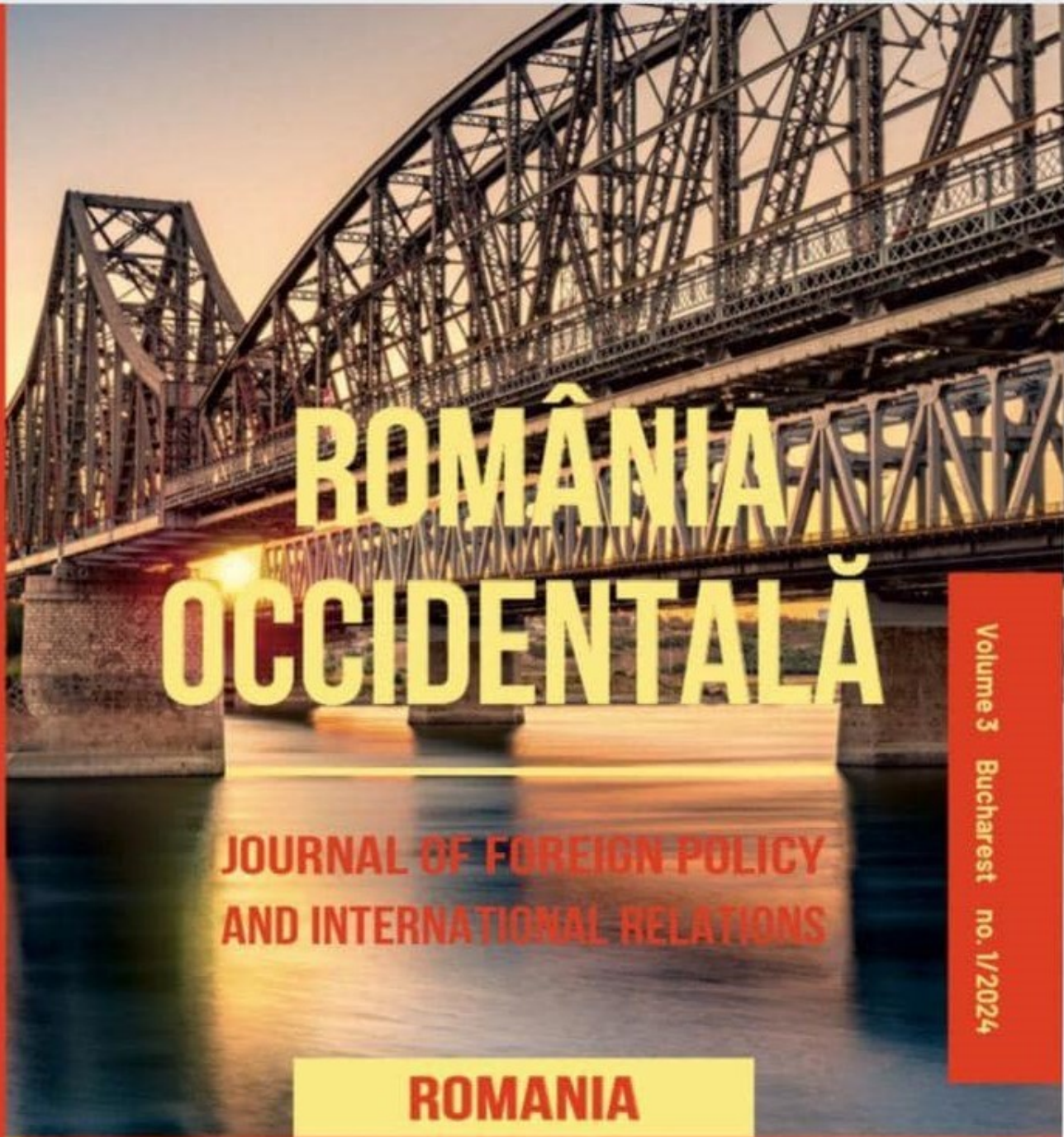


ROMÂNIA OCCIDENTALĂ

Volume 3 - Bucharest - no. 1/2024



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JOURNAL OF FOREIGN POLICY
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ROMANIA
WHERE WEST
MEETS EAST

Editorial ▪ Interview ▪ Correspondence
Report ▪ Foreign policy and international
relations ▪ Diplomatic documents ▪ Book
review ▪ In memoriam ▪ Received by our
editors ▪ Highlights of the RDI's activity

RDI

Romanian Diplomatic Institute

ROMÂNIA OCCIDENTALĂ

Volume 3, no. 1/2024

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SUMMARY

5 EDITORIAL

Liliana Popescu-Bîrlan

INTERVIEW

7 Interview with H.E. Luminița Odobescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs

CORRESPONDENCE

From London

11 Romania – a gateway between East and West

Laura Popescu

From Ankara

17 Letter from Ankara

Ștefan Tinca

REPORT

25 Towards the 30th anniversary of the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses for Young Diplomats

Raluca Trușcanu, Monica Joița

29 Impactful dialogues

Liliana Corobca

in dialogue with Ileana Racheru

FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

33 Energy connections between the Middle East and Europe and the green transition - when East meets West

Lavinia Ochea

43 Romania, the “mortal” Europe and the community of values

Tinca Prunea-Bretonnet

51 Bridging East and West: lessons from Qatari experience

Abdulaziz Mohamed Al-Horr

59 Romania’s relationship with the Middle East. A perspective

Flavius Caba-Maria

DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS

- 67** **Nicolae Ceaușescu, Georges Pompidou and Romania – France relations
at the beginning of 1970's**
Ovidiu Bozgan

BOOK REVIEW

- 81** ***Twelve Feminist Lessons of War*, by Cynthia Enloe**
Liliana Popescu-Bîrlan

85 **IN MEMORIAM**

Academician Alexandrina Cernov

87 **RECEIVED BY OUR EDITORS**

89 **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RDI'S ACTIVITY**

95 **ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS**

EDITORIAL

Liliana Popescu-Birlan

Romania's position with respect to the East and the West has always been a debated issue and remains vital even today. Whether we consider that Romania is "in-between" these regions or in both of them, that it has a specific location and belongs to neither of them or that it belongs to both, our understanding of this problem may shape our beliefs and actions in the contemporary world. In an ever changing geopolitical and cultural context, we are asked not only to define our situation, to reflect on geographical, political and intellectual kinships and relations, but perhaps also to choose our place. We have therefore decided to devote this journal issue to this decisive topic, "Romania between East and West", and offer to the public reflections on this question coming from several prominent diplomats, scholars, writers, and intellectual figures.



In her interview, Luminița Odobescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, considers Romanian politics and society after two decades of membership in the North Atlantic Organization and brings to the attention current issues on Romania's diplomatic agenda. She emphasises the need for Euro-Atlantic security in an unstable international context and the benefits of the interaction between NATO structures and the Romanian institutions: the modernising and transformative force of the Alliance, the geostrategic and socioeconomic advantages offered to Bucharest, as well as the capacity of our country to endorse the fundamental political values of NATO - individual freedoms and minority rights, the rule of law, national security, and human rights.

Laura Popescu, Romania's Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has contributed with an article that presents Romania's strengths in its relationship with London and argues for the westernisation of our country in the eyes of the British elites and society. She addresses issues such as Romania's role as a space of cultural and geopolitical exchanges between East and West, the significance of King Charles III's personal relationship with Romania, the contribution of UK's Romanian diaspora to the accurate reflection of national identity and to countering the negative cultural stereotypes.

In his correspondence, Ștefan Tinca, Romania's ambassador to Ankara, highlights Romania's belonging to the geopolitical and cultural West as an achieved reality - illustrated by its EU and NATO memberships. He proposes to abandon comparing and

making hierarchies between East and West, in favour of valuing both spaces. He focuses on positive advances and the progress made by Romanians since 1990, rather than on negative perceptions.

Raluca Truşcanu and Monica Joiţa report on the 29th edition of the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses for Young Romanian Diplomats. Launched in 1991, and organised annually ever since, the courses for young diplomats are one of MFA’s main professional training programs for foreign diplomats and are internationally appreciated.

Ileana Racheru discusses with Liliana Corobca the cultural intersections between East and West, which inevitably have an impact on Romania as a border country between the two regions. Liliana Corobca argues, based on her experience as a writer, that the West and the East are not two antagonistic worlds, but can converge towards common values in the future.

Starting from the Eugen Lovinescu’s views and analysing E. Macron’s claim that Europe “is, today, mortal”, Tinca Prunea-Bretonnet’s article appeals to the concept of “narrative hospitality” (Ricoeur), and argues that the question of common values is a potential unifying element and a hermeneutic prism able to shed light on Romania’s location in both the West and the East. Dr. Abdulaziz Mohamed Al-Horr, Director of the Qatar Diplomatic Institute, reviews the most important tools of Qatar’s soft power, proposing partnerships to support Romania’s efforts to serve as a cultural bridge between the West and the East. In his article, Mr. Flavius Maria-Caba offers a strategic perspective on Romania’s relations with countries in the Middle East region, in the broader context of global power shifts.

In his analysis of diplomatic documents, Ovidiu Bozgan addresses Nicolae Ceauşescu’s 1972 message to President Georges Pompidou and examines their correspondence, offering a critical contextualisation based on French diplomatic archives. Meant to relaunch Romanian-French relations, this political act was occasioned by Ceauşescu’s African tour, which, despite Pompidou’s refusal, led to the Romanian President’s involvement in the reconciliation process between Egypt and Israel.

In my review of Cynthia Enloe’s *Twelve Feminist Lessons of War* (2023), I analyse the author’s decisive arguments in favour of the idea that women’s wars are different from men’s wars. In order to properly understand war in general and promote peace, we need to address women’s specific experiences of war, their various roles in it, and, thus, rearticulate gender perspectives in international affairs in new terms.

Before closing this issue, we bid a warm and grateful farewell to Academician Alexandrina Cernov (24 November 1943 - 5 June 2024), a committed intellectual, a strong conscience, and an emblem of Romania, for whom she fought her entire life. She has honoured us by being a member of the scientific board of our journal and has been a precious collaborator.

We hope that this issue devoted to the engaging question of Romania’s place with respect to the East and the West will shed new light on essential political, geopolitical, and cultural aspects, and open new paths for viewing and shaping Romania’s position in the contemporary world.

INTERVIEW WITH H.E. LUMINIȚA ODOBESCU, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

• MADAME MINISTER, HOW WOULD YOU ASSES THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY OF EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY?

For Europe and the transatlantic world the current times are a watershed moment. A brutal aggression, an illegal war of imperial conquest was started by Russia against its sovereign neighbour. We have not witnessed such a challenge to the principles of freedom, peace, and security since 1945. This war has a massive negative impact for the entire region and beyond, as it constitutes an attack against the entire rules based on international order. It is an even more glaring breach of international norms if we consider that 35 years ago the Cold War ended, and we all trusted that unfreedom is a thing of the past. We had to respond to this brutal aggression, and we did so swiftly and credibly. Also, we did so collectively – EU, NATO and the entire community of democratic states. This rapid and largely effective response to Russia's illegal war was



made possible by developments over the past three decades. Romania's own trajectory is a case in point. Our support for Ukraine needs to continue for as long as it takes.

• **COULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT ROMANIA'S POST-COMMUNIST EVOLUTION ENTAILED IN TERMS OF JOINING THE DEMOCRATIC WESTERN COMMUNITY?**

Since this year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our NATO membership, I will refer to this fundamental moment of our country's evolution and development. Twenty years ago, Romania joined the North Atlantic Alliance as part of the largest round of enlargement in NATO's history (alongside six other former communist states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Romania's accession to NATO took place against the backdrop of the profound transformation of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture in the aftermath of the Cold War. NATO enlargement was a defining moment



not only for our country's post-communist evolution and the other Central and Eastern European nations, but also in terms of adapting the Alliance to the new strategic realities and redefining its role. NATO is an alliance of democratic values.

Enlarging NATO means extending the community of Euro-Atlantic values and principles. Consequently, the accession process of new members was and remains guided by their commitment to democratic reforms. NATO membership has translated into Romania's return to the Western community of free nations, confirming our adherence to common values and providing the Romanian citizens with the strongest security guarantees in history. In other words, joining NATO was a pivotal moment in our nation's journey towards freedom, democracy, individual liberties, human rights, the rule of law, and a secure and stable future.

• HOW WOULD YOU BRIEFLY DEFINE ROMANIA AS A NATO MEMBER, AFTER 20 YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP?

Since 2004, Romania has not only benefitted from the security guarantees provided by the Washington Treaty, but has also brought a significant contribution to Euro-Atlantic security. There is no doubt as to our firm commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with our NATO Allies and partners for the defence of each Member State and in response to crisis around the world. Romania remains a reliable Ally and an important bastion of the Eastern Flank, especially in a region of such geo-strategic significance like the Black Sea. At the same time, we are a pro-active Ally and have the ability to act in a sustained manner to achieve our own objectives. We are constantly bringing issues of major concern for Euro-Atlantic security to the attention of Allies. At the same time, we are strongly engaged in NATO's decision-making process, to ensure that the Alliance remains ready, strong and united.

• WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN REFLECTIONS ON THE NATO'S ROLE IN THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT?

The 20th anniversary of Romania's accession to NATO and the 75th anniversary of NATO are being marked at an extremely critical moment. The world is completely different if we compare it to the moment of our accession into the Alliance. Russia's brutal aggression on Ukraine has fundamentally shaken the rules-based international order and has direct consequences on transatlantic security. In these unpredictable times, no cloud of uncertainty hovers over the need to continue our efforts to strengthen NATO's defence and deterrence posture, to increase the resilience of our societies, and to provide political and practical support to our partners exposed to the consequences of the ongoing war and to the aggressive behaviour of Russia.

Despite the changing security environment, NATO's values have not changed. Allies' solidarity and firm commitment to protect and defend each other remain at the heart of the Euro-Atlantic community. Moreover, 75 years after NATO was founded and the Washington Treaty was signed, the Alliance is more relevant than ever. Its unparalleled longevity and unique capacity of continuous adaptation underpin its action as a protective shield for our people and societies.



ROMANIA – A GATEWAY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST



Laura Popescu

THE CHALLENGES OF MY TERM AS AMBASSADOR TO LONDON

I officially took over my term as ambassador of Romania to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the spring of 2021, after a year and a half as the Deputy Head of Mission and *chargé d'affaires*, in a period that overlapped with the completion of Brexit process and the *de facto* withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, amongst the tumult and tensions which were inherent to a historically unique situation for the EU and for a community of over to 1.2 million Romanians.

Since my arrival to the United Kingdom, the slogan “Global Britain” had gained certain strategic connotations within the foreign affairs discourse of the UK’s leaders, who were advocating for Britain to build closer ties with countries in the far East, distant both geographically and culturally. In spite of the new strategic tilt towards the Indo-Pacific, the war in Ukraine led to post-Brexit divergences tone down and to a realignment between the UK, the EU and its member states around the common goal of ensuring Europe’s collective security.

In the years since my debut as ambassador to London, I witnessed a tumult of events and developments, marked by unprecedented global challenges (the Covid pandemic), by threats to the security of Europe (the Russo-Ukrainian war) and that of the Middle East (the Israel-Hamas conflict). A different dimension of this flurry, offset by its remarkable and bright note, was the special moment of presenting my credentials to the Queen Elizabeth II, followed by the Platinum Jubilee in June of 2022, dedicated to celebrating the 70th year of the reign of the longest-ruling monarch in the history of the United Kingdom, as well as the head of state with the longest-lasting role in history.

Partaking in the emotional moments of the Queen’s funeral just three months later, as the entire world took a fond farewell to one of the most iconic figures of the last century, and later, in the Coronation of King Charles III, a great friend to Romania, I had the feeling that I was witnessing a string of events seldomly encountered in the history of the United Kingdom, and moreover, that of the world, which would have been nearly impossible to predict when I took over as ambassador. The visit of King Charles III to Romania, His Highness’ first visit following the Coronation, and the first visit of a ruling British monarch to Romania, was yet another memorable event which, beyond its diplomatic importance, highlighted again the King’s deep personal ties with Romania.

