Lausanne, and since October 1929, he was a member within the Straits Commission. On May 1, 1932, he applies for his dismissal:

“I end my career with a clear conscience of the man and clerk who did his best to fully carry out his duties”¹⁷⁰.

3.9. Emanoil Pitișteanu

He was born in Paris on December 23, 1873. He received his law degree in Bucharest in 1897. He was married to Elena Dosty. He was fluent in French, German, and Italian. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 11, 1893, as a copyist. On February 1, 1896, he was promoted to editor, and on June 1, 1899, he was appointed deputy head of office. From January 16, 1901, he served as secretary-archivist at the Consulate General of Romania in Constantinople. From April 1, 1904, he served as chancellor within the Central Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until May 1, 1904, when he was seconded to the Consulate General in Thessaloniki, from where he was transferred to Constantinople on February 25, 1905, to the same position as chancellor. Starting on April 6, 1905, he served at the Consulate General in Constantinople, having been promoted to vice-consul. From September 15, 1906, he was recalled to the Ministry's headquarters, serving as vice-consul with the salary of a chancellor, and on September 1, 1911, he was appointed vice-consul at the Consulate General in Budapest. On April 1, 1912, he was transferred to the post of consul in Ioannina, replacing Sebastian Greceanu, who had been transferred to Ismail. He remained in this post until October 1, 1913, when he was sent to serve as consul in Monastir. At the end of 1915, when Monastir was occupied by Bulgarian troops, he returned to the Ministry's headquarters. On October 1, 1918, he was promoted to consul general in the Central Administration

¹⁶⁸ A.M.F.A.B., Problema 77, Vol. I-13-G. C. Ionescu, unpaginated.

¹⁶⁹ Several reports from Thessaloniki, sent by Gheorghe Constantin Ionescu in 1917-1918, were recently published by the historian Petronel Zahariuc: “Muntele Athos și Marea Unire” [“Mount Athos and the Great Union”], in *Analele Științifice ale Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”*, Special issue: „Marea Unire a Românilor (1918) – Istorie și actualitate” [“The Great Union of the Romanians (1918) – History and Actuality”], Tom LIX/ 2018, Petronel Zahariuc, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu and Adrian Vițalariu (eds.), Iași, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Press, pp. 211–226.

¹⁷⁰ „Îmi închei cariera cu conștiința curată a omului și a funcționarului care a făcut tot ce i-a stat în putință pentru a-și îndeplini pe deplin îndatoririle”, in A.M.F.A.B., Fund Problema 77, Vol. I-13-G. C. Ionescu, unpaginated.

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On December 1, 1920, he was appointed Consul of Romania in Rusciuk until March 1, 1927, when he was recalled to the Central Administration. Beginning July 1, 1928, he was temporarily seconded to the consular office in Constantinople, where he served as manager of that diplomatic mission. As of January 1, 1930, he retired due to reaching the mandatory retirement age. Decorations: “Star of Romania, Officer Class”, “Crown of Romania, Knight Class”, “Avântul Țării” Medal, the “Manhood and Faith” Medal, 1st Class, the “Jubilee Medal”, the “Legion of Honor” in the rank of Knight, the “Order of Franz Joseph I” in the rank of Officer, and the “Order of Saint Sava” in the rank of Commander¹⁷¹.

4. FINAL REMARKS

The structure of the consulate in Monastir at the beginning of the 20th century (1905) was as follows: Constantin Contzescu, consul; Lazăr Duma, “honorary vice-consul, charged with inspecting Romanian schools and churches in Turkey”; George C. Ionescu, honorary vice-consul, charged with administering Romanian schools and churches in Turkey; Constantin Metta, dragoman¹⁷². This consulate played a key role in the Aromanian issue, as the heads of this diplomatic mission were, on more than a few occasions, the true architects of relations between the Aromanians and the local Ottoman/Serbian authorities, the articulated form of Romanian policy in the Balkans, an intermediate segment – yet one of major importance – between the political actors in Bucharest on the one hand and the Aromanian communities and the Ottoman and later, Serbian authorities in the region on the other.

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EMIGRATION – A CHANCE FOR CULTURAL REGENERATION

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ABSTRACT

This material proposes a theoretical perspective on the issue of Romanian emigration as a phenomenon of restoring Romanian societal balance. The central elements of the work, social will and societal balance (Gusti), are used to penetrate the depth of the phenomenon of Romanian emigration and at the same time to open the chance of understanding this phenomenon in its restorative dimension. To fulfill this desire, the elites are obliged to eliminate the anomic state (Durkheim) and for this to be possible, they must give up the complex of failure (Hirschman) to be able to put the entire social organism in order. Renouncing speculative behavior and the deviation of social will from the immediate interests of the nation towards obtaining objectives of particular benefit, which is specific to rebellious factors (Acad. Postolache) will lead to the elimination of the feeling of an abandoned society (Baltasiu, Bulumac). As a result of this paradigm shift, a change will be observed on the two planes of existence, simultaneously: on the social plane, the elites will be actively involved in capitalizing on the identity rent (Acad. Postolache), those intangible assets that offer uniqueness and economic advantages in relation to other nations, and on the ontological plane, the elites will create the space necessary for becoming into being (Noica). All these changes will only take place on the condition that the elites operate all this time with the imperative of the whole (Baltasiu) and only in this way will the phenomenon of disintegration (Băncilă) be reversed.

Keywords: societal balance, identity rent, emigration, diaspora, rebel factors, leaving the fatherland.

1. SOCIAL WILL – BALANCE FACTOR

Starting from a simplistic perspective of understanding reality, we can observe that any environment that knows an interaction between at least two actors, regardless of the analyzed period or intensity of the interaction, has a universal tendency that can be identified in any type of environment (social, economic, digital, etc.), namely, the tendency to balance. This does not imply a mathematical calculation of the increase or decrease of the units involved in a simplistic mathematical way but refers to a balance ratio between the units involved that may be different from the primary logic of equal parties. This is also true in the environment of social interactions, where the parties that enter into an interaction

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relationship to achieve certain objectives get involved in the respective social relationship in different proportions. Precisely for this reason, differences in involvement can lead, in an unplanned way, to the creation of societal imbalances.

The energy underlying the involvement of social actors is known as social will¹⁷⁴, a concept whose meaning was attributed by Dimitrie Gusti. It is considered the essence of social life because it represents that dynamic element within any social unit or among several social units, which gathers around itself those component parts of the social relationship to achieve a goal that goes beyond the individual level and can be identified as a collective necessity. During the period in which the social will is oriented toward achieving that goal, the entire social unit or all social units undergo structural changes. The changes that the parts of a whole undergo are elements that can truly bring improvements/increases in the condition of manifestation of that unit, but it must be borne in mind that a change, to have a beneficial effect, must consider the entire unit; otherwise, it creates the risk of an imbalance. The problem of societal imbalance was deepened by the Bucharest School of Sociology when the law of sociological parallelism¹⁷⁵ was developed. This social law starts from considering social reality as the sum of all the parts that make up the whole (social reality), and the component parts are in a relationship of interdependence, one with another. The two major descriptive categories of reality are the following: the constituent parts of reality are known as frames, and how people exert their influence on them through social actions are called manifestations. The key element of this theory is the fact that the relationship of interdependence exists between frames (cosmic, biological, psychic, and historical), among manifestations (economic, spiritual, ethical-legal and political-administrative) and between frames and manifestations. All these relationships of interdependence occur in parallel, that is, at the same time, between all units in a relationship of interaction. Therefore, the entire social cosmos of the respective unit is involved and undergoes changes.

2. ANOMY – AN IMBALANCE FACTOR

The danger of societal imbalance lies in the fact that although the whole social unit is dependent on the development of all parts and should develop at the same time and pace (parallelism), this does not happen in reality every time. This is the cause of societal imbalance, a cause that if not identified and eliminated within a certain time horizon, the imbalance can become so strong that the entire social unit can know its disappearance or dissolution. Historically, there are periods in which those who care for the good order of the social unit for which they are responsible either no longer respond to the collective responsibility they have assumed, or the

¹⁷⁴ Dimitrie Gusti, „Paralelismul Sociologic” [“Sociological parallelism”], in *Romanian Sociology*, Year II, No. 9–10, September 1937, p. 380.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 382.

height of the historical moment is much greater than the power of the elites to manage the tension. Regardless of the reason, such a period is known as anomic time¹⁷⁶. Anomia is a period in which the norms (set of regulations) that guide, order, preserve, and support the evolution of the social unit(s) become unclear. The ambiguity does not come from the fact that these norms no longer exist but from the fact that the consequences of not respecting them disappear, and the longer the time in which the norms are unclear, the greater the risk that the entire social unit will enter a state of profound imbalance, which may even lead to complete disappearance. However, before disappearance, a series of events are glimpsed that predict the deepening of the crisis or the approaching moment when disappearance becomes inevitable. An indicator of entering an anomic period is the dilution of identity.

3. LEAVING THE FATHERLAND – A LOSS OF VITALITY

The most profound concept that describes the starting point of the process by which collective identity is diluted is theorized by Vasile Băncilă under the name of “leaving the fatherland”¹⁷⁷. As the name indicates from the beginning, the process of “leaving the fatherland” involves leaving the spiritual land of your country. There is not a single stage, as in the immediate reality of leaving a specific space but can represent a series of “exits” from this relationship with the country, more precisely with the land of the homeland. To deepen the idea, we must understand that “leaving” at the same time distancing, postponing, ignoring, or even breaking the connection with what is generally called “the land of the country”. It must also be considered

¹⁷⁶ „Anomia este tocmai acest vid moral, vid de autoritate morală, un gol normativ, un deficit socio-moral, de integrare socială și profesională” [“Anomia is precisely this moral vacuum, a vacuum of moral authority, a normative void, a socio-moral deficit, of social and professional integration”], in Ilie Bădescu, *Istoria sociologiei – perioada marilor sisteme. De la A. Comte la M. Weber [History of sociology – the period of great systems. From A. Comte to M. Weber]*, Galați, Porto-Franco Publishing House, 1994, p. 437.

¹⁷⁷ „Când zici Țară, nu înțelegi numai ceva material. Ci și sufletul nației care formează oarecum parfumul existențial al «Țării». Termenul țarnă, țarină, poate că implică, în oarecare măsură, și factorul geografic, și pe cel al sângelui; pentru că țarina reprezintă pământul, terra, dar reprezintă și pe strămoșii (Pater) care s-au înapoiat în țarină. Iată de ce suntem contra crematoriului, pentru oameni. Chiar dacă nu se mai păstrează mormintele, și nu mai sunt cunoscute de urmași, dar se știe, în principiu, că moșii și strămoșii sunt în pământul Țării. Vorba a se desțara (spusă de L. Moldoveanu) e foarte expresivă și dramatică. Ea înseamnă că, prin desțărare, omul iese nu numai din pământul material, ci și din sufletul țării, adică și din pământul duhovnicesc.” [“When you say Country, you don’t just mean something material. But also the soul of the nation that somehow forms the existential perfume of ‘Country’. The term dust, perhaps implies, to some extent, both the geographical factor and that of blood; because the dust represents the land, terra, but it also represents the ancestors (Pater/Father) who returned do dust. This is why we are against the crematorium, for the people. Even if the graves are no longer preserved, and they are no longer known by descendants, it is known, in principle, that our ancestors lay in the land of the Country. The words leaving the fatherland (said by L. Moldoveanu) is very expressive and dramatic. It means that, by leaving the fatherland, the man leaves not only the material land, but also the soul of the country, that is, also the spiritual land”], in Vasile Băncilă, *OPERE – Volumul XII [WORKS – Volume XII]*, Brăila, Istros Publishing House, 2016, p. 103.

that land does not represent that matter whose utility is only to satisfy the food need of the population occupying a given space but is more than that. The meaning of the land is much deeper and simultaneous: from the geographical territory and the blood sacrificed by ancestors to preserve it within a certain border to that element that provides the genesis of the specific ideas of a nation, along with the memory of those who came before. Therefore, the renunciation or spiritual abandonment of the land represents a disconnection from the source that gives each nation its specificity in thought and manifestation among the great cultures. Considering the fact that the Romanian nation is a steadfast people and that it did not seek its place in the world through great migratory processes, it strongly highlights a degradation of the perception and manifestation of identity in relation to the Romanian meaning.

Regardless of the field discussed, each person is obliged to provide an original response to the challenges and problems of the times in which they find themselves. That is precisely why the way we choose to react to the challenges of history is important, because only in this way can the level and quality of a people's vitality be glimpsed.

Vitality¹⁷⁸ represents, in Nicolae Iorga's vision, that collective energy oriented toward achieving an objective pursued by all those involved. This organic response capacity must always be available to provide a response to the moment that requires a collective decision, and this will translate into obtaining/creating of that is of an extraordinary level. Moreover, it is important to remember that the vitality of a nation emerges when the elites have abandoned their social role and transformed their position into only an instrument for satisfying particular needs. Only in this way, by refusing/abandoning the social purpose, is the specificity of adaptation to new situations lost as well as the capacity to provide a response, specific to the place you represent.

In this case, not unique in the history of Romanians, using the theory of vitality and social will, we can say that when a critical moment occurs in the history of a nation, the measure and quality of a nation's vitality is given by the capacity of those who compose it to provide a specific and extraordinary response to that historical challenge.

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1. „Atunci este vitalitatea într-un popor, când și fără conducător și organizație, e în stare să realizeze ceva” [“There is vitality in a people when, even without a leader and organization, they are able to achieve something”];

2. „Vitalitatea, ca să existe, trebuie să îndeplinească două condiții: să fie o vitalitate permanentă în orice împrejurări, și să facă lucruri care să fie la un nivel excepțional” [“Vitality, in order to exist, must meet two conditions: to be a permanent vitality in all circumstances, and to do things that are at an exceptional level”];

3. „Vitalitatea adevărată nu e atunci când un om cu însușiri mari (...) o provoacă, ci când ea izbutește singură, din masa poporului.” [“True vitality is not when a man of great qualities (...) provokes it, but when it succeeds alone, from the mass of the people.”], in Nicolae Iorga, *Spații și hotare naționale. Afirmarea vitalității românești* [National spaces and borders. Affirming Romanian vitality], Galați, Porto Franco Publishing House, 1996, p. 223.

4. BECOMING – A SPECIFIC ORIENTED ACT OF WILL

The orientation of social will in a way specific to the ethnic group in a given space is the most original way to respond to collective challenges. As a phenomenon or an idea creates the need for a response from multiple social units, both the adaptation method and the response provided must encompass the specifics of all the units involved. This implies the ability to fully encompass both the problem and the entire unit/units undergoing change, so that the response provided protects the whole¹⁷⁹ and not just a part of it. The continuous process of adaptation to the dynamic surrounding environment can be understood from the perspective of becoming¹⁸⁰.

To understand what becoming means among collective destinies, it is necessary to consider the imperative of the whole, namely, individual destiny. This implies the ability of an individual to constantly know where he is. This space is not only physical but also includes his specific will. At every moment, any individual is in two places simultaneously: the physical and the spiritual. The second positioning is important because it shows the availability and potential of the individual in question. Therefore, in the Romanian space, the second space is questioned within communities, regarding someone outside the community, by asking: *whose are you?* Belonging is the most important indicator in the relationships between individuals, communities, different social units, or nations to establish a relationship between the parties. This belonging also implies the way in which a certain situation is managed because, as I said before, each individual must be understood as part of a whole. These wholes provide direction, intensity, and how the challenges are answered.

When in contact with a new situation, the change of the individual/collectivity presupposes the capacity to be in change, that is, open to the process of adaptation. The depth of in shows that a social unit that undergoes a change is no longer the old one because it is new, but the new one does not represent a completely new unit because it includes elements of the old ones. The process of selecting and adopting

¹⁷⁹ „Un rîu nu devine, ci curge. O transformare matematică nu devine, ci se desfășoară. Stările vremii nu devin, ci se succed. Nici una din aceste manifestări ale realității nu are loc cu necesitate întru ceva. Devenirea se ivește, în ele și cu ele cu tot – de la simpla mișcare pînă la transformare –, abia din clipa cînd s-a obținut, de către natură sau om, o întruchipare a situației descrise de «a fi întru». Devine ceea ce este întru ceva; și devine însuși lucrul (orizontul, întregul) întru care este ceva ; sau, laolaltă sudate, devin partea și întregul, lucrul și orizontul, învăluitul cu învăluitoar cu tot. Nu poate deveni decît o totalitate de fiecare clipă, așadar ceva care, devenind, se reazăză statornic ca totalitate.” [“A river does not become, but flows. A mathematical transformation does not become but unfolds. The states of the weather do not become but follow one another. None of these manifestations of reality necessarily take place in something. Becoming emerges, in them and with them everything – from simple movement to transformation – only from the moment when an embodiment of the situation described by ‘being in’ has been obtained, by nature or man. It becomes what is in something; and it becomes the very thing (horizon, whole) in which something is; or, welded together, they become the part and the whole, the thing and the horizon, the enveloped with the enveloping with the whole. It can only become a totality of each moment, therefore something which, becoming, reestablishes itself steadily as a totality.”], in Constantin Noica, *Sentimentul românesc al ființei* [The Romanian Sentiment of Being], Humanitas Publishing House, 1996, p. 168.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

new structural elements within a unit is called, from Constantin Noica's perspective, becoming¹⁸¹. This process is very important from the perspective of the fact that this type of choice can make the difference between prosperity and misery because these choices can block or potentiate the specificity of the respective unit. Therefore, it becomes clear that becoming¹⁸² is not just a singular process but a continuous and permanent one.

The orientation of the will becomes more evident when the individual/collectivity places themselves at the service of creative ideas of the will: a truth, a meaning of life, an idea¹⁸³. The openness to any of these generates a predisposition in choosing a certain way of responding, and thus, the individual sees himself faced with a profound choice; namely, he has to choose between "becoming into becoming" and "becoming into being"¹⁸⁴. The first orientation represents the path turned on each of us, a process in which the individual becomes only into something specific, completely forgetting the fact that the individual is also responsible for his being, not only for his intellectual or professional capacities. Therefore, one type of relationship to life (into becoming) tends toward conquering the edges, and the world and the second (into being) includes, in addition to the first, the aspiration of being. According to these two typologies, the world is also divided into human judgment and culture¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸² „Și tocmai aceasta e devenirea, care exprimă nu capetele de drum, ci drumul însuși, cu capete cu tot. Ceea ce e în devenire a părăsit informul materiei de început, dar nu e nici în forma, deplin obținută, a capătului atins; este într-o formă aceea, cu ea cu tot, modelându-se prin ea și făcând ca ea însăși să se modeleze prin devenire” [“And this is precisely the becoming, which expresses not the ends of the road, but the road itself, with ends and all. What is in becoming has left the formless beginning matter, but it is not in the fully achieved form of the end reached; it is in that form, with it and all, shaping itself through it and causing itself to be shaped through becoming”], in *Ibidem*, p. 169.

¹⁸³ „În cazul insului, e limpede: când intră sub atracția unui adevăr, a unui sens de viață ori a unei idei modelatoare, el înfrânge condiția de a fi în și trece în cea de a fi într-o ceva. Acel termen de atracție poate să nu fie un adevăr, un sens ori o idee gata constituite, ba chiar niciodată nu sînt constituite, pentru cel ce se deschide către ele și devine odată cu ele, dar nu e mai puțin termenul în care se petrece devenirea, cel la care ea se raportează statornic, chiar dacă îl întrușchipează schimbat de fiecare dată.” [“In the case of the individual, it is clear: when he falls under the attraction of a truth, a meaning of life or a shaping idea, he defeats the condition of being in and passes into that of being in something. That term of attraction may not be a truth, a meaning or a ready-made idea, or indeed they are never constituted, for the one who opens himself to them and becomes with them, but it is no less the term in which the becoming takes place, the one to which it relates steadily, even if it embodies it changed each time.”], in *Ibidem*, p. 170.

¹⁸⁴ „Există atunci două deveniri, ce se înmănunchează în om, dar cu orientări deosebite: o devenire într-o devenire și una într-o ființă” [“There are then two becomings, which are intertwined in man, but with distinct orientations: a becoming into becoming and one into being”], in *Ibidem*, p. 173.

¹⁸⁵ „Căci putem vorbi despre două deveniri. Una e cea întoarsă asupra-și, o devenire numai într-o ceva, ca o reluare neîncetată, satisfăcută ori nesatisfăcută cu sine și ea poate reprezenta o adevărată uitare a ființei, alta este devenirea cu năzuința ființei în ea. Potrivit cu aceste două deveniri se și împarte lumea omului, cum se împarte judecata lui, ca și cultura în întregul ei” [“For we can speak of two becomings. One is the one turned upon itself, a becoming only in something, as an incessant resumption, satisfied or dissatisfied with itself and it can represent a true forgetfulness of being, the other is the becoming with the aspiration of being in it. According to these two becomings, the world of man is divided, as is his judgment, as is culture in its entirety”], in *Ibidem*, p. 174.

Therefore, it becomes easier to understand that the path an individual takes is constantly under an “imperative of the whole”¹⁸⁶. This feeling constantly works within the individual and constantly creates chances to fill this void created by the lack of development of the entire human spectrum: social and ontological. If the need for the whole remains unrealized, the chance for crises to be introduced into the world is thus created¹⁸⁷. The longer a crisis remains unresolved, the greater the chances that the level and forms of manifestation of the initial crisis will multiply exponentially.

5. REBEL FACTORS – DEVIATION OF THE WILL

The evolution of a society should naturally follow a coherent line, dictated by its real needs and the internal rhythm of development. However, history shows us that this path is often diverted by what are known as “rebellious factors”¹⁸⁸ – it can be individuals, groups or ideologies – who introduce artificial tensions into the social structure. These tensions operate on the principle of “open information loops”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ „Imperativul întregului se referă la faptul că omul este o totalitate latentă care este supusă constant eroziunii și deci îndepărtării de sine și de semenii. (...) În același timp, imperativul întregului arată că pentru înțelegerea realității este necesară înțelegerea contextului simbolic.” [“The imperative of the whole refers to the fact that man is a latent totality that is constantly subject to erosion and therefore distance from himself and from his fellow men. (...) At the same time, the imperative of the whole shows that in order to understand reality, it is necessary to understand the symbolic context.”], in Radu Baltasiu and Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Noologia, perenitatea unei paradigme [Noology, the perpetuity of a paradigm]*, Bucharest, Mica Valahie Publishing House, 2008, p. 12.

¹⁸⁷ „(...) tot ceea ce se întâmplă cu noi și în jurul nostru, oricât de neimportant ar fi, poartă stigmatul întregului, chiar atunci când în compoziția unui fapt oarecare, întregul este prezent prin *criza* pe care o întrețin părțile *absente* în câmpul concret de manifestare a respectivului *fapt circumstanțial*.” [“(...) everything that happens to us and around us, no matter how unimportant, bears the stigma of the whole, even when in the composition of a certain fact, the whole is present through the crisis that the absent parts maintain in the concrete field of manifestation of that particular circumstantial fact.”], in Ilie Bădescu, *Noologia. Cunoașterea ordinii spirituale a lumii. Sistem de sociologie noologică [Noology. Knowledge of the spiritual order of the world. System of noological sociology]*, Valahia Publishing House, Euxin Collection, 2001, p. 523.

¹⁸⁸ „Problema este că în loc să evolueze normal, adică după logica lor firească, societățile sunt forțate să urmeze căile ocolite induse de aceste bucle provocate de factorii rebeli ai sistemului.” [“The problem is that instead of evolving normally, that is, according to their natural logic, societies are forced to follow the detours induced by these loops caused by the rebellious factors of the system.”], in Ilie Bădescu, *Creație și ruină [3] – Economia și lumea, de unde vine dezechilibrul? Introducere în teoria crizelor substructurale [Creation and Ruin [3] – Economy and the World, Where Does the Imbalance Come From? Introduction to the Theory of Substructural Crises]*, Bucharest, Mica Valahie Publishing House, 2023, p. 62.

¹⁸⁹ „În principiu, factorii rebeli rup societatea de linia sa firească de înaintare, generând ceea ce Bluma Zeigarnik denumesc bucle informaționale deschise. Bucla rămâne deschisă și apăsătoare pentru minte ca și cum timpul n-ar exista. Persistența aceasta ține cumva de specificul funcțional al regiunii cerebrale amigdaliene. «Amigdala cerebrală nu are percepția timpului. Vrea o rezolvare chiar acum». Factorul rebel a indus o tensiune, care îmbracă forma buclelor deschise. Problemele nesoluționate, ne spune Bluma Zeigarnik, induc tensiuni sub forma buclelor deschise pe care creierul caută să le închidă (să le rezolve) pentru a depăși tensiunea lor. Supralicitarea amigdalei, prin mecanismul fatal al buclelor deschise, adică al problemelor nerezolvate, poate genera dezechilibre specifice de ordin spiritual. În loc să fie utilizată la rezolvarea problemelor specifice sistemului, ideologiile induc bucle în raport cu linia sistemului și astfel sustrag energia sistemică de la căutarea soluțiilor spre susținerea unei/unor ideologii. În loc să rezolve chestiunea, ideologiile o agravează generând mari ocoluri ale societății împinsă în conflicte și războaie ideologice.” [“In principle, rebellious factors break society from its natural line of advance, generating what Bluma Zeigarnik calls open

described by Bluma Zeigarnik as a series of unresolved problems that remain active in the minds of individuals, consuming psychic energy until they are closed/resolved.

At the individual level, such an information loop means that the minds of individuals are in a state of continuous alert due to the fact that this brain region, responsible for emotional reactions, cannot perceive the temporal extent. Thus, an unresolved problem remains always active, always urgent. When we transpose this mechanism to the collective level, it can be seen that entire societies can remain trapped in tensions that do not belong to them, but which dominate their attention and consume their resources.

Ideologies play a key role in this process. Instead of contributing to solving the real difficulties of the system, they create their own open loops, imposing themes and conflicts that do not derive from the authentic needs of the community. Thus, social energy is diverted from concrete solutions to supporting abstract constructions. Instead of clarifying, ideologies complicate; instead of uniting, they polarize; instead of providing direction, they generate detours¹⁹⁰.

The consequences become predictable: from stagnation, conflicts, cultural ruptures to ideological wars. Society, instead of advancing on its natural path, is pushed along winding paths, dictated by tensions that do not belong to it, but which it is forced to bear. Thus, the fundamental problem is not only the existence of rebellious factors, but their capacity to transform tensions into open loops that paralyze evolution. A mature society is one that manages to close these loops, reduce ideological noise and find its natural direction, freed from the pressure of artificial problems.

Thus, the phenomenon of subalternization becomes relevant because it describes the effects of elites giving up on representing the interests of the people they come from, ending up serving new centers of power. In this process, elites become dependent, lacking autonomy and deeply alienated, like entities without their own identity. It becomes somewhat intuitive to understand that in societies with a real need for development and synchronization¹⁹¹ of creative manifestations with the needs that

information loops. The loop remains open and oppressive to the mind as if time did not exist. This persistence is somehow related to the functional specificity of the amygdala brain region. 'The cerebral amygdala has no perception of time. It wants a solution right now'. The rebellious factor has induced a tension, which takes the form of open loops. Unsolved problems, Bluma Zeigarnik tells us, induce tensions in the form of open loops that the brain seeks to close (solve) in order to overcome their tension. Overexertion of the amygdala, through the fatal mechanism of open loops, that is, of unresolved problems, can generate specific imbalances of a spiritual nature. Instead of being used to solve problems specific to the system, ideologies induce loops in relation to the system line and thus divert systemic energy from the search for solutions to support to an ideology/ideologies. Instead of solving the issue, ideologies worsen it by generating great detours of society pushed into conflicts and ideological wars"]], in *Ibidem*, pp. 58–59.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹¹ "The substance, meaning the whole of aptitudes and behavioral predispositions of the masses, even if it is foreign or 'inadequate' in relation to the imported superstructure, has to change in order to match the profile of the new institutional matrices. Development is not possible by their own means, hence the name synchronization of this type of evolution by imitation. There is, therefore, a single model, the Western model, and backward countries have no access to it save by imitation. The process has been theorized in Romania by Eugen Lovinescu (Lovinescu, 1997) in the first half of the 20th century, and it is generally known as the paradigm of synchronization.", in Radu Baltasiu and Ovidiana Bulumac, *Fractured Modernities, Elites, Romania and „Europe”*, Bucharest, University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2014, p. 60.

historical time brings, the inability of the elites to rise to the height of the moment creates a double fracture¹⁹²: one among the elites and the other among those represented. In the first case, it is about what is known as the phenomenon of the *intelligentsia*¹⁹³. That social class whose destiny was to provide guidance and increase the chances of manifestation of the latent potential of the space it represents, becomes the means through which only the forms of a phenomenon that is functional in the space from which it is taken are adopted from an external space, without understanding the reason behind the creation of that phenomenon. Instead of dignity and courage based on a collective desire to increase the power of representation among the great civilizations, what Hirschman calls *fracasomania*¹⁹⁴ appears, a feeling of inferiority based on the gap between societies at different degrees of development. At the same time, among those represented, a feeling of an abandoned society is created, that moment when the state becomes deeply dysfunctional, and its institutions no longer serve the public interest, but undermine it: the administration acquires irrational features through predatory taxation that burdens citizens without providing them with adequate services, the judicial system turns into a source of insecurity through inefficiency, corruption and unpredictability, and bureaucracy, instead of stimulating development, acts as a social brake, blocking initiative and modernization; all of this leads to a deep rift between the state and the citizen, who ends up feeling unprotected, ignored and, ultimately, abandoned¹⁹⁵. Peoples are transformed into obedient majorities, free only to sell their labor power, not to participate in the real valorization of the results of their labor¹⁹⁶.

From the perspective of the theory of coexisting successions, the current crisis is interpreted as a civilizational crisis, which propagates in all structures (levels) of the

¹⁹² Fractures appear when societies cannot conclude their historical cycle or series due to major temporal distortions, resulting from external aggressions. Once the fracture is triggered, even after the primary factor has retreated and disappeared, the affected society suffers from the decomposition of its social potential, thus sabotaging, at least in part, the future chances to its own normality, and implicitly, its own modernity, in *Ibidem*, p. 20.

¹⁹³ “The main mediator on the side of the backward society is the *intelligentsia* that manages the connection between the two types of society, most of the time by imitation, by importing legislation, and through democratic institutions. The dominant notion of these elites is that backward societies only have access to progress by ‘synchronizing’ local structures to the Western ones, development progressing from form to substance. The substance, meaning the whole of aptitudes and behavioral predispositions of the masses, even if it is foreign or ‘inadequate’ in relation to the imported superstructure, has to change in order to match the profile of the new institutional matrices. Development is not possible by their own means, hence the name *synchronization* of this type of evolution by imitation.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁴ “As a result of prolonged relative backwardness, a general expectation is that one’s country will continue to perform poorly. (...) Take the situations in which politicians who have spent the largest part of their lives in the opposition suddenly and unexpectedly seize power: all too often their actions seem almost calculated to make them forfeit that power in the shortest possible time. (...) Lack of learning is by no means the most serious consequence of *fracasomania* [i.e. the failure complex] and of the inability or refusal to perceive change. In a government intent upon transforming a country’s socio-economic structure, these traits can lead to complete mishandling of the political situation, from ignoring and needlessly antagonizing groups that could be won to underestimating the strength of others that cannot (...)”, in *Ibidem*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁵ The main characteristic of the abandoned society is the *dysfunctional character of the state and administration*, in general. The state administration gains irrational accents by the *predatory character of taxation, serious shortcomings in the justice system*, and the *social retardation function* that it exercises in relation to public interests, in *Ibidem*, p. 64.

¹⁹⁶ Ilie Bădescu, *quoted work*, 2023, p. 62.

system. Therefore, being a multilevel and multidimensional crisis, it is capable of attracting into its dynamics all civilizations that currently co-exist. This characteristic shows that we are dealing with a substructural crisis, that is, one that affects the deep foundations of the system. The transition from one level to another within this crisis occurs in a hidden way, specific to substructural processes. At each level, the crisis takes a particular form. The first level, viewed from top to bottom, is marked by the energy exhaustion of the elites. Acad. Postolache states that this phenomenon of the elites' inability to adapt to a new, even radically changed, environment is caused by the lack of internal energy necessary for readaptation to a new change. This idea takes up and complements established concepts such as "historical fatigue" (N. Iorga) or "social overwork" (E. Demolins, sociologist of the school of Frédéric Le Play)¹⁹⁷.

In recent decades, the world's civilizations have come into increasing tension with the dominant global economic model. This tension is not just a conflict of interests, but a profound, almost instinctive reaction of people who feel that the contemporary economy no longer reflects their specific identity. The increasingly visible distrust of elites is not an accident, but the expression of a rupture between civilizations and an economy that has eroded what they have achieved. Postolache conceptualizes it as "identity rent"¹⁹⁸. Identity rent represents the set of intangible assets – cultural, spiritual, symbolic – that give a person uniqueness and the ability to transform this uniqueness into an economic advantage. Here we can bring into question those resources that are impossible to imitate, which derive from traditions, mentalities, ethos, creativity and social cohesion. When there is a tendency to standardize, standardize and impose external models, these assets are diminished to the point of suppression. In this way, nations observe how the feeling is increasingly acute that the economy no longer belongs to them, and the elites no longer seem to act on their behalf.

In this context, the identity quasi-rent becomes an essential indicator: it measures the level of confidence of populations in their own economies and in the capacity of their elites to manage challenges¹⁹⁹. When this confidence decreases, we are not only witnessing an economic crisis, but a civilizational crisis. People no longer perceive the economy as a space for valorizing their own identity, but as a foreign, imposed mechanism, in which their role is reduced to simple participation through work, not through decision or benefit. On a larger scale, the civilization quasi-rent reflects the average of these identity rents within a world economy. If people in a given civilizational area lose confidence in their own elites and their own economies, the entire civilization enters a state of vulnerability. Europe, for example, is facing such a crisis today: a crisis of trust, meaning, and the capacity to transform identity into an economic resource²⁰⁰.

The civilizational value of a nation's economy cannot increase through simple technical adjustments or by importing external economic models. It can only be revitalized by reconnecting elites to the spiritual specificity of their peoples²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

Identity is not an obstacle to modernization, but an intangible asset of great value, a source of creativity, cohesion and social energy. When elites assume this identity and transform it into a positive resource, the identity rent increases, and the people's trust in their elites is restored.

The current crisis is not only economic but also structural and substructural. It touches the foundations of Romanian civilization because it affects the way people relate to their own economy and elites. The way out of this crisis requires institutional reforms and a return to the profound values of civilization. In a globalized world, identity must not be sacrificed but valorized. Only in this way can the homeland once again become a space of meaning, trust, and authentic development.

6. MIGRATION – PROCESS OF IDENTITY REGENERATION

Romanian migration in recent decades is often viewed through narrow lenses: demographic loss, labor exodus, family breakdowns or economic imbalances. Although these dimensions are real, they do not exhaust the profound meaning of the phenomenon. Viewed from a civilizational perspective, Romanian migration can be understood as a stage of cultural reconquest of an untapped historical potential, a broad movement through which a nation rediscovers its latent resources, reactivates them and reintegrates them into a global circuit.

Romania has been, for centuries, a border civilization: between empires, between worlds, between cultural models. This position has generated a complex identity, but also an accumulation of unfulfilled potential. In many historical moments, the creative energies of the people have been blocked by political, economic or institutional constraints. The massive migration after 1990 functioned as a valve, but also as a catalyst: Romanians went out into the world not only to survive but also to reactivate their individual capacities in an environment that allowed them to manifest themselves.

In this sense, migration should be seen not as a flight, but as an action to recapture abandoned/untapped potential. Romanians, like all nations, carried with them a cultural, professional and spiritual potential that, within the borders, had remained uncultivated. When we say diaspora, we do not only refer to a dispersed community, but we must also bear in mind that we are dealing with an identity laboratory. Outside the country, Romanians were forced to define more clearly who they are, what differentiates them and what unites them. Paradoxically, distance produced a rapprochement: many Romanians rediscovered the language, traditions, values and spirituality that at home they considered trivial or invisible. Migration should be seen as a civilizational school, and the diaspora as an extension of the nation, not a loss. Cultural reconquest does not necessarily mean the physical return of those who emigrated, but rather a return to the values and spiritual foundations on which the history of the Romanian nation was built.

By the way Romanians assert themselves in the world, they reconquer a symbolic space that history has not allowed them to occupy. Migration thus becomes a particular

strategy of modernization, a process through which the nation regains its unfruitful potential, puts it into global circulation and returns it to its own cultural matrix.

7. CONCLUSION

Romanian migration should not only be seen as a demographic drama but also be understood in a broader context, that of cultural rebirth. It is a stage through which the Romanians recover their deep energies, redefine their identity, and expand their civilizational presence, becoming notable among the great European peoples (especially, but not only). Instead of being seen exclusively as a loss, migration could be understood as a process of unlocking the becoming by redirecting collective energies (social will) to fulfill those objectives so necessary for an increased quality of life in relation to the new contemporary challenges. Moreover, this Romanian cultural laboratory (diaspora), despite its apparent institutionalized disorganization, can become a factor in correcting the economic and spiritual deviations of the elites, making possible the economic recovery of the homeland by identifying and introducing the identity rent into the great international economic circuits.

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CULTURE AND HOUSING – IN THE ROMANIAN VILLAGE AND IN THE HOMERIC TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

The spatial dimension is not just one of the coordinates of cultural development, but rather a condition for its manifestation. This is easily seen in the analysis of family culture. By researching sociological and ethnographic data related to the organization and functioning of the traditional Romanian family in rural spaces, the article interprets these data in order to restore the importance of physical, natural, and material references in understanding the cultural formula of the family. Even though they have been treated more from an economic perspective, these references carry and generate visions of the world and life. The research into the composition of the family household, both at the level of forms and architecture as well as at the level of materials used, reveals a mode of human social life that extends and does not separate itself from nature. Additionally, it represents an organizational method that, by specializing in space, can maintain its continuity at universal dimensions. This process does not arise from a historical perfection of construction forms but from the initial stages of these forms that have become matrices surviving into contemporary Romanian family tradition. The study of this reality is complemented by its comparison with the Homeric household, which, in an interpretation of its material forms, closely resembles the Romanian model.

Keywords: household, culture, tradition, Homer, Odyssey.

1. CULTURE AND SPACE

Cultures form organically through a society's assimilation of a spatial arrangement. This does not necessarily imply a stable horizon, as is the case with sedentary societies, although sedentarization, through its constancy, fosters a deeper connection between space and society. Leo Frobenius distinguished between two different systems of paideumatic perception of space: the Eastern system defines space as the cave of the world; the Western system, on the contrary, as the vastness of the world. The sense of the interior or, conversely, that of the exterior has generated different constructions in terms of the culturalization and socialization of space:

“In Africa, the feeling of the cave corresponds to the Arab encampment, the Atlantic rain-fed structure; in Europe, to the ancient Etruscan rotunda; in Asia, to the basilica, which has become the central structure, whose dome is, for example, for Spengler nothing other than a replica of the celestial cave set above the inner courtyard. The

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Berber hut, the Ethiopian fortress, the Kotoko palace, the Cretan palaces, the Rhine citadel, and the Gothic dome represent architectures of the feeling of vastness²⁰³.

A certain condition of the encounter between space and human perception gives rise to a specific cultural, paideumatic disposition of populations: the feeling of the cave leads to the emergence and the weight caused by the sense of the inexorable, of the destiny from which one cannot escape; the sense of vastness fosters a passion for exploration, a thirst for novelty, and the development of individual character – qualities that, in the end, can overcome fate.

In no civilization is space perceived and defined in a uniform manner. Lived space is the medium through which the cultural articulation of the social takes place, and this occurs not only through occupational conditioning based on the resources available in a given area, for example, but also through the imposition of a sacred universe that is fundamentally and unconsciously accepted²⁰⁴. Initially, in traditional cultures, space was distinguished by a fundamental and exclusive criterion: sacred space was the realm of fundamental social reality, distinct from and opposed to profane space, and habitation was oriented according to these two dimensions²⁰⁵. With modernity, the industrial city transforms the space around it, in accordance with the logic of the proliferation of industrial productive activities. Postmodernity proposes the development of the dynamic urban form (dynamopolis, according to the term proposed by Constantin Doxiadis²⁰⁶), which leads to the destabilization and fluidity of boundaries. This process is not a cultural evolution, but quite the opposite. Leo Frobenius said, 100 years ago:

“The metropolis means death for everything that is brilliant and seeks to realize itself fully, for the free evolution of the sense of space. In the metropolis, a great phenomenon of paideumatic life comes to an end, which is entirely natural, since this confinement results in the loss of the sense of vastness in various ways. (...) There is such an immanent connection between the paideuma and human life that the loss of the paideumatic sense of space also results in the disappearance of man himself”²⁰⁷.

²⁰³ „În Africa, sentimentului grotei îi corespunde tabăra arabilor, construcția impluvială atlantică, în Europa, construcția rotundeii etrusce antice, în Asia, bazilica devenită construcție centrală, a cărei cupolă nu este, de exemplu, pentru Spengler altceva decât o replică a grotei cerești așezate peste curtea interioară. Construcția chiliei berbere, fortăreața etiopiană, palatul kotoko, palatele cretane, cetatea de pe Rin și domul gotic reprezintă arhitecturi ale sentimentului vastității.”, in Leo Frobenius, *Paideuma*, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing House, 1985, p. 140.

²⁰⁴ Lucian Blaga, „Despre personanță” [“About Stylistic Imprint”], „Cultură și spațiu” [“Culture and Space”], in Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii [The Trilogy of Culture]*, Bucharest, World Literature Publishing House, 1969.

²⁰⁵ Mircea Eliade, „Spațiul sacru și sacralizarea lumii” [“The Sacred Space and the Sacralization of the World”], in Lucian Blaga, *Sacru și profanul [Sacred and Profane]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1992, pp. 21-63.

²⁰⁶ Constantin A. Doxiadis, *Ekistics: an introduction to the science of human settlements*, London, Hutchinson, 1968.

²⁰⁷ „Metropola înseamnă moartea pentru tot ceea ce e genial și vrea să se realizeze pe deplin, pentru libera evoluție a sentimentului spațiului. În metropolă ia sfârșit un mare fenomen al vieții paideumate, lucru întru totul firesc, deoarece claustrarea aceasta are drept urmare pieirea sentimentului vastității, în diferite moduri. (...) Între paideuma și viața oamenilor există o asemenea legătură imanentă încât pierirea sentimentului paideumatic al spațiului are drept urmare și dispariția omului însuși”, in Leo Frobenius, *quoted work*, p. 142.

Oswald Spengler [1933], Lewis Mumford [1961], Arnold Toynbee [1939] share the same vision of the overpopulated, hyperdynamic city, which takes the dimensions of its assertion – conquest and accumulation – to the extreme, and ultimately becomes a necropolis, a city of death, hindering human existence within the cultural frameworks that established it. Among these, the family is the first and most important.

2. THE TRADITIONAL HOMESTEAD AS A UNIVERSAL FORM OF CULTURE

Space as a place, with concrete dimensions, is best represented in family culture – as a dwelling, a home, a household. In Romanian culture, particularly in traditional peasant culture, the place is first and foremost the double of man, his cosmic projection. Every person, like everything, has their place, and maintaining this place means upholding order, the universal balance. The earth is not merely a source of food, nor merely a shelter; as a family place, it is the cosmos – not created by man, but one that creates man, through its grounding in full humanity, the familial kind. In his research on space within village family culture, Ernest Bernea observed that research, no matter how multidisciplinary and meticulous it is, cannot exhaustively describe the way in which man and his place coexist, for space itself becomes a category and a form of understanding upon which a vision of life is built²⁰⁸.

“In the old Romanian village, the house is viewed in a manner distinct from that of the urban population. The general mindset of archaic villages rejects the urban way of conceiving the home. Whether more or less developed, richer or poorer, young or old, the people of our old settlements saw the house as an object that was not only material but also spiritual, not only for sustaining daily life but also for promoting traditional spiritual values. There, the house is a true tapestry of spatial connections; strong local roots make the house and yard a kind of origin and a defining form for most human activities”²⁰⁹.

In the world of tradition, space is not homogeneous: neither within the house, where the hearth, the threshold, the corners, and the eaves shelter genies and spirits that constantly intervene in human daily life; nor in the open space of the surroundings, sharply separated from other worlds toward which passage is fraught with risk. There are bad places, where the continuity of good order is broken and imbalance is possible and frequent (bridges, superficial structures over the unknown,

²⁰⁸ Ernest Bernea, *Spațiu, timp și cauzalitate la poporul român [Space, Time and Causality for the Romanian People]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2005, pp. 17-18.

²⁰⁹ „În vechiul sat românesc, casa este văzută într-un mod deosebit de cel al populației urbane. Mentalitatea generală a satelor arhaice refuză modul citadin de a concepe locuința. mai evoluat sau mai puțin evoluat, mai bogat sau mai sărac, tânăr sau bătrân, omul vechilor noastre așezări vedea în casă un obiect nu numai material, ci și spiritual, nu numai de întreținere a vieții cotidiene, ci și promovare a unor valori spirituale tradiționale. Casa este acolo o adevărată țesătură de legături spațiale; puternice rădăcini locale fac din casă și curte un fel de obârșie și formă determinantă pentru cele mai multe activități umane”, in *Ibidem*, p. 34.

or corners, where the horizon closes in and where most accidents occur, are such examples). There are good places, those that gather around the person and in which they are sheltered: the house, the courtyard, the yard, the flower garden, the neighborhood, the village, and its surroundings are stations where goodness settles, as a stable landmark, and is delimited, by boundaries, from what is not stable. The “white world”, a space confined to the familiar horizon of the village, meant for living, is separated from the potentially dangerous, chaotic realm of the unknown and the foreign, yet it is also connected to it by roads and paths, some well-trodden, others forgotten.

According to architect Sebastian Moraru, a house is a complete space, whose creation takes as long as it takes for a flower to become fruit.

“From wood, clay, stone, and plaster, a new universe was born one summer in a barnyard. Entering this universe, the stone reevaluated its gray existence and became a white foundation; the oak from the coast extended its energies into pillars, beams, and sills; the twigs from the grove formed a new, geometric thicket in the hearth and the chimney; the firs from the hilltop found peace in the ceiling planks and the roof shingles, while the clay from the ravine seeped in, as the binding agent of the idea, into the walls, the foundations, and the chimneys”²¹⁰.

The materials are temporarily detached from the places where they were born to coalesce into human construction; so great is the closeness between the domestic space and the natural one that they can sometimes be confused. The architecture of the house is the same as that of the natural world, and the architects discover that:

“beneath the house’s foundations lie not only thick oak planks, but bears sleeping deeply in the darkness of the earth; that within the wooden and clay walls of the whitewashed house is a white field – from which pure light can be gathered; that at its corners, the house does not end merely in joined wooden ends, – but in wooden stumps; that the porch posts are in fact enchanted trunks, with their roots in the house’s foundation, and that they bear fruit, being enchanted, sometimes apples, sometimes quinces, and sometimes even little stars; that the large beam atop the porch pillars is a peak, like the hill on the horizon, that a spiral ridge around the staircase pillar is a vine, but that it has borne, under the eaves, some wooden butterflies; that the porch railing is not just a cut plank, but is made of clover, tulips, and little fir trees; that this oak edge of the door is not a twist, but a house snake, guardian against evil; that the beams in the corners of the house are diligent little horses; that the beams running in a circle beneath the eaves are slender rafters; that the roof of the house, at its very top, is the house’s sky, and that the shingles at its peak, finely notched, are cheerful birds, larks,

²¹⁰ „Din lemn, din lut, din piatră și din var, s-a născut, într-o vară, un nou univers într-o bățatură. Intrând în acest univers, piatra și-a reevaluat existența cenușie și a devenit albă temelie; stejarul de pe coastă și-a prelungit energiile intrând în stâlpi, în grinzi și în tălpoaie; nuielele din crâng și-au făcut un desiş nou, geometric, în băătura vetrei și în coşare; brazii de pe culmea dealului s-au liniştit în scândura tavanelor și în şindrila acoperişului, pe când lutul din râpă s-a insinuat, liant al ideii, în pereţi, în temelii și în hornuri”, in Sebastian Moraru, *Casa, satul și devenirea în tradiția românească [The House, the Village and the Becoming in Romanian Tradition]*, Saeculum Vizual Publishing House, 2011, p. 38.

and, finally, that neither the sun nor the moon are absent from the house; they are the two carved circles to the left and right of the gate”²¹¹.

In stark contrast to functional homes – devitalized spaces, aestheticized to conform to artistic canons long detached from natural reality – the dwelling as a household is a living universe, in which man finds his place. Not to become a master, not to accumulate possessions and wealth that would sustain him through time, but to enter – and better yet – into his destiny, which can be fulfilled only because it is limited. Moreover, time is, in turn, material and materialized in the structure of the house, for nothing is made to last beyond the span of a human life. Everything is perishable; the roof, the pillars, the walls, the fences – they all age like everything else. But this

“is in the nature of things: for the matter of this house is joyful. It rejoices that the heaviest burden to bear, that of time, does not weigh upon it. The material seems to know that it will not be made to bear more than it is capable of carrying, and that, once it has become part of the structure of this peasant house and, once ennobled by this new state of its own, it will end beautifully; for it will end in due time. The material seems to know that the entire structure of the house is conceived in full acceptance of natural decay, and that nothing in the house aspires to defy eternity, but everything is engaged in the friendliest of relationships with time. It seems to know that somewhere, in the clay found everywhere in its body, in the very mortar that binds it, this house has incorporated time; it has, in fact, embraced it from the very beginning, ever since the thought that was its first foundation and which built it; time lies in the foundation of this house”²¹².

In every household, family culture restores the primordial unity between space and time, between spirit and matter. Every family is, in fact, a cyclical pattern of endings and beginnings that make up the traditional and human meaning of eternity.

²¹¹ „sub temeliiile casei nu sunt numai tălpile groase de stejar, ci sunt urșii care dorm adânc în întunericul pământului; că în peretele de lemn și de lut al casei văruiate este un câmp alb – de pe care se poate culege lumina curată; că la colțurile ei, casa nu se încheie numai în capete de lemn îmbinat, – ci în căței de lemn; că stâlpii pridvorului sunt de fapt tulpini fermecate, cu rădăcinile în temelia casei, și că ei rodesc, fermecați fiind, când mere, când gutui, iar câteodată chiar steluțe; că grida mare de pe stâlpii foisorului e o culme, ca a dealului din zare, că o creștătură elicoidală în jurul stâlpului de la scară e viță de vie, dar că ea a rodit, sub streășină, niște fluturi de lemn; că pălimarul pridvorului nu e doar scândură tăiată, ci e făcut din trifoi, din lălele și din brăduți; că marginea aceasta de stejar a ușii nu e o torsadă, ci șarpe de casă, păzitor de rele; că grinzile din colțurile casei sunt căluți vrednici; că leațurile ce dau roată pe sub streășină sunt căpriori zvelți; că acoperișul casei, în partea lui de sus, e cerul casei și că șindrilele din vârful său, crestate subțirel, sunt păsări vesele, ciocârlani, și, în sfârșit, că nici soarele, nici luna nu lipsesc din casă; sunt cele două rotocoale cioplite de-a stânga și de-a dreapta porții”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 44-45.

²¹² „este în firea lucrurilor: pentru că materia din casa aceasta e bucuroasă. Se bucură că povara cel mai greu de îndurat, aceea a timpului, nu o apasă. Materia pare a ști că nu va fi pusă să se încarce cu mai mult decât este ea în stare să ducă, și că, odată intrată în alcătuirea acestei case țărănești și, odată înnobilită prin această nouă stare a ei, va sfârși frumos; căci va sfârși la vreme. Materia pare a ști că întreaga alcătuire a casei este concepută în deplina acceptare a fireștii degradări, și că nimic din casă nu ambiționează să înfrunte veșnicia, ci totul este angajat în cele mai prietenești raporturi cu timpul. Ea pare a ști că undeva, în lutul care se află pretutindeni în trupul său, în înșeși mortarele care leagă, casa aceasta a înglobat timpul; ea și l-a asumat, de fapt, de la bun început, încă din gândul ce a fost temeiul dintâi și care a ctitorit-o; timpul se află în fundația acestei case”, in *Ibidem*, p. 39.

3. FORMS OF SPATIAL SANCTIFICATION

The fundamental way in which local cultures take shape is through the integration of the family, as a cultural unit, into the domestic sphere. Just as the family is the primary cultural matrix, it is also the first formula for the orderly integration of space into what constitutes the household's cosmos. The earliest forms of mutual assimilation between space and the human family remain largely unknown to us. Architect Silvia Păun researches the matrices of habitation and uncovers humanity's particular concern, dating back to prehistory, to find its religious vision within a suitable horizon. Yet this endeavor was not so much a constructive and creative one; it was not so much the act of devising a formula for habitation that defined the traditional human, but rather the act of finding and integrating oneself into the matrices and rhythms of cosmogony. That is why, the author shows, the earliest forms of family settlements are ovoid and apsidal, and their primary function is sacred.

“To protect what was most precious to him – his faith in the Creator – man conceived the apse, which optimally focused on the holiest part of the building. The arched shape of the apse wall provides a space conducive to the sanctuary and ensures that balanced, frontal protection of the altar. When creating the form of the apse, aside from the semicircular one, man settled, perhaps not by chance, on the shape of the egg, which carries the embryo of earthly (or cosmic) life – and not merely because it was familiar and readily available. But also, because he sought to achieve a directional form such as that offered by the ellipse of the egg. Compared to the circle, the ellipse has the advantage of a longer diameter, its oval having, a priori, 2-4 reference points, which help to more easily establish a desired direction”²¹³.

This primary form, discovered rather than imagined or created, as I mentioned, in the way the celestial dome settles above the world, in the way the horizon unfolds its concentric proximities around man, is reproduced in the oldest tombs, altars, hearths, and houses: in traditional Romanian architecture, we find it in the *bordei*, a semi-subterranean dwelling, a geomorphic structure that still survives today, in some places, serving as storage, in hearths or mobile ovens (*țesturi*), or in seasonal or temporary settlements (*surle*). The architecture of the household, which contained and reproduced cosmogony – and anthropogony, for conception was the vital center of the family settlement – was one and the same with the settlement's alignment with rhythms and coordinates that were both natural and sacred, and for this reason, it was fundamentally ritualized.

²¹³ „Pentru a proteja ce avea mai de preț, credința în Creator, omul a imaginat absida, care focaliza optim locul cel mai sacru al edificiului. Forma arcuită a peretelui absidei oferă spațiul propice sanctuarului și asigură acea protecție echilibrată, frontală a altarului. Când a creat forma absidei, în afară de cea semilunară, omul s-a oprit, poate nu întâmplător și la forma oului, ce poartă embrionul vieții pământene (sau cosmice) și nu numai fiindcă îi era familiar și la îndemână. Ci, deopotrivă, și pentru că urmărea să obțină o formă direcționată cum este cea pe care o oferă elipsa oului. Față de cerc, elipsa are avantajul prezenței unui diametru mai lung, ovalul ei având, apriori, 2-4 repere, care ajută la fixarea mai ușoară a unei direcții căutate”, in Silvia Păun, *Absida altarului [The Apse of the Altar]*, Per Omnes Artes Publishing House, 2000, p. 166.

“Considering the world to be in a continuous process of becoming – with a permanent openness to the unfolding of things – the local folk conception transformed the power of being of things through ritual, in order to pass them through and place them in beauty, leaving us, especially in architecture, major examples. As Prof. Vasile Vetișanu pointed out in his 1989 book – (...) ritual causes everything to enter the ‘fabric of the whole’ in such a way that it also acquires some of the meanings of the sacred”²¹⁴.

The value of traditional architecture was explained by Silvia Păun through five dimensions of the sanctification of inhabited space. The first refers to “understanding the place” as a possible center of the world, a site for the manifestation of the sacred, the knowledge of its fundamental traits, of its spirit, the *genius loci*, and of the possibility of reiterating God’s primordial creation. The second dimension consists of the ritual foundation of the settlement, through sacrifice, its extraction from chaos, the establishment of centrality (driving in the stake, the peg, lighting the fire), and consecration (attracting fertility, abundance, and power). The third dimension involves the rites of animating the house, its birth, and its connection to heaven and earth (foundations, roof, vertical and horizontal architectural elements, as well as the building materials used), to water (the well), to humans (as the measure of one’s home, in all their forms: as a newborn, a youth, a man or woman, an elder, or the deceased), to animals (the pasture, the stable, the hayfield), and to vegetation (the garden, the orchard, the field, the forest, the pond, etc.). The fourth dimension signified the marking of privileged places: the hearth, as a focal point and altar, source of all blessings, place of purity and symbol of the family; the chimney, as an upward opening toward the Creator; the window, a place of passage and balance (“*neither in the house, nor outside, neither in the sky, nor in the earth*”, as a riddle goes), the door and the threshold, as an opening and a closing, the final front line for the battles between the protectors and the enemies of the house. The fifth dimension was the actual construction of the house, respecting the order and the roles of each of its parts²¹⁵.

4. EXPRESSIONS OF SPATIAL KINSHIP

Romanian villages, organized into clans and family groups as free settlements – not the enslaved villages, whose precarious condition was the consequence, not the cause, of their enslavement – were themselves organically constituted, with the

²¹⁴ „Considerând lumea într-o continuă facere – cu deschiderea permanentă spre devenirile lucrurilor – concepția populară autohtonă a transfigurat puterea de a fi a lucrurilor prin ritual, pentru a le trece și a le așeza în frumos, lăsându-ne, mai ales în arhitectură, exemple majore. După cum arăta prof. Vasile Vetișanu în cartea sa din 1989, – (...) ritualul face ca fiecare lucru să intre în «urzeala întregului» în așa mod încât să dobândească și ceva din rosturile sacralului”, in Vasile Vetișanu, *Deschideri filosofice în cultura tradițională [Philosophical Perspectives in Traditional Culture]*, Eminescu Publishing House, 1989, quoted by Silvia Păun, *România – Valoarea arhitecturii autohtone [Romania – The Value of the Local Architecture]*, Per Omnes Artes Publishing House, 2003, p. 248.

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 248–256.

“body of the estate”, the “home”, and the people bound to one another “*like the organs of a human body*”²¹⁶. Each village had at its center the home (family households), cultivated fields, pastures, and forests; in addition to these, one could also count the marsh, the pond, the reed bed, the glades, the vineyards, the mill fords, and the gardens. Romanian families, “stem families”, settled in households following the neolocal model, meaning that married sons left their parents’ home equipped with a plot of land on which they established their own household; only the youngest son remained in his parents’ household, where he was obligated to care for them in their old age and to perform memorial rites for them after their death. Here is how Henri and Paul Stahl describe the composition of a household in the village center:

“The house, usually situated on the edge of the road, had a precise orientation, facing south with the living room toward the east. The outbuildings were arranged around the house so that they were all within easy reach of the household: opposite the house, or further back, stood the summer kitchens; the stable and other outbuildings were located further back, toward the end of the garden, with a fence dividing the ‘barnyard’ in two to prevent animals from entering the front yard”²¹⁷.

The outbuildings were made primarily of wattle, brushwood, and reeds. Their forms ranged from simple walls sheltering the animals from the wind to enclosed stables, raised with lofts or extended with sheds where fodder was stored; from food pits, dug in the shape of a funnel, wide at the bottom and narrow at the opening, with the inside burned to dry them out, to built-in pantries attached to the house, sometimes with an upper floor and housing, in addition to food, clothes and fabrics, tools or wine barrels. The house, surrounded by a porch or veranda enclosed by a railing or balustrade, which sometimes extended into an open gazebo at the front, had a first room, the entrance hall, a space used mainly for passage and storage of frequently used objects (such as a water bucket), a main room with a hearth, oven, table (usually round and low), bed, benches (long, backless seats), stools, a *blidar* (an open cupboard with shelves), shelves, a chest, and a rod or beam (a pole suspended from the ceiling on which either clothes or pots were hung) and all other items necessary for cooking, dining, and women’s indoor work (tools for weaving, spinning, and embroidery), among which an icon was never missing, and, possibly, a pantry. Gradually, especially in the 20th century, a clean, formal room also appeared, with windows facing the street, without a stove, where luxury items were kept (the dowry of marriageable daughters, the finest furniture and fabrics used only on major holidays), where guests could be accommodated, but which was not

²¹⁶ Henri Stahl and Paul Stahl, *Civilizația vechilor sate românești [The Civilisation of the Old Romanian Villages]*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1968, p. 12.

²¹⁷ „Casa, obișnuit așezată pe marginea drumului, avea o orientare precisă, fiind cu fața spre miazăzi și cu oadaia de locuit spre răsărit. Acareturile erau dispuse în jurul casei, astfel încât să fie toate la îndemîna gospodăriilor : vizavi de casă, sau mai spre spate, stau bucătăriile de vară; grajdul și celelalte acareturi mai departe, spre fundul grădinii, printr-un gard despărțindu-se «bătătura» în două, pentru a împiedica animalele să pătrundă în curtea din față”, in *Ibidem*, p. 44.

inhabited by the household members. The windows, doors, ceiling beams, hearth, and eaves – or, outside the house, the fence and gate – are protected with sacred symbols: pots, animal skulls, or carved symbols meant to attract good fortune and ward off evil.

Paul Stahl, in his comparative study of households in Southeast Europe, notes the holistic nature of the Romanian household. This refers, first and foremost, to the inclusion, in every household, of the claim on all local resources:

“every household must engage in an activity that provides it with everything necessary for life; every household practice agriculture, raises livestock, needs water, and so on; therefore, every household must have access to all economic categories of land”²¹⁸.

In a document from 1719, cited by the same Paul Stahl, a landowner declared: “I, having nothing else with which to pay him, gave him three plots of land in the village of Lățcani, on the Moldavian River, which are in the Suceava region, but these plots are my share that comes to me from other brothers, with hayfields in the open, in the forest, and in the pastures, with a mill ford and all the income”²¹⁹.

Secondly, the continuity preserved within the expanding family is noted, as its young members are transplanted into a new household:

“(…) the obligation to have a house (...) is always the result of a collective effort, especially in the past, when everyone built their own house without hiring skilled builders. Just as every woman, in order to marry, had to know how to weave and sew, every man had to know how to handle an axe. Nicolae Iorga states that every peasant was also skilled in carpentry and needed no help to cut, carve, assemble, and even make ornaments. (...) This work is carried out by a group of varying size; we can see this even in cases where a master builder oversees the work, surrounded by family members who will eventually live in the house. The future owner’s obligation to assist the master builder is stipulated in this case in the verbal agreement between them, which specifies each party’s duties in detail. Men and women work together; there are specific tasks for each, with the heaviest work reserved for the men. They cut the wood, hew the beams and planks, and assemble them; the women plaster, whitewash, and then decorate the walls at regular intervals. Usually, parents, brothers, and sisters work alongside the young man who is getting married. Even the sons who have left their parents’ home are called upon to help their younger brother, just as they themselves

²¹⁸ „fiecare gospodărie trebuie să desfășoare o activitate care să-i asigure toate cele necesare traiului; fiecare practică agricultura, creșterea animalelor, are nevoie de apă și așa mai departe, prin urmare fiecare trebuie să aibă acces la toate categoriile economice de pământ”, in Paul Stahl, *Triburi și sate din sud-estul Europei [Tribes and Villages in Southeastern Europe]*, Paideia Publishing House, 2000, p. 115.

²¹⁹ „Eu, neavând cu altă cu ce-i plăti, i-am dat dumisale trei locuri de casă din sat din Lățcani, pe apa Moldovii, ce sunt la țănutul Sucevii, însă aceste locuri este partea mea ce mi să vine despre alți frați, cu locuri de fâneață în câmp și în pădure și în hăleștei, cu vad de moară și cu tot venitul”, in Vasile Mihordea, Ioana Constantinescu and Corneliu Istrati, *Documente privind relațiile agrare în veacul al XVIII-lea. Moldova [Documents Regarding Agrarian relations in the 18th Century. Moldova]*, II, 1966, p. 134, quoted by Paul Stahl, *quoted work*, p. 115.

were once helped. The circle of close relatives is often expanded; neighbors participate as well”²²⁰.

The collective effort once again unites the clan and signifies the birth, within it, of a new household unit. Meals are also shared during construction, and the completion is celebrated:

“In northern Moldova, after the walls have been erected, the floor of the house is covered with large stones and earth; the host calls the musicians, and a party is organized during which the girls and boys dance and tamp down the floor”²²¹.

5. LEGAL FORMS OF DOMESTIC SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Housing within family culture is customary governed within a system of folk law which, according to Romulus Vulcănescu, is based on a communal legal concept known as peasant law or customary law, and on legislation that structured community life according to local custom²²². This custom divides people into locals (those who legitimately belonged to the clan or lineage inhabiting a given territory, village, or hamlet) and outsiders (those who did not belong there, the foreigners). The locals had all the rights provided by the law regarding settlement, household, roads, mountains, forests, or water, etc.; the outsiders were given only certain conditional permissions, for a limited time or outside the village boundaries, called “*slobozenii*”²²³.

²²⁰ „(...) obligația de a avea o casă (...) este întotdeauna rezultatul unui efort colectiv, mai ales în trecut, când fiecare își construia casa fără să facă apel la constructori calificați. Așa cum fiecare femeie, pentru a se căsători, trebuia să știe să țese și să coase, fiecare bărbat trebuia să știe să mănuiască securea. Nicolae Iorga afirmă că fiecare țaran se pricepea și la dulgherie și n-avea nevoie de niciun ajutor pentru a tăia, ciopli, asambla și chiar a face ornamente. (...) Această muncă este făcută de un grup mai mult sau mai puțin numeros; o putem vedea chiar în cazul în care un meșter constructor conduce lucrările, înconjurat de membrii familiei, care urmează să locuiască în casă. Obligația viitorului proprietar de a-l ajuta pe meșterul constructor este prevăzută în acest caz în acordul verbal încheiat între ei, care specifică exact îndatoririle fiecăruia. Bărbați și femei muncesc împreună; există operații specifice pentru fiecare, cele mai grele fiind rezervate bărbaților. Ei taie lemnul, cioplesc grinzile și scândurile și le assemblează; femeile tencuiesc, vâruiesc și ornamează apoi pereții la intervale de timp regulate. De obicei părinții, frații și surorile muncesc alături de băiatul care se căsătorește. Chiar băieții care au părăsit casa părintească sunt chemați să-și ajute fratele mai mic, așa cum au fost și ei ajutați. Cercul rudelor apropiate este deseori depășit; vecinii participă și ei”, in Nicolae Iorga, *Negoțul și meșteșugurile în trecutul românesc [Trade and Crafts in the Romanian History]*, București, 1906, p. 75, quoted by *Ibidem*, p. 118.

²²¹ „În nordul Moldovei, după ce au fost ridicăți pereții, se acoperă planșeul casei cu pietre mari și cu pământ; gazda cheamă lăutarii și se organizează o petrecere în timpul căreia fetele și băieții joacă și bătătoresc pământul planșeului”, in Dimitrie Dan, *Comuna Straja și locuitorii săi. Studiu istoric, topografic și folcloric [The Straja Commune and Its Inhabitants. A Historical, Topographic, and Folkloric Study]*, Cernăuți, 1897, p. 26, quoted by *Ibidem*, p. 119.

²²² Romulus Vulcănescu, *Etnologie juridică [Legal Ethnology]*, Academy Publishing House, 1970, pp. 48–49.

²²³ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

The choice of the settlement site, following traditional guidelines and a specific ritual, as mentioned earlier, was made by the leader of the clan or family line; the eponymous hero would throw a spear, mace, or arrow to determine the heart of the settlement, where a pole – a pillar of the sky – would be erected, or more recently, a wayside shrine or a cross; when the village or its founder had sufficient resources, a church. The households of the leaders were grouped around this focal point; the village roads converged here. The village is a cultural unit with its own institutions, possessing legal capacity through its community; the hamlet, lacking a community and created by the splitting off of groups of relatives from the village, remains dependent on it.

“The village differs from the hamlet in its legal capacity to enter into and dissolve certain obligations, to create laws, and to enforce them. The hamlet, as an annex of the village, lacks traditional rural institutions: a church and a cemetery; it is set back from the village road and cannot act against the interests of the village community on which it legally depends”²²⁴.

Within these units of communal life, new households were established under the protection of the parental household: either within it, through the allocation of a plot of land to each male descendant by the head of the large household; or outside it and the village center, on the village estate, “on the hill” or “in the valley”, in a “new” or “old” location. Sometimes, these settlements were arranged as farmsteads, specifically intended for newlyweds, evolving into “villages of newlyweds”. The construction was organized with this in mind. The porch posts and the beams of the ceiling in the entrance hall, in addition to their sacred properties, were important elements in the legal tradition, used as measuring tools and instruments of calculation “to mark the material and spiritual obligations of the head of the family (man or woman) toward state, ecclesiastical, boyar, or communal administrative bodies, and to record the personal property rights over the dwelling built by them”²²⁵.

Furthermore, the interior organization of the household and the house was arranged according to traditional norms that separated spaces designated for specific forms of sexual or generational activities.

“The porch, the entrance hall, the stove, the gazebo, etc., were not only structural components of the building but also elements of the customary legal organization of domestic space, work, and rest within the home. On the porch, work was done in the summer and fall: spinning, carding, weaving, and threshing. Also on the porch, only the man slept during summer. And when the woman slept beside him, the man would

²²⁴ „Satul se deosebește de cătun prin capacitatea lui juridică, de a face și desface unele obligații, de a crea legi și a le aplica. Cătunul, ca anexă a satului, este lipsit de instituțiile rurale tradiționale: biserică și cimitir, e retras de la drumul vicinal și nu se poate ridica în contra intereselor obștii satului de care depinde legal”, in *Ibidem*, p. 52.

²²⁵ „a însemna obligațiile materiale și spirituale ale capului familiei (bărbat sau femeie) față de organele administrative de stat, ecleziastice, boierești sau obștești și pentru a consemna drepturile de proprietate personală asupra locuinței edificate de el”, in *Ibidem*, p. 56.

position himself so as to block the entrance. In the hallway, however, the woman reigned supreme. She bustled about there all day and filled the entire room with her activity. The remarks the man made to his wife when she overstepped her bounds were clear: ‘Don’t spread out any further than the hallway allows’ or, ‘Woman, you’ve stuck the hallway in the stove’ (the bedroom)”²²⁶.

Hospitality was also governed by universal rules and signs. A stick leaning against the door signaled the absence of the household’s masters; no one had the right to move the stick without risking punishment. But the master’s presence was not always necessary to receive a guest:

“in Oltenia (...), the wooden cellars built at ground level had their doors left open after the harvest, so that any passersby could enter and drink as much of the new wine as they wished, either as a gift or in honor of the absent host. For this refreshment, a clay cup was left out, and sometimes a bowl of polenta with a piece of pastrami. Hospitality in the host’s absence was valid only if the established rules were followed. If the traveler sought to take a cup of wine with him, he was liable to severe punishment. In the cellar, he could drink an entire barrel and not be blamed”²²⁷.

6. THE COMPREHENSIVE CONCEPT OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The family, the home, and the household are rather different manifestations of the same reality than distinct forms of human organization or units. In economics, they form the foundation of the rural economy²²⁸. In culture, the household is the center of domestic life, as well as of cultivation and fundamental, primary education through the mother tongue. In law, it is the primary legal unit that establishes or abolishes values and laws, some strictly necessary for survival, others useless or even dangerous; the family ensures the internalization of good laws – those of tradition, for the most part and until recently – until the essential norm becomes the standard;

²²⁶ „Prispa, tinda, soba, foişorul etc. nu erau numai părţi constitutive ale construcţiei, ci şi elemente de organizare juridică cutumiară a spaţiului domestic, a muncii şi repaosului în casă. Pe prispa se muncea vara şi toamna la meliţat, dărăcit, la războiul de ţesut, la desfăcut ştiuleţii. Tot pe prispa vara numai bărbatul dormea. Iar când dormea şi femeia alături, bărbatul se aşeza astfel încât să bareze intrarea. În tindă, în schimb, stăpânea numai femeia. Ea trebuia acolo toată ziua şi ocupa cu activitatea ei întreaga încăpere. Expresiile adresate de bărbat femeii lui când depăşea limitele erau clare: «nu te-ntinde decât cât ţi-e tinda» sau «muiere, ai băgat tinda-n sobă» (camera de dormit)”, in *Ibidem*.

²²⁷ „în Oltenia (...), pivniţele de lemn construite la suprafaţa solului, după recoltă aveau uşile lăsate deschise, pentru ca trecătorul să poată intra şi bea din vinul nou, cât simţea nevoia, fie de pomană, fie în cinstea gazdei absente. Pentru această înfruptare era lăsată o cană de lut şi uneori o coajă de mămăligă cu o bucată de pastramă. Ospitalitatea în absenţa gazdei era valabilă numai prin respectarea regulilor prestabilite. Dacă trecătorul căuta să ia cu el o cană cu vin era pasibil de pedeapsă aspră. În pivniţă putea să bea un butoi întreg şi nu i se reproşa nimic”, in *Ibidem*, p. 57.

²²⁸ Gabriel Popescu and Nicolae Istudor, „Gospodăria ţărănească în economia rurală” [“The peasant household in the rural economy”], in ***, *Probleme de politică agrară [Agricultural Policy Issues]*, 4, ASE Publishing House, 2017, Available at: <https://www.mdr.ro/documente/brosuri/Gospodaria-taraneasca-in-economiarurala.pdf>, Accessed on January 23, 2026.

it supervises, judges, punishes, and rewards the behavior of each of its members promptly and directly. In religion, the family or household are, as Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția shows, units of spiritual life, initiation, and magical-religious practice.

“Our research has led us to realize that the true motives behind the perfect social structure represented by the household family in any Romanian village must henceforth be sought not only in economic factors, but equally in spiritual ones”²²⁹.

Starting from the observation that previous research has recognized the relevance of the economic aspect of community life, Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția considers and recommends the household as a complete sociological unit, moving beyond previous approaches, which viewed the household as a predominantly, if not fundamentally, economic unit – as a sum of movable and immovable property, inhabited and used by people and sustained by their collective labor.

“The sociological monograph studies (...) the household from two perspectives: 1) first, as determined by: a) external natural factors, that is, by the land on which it was born and by the people as biological beings who make up the family group (the cosmological and biological frameworks) and b) the internal factor, that is, by the spirit of past generations preserved in old customs (...) (the biological and historical frameworks). 2) Secondly, the sociological monograph studies the household as a social phenomenon in itself, that is, as an organically structured unit of economic, spiritual, legal, and political-administrative manifestations, a unit born of the special kind of life that connects humans to animals and things, a unit that carries its deep meaning within itself!”²³⁰.

Precisely by bringing together different ages and genders, home and livestock, land and tools, distinct kingdoms and species – not merely in association, but in a full and solid community – the family-household signifies a unit of social life in the broadest sense of the term. The study of the household becomes the central issue of understanding society, through which one can gain insight into both the outward aspects of village social life and the intimacy of the family world. Moreover, acquiring this kind of knowledge serves both to understand how beliefs, interests, and needs – material and spiritual – across all categories and types of human

²²⁹ „Cercetarea noastră ne-a făcut să ne dăm seama că adevăratele motive ale structurării sociale perfecte pe care o reprezintă familia gospodărească din orice sat românesc trebuie căutate de acum înainte nu numai în factorul economic, ci în egală măsură și în cel spiritual” , in Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția, *Gospodăria în credințele și riturile magice ale femeilor din Drăguș (Făgăraș)* [*The Household in the Beliefs and Magical Rites of the Women of Drăguș (Făgăraș)*], Paideia Publishing House, 2002, p. 33.

²³⁰ „Monografia sociologică studiază (...) gospodăria din două puncte de vedere: 1) mai întâi ca determinată: a) de factori naturali externi, adică de pământul pe care s-a născut și de oamenii ca ființe biologice care-i compun grupul familial (cadrele cosmologic și biologic) și b) de factorul intern, adică de sufletul generațiilor trecute păstrat în vechile obiceiuri (...) (cadrele biologic și istoric). 2) În al doilea rând apoi, monografia sociologică studiază gospodăria ca fenomen social în sine, deci ca pe o unitate organic structurată de manifestări economice, spirituale, juridice și politico-administrative, unitate născută din genul special de viață ce leagă omul de animale și lucruri, unitate ce-și poartă sensul adânc în sine însăși”, in *Ibidem*, p. 34.

existence crystallize into current solutions to the problems of the present, and to attune oneself to the vibrations of immutable forms.

“The household, as a social reality superior to the individuals who temporarily comprise the family group, thus not only determines their entire economic activity down to the smallest details, but it also specifically shapes, permeates, and colors the entire range of spiritual activities of the people who serve it. This specifically Drăgușan spirituality, determined first and foremost by the eternal existence of the household, can thus be called domestic spirituality”²³¹.

7. THE FAMILY COSMOS IN HOMER’S EPICS

A detailed portrayal of the spatial dimension of the family is provided by the Homeric epics, which serve as the sources of ancient European family culture. The first of these, the *Iliad*, is the epic of the chaos that follows the violation and desecration of the family space: Paris, a guest and stranger in the home of Helen and King Menelaus, violates the protected space, desecrates the sacred realm of marriage, and abducts the wife. Even as he attempts to build a new family with Helen under the protection of the strongest walls of one of the most powerful kinship groups – for the family of Priam and Hecuba is the true Trojan citadel – he does nothing but bring the disease of destruction into the very heart of this family, within the walls of Troy. Contagious, the chaotic force of familial sin cannot be overcome by the numerous and virtuous Trojan family. Paris is the first and true Trojan horse; according to another law, older and less subject to human control, Paris and Helen should have gone into hiding to avoid punishment not only from the dishonored husband and his kin, but also from the rapist’s family. The crime was the same, regardless of which family suffered it. Except that Helen is seen as a trophy and in this capacity is brought before King Priam; and in this capacity, the entire army of Troy and the finest sons of the city-state mobilize to defend her. But in vain; not even the sacrifice of Hector, the heroic embodiment of all family virtues, can restore the balance shattered by his brother. Chaos engulfs Troy and touches all who take part in the great war. Aphrodite herself, the one who inspired Paris’s crime, is wounded²³², as is Ares²³³.

On the contrary, *The Odyssey* is the story of the restoration of the family cosmos, of the integrity of the family space in Ithaca, where we find not a city but a household. The family cosmos will be restored both through the reunion of the

²³¹ „Gospodăria, ca realitate socială superioară indivizilor care-i compun vremelnic grupul familial, nu le hotărăște astfel numai întreaga lor activitate economică în cele mai mici amănunte, ci ea determină, pătrunde și colorează specific și întreaga gamă a activităților spirituale ale oamenilor care o servesc. Spiritualitatea aceasta specific drăgușană, determinată în primul rând și esențial de existența eternă a gospodăriei ar putea fi astfel denumită spiritualitate domestică”, in *Ibidem*, p. 55.

²³² Homer, *Iliada [Iliad]*, translated in Romanian by George Murnu, Book V, 328–336, Univers Publishing House, 1985, p. 138.

²³³ *Ibidem*, Book V, 838–845, p. 154.

spouses (the resourceful Ulysses and the wise Penelope) and of the generations – the father with his heir, the well-behaved Telemachus, exactly at the age when he can become a true successor – as well as through the spatial restoration of the household, in its landholdings and movable property; through the revival of the hearth, the spatial center of the domestic universe.

In this interpretation, the moments of the dissolution and reestablishment of family culture are clear and manifest on a universal level. After the destruction of the family space and the dissolution of its culture, restoration requires time and a new order, a new balance, on earth and in heaven. Ulysses is not the bravest of the Greek heroes, but he is the most cunning. In his wanderings, he does not lose his way or resign himself to his fate: when the epic begins, the hero had already been stranded for seven years on the island of Ogygia, home to the goddess Calypso (*kalypso*, incidentally, means “to hide”); all the other heroes of the Trojan War had already met their fate: they were either dead (buried, and thus settled, arranged within a familial and ritual framework), or had returned home. Ulysses, however, has been detained:

“here, in the forests, lives a goddess/daughter of tough-minded Atlas, who knows/the ocean depths and by himself holds u/those gigantic pillars which separate/earth and heaven. That’s the one whose daughter/prevents the sad, unlucky man from leaving/Her soft seductive speech keeps tempting him/urging him to forget his native land/Odysseus yearns to see even the smoke/rising from Ithaca and longs for death”²³⁴

says Athena, compassionately submitting his condition to the judgment of Olympus. Everything is already laid bare in these few verses: Ulysses (“he who stirs the wrath” of the gods) is alone and yearning: for Ithaca, for his hearth, and for the peace he deserves. Having obtained the gods’ consent – the harmony that is first established on the divine plane – Athena, his guardian and protector, begins the process of arranging his return home: this will begin not with him, not with his “captor”, Calypso, but with the hearth, the focal point to which Odysseus is called, that is, the center of his family. These are the spatial and action-oriented poles of the epic, between which cosmic balance will be restored: the individual and the domestic nucleus. We do not encounter the term “family” very often in *The Odyssey*; the entire epic, however, is dedicated to the invincible force that draws people back to the hearth of their home.

“I’ll go to Ithaca and urge his son/to action and put courage in his heart/so he will call those long-haired Achaeans/to assembly, and there address the suitors/who keep on butchering his flocks of sheep/and shambling bent-horned cattle. I’ll send him/on a trip to Sparta and sandy Pylos/ to learn about his father’s voyage home – /he may hear of it somewhere – and to gain/a worthy reputation among men”²³⁵.

It is no small matter for the goddess of wisdom to be concerned about the wealth of livestock in the hero’s household; for, just as “good reputation”, fame, is gained by stepping outside the walls of the home, its preservation is achieved within those walls, in both moral and material prosperity.

²³⁴ Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Ian Johnston, 2002, Book I, 69–78, p. 5.

²³⁵ *Ibidem*, Book I, 116–125, pp. 6–7.

In Ithaca, we find the place of an almost scattered family, invaded by the suitors/guests – those who do not come, like strangers, to be received, feasted, and then sent on their way with gifts, as custom required, but who instead remain, revel, and squander the household's wealth until they succeed in displacing what is the very heart of the home: the prudent wife, Penelope. Hospitality is regulated, much as in the Romanian peasant household, in different forms depending on whether the master of the house is present or absent.

The suitors are not ordinary guests; they do not come to seek lodging from the host, but rather with the claim of replacing him, for no household – especially a distinguished one like that of Ulysses – can remain without a leader. As suitors, these outsiders remain within the bounds of the estate; and even if they do not have access to the inner rooms, they occupy the courtyard, where they spend their time amusing themselves, and the dining hall. Their status as uninvited yet legitimate guests, by virtue of their claim to lead a masterless household, is limited by the distance at which the valuables are kept, sheltered within the inner circles of the home. The precise state of this familial degradation, through the dissipation of both people and goods, is what Athena, the goddess of wisdom, seeks to observe:

“She raced down from the peak of Mount Olympus/sped across to Ithaca, and then just stood there/at Odysseus' outer gate before the palace/on the threshold, her hand still gripping the bronze spear/in the form of Mentos, a foreigner, the chief/who ruled the Taphians. There she met the suitors/those arrogant men, who were enjoying themselves/playing checkers right outside the door, sitting down/on hides of cattle they themselves had butchered/Some heralds and attendants were keeping busy/blending fine wine with water in the mixing bowls/Some were wiping tables down with porous sponges/and setting them in place, while others passed around/huge quantities of meat. Godlike Telemachus/ observed Athena first, well before the others/He was sitting with the suitors, his heart troubled, picturing in his mind how his noble father/might get back, then scatter the suitors from his home/win honour for himself and reassert control/of his own household”²³⁶.

In the ancient family, the authority of the leader (*archon* or *pater familias*) extended equally over all its members (wife, parents, natural or adopted sons, slaves, freedmen), over the household domain (house and land), livestock, and material goods; the family itself was a complete form of communal life, a unified organism. Within this ordered structure – yet incomplete due to the absence of its head, its leader – Penelope becomes the focal good, the most valuable asset, and precisely the one most fiercely coveted by the suitors. Unlike the ease with which Helen could be persuaded to abandon her home, Penelope cannot be dislodged from her household; not so much in a spatial sense (for she rarely emerges from her chambers), but in a cultural one, as she persistently – almost obsessively – engages in the same activity of weaving, which defines her as the mistress of the fate of Odysseus's house. In the most obscure and narrow of the concentric circles organizing the home, in her

²³⁶ *Ibidem*, Book I, 134–153, p. 7.

upstairs dwelling (the women's quarters in the ancient house), the prudent Penelope hides like a spider within the web she weaves; the shroud of Laertes, her father-in-law, is her final duty as both wife and daughter-in-law. A weaver, like Athena, she has direct access – though it may be interpreted as involuntary – to the fulfillment of the family's destiny.

Maria Vania Cavalli²³⁷, discussing Moses Finley's analysis of the Homeric world, starts from this concentric unity of the *oikos*, examining its dynamics and its connections with its material components – above all, the goods kept within the household and the possessions at a distance: fields, vineyards, orchards, and so on. She regards this familial organization as a model for the political organization of the city.

“The *oikos* provides to the institutional dimension of the new political community an internal organizational model based on the principle of self-sufficiency (...) that the *oikos* of Homeric age elaborated”²³⁸.

The patriarch, the *basileios*,

“is the individual who, after having learned and mastered, through a trial-and-error path, the practical abilities and ethical qualities necessary to lead the new *oikos*, spreads them across the whole family”²³⁹.

Of all the human models of antiquity, Ulysses seems the closest to this role – not merely, or not primarily, as a warrior hero (many of his martial deeds may even suggest a prudence quite foreign to the often reckless bravery – opposed to moderation or wisdom, and sometimes verging on madness – that other heroes of the great war, such as the “great” Achilles or Ajax the Telamonian, claimed as the guarantee of their fame²⁴⁰), but as a man devoted to his family and to duty. In the management of the Homeric and Hellenic aristocratic household, this survival of leadership capacity was identical to the survival of the family itself; it was embodied in the traditional charisma of the *archon* or *basileus*, or, in the later Latin version, the *pater familias*.

Within this cultural model, the *oikos* reproduced a pyramidal organization similar to the great houses of Mycenaean civilization. After the collapse of their dominance, only those who were able to preserve sufficient economic resources and administrative qualities could devise and implement strategies of survival in the reorganization of society. By contrast, Romanian society – being a community

²³⁷ Maria Vania Cavalli, “The Homeric Aristocratic Oikos: a model of socio-economical aggregation”, in *Gaia. Revue interdisciplinaire sur la Grèce ancienne*, 12/2008/2009, pp. 69/76, Available at: https://www.persee.fr/doc/gaia_12873349_2009_num_12_1_1527, Accessed on February 12, 2026.

²³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

²³⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁰ Moreover, the shadow of Achilles, as fearsome in the realm of the dead as he had been on the battlefield in life, revealed to Odysseus that the price of warlike fame is much lower after death than during life: “I'd rather live/working as a wage-labourer for hire/by some other man, one who had no land/and not much in the way of livelihood/than lord it over all the wasted dead”, in Homer, *quoted work*, 2002, Book XI, 624–628, p. 203.

grounded in family culture, not a *polis* – saw the role of the patriarch stabilized once and for all by tradition; it was not he who upheld tradition, but tradition itself, as an essential form of ancient family culture, with even matriarchal connotations, that upheld the head of the household, as well as all the other members of the family. The management of the household was carried out collectively, and a house abandoned by its leader was not endangered by external sieges (such as that carried out by Penelope's suitors in Ithaca during Odysseus's absence).

“Homer describes a production chain (...) fully controlled by the Basileios, who undertakes those efforts needed to intensify and diversify the production on which the survival of the oikos is based”²⁴¹.

The absence of Odysseus, the withdrawal “to the countryside” of Laertes, his father, and the youth of Telemachus, his son, had left the household without any male structure. The family was affected, but not irreparably, for in the absence of the men it was safeguarded through the exceptional merits of the wife, the prudence of the son and the slaves, and with the protection of the gods. The material side of the household was managed wisely by the slaves, especially by the swineherd Eumaeus and the cowherd Philoetius – those who, together with Telemachus, would support Odysseus in the struggle to reclaim his home from the suitors. The immaterial side, the family's moral order, was precisely the stake of Penelope's domestic resistance. The foundation of masculine and feminine roles is clearly emphasized here: the man ensured the guarding and material protection of the house (the family, the household, its members, and all its goods) and contributed to the increase of prosperity; the woman guaranteed the family's moral order, stability, and the fidelity of its cultural values. In Odysseus's case, the detailed portrayal of the consequences of his absence highlights the effects of the lack of male protection, but also the possibility of compensating for it through the steadfastness of feminine moral order. As the certainty of his return home begins to emerge, the management of movable goods – arms, ornaments, and provisions – also becomes important; this explains the anger at the squandering of wealth by the suitors, the concern for the rich gifts of the Phaeacians, and the care taken not to lose them once he reaches Ithaca. The master of the household must live at the center of it, like a king at the center of his kingdom; the dwelling is the physical and moral core of the domain. He must demonstrate both moral and administrative qualities²⁴². And if he departs, he must return within a short time, so that his strength and authority are not forgotten, and so that the resources necessary for the family's survival are not exhausted.

Since *The Odyssey* is considered to represent a historical stage later than that of *The Iliad*, Cavalli believes that it proposes

²⁴¹ Maria Vania Cavalli, “The Homeric Aristocratic Oikos: a model of socio-economical aggregation”, in *Gaia. Revue interdisciplinaire sur la Grèce ancienne*, 12/2008/2009, p. 71, Available at: https://www.persee.fr/doc/gaia_12873349_2009_num_12_1_1527, Accessed on February 12, 2026.

²⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 74.

“the new model of ‘global competence’ sponsored (...) by Odysseus, finds his roots in the heroic *paideia*”²⁴³.

Moreover, the new *basileus* adapts and adds new qualities to his status, such as skill, versatility, and tenacity²⁴⁴, which – if viewed from a spatial perspective – imply new capacities for appropriating land, whether as cultivated field or dwelling. In fact, land and the spatial and material attachment to the household become the new criteria by which the leader is defined. Setting out for war, Odysseus never truly severed himself from his home. This immaterial yet strong and constant bond made him aware of all dangers and even enabled him to resist the episodes of conjugal temptation: with the goddess Circe, the young Nausicaa, or the nymph Calypso, each of whom presented obvious advantages²⁴⁵. Fidelity, which for Penelope is a vocation, for Odysseus is an ideal. Wisdom, restraint, and prudence – traits that belong to the conjugal vocation – lead each of them, though in different ways, not to recognize one another immediately as spouses after twenty years of separation, but first to test each other in order to determine whether they are still, in truth, husband and wife. For Odysseus, Penelope has passed the test, having resisted – more than an ordinary woman – the persistent and aggressive assault of the suitors, preserving within the household the same place she had occupied from the beginning. For Penelope, however, Odysseus must undergo several tests, for the woman, as the heart of the household, must be more cautious: when she yields, the entire house is yielded. Odysseus must recover his strength and physical skill, demonstrated through the handling of his weapon (the bow of his youth); the moral strength and courage to claim and reconquer his home, proven by driving the invaders from the domestic space; the legitimate authority over the house and its people (his recognition by Telemachus and the slaves; the punishment of the disloyal servants and the reward of the faithful ones, as was proper for the master of the house); and finally, the strength of memory and authority over the conjugal space. Feigning not to recognize him, Penelope orders that the marital bed – carved by Odysseus himself – be brought into the outer hall; thus, the supposed guest is to be received with the highest honor, but in the place reserved for strangers. Odysseus reacts with an outburst of anger, partly because he is not granted the recognition he expects²⁴⁶, and partly because the woman’s command seems absurd to him:

“Woman, those words you uttered are very painful. Who’s shifted my bed to somewhere else? That would be difficult, even for someone truly skilled, unless a god came down in person – for he could, if he so wished, set it elsewhere with ease. But among men there is

²⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁵ Félix Buffiere, *Miturile lui Homer și gândirea greacă [Homer’s Myths and the Greek Thought]*, Univers Publishing House, 1987, pp. 310–311.

²⁴⁶ The question here is: what kind of *basileus* is the one who waits for his recognition from a woman? He has defeated all suitors, is revered by his son and by the slaves, yet still nothing persuades Penelope to receive him into the intimate interior of the household’s conjugal life.

no one living, no matter how much energy he has, who would find it easy to shift that bed/ For built into the well-constructed bedstead 240 is a great symbol which I made myself with no one else. A long-leaved olive bush [190] was growing in the yard. It was in bloom and flourishing – it looked like a pillar. I built my bedroom round this olive bush, till I had finished it with well-set stones. I put a fine roof on it and added closely fitted jointed doors. After that, I cut back the foliage, removing the branches from the long-leaved olive bush. 250 I trimmed the trunk off, upward from the root, cutting it skillfully and true with bronze, so it followed a straight line. Once I'd made the bedpost, with an augur I bored out the entire piece. That was how I started. Then I carved out my bed, till I was done. In it I set an inlay made of gold, [200] silver, and ivory, and across it I stretched a bright purple thong of ox-hide. And that's the symbol I describe for you"²⁴⁷.

Only from this point onward, after Odysseus – equally skilled in carpentry as in war – demonstrates the integrity of his household memory, will he be able to be reintegrated, through Penelope, into the culture of the family interior, which is under her authority.

Through this type of family culture, Maria Vania Cavalli argues, classical antiquity will come to define itself through a

“new moral code emphasizing land as a good to desire and defend. Even if this transition does not reach the birth of the polis yet, we are not far from that, as the polis will institutionalize this organizational model centered on private owned land, determined its full success, even by means of the colonization phenomenon, that is, to the export and reproduction oversea of the model mastered in the homeland”²⁴⁸.

8. THE HOMERIC HOUSEHOLD

But what does the household of a chieftain such as Odysseus contain? What constitutes the domain of the family, and who makes up this community so well integrated that it may be likened to a powerful city – perhaps even more powerful than Ilion? For while Troy, with its indestructible walls built by the gods, before whose gates the greatest heroes of antiquity are sacrificed, is ultimately weakened from within – its own men becoming those who bring down its gates and walls to make way for destruction – Ithaca, the small and poor island, and Odysseus's peasant household endure, even when no man remains to defend them.

At the center of Odysseus's domain stands the house. Within it live the members of the family, strangers are received, and valuable objects are kept safe. Odysseus's house is that of a leading man of Ithaca:

“this place surely is the splendid palace/belonging to Odysseus. It's easy/to recognize, even when one sees it/among many others, for here there is/building after building,

²⁴⁷ Homer, *quoted work*, 2002, Book XXIII, 232–260, pp. 412–413.

²⁴⁸ Maria Vania Cavalli, “The Homeric Aristocratic Oikos: a model of socio-economical aggregation”, in *Gaia. Revue interdisciplinaire sur la Grèce ancienne*, 12/2008/2009, p. 75, Available at: https://www.persee.fr/doc/gaia_12873349_2009_num_12_1_1527, Accessed on February 12, 2026.

and this courtyard – /it’s finished off with walls and coping stones/and there’s a double gateway well fenced in/No man could criticize a house like this/I notice many men are eating here – /there’s smoke from roasting meat above the house/and a lyre is playing. A god made that/to serve as our companion at a feast”²⁴⁹.

The enclosure is walled, and the gates, wide and solidly closed, are meant to protect rather than to keep out intruders. Evidence of this is that the suitor-invaders are already inside, like guests who refuse to leave until one of them can establish himself in the house as Penelope’s husband, as the new head of the household. Extremely important and protected by taboos against touching – and, of course, by prohibitions against striking – are the outer walls (another similarity with a fortified city); apparently, this type of high wall, which blocked the view and curiosity of passersby, featured a carefully crafted and very sturdy gate, with “sounding” thresholds made of bronze or other metals.

Beyond the courtyard lay the porch or colonnade, a space belonging to the house but exterior to its core. Roman villas later called this space the *atrium*, a transitional area where strangers were received and assessed: those who were to leave immediately were separated from those who would stay, join the host in feasts, and whose stay could extend for days. In *The Odyssey*, the porch is where guests slept, however illustrious or well-received they were by their hosts, on textiles or animal skins spread on the floor. Games or feasts of the guests also took place in the courtyard or porch – it was a space where they could remain even without the presence of the hosts.

In the hall of feasting, one dined seated on a throne-like chair, at individual tables, while conversation took place and singers performed. Adjacent was the master’s chamber and the marital bed (strictly for conjugal use; abandoned by Odysseus, it was no longer occupied even by Penelope). Like every other room, the hall had a threshold charged with symbolic meaning, crafted from stone. (Thresholds were made of the sturdiest materials; aside from exterior ones, which were of metal, and the hall’s threshold, made of stone, the chambers had thresholds of oak.) On the day of his return – and on the day the suitors were punished – Odysseus seated himself on or near the threshold, as his son himself urged him to do:

“Thinking it might be advantageous/Telemachus sat Odysseus down inside the well-constructed hall/beside the entrance made of stone”²⁵⁰.

This positioning on the threshold can have a dual significance: on one hand, it may signal hesitation to enter the hall, due to the precarious status he is pretending to have; on the other hand – and more plausibly – it reflects the guarding of the entrance and exit by the one most entitled to do so. As for the women’s chambers, they were isolated in hard-to-reach places, either on the upper floor (“the upper house”) or possibly in a tower. Penelope, Helen, or Circe lived with the other

²⁴⁹ Homer, *quoted work*, 2002, Book XVII, 337–348, p. 307.

²⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, Book XX, 317–319, p. 366.

women – slaves or free (in the case of mortals) – in these elevated quarters, from which they would descend via tall staircases.

The marital bed, the symbol of marriage, and the spouses' chamber were, however, on the ground floor. If one spouse died and the other remarried, custom required abandoning the old bed and building a new one. As for the bed constructed by Odysseus himself, it was a special one, as we have seen.

The central symbol of the house, invoked in oaths and appearing as a substitute for the entire homeland in Odysseus's lament, is the fireplace, the hearth. As a focal place, not only for food preparation but also as a radiant center of warmth and light, the hearth is where libations and sacrifices are made, and certain protective deities of the household are invoked. Hestia, one of Zeus's sisters and guardian of the celestial fire, is the protective deity of the domestic hearth. Notably, next to the hearth are arranged the chairs of the household's women-ladies, and it is also the place where strangers are observed and assessed.

Beyond the house itself – likely situated within the city near other homes – Odysseus's family domain includes the cultivated fields, the garden, the orchard, and the vineyard where Laertes had retired, as well as the stables, sheepfolds, and other animal shelters. A brief description of Odysseus's wealth is given by the swineherd Eumaeus, who expresses his anger at seeing it squandered in the feasts of the suitors:

“My master used to be a man of substance/beyond all measure. No warrior hero/in Ithaca itself or on the mainland/possessed what he did. Twenty men combined/did not have so much wealth. I'll tell you this – /on the mainland he's got twelve cattle herds/as many flocks of sheep and droves of pigs/and wide-ranging herds of goats, all of these/tended by foreign herdsmen or his own/And here, on the edges of this island/graze roaming herds of goats, eleven in all/with loyal servants guarding every one”²⁵¹.

As for Eumaeus, he looked after the pigs.

“The swineherd built it by himself to house the pigs/property belonging to his absent master/He had not told his mistress or old Laertes/He made it from huge stones, with a thorn hedge on top/and surrounded on the outside with close-set stakes/facing both directions, made by splitting oaks trees/to leave the dark heart of the wood. Inside the yard/to hold in the pigs, he packed twelve sties together/In each of these fifty wallowing swine were penned/sows for breeding. The boars, in a much smaller group/stayed outside. The feasting of the noble suitors/kept their numbers low, for the swineherd always sent/the finest of all fattened hogs for them to eat/There were three hundred and sixty boars there – four dogs/fierce as wild animals, always crouched beside them/These the swineherd, a splendid man, had raised himself”²⁵².

Besides the domain of the house, the fields, and the stables (land), the household's wealth also included the family's weapons and ornaments, kept in special rooms, as well as wine and textiles.

²⁵¹ *Ibidem*, Book XIV, 122–133, p. 245.

²⁵² *Ibidem*, Book XIV, 9–24, p. 242.

9. CONCLUSION

The household is the place where the family exists – the only place where it can exist. Within this universe, there are clear boundaries and limits, yet nothing is marginal, nothing is insignificant. Even the smallest objects, the most trivial animals, form part of the family's balance. This seems to be the message of the Homeric family epics, as well as of the peasant family culture, which remained strong in Romanian society. Paul Krause, a subtle Homeric exegete, notes:

“This is the ultimate message of Homer's two epics: Where family is found, life is found; where family is found, true beauty is found; where family is found, piety is found; where family is dissolved, only death and destruction follow. Homer's message of the meaning in life couldn't be clearer. Odysseus does not find peace until he returns home and reclaims his home from intruders. Duty to family is the highest call of men and women in the Iliad and Odyssey. It is fitting that the Iliad and the origin of the Trojan War start with the dissolution of family while the Odyssey ends the Trojan War with the reconciliation of a family. The reconciliation is made even more triumphant given the trials and temptations that beset both Penelope and Odysseus. Homer's epic of the family is profoundly traditional in its advocacy. It is unsurprising that Christianity, the religion of love and family, took a liking to Homer's works and themes. Furthermore, Homer's Odysseus is a profoundly conservative figure. Odysseus is moved by love for family and fatherland, the love of the real, and desire to be reunited with Penelope with whom he shares an indissoluble bond despite the interference of goddesses and other women. Odysseus' odyssey began because of the dissolution of a family it comes to an end – finally bringing him the happy rest he seeks – when he reunites with his family. Home, according to Homer, is where the family is”²⁵³.

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²⁵³ Paul Krause, “Homer's Epic of the Family”, in *The Imaginative Conservative*, 2018, Available at: https://www.academia.edu/37604931/Homers_Epic_of_the_Family, Accessed on February 12, 2026.

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