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A century of U.S.–Romania Relations

**From the Grand Union of 1918
to the Strategic Partnership**



GEORGE MAIOR

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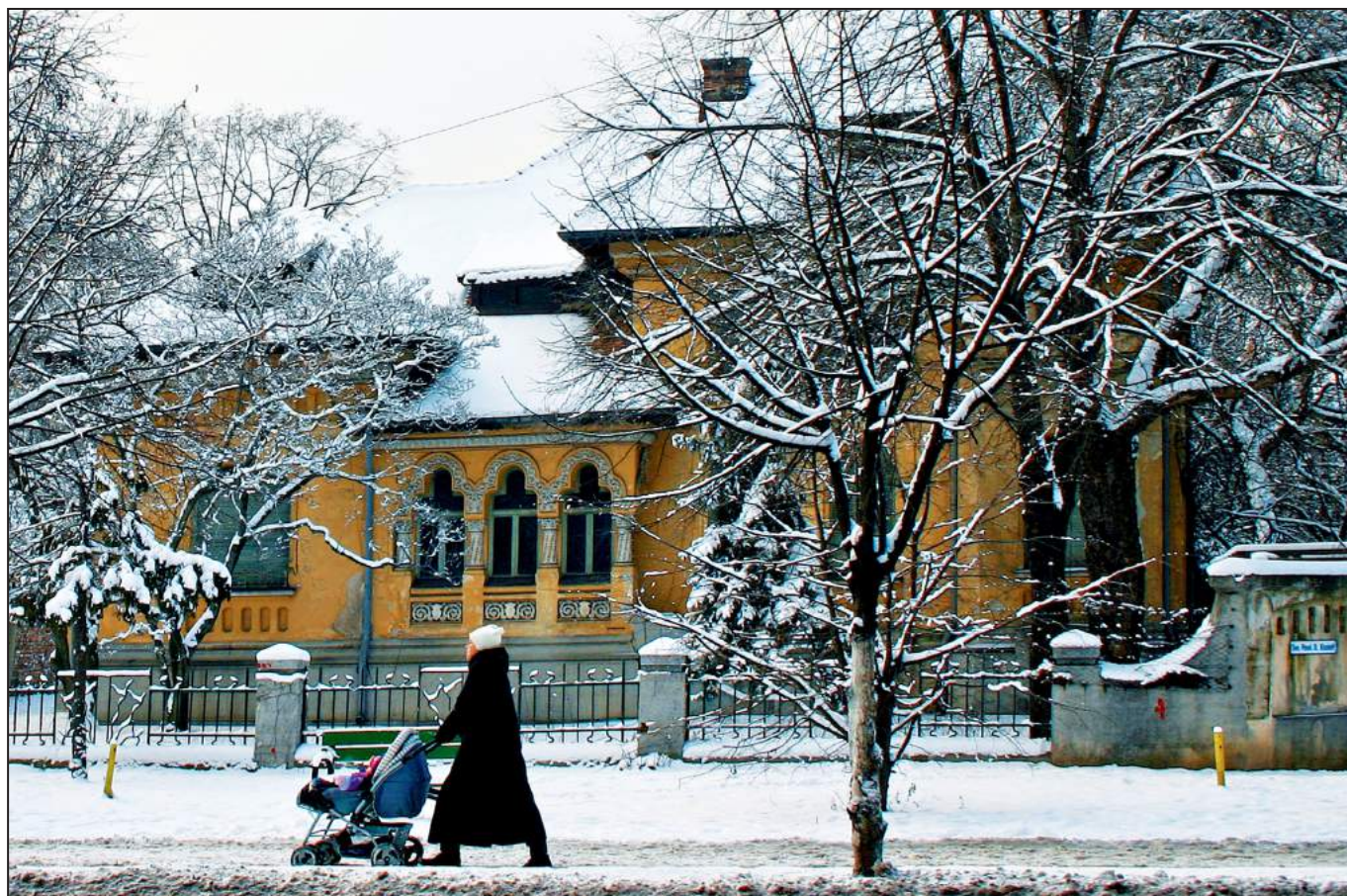
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From the Grand Union of 1918 to the Strategic Partnership A Century of U.S. – România Relations

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Abstract: The article argues that the US-Romania Strategic Partnership is the logical and mutually advantageous result of the two countries' shared values and core interests, evidenced by the evolution of bilateral relations over the past century. To that end, the analysis focuses on four main aspects: (1) the historical dimension, in particular US support for Romania's Great Union and the role of the Romanian-American community in that context, (2) the common values and strategic vision of the two countries in the post-1989

period; (3) the current state and substance of the Partnership and (4) its potential and future perspectives. The conclusions show that the US-Romania Strategic Partnership is based upon shared long-term strategic interests, a common set of values, as well as genuine affinity and friendship between the two peoples. These aspects are validated by a history of constructive engagement and cooperation. The value of the Strategic Partnership is proven by its concrete results and by the fact that it is a "living" framework, continuously evolving and expanding, underscoring the bilateral compatibility and mutual benefits for both the US and Romania.

Keywords: History, Interdisciplinary Sciences, US-Romania, partnership, values, interests, compatibility, diplomacy

1. Introduction

The Centennial anniversary of the 1918 Great Union holds particular significance for the history of Romanian-American relations. The American contribution to the unification of Romanians in a single state is rarely and insufficiently debated in history studies. Rectifying this situation offers an opportunity to study the origins of Romania's most important strategic partnership today, the one it has with the United States of America. Examining the events of 1918 reveals a remarkable degree of historical foresight and continuity, a common thread, composed of rational geopolitical calculations, shared values and people-to-people relations, connecting the two countries across a complicated century.

The American contribution to the emergence of today's Romania is most prominently revealed by President Woodrow Wilson's vision on restoring peace in Europe at the end of the First World War.

The *14 Points*, presented in the joint session of the U.S. Congress on January 8, 1918 [1] paved the way for Romania's Great Union. December 1st, Romania's National Day, is thus also a landmark for the Romanian-American relationship. As we celebrate it, we should also remember how American support, based on President Wilson's commitment to the principles of freedom and self-determination, contributed to the Great Union of Romanians and the completion of the modern Romanian state.

In this context, Romanian historiography must recover the genuinely exceptional contribution, both in 1918 and afterward, of the representatives of the Romanian-American community in strengthening the ties between the two countries, with obvious benefits on both sides. A century of Romanian-American relations captures both sublime and dramatic moments, seemingly always dominated by a positive constant that began in 1918. This could be seen even during the communist regime, a fact highlighted by the two visits made by American presidents in Bucharest in this period. After 1989, the international context allowed the bilateral

relationship to achieve its genuine potential. In 2018, a century after the Great Union, the two countries have a robust strategic partnership, anchored in a favorable public perception that makes Romania, at this time, probably the most pro-American country in Europe.

2. Bilateral diplomatic relations during the First World War; American support for Romanians' self-determination and unity

Romania and the United States established diplomatic relations in 1880, following Romania's declared independence in 1877. During the First World War Romanian-American diplomatic contacts became significant after 1917 when the U.S. entered the war. The political and military disaster caused by the chaos of the Russian Revolution had left Romania in a desperate situation, even after several seemingly impossible victories against enemy forces. For this reason, Romanian political elites regarded America's entry into the war as a timely salvation (apparently with some exaggerated interpretations, as noted by renowned American historian Victor Mamatey). However, it should be noted that the first noteworthy political signal given by the U.S. to Romania occurred on July 3rd, 1917, when U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Hugh L. Scott, addressed the Romanian Parliament in Iasi. On that occasion, „he assured the Rumanians [...] that the United States would fight to the end of the conflict at their side and the side of their Allies” [2]. Even though the American general's speech did not represent an explicit commitment to support Romania's political goals, the United States' entry into the war prompted a strong mobilization from the Iasi government. This mobilization included: direct appeals made by King Ferdinand, an exchange of letters with President Wilson, the appointment of the first Romanian diplomatic representative to Washington D.C., as well as actions aimed to stimulate and support the Romanian-American communities. Dr. Constantin Angelescu was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania to Washington D.C. (October 1st, 1917 – March 25th, 1918). With strong support from French

diplomatic representatives in Washington D.C., Dr. Angelescu - who had arrived in the American capital only at the beginning of 1918 - presented his letters of credence to President Wilson on January 15, 1918. He sought to attract America's support in the difficult context marked by the catastrophic military consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution. Supporting Romania's political objectives, especially the union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania, was the primary mission of the Romanian envoy.

One of President Wilson's personal messages addressed to the King of Romania, Ferdinand I, in November 1917, formulated the bases of American policy towards Romania: "I wish to assure Your Majesty that the United States will support Romania after the war to the best of its ability and that, in any final negotiations for peace, it will use its constant efforts to see to it that the integrity of Romania as a free and independent nation is adequately safeguarded" [3]. Along with Woodrow Wilson's assertion of the principle of nations' self-determination in the *14 Points* presented before the U.S. Congress, these positions of support were used consistently, during 1918 and afterward, in the effort to unify Romania.

It is worth noting that the spirit of the *14 Points* also marked the U.S. position on the unification of Bessarabia with Romania. Thus, in the suggested response sent by State Secretary Robert Lansing to President Wilson, he „proposed to inform the Rumanian government that the United States would confirm definitely any agreement reached in accordance with the will of different peoples" [4] - which represented a *de facto* recognition of the union vote approved by the National Council of Bessarabia. Even though this message was not officially transmitted at that time, it reflected the U.S. authorities' willingness to support the claims of those populations unwillingly incorporated in oppressive multinational empires. American support for Romania's national unity was fully confirmed in November 1918 through a public declaration approved by President Wilson at a cabinet meeting: "The government of the United States is not unmindful of the aspiration of the

Romanian people, without as well as within the boundaries of the Kingdom. It has witnessed their struggles and sufferings and sacrifices in the cause of freedom from their enemies and their oppressors. With the spirit of national unity and the aspirations of the Romanians everywhere the government of the United States deeply sympathizes and will not neglect at the proper time to exert its influence that the just political and territorial rights of the Romanian people may be obtained and made secure from all foreign aggression" [5]. Beside the declarations of support, it is worth mentioning the U.S. financial assistance for the Kingdom of Romania, namely granting in October 1917 a several million dollars loan to support Romania's war effort.

3. The Romanian-Americans' contribution

In addition to the official diplomatic actions, Romania's interests were strongly supported by the Romanian-American communities in the U.S., most of them originating from Transylvania. Since the beginning of the war, Americans of Romanian, Slovak, Czech, Serbian or Polish descent, namely the emigrants belonging to nations that were part of Austria-Hungary, mobilized and coordinated their effort to support the liberation of their nations from the domination of the dual monarchy [6]. Their actions intensified after America's entry into war. In May 1917, with the approval of the Romanian Government, holding letters of introduction from the U.S. diplomatic representative in the Kingdom of Romania, and enjoying French diplomatic support, Transylvanian refugees, the Greek-Catholic priest Vasile Lucaci and lieutenant Vasile Stoica, left Iasi to the United States on a complicated route passing through Russia, Siberia and Japan. The objective of this unofficial Transylvanian mission was obvious: to encourage Romanian-Americans' actions in favor of national unity and to attract official U.S. support in this regard. The Romanian mission's first meeting took place on July 2, 1917, at the Department of State, where Secretary of State Robert Lansing received them. A few days later, they had another meeting at the Department of

War with Secretary Newton D. Baker [7]. After the arrival of Thomas Masaryk, the future President of Czechoslovakia, in the U.S. in May 1918, the representatives of oppressed Austro-Hungarian nations increasingly coordinated their efforts. In this context, Vasile Stoica (now already a captain) became not just one of the most active representatives of the Romanians, but also of the other aligned nations.

Stoica and Father Lucaciu coordinated the establishment of the National League of Romanians in America, an organization that united all Romanian associations in the U.S. On May 13, 1918, in Cleveland, under the leadership of Dionisie Moldovan, the two previous associations of Romanians, called The Union, respectively, The League and Aid united and formed a unified organization. Later, on June 5th, 1918, the delegations of more than 150 organizations of Romanians in the U.S. attended the Congress of the Romanian National League and elected Vasile Stoica as president of the League [8].

From this position, captain Stoica became even more active in supporting the unification aspirations

of the Transylvanian Romanians. He sent memos to President Wilson and other U.S. officials, such as Secretary of Interior, Franklin Lane, met with members of Congress and had public appearances publicized in major U.S. newspapers from New York, Washington D.C., Cleveland or Philadelphia. Via frequent contacts at the Department of State and the Department of War, he promoted the project of the Romanian Legion, designed to mobilize American-Romanians who wanted to fight on the European front. Stoica's efforts also mobilized the Romanian-American community, who sent hundreds of letters to the White House asking support for the freedom of the Romanians and their right to be united in one state [9].

On September 20, 1918, as a member of the Committee representing the oppressed peoples of Austria-Hungary, Vasile Stoica was received by President Woodrow Wilson along with Thomas G. Masaryk, Ignacy Paderewski, and Hinko Hinkovich. The delegates handed the U.S. President a resolution containing the wishes of the oppressed nations in Austro-Hungary, strongly supported by U.S. citizens originating in these regions. In essence, the resolution called for the dissolution of



Figure 1. Delegates at the Central European Democratic Union Assembly, October 26, 1918, in Philadelphia

the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the organization of the liberated nations according to their own desires [10]. This collaboration led, on October 3, 1918, to the establishment of the "Mid-European Union" or "Central European Democratic Union" a U.S.-based organization bringing together Americans of Romanian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, Polish, as well as Italian, Lithuanian and Ruthenian origin. Vasile Stoica was elected vice-president of the organization. The most important event organized by the Union was the Great Assembly held at Philadelphia, the cradle of American independence and a symbol of freedom, between 23 - 26 October 1918. On that occasion, the Great Assembly adopted the proclamation of *Independence of the oppressed nations of Austria-Hungary*. The event brought together thousands of people from all over America (Fig. 1). One of the original copies of the Declaration of the Great Assembly (fig. 2) is still kept today at Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

At the Great Assembly of Philadelphia, captain Stoica eloquently expressed the will of Romanians from the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Transylvania, Banat, and Bucovina) to unite with Romania.

In response to this strong mobilization, given that the vast majority of participants had American citizenship, President Wilson sent a clear message of support, which gave substance to U.S. policy favoring self-determination and, in the case of Romanians, their unity in one state: "Please send my best wishes to the representatives of the oppressed nations of Central Europe and express my deep satisfaction with the fact that between us there is such an impressive and irresistible unanimity of principles." [12].

These too often overlooked efforts, jointly undertaken by Romanians in the Old Kingdom, in Austria-Hungary and in the United State, were, in fact, a key element that ensured America's essential support for Romania's legitimate aspirations at the Paris Peace Conference. The particular dynamics of the Conference are already well-trodden ground for historians, and we shall not dwell on them in this article. Its aftermath,



Figure 2. Declaration of Common Aims of the Independent Mid-European Nations signed in Philadelphia, October 26, 1918

however, certified that President Wilson's trust and support were fully justified and the U.S. had facilitated the emergence of a valuable partner and ally.

4. Political and economic relations in the interwar period

After the First World War, diplomatic relations between the United States of America and reunited Romania witnessed significant developments, as Romania became one of the most important European countries regarding territory, population, and resources. The Romanian Legation, which operated between 1918 and 1921 at the Shoreham Hotel and the Wardman Park Inn, finally established its official headquarters in the beautiful Beau-Art building in Sheridan Circle and 23rd Street, where it still stands today. The Embassy was headed by prestigious mission leaders, such as Andrei Popovici, grandson of Civil War hero Gheorghe Pomutz, a well-known U.S. general of Romanian descent. The most important milestones



Figure 3. Queen Marie of Romania on Broadway, New York, October 1926

of the Romanian-American relationship during the interwar period concerned the political, economic and cultural dimensions. It is worth mentioning in this respect the famous visit of Queen Marie of Romania to the U.S. in 1926, which included a spectacular parade held in New York (Fig. 3). On this occasion, in her message to the American people, the Queen expressed her gratitude for their support: "In all the corners of America there are people who helped of my country. I want to take these people by the hand, look them in the eyes, and tell them wholeheartedly how grateful we are for their sacrifices" [13].

In the same period, the great Romanian historian and politician Nicolae Iorga made a series of visits to American universities, chambers of commerce, Romanian communities and editorial offices of major American publications in New York, Washington, or Chicago. He also met President Herbert Hoover on February 5, 1930.

The economic ties between the two countries intensified. During this period, the first U.S. investments appeared in Romania, especially in

the automotive sector, strongly represented (just like today) by the Ford Motor Company, and in the oil industry, as Romania was at that time one of the world's largest oil producers. At the 1939 Universal Exhibition in New York, Romania had several large pavilions that were inaugurated by Sara Roosevelt, the mother of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the chairman of the patronage committee of the Romanian participation.

The rapid deterioration of the security situation in Europe and the outbreak of the Second World War caught the two countries in an initial phase of neutrality (1939-1941), followed by a phase of hostility (1942-1944), and, after August 1944, by a restoration of relations. The actions of numerous individual Romanians in these turbulent times, such as the good treatment and protection given to U.S. pilots shot down over Romania, clearly show that the general population did not support a conflict with America. An important witness to this was Frank Wisner, the representative of the Office of Strategic Services Operations stationed in Bucharest, who, among other tasks, managed the recovery of downed U.S. Air Force pilots. Wisner



Figure 4. U.S. colonel (ret.) Barrie Davis and Romanian general (ret.) Ion Dobran meet as friends for the first time in 66 years after they fought each other over Romania in the Second World War. Courtesy of <http://kogainonfilms.com/Pages/KnightsOfTheSky/Diary.html>

was to show himself one of the most clear-eyed observers of evolutions in Eastern Europe after the war, as well as a genuine friend of Romania.

5. Romanian-American relations after the Second World War

After the Soviet army forcibly installed the communist regime, Romania followed, for the next two decades after, the direction set by Moscow in its relations with the United States without any significant element of independent foreign policy.

Later, after 1964, when the Romanian legation to Washington D.C. was elevated to the rank of the embassy, and even more after 1968, bilateral relations expanded, Romania adopting a different attitude and even defying the Soviet line. Remarkable in this respect is the evaluation note *The Rumanian Party's Declaration of*

Independence sent by the National Security Council to President Lyndon B. Johnson. The note referred to a famous declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party from April 1964, which revealed an attempt to escape Soviet tutelage: "This is probably the most far-reaching document of its kind in Eastern Europe since Belgrade severed relations with Moscow. The big difference is, however, that Romania is still inside the bloc [...]. The Romanian doctrine has many difficult points for the Soviet Union to digest [...]. The doctrine could be contagious. And in Moscow's partially immobilized position for dealing with insurgency within its Eastern European ranks, this could well have serious repercussions in other equally fertile parts of European Communist bloc, including Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia" [14]. This expansion materialized in several ways. Most notable were the two American presidential visits to Bucharest made by Richard Nixon (in August 1969, one year after the Prague Spring - Fig. 5), and by Gerald Ford (in August 1975- Fig. 6).

The visits of U.S. Presidents were followed by several visits of the Romanian Communist leader to the United States. The trade also increased after Romania joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (G.A.T.T.) in 1971, the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in 1972, a premiere and an exception for the Eastern Bloc countries.

Last but not least, commercial ties have translated into the adoption of Western technologies in top industry areas. For example, Romania was the only country in the Communist bloc to build a nuclear power plant with Western technology.

The expansion of bilateral relations from the 70s was followed by a brutal deterioration in the 1980s, as the dictatorial tendency of the communist leadership led to a series of abuses and a clear worsening of the human rights situation, which was unacceptable for the Regan administration. In fact, Vice President George H. Bush was the last high-rank U.S. official to visit Bucharest in September 1983. Romanian



Figure 5. President Richard Nixon in Romania, August 2, 1969. Source: *Agerpres* photo archive



Figure 6. President Gerald Ford in Romania, August 2, 1975. Source: *Agerpres* photo archive

expatriates in America had an essential contribution in raising the U.S. administration's awareness of the rapidly degrading situation in Romania in the 80s. They were a source of reliable information about the harsh realities of the last decade of the communist dictatorship in Romania, as well as an anchor for the exceptional Romanian-American partnership, which will start to be gradually built after 1989.

6. After 1989 – a call back to 1918 and a re-emerging common vision

In many ways, we can actually speak of a re-building of the Romanian-American partnership after 1989. One could argue that the natural dynamic of the bilateral relationship is one of cooperation, based upon shared values and compatible interests. More importantly, these values and interests are not disparate or temporary alignments, but integral parts of a broad strategic vision, shared by both the U.S. and Romania.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the emergence of this vision takes us back to the end of World War I and President Wilson, a man who effectively championed many of the things that are today regarded as the core principles of the modern international system. These included not just the self-determination of nations, but also the sovereign equality of states, regardless of size, ensuring the freedom of navigation and the removal of trade barriers. The President also foresaw creating "an association of nations [...] for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike"[15] – what would become, after the war, the League of Nations and, eventually, the UN. For a modern historian, this can easily be seen as a preview of the kind of world that the U.S. would aim to build in the 20th century.

To use an American expression, Romania was an "early adopter" of these ideas. This was not unusual, considering its status as an emerging middle power in post-World War I Europe, facing a broad array of security and economic challenges. In 1919, the future Romanian foreign

minister and President of the League of Nations, Nicolae Titulescu, summarized the issue very well: "In addition to victory itself, in addition to the humanitarian Charter that will represent peace in the future, in addition to the guarantees against the possible resumption of war, what small nations owe America above all is the equality under law in a new world and the material means to enforce it" [16]. In a subsequent speech, delivered in front of American journalists in Geneva, in 1925, Titulescu (by then already a cabinet member) further stated: "The fact that America stated countless times that its interest is a Europe that has on its own arrived at a formula of internal [continental] peace, the need to find systems to peacefully settle conflicts among nations, all these things are welcomed warmly and generously by the Romanian people [...]. You [the U.S.] have a concept of international commitments that absolutely coincides with our own. [...] When we receive, across the Ocean a powerful, but gentle reminder that an international commitment must be respected or civilization will cease to exist [...] we feel emboldened in the face of disorder [...] and we feel the need to tell you are our brothers in this worldview." [17]

In his own expressive manner, Titulescu, articulated the basic premises of a strategic vision that the U.S. and Romania share to this day: the importance of a rules-based international order, the need for an international peaceful conflict resolution system, as well as effective enforcement mechanisms for it, the key role of a peaceful and united Europe for U.S. and global security. Not coincidentally, both Wilson and Titulescu were criticized as "idealists" in their time. But they were both vindicated in the second half of the 20th century, especially after 1989. In fact, what seemed to many like an idealist vision in 1918, had a strong underlying current of pragmatism (as one could rightly expect from a U.S. President, or a Romanian foreign minister). The U.S. realized that its own security was inextricably tied to Europe's - what we today have come to see as the Transatlantic security space, whose strongest institutional expression is NATO. Furthermore, it understood that, in order to put an end to Europe's destructive cycles of rivalry and conflict, profound geopolitical changes were

needed. In 1918, these changes included liberating the Central and Eastern European nations from oppressive and dysfunctional multinational empires (effectively relics of Medieval times) and facilitate the formation of modern states, on a par with those in Western Europe, as well as encouraging peaceful cooperation across the continent. Seventy-one years later, in 1989, one could see remarkable similarities. Once more, the nations of Central and Eastern Europe broke free from oppressive (and dysfunctional) regimes and a heavy-handed hegemon. Once more, they rejoined the Western world as full-fledged members. And, once more, the United States was key in achieving this. The U.S. began to understand in 1918, and realized fully after 1989, that the countries on Europe's Eastern flank could be valuable allies, indispensable for Transatlantic security as a whole. In turn, these states understood (better than many others), that partnership with the U.S. was a cornerstone of their own security and prosperity.

After this detour into hard realism, we turn again to the seeming idealist discourse, in order to identify another part of the common vision shared by the United States and Romania – support for democracy and the rule of law. In his address to Congress requesting a declaration of war Against Germany, on the 2nd of April, 1917, President Wilson stated: "Our object [...] is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth ensure the observance of those principles. [...] But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts--for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free." [18]

The U.S. would enter the global conflict not just to secure a favorable geopolitical order, but also to promote a set of rights and values. As with all of

Wilson's seemingly idealistic aspirations, this too had a strong realist dimension, which he himself underlined in his 1917 speech: "A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants. It must be a league of honor, a partnership of opinion." [19] America would fight for democracy not just because it was the right thing to do, but because it was essential in building the peaceful and secure global system it envisaged. A rules-based international order required "a partnership of opinion", or, as we put it today, a community of values – words that we use to describe both the North-Atlantic Alliance and the EU.

The ideas expressed a century ago by President Wilson serve to underline the deep roots of the common strategic vision that the U.S. and Romania share today. Both countries regarded the post-1989 evolutions through similar lenses and worked towards the same primary objectives: a Europe whole and free, a robust Transatlantic link, a rules-based international order. In this context, the evolution of the bilateral relation to today's Strategic Partnership and alliance within NATO seems natural. However, this image should not obscure the enormous efforts that led to this outcome. Pursuing NATO and EU membership, developing a close partnership with the U.S., upholding a certain set of values and principles at the international level, were all conscientious and complex decisions assumed by Romania's leaders and citizens. Just as it had done almost a century before, after 1989 Romania chose the path of Western modernity. Even more so than in 1918, the post-1989 option was not just a question of *realpolitik*, but of choosing the best avenue for the development of the Romanian state and society, politically, economically and culturally. It meant an option for certain values, not just for a certain side. It also meant the full assumption of Romania's obligations as a responsible international actor, as a military ally, as a full-fledged European state, as a democracy.

In addition to its geopolitical impact, U.S. support for Romania's aspirations in 1918 had another significant contribution to the development of a

close partnership a century later. It significantly consolidated the genuine sympathy and friendship between the two nations. The positive perception of America among Romanians endured, as we saw, even during some of the most challenging historical times of the 20th Century.

7. The Strategic Partnership: a reflection of shared values, mutual interests, and joint efforts

These shared values and interests found their institutional expression in the current Strategic Partnership between the United States and Romania. The Partnership, initiated in 1997, encompasses a broad scope of cooperation between the two nations, across security and defense, trade and economy, and cultural and people-to-people relations. Its success is proven not just by its longevity, but by its vitality, its exponential growth, and its substantial results. For Romania, these included NATO accession, the development of a vibrant market economy and a robust whole-of-society engagement in support of democratic values and principles. For the U.S., the Partnership has brought a steadfast ally, a valuable trading partner, and a proven friend.

Just over 20 years ago, after an intense campaign towards joining NATO (which would achieve success a few years later) and after the Alliance's 1997 Madrid Summit, on July 11, 1997, Romania welcomed U.S. President Bill Clinton in Bucharest. Acknowledging Romanians' aspiration to freedom and democracy, as well as their spirit, endurance and determination, President Clinton's pledge was clear "our friendship will endure the test of time. As long as you proceed down democracy's road, America will walk by your side." [20]

This commitment led to both countries agreeing to "(...) establish a strategic partnership between our nations, a partnership important to America because Romania is important to America, important in [its] own right, important as a model in this difficult part of the world. Romania can show the people of this region and, indeed, people throughout the world that there is a better way



Figure 7. Presidents Bill Clinton and Emil Constantinescu in Bucharest, July 11, 1997. Source: Agerpres photo archive

than fighting and division and repression. It is cooperation and freedom and peace." [21]

The following years demonstrated the transformation of this pragmatic approach into reality, as the United States proceeded to support Romania in essential areas such as security, regional cooperation, economic development and democratic reforms. Romania *stayed the course* [22], contributed significantly to burden sharing through the support of NATO and U.S. operations in the European theater and Afghanistan, acting as a *de facto* member even before joining the Alliance.

At the beginning of his famous "rainbow speech" to the people of Romania on November 23, 2002, President George W. Bush included a memorable phrase "*God is smiling on us today*". [23] Those words capture the intensity of the moment, whose meaning, through the invitation to join NATO, was Romania's membership in a community of freedom and democracy.

On September 13, 2011, Presidents Barack Obama and Traian Băsescu adopted, in Washington D.C., the *Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between the United States of America and Romania*, a landmark document embodying a



Figure 8. Presidents George W. Bush and Ion Iliescu in Bucharest, November 23, 2002. Source: *Agerpres* photo archive



Figure 9. Presidents Barack Obama and Traian Basescu, together with Vice-President Joe Biden at the White House, September 13, 2011. Source: White House photo archive

strong track record of cooperation across all areas of the Strategic Partnership [24].

On June 9, 2017, current U.S. President Donald Trump acknowledged the scope and potential of the Strategic Partnership and restated the U.S.

commitment to its further development: "Today we especially reaffirm and celebrate our strategic partnership that began more than 20 years ago. That partnership covers many dimensions, including economic, military, and cultural ties. And today we are making those ties even stronger." [25]

This series of presidential quotes is, of course, not just an exercise in political eloquence – it highlights the acknowledgment of the Strategic Partnership's importance for both countries as well as the bipartisan support for its development.

The political will of the two nations, expressed at the highest level, gave over the years an impetus to pragmatic cooperation. A yearly strategic dialogue focuses on exploring ideas and concrete projects in line with the political framework set in the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership. Such concrete projects were reflected in the *Joint Statement on the Implementation of the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States of America*, adopted in September 2016 on the occasion of the fifth annual strategic dialogue.[26]

Security and defense areas have formed the basis of this dialogue and cooperation and developed in a coherent and constant foundation, codified in legally-binding documents.

Thus, the Defense Cooperation Agreement of 2005 provided the framework for the consolidation of Romania's as well as of the region's security and stability, by increasing the cooperation of the armed forces of both countries through the U.S. forces presence in Romania and prepositioning of equipment across significant facilities in key locations [27]. Notably, such facilities include the Mihail Kogalniceanu Airbase, an important hub of transit to and from Afghanistan, and a major area of joint defense efforts and burden sharing. The airbase also hosts the U.S. *Black Sea Rotational Force* as well as other U.S. units that give proof to U.S. engagement to this strategic area.

Furthermore, the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement of 2011 [28] set the framework for a major strategic joint project of the two countries, the deployment of the U.S. Aegis Ashore missile defense facility in the Deveselu Military Base, as part of the development of the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach on Missile Defense. The agreement enjoyed broad political and



Figure 10. Presidents Donald Trump and Klaus Iohannis at the White House, June 9, 2017.

Source: White House photo archive

public support, being ratified by the Parliament of Romania almost unanimously. Subsequently, command of control of the facility was transferred to NATO at the Alliance 2016 Warsaw Summit, making possible the declaration of the initial operational capability of the NATO Ballistic Missile Defense [29].

This joint project is illustrative of the substantial contribution that U.S.-Romania bilateral cooperation can bring to the overall security of the Alliance. This recalls the reasoning that both Wilson and Titulescu envisaged a century ago. The value of the partnership was twofold: not just in what the two countries could do for each other, but in what they could accomplish together to advance regional and global shared goals.

A key issue in any alliance and NATO is no exception to this is, of course, fair burden-sharing. NATO members have acknowledged it and committed to addressing it, most famously through the Defense Investment Pledge (the well-known 2% of GDP goal) adopted at the 2014 Wales Summit. Romania has been a strong supporter of this pledged increase in European allies' capabilities. Indeed, in 2017, the rate of growth for Romanian defense expenditure was among the highest in the world, with almost 40% of that budget going towards acquiring new capabilities. It is worth noting that these new capabilities, such as the Patriot missile system, the high mobility rocket artillery systems, or the F-16 multirole aircraft also led to more interoperability with the U.S. and Allied forces.

The most important thing to underline, when discussing the issue of burden sharing is that, in Romania's case, the driving force was not an external one. The decision to increase investments and develop the national defense capabilities was firmly grounded in the national interest and is a logical and necessary response to the current security dynamics. Once again Romania stands out as a valuable partner because its own interests and priorities naturally align with those of the U.S. As a medium-sized European state, Romania also understands the value of functional alliances and the need to actively invest in them.

This includes supporting one's allies where it matters most: on the battlefield. Since 2001, over 30,000 Romanian soldiers served in theaters such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. Currently, in Afghanistan, Romania has the fourth largest troop contingent among NATO Allies, as part of the Resolute Support Mission [30]. Romania is an active contributor to the global fight against terrorism, supports the U.S.-led Coalition against ISIL, and provides essential training to Iraqi armed forces.

In light of Romania's strong commitment and concrete actions towards genuine burden-sharing in NATO, it was not coincidental that President Trump first publicly expressed U.S. commitment to Article V of the Washington Treaty in the joint press conference with the President of Romania on June 9, 2017. [31]

As the security and defense partnership matured and consolidated, conditions were created for an exponential expansion of the U.S.-Romania economic relationship. Here, too, Romania profiles itself as a logical choice for U.S. companies. It is the EU's seventh largest country, strategically positioned at the crossroads of all major commercial and energy routes in the region and benefitting from the largest and deepest port at the Black Sea, Constanța. As an entry point to the EU's common economic space, or regional hub for Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Greater Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, its competitive advantages are numerous.

Of course, these aspects have not gone unnoticed by U.S. firms, and this is reflected in the constant growth of both the bilateral trade and investment volume (the peculiarity of the U.S. case is that the investors are some of the largest multinational companies in the world and quite a number of projects are carried out by European subsidiaries, a fact that leads to investments being classified under a different country of origin). [32]

The Romanian economy's diversity and level of development now allows for complex, long-term investment strategies that include modern, competitive industries and the research and

development sector. There are areas, such as the automotive or the petrochemical industries, where Romania brings proven experience and expertise. Alongside these, new fields such as the IT sector have reached a level of excellence that allows for cooperation with top U.S. (and global) companies. As Silicon Valley hosts a growing community of Romanian experts and developers, one must keep in mind not just the economic rationale, but also the strategic dimension of this field. Cybersecurity cooperation, both on a bilateral basis and within NATO, is in itself an important element of the Strategic Partnership.

The energy field, perhaps the ultimate example of the strategic economic sector, is one of Romania's main strengths. It is the biggest producer of oil and natural gas in the region and one of the strongest advocates of source diversification and interconnectivity in the EU. European countries' economic independence from actors that leverage energy as a political weapon is a key concern in today's Euro-Atlantic security environment. By virtue of its position, resources and expertise, Romania is well positioned to be part of the solution.

8. Conclusions and perspectives

The current geopolitical context, a century after the 1918 Great Union, only serves to underline both the relevance and the potential of the U.S.-Romania Strategic Partnership. As revisionist powers challenge the very foundations of the international order and breach its core norms and principles, it becomes even more important to uphold the key tenets of international law, the respect for states' sovereignty and internationally recognized borders, the freedom to make one's own foreign policy choices and reject spheres of influence.

Bearing in mind both historical evolutions and current context, we can draw a set of conclusions about the state and the perspectives of the Strategic Partnership.

First, and most obvious, is that the partnership with the U.S. is and will remain an essential pillar of Romania's strategic policy.

Second is that the Partnership is firmly anchored in shared long-term strategic interests, a common set of values, as well as genuine affinity and friendship between the two peoples. This means it is not intrinsically tied to a narrow historical moment, as its success and evolution over more than two decades of significant geopolitical shifts have proven.

Third, the Partnership has shown itself to be a "living", dynamic framework, constantly expanding and adapting. Its development in relatively new areas, such as energy and cyber security or hybrid threats, demonstrates its adaptability and forward-looking nature. Cooperation in fields such as education, research and people-to-people relations is, in fact, an investment in the future of the Partnership.

Fourth, the scope and depth of the Partnership, coupled with a remarkable number of concrete results, underscore the bilateral compatibility and mutual benefits for both the US and Romania.

This (deservedly) optimistic outlook is by no means an invitation to complacency. As a matter of fact, the Strategic-Partnership with the U.S. provides Romania with a key platform for articulating and promoting its own strategic vision in its immediate neighborhood, as well as in the broader Euro-Atlantic space. In the greater Black Sea area, the U.S. is both an irreplaceable strategic balancer for an increasingly assertive and aggressive Russian Federation, and an essential factor for promoting a future paradigm focused more on cooperation rather than division. Romania's actions to increase its own capabilities and to encourage regional cooperation formulas must always be complemented by efforts to ensure and support a substantial U.S. presence on NATO's Eastern Flank.

Both countries (relative to their respective sizes and locations, of course) are essential stakeholders in the integrated security of the Euro-Atlantic area. As such, a successful, active and capable NATO is a top common interest of the U.S. and Romania. Effective Euro-Atlantic security is dependent on a strong Transatlantic link, going beyond the collective

defense guarantees provided by the Washington Treaty. As a member state of both NATO and the EU, Romania is well positioned to advance ever closer cooperation across the Atlantic.

In the current environment of hybrid aggression, negative propaganda and attempts to undermine international laws and democratic principles, the common values foundation of the U.S.-Romania Strategic Partnership becomes even more important. We must stand together not

just in defense of each other's people, territories and sovereignty, but also in defense of human freedoms, democracy and the rule of law.

Appropriate answers to these current challenges require allied unity, political commitment and strategic vision. We must remember that the events of 1918 were by no means pre-ordained, but the result of intense efforts, foresight and courageous decisions, on behalf of political elites and citizens alike. 2018 requires nothing less.

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Values, perceptions and representations of the population

from Romania and the United States of America

100 years since the Great Union of the Romanians and the 14 Points presented by President Woodrow Wilson



November 2018

Values, perceptions and representations of the population of Romania and the United States of America

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The Institute for Political Sciences and International Relationships “Ion I. C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy and the Laboratory of Information Warfare Analysis and Strategic Communication (LARICS), under the patronage of the Romanian Academy, have presented a socio-logical study based on two surveys simultaneously done on the Romanian and American societies.

The study “**Values, perceptions and representations of the population of Romania and the United States of America**”, commissioned by LARICS, represents a scientific contribution that has the potential to help strengthen the strategic partnership between Romania and the United States of America, by providing a comparative and an in-depth knowledge of the two societies. The study reveals the values, attitudes, states of mind of the two societies in 2018 and their particularities.

The national survey was conducted by INSCOP Research (www.inscop.ro) at the request of LARICS, during 12th – 23rd October 2018, on a sample of 1050 individuals, representative for the Romanian population (18 and over 18 years). The maximum permissible error is $\pm 3\%$, at a confidence interval of 95%, given a probabilistic, multi-layered sample. The data was collected through a questionnaire applied by the interview operators at the home of the respondents. The sample was validated based on the National Statistics Institute's official data.

The survey in the United States of America was conducted by The Polling Company (www.pollingcompany.com) during 19th – 22nd October, 2018, on a sample of 1050 individuals, representative for the US population (18 and over 18 years). The maximum permissible error is $\pm 3\%$, at a confidence interval of 95%. The data was collected through a phone questionnaire, providing live opt-in response technology of 70% landline, 30% cell phone coverage.

Inscop Research (Romania) and The Polling Company (USA) have signed a collaborative partnership through which they offer each other support for conducting sociological studies, not only in Romania and other countries in the region, but also in the United States of America. The two companies are also working for developing a set of innovative methodologies, already tested on the American market, which can be applied on Romanian and regional markets.

The study includes three sections: the first one contains common questions applied both in the USA and Romania (I), the second one contains questions which were exclusively included in the American survey (II) and the third one contains questions which were exclusively applied in Romania (III).

Section I Common questions (Romania – the USA)

The direction of the country

19% of Romanians think the direction towards which Romania heads is right, while 46% of Americans have the same perception about their country. 74% of the Romanian respondents are pessimistic about the direction of their country compared to less than half of Americans.

Europe's direction

43% of Romanians think that things are going in the wrong direction in Europe. A similar percent – 40% - consider that things are going in the right direction in Europe, while 17% don't know or don't answer. The percentage of non-responses to this question registered among US respondents is 40%. 35% of the interviewees believe that things are going in a wrong direction in Europe, while a quarter are optimistic concerning the future of the Europe.

The current general situation of the country

72% of Romanians consider that the current general situation of Romania is bad or very bad, while almost a quarter think that the current general situation is good or very good. Almost a half of the Americans (47%) believe the current general situation of their country is good or very good. 44% say that the current general situation of the USA is bad or very bad.

The current economic state of the country

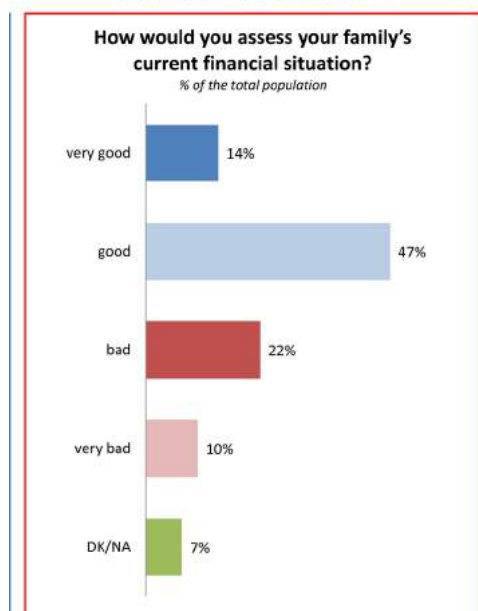
Over 70% of the Romanian respondents consider the current economic state of the country is bad (57%) or very bad (16%). Less than a quarter of the interviewees assess positively the current economic state of Romania. Over half of the Americans think the current economic state of their country is good (38%) or very good (18%). 35% assess negatively the current economic state of the USA – 26% as bad and 9% as very bad.

The financial situation of the family

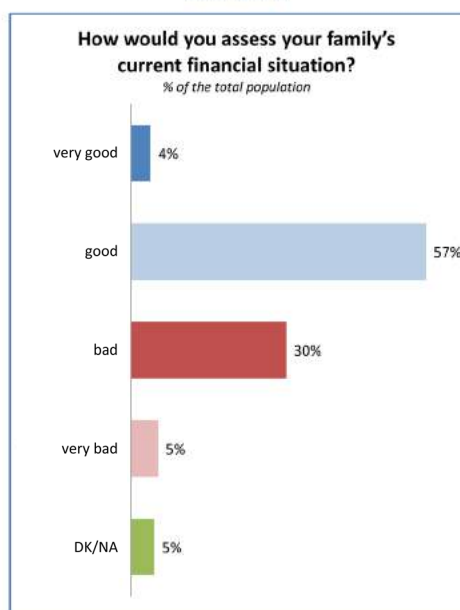
Over half of the Romanians evaluate their family's financial situation as being good (57%) or very good (4%). 35% say their family has a bad (30%) or very bad (5%) financial situation.

Approximatively 60% of those surveyed in the USA think the financial situation of their family is good (47%) or very good (14%). Almost a third say their family has a bad (22%) or very bad (10%) financial situation.

United States of America



Romania



The 3 main problems of the country

The 3 main problems of the country mentioned by Romanians are: the inflation / the cost of day-to-day living (chosen as an answer from the three possible options by 69% of those surveyed), the economic state (59%) and the energy cost (53%). This list of problems faced by Romania, as viewed by the respondents, is completed by other issues like: the level of taxes and contributions and the lack of jobs respectively. The climate changes, immigration and terrorism are among the least mentioned problems by the Romanians.

The Americans think that the main 3 problems faced by their country are: the access to medical care services (mentioned by 38% of those surveyed), immigration (38%) and the inflation / the cost of day-to-day living (36%). This list of the problems is completed by: terrorism (28%), climate change (28%), the economic state (23%), the level of taxes (20%). The cost of energy and the lack of jobs are among the least mentioned problems by the Americans.

The level of trust in institutions

The trust in institutions was measured on a special scale, giving marks from 1 to 5, in which 1 means a lot of trust and 5 – very little trust. The institution that both Romanians and Americans trust the most is the Army. Police also benefits from a quite high level of trust in Romania and the USA. Among the listed Romanian political institutions, the President and the local authorities have the highest level of trust. The political parties and the other central institutions, the Government and the Parliament, are rather distrusted by the Romanians.

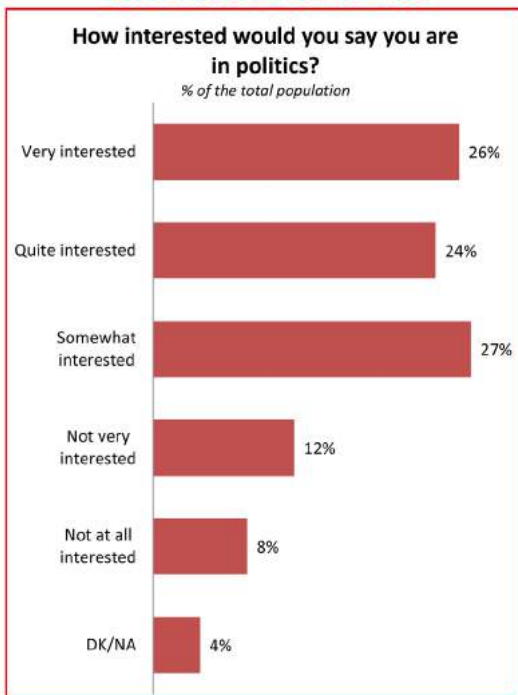
In the USA's case, the local authorities also have the highest level of trust among the listed institutions. The Americans have a rather low trust in the Government, the Congress and the political parties.

Romanians and Americans' trust in Justice is higher than in other fundamental institutions like the Parliament / the Congress and the central / federal Government. Both in Romania and the USA, a

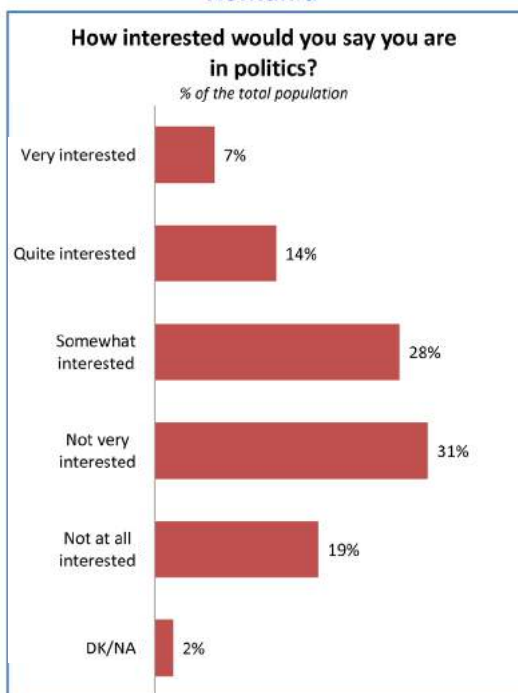
significant percentage of respondents choose a moderate answer, giving a 3, on the 1 to 5 scale measuring trust. Romanians' trust in the media is a little higher than the Americans', the negative evaluations being more frequent in US case.

The interest in politics

United States of America



Romania



Overall, Romanians are rather uninterested in politics. 19% of the Romanian respondents say they are completely uninterested in politics, 31% not that interested and 28% slightly interested. Only 7% are very interested in politics, while 14% rather interested.

On the opposite side, the American population is rather interested in politics. 26% of the American respondents declare themselves very interested in politics and 24% - rather interested.

The importance of democracy

For both Romanians and Americans, it's very important to live under a democratic regime, Americans being firmer in this respect. For half of the Romanians, it is very important to live in a democratically governed country. A little over 10% chose answer options 1 and 2, corresponding to a low importance.

Over three quarters of Americans consider that it is very important to live in a country in which there is a free election system. Only 2% said that this aspect has low importance.

Freedom of the press

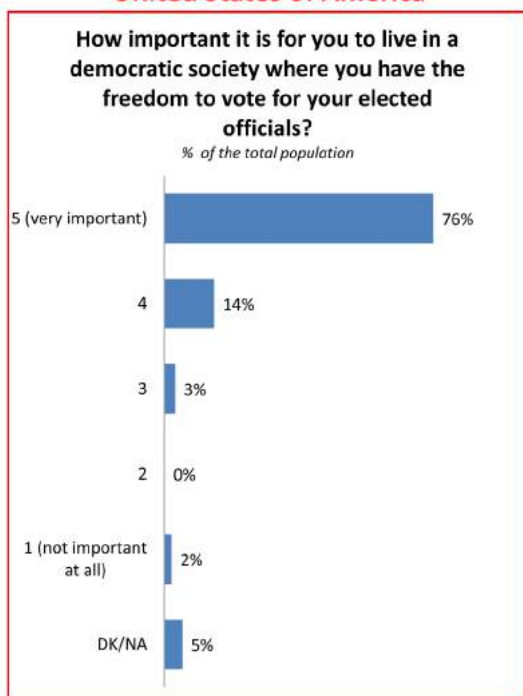
Americans think, in a much higher proportion than Romanians, that the press in their country is free. Almost 30% of Romanians believe that the national media has very little or little freedom. In comparison, 10% of the American respondents think that the media in their country has a little or no freedom at all.

Types of political leadership

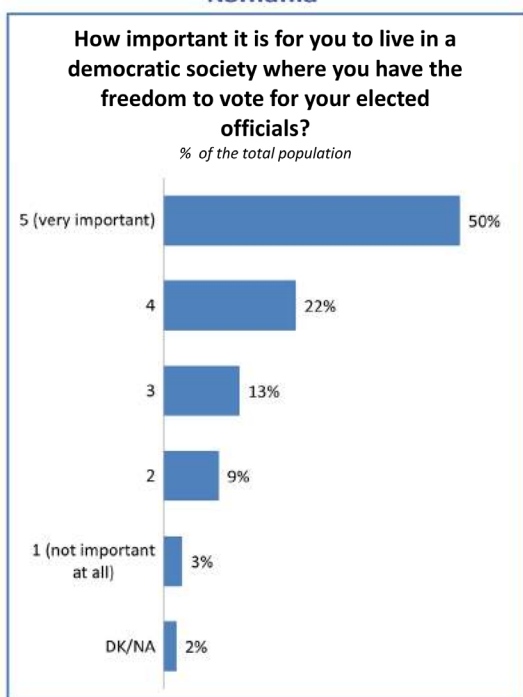
A significant percentage of both Romanians and Americans express their agreement with a type of political leadership which involves a leader/president who manages the country's problems with an iron hand. Thus, 49% of Romanians and 42% of Americans respectively, think that such a type of political leadership would be useful for their countries.

Also, almost 60% of Romanians would prefer their country to have a leader/president who assumes the role of mediator within the society. 60% of the

United States of America



Romania



American respondents expressed their preference for a balance and mutual control between the state powers.

42% of Romanians think that a Government made up of experts (technocrats) would be a good solution for ensuring the governing of the country, while only 32% of Americans share the same

opinion.

Both Romanian and American respondents are reserved concerning the prospect of increasing the powers of the legislative bodies in their countries.

Individual well-being

Romanians think, in a larger percentage than the Americans, that the state should take more responsibility for the people's well-being (68% versus 46%). At the same time, 75% of Romanians and 64% of Americans respectively believe that each individual should take more responsibility for his well-being. Romanians have more faith, than the Americans, that people can, in time, have a better life through hard work (67% versus 57%). On the other hand, over a half of the Romanian respondents (60%) think that it is very difficult to get rich only by working harder, unlike 46% of the questioned Americans.

Intervention of the state

Romanians agree, in a more significant percentage than the Americans, with a stronger intervention of the state in the economy. So, 70% of Romania's population think that the state should intervene more in the economy, while only 30% of the USA population share this opinion. Also, Romanians believe, in a larger percent than the Americans, that the state should tax the rich people more than it does now (63% versus 52%), respectively that the differences among people's incomes should diminish (65% versus 39%). Almost a third of both the Romanian respondents and the American ones agree with the limitation of certain rights and personal freedom in case of strong threats to national security. So, the agreement is rather low.

The role of international organisations in solving global conflicts

Romanians generally appreciate, in a larger percentage than the Americans, the necessity of international organisations (51% versus 40%), and their efficiency in solving different global issues (47% versus 31%). Also, Romanians positively evaluate, in a more significant percentage than the

Americans, the efforts of the UN for maintaining peace (44% versus 27%) and the security guarantee offered by NATO to its members (48% versus 31%).

The role of the states in solving global conflicts

46% of Romanians, 40% of Americans respectively, think that, as one of the most powerful countries in the world, the USA has a big responsibility in solving global conflicts.

Over half of both the Romanian and the American respondents consider that all the states, whether big or small, bear a certain responsibility for solving global conflicts.

Romanians believe, in a more significant percent than the Americans, that their country should only deal with internal issues (48% versus 23%).

The Romanian respondents believe, in a larger percent than the Americans, that it is important for their country to meet the international commitments, even when they are divergent to

politics proposed by the national government (50% versus 40%).

Increase in defense spending by NATO countries

Americans think, in a larger percentage than the Romanians, that the increase in defense spending by NATO members is necessary to counter the Russian threat (47% versus 34%), and that their country should increase defense spending (32% versus 23%).

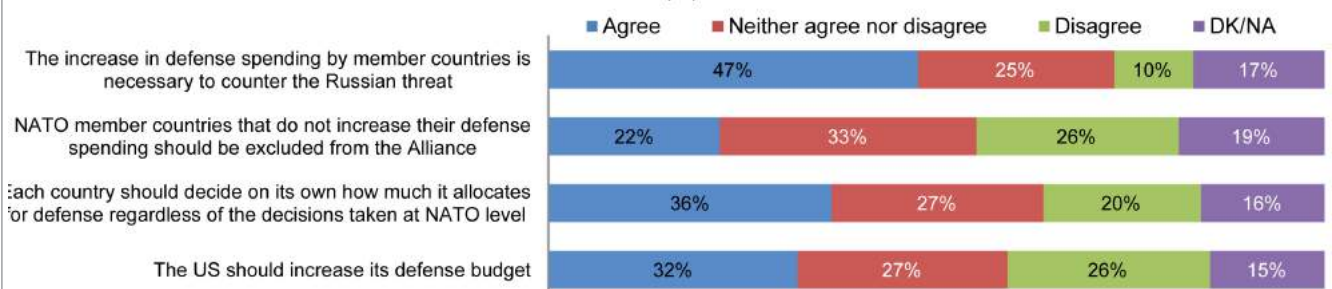
Under a quarter of both Romanian and American respondents think that the NATO countries that do not increase their defense spending should be excluded from the Alliance.

40% of Romanians, respectively 36% of Americans, believe that each country should decide on its own how much it allocates for defense, regardless of the decisions taken at NATO level.

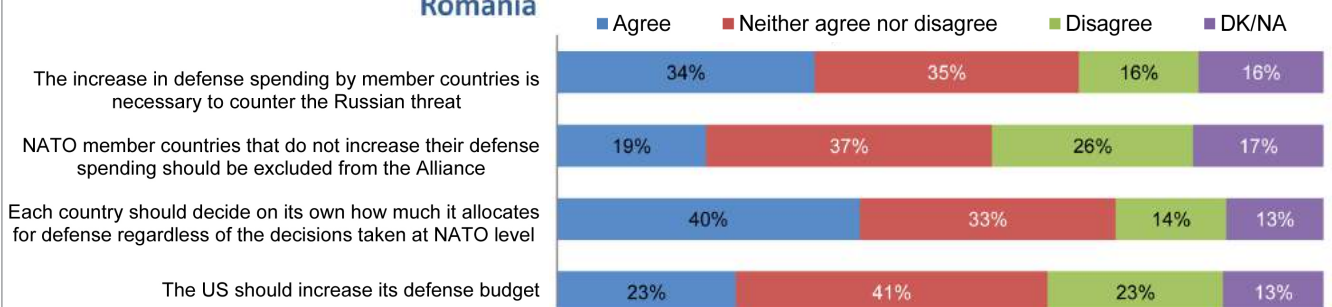
Maintaining the US sanctions against Russia

Lately, there have been some talks within NATO about member countries increasing their defense spending. I will read out a series of statements on this matter and I will ask you to tell us your opinion.
% of the total population

United States of America



Romania



Romanians' opinions concerning the US sanctions against Russia are divided. Almost 30% of those surveyed believe that maintaining these sanctions would be advantageous for Romania, while a similar percentage consider that it would not be a good thing for the country. 26% think that maintaining these sanctions is neither advantageous nor disadvantageous for Romania. Also, we observe a large share of non-responses – 18%, which indicates a low knowledge of the subject. Almost half of the American respondents believe that maintaining these US sanctions against Russia is beneficial for their country. The percent of the non-responses is also high in the case of American respondents.

The fake-news phenomena

The majority of both Romanian (56%) and American respondents (52%) think that fake-news are more likely to spread online than on traditional channels. Half of the Americans, respectively a little over half of the Romanians, believe that behind the spread fake-news are, most of the times, the politicians and the political parties in their countries. The distribution of answers shows that the politicians and the political parties are most strongly perceived as being the initiators of fake-news. Under 50% of both Romanians and Americans say that behind the spread of fake-news, are, most of the time, other states. The Romanian respondents say, in a larger percent than the Americans, that media spreads fake-news in pursuit of a larger audience (56% versus 42%). Ordinary people are perceived as being the spreaders of fake-news by a small percent of the interviewees, both Romanians and Americans (a little over a quarter).

The willingness to alert authorities when facing a situation that could pose a threat to public safety and order

47% of Romanians, respectively 55% of Americans, declare that they would be willing to alert the Police and other authorities in case of a situation that represents a threat to public safety and order. Romanians are more reserved in alerting authorities than the Americans. 16% of the Romanian respondents (compared to 4% of the Americans)

declare that they would rather not alert authorities in order to avoid unnecessary complications for themselves, while 6% (compared to 1% of the Americans) to avoid being viewed by the others as a snitch.

Equity of the society

Only about one-eighth of Romanians and Americans believe that we live in a fair society, which does not disadvantage those who are powerless and follow the rules. The highest share of the respondents (over 50% of Romanians, a little under half of the Americans – 47%) consider that they live in an unfair society in which rules do not apply to those in power. A little over a quarter of both Romanians and Americans think that the world is neither fair or unfair.

Religiosity

Romanians declare they believe in God in a more significant percent than the Americans (92% versus 76%).

85% of Romanians, compared to 60% of Americans, consider themselves religious persons. 10% of the Romanian respondents see themselves as not being religious, and just 1% as being convinced atheists. In the USA, 26% of those surveyed consider themselves not being religious, while 5% declare themselves convinced atheists.

The USA's image in the world

Over a half of Romanians think that the USA has a rather positive image in the world, while just a little over a third (36%) of the Americans have the same perception about their country. Almost a half of the interviewed Americans believe that their country has a rather negative image in the world.

Romania's image in the world

Two thirds of Romanians (66%) think that Romania has a rather negative image in the world, while almost a quarter (24%) consider that their country has a positive image.

Section II

Questions included exclusively in the American survey

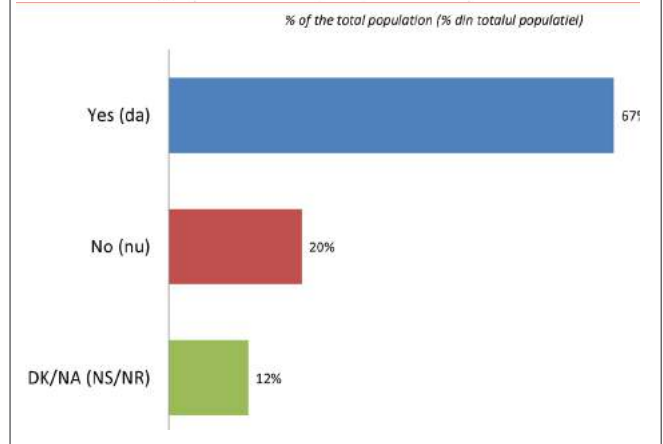
About Romania

67% of the Americans declare that they have heard of Romania, 20% declare that haven't heard of it, while 12% do not know or do not answer. Men, older people and those in urban areas declare, more often than the other categories (females, youngsters, people from suburban/rural areas), that they have heard of Romania. Also, a higher percentage of those who have heard of Romania can be found among the respondents from the North-East and West of the USA, as well as the white and Asian respondents.

Information about Romania

23% of the interviewees declare that they know Romania is a country, 3% that it's a former communist state. Also, the 3% mention that they know someone from our country. 4% of the respondents associate Romania's name with Gymnastics, respectively Vlad the Impaler/Dracula. 61% say that they have heard of Romania in another context.

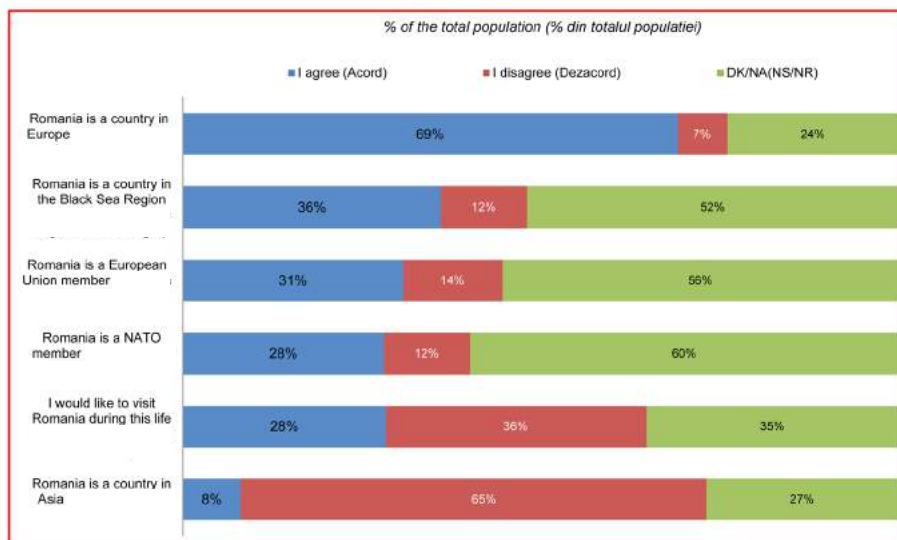
Have you ever heard about Romania?



Transylvania

71% of Americans declare that they have heard of Transylvania, 19% that they haven't heard, while 10% don't know or don't answer. 35% out of the total interviewees consider Transylvania a region of Romania, 23% that it's Dracula's country, 4% - a region in Hungary, 3% - a region in another EU country. 6% say that they have never heard of Transylvania, while 24% do not know or do not answer. White males, between 45 and 64 years, those living in the North-East and the ones with a higher level of education, identify Transylvania as a region in Romania, more often than other

I'm going to read out a series of statements about Romania. Please tell us whether you disagree or agree with each one?



categories.

Statements about Romania

Asked to express their agreement on a series of statements about our country, 69% of Americans identify Romania as being a European country, 36% - a country in the Black Sea Region, 31% - an EU member, 28% - a NATO member. Just 8% think that Romania is located in Asia. 28% of those surveyed show interest in visiting Romania. Males and those with a higher level of education identify Romania as a NATO member, an EU member or a country in the Black Sea Region, more often than the other categories (females, people with a lower education level). The willingness to visit Romania is higher among young people and the ones with a higher income.

Improving the opinion about Romania

At the top of the list of information which could be taken into account for improving the opinion about Romania are: the fact that Romanian soldiers are fighting alongside the American ones in Afghanistan (48% of the respondents chose the answer options 4 and 5, which means a high importance), the EU and NATO membership (46% chose the answer options 4 and 5 on the scale), the fact that over 70% of the Romanians have a good opinion about the USA (44%) and the lack of close ties with Russia (43%). The percentage of those who don't know or don't answer is a quite high. Men, those over 35 years, those with higher education and the inhabitants from the North-East are the categories who believe stronger than the others that the Romanians' predominant good opinion about the USA is essential for improving their opinion about our country.

Section III

Questions which were exclusively included in the Romanian survey

The feelings towards the USA

Romanians have, in an overwhelming majority (79%) rather positive feelings towards the USA.

Only 14% declare that their feelings towards the USA are rather negative.

Young people and urban tend to have a pro-American orientation, more than older people and rural residents. In terms of gender and education, there aren't major differences concerning the feelings towards the USA.

People living in the West part of Romania have a stronger pro-American orientation than people from other regions of Romania.

Self-employed people and those with higher income (over 3000 lei) declare, in a higher proportion, that they have rather negative feelings towards the USA.

The presence of American troops on Romania's territory

Three quarters of Romanians say that the presence of the American troops on Romania's territory is important and very important, while only 18% consider this military presence as less important or not important.

Males, people between 35 and 49 years and those with a medium-level education believe, more than the other categories, that the presence of the American troops on Romania's territory is important.

People living in the South-West and Central part of Romania, namely Transylvania, say, in a higher percentage than people from other regions, that the presence of the American troops on Romania's territory is very important.

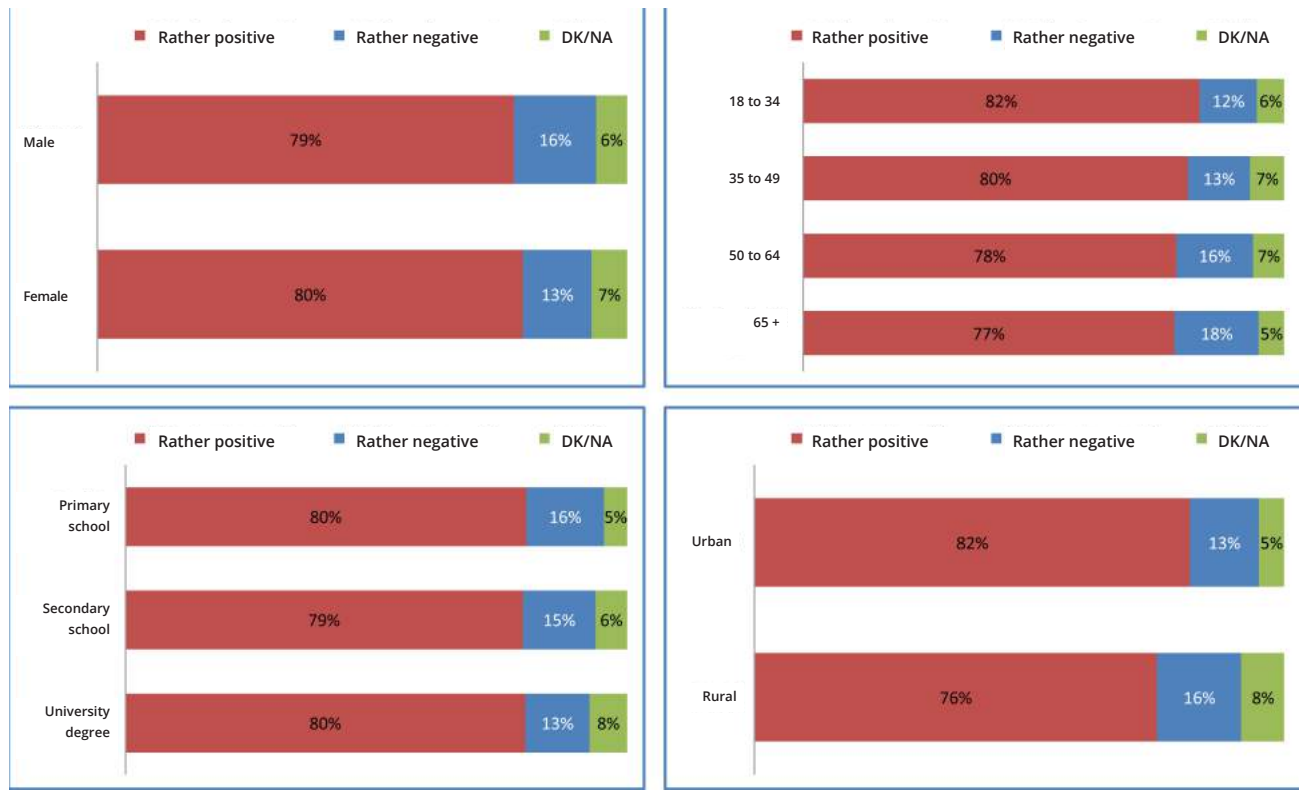
As the income increases, the importance of American troops on Romania's territory decreases.

From the point of view of occupation, state employees, pensioners and University students believe, in a lower percentage than the other categories, that the presence of the American troops on Romania's territory is very important.

The investments made by American companies in Romania's economy

Almost 80% of Romanians say that the investments made by American companies in Romania's economy are important and very important. Only

Please say what is your feeling toward USA?



18% see these investments as less important or not important.

Working for an American company

Over a half of Romanians would like to be hired in a company having an American majority shareholding. Young people and the ones with a low education level are the most willing to work in an American company. Regarding gender and residence, there are no significant differences. Geographically speaking, people from the West and from Moldavia are the most willing to work in an American company. People with a higher income are less willing to work in such a company, than the ones with lower income. Excluding the unemployed/no occupation/housewife category, the self-employed people and the private sector employees are the most willing to work in an American company.

NATO's role

Most of the respondents (42%) believe that, in case of an attack, our country cannot defend itself without the help of the other NATO members, while 31% neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Only 19% of those surveyed say that Romania could defend itself in case of an attack.

The state of democracy

45% of Romanians think that, over the last years, the democracy in their country has neither consolidated, nor weakened itself, 35% that it has consolidated, while 16% consider that it has weakened.

Economic interventionism

35% of the interviewees agree that the state should favour the domestic companies even if it breaks the principals of the free competition, 31% neither agree, nor disagree and 26% declare they don't agree with this idea.

The country's international role

Almost 60% of the respondents believe that our country should try to make its voice more strongly heard at the international level. 30% neither agree, nor disagree with this idea, while only 7% say they disagree with this idea. As concerns an increased implication of our country in solving regional and global conflicts, 35% agree with the idea, 40% neither agree nor disagree, while 19% disagree.

Romania's Centenary

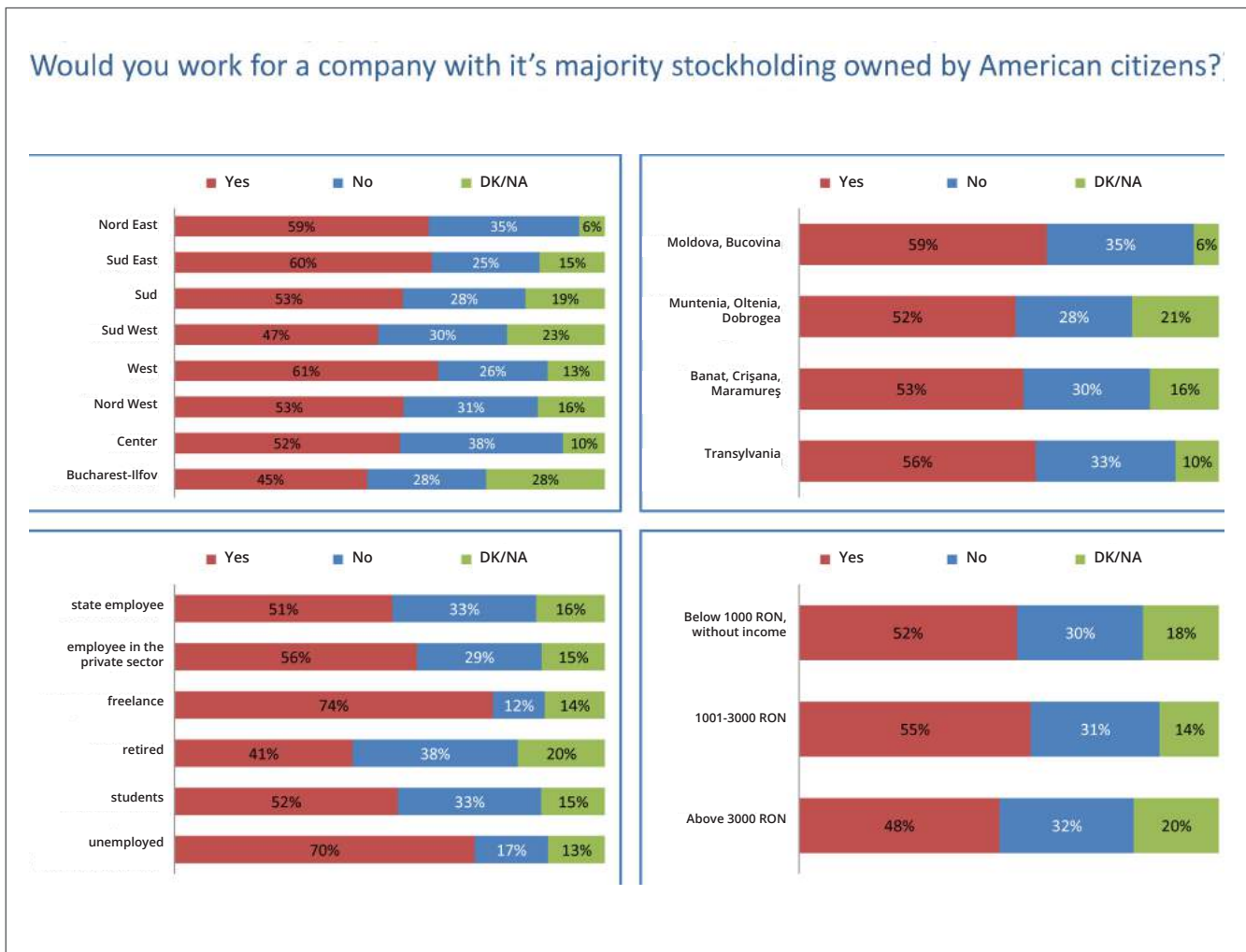
Being asked what we celebrate this year by Romania's Centenary, overall, more than 75% of the interviewees, referred to, more or less clearly, the event of the Great Union. So, 34% have mentioned that we celebrate 100 years from the Great Union,

27% - the Great Union, 12% - the Union, 2% - the creation of Great Romania, 2% - the Union of Romania. A quite high percentage – 12% of the respondents don't know or don't answer.

The most important event for Romania since the Great Reunion until the present day

45% of Romanians say that the 1989 Revolution is the most important event from the Great Union up to present day. The top of the most important events is completed, at a large percentage difference, by Romania's accession to the EU (8%), the Second World War (5%), Romania's accession to NATO (3%), the communism (3%). The rest of the events on the list are mentioned by 1% or under 1% of the respondents. 30% of the respondents (a high percent) don't know or don't answer.

Conclusions



46% of the American public thinks that in the USA things are going in the right direction. In Romania, only 19% of the population believe that things are going in the right direction, revealing, compared to the previous years, a strong downward trend. Romanians are much more optimistic about the future of the EU than Americans (40% compared to 25%). In general, Romania, which has an internal view of the EU, is among the most Euro-optimistic member countries. The current political debate in the USA regarding the relationship with the EU probably has a significant influence on Americans' perception over the future of European project. Somewhat paradoxically, 61% of Romania's population, the same as the US population, assess the financial situation of their own families as being good or very good (considerably more Americans say it's very good). Of course, each public relates to the economic development of its own society, the subjectivism in evaluating one's own situation being obvious.

As concerns the trust in institutions, it can be observed a comparable lack of trust in political parties, Government and Parliament/Congress. So, there is a crisis of the democratic model in both countries, as in the entire Euro-Atlantic world. Even the level of trust in the president is similar. Although not very high, the trust in the president in both Romania and the US is higher than in other institutions. We state, though, that the American president is still in the first half of his mandate, while the Romanian president enters the last year of his mandate.

The trust in the Army remains the highest, both in Romania and the USA. Also, the trust in Justice and the press is higher in Romania than in the USA. Americans are much more interested in politics than Romanians (50% compared to 21%), which explains the differences concerning elections turnout and absenteeism between the two societies, as well as the complexity of the political implication and civism in the USA. This indicator

underlines the major differences of political culture, apart from those derived from the political and elective system particularities. Also, Americans seem more attached to the idea of democracy than Romanians, although, living under a democratic regime is considered important by the respondents in both countries. Both political cultures approve to the idea of a strong leader / president.

At least at a discourse level, the references to work and responsibility are not very different for the two populations. However, Americans focus more on the individuals than on the state's responsibility. Romanians believe that both the individual and the state are responsible for the individual well-being, which is a rather comfortable answer and following the social norms.

Economically, Romanians sustain more than the Americans an increased state intervention, which is not necessarily an East-European attitude, but a typical European one.

On the other hand, Americans believe more than Romanians that increasing funds for NATO to counter the Russian threat is a must.

Concerning general human issues – religiousness, the belief in a fair world – or rather unfair – there aren't any significant differences between the two populations. Americans are much more demanding with their own country and only 36% think that the USA has a positive image in the world, while 60% of Romanians think that the USA has a rather positive image.

In what concerns the perception of Romania in the USA, although most of the Americans know that a country with this name exists, a common brand which can help to identify your country is missing. Transylvania and Dracula work in this sense rather through recognition – they are associated with Romania not automatically, but if people are asked about them in this context.

Regarding the public of Romania, it's probably one of the few of the EU which is simultaneously and significantly pro-American and pro-EU.



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George Friedman: “We need each other”

Flaviu Predescu: *Romania celebrates 100 years since the Great Union, a moment which would not have been possible without the support of the United States. How would you assess the impact of that moment today and for the future, given the fact that Romania and the United States enjoy today longstanding friendship and a Strategic Partnership built around shared values of freedom and democracy and a joint commitment to advance transatlantic security and mutual prosperity?*

George Friedman: I think that the most important principle of the friendship between our countries is shared interests. We need each other. Romania needs to guarantee its security in a region of unique uncertainty including

not only the Russians but also Turkey and the Balkans. They are not necessarily adversaries but they all raise uncertainties. For the United States, Romania is a safe haven from which to observe and react to events in this region. We share common political philosophies as liberal democracies, but it is our common interests that bind us.

Flaviu Predescu: *How do you see Romania’s role in Euro-Atlantic security at large, as well as more specifically in the Black Sea region, given its strong defense cooperation with the U.S. and activism in NATO?*

George Friedman: I am not optimistic about NATO as an entity. A military alliance requires,



above all, a military capability. With Germany and other countries lacking significant military capabilities they cannot honor their commitments to NATO. So from my point of view these countries have abandoned NATO. For the United States, it is now the bilateral agreements with NATO partners like Romania that are the primary vehicle for action and for Romania the United States is the only NATO power able to project sufficient force to support Romania. Of course individual members like Britain and other countries have capabilities and are welcomed into the relationships. But NATO as a whole cannot be said to be an effective fighting force. So the most important relationship is now Romania, Poland and the United States, all NATO members but effectively acting together in the new model of European defense.

Flaviu Predescu: *Romania appears to act quite alone as a strong advocate for the Black Sea Security. On the other hand, it appears to remain the only strategic pillar in the south of NATO Eastern Flank. How can Romania approach U.S. and NATO in a way to put the Black Sea region higher on their agenda?*

George Friedman: The current U.S. posture allows it to impact the Black Sea region without declaring its intent. More important, there is a vital issue being played out, which is the U.S.-Turkish relationship. How this plays out determines what the U.S. needs to do in the Black Sea. The ideal solution for the United States is drawing Turkey back into a close relationship with the U.S. If that happens then the Black Sea problem is managed one way. If it does not, it is managed in another, more difficult way. For the U.S. to become more assertive in the region while the Turkish relationship is evolving, may create the more difficult case. The Black Sea is vital but not urgent. The U.S. has time to rebuild its relationship with Turkey, and the Turks seem open to it now. So it is a time for waiting.

Flaviu Predescu: *Poland's offer to host significant permanent U.S. forces at a future "Fort Trump" made headlines. What is your assessment on the strategic value of this proposal and its chances to succeed, at least partially?*

George Friedman: It has a psychological value and a military value in that it provides facilities

for pre-positioning forces. But any Russian incursion into Poland and the North European Plain will require massive reinforcement from the United States. This was true in war plans during the Cold War and it is true now. The force envisioned cannot stop a large scale Russian force, so the new military base will not solve the strategic requirement for massive reinforcement and the use of NATO national transportation facilities for this deployment. This force, plus airlifted troops and combat air forces can delay the Russians and buy time.

Flaviu Predescu: *Russia continues to act provocatively, deploy military assets, use hybrid warfare tactics, agitprop, cyber-attacks and basically to test the West below the threshold. However, it pushes the threshold up. What should we expect from Russia's conduct over the next decade?*

George Friedman: It is interesting that for all of its activity, Russia has mostly lost as a result. So Russian operations in the United States has resulted in the unification of the Democratic Party, along with the bulk of Republicans, against Russia. This has resulted in sanctions that have caused substantial pain to the Russians. So the intent of any military operations, including cyberwarfare, is to weaken the enemy's resolve. The Russians have achieved exactly the opposite

effect in the one country they hoped most to weaken. Therefore, in objective terms, the Russians have failed in their mission. I suspect the same is true elsewhere as it is not a sudden Blitzkrieg but slow psychological warfare. And time is on the side of the defender in psychological warfare.

Flaviu Predescu: *There are many hot topics between U.S. and Russia, such as Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, sanctions, energy security, as well as in the larger picture with Syria and Middle East, or Russia and China apparently getting closer. How would U.S. relations with Russia likely evolve?*

George Friedman: The Russians have contracting room for maneuver as its economic problems force it to take unpopular steps like raising retirement age. If oil prices decline again, which I think is likely, it will be in a difficult position. Much of its foreign actions, such as Syria, are not designed for clear strategic purposes but as attempts to demonstrate their power to a domestic audience. On the other hand, the United States which has shifted to an economic warfare model, has the time to wait for the Russians to weaken. So the U.S. will be applying pressure on Russia economically, as it has on China, and allow the situation to unfold. The Russians will attempt to take actions to shape



perceptions of its power, but in the long run Russia is facing the same forces that destroyed the Soviet Union: declining energy prices and rising defense costs. In such a situation the American strategy must be to let Russia play its hand.

Flaviu Predescu: *Romania will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in January 2019. What would you call success in fulfilling this mandate in geostrategic and security terms, also when analyzing it from a transatlantic point of view?*

George Friedman: I have to admit that I have never understood what it means to hold the Presidency of the EU Council, or what special problems it has. I see the EU at “war” with Britain, Italy, Poland, Hungary and perhaps even Romania. The need is that the EU must reduce its internal conflicts before it is torn apart. So if the EU Council president has any power, he should realize that a treaty organization that alienates some of its most important

members can’t survive and should find means of accommodation. But I suspect that the EU technocrats may not listen to their political masters.

Flaviu Predescu: *In the post-cold war time, the frontier of freedom moved eastwards, answering legitimate aspirations of nations on whom communism was imposed to. Can we hold the line so that future generations can enjoy the same freedoms, security and aspirations for prosperity?*

George Friedman: I think it is an easier task than others might think. I see the Russian position as extremely weak, having lost most of its western buffer and its ability to act constrained by its economy. In addition the alliance between Poland, Romania and the United States from the Russian point of view poses for them a defensive problem. I think it is time to keep watching the Russians, but to focus increasingly on building the economies of eastern Europe. As we learned in the Cold War, a credible defensive line that





makes attacks risky, coupled with surging economies is the key to national security.

Flaviu Predescu: *How do you see Romania's grand strategy in such an international context? Also, how do you think its communication with the Trump administration works? What should the Romanian Embassy in Washington do more?*

George Friedman: Communications with the Trump administration are like communications with any American administration: confusing. The President is the weakest leader in the Euro-American world, hedged in by two parliaments and an independent judiciary. He rarely has the last word on anything. DoD will say one thing, State Department another, CIA something

else, and then everyone has to stop to listen to Congress. Our founders wanted a division of powers and they got it. So you never knew what Obama's people intended either. The key to working with the United States is also the key of Romania's grand strategy: to develop a robust economy not dependent on weak European institutions. I urge you to look at the evolution of South Korea, and Israel and Germany and Japan after the war. Being a strategic asset to the United States, the U.S. had a deep interest in their economic development. They emerged from rubble into being significant global forces. The US needed them, they focused on building themselves rather than on Washington chatter, yet maintained their value to the United States. This should be Romania's path.



Editorial

„Cultura” goes forth...

ANAMARIA MAIOR-BUZURA

On the 21st of September, the Augustin Buzura Cultural Foundation presented its future projects as part of the inaugural meeting of the Gala of FCAB

(ABCF) Awards, and the relaunch of „Cultura” Magazine as the flagbearer for these projects. We relaunch „Cultura” out of a conviction that such a publication is necessary in the Romanian market for news and magazines, where value tends to be awarded to proximity, and to the speed of presenting pseudo news and pseudo events, rather than to quality. „Cultura” aims to represent a space which is open to cultural dialogue, operating within the confines of good common sense. Therefore, it will be worth fighting for its existence, using the arguments of decency, competence and honesty.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

Contributions

Our internal clock and collateral reflections on a Nobel Prize

DORU MĂRGINEANU

The biological clock has thus gained genetic identity and entered the concerns of molecular biology, an increasingly rapid succession of essential discoveries then leading to completing genetic determination and deciphering the molecular mechanism for the generation of the circadian cycle. The molecular mechanism

of the circadian cycle consists in numerous components which ensure its stable periodicity and the synchronicity with the light-dark cycle. Simplifying to the extreme, we retain only that transcribing timeless genes is inhibited by the proteins whose synthesis is commanded even by themselves, but is activated by the products of the clock and cycle genes, and their activity is, in its turn, inhibited by the products of those first genes, thus autonomous oscillation being generated.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

In debate

From the Public to the Publics

A short contextualisation

CARMEN CORBU

In a world of hyper-choice, the consumer of cultural products follows the sort of content which interests them with relative ease. The audiences tend to create their own niches, and are therefore characterised by increasingly smaller numbers. In the recent past, there have been a few studies of Romanian audiences based on lifestyle, or on a



detailed mapping of psychology and motivation. In order to identify different types of receptivity to certain offers and messages, a short history of the results could explain many of the numbers in the different measures of cultural consumption, or, at least, alleviate the tensions which they produce.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

Culture & society

Culture factories Books in the countryside

The Association "Eu, tu și ei" (I, you, and them) has run a project to promote reading in the disadvantaged rural areas by children and teenagers, in towns where there are no libraries or other educational public services. Isolation raises serious issues for the provision of the necessary infrastructure by the local authorities, as well as of the access to public services for the population in those villages. From this point of view, the mountain village communes, amounting to 15% of the total of the communes in the county, are especially disadvantaged.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)





ECLIPSE, artwork by Aurel Vlad

Visual Arts

Echoes and glitters in a White Night

NICU ILIE

The activity of art galleries, as we have seen with NAG (White Night of the Art Galleries), tends to become more settled and, implicitly, predictable. The names which are well known had a reduced presence, and emerging artists were launched with uneven proposals, some of them in the echo of past years, and some that are missing the finishing touches. Some interesting proposals

coming from the north of the Bucharest, from the Combinatul Poligrafic (ex-Printing House Complex), which hosts works by both very young artists and collective projects, such as Sandwich. In the (not so old) Old Centre of the city, one of the important exhibitions is from Galeriile Carol, in the area of Piața Latină, with sculptural works by artists of great force – Mircea Roman, Aurel Vlad, and Doru Covrig –, with a consistent, humanist expression, and that means today anxiety and fears.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

In debate

A Short Itinerary
of Creativity

ANDREEA GRECU

In past years, discussions about urban regeneration have been based on the part of the population which endures the privilege of living in the city. These are social categories pauperised by a restrictive capitalism of the Eastern kind, categories of people who are close to the threshold of poverty or under it. For these people, modernity means second-hand shops and Chinese-made merchandise, and under the heading of leisure time, TV and the Turkish soap-opera *Suleiman*, are the mainstream. (excerpt from the Romanian version)

Arts

Romanian Film
Between Themes and Readings

ION LAZĂR

Year on year, increasingly more Romanian films make it on to the circuit of international festivals of various categories. Some come back with awards, others with eulogies from the international specialised press. The recognition of the value of Romanian cinematography continues both at home and abroad. Even in an approach that does not necessarily propose a complete survey of all these participations in serious competitions, we can believe that we're in a pretty good position. A glance at the programme of the recent festival of the Francophonie which took place in Namur shows that, in the main competition, which awarded the Bayard Prizes for feature films, we were present with "Alice T." by Radu Muntean.



Mural signed "Pisica Pătrăță", Romania, Bucharest

In the debut section, we had "A Decent Man" (Un om la locul lui) by Hadrian Marcu, and the France-Romania-Belgium coproduction, "Alone at My Wedding" (Singulară la nunta mea), directed by Marta Bergman. Two titles took part in the international short-film competition: "Sunday" (Duminica) by Dorian Boguță, and "Miss Sueno", by Radu Potcoavă. In the "smaller" short-film section (where they are looking for "golden promises"), there was the film "Just One More" (Cu unul în plus), by Valeriu Andriuță.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)



„A Decent Man” (by Hadrian Marcu)



Ioana Cîrlig – *FAIRIES (ZÂNE)* – project of documentary photography

In debate

100 Years of Modernity Perceptions and Representations

CARMEN CORBU

Of what type is it, and what intensity is recorded in the relationship the Romanians have with the nation they form? Opinions are split, and this leads to a conflict on the axis of community self-esteem. Stress and confusion lead to excessive rationality and individualism. The research team from the National Institute for Cultural Research

and Training note that, while in other parts of the world there is a significant participation in such events with celebratory character, Romanians do not exhibit a similar interest in them. Continuing their conclusions, they bring into discussion their concern regarding “the temporal identity of the Romanians, their capacity to perceive themselves to be actors in a narration that comes from the past and which needs to extend into the future”.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

Editorial

A Centenary State, Touched by a Millenary “Stasis”

ANANIE GAGNIUC

For the Centenary, it is sad to acknowledge the stasis which has started to envelop Romania, under the influence of a relatively small group of individuals: presidents of political

parties and of parliament chambers, a few people with criminal convictions, a few people who have struck it rich, a few media proprietors, and a few members of the Securitate who were well-oriented even before 1989. There may even be a few intellectuals, unfortunately, who are coerced into obedience or are cowards, pure and simple.
(excerpt from the Romanian version)

In debate

The Need for Literature The Parallel Route of Books under the Dictatorship

DANA GAGNIUC-BUZURA

We are talking about traditional books, of books in digital format, of virtual libraries and bookshops, as well as of the possibility of facile and rapid access to a huge informational spectrum. The steps



Gheorghe Fărcașiu, “ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNS”

put in place in order to transition from a culture of paper to a culture of electronics, and the twinning of the concept of traditional library with that of digital library, are irreversible. On-line networks have taken over a great part of the physical efforts of the books' consumers, leaving an ample space of comparison between the methods of sourcing quality books nowadays and those employed during the times of Ceausescu's defunct Golden Era.
(excerpt from the Romanian version)

Arts

Interview with Director Gianina Cărbunariu: “I think the viewer must be challenged, first of all, to think.”



CRISTINA RUSIECKI

There are dramatic changes in the labour market, and I tried to represent them in my show as well, but they are found in many other shows. Year on year, we no longer know what is happening to us, we don't know whether we'll get a retirement pension anymore, or if we'll benefit from healthcare. We don't know if our children will have the reassurance of free education. All these are lost in total chaos. But these are crucial matters. It depends on them how we are going to live from this point onwards. It seems to me that we are in a time of confusion.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

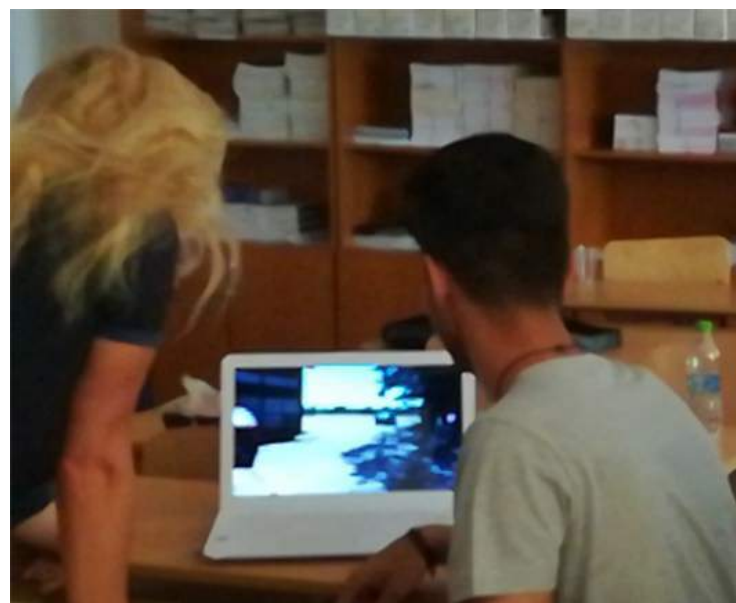
Culture & society

Culture factories The Smart Option

There is a trend of rejecting the use of telephones in the education sector. Young people show an attachment both to the use of this technology, and to the circulation of images (photo and video) by means of the channels of information distribution. Documentary-type films are less popular among the young, but their virtues in the field of knowledge acquisition are recognised. Vis-A-Vis Association organised four sets of workshops for

four groups of young people between 14 and 18 years of age, selected from four different areas of Bucharest, and based on the criteria of the breadth of cultural access in those areas.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)





Mural signed "Mister Thoms, 2016", Romania, Braşov, Între ziduri area

In debate

1968. The Semi-Centenary of Change in the Social Paradigm

NICU ILIE

Taken as a whole, beyond the particularities granted by the specificity of each country, countercultures, as they were called in the West, or the cultural

revolution, as it was called in East Asia, drew attention to a new type of social fracture, that between generations, as well as to the fact that, in the societal ensemble, culture (its forms) has a primordial role, being the basis for both capital, and for political and cultural organisations.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

In debate

Members of a Nation. Redefinitions and Politics for the Diaspora

ROXANA BRATU

An idea widely aired in order to support the portrayal of migrants as "agents of development", in the various discourses about development, is that the trans-frontier flows are not just the transfer of economic remittances, but also that of social remittances. Defined as "ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that circulates

from the host-societies to communities of origin", social remittances have the potential to produce changes at the level of the community of origin. A special kind of such remittance is the political one, defined by Faist as "ideas on the rule of law, good governance, democracy and human rights", which can contribute to the democratisation of the country of origin, or an increase in citizens' demands with regard to the way institutions are organised and to the quality of government.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)



Photo by Dimitra Stasinopoulou, Lijiang, China

In debate

National Poet. One expression, two words, four concepts, nineteen figures

NICU ILIE

The simple mechanics of logic would have it that the phrase “national poet” is created at the concrete intersection of the multitude of poets with the multitude of elements that objectivise the construction of the national spirit. However, with all its hard edged clarity, logic is useless here: the concept of national poet is so much more, and so much less. The foundation of this concept is not literature, but politics; while its substance is not aesthetics, but the state. Without proceeding from an explicit and clearly formulated ideology, the concept of national poet is defined by traits that transcend

the cultural specificity of any country. Its dominant features are: romantic style, political activity, and a “progressive” vision, (inverted commas are due to the erosion of the concept in contemporary vision, while in the time of the Romantics it conferred a precise content). It should also display engagement in the “century of the nations”, as we can call the 19th Century. It should make recognised contributions to the lexis, syntax or connotations of language. It should endorse ethno-cultural symbols, and explore historical subjects (predominant in the form of the epic poem). Finally, the “national poet” must have the capacity of being institutionalised in the form of a canon by means of at least one perfect work.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

In debate

The Art of Conquering Fear.

DANA GAGNIUC-BUZURA
LUMINIȚA TUCĂ

Even if times have changed, and the world of the village has suffered huge transformations, we can talk about a folk culture that “travelled” through time. The material and spiritual

dimensions of folk culture are indispensable. We may define tradition in a simple manner: everything which is practiced following certain rules coming from the olden days; and custom as the totality of manifestations taking place on a certain occasion, a usage, an arrangement.

(excerpt from the Romanian version)

Radu Afrim represented Romania at the Bangkok Art Biennale

MONICA RADU

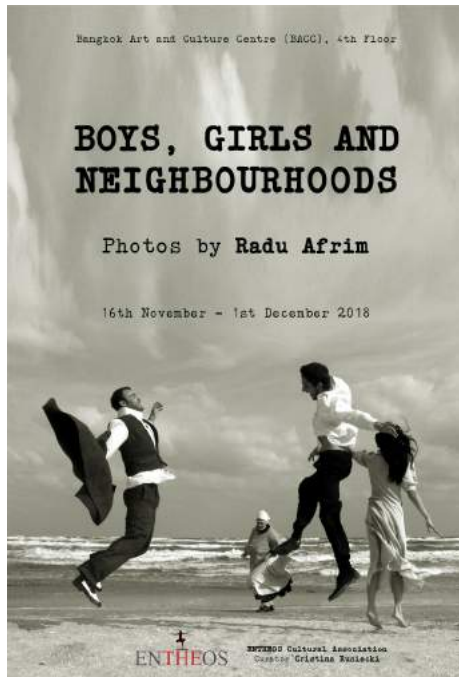
Bangkok Art and Culture Center (BACC) is Bangkok's most important cultural venue, an area of international cultural exchanges. In the modern, imposing, circular architecture building, the number of visitors attracted by cultural events has risen from 300,000 in 2007 to 1,700,000 visitors in 2017. At the Bangkok Art Biennale, the ENTHEOS Cultural Association, with the support of the German Cultural Foundation KulturForum Europe, represented by its president, Dieter Topp, and by Christian Bauer, organized at BACC the photography exhibition „Boys, Girls and Neighborhoods” signed by one of the most appreciated Romanian theatre directors, Radu Afrim, who is also a talented visual artist. The Board estimates that BACC exhibitions have on average 4000-5000 visitors per day.

„So far we have had a lot of participation from artists from various fields showing their works and freely expressing their views, and visitors in turn

get pot-luck experience when they visit us, and it is up to them what to make of it. This is the kind of activities that have been happening here for the last ten years. We ended up with some 120 exhibitions last year, and adding to that some 440 events such as theatre, film, music, and meetings. Not all the events of the latter have to do with art, but they serve to bring people from all walks of life and all professions to come and be here, ending up in a cultural center after all.”, said Mr. Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, board member and secretary general of BACC at the exhibition vernissage and book launch Radu Afrim. The Fabric of Fragility by Cristina Rusiecki. The exhibition „Boys, Girls and Neighborhoods” ran from 16 November to 1 December 2018 on the fourth floor of BACC. The exhibition consisted in twenty photos, most of them featuring actors with whom director Radu Afrim has worked in various projects throughout his career.

Pawit Mahasarinand, director of Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Dieter Topp, president of the German cultural foundation KulturForum Europa, Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, founding member and secretary general of BACC, and Cătălin D. Constantin, anthropologist, vice-dean of the College of Letters from Bucharest University talked





about the importance of the event organized by the Cultural Association ENTHEOS, meant to contribute to the development of cultural links between Romania and the Kingdom of Thailand, about the personality and the universe of the Romanian theatre director Radu Afrim, and about the atmosphere of the photography in „Boys, Girls and Neighborhoods”. The curator of the exhibition, Cristina Rusiecki, gave a brief introduction to the universe of Radu Afrim’s work. On this occasion her volume, „Radu Afrim. The Fabric of Fragility”, was launched.

„In 2000 I saw his first performance, actually his graduation, *Black Milk*. Two girls and a boy all rather lunatic used to play childish and cruel games all day long. But the roles were permanently interchangeable because it was just a game. Everybody looked down at the performance and asserted with all the contempt in the world: This is not theatre. Well, today „This is not theatre” turned into the most appreciated theatre. Radu Afrim became one of the most awarded directors. When his performances from all over the country are invited to Bucharest, the doors of the theatre are assaulted. This year he had the most performances – four – selected in the National Theatre Festival. And when they started at the midnight to sell the tickets online in a few hours all of them were sold out. His performances traveled across Europe, in Paris, in Luxembourg and so on.

All the myths fail into derrision in Afrim’s performances: macho pride, religion, the nationalism, the obsolete Romanian classical literature. And any pretext is good for the

characters to escape from reality. The characters are anti-heroes. They live a minor existence. They are weak and the society finds them unimportant. Afrim’s characters are the definition of fragility. These characters are like cute toys who do not want to hurt anyone. The director knows how to mix the violence with lyrical parts and playfulness. He talks about smashing human dignity, about rejection, about aggression and submission. The fragility of the victims, their incapacity of protecting themselves and their trust in others make them the easiest people to be sacrificed. Usually this type of characters are teenagers, orphans, mentally disabled or old people. But the main reason why his performances are so appreciated is their comical dressing, a mixture of light absurd, grotesque, drag queens’ glamour, and linguistic puns.

Radu Afrim is fond of taking pictures with the actors whom he works with. He himself usually makes the posters for his performances, compositions of crowds of bodies, sandwiched together in strange combinations or forming the occasional monolith of nudes”, said Cristina Rusiecki.

This is why for the anthropologist Cătălin D. Constantin „the subject of the exhibition is the contradictory answer to a question that can be formulated in two ways: To have a body? or To be a body?. Though apparently similar, these are two very different questions in substance, describing two very distinct ways in which European culture reflected the human body during its history”. For the anthropologist, Radu Afrim’s pictures represent a visual anthropology of the present, taking the human body as a guiding thread.

„To have a body? With this question we go to Old Europe, to traditional communities in Middle Ages, when the body was perceived as a possession”, said Cătălin D. Constantin. „A person owned a body in the same way a person owned a house or something else, any other material object. Actually the body was conceived as a house of the soul, and nothing more. This is why the beauty of the human body was not a purpose in itself. It was not a purpose at all. The body did not meant identity. It was not the unquestionable limit. It was only a symbolic frontier, a transitive one, part of a much larger series of frontiers defining and describing the human being as a spiritual being and as part of a larger community, not confined to a body. It was even believed a human soul could change the house and easily move in a different body by means of rituals or magic acts. By contrast, modern European culture puts the sign of equality between body and person. Identity is given especially by facial traits. To be someone means to be a body. The human existence is corporal

and the appearance of laic portraits in European art is simultaneous to this idea. The beauty of the body becomes a purpose in itself, a beautiful body is something to wish and admire. Of course, this is directly or just symbolically connected to sexuality and the beauty of the nude body is important. Just look at how beautiful the bodies are in Radu Afrim's pictures! The body has a profound symbolic meaning in Radu Afrim's pictures and this perspective is a very modern one. There is also a reference to the spiritual, ethereal body, as you can see by looking at the flying bodies on the exhibition poster."

About Cristina Rusiecki's volume „Radu Afrim. The Fabric of Fragility”, Cătălin D. Constantin added: “The book was first published in Romanian language in 2012. The English version followed in 2016. It is a special book and a very beautiful one. Special, because it is a rare case in Romania to have such a detailed documented book about the work of a stage director. And beautiful, for at least two reasons. It is an object-book, professionally edited and printed, with a lot of beautiful pictures, most of them also taken by Radu Afrim. Which is also not so common, because stage directors usually don't take pictures by themselves during rehearsals and plays. But also beautiful due to the text itself. Cristina Rusiecki is not only a theatre critic and a cultural journalist, but also a philologist and her text has evidently literary qualities. You read her book with the pleasure you read a literary work”.

At the vernissage, Dieter Topp, the president of the German Foundation KulturForum Europa, founded in 1992 by vice chancellor Hans Dietrich Genscher, the principal architect of German reunification, awarded the honorary medal to Cristina Rusiecki, president of the Association Cultural Center ENTHEOS, to anthropologist Cătălin D. Constantin, vice-dean of the College of Letters at the University of Bucharest, to Pawit Mahasarinand, director of Bangkok Art and Culture Center, and to Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, founding member and secretary general of the BACC. The awards “express the importance of the efforts of the work of four

fantastic personalities in building a cultural bridge between the South-East Asian country of Thailand and the East European country of Romania as a good example of cultural ambassadors eliminating cultural and historical barriers by promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance”.

„You did an important job. Now, it's our and my personal wish and your duty not to lose strengths in contributing to the development of this intercultural dialogue”, Dieter Topp said. And he added: „Romania is different! This event in South East Asia is again KFE's contribution of positive images of Romania to the world. Different from prostitution, street children, robbery, and so many prejudices. Romania is different. Happy 100s anniversary, Romania! I saw a chance for Cristina Rusiecki and her book to raise awareness of the Afrim phenomenon and of Romania among a wider audience and a further opportunity to transmit an interesting, relevant and positive image of the country and one of its leading creative artists.” The president of KulturForum Europa tried to find an explanation for the Romanian ambassador's absence: „It might be due to the European Union constructive critical confrontation with recent politics in Romania that there is no presence of the Romanian Ambassador today”.

The first days of the „Boys, Girls and Neighborhoods” overlapped with the Bangkok International Theatre Festival and the Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting (November 14-18, 2018). On this occasion, the theatre critic Cristina Rusiecki presented the distinct personality and universe of Radu Afrim's performances at Chulalongkorn University. Through the series of events included in the project “Radu Afrim, a personality of today's Romanian theatre”, the ENTHEOS Cultural Association hopes to contribute to a better knowledge of the Romanian culture on the Asian continent and to provide new opportunities to improve and diversify the cultural links between the two partner countries, Romania and the Kingdom of Thailand.



A Novel of Augustin Buzura presented at Radio Free Europe

The review was published in the weekly bulletin of Free Europe's Research Institute, Situation Report, of 4 August 1989. The text describes, in a direct and daring manner, all of the problems which Augustin Buzura encountered when publishing the novel – a publication which, amazingly, was possible only one year before the fall of communism.

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7. Augustin Buzura's Novel: an Appalling Picture of Romania Today

Summary: A new novel by Augustin Buzura questions the values of the regime in Romania. Buzura describes how it is impossible to lead a normal existence in a world dominated by ideology and political incompetence.

* * *

After many delays caused by censorship, the Romanian novelist Augustin Buzura has finally brought out *Drumul Cenusii* [The Ash Road], the second volume of a projected trilogy, *Zidul Mortii* [Death Wall]. The first volume, *Refugii* [Places of Refuge], was published in 1984. The book concentrates on the problems facing Romanian intellectuals. The central character is a journalist, Adrian Coman, who once believed that he could transform, influence, or at least be a witness to events through his writing. Gradually, however, Coman is overwhelmed by a feeling of futility because of his conviction that "to a certain degree," "even . . . witnesses" have contributed to the current deplorable situation. He seems to have lost hope that events can change their course. Writing has become "a strange and absurd exercise of survival . . . , an antidote against suicide."

The novel is a painfully detailed description of Coman's search for David Helgomar, an engineer who mysteriously disappeared after he had tried to defend miners' rights during the strike in the Jiu Valley in 1977.¹ Coman is asked by a doctor, Victoria Oprea (Helgomar's former mistress), to find out the circumstances of his disappearance. Coman talks with some of Helgomar's friends but soon he and Oprea are warned to give up their search for Helgomar. Oprea tries to find out who sent her a suspicious letter, but she is killed in a car accident. Coman is also involved in a similar accident. These accidents are too similar not to be suspicious, partly because the representatives of the striking miners were also killed in car accidents, according to rumors circulating in Romania at the time.

The plot is obviously only a pretext for Buzura to develop his favorite topics: dictatorship, censorship, cowardice, truth, and lies. There is little dialogue. The characters are more disposed to introspection than action. For anyone aware of the current situation in Romania, Buzura's novel is an accurate picture of Romanian society. The search for Helgomar becomes a symbol of the writer's determination to find out the truth. While he is searching for Helgomar, Coman, the narrator, discovers a society divided in two: those who enjoy exercising power and the rest of the people who are struggling for physical survival. Against this background, Buzura depicts an appalling picture of Romania today.

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Power-mania and the Recipe for Survival. Coman comes into conflict with the authorities everywhere. Power-mania seems to have affected anyone who has a bureaucratic function. Under these circumstances, the aim of the average Romanian has become survival. Coman claims it is necessary to assume a dual personality in order to survive and to preserve integrity. Buzura offers a recipe for survival:

the first law of survival is not to think; but if you cannot refrain from thinking, then make it a habit to hold your tongue; and if you find holding your tongue unbearable, your last chance is to say the opposite of what you are really thinking.

Buzura suggests that moral standards have to decline in order for people to survive. Vices, once seen as sins, are now appreciated as indispensable qualities.

The Mechanism of Dictatorship. The novel argues that a dictator's aim is to intimidate people by every means. While love does not affect a dictator in any way, fear is considered to be a much more reliable emotion. For this reason, a dictator strives to convey the impression of being the master of everything and of being invincible. If someone were able to convince people that the terror imposed by a dictator is the result of the dictator's own fear, dictatorship could be defeated.

I cannot imagine how people can be made aware of their strength, aware of the fact that every day they are waiting for salvation from the outside, from someone other than themselves, every postponement is a concession to death, to their own death.

The Potemkin Syndrome. Fiction has become a characteristic feature of Romanian communist society. The novel depicts some scenes that border on the grotesque. One of them is referred to by the narrator as "legendary." Since living standards in Romania have dropped sharply, the regime has become obsessed with proving the opposite. The regime's way of proving to foreign guests that living standards have risen and that there is no truth in reports of starvation conditions is to organize cookery exhibitions. Consequently, whenever it is necessary to prove that things are going well a big cookery exhibition is organized. Naturally, receptions for foreign guests are prepared well in advance because the organizers themselves have difficulties in finding basic foods, which are in chronically short supply. The narrator tells that in a town where such an exhibition was set up, the organizers moved heaven and earth to find a small piglet. When they found one, they sent it to be baked in the best oven in the town. On the way to the oven, the piglet disappeared; and the entire police force was mobilized to find it: "There could have been a crime, a rape, a murder, a burglary--but finding the piglet became the priority!"

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Another scene depicts the poverty of Romanian peasants and their attempts to obstruct the regime that has deprived them of everything. In a village where there is a single sterile cow, all the peasants borrow it from the owner and take it, rather than their fertile cows, to the bull for breeding. According to a letter that has just reached the West,² Romanian peasants prefer to take their cattle to the forest and leave them to be eaten by bears or to let them be run over by a train rather than sell them to the state. This behavior is caused by the low prices the regime pays for the cattle and the fact that the peasants are not allowed to slaughter any of them for their own consumption. In addition, they can sell the cattle only they have reached a certain weight. Because of the lack of fodder, people are driven to despair watching their animals suffer from hunger. Like women, cows are subject to monthly gynecological examinations and when there is proof that someone has caused a cow to miscarry, the punishment is imprisonment.

Abnormality Made Normal. The narrator questions the current moral and political values in Romania. He discusses the spiritual and material corruption, which could affect Romania's future. The moral disaster is so overwhelming that people have become used to humiliation and are no longer able to sense the loss of their dignity. At this stage, the narrator comments that the leap from humiliation to courage and dignity in Romania seems to be even more "difficult than the leap from the ape to a human being." According to the narrator, heroic deeds are unusual in normal everyday life, but in a society where the idea of normal life has been erased and moral and political values are not what they used to be, moral integrity may become synonymous with heroism.

The heart of the novel is a description of how abnormal conditions have become normal in Romania. It is now normal "to look everywhere, always be ready to defend oneself against a real or imaginary enemy, to talk in whispers even about the most insignificant things, because one is afraid not of what one says but of distortions [One has] courage in the bathroom with the water running full blast, or courage outside, looking around to see if there is someone near you."

Nevertheless, a normal life for those who are forced "to imitate the life of the first Christians" will only be possible if there is a change of mentality. The novel suggests that people are to a certain degree responsible for their own poverty, degradation, and humiliation, even though it has become a habit to blame circumstances for the present situation: "again and again: fate, history, circumstances, the sky and the planets, the devil." The narrator disagrees with those who believe that "to smile in the face of adversity" is the best anyone can do and with those who consider this "stupid habit" a sign of "wisdom." In his opinion, such an attitude is synonymous with human "degradation," because behind it lies "cowardice, fear of confrontation, laziness, and fear of everything." In a

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world that mistakes arbitrary decisions for good management, "the ignorant" rule over those who do not protest against abuse. In his opinion, "the ignorant" are those united "neither by any ideology nor by any conviction" but only by a special ability to recognize one another and to unite against everything that represents value and intelligence. In "a period of dilettantism," if certain people do not say no when it is necessary, the world would be dominated by "silence imposed by force."

The narrator describes the regime's lack of moral standards when evaluating events and people as a sign of "barbarity." He pointedly makes the comparison with Caligula's question when he was appointing senators: "Are you sure that there is no one worse than this?"

Writers and Censors. Literature and the press are heavily censored in Romania, but Buzura seems convinced that, despite censorship and terror, a code can be gradually established between a writer and his readers. No matter how severe the censorship is, a writer can communicate to a certain degree with a reader if he really wants to give him courage and hope; what a writer needs, besides this determination, is to be a good psychologist when dealing with the censors. The press is subject to the same harsh censorship: "What it knows, it does not say, and what it says, it does not know." Distortion of reality and censorship have become common. One character in the book says "I'm very curious to see not what you are writing but what will be published."

A World of Deprivation. Buzura is distressed about the shortage of medicines--even blood for transfusion and saline solution are often hard to find in hospitals--the shortages of basic foods, including bread, and the chronic energy shortages. The consequences of the energy shortages are not only material: without light people are deprived of access to information, culture, and other things that could make their life easier. While Buzura's previous novels concentrated on the living conditions and the privations of the working class, *The Ash Road* describes some aspects of peasant life. He blames the regime for the fact that many peasants have left their villages, that "more houses have their doors fastened with nails," and that courtyards have been invaded by weeds.

Buzura believes that Romania has been totally forsaken by God. The novel ends with a prayer to God, who is described as Romania's last chance. Buzura warns that "beyond a certain limit one is no longer responsible for one's actions."

Crisula Stefanescu

¹ See Romanian Situation Report / 16, Radio Free Europe Research, 2 November 1984, item 4.

² Broadcast by RFE's Romanian Service on June 1989.



The “Augustin Buzura” Cultural Foundation was established in 2017 in Romania, in honor of the late Augustin Buzura, prolific writer and distinguished member of the Romanian Academy. The following year, in 2018, a sister non-profit organization with the same mission and vision was born across the Atlantic, in Washington DC.

Founded by members of Buzura’s family, the two institutions – referred to jointly hereafter as the Buzura Foundation or, simply, the Foundation – aim to continue his lifelong mission of supporting and promoting Romanian and universal culture, art and civilization. Augustin Buzura’s ideals of conscience and responsibility towards the nation’s cultural heritage can thus be upheld through this platform.

Cultural identity, traditions, freedom, dignity, love for one’s country, spirituality, respect of others are fundamental values the Buzura Foundation stands for. It aims to defend, just as Augustin Buzura did throughout his lifetime, freedom of thought and speech, equal opportunities and justice. It will strive to make sure valuable Romanian voices are heard, irrespective of orientation or ideology.

The Buzura Foundation believes in debate and dialogue, in unity and diversity, in the responsibility that rests with each of us to constantly remember that one’s deeds matter not solely to oneself, just as a comfortable withdrawal can potentially affect everyone else.

The Foundation will initiate and join ongoing institutional, private and individual projects that have the potential to innovate, to generate new cultural products, services, technologies. In order to reduce development inequalities between regions and to ensure equal opportunities for the future, it will mediate dialogue between cultural media and local enterprises. Thus, it hopes to help generate and implement projects that favor contemporary creation, give voice to artists and craftsmen, and support a sustainable and prosperous local production of culture.

The Buzura Foundation will work, furthermore, for the promotion, in Romania and abroad, of the literary and journalistic oeuvre of the writer Augustin Buzura, as well as of the films made based on his scripts. It will also maintain his personal reputation, and the stature of the actions through which he generated civic and institutional culture.

The Foundation also plans to be an active factor in civil society, by supporting the process of European and international cultural integration and affirmation, while offering practical solutions in the fields of culture, art, and education. Specifically, the Foundation will organize and take part – on its own or acting in partnership – exhibitions, shows, festivals, concerts and other cultural and artistic manifestations, in Romania and abroad.

The president of the Foundation is Anamaria Maior-Buzura, the writer’s daughter.