Beyond these events, the bilateral dimension of the relationship between Romania and the UK was marked by the renewal of the Strategic Partnership (launched in 2003) by signing an upgraded joint Declaration regarding the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United Kingdom on the 23rd of March 2023.

Looking back, it now appears as though an age has made it so that, in less than four years, there have been events and developments which would have, at other times, been encountered over the span of over a decade.

ROMANIA AS A SYMBOLIC BRIDGE BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST

Romania’s identity as a geographic, as well as a symbolic, historic, and cultural “crossroads” between the East and West is a subject of interest in academic circles, particularly for British universities, which offer a number of courses and programmes centred on Eastern-European studies. Romania’s inclusion in the curriculum is owed both to its complex identity, which can be described as multi-faceted, but also to high interest in the Latin roots of the Romanian language, enriched through Balkan, Slavic, German, Hungarian and Turkish influences, and later, in the XIX century, through the *corpus* of neologisms borrowed from French and Italian.

The media and literature in the United Kingdom also reflect an increasingly keen interest in Romania’s complex identity. This fascination with the cultural heritage and historic complexity of Romania goes to highlight the fact that it is perceived as a symbolic “gateway” between wholly different worlds.

From academic programs and cultural exchanges, to tourism and economic partnerships, the bilateral relationship between Romania and the UK continues to evolve, reflecting the special connotation held by Romania's role as the link between the East and West, in addition to contributing to shaping mutual perceptions and fostering stronger ties between Romania and the UK.

On a diplomatic level, the United Kingdom relates to Romania in its capacity as a European partner and NATO ally with particular strategic importance for regional security. Romania's unique position as a mediator and link between the East and West is considered an asset, enabling it to play an important role in various multilateral cooperation frameworks.

The UK's perception regarding Romania's Western identity was reinforced following Romania's accession to the EU in 2007, an event which reconfirmed Romania's alignment with Western political, economic and security standards.

High level political contacts - from the president and premier to the foreign affairs minister - started long before Romania's accession to the EU, and gradually paved the way towards a framework for friendship and bilateral collaboration, in all areas. The support of the British political leadership for Romania's European path culminated with the visit of British Prime Minister Tony Blair to Bucharest in 1999. Through the British Prime Minister of those days, a Western ally expressed, for the very first time, the UK's unequivocal support for Romania in its goal of joining the European Union.

Romania's historic and cultural links with Eastern Europe continue to be crucial, particularly as its interactions with neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Moldova, remain an integral part of the effort to consolidate Romania's profile in the realm of international relations. British diplomacy has continued to pragmatically evaluate Romania's Eastern connections, acknowledging and commending its commitment to mediating regional conflicts and the support it offered Ukraine following Russia's invasion, as well as its role as a promoter of dialogue between Eastern and Western Europe.

KING CHARLES III AND ROMANIA

King Charles III's profound personal ties with Romania adds a novel dimension to the manner in which the British public's perception of Romania has evolved. The monarch's reverence for the rural areas of Transylvania, which goes back decades, in addition to his understanding and appreciation of Romanian culture and villages, and his involvement, especially before his ascension to the throne, in projects which seek to preserve the architectural heritage and traditional crafts of the country, have played a significant role in the public's understanding of Romania, both in the UK, as well as worldwide. By becoming a vocal champion of the cultural and natural preservation of Romania on the world stage, King Charles III has drawn attention to the necessity of promoting Romania's rich biodiversity, showcasing it as a valuable part of the European heritage in a broader sense.

His Majesty's numerous visits and constant commitments have deepened diplomatic and cultural ties between the United Kingdom and Romania, highlighting shared values and interests in preserving the environment. Moreover, the British monarch's dedication

to the preservation of natural landscapes and traditional ways of life has garnered him admiration and respect in Romania.

Last but not least, King Charles III's fascination for Romania has fostered curiosity and interest amongst British tourists who now seek to explore the region and directly experience the contact with many different communities of Romanians, Hungarians and Saxons, an interethnic fusion which perfectly mirrors the mix of Western and Eastern influences characteristic of Romania.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE ROMANIAN DIASPORA IN THE UK - BETWEEN THE TEMPTATION OF STEREOTYPES AND REALITY

The over 1.2 million Romanians who live, study or work in the United Kingdom have, over time, shifted the paradigm of the bilateral relationship, leading to a better understanding and appreciation of the Romanian mentality, culture and traditions, which reflect both the Western as well as the Eastern dimensions of their identity. The vast Romanian diaspora is perhaps the strongest link in the Romanian-British relationship, playing an important role in strengthening the British economy and society. Through their existence and cultural heritage, our diaspora in the United Kingdom has promoted Romanian to the top of the most widely-spoken languages, becoming the third most widely-spoken language in England and Wales according to the most recent census.

Romanian communities actively seek to promote Romania's complex heritage through cultural activities, culinary and film festivals, concerts, and art exhibitions, events which all highlight the various traditions and historical influences, and which favour a more profound connection, people to people, amongst the multi-ethnic communities which Romanians are part of.

All of these projects and events often showcase the ground and diverse influences present in Romanian art and culture, from Byzantine and Ottoman, to French and Austrian, thereby illustrating the complexity of Romania's identity and of the identity of its citizens. In the realm of music, for instance, the fusion of oriental rhythms and occidental harmonies makes for a unique sound, which is distinctly Romanian but nevertheless perceived as enchanting worldwide. For instance, the presence and dance of the *Călușari* at the celebration of Romanian Blouse Day recently held by the Embassy created a distinctive multicultural synergy, with tens of foreign diplomats dressed in their own countries' traditional costumes joining the Romanian *hora* in a stunning display of sartorial syncretism. Moreover, Romanian cuisine, very much acclaimed in the UK, reflects a gastronomic diversity which succinctly illustrates Romania's position between Eastern and Western traditions.

The UK's Romanian diaspora is not just vast, but also diverse and well-integrated in many sectors of the British labour market (health, building, financial, IT, business, academia and research, hospitality, etc.), as well as politically and administratively. The number of Romanians elected as local councillors in many regions of the United Kingdom is on the rise, standing as proof of the fact that their abilities are remarkable, and their voices are increasingly louder and more respected with each passing year. Alongside Romanian professionals, praised for their expertise, Romanian students in British universities excel academically, gradually cementing the positive lens through which the Romanian diaspora is viewed as an integral part of the highly-skilled workforce in the UK.

CONCLUSION

As seen through the dual East-West paradigm, the image of Romania and the Romanian diaspora in the UK has evolved substantially to a more positive and complex representation, centred on its contribution to the wider spectrum of the collective European identity. Brexit further amplified the perspective on the opportunities of the bilateral relation, with Romania as a partner with similar views in the EU. Secondly, the post-Brexit challenges facing European citizens in the UK were not impacted by national identity or the Eastern or Western origins of their citizenship, being rather approached unitarily and solved cohesively. Belonging to the EU prevailed.

Beyond the European identity of Romanians in the UK, the geographic peculiarities, historic reality, and the national identity continue to be important in shaping the perception of Romania enriched through the influence of civilisations and time.

**This article reflects the views of the author and does not present an official position of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*





LETTER FROM ANKARA

Ștefan Tinca



As a personal interest, when I travel by car in Europe and I have the opportunity, I take my time to pass through former Iron Curtain checkpoints. I have done this from Triest and Gorizia, in Italy, in Nickelsdorf, Austria, Znojmo, Czech Republic and several others, all the way North to the Baltic Sea, near Lübeck, through the middle of Germany. I have to admit that this curiosity stems from my eagerness to imagine how life was in these regions which formed the border of the West in the past and whether there still are relics from those times. Naturally, as the Schengen area expanded to the East, such proofs from the past are less and less present and this is why, instead of driving on the new modern highways, I choose to use the former secondary roads, where the former border and custom facilities remain, although largely unused today. In Germany, some facilities became museums, as a reminder of the past. These are the regions that used to be envied by millions of East Europeans, with a mix of admiration and frustration, for what they represented back then, as a symbol of freedom, not necessarily of wealth. As a matter of fact, during my trips, at the end of the 90s and until 2014–2015, with few

exceptions, these regions had very little of the well-known shine of the major economic and cultural centres of the West.

Let's press the fast forward button and get to our present times. The former Western border regions differ very slightly from the regions across the former Iron Curtain. Basically, today there is nothing to envy any longer. For someone born after 1990 such differences concern mainly the different road signs and the language change. Furthermore, these peripheral regions from the past found a new energy after 2000, with the advancement of EU enlargement. Today, I no longer have many opportunities to travel to Europe by car, but instead on my way to Bucharest I use very frequently the border between Türkiye and Bulgaria. This border was also part of the East-West divide during the Cold War, although the Iron Curtain is generally known as described by W. Churchill in his famous speech, from Stettin to Trieste.

These introductory remarks are not meant to serve as a proof that today Romania is part of the West. It would be unfair to claim that this mere perception, which is personal and largely subjective, can provide evidence that joining Western structures like EU and NATO makes Romania part of the West. Indeed, politically, Romania is part of the West, on all accounts. But if there are still doubts about Romania's "Western-ness", then this is mainly an issue of perception. Many fellow Romanians believe that the road to the West is still long. In the past, I often had to acknowledge the social and economic gaps that separated my country from the West. In the meantime, Romania recovered largely and



rather quickly, that is a certain fact. I don't know what my perception would be today from Western Europe. But today, Romania looks more and more Western and all other features that derive from the past, although some beneficial for us, appear to be largely conjunctural. They are not part of our identity, nor of our statehood. Leaving perceptions aside, perhaps the most striking proof that Romania is not only part of the West, but Western, lies in its capacity to modernise in an accelerated way and to reach what we often describe as the highest level of security and national wealth in its history. It is the third process of Westernisation in history, after the previous ones in late 19th century and in the inter-war period in the 20th century and it was carried out naturally and organically. So, there isn't a real East-West dilemma in Romania, because the concept of "West" is economically and culturally diverse enough to allow countries along the Northern shore of the Mediterranean or East of the former Iron Curtain to all claim and to be recognised as part of the West.

A pertinent observation would be that Romania is Western, but it is a border state. This is primarily a geographical fact. The real question is not whether Romania is Western or not, but rather if Romania could change its fortunes and harness the benefits of this position, just as the Eastern provinces of Austria, Italy or Germany did so more than two decades ago, or will it continue to look at this as a fatality? This is a historical dilemma in Romania and the first attempts to put value to our peripheral location go back more than a century ago. The development of a major Black Sea port, linked to the Danube through a channel is a vision that was put on paper at the end of 19th century. More recent is the project of transforming the Mihail Kogalniceanu air base outside Constanta into a full-scale NATO hub. Such a development is timely, given the complicated state of instability around the Black Sea and the huge uncertainties related to the end of war in Ukraine. What hides around the corner is a new geopolitical fault, across the Black Sea, which puts the role of Romania in a different new perspective.

WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

Just as it is wrong to question whether Romania is Western, so are the suggestions that since Romania would not be entirely Western, it should act as a bridge between East and West. Even if such a proposal would be strictly economically motivated, it will still be a wrong idea. As a matter of principle, a connectivity gateway is associated with a major economic corridor. Like a chain, connectivity corridors will bring together various regional hubs. In what is informally known as the Eurasian continent, there are three mega-corridors linking the two edges of that space, Europe in the West and the Pacific Rim, in the East. The first one, in the Northern part, provides the connection mainly through the Russian territory as close as the Baltic coast. In the South, the mainly maritime route ensures a link to the Mediterranean shore through the Suez Canal. The third option is a middle path, through Central Asia and Caucasus, the end point in South East Europe. However, in this paper I will use the more general term "path" instead of "corridor" because the aim of this paper is not to enter into a geopolitical debate about corridors. It is obvious that the Chinese concept of "Middle Corridor" is strikingly different from what the EU envisages as corridors through Central Asia (Global Gateway Initiative) or other global players (India and its own IMEC project). When I refer to the term "path", it includes implicitly their different geographical variants.

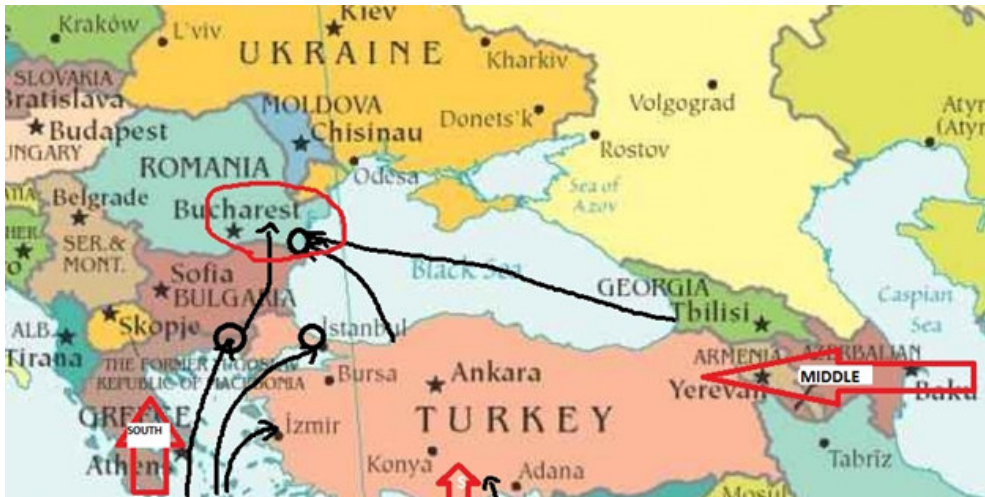
Here is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the main paths connecting Europe with Asia:

	STRONG FEATURES	WEAK FEATURES
Northern path	More flexible from a bureaucratic standpoint (e.g. custom procedures), as the transit is done mainly through one single country. In principle it ensures a faster access to the destination	The war in Ukraine and the international isolation of Russia reduces the viability of such a route. In addition, the poor quality of infrastructure puts under question the competitiveness of the route
Southern path	Increased competitiveness due its primary maritime feature	Security challenges along the path (Yemen, piracy etc.), bottlenecks in Suez
Middle path	More versatile compared to the previous two, it can be adapted in case of deteriorating security conditions. Thus, it provides a good alternative to N and S paths.	Its land component crosses a big number of states, hence not very efficient. Its inter-modal component (land-sea-land) needs further financial analysis.

So, Romania's ambition to become a gateway to Asia is founded on its interest on the middle path, which geographically is the most attractive (the Black Sea). But, as a second option, the Southern path, doubled by a small corridor through Bulgaria towards Northern Greece, also seems interesting. At present, the Northern path does not seem worthwhile, even if it will contain a derivation from the main route towards the Russian Black Sea coast.

However, all these paths will co-exist in the future and this, in principle, is a positive aspect. As long as they will be governed with transparency and consistent with free trade rules, they will ensure that the beneficiaries have options just in case. Equally important, having more options available ensures that none of the countries along the route gets a dominant position and the risk of distorting competition along the route remains low. But co-existence of various trade routes will also mean that there will be several European gateways, of global or regional relevance, and these gateways will compete against each other. Romania's arguments for becoming a European gateway are well known: its location, its economic relevance and the cultural ties with the entire Black Sea region. Hence, such a gateway will have to revolve around the Port of Constanta, the biggest in the Black Sea basin. However, the Black Sea itself doesn't enjoy full access to world oceans due to its geography and this brings an important disadvantage for the Port of Constanta compared to Greek and Turkish ports nearby. The ideas to link Constanta to Georgia, on the Eastern Black Sea coast, sounds interesting, but also challenging, because it clearly needs further financial analysis to establish if such a sea connection would be more competitive than shorter connections to Greek and Turkish ports (see picture 1).

Picture 1



At this point, it seems that perhaps the “traditional” arguments do not seem to be enough, hence the need of a new enriched perspective and additional arguments.

- a) The political argument: Romania’s aim in establishing a gateway is twofold: to have direct access to goods and services which have Western Europe as the primary destination and to become part of the global supply chains. Some consider this gateway as an expression of a balance between the West and the Far East and that in order to achieve this, Romania should promote a more balanced policy between the West (to which it belongs) and the East (namely China). The main problem that I see in this approach is the subliminal message that usually accompanies this view, that is that opening up to the East brings a looser relation with the West. Another flaw in this line of thinking stems from the assumption that a European gateway controlled by a non-Western power can be successful. At a time when Europe understands how important is to be strategically autonomous, a European gateway would need to remain European, or at least to be Western-friendly. Therefore, I favour the opposite view: in order to be successful in becoming a gateway, Romania needs to integrate further with the West (including from the angle of connectivity) and to address the leftovers from its accession (especially joining the eurozone). Only after having strong, robust EU credentials, Romania could turn its attention to the East, including from a foreign policy perspective.
- b) The competitiveness argument: very often the concept of gateway is about logistics and fiscal measures. If this would be the case, then Constanta will find it tough to withstand competition from other ports nearby, which can provide better liaisons between the East and the West. I take the view that a gateway which is embedded in a bigger economy has a better chance to be integrated in the supply chains and this, in turn, will ensure the sustainability and success of the gateway project¹.

¹ For instance, Croatia is promoting one of its Adriatic ports to become a gateway for Central Europe, challenging the Italian port of Trieste. Without ignoring the historical role played by Trieste to this end (it was the only major sea port of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire), one needs to consider the major advantage that Trieste has as part of the huge

Romania, with the current level of its economy of less than \$400 bln, is of limited interest for the global flow of goods and services. However, given the dynamics of the Romanian economy in the past two decades, which are expected to remain in the next 10-15 years, also underpinned by the incoming energy boom from the Black Sea gas reserves, this international interest in the Black Sea might change. Today, the common wisdom is that the wider Black Sea region will be integral part of any middle path or corridor. Currently, the Romanian economy is the second in the region, after Türkiye², and it generates about two thirds of the cumulated value of all national economies of the countries surrounding Romania. Therefore, it is a realistic perspective that Romania could provide by itself the economic environment to support the creation of a European gateway on its territory.

- c) The capacity to project beyond: a specific feature of a gateway is its capacity to project economic and political interests, rather than being only a trading hub. This is what the former border regions of the West have done throughout the 1990s and 2000s, even if most of them were not really gateways (except perhaps Trieste and Vienna). A true European gateway should not only attract, but also project and there are huge opportunities in the near neighbourhood, at least (investments in R. of Moldova, reconstruction in Ukraine or investments in the Caucasus).

WHAT ARE TÜRKIYE'S INTERESTS?

There is no secret that Türkiye aspires to become an intercontinental hub due to its unique geography, the size of its economy, its role in NATO and the myriad of historical, cultural and religious ties around the country. In particular, the Turkish economy surpassed the level of \$1 trillion and it is one of the top 20 economies globally. It has a very dynamic and more and more innovative private sector. Against this background, Türkiye is quite confident that it will have a critical stake in almost any corridor linking Europe to Asia and plans to be an essential link of the global supply chains.

As part of the huge national infrastructure programs, Türkiye has completed (with EU funds) the high-speed railway connecting the European side of Istanbul with the border with Bulgaria. In addition to the major ports in the metropolitan area of Istanbul and Izmir, in the West, Türkiye will upgrade its Mediterranean port of Mersin, which will count for the Suez-Red Sea connections. The new international airport North of Istanbul is already a global hub for passengers, but also for freight. Last, but not least, the various energy pipelines from the Caucasus and the 5 LNG units all around Türkiye already make this country an energy hub for Europe.

Despite all these achievements, Türkiye's plans to become a major gateway to Europe have one important hurdle: Türkiye is not part of the EU. The Custom Union regime that the country enjoys with the EU since the mid-90s is expected to be reviewed or modernised. This would help somewhat the Turkish gateway plans but not entirely. That is why the real long-term objective of the country is full accession to the EU as it answers the desire of the elites and the Turkish society to see their country accepted on an equal footing at

Italian economy.

² Not considering the Russian economy, which is currently a war-driven economy, hence of less relevance for this paper. Even during the pre-war period, the engines of the Russian economy were not located in the south of the country, in the areas adjacent to the Black Sea.

the European decision-making table. Naturally, Romania supports Türkiye's aspirations. However, the EU accession process is an extremely complex one and it is not my purpose to dwell on it in this paper. Still one can note that it seems that in Türkiye there are high hopes that, through connections and the global supply chains, the strategic importance of Türkiye will prevail over the more conventional approach to EU enlargement (strictly based on the accession criteria) and this will determine a positive decision by the EU to accept Türkiye among its ranks.

The result is that Türkiye needs to cover this timeframe with a credible formula that keeps Türkiye relevant for Europe. Romania seems to have its part in the Turkish strategic thinking. The economic circles were the first to note that Romania possess assets that Türkiye does not and that Türkiye's physical access to Europe largely goes through Romania. It is therefore a sort of strategic complementarity between the two countries that especially the Turks seem eager to turn to mutual benefits. The same seems valid for Romania and working in tandem with Türkiye might prove a wise approach that make the Romanian gateway easier to put in practice. It is not a simple coincidence that this summer a direct sea-lane from Constanta to Karasu, close to Istanbul, will become operational on a permanent basis. Therefore, I am advocating in favour of mutual benefits and closer cooperation between Romania and Türkiye, which might have regional and even wider implications.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

Let me turn back to the parallel with Central Europe that I have made in the introduction. The question is how relevant is that experience for Romania on the short and medium term? Connectivity seems to be the main bet of this century, and this implies the creation of links, bridges and opportunities. 40 years ago, Europe was a divided continent on which the two sides were hardly communicating. Regions on the West side of the Iron Curtain became prosperous not because they found new fortunes as gateways (with the exceptions of Trieste and Vienna, both of them always being important gateways), but because they acted as an interface with the regions East of the Iron Curtain and thus they converted to their own benefit the dynamism and new energy that animated Central Europe in the context of EU enlargement.

This is perhaps the main lesson of those times. A gateway in Romania is feasible and can be achieved, nor necessarily in the sense of a window to the East, but as an interface with the East. *I see it as a **European gateway**, not a gateway to Europe.*

Let me press again the fast-forward button and imagine our region in 2035. I see Romania as a country that produces up to \$700 bln. a year (which translates to \$1.2-1.3 trillion in PPP). Out of this, the extended Bucharest area generates a quarter, which adding up the potential of the urban area downstream of Giurgiu, all the way to Constanta, and the energy boom expected in the coastal areas of the country defines a perimeter which could generate at least a quarter of trillion US dollars. This is huge and will represent the nearest economic engine to Istanbul. This is the geographical reflection of what I view as the gateway in Romania (picture 2). Eventually, the success of the gateway in Romania will depend on its liaisons with the similar hubs in Greece and Türkiye.

From a military standpoint, Romania is well equipped and strong. At EU level, Romania becomes more relevant and becomes at least as influential (in institutional terms) as

Greece and Austria. It has a sizeable and predictable economy, guided by transparent rules. Hopefully, by 2035 Romania joins the eurozone. Needless to say, joining the euro will boost the competitiveness of a Romanian gateway.

Picture 2



Once this is set up, I believe it will solve once and for all the “periphery dilemma” that challenged Romanian thinkers for more than a century: how to open up to Asia and the East, without compromising our stance towards the West, without being too shy or defensive, but with a truly complex-free behaviour.

TOWARDS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE “NICOLAE TITULESCU” INTERNATIONAL COURSES FOR YOUNG DIPLOMATS

Raluca Truşcanu, Monica Joiţa

On 17 June 2024, the 29th edition of the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses for Young Diplomats came to an end.

Relaxed atmosphere, modern cultural environment, generously offered by the Transilvania University of Brasov. Certificates of attendance, representation at high level, group photos or selfies, the joy of meeting people dedicated to their profession and exchanging ideas, and perhaps a little sadness that the days had gone by too quickly and that the reintegration into everyday work was still to come. Memories of Sighisoara, the Clock Tower, the stairs of School Hill, Bran Castle and its myths, and the deep sounds of the organ concert in Biertan. The organisers were pleased that all the lecturers arrived as planned, that the participants’ reactions were appreciative, that they would further recommend the programme, that they would have liked more lecture days and excursions to more heritage sites in Romania. Readers who enjoyed the tough questions and appreciated the quality of the robust or friendly dialogue with dedicated professionals.



The general satisfaction that yet another edition of the courses has been a success and that plans are already under way for the 30th anniversary edition.

Here is the series of pictures from a busy week that once again took us in the footsteps (concrete or symbolic) of the great diplomat, orator, professor, lawyer and foreign affairs minister!

Organised almost continuously for the past 33 years, the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses for Young Diplomats are one of the longest running and best-known public diplomacy programmes of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The number of alumni is remarkable: more than 1,300 people from all over the world!

Launched in 1991 to honour the memory of Nicolae Titulescu, a diplomat and a leading figure on the international political scene, they put into practice his vision that success in foreign policy is based first and foremost on close, direct, constant and active contacts with diplomats of other countries, on the need to build a professional, elite diplomatic corps, and that knowing each other is the key to lasting success in diplomacy.

The courses have been and continue to be a platform for education, a place where a network of professionals from different backgrounds and cultures multiplies, a fruitful space for interaction and exchange of ideas.

We can say with justifiable pride that over the years, the courses have become *a hub*, and there have been numerous occasions when organisers or lecturers have met alumni again: either in negotiations outside Romania, on official or working visits, or at events abroad.

The courses have also created *a community* of several hundred young diplomats – or, if we refer to the graduates of the first editions, today in full professional maturity – who keep in touch with each other and who have become enthusiastic promoters and friends of Romania, either in their home countries or in the countries where they work as diplomats! It remains a desideratum to find active ways, together with our diplomatic missions, to cultivate the members of this “Titulescian” community in a permanent and dynamic way.

This is why we want to complete the database and have a map showing the current geographical “distribution” of the alumni. In this way, together with the beneficiaries of other MFA programmes dedicated to young people (the annual scholarship programme offered by Romania through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the “Eugen Ionescu” scholarships, the “Ierunca-Lovinescu” scholarship, the programmes for young diplomats from specific geopolitical areas, the winners of the “Young Ambassadors of Romania” competition organised by the Diplomatic Archives, etc.) can form an extraordinarily consistent and creative vector, an impressive community (of several thousand members!) that has kept something of the Romanian expertise and hospitality in its formative background.

The last three editions of the courses (2022, 2023, 2024) focused mainly on strategic and security issues, with an emphasis on Romania’s presence and role in the EU and NATO, and on the importance of defending the international order based on rules and respect for international law, in an international security context marked by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and its multiple consequences in the region and in the Euro-Atlantic area. On each occasion, there was no lack of priority topics of Romanian foreign policy, the history of diplomacy, the approach to globalisation, current dossiers on the EU agenda, the strategic role of the Black Sea, the development aid provided by Romania, the way consular activity is organised or the impact of changes in the information environment on diplomatic activity.

The cultural diplomacy component has also played an important role, and in the last few years it has been devoted to Dimitrie Cantemir and to the presence of Romania at the Venice Biennale of Art.

Over time, the program of the courses has followed the same broad outlines, but each edition has a specific character, defined by the profile and personality of the participants, by their knowledge, by the interaction, including with the lecturers, coming from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as from the academic environment and civil society, from Romania and abroad. However, it is also interesting to discover the similarities in the professional validation stages that bring together the participants of such a course, from the tough entrance exam for the Foreign Ministries, with many tests, to the first mission abroad, to work in the space of multilateral directorates, to managing relations with the press or the online presence.

Comparing with other courses organised for young foreign diplomats shows similar aims, themes and organisational schemes. Obviously, the human and financial resources (including for a dedicated web page, constantly updated) have been far greater, for example, The Young Diplomat, founded in 2018 by Hans van den Berg (<https://www.youngdiplomat.org/>), The Global Diplomatic Forum (<https://www.gdforum.org/>), with its programme The Young Diplomats Forum (YDF), which will celebrate its 20th edition in London in September, the UNITAR Global Diplomacy Initiative (GDI), coordinated by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (<https://www.unitar.org/>), or the Clingendael Academy's Young Diplomats Programme, the latest edition of which is aimed at trainees from South-East European countries (<https://www.clingendael.org/news/training-diplomats-southeastern-europe>).

We should also mention the rich offer that the MFA's Career and Professional Development Division provides to both young and experienced Romanian diplomats, including courses proposed and organised by homologous ministries, institutions, bodies and academies in other countries. In addition to the diploma obtained at the end of the "Titulescu" courses, the diplomas or certificates obtained by Romanian participants in these courses abroad contribute not only to their professional profile, but also to the points required for promotion in the diplomatic and consular ranks. Therefore, we can also talk about a *practical recognition* of the "Titulescu" courses for the professional career in the Romanian diplomatic system.

All these programmes (and this is also a subject of reflection for us) are developed, organised and coordinated by whole teams specialised in this real field of activity: *lifelong learning programmes* for young people who want to become diplomats or for young people who are just entering the diplomatic system, with constantly updated links throughout the diplomatic community. There is, of course, that *pragmatism* which is specific to Western cultures and which makes the young diplomat not only an elite official, but also a person who is rooted in global issues and the problems of his society, who can express himself without inhibition, who can react appropriately, who has social skills, and so on. However, we were pleased to see that we are very close to these programmes through the objectives of the "Titulescu" courses, first of all, and then through the topics.

For example, the Young Diplomat Forum aims to: 1) "develop the next generation of diplomatic leaders with the necessary skills and abilities to successfully operate in the 21st century diplomatic arena"; 2) „provide diplomatic skills and knowledge to

diplomats and students from various countries and communities worldwide”; 3) „foster knowledge management and collaboration through a community platform that increases productivity.” The concept of *productivity* brings to mind the wise saying of Nicolae Titulescu himself, which can be applied to the diplomatic system as well: “Trust is the essential condition for all productive work.”

Speaking of training and continuous improvement of the activity and profession of diplomats - a broad, generous and permanent objective that the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses programme is part of - let us not forget that during his mandates as Foreign Minister, the “Minister of Europe” showed a strong concern for the creation of a professional, elite diplomatic corps, promoting appropriate measures of institutional modernisation.

Nicolae Titulescu also understood the importance of diplomatic representation like no one else, and promoted the development of foreign activity by establishing new diplomatic missions in European countries and in countries on other continents (“I wanted to pursue a constructive policy and a policy that would make Bucharest an international centre: hence the legations I established in all the Scandinavian countries, in all the Baltic countries and in five countries in Central and South America”), by Romania’s accession to new international bodies and organisations, by organising or participating in international conferences of a sub-regional, regional and continental nature on various topics.

One edition of the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses, the XXIXth, has just come to an end; the next one, in 2025, will mark a wonderful anniversary, the 30th! A beautiful, mature, challenging threshold, even now, under the sign of the key words that were so dear to the great man and diplomat who inspired the programme presented here: enthusiasm, confidence, dynamism, creative impulse, energy.



LILIANA COROBCA¹ IN DIALOGUE WITH ILEANA RACHERU

I.R.: What do the East and West represent for the writer and researcher L. Corobca?

L.C.: For the “writer and researcher”, the East and West have not yet been either a source of inspiration or documentation for any scientific project. During my childhood years, the child born in the USSR did not perceive them as antagonistic, probably not even now, thinking of the few Armenians, Chinese, Azeris I have known, especially after the recent migration that has changed the demographics worldwide. All that I know, everything that is familiar to me, I place on the edge of my world and bring into my broad circle. In the Soviet Union, Europe and Asia formed a whole. I believe that even now, the East and West complete each other quite harmoniously and naturally, or at least they should. I would venture to make other statements, except that while I have always visited only Europe (central, southern, eastern, western), I have never visited Asia, I do not know it.

For the novel *Capătul drumului* I intensely studied various aspects related to Kazakhstan, where the majority of deported Romanians were forcibly relocated. However, I did not think of the place of deportations as something oriental (I checked, it is in Central Asia). I think of oriental stories, world, languages, and exotic civilisations, very distant (but not only the Orient is exotic!). I do not perceive the West and the East as two antagonistic worlds, antagonistic could be (or have been), for instance, America and China, the “extreme West” and the “extreme East”, with the other states balancing around them. The writer and researcher, born in a small village that, in childhood, seemed enormous, believes in the peaceful balance of our world. Ultimately, I think the balance

¹ Liliana Corobca (born October 10, 1975, Săseni, Călărași, Republic of Moldova) is a writer and researcher of communist censorship in Romania. Graduate of the Faculty of Letters of the State University of Moldova (1997), doctor in philology at the University of Bucharest (2001, with the thesis „The character in the Romanian interwar novel”, published by the University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2003). Scientific researcher at the Institute of History and Literary Theory „G. Călinescu” of the Romanian Academy (2002-2011), associate professor at the Universities of Bucharest and Ploiești (2004-2007). She is an expert in the field of Romanian Exile at IICMER in Bucharest (since 2014). She made her debut with the novel *Negrissimo* (Arc, Chișinău, 2003, “Prometheus” Award for debut of the magazine *România literară*, Award for debut in prose of the Writers’ Union of the Republic of Moldova, translated into Serbian, 2022). She has also published the novels *A Year in Paradise* (Cartea Românească, 2005, translated into Italian in 2009 and into German in 2011), *Kinderland* (Cartea Românească, 2013, Polirom, 2015; Radio România Cultural Award, Cristal Award at the Vilenica International Literary Festival, translated into German by Ernest Wichner - *Der erste Horizont meines Lebens*, 2015, into Slovenian by Aleš Mustar, 2015; into Serbian by Ileana Ursu Nenadić, Marija Nenadić, 2021, into Italian by Elena di Lernia, 2022); *The Empire of the Spinsters* (Cartea Românească, 2015); *The Censor’s Notebook* (Polirom, 2017, translated into English by Monica Cure, Seven Stories Press, 2022, Winner of the Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize 2023), *Capătul drumului - Too Great a Sky* (Polirom, 2018, translated into English by Monica Cure, Seven Stories Press, 2024, forthcoming), *Buburuza/Ladybird* (Polirom, 2019), *Ionesco. Elegies for the new rhinoceros* (Polirom, 2020), *Maestrul și Makarenko* (Ratio et Revelatio, 2023).

of powers should exist. The East and West are two different facets of our world, so mixed together. And today, with the waves of emigration the West has endured from the East, who can separate them anymore? Principally, it seems that we assimilate each other quite easily and quickly.

Recently, the American editor of the novel *Capătul drumului* sent me a cover of the book with an image of the Kazakh steppe. I was very surprised because I imagined it quite differently. And *Kinderland*, the novel about children abandoned due to migration, will be translated into Azeri, the first translation of my books into an oriental language, and probably I will visit Azerbaijan. I communicate a lot with my translator, Jale Ismail, but I do not feel she is different from me; I do not feel she is either an exotic foreigner. We are the same, born in the same Soviet Union, and when I see her Romanian is not good enough, we communicate in Russian, a language we both know very well.

I.R.: Is Romania a gateway to the West for the Republic of Moldova/the writers and literature from Moldova?

L.C.: It is probably true. Recently, we see that the Republic of Moldova is gaining interest in the West for reasons unrelated to Romania but rather due to Ukraine and Russia. When I came to Romania, I heard about a springboard, not a gateway. And the Romanian citizenship has been a lifesaver for thousands of Moldovans who did not have the right to leave for the West or were not accepted with Moldovan citizenship but for them it wasn't an issue if they had a Romanian passport. Generally, if the West opens its doors widely for Moldovans, they go directly without intermediaries.

For writers, the situation is not always so pragmatic, but they do not choose; the initiative is Romanian, and we need to investigate this more closely. The gateway to the West for literature means translations, participation in festivals abroad, and here we have a complex system where the writer responds to invitations from Romanian cultural institutions. Writers are rarely asked, only as an exception, if they are Romanian writers, Romanian-speaking etc. I am referring to writers living in the Republic of Moldova, which represent the country with financial assistance from Romania. There are also publications in the Republic of Moldova supported by Romanian money. We could poetically say that in this way, Romania maintains the flame of Romanianism in the Republic of Moldova.

Writers are a vulnerable category, not to be relied upon; the gateway to the West can collapse entirely. To answer the question more concretely and personally, in the last 30 years, with great difficulty and support of all kinds, only one Romanian writer has "broken through" in the West, becoming truly visible there. When I succeeded abroad, I was seen as a competitor who needed to be eliminated and sidelined. Maybe if I had claimed not to be Romanian but Moldovan, my chances would have been higher. But I do not fit into the "literature of the Republic of Moldova", I wrote all my books in Romania.

I.R.: How is Romania perceived/identified in the literature originating from the Republic of Moldova? As Western or Eastern? Or something else entirely?

L.C.: Good question. It would even suit a doctoral thesis. Now, since the question refers to the contemporary period and not to Alecu Russo's "Cântarea României" (when

Moldova did not exist on the map), I do not know of much literature on the subject. Both Romania and Republic of Moldova are in this regard at the gates of the East/West, depending on which side you look from. Nonetheless, the thousands of Moldovans who choose to settle in Romania do not concern themselves with this dichotomy. Romania is primarily, for most, the dearly beloved country. I do not know how it is now and why Moldovans came to Romania, if they still do (the number is carefully hidden on both sides of the Prut River), but I can say for myself that I came to my country. It took me a lot of time and energy to come to terms with my Soviet, non-Romanian past (generally, for many Bessarabians, it was anti-Romanian, but I was too young, and in my case it was not "anti-", just "a-", meaning without). I was very attentive and sensitive to everything that was different in me and to the behaviour of those around me.

As a writer, when I wrote about Romania, I did it as a Romanian, as a Romanian born here. It was not hard for me, after imagining characters who were deported, trafficked, abused, abandoned, disabled etc., to imagine that I was born in Romania. *Caiet de cenzor* is my novel with a Romanian subject, and it somewhat frightened the system's officials, censorship being a delicate topic no matter the political regime. In general, I perceive Romanian literature as being Western, especially since I completed my PhD in the Romanian interwar novel, excellently synchronized with the literature of Europe at that time.

I.R.: In various historical periods, the arguments for the necessity of Romania's modernisation were constructed based on the antithesis of West-East, with the latter often being blamed. Is the East something that could be perceived as exclusively negative, especially in the current context of war and undemocratic regimes? Or are there cultural and literary influence and experiences that can be capitalised on?

L.C.: In the context of the war near us, we are talking about Russia, not some abstract Orient. I do not perceive Russia as the Orient; for me, the Orient is more likely China. Russia is a conglomerate of republics, regions, mostly eastern, but I do not consider the Tatars, Kalmyks, Eskimos, Chechens, Chuvash, Yakuts, etc. to be Russians. Russia has had several periods when its own vulnerability became a threat to those around it, and enlightened minds found solutions to help it and us. I am sure there are enough people scratching their heads over what to do in today's complicated situation. For now, we do not see the end of conflicts, but rather their multiplication. And literature has fed on suffering, all kinds of oppression; inspiration and creativity are not always proportional to democracy and its values.

A few years ago, I took Chinese language courses; for about two months, I learned only the tones of this language and how to write a few ideograms. I gave up after a semester when I started a new job and no longer had time for foreign languages. But I do not forget that feeling of fear in the face of the unknown that watches us and knows us intimately, while we remain with the same medieval prejudices, full of arrogance and airs of superiority.

I.R.: What advantages do Romanian history, geography, and culture bring when placed at the intersection of East and West in the current context of global changes, and how could they be leveraged?

L.C.: I believe the disadvantages are equally significant, but let us be constructive. In the current context, with a war nearby, I would have preferred, both for Moldova and especially for Romania, an Australian-like geography – peaceful, tranquil, with kangaroos and sunny beaches. Romania could be a better negotiator, a mediator between two worlds, taking the best from East and West, not the worst. It seems that any attempt to capitalise on something for national benefit, any Romanian attempt to mediate between two worlds, is viewed suspiciously by the great powers. We need more mediation experts. During Russia's difficult political moments, the Bessarabian province joined Romania, but when Romania (and Europe) was weaker, the Russians immediately took back the province, and so on.

Many things are going wrong in many fields, but our culture continues to advance and seems to be increasingly appreciated by the West and still very weak in the East. I hope that the Republic of Moldova will not be a pretext for a new conflict.



ENERGY CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE AND THE GREEN TRANSITION - WHEN EAST MEETS WEST

Lavinia Ochea

ABSTRACT: *This article analyses the green energy connections between the Middle East and Europe from the perspective of the potential benefits for Romania. The historical energy interdependency created complex geopolitical relations between the countries of the two regions. The European Union's objective to gain climatic neutrality by transitioning to clean energy is currently followed by a series of Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Jordan) with massive investments in this area. This leads to a strategic change in terms of energy security in both Europe and Oriental regions. The European Union and the mentioned Oriental countries developed similar long-term strategies for green electricity and hydrogen production to minimise the negative impact of fossil fuels. The paper emphasises the increasing role of energy diplomacy in solving potential geopolitical adversities and satisfying continuous social needs. The article also exposes some challenges and opportunities accompanying the green energy transition. Potential challenges include geopolitical tensions, security threats, policy harmonisation, and environmental concerns. These inconveniences are counterbalanced by intensified regional cooperation, socio-economic development, technological renewal, especially for the Middle East, and the transformation of energy diplomacy into a more flexible instrument in international relations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The global energy landscape is undergoing a transformative shift towards sustainability, driven by the urgent need to mitigate climate change and reduce dependency on fossil fuels. This green revolution, marked by a transition to renewable energy sources, presents both challenges and opportunities for regions with historical dependencies on fossil fuels. European Union member states, with their ambitious climate policies and green initiatives, are leading this transformation. Concurrently, the Middle East, a region traditionally dominated by oil and gas production, is increasingly investing in renewable energy technologies. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the energy connections between the Middle East and Europe in the context of the green revolution. It explores historical dependencies, current developments, and prospects, along with the geopolitical, economic, and technological implications of this transformative shift. **Ultimately, the analysis also offers to the readers of the *România occidentală* journal a perspective on transformations and opportunities from the 'Orient' that are of major interest for Europe and Romania.**

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Energy is the lifeblood of modern economies, driving industrialization, transportation, and daily living. The Middle East possesses vast oil and gas reserves, while Europe demands substantial energy imports. Therefore, **efficient energy connections are crucial** for ensuring stability, economic growth, and security for both regions.

Historically, Europe's energy relationship with the Middle East has been characterized by a long-standing **dependency on fossil fuels**. The discovery of vast hydrocarbon reserves in the Middle East in the early 20th century marked the beginning of a **deep-rooted energy interdependence**. European economies heavily relied on Middle Eastern oil and natural gas, facilitated by extensive infrastructure developments such as pipelines and shipping routes.

Countries like **Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Qatar, and Iran** emerged as key suppliers, providing the energy necessary for Europe's industrial growth and economic stability. This dependency created a complex web of geopolitical relationships, with energy security becoming a critical concern for European policymakers. The Middle Eastern oil exports not only fueled European industries, but also played a **pivotal role in shaping global energy markets**.

Moreover, **key pipelines and shipping routes** have been crucial in facilitating the transportation of energy resources from the Middle East to Europe. **The Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz** are vital chokepoints for oil and gas shipments, underscoring their strategic importance. Tankers carry crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) through the Suez Canal and via the Mediterranean Sea to European ports, thus making the Suez Canal a crucial maritime route connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas. It facilitates the transit of oil tankers and LNG carriers from the Middle East to Europe, significantly reducing transportation distances and costs. Infrastructure investments continue to expand capacity and enhance efficiency along these routes, but **geopolitical tensions or disruptions in the canal** have also had profound implications for global energy markets.

Nonetheless, when it comes to pipelines, according to the Global Energy Monitor, there were at least 2,381 operational oil and gas pipelines distributed across some 162 countries with the combined length of these pipelines being more than 1.18 million km. Pipelines such as the Trans-Arabian Pipeline and the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline have historically ensured a steady flow of oil to Europe, highlighting the infrastructural backbone of this energy relationship.

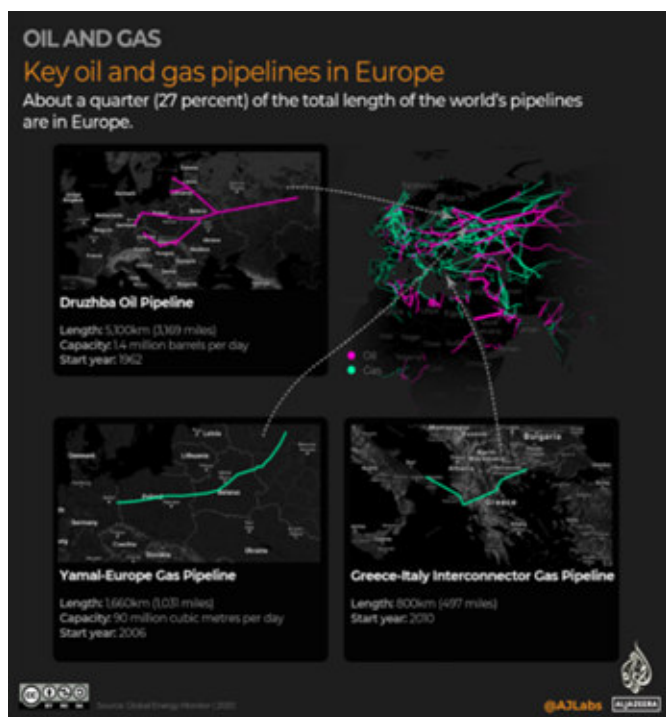
The significance of these routes extends beyond their economic utility; they have been focal points of geopolitical tension and strategic competition. Control over these critical infrastructures has often been a source of conflict, reflecting the intricate link between energy security and international relations. The vulnerability of these routes to political instability and conflict underscores the fragility of the traditional energy paradigm.

3. THE GREEN TRANSITION: A PARADIGM SHIFT ORIGINATING IN EUROPE AND THE RESPONSE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Global investment in the clean energy transition soared in 2023, rising by 17% on the year to hit USD 1.8 trillion. Moreover, USD 25 trillion of capital investment could be

deployed this decade, therefore the energy transition will affect all sectors. But a shift to 70% economy-wide electrification will open investment avenues and clean energy transition will be a major and unprecedented financial opportunity for investors.

The European Union (EU) has positioned itself at the forefront of global climate action through the European Green Deal, launched in 2019. Under the motto *“Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent,”* this comprehensive plan aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy, ensuring: no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050; economic growth decoupled from resource use; no person and no place left behind. Moreover, it is setting ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, renewable energy adoption, and energy efficiency improvements. The Green Deal outlines a roadmap that includes significant investments in renewable energy infrastructure, the development of a circular economy, and policies to promote sustainable agriculture and biodiversity. Key targets include reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The Green Deal also emphasizes the importance of a just transition, ensuring that the shift to a green economy is fair and inclusive.



What is then the response from the Middle East, i.e. from the ‘Orient’ closest to us in Europe? While traditionally known for its oil and gas reserves, the **Middle East is also increasingly investing in renewable energy**. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Jordan have launched major solar and wind energy projects. Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 plan includes the goal of generating 50% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030. Similarly, the UAE’s Energy Strategy

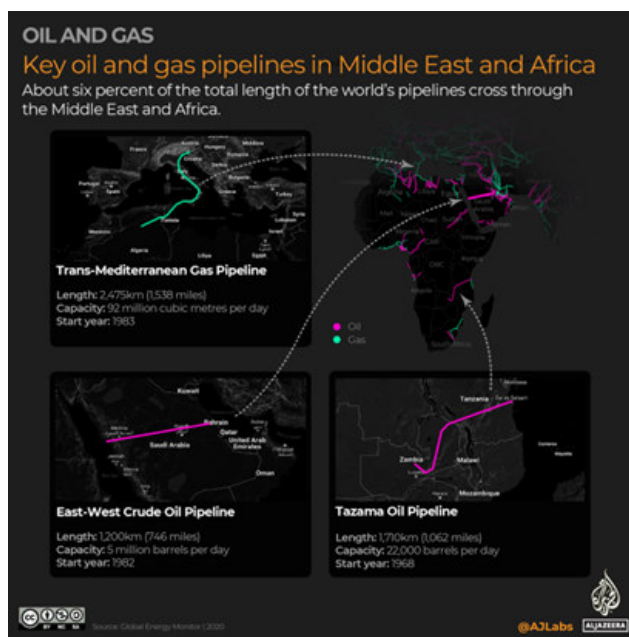
2050 aims to increase the share of clean energy in the total energy mix to 50% by mid-century. These initiatives represent a strategic pivot towards economic diversification and sustainability, reflecting a growing recognition of the long-term risks associated with fossil fuel dependency. The Middle East's abundant solar and wind resources provide a strong foundation for large-scale renewable energy projects. By investing in these resources, Middle Eastern countries are also positioning themselves as key players in the global renewable energy market.

It is precisely in this context that more and more strategic connections emerge between the EU and its Middle East, 'Oriental' neighborhood, with support from both sides. To facilitate the green transition, cross-border **electricity interconnections between the Middle East and Europe** are being explored. Projects such as the Euro-Asia Interconnector, renamed recently the Great Sea Interconnector, a subsea cable linking **Israel, Republic of Cyprus, and Greece**, are examples of initiatives designed to enhance energy security by diversifying energy sources and integrating renewable energy into the grid. Such projects not only provide a direct link for the transfer of electricity originating from renewable sources, but also symbolize a new era of energy cooperation that transcends traditional fossil fuel dependencies.

The Great Sea Interconnector is a 'challenging project of common interests,' which is now possible with the development of technology, according to the Minister of Energy, Trade, and Industry of the Republic of Cyprus. This planned HVDC interconnector will connect the power grids of the three countries via the world's longest submarine power cable, with a length of 310 kilometers (190 mi) from Israel to Cyprus, 898 kilometers (558 mi) from Cyprus to Greece, for a total of 1,208 kilometers (751 mi). Its main purpose is to create a transcontinental electricity network, allowing for the efficient transfer of renewable energy between Europe and the Middle East. This project highlights the potential for regional integration in the energy sector, fostering collaboration and mutual benefits.

There is also **the Euro-Africa Interconnector**, another planned submarine cable, representing a 2,000MW electricity interconnector between **Egypt, Republic of Cyprus, Greece, and in the end Europe**. This is defined as an 'electricity highway,' connecting the national electricity grids of those countries through a 1396 km subsea HVDC cable. The main scope of these cables is to end energy isolation of the Republic of Cyprus as an EU member state (n.b. currently, the Republic of Cyprus is totally energy isolated even though there are various projects to end this situation). Therefore, the integration of the isolated small systems of Cyprus and Crete with the Egyptian and European networks and the uninterrupted, multidirectional flow of energy will also promote the substantial development of the renewable energy sources and contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions. Moreover, it will offer significant economic and geopolitical benefits to the involved countries and will **contribute to the target of the European Union for 10% of electricity interconnection between Member States**. Additionally, by linking renewable energy producers in the Middle East with consumers in Europe, such projects can enhance energy security, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Furthermore, **another key instrument is hydrogen**, which can play a big role in the transitional economy. Hydrogen, particularly **green hydrogen** produced from renewable sources, is emerging as a pivotal element in the future energy landscape. **The Middle**



East, with its abundant solar and wind resources, is well-positioned to produce green hydrogen at scale. Europe, on the other hand, has significant demand for clean hydrogen to decarbonize industries and transport sectors. Collaborative projects, such as the **NEOM** in Saudi Arabia, aim to produce green hydrogen for export to Europe. These ventures highlight the potential for a new energy partnership, leveraging the Middle East's renewable resources to meet Europe's green hydrogen needs.

Green hydrogen has also the potential to play a critical role in **achieving climate targets**, offering a clean and versatile energy carrier that can be used across various sectors. The development of a hydrogen economy **requires significant investments** in production facilities, transportation infrastructure, and storage solutions. By collaborating on hydrogen projects, the Occident and Orient, Europe and the Middle East, can drive innovation, reduce costs, and accelerate the deployment of this promising technology.

Middle Eastern countries endowed with abundant sunlight and vast desert areas are also increasingly investing in renewable energy projects, particularly solar and wind power. Initiatives such as the **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai**, and the **Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030** include ambitious targets for renewable energy development.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 highlights the country's commitment to reducing its reliance on oil and developing renewable energy sources. The Kingdom has launched several major projects under this strategy, including the 2.6 GW Al Shuaibah solar project and the Dumat Al Jandal wind farm. Additionally, Saudi Arabia is investing in green hydrogen production, with the **NEOM** aiming to become one of the largest green hydrogen production facilities globally. These projects reflect a strategic vision to transform the country's energy landscape and enhance economic resilience. The NEOM project exemplifies Saudi Arabia's ambitions in the green energy sector. Located in the

northwestern region of the country, it is envisioned as a smart city powered entirely by renewable energy. The project includes significant investments in solar and wind energy, as well as innovative technologies for energy storage and management. By creating a sustainable and technologically advanced urban environment, NEOM aims to showcase the potential of renewable energy and attract global investment.

And the 'West' is playing these same cards, with European companies and governments increasingly investing in renewable energy projects in the Middle East. For example, the **UAE's Masdar has partnered with European firms to develop solar and wind projects across the region**. Additionally, European financial institutions are providing funding for renewable energy initiatives, recognizing the strategic importance of diversifying sources and supporting the global green transition. Such investments not only foster international cooperation, but also promote the transfer of technology and expertise in both directions, eastward and westward.

European investments in Middle Eastern renewables highlight the potential for cross-regional collaboration in the green energy sector. These partnerships leverage the complementary strengths of both regions, combining Europe's technological expertise with the Middle East's abundant renewable resources. By working together, Europe and the Middle East can accelerate the deployment of renewable energy projects, reduce costs, and enhance energy security.

4. GEOPOLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This green transition is also reshaping global energy alliances. Europe's relatively reduced reliance on Middle Eastern oil and gas, together with developments outside this connection lead to a reconfiguration of geopolitical relationships. The growing trade in renewable energy technologies and green hydrogen may **create new avenues for cooperation**. Countries that successfully diversify their economies and invest in renewables could emerge as key players in the global green energy market. This shift necessitates a **rethinking of traditional alliances** and could potentially **reduce the geopolitical tensions historically associated with fossil fuel trade**.

As Europe transitions to a green economy, its energy diplomacy will increasingly focus on securing renewable energy sources and technologies. This shift could reduce the strategic importance of oil-producing regions, altering the dynamics of international relations. However, the development of new energy partnerships centered around renewables could foster greater collaboration and stability. Investing in renewable energy and technological innovation will set the countries to be well-positioned as to be able to shape the future energy landscape.

The green transition presents an opportunity for economic diversification in the Middle East. Historically reliant on oil revenues, these countries are **investing in renewable energy projects to create new industries and jobs**. For instance, Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 includes plans for large-scale solar and wind farms, as well as initiatives to develop a local manufacturing base specialized on supplying elements necessary for renewable energy technologies. These efforts are aimed at reducing economic vulnerability to oil price fluctuations and ensuring long-term economic sustainability.

Economic diversification strategies in the Middle East also include **investments in research and development, education, and infrastructure**. By fostering a supportive

environment for innovation and entrepreneurship, these countries can develop new economic sectors and reduce their dependency on fossil fuels. Renewable energy projects can also serve as catalysts for broader economic transformation, creating opportunities for growth and development.

Nevertheless, despite the potential benefits, several **challenges impede the transition to green energy**. Technical barriers include the need for advanced grid infrastructure to integrate variable renewable sources and the development of solutions for efficient energy storage. Financial challenges involve securing investment for large-scale renewable energy projects and developing attractive financing models. Overcoming these barriers requires coordinated efforts between governments, private sector stakeholders, and international financial institutions.

Technological advancements are essential for the successful integration of renewable energy into existing energy systems. This includes the development of smart grids, storage technologies, and innovative solutions for energy management.

Financial support, including public funding, private investments, and international aid, is crucial for accelerating the deployment of renewable energy projects.

Policymakers must create an environment conducive to investment, providing incentives and reducing regulatory barriers. Effective policy and regulatory frameworks are crucial for the successful integration of renewable energy. **Europe and the Middle East must harmonize their energy policies to facilitate cross-border trade in renewable energy.** This includes standardizing technical specifications, ensuring grid compatibility, and creating supportive legal frameworks for international transfers and projects. Collaborative policy efforts can help streamline the deployment of renewable energy technologies and enhance mutual benefits.

Matching energy policies requires also international cooperation and alignment of regulatory standards. This can be achieved through **bilateral and multilateral agreements**, as well as regional initiatives. Policymakers must address issues related to market integration, grid interconnection, and environmental regulations. By creating a coherent policy framework, Europe and the Middle East can facilitate the seamless East-West flow of renewable energy and strengthen their energy partnership.

Correspondingly, the transition to green energy will have **significant socioeconomic impacts**. In **Europe**, it could lead to job creation in new industries and improved public health due to reduced air pollution. In the **Middle East**, it offers a pathway to economic diversification and sustainable development. However, managing the transition for workers in traditional fossil fuel-based industries and ensuring equitable access to new opportunities will be critical. Policies aimed at **retraining and reskilling workers, as well as social safety nets, will be essential to mitigate the negative impacts of the transition.**

The green transition can drive inclusive growth and social development, if it is managed effectively. This includes ensuring that the **benefits of renewable energy projects are widely shared** and that **vulnerable populations are protected**. Social policies must address the needs of workers and communities affected by the transition, providing support for education, training, and employment. By prioritizing social equity, policymakers can build public support for the green revolution and ensure its long-term success.

Strengthening energy connections between the Middle East and Europe through renewable energy projects can enhance energy security for both regions. Diversifying energy sources and increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix reduces

dependence on a single energy source or supply route, thereby mitigating risks associated with geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions. Renewable energy projects, such as solar farms in the Middle East, can provide a stable and sustainable energy supply to the region and westward, to Europe. **Enhanced energy security also requires investments in resilient infrastructure and grid management.** By developing interconnected grids and efficient energy storage solutions, Europe and the Middle East can ensure a reliable supply of renewable energy. This reduces vulnerability to external shocks and enhances the stability of the energy system.

Innovation in renewable energy technologies can also lead to cost reductions and improved efficiency. By investing in research and development, Europe and the Middle East can drive breakthroughs in solar and wind energy, energy storage, and green hydrogen production. These innovations will be essential for scaling up renewable energy deployment and achieving climate targets. Collaboration between academia, industry, and governments will be key to fostering a culture of innovation and accelerating the green revolution.

The transition to green energy also aligns with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly **Goal 7** (Affordable and Clean Energy) and **Goal 13** (Climate Action). By investing in renewable energy, both Europe and the Middle East can contribute to global efforts to combat climate change, promote sustainable development, and improve quality of life. Achieving these goals requires a concerted effort to integrate renewable energy into national development strategies and prioritize sustainability in policy-making. The green transition also supports other SDGs, including **Goal 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth), **Goal 9** (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and **Goal 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities). By creating new industries and jobs, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting sustainable urban development, the green revolution can drive inclusive growth and improve living standards. Policymakers must ensure that the benefits of the green transition are widely shared and that no one is left behind.

5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the benefits, energy connections face various challenges, including geopolitical tensions, security threats, and environmental concerns. Geopolitical dynamics heavily influence energy connections between the Middle East and Europe and regional conflicts, diplomatic relations, and alliances shape the stability and viability of energy routes.

European countries seek to diversify their energy sources to reduce dependency on any single supplier and mitigate geopolitical risks. Stable and reliable energy supplies support economic growth and industrial development in Europe. The revenue from energy exports sustains the economies of Middle Eastern countries, driving investment and infrastructure development.

Technological advancements and international cooperation are key to overcoming challenges and ensuring sustainable energy connections.

The successful implementation of renewable energy projects faces several **technical and financial barriers**. Technical challenges include the **integration of**

intermittent renewable energy sources into the grid, requiring advancements in grid management and storage technologies. Financially, the high upfront costs of renewable energy projects and the need for substantial investments pose significant challenges.

Overcoming these barriers requires innovative financing mechanisms, such as **green bonds and public-private partnerships**, as well as **supportive regulatory frameworks that incentivize investment**. Technical barriers can be addressed through **research and development**, as well as **the deployment of advanced technologies**. Storage solutions, such as batteries and pumped hydro storage, are critical for balancing supply and demand and ensuring grid stability. Financial challenges can be mitigated through a combination of public and private investment, international aid, and innovative financing models. Governments must create an enabling environment for investment, providing incentives and reducing regulatory hurdles and red tape.

Harmonizing policy and regulatory frameworks between Europe and the Middle East is essential to facilitate the green transition. This includes creating standards for renewable energy technologies, establishing cross-border electricity trading mechanisms, and ensuring regulatory alignment to support international collaboration. Effective policies must also address issues related to land use, environmental protection, and social impacts to ensure sustainable and inclusive development.

Policy harmonization requires coordination and cooperation at the international level. This can be achieved through bilateral agreements, regional initiatives, and multilateral forums. Policymakers must also engage with stakeholders, including industry, academia, and civil society, to ensure that policies are comprehensive and inclusive. By creating a coherent policy framework, Europe and the Middle East can facilitate the seamless flow of renewable energy and strengthen their energy partnership.

The transition to green energy will have profound socioeconomic impacts, particularly on communities and workers dependent on the fossil fuel industry. Managing this transition requires comprehensive strategies to support affected workers, including retraining and reskilling programs, social safety nets, and initiatives for community development. Ensuring that the benefits of the green transition are equitably distributed is crucial for maintaining social cohesion and political support for climate policies. The green transition can drive inclusive growth and social development, provided it is managed wisely. This includes ensuring that the benefits of renewable energy projects are widely shared and that vulnerable populations are protected. Social policies must address the needs of workers and communities affected by the transition, providing support for education, training, and employment. By prioritizing social equity, policymakers can build public support for the green revolution and ensure its long-term success.

The shift towards renewable energy is also **redefining energy diplomacy**. The traditional one, focused on securing access to fossil fuel resources, is evolving to include renewable energy cooperation and technology exchange. Europe and the Middle East can leverage their respective strengths in renewable energy production and technological innovation to **build strategic partnerships**. Such partnerships can enhance global energy security, promote sustainable development, and strengthen

geopolitical stability. Energy diplomacy in the context of the green transition involves fostering collaboration on renewable energy projects, sharing technological expertise, and supporting capacity-building efforts. By building strategic partnerships, Europe and the Middle East can enhance their energy security and contribute to global climate goals. These partnerships can also promote regional stability and cooperation, reducing the risk of conflict and fostering mutual benefits.

For Middle Eastern countries, the green transition also offers a pathway to economic diversification. Investing in renewable energy **can create new industries, generate employment, and reduce economic dependence on oil and gas exports.** Diversification strategies should also include the development of related sectors, such as manufacturing of equipment involved in renewable energy technologies, research and development, and sustainable tourism. A diversified economy is more resilient to external shocks and better positioned for long-term growth. Economic diversification requires a comprehensive approach, including investments in infrastructure, education, and innovation. Policymakers must create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and private sector growth, providing incentives and reducing regulatory barriers. By fostering a dynamic and diverse economy, Middle Eastern countries can enhance their resilience and ensure sustainable development.

Regional cooperation is essential for the success of the green transition. Middle Eastern countries can benefit from collaborative efforts between themselves and with European partners to develop renewable energy infrastructure, share technical expertise, and coordinate policy initiatives. Regional organizations, such as the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab League**, can play a pivotal role in fostering cooperation and facilitating the integration of renewable energy into regional energy markets. Regional cooperation involves aligning policies and regulations, sharing best practices, and coordinating investments. By working together, Middle Eastern countries and western partners, such as the EU and EU Member States, can create a more integrated and efficient energy market, enhancing energy security and reducing costs. Enhanced regional cooperation can also attract international investment and support large-scale renewable energy projects.

6. CONCLUSION

The energy connections between the Middle East (East) and Europe (West) are undergoing a profound transformation as both regions pursue the green revolution. While historically defined by the trade in fossil fuels, this relationship is evolving towards renewable energy collaboration and technological innovation. The transition to green energy presents significant opportunities for enhancing energy security, driving economic diversification, and achieving sustainable development goals. However, it also poses challenges that require coordinated policy efforts, technological advancements, and financial investments. By strengthening their energy partnership, Europe and the Middle East can play a pivotal role in the global transition to a sustainable future, potentially with positive global consequences.

ROMANIA, THE “MORTAL” EUROPE AND THE COMMUNITY OF VALUES

Tinca Prunea-Bretonnet

ABSTRACT: *This article addresses Romania’s location “in-between” East and West through the prism of the problem of values. The starting point is E. Lovinescu’s perspective, who recommended in 1924 interdependence and adaptation to Western civilisation, by cultivating a critical spirit, but also the breaking away from the Eastern “moral life” that, on his account, had bound us to the past and been a hindrance. The second section of the article analyses the April 2024 speech of French President E. Macron, according to which Europe is today “at a crossroads” and appears to us for the first time as “mortal”. His solution arguing for a defense of Enlightenment values and narratives, while pertinent, does not provide sufficient clarification as to what we might understand by them. Moreover, as the third section shows, there was no homogeneous standpoint in this respect in the Enlightenment either, just as there is none in the contemporary period, when this movement is being criticised and revised. This article proposes an axiological approach to Romania’s location between the West and the East through Paul Ricoeur’s concept of “narrative hospitality”, which, we advance, would allow a positive re-interpretation of our double belonging to these two regions and an active reconsideration of the values we wish to endorse.*

From imitation to interdependence

This year marks, as we know, the 100th anniversary of the publication of the first volume of Eugen Lovinescu’s *History of Modern Romanian Civilization*¹. Lovinescu’s entire reflection was based on the observation that inspired the title of our issue: “Both by ethnic constitution and by geographical position, the Romanian people is on the border of two worlds: the East and the West.”² If this statement is still legitimate and valid today, Romania has in the meantime gone through turbulent periods and events, and historical conditions seem to have changed radically. Some of Lovinescu’s beliefs or interpretations appear to us as outdated, or arising from personal prejudices, perhaps inherent, and cannot be accepted as such³. However, some of the solutions suggested by the author - if not even some of the diagnoses - are still relevant and can offer fertile insights into the present moment. The premises of his position are well known: Latinity

¹ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, Minerva, București, 1997.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5: “If tragic historical circumstances had not for a long time established us in the moral atmosphere of Eastern life, - a Roman soul in a vigorous Illyrian-Tracian body - we could have entered from the beginning, like the other Latin peoples, into the orbit of Western civilization”; or *ibid.*, p. 6: “The most active ferment of Orientalization was, however, Orthodoxy.”

would have given us a specific (and beneficial) “mentality” or “mental conformation”⁴, but historical conditions have “Orientalized” us as a nation. Nevertheless, through interaction with Rome (regarded as “the origin of our nation”⁵) we have “strengthened our conscience” since the 18th century. Therefore, gradually, “the axis of [our] political and cultural life shifted from East to West.”⁶ Lovinescu’s optimism was overturned by immediate history. He was also convinced that “the axis of our spiritual life will also shift” towards the West⁷. The central thesis animating his interpretation is that the East links us to the past and is not “a force [...] of the present”, while the West represents the future. Hence the famous statement: “*Ex occidente lux!*”⁸

The first epoch of Romanian modernity, characterised by a “feverish and complete imitation” – understandable and welcome, in his opinion, at that historical moment – must be followed, Lovinescu claims, by an era of “real interdependence”, reflected in all areas: political, artistic, scientific, economic⁹. This remark made at the time, and probably intended to be both a description and a program, is perhaps even more justified today, when Romania is a member of the European Union: “we are therefore living in solidarity and synchrony in the structure of European life.” Now, the author argues, in a thesis that is still valid today, this interdependence can and must no longer be reduced to imitation¹⁰, nor must it be defined as “the interdependence of the fly in the spider’s web”, as C. Rădulescu-Motru famously reproached him¹¹. On the contrary: if we really want civilizational progress, we must necessarily go beyond borrowing, imitation, or mere adoption of Western models. This is because, according to Lovinescu, “the originality of the Romanian people [...] will be shown only by adapting the borrowed forms to its ethnic background.”¹² Even if we do not entirely share the author’s somewhat one-sided view, according to which “[p]rogress cannot therefore mean, for us, anything other than the fertilization of the national background by the creative element of the Western ideology”, we cannot but accept the thesis that it is absolutely necessary to go beyond imitation, borrowing or the mechanical – that is, uncritical – adoption of Western forms, ideas, models and, why not, ideologies or trends. Here we also find an important idea, namely the exercise of the critical spirit. Lovinescu recalls the need for critical spirit in any phenomenon of adaptation, and in particular in updating the interdependence with the Western world in our country, even if, as I mentioned, the “light” of civilisation comes from there. If, in relation to the Western European world, the political, economic, military, perhaps even cultural interdependence – or one could even say the dependence – is more accentuated today, all the more pressing is the need for this critical spirit¹³, which not only prevents sterile or harmful imitation, but may even transform Romania’s position from a marginal border space, from an uncertain and precariously balanced “in-between”

⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

⁹ Ibid., p. 279.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 285 sq.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 278-279.

¹² Ibid., p. 310.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 302-305.

two worlds, into a privilege of being *both* in the West and in the East and into a source of cultural and axiological richness.

How should we conceive of Romania's place and, therefore, role in the contemporary world? The answer to this question no longer seems so simple today, when the West is an increasingly contested concept, when geopolitical upheavals make the East weigh ever more heavily in power reallocations, when principles that seemed self-evident - such as democracy or the rule of law - are being called into question by some European actors themselves, and especially today, when populist and identity movements in European countries are highlighting the ever-widening gap between a European identity defined by the European Union through its institutions and what is assumed and understood as a European identity by the citizens of the member countries.

If the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022 seems to have strengthened the solidarity and cooperation of European countries in the North Atlantic Alliance through external aggression, the attachment of citizens to the EU does not seem to have been strengthened, nor the sense of cohesion positively affected. The far-right is on the rise in the EU, as is Euroscepticism and hostility towards the European institutions through sovereigntist and nationalist claims. These developments need to be faced and tackled head-on if the EU is to survive, because the most dangerous weakening of the EU, we believe, comes mainly from within. And perhaps for the first time we acutely feel that "Europe is mortal", to quote the French President Emmanuel Macron. Today we must ask those awkward questions that can help us first find the causes and then find the right solutions, or at least see what paths we can follow to seek relevant solutions¹⁴.

I would like to propose here an approach through the prism of the values which the EU claims to represent and which today seem to be going through a deep crisis. In this article I would like to propose some reflections on Romania's place in an area of culture and values. I will refer in particular to the relationship with the "West", which I understand here in the traditional sense of Western European countries, defined by a common cultural heritage, labelled as "humanist", "enlightened" and "Christian."

"Our Europe is today mortal"

On April 25, 2024, President Emmanuel Macron gave a speech on Europe at the Sorbonne, his second after his 2017 speech at the same University and on the same topic, one that was also intended to be a French stock-taking and a program for the EU in which the European vision of the head of the French state, and through him, of France as the driving force of the E.U., was expressed and imposed. Even if this second speech, very dense and ambitious, was closely linked to the electoral campaign for the June 2024 European elections in France, and therefore subordinated primarily to domestic political goals and calculations, and even if the theses developed by the president did not have the hoped-for echo either internally or externally, we must mention here a few ideas that are relevant. The speech focused on three main points: European defence and the need

¹⁴ This was, for example, the theme of an excellent event organised by the think tank EU+ Ideas Institute on What European Values? (TU Dublin, 10 April 2024), which was attended by Noel Fitzpatrick, Hans Kundnani, Richard Kearney, and Lorna Hayes, among others.

for the EU to become a power (*Europe-puissance*); reindustrialisation and economic prosperity in general (a *sine qua non*, according to Macron, to face the threats posed by global warming, artificial intelligence or social conflicts, among others); and - what is of particular interest here - the issue of the “cultural battle, of imaginaries, narratives [récits], values.”¹⁵

Even if the latter enumeration is somewhat heteroclitite and vague, E. Macron’s assumed intention is to “defend this European humanism that binds us together. [...] to defend a certain idea of man that places the free, rational and enlightened [*éclairé*] individual above all else.” He repeatedly emphasizes that we are at a crossroads, a moment when clear, courageous and swift decisions can prevent Europe from “dying”¹⁶. The tone of his speech is thus rather pessimistic: it is no longer so much a question of perfecting the Union, of improving one or other of the directions in which it is heading, but rather of preventing it from dying. Of course, in this speech, Macron mobilises an expressive rhetoric, inspired by Paul Valéry and Albert Camus, and perhaps a little exaggerated, in order to shock voters and European leaders and make himself heard. But we have to recognise that the EU does indeed seem more fragile today than ever, and that asserting its mortal nature does not sound absurd or implausible. While the constant invocation of “values” in the French President’s speech remains somewhat general - which probably could not be avoided in such a rhetorical, very comprehensive exercise - I am inclined to agree with the diagnosis of the impasse or crossroads we are at today, especially from an axiological perspective.

Interesting in this context is a seemingly paradoxical twofold thesis he puts forward: the solution, according to Macron, would consist simultaneously in accepting a paradigm shift that has become inevitable and in reaffirming the humanist values that are the glue binding European citizens together. Quoting Albert Camus, he sees in Europe the “common adventure” in which we continue to take part in the “breath of intelligence” - that is to say, in the realm of ideas, convictions and values¹⁷. It is an adventure in which freedom, justice, knowledge, culture - namely, the Enlightenment ideals - play a decisive role, but which is also in a constant state of “disequilibrium”, given the constant “tension” between tradition and “permanence” on the one hand, and modernity and the desire for renewal and progress on the other. This tension confers, Macron argues, a constitutive fragility to the humanism that characterises European civilisation; that is

¹⁵ The speech is available here: <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2024/04/24/discours-sur-leurope>. “Puis le troisième constat qui fonce l’importance du moment que nous vivons, c’est la bataille culturelle, celle des imaginaires, des récits, des valeurs, qui est de plus en plus délicate”, *ibid*.

¹⁶ “Mon message aujourd’hui est simple. Paul VALÉRY disait, au sortir de la Première Guerre mondiale, que nous savions désormais que nos civilisations étaient mortelles. Nous devons être lucides sur le fait que notre Europe, aujourd’hui, est mortelle. Elle peut mourir. [...] Oui, nous sommes au moment de bascule, et notre Europe est mortelle. Simplement, cela dépend de nous. Et ceci se fait sur des constats très simples pour documenter la gravité de mon propos”, *ibid*.

¹⁷ “Camus avait cette phrase magnifique dans ses Lettres à un ami allemand: ‘Notre Europe est une aventure commune que nous continuons à faire malgré vous dans le vent de l’intelligence’. C’est ça l’Europe. C’est une aventure qu’on continue à faire, malgré tous ceux qui doutent, dans le vent de l’intelligence. Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire? Ça veut dire qu’être Européen, ce n’est pas simplement habiter une terre, de la Baltique, à la Méditerranée ou de l’Atlantique à la mer Noire. C’est défendre une certaine idée de l’homme qui place l’individu libre, rationnel et éclairé au-dessus de tout. Et c’est de se dire que de Paris à Varsovie et de Lisbonne à Odessa, nous avons un rapport unique à la liberté et à la justice. Nous avons toujours fait le choix de mettre l’Homme au sens générique, au-dessus de tout. Et de la Renaissance aux Lumières jusqu’à la sortie des totalitarismes, c’est ça qui a constitué l’Europe”, *ibid*.

why Enlightenment values and trust need to be conquered again and again¹⁸. I think that the idea of a trust in values that must be regained again and again, constantly justified and reaffirmed, is interesting and pertinent. As we can see, Macron, who claims to be the heir and continuator of Enlightenment ideals, invokes here particularly the concept of man as a rational, free individual, "enlightened" through education and culture.

What Enlightenment are we speaking of?

Probably the abstract reference to "Enlightenment" is no longer enough today, it no longer mobilises or has a clear meaning for Europeans. What kind of Enlightenment are we talking about? The Enlightenment of Voltaire and of the French *philosophes*, deists or even atheists? Of the revolutionaries? That of the sceptics? Or that of Kant? Of the German-speaking philosophers, deeply faithful and lacking in hostility towards the ecclesiastical hierarchy? Or perhaps that of Frederick the Great, the philosopher-king, the absolute monarch who, despite his intellectual and political preferences, welcomed French freethinkers like La Mettrie to the Prussian court? We know today that we cannot speak of a homogeneous Enlightenment, that this movement was made up of a plurality of currents, with many facets and particularities, not only national - although they are essential - but also linked to transnational preferences that crossed the Republic of Letters. We speak today of a radical Enlightenment (Israel), that of the clandestine literature, of a moderate Enlightenment, of a secularised Enlightenment (Jacob), of a conservative Enlightenment¹⁹.

Moreover, as we know, the Enlightenment has been contested at least since the 1940s. More precisely, interpretations that directly criticise it (whether or not inspired by Nietzsche) or simply highlight its "shadows" - after the title of a famous book²⁰ - its flaws or ambivalences are more and more numerous and accepted. If Peter Gay, for example, ascribes to the Enlightenment all the successes and subsequent progress and "all that is good" in the 20th century²¹, the famous critical interpretation developed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno since the 1940s has had a great impact²². They speak of a "dialectic of the Enlightenment", in a nuanced and critical approach to the Enlightenment in which reliance on reason is denounced as excessive, as is the preoccupation with the rational element. The idea that the Enlightenment was responsible for the atrocities of the last century has gained ground. Continuing this Marxist-inspired approach to critical theory, J. Habermas has argued for the need to continue and thoroughly complete the Enlightenment program, rather than rejecting it in its entirety²³. Other thinkers advance the need to develop a "new" Enlightenment, which alone would be capable of banishing

¹⁸ "C'est une confiance dans l'individu libre, doté de raison. C'est une confiance dans le savoir, la liberté, la culture. C'est une tension constante entre une tradition et des permanences et une modernité. C'est un déséquilibre, être Européen, et c'est cela qu'il nous faut défendre. Cet humanisme si fragile, mais qui nous distingue des autres", *ibid*.

¹⁹ J. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; M.C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment. Pantheists, Freemasons, and Republicans*, Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1981. M.C. Jacob, *The Secular Enlightenment*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

²⁰ P. Hulme and L. Jordanova, *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*, London: Routledge, 1990.

²¹ P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vol., New York: Norton, 1966-1969.

²² M. Horkheimer, T. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1969 (1947).

²³ J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962.

contemporary relativism²⁴. We therefore see how diverse the contemporary readings are and how plural and nuanced this current has been. Of course, E. Macron could not have gotten into such details in his Sorbonne speech, but it is also true that the generic invocation of “Enlightenment values” does not provide a satisfactory idea of what we mean by these values nor of how we want them to animate our actions and choices.

It is interesting to recall that even the representatives of the German Enlightenment, for example, were unable to offer an exact, uncontroversial definition of the movement or even to agree on what it meant, what its responsibilities were, or even on its limits and chances of success. Today we associate the Enlightenment mainly with the work of Kant and his famous injunction *Sapere aude!*: dare to know, to think for yourself, “by yourself” - that is, to not let someone else (political leaders, priests, doctors, authority in general, Kant says) take the place of your reason, your judgment, and keep you under their tutelage²⁵. This was not a call for rebellion or disbelief; on the contrary, it was a call for us to make our decisions and choices with maturity, responsibility and in full knowledge of the facts. Kant placed great emphasis on theoretical reason and the conditions of scientific knowledge, as we know today, but also on the moral maturity of man. The emancipation or “coming of age” of which he speaks (*Mündigkeit*), is also a moral maturation through which man comes to act according to clear, demanding moral principles, and does not allow himself to be carried away by the inclinations or desires of the moment, by “whims”.

The most interesting and subtle analysis of the Enlightenment in the controversy over the meaning, nature, boundaries and duties of the movement, however, is to be found in Moses Mendelssohn²⁶. He too enters the debate at the same time as Kant and constructs a passionate parallel between theoretical instruction and training, on the one hand, and the moral element, the ethical or “practical” values in the terminology of the time, on the other. The human being who claims to be “enlightened” should acquire these values and be guided by them. Mendelssohn, who is much more pessimistic about the current’s chances of success, insists on the connection between these two aspects, the theoretical and the practical: training and education through knowledge must, he argues, go hand in hand with progress or growth in the moral realm. And the acquisition of knowledge unaccompanied by the cultivation of morality has negative consequences just as harmful as ignorance and lack of knowledge, of theoretical education. Emphasising the latter brings neither true “enlightenment”, nor progress or happiness to humans, nor balance to society. Thus, Enlightenment values, as we would say today, are by no means reducible to (theoretical) reason, and man cannot be truly free, Mendelssohn asserts, if he focuses only on civilisation, education, the accumulation of information - these two dimensions, according to him, moral and theoretical, rise or fall together.

It is therefore important today to remember the self-interpretations of the Enlightenment thinkers who “lived” from within this current so often invoked today. The Enlightenment is not just about Voltaire, nor is it about unwavering faith in reason or political emancipation. Despite the decisive importance of these elements, the question

²⁴ D. Graham and P. Clarke, *The New Enlightenment: The Rebirth of Liberalism*, London, 1986.

²⁵ I. Kant, „Ce este Iluminismul?” - „Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”, in N. Hinske, M. Albrecht (ed.), *Was ist Aufklärung? Beiträge aus der Berlinischen Monatsschrift*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977, p. 452 sq.

²⁶ M. Mendelssohn, „Über die Frage: was heißt aufklären?”, *ibid.*, p. 444 sq.

of moral values was at the heart of the preoccupations of the philosophers of the time who insisted, as we have seen, on the need for constant moral growth, without which no political, social or intellectual progress is genuine, lasting or capable of fulfilling our deepest aspirations. This is why the invocation of the "narratives" (*récits*) developed by the Enlightenment must take into account their plurality and the meaning they have been given in the period in question, otherwise the meaning of the values bequeathed to Europe will be lost.

Narrative hospitality and the axiological dimension

Paul Ricoeur, who speaks of a "new ethos" for Europe and introduces, after the concept of "linguistic hospitality", the concept of "narrative hospitality"²⁷, is a fascinating reference to this problem of European values. Narrative hospitality implies listening to and accepting (but not necessarily appropriating as one's own) the other's narrative, through which he or she recounts, for example, his or her national or collective history, the past that makes him or her what he or she is today, and which often differs from our narrative, our interpretation of history, our past - especially when it concerns neighbouring countries, communities that have experienced periods of mutual hostility or conflict. If history - or, more precisely, history as interpretation - is never "innocent", says Ricoeur, but mobilises a specific imaginary, a particular perspective, because it often "tells the story" of the same event from different points of view (of the defeated and of the victorious, for example), this also applies to national communities and European states. This is the first characteristic of narrative hospitality, namely "narrative plurality", contends Ricoeur.

Added to this is the "narrative transformation", the second characteristic through which the historical past can offer unexplored, unexperienced possibilities, and which - if we resort to reinterpreting it through the prism of the narrative or the testimony of the other - can offer the combination of memory with the fulfilment of unfulfilled promises. In this way, the past can "give" the future a content not yet discovered, and a cathartic dimension. The third characteristic is "narrative forgiveness", which creates an empathy with the other, a different way of relating to the "wounds" of the past - both our own wounds and the wounds of the other. Here, Ricoeur argues, there is a move or a leap towards another level, where justice and entitlement, reciprocity and contractual exchange, are overtaken by love (*charité*) and forgiveness. This narrative exchange of histories, testimonies or memories, on which narrative hospitality is based, is transformed not only into forgiveness but also into action: it becomes performative, "the word becomes gesture"²⁸.

I would dare to say that narrative hospitality can also be applied to European values, not only to history: first by accepting the specific values of the member countries,

²⁷ P. Ricoeur, "Quel ethos nouveau pour l'Europe?", in *Politique, économie et société. Écrits et conférences 4*, Paris: Seuil, 2019, p. 271-286: 'Il n'est pas exagéré de poser en termes d'imagination la question de l'Europe à venir. [...] J'aimerais dire ici comment une réflexion portant sur les comportements éthiques et spirituels, tant des individus, des intellectuels, des hommes de culture, que des sociétés de pensée, des Églises et autres confessions religieuses, peut contribuer à cette imagination politique'.

²⁸ For a recent discussion of Ricoeur's standpoint, see R. Kearney, M. Fitzpatrick, *Radical Hospitality: From Thought to Action*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2021.

without attempting to level or homogenise them axiologically by – “from above” – imposing values that citizens or communities do not aspire to nor are willing to accept. But also without resorting to reducing them to the lowest axiological common denominator, which would impoverish and diminish them. Moreover, on a deeper level, it would be beneficial and constructive to revisit our own axiological “narratives”, to see the riches and core issues that we may have missed and the promises that we have not realised, and to which precisely we are attached to. This is, I believe, a much more fertile attitude than unreflective denial, than the rejection of or the detachment from an entire aspect of our identity and past and heritage, namely our Eastern, spiritual and moral dimension – if we were to return to Lovinescu’s position and to his exhortation I mentioned in the introduction. Our political, cultural and social maturation, as well as our undeniable adaptation or synchronisation to and integration in Europe, have reached an obvious equilibrium that allows us to reflect serenely and critically on how we should delimit the place we wish to occupy between East and West; on how we understand our position – especially from an axiological perspective, the subject of these reflections – “on the edge” of Europe, at the crossroads between East and West. And crucially to reflect on what kind of Europe we wish to belong to, how it could be shaped by the values that represent us. And, above all, on how to turn this position of ours into an asset and a richness – as, in fact, we are and always have been, we know it, *both* in the West and, in the East.

BRIDGING EAST AND WEST: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE QATARI EXPERIENCE

Abdulaziz Mohamed Al-Horr

ABSTRACT: *Qatar's soft power ranges from humanitarian and development assistance to international investments, sports, culture, and organising international conferences and forums. Qatar has a unique mix of soft power, based on a foreign policy based on preventive diplomacy, with a wide level of acceptance regionally and globally. The country benefits from oil and gas revenues that have strengthened Qatar's global role and allowed investments in soft power tools. In this article, we will evaluate the most important soft power tools of Qatar, which have enabled the country to strengthen its global presence in areas such as the economy, investments, and sports. Additionally, these tools can be used to support Romania's efforts to become a cultural and civilisational bridge between the West and the East. Qatar, which has begun to play an important role on the international stage, can support Romania in this regard through soft power tools, both by acting as a mediator in conflict resolution and by promoting development and peace. Moreover, Qatar can support Romania through its privileged position in the energy sector, considering its substantial natural gas reserves.*

Introduction

The term "Soft power" has previously gained widespread prevalence. According to Joseph Nye's *Soft Power* book, there are three main sources of soft power identified by the receiving public and not by the state: civilisation, culture, and values, domestic policies and foreign policies. This concept has evolved in recent years to show other factors contributing to enhancing states' soft power: investments and tourism, the concept of soft power turned to mean not the ability to control but to have influence over others or simply: "Attracting others to what you want." The Soft Power Index added to the evaluation criteria in 2024 the readiness of the respondents to recommend the state as a place to "invest", buy products, work, study and visit as well.

Qatar has a unique mix of soft power, a foreign policy based on preventive diplomacy with a broad global and regional acceptance. It enjoys revenues of oil and gas that have also enhanced Qatar's world role by focusing and investing in Qatar's soft power tools.

In this article, we will review the most important tools of Qatar's soft power that have enabled Qatar to consolidate its global presence in the areas of economy, investment and sport and that can be used to support the efforts of the Republic of Romania to serve as a cultural and civilisational bridge between the West and the East.

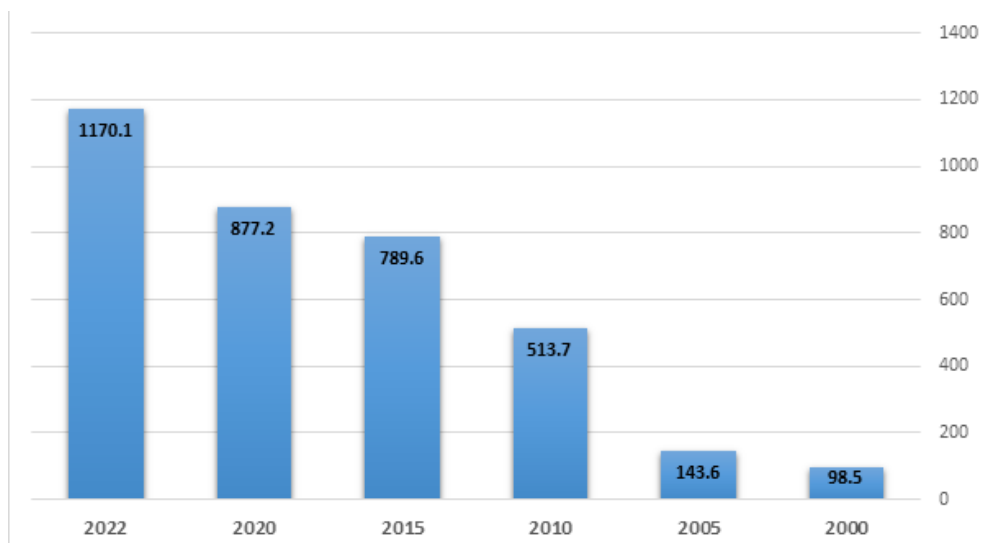
First: Soft Power Tools

Qatar's soft power tools range from humanitarian and development external aid to investments, Qatar Airways, sport and culture to investment in the organisation of international conferences and forums. These tools are detailed below:

1. Development and humanitarian aid

The financial abundance of oil and gas revenues contributed to the establishment of Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), which is the executive arm of Qatar's development diplomacy. It provides support and aid to Arab and other developing countries in strengthening their economies and implementing development programs. This is done through the provision of loans, grants, technical assistance and guarantees. The period (2000-2022) saw Qatar's foreign aid growth as a result of high revenues from gas exports. This contributed to a sore in Qatari development aid to developing countries from US \$ 98.5 million in 2000 to US \$ 1170.1 million in 2022, almost doubling 12 folds.

Figure (1). Development of Qatar's aid and assistance (2000-2022) US \$ million



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of International Cooperation, Foreign Aid Report, various years.

2. Sport

The strategic understanding of sport is what drives Qatar and enhances its soft power and improve its image abroad.

As a result of Qatar's perception of the importance of sport in promoting development

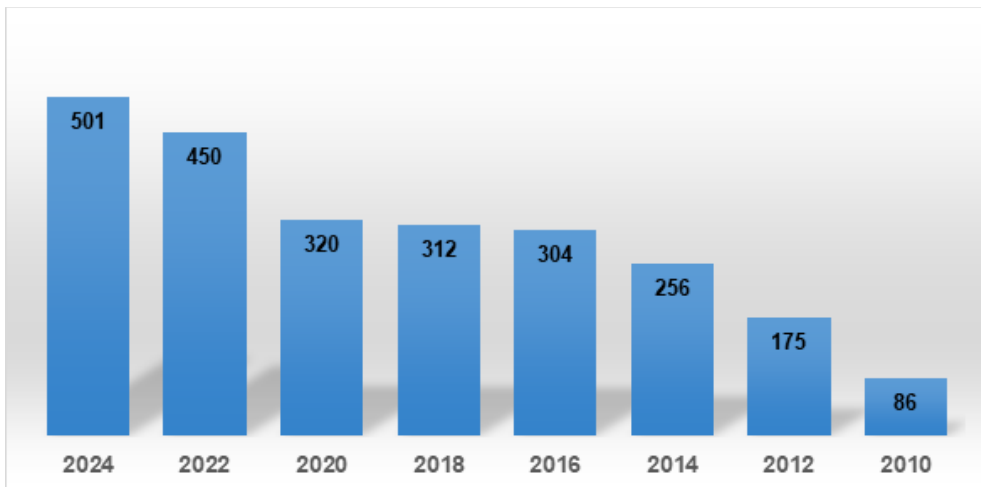
and peace and spreading the values of tolerance and respect. Qatar has become the focus of most international sports federations to hold international competitions due to its high-quality sports infrastructure, expertise and professional management that has qualified it to host about 42 international sporting events. The most important of which were the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the 2019 World Athletics Championships, the 48th Artistic Gymnastics World Championships, the 2015 and 2017 FINA World Cup, 2012 Men's World Open Squash Championship and the 2005 World Weightlifting Championships.

Needless to say, Qatar's impressive success in organising the best FIFA World Football Championship in 2022 is evidence to its effective use of soft power and has positioned Qatar as a hub for major sporting events. It promoted cultural exchange, dialogue and cooperation, thereby enhancing its diplomatic influence on the global scene.

3. Foreign Investments

Qatar Investment Authority is the Sovereign Wealth Fund, it plays a major role in enhancing the soft power of Qatar. Its investments have grown steadily over the past 14 years. The value of Qatar Investment Authority's assets rose from approximately \$ 86 billion in 2010 to \$ 501 billion in 2024.

Figure (2). QIA Assets Growth (2010-2024) USD Billion



Source: Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute: <http://www.swfinstitute.org/sovereign-wealth>.

QIA owns stakes and holdings in key global investment across the world, most notably: the Agricultural Bank of China, 17% in Volkswagen Group and a 9% stake in Glencore. It also owns more than 6% of Barclays Bank and 22% of Sainsbury's.

Qatar Investment Authority opened an office in New York in 2015 to invest \$35 billion in the United States and bought 10% of Empire State Realty Trust, the owner of the famous Empire Estate Building in 2016, as well as Miramax and Rosneft. Also, QIA owns

8.3% of Brookfield Properties, 4.6% share of Royal Dutch Shell PLC and 8% of Swiss UPS. Along with a stake in both Bank of America and TotalEnergies and Tiffany & Co. US Luxury Jewelry, Gifts & Accessories.

According to open sources information, UK accounts for the largest share of Qatar's total overseas investment. Qatar holding a stake in Barclays Bank and The Shard in London, the highest skyscraper in Europe, and 20% of the company that owns Heathrow Airport. Qatar also invests about \$700 million in Qatar Diar's Washington DC Project, Harrods British Store, and 26% of M&S: Marks & Spencer. Qatar also invests about \$5 billion in Shanghai Stock Exchange, owns Paris Saint-Germain F.C., Neo Paris, and 3% of Porsche, and also invests in Grosvenor House Hotels in London and Dream Downtown NYC Hotel, as well as a package of other investments by Katara Hospitality QatariDiar worldwide.

4. Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways, founded two decades ago, continues to contribute to the consolidation of Doha as a world leading financial and tourism hub. Qatar Airways has won the award of the "Best Airline in the World" seven times, an unprecedented achievement. Qatar Airways currently operates to some 170 global destinations, via Doha operational headquarters, Hamad International Airport, which has been recently selected as the "best airport in the Middle East." It was awarded the "Best Airport in the World" award for two consecutive years by Skytrax for 2021 and 2022.

In 2023, Hamad International Airport recorded about 252 thousand airplanes movements, representing an increase of 22% compared to 2022 year. The airport also witnessed a growth in cargo operations exceeding 2.3 million tons of cargo, while the number of airlines was 52 companies during 2023.

Since it was founded and the start of its operations in 2014, Hamad Airport has continued to expand. The cumulative number of passengers has reached approximately 303 million, reflecting a 63% increase in annual passenger numbers since the start of its operations. Hamad International Airport has been ranked among the world's busiest flight routes for 2023 according to a report revealed by the British company OAG, which specialises in flight data.

5. Culture

Revenues from Qatari gas exports helped building cultural diplomacy tools to enrich its cultural heritage and values, through the establishment of cultural institutions to keep pace with the modern world's academic institutions, like Qatar Foundation, which have attracted elite international universities such as Georgetown University, Carnegie Mellon, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth and Northwestern University. In addition to the historical aspect in highlighting Qatari cultural identity globally through Qatar museums under the supervision of international experts and designs by the world's leading artists, which is evident in the premises that have been constructed.

In addition, common cultural years have been initiated with many countries, most recently the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture. Qatar has also been able to promote

cultural understanding and its diplomatic relations with countries around the world. It has also established global awards on the promotion of dialogue of civilisations and international understanding, including Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding, Qatar Global Award for Dialogue Among Civilizations and The Doha International Award for Interfaith Dialogue.

6. Investing in International Conferences and Forums

Qatar has adopted an option to allow the world's intellectuals to come together and consider global issues. This option has made it possible to develop the means of producing a common thinking capable of increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian action. Such intellectual effort is expected to enable people to become actors in this world. These meetings also contribute to bringing different nations, religions and political currents closer together in order to achieve the same goal of collective thinking. Key forums and conferences include Doha Forum, U.S.-Islamic World Forum and Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue.

7. Al Jazeera Media Network

Al Jazeera Network, which was launched in 1996, through its network of direct and indirect relationships with individuals and community-based institutions in the world, Al Jazeera with its various channels, which are broadcast in multiple languages, has been one of the most important tools of Qatari soft power through its multi-language programs.

The Network also holds interactive symposiums on contemporary international issues on various aspects to create opportunities for dialogue and discussion. As well as Al Jazeera Annual Forum, which seeks to set up bridges of communication between diverse cultures and civilisations and exchange experiences and expertise through dialogue, scientific research and workshops in the areas of politics, information, communication, public freedoms and human rights.

Al Jazeera Network website provides an interactive page for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, and focuses on displaying foreign books in English and French, which reflects the culture of the peoples speaking those two languages and enhances their recognition among readers in Arabic.

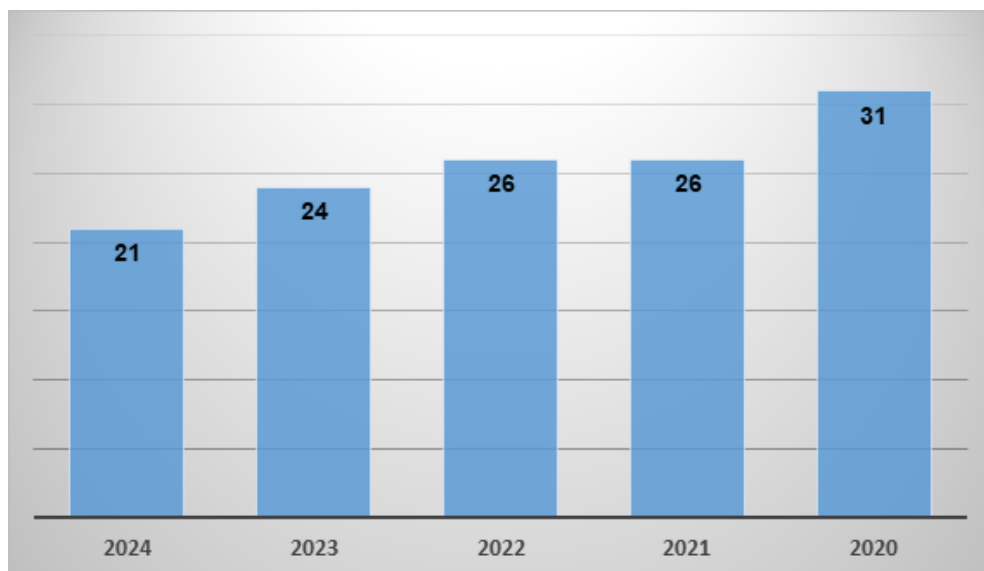
Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies aims at promoting scientific research and disseminate knowledge through the media and communication technology, contributes to promote knowledge, enriching the cultural and media landscape and enhancing strategic thinking in the Arab world. It looks forward to the world's vast prospects.

Second: Qatar's Rank in Global Soft Power Index

Qatar's ranking in Brand Finance Global Strongest Soft Power Index has seen fast growth over the last five years by 10 places from 31st in the 2020 rankings to 21st in the

2024 rankings. The index is based on a package of criteria, most notably attendance and global impact in sectors: business, trade, international relations, culture, heritage, media, communications and science, along with governance applications.

Figure (3). Qatar Ranking in Global Soft Power Index 2020-2024



Source: prepared by the researcher, based on: <https://brandirectory.com/softpower/>.

The index includes 193 countries, which means that Qatar has outperformed (172) countries of the world, most notably: Turkey, Singapore, Austria, Ireland, Portugal, India, Brazil, Malaysia and Greece. While the top 10 in the world soft power included: the USA, Britain, China, Japan, Germany, France, Canada, Switzerland, Italy and the UAE, respectively.

Brand Finance said that Qatar strengthened its soft power in the wake of its impressive 2022 FIFA World Cup, described by FIFA President Gianni Infantino as the best in history, noting that Qatar's momentum of progress at the Global Soft Power Index level has been accelerating. It achieved the rank 31 globally in 2020, and then 26th in the 2021 and 2022 rankings and 24th in the 2023 rankings and finally 21st in the 2024 rankings. The advancement of Qatar's world index ranking reflects the high level of positive image of the country, its strong international reputation and the success of its development model that earns global fame.

Table (1). Qatar Soft Power Global Index Sub-indicators for 2023 and 2024

Indicator	Indicator for 2023		Indicator for 2024	
	Credits	Ranking	Credits	Ranking
Trade and business	7.0	20	5.9	19
International relations	5.7	17	5.4	19
Education and innovation	4.0	23	3.6	24
Culture and heritage	4.0	40	4.3	33
Governance	4.9	20	4.6	23
Media and communication	4.0	19	4.1	22
Sustainable future	5.0	25	5.5	26
People and values	4.4	27	4.1	38
Generosity and giving	6.9	25	--	--
Positive/negative net effect	45.5	27	32.8	32

Source: <https://brandirectory.com/soft-power/nation?Country=168>

Qatar ranks tenth in the World Soft Power Index, which includes all Member States of the United Nations, reflects the outstanding and growing global role of the State of Qatar as an influential and supportive partner for the growth of the global economy and the strengthening of international ties.

Third: the role of Qatari soft power in supporting Romania to be the meeting point between East and West.

The Republic of Romania is one of the European countries with a unique culture, which is the outcome of its geography and historical development. It is defined mainly as the meeting point of three regions: Central and Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. However, it cannot really be included in any of them. After the collapse of communist rule in 1989, a transition began towards a market economy as well as a trend towards Western European countries. It undertook a number of institutional reforms that qualified it to join the European Union, complementing the requirements for entry into the eurozone.

By virtue of its geographical location, Romania is looking forward to its historical legacy to be the meeting point of the West and the East. The State of Qatar, which has come to play a prominent role in the international arena, can support Romania in this aspect through its soft power instruments, both through its role as mediator in conflict resolution and in promoting development and peace. And by its outstanding position in the field of energy with its huge natural gas reserves. In addition to having the capacity of organising global events and forums in various political, economic and cultural spheres.

Some programs and projects can be proposed for possible cooperation between the two sides:

1. Co-organising the ceremony of distributing some of the international awards granted by Qatar in various fields such as Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding, Doha International Award for Interfaith Dialogue and the Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani Anti-Corruption Excellence Award.
2. Given the State of Qatar's great potential and capacity in organising and managing international conferences and events, cooperation and partnership can be jointly achieved with Romania in organising some of these forums. Such as Doha Forum, the Europe and Islamic World Conference, similar to the U.S.-Islamic World Forum and Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue.
3. Establishment of Qatar-Romania Forum for Cultural Dialogue between the West and the East to set up bridges between diverse cultures and civilisations and exchange experiences and expertise through dialogue. This forum to organise joint projects and programs in the areas of dialogue of civilisations and cultures that promote a proper understanding of Western and Islamic civilisations. Thus, promote security and stability in Europe and the Arab world.
4. Exploring the possibilities of establishing giant investment projects in Romania in areas that constitute opportunities for Qatar Investment Authority and thus enhance the Qatar's presence in Europe via Romania.

ROMANIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MIDDLE EAST: A PERSPECTIVE

Flavius Caba-Maria

ABSTRACT: *The current decade is characterised by transitional movements globally and regionally. Nowadays, we are witnessing the beginning of the transition period from a unipolar world under the American aegis to a multipolar world still in formation. In this context, it becomes necessary to know and develop the relationship with geopolitical spheres other than the one established in the last three decades, namely the Euro-American one. It is advisable for Romania to assert a pragmatic and independent position in international relations, without neglecting its Euro-Atlantic status.*

In engaging with the Middle East region, a win-win relationship can emerge, according to bilateral interests. In this context, the paper reiterates that in the past decades, Romania has followed not only its own interests, but also pragmatism in relations with the Near/Middle East space.

In short, Romania's position towards global changes must be one of openness relative to the dynamism of power circles, in the hope that the multipolar balance will lead to the realisation of joint projects of the partner states, without antagonising each other as in the unipolar model.

Geopolitical Significance and Economic Attractiveness

The current decade can be characterised by transitional movements on a global and regional level. We are at the beginning of a transition from unipolarism under American aegis to a still-forming multipolarism. In this context, it becomes necessary to know and develop relationships with other geopolitical spheres beyond the Euro-American one established during the last three decades.

Romania has historically shown both interest and pragmatism in its relationships with the Near/Middle East (a standardised term describing the area of West Asia and North Africa with a predominantly Arab population). Based on these historical considerations and to address the changing world, we must answer the question: *Why would renewing Romania's relations in a concerted manner with this area be attractive?* The answer to this working hypothesis is multifaceted, involving both strategic needs and economic considerations, and also considering that the Western economy is in decline/recession, eroded by the current model and recurring crises.

1. Need for Strategic Diversification

The new multipolar order, connected with the growing role of Asia, is projected as an opportunity for the affirmation of middle powers without a single power space. However,

the emergence of this order is currently full of contradictions, as the Euro-American West wants to maintain its dominant position in defining the World Order while the Euro-Asian East, with its projections in the Global South, seeks to promote a new multipolar order that allows for the affirmation of multiple global power zones. To keep up with new global orientations, Romania should assert an independent position in international relations without neglecting its Euro-Atlantic status.

Engaging with the Middle East can shape a *win-win* relationship. Romania has the opportunity to diversify its external relations, while the Middle East gains a European partner with a sufficiently developed economy and access to important navigation routes, such as the Port of Constanța, one of the largest in Europe, which is currently underutilised. This maritime gateway is on the pan-European Rhine-Danube axis but can also be integrated into China's connectivity plans – the Belt and Road Initiative – and the Middle Corridor.

The internal, regional, and external contexts of the Middle East and North Africa have changed dramatically during the last decade. Although the turbulent social movements specific to the Arab Spring, which led to political and security reactions from 2011 to 2019, have subsided, social, political, and economic discontent remains a disruptive factor in the regional equation. Additionally, the recession resulting from decisions made during the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent increase in energy costs, reflected in production costs and inflation generated by the war in Ukraine (especially in food import-dependent countries), and the exacerbation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Chatham House 2024).

The regional order in the Middle East is undergoing a transition as major external powers like the United States (US), Russia, and China reevaluate their roles while regional states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Israel, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) assert greater independence. Saudi Arabia was among the first regional players to recognise that to serve both its economic and security interests in this changing environment, a diversified set of partnerships is necessary (Carnegie Endowment 2023). The US remains a security partner for the Kingdom, but its predominant position is no longer uncontested. China is the number one trading partner for countries in the region, and Russia is becoming an attractive security provider with its military technology for several states, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Turkey.

Before the Gaza incidents, the regional structure was on the verge of a new order. Before the events of October 7, 2023, following the Israeli-Palestinian clashes, almost all regional states were active participants in the ongoing regional de-escalation and normalisation process manifested through the Abraham Accords, the resolution of the intra-Gulf rift (between Saudi Arabia and Qatar) (Ali Z. 2023), the thawing of Turkey's relations with Gulf states, the restoration of diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the gradual reintegration of Syria into the regional system. Additionally, several regional and international actors, such as Iraq, Iran, and Russia, have offered visions for some form of regional order or security dialogue.

The trilateral declaration signed between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and China in March 2023 paved the way for the restoration of diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran, indicating the emerging regional pragmatism (Cafiero 2024). In this context, with Riyadh's determined leadership continuing efforts to de-escalate regional tensions, China, based

on its cordial ties with Tehran, was perceived by Saudi authorities as the most suitable partner to bring Iran to the negotiating table. However, the agreement does not signal a strategic shift of the Kingdom from West to East but underscores its interests. Saudi Arabia seeks to regain its independence in its foreign policy direction and intends to position itself as a regional power in the connectivity triangle of Europe, Asia, and Africa in the coming years.

The new feature of the evolving strategic landscape in the Middle East is the increased independence of regional states with a greater emphasis on pursuing national interests and showing less deference to the policies of external powers, including the US.

The current conflict in Gaza is a shock to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Besides causing immense human suffering, it exacerbates an already constrained environment due to many internal and external factors, projecting economic disruptions both in the proximate area and on a broader scale. To this respect, there must be noted the economic fragility of Lebanon, severely affected by the economic crisis that began in 2019, and Jordan's fragile economy, along with emerging internal problems in Egypt. Overall, the major factors influencing regional growth in MENA are (i) the impact of regional and international conflicts; (ii) oil production cuts (even though robust activity in the non-oil sector continues to support growth for several major oil-exporting states); and (iii) maintaining strict – centralised policies in many regional economies.

This is a generic context, but addressing specific circumstances can bring benefits to Romania. Therefore, it is recommended that Romania be analysed from the standpoint of its national interests in a profoundly changing world that can pursue the revival of its international relations agenda.

2. Economic Considerations

The Middle East region has influenced European culture and politics for centuries. At the same time, Western powers, initially European ones, specifically Great Britain and France after World War I, and subsequently the United States after World War II, have crucially determined political and economic developments in the Middle East.

This region undoubtedly has a strong geostrategic value. The Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf remain connecting bridges between the Atlantic and the Eurasian continental mass (as well as Africa). They are also crucial in global trade routes. Consequently, China views the region as a key support area in its plan to revive the ancient *Silk Road*. China channels its efforts through the grand infrastructure plan, the *Belt and Road Initiative*, which projects a “going out” policy in contrast to the internally focused growth promoted for several decades. Additionally, the concept of “Peace through Development” is promoted – as opposed to the Western concept of “Peace through Democracy.”

For this reason alone, the Middle East deserves immediate and sustained attention from Romania, as isolating Europe from the terrestrial periphery of the Eurasian zone would be imprudent; meanwhile, the trend for the US is to have a less evident role in the extended region (a trend marked during President B. Obama's tenure). Europe continues to be strongly influenced by changes in the Middle East and North Africa due to their geographical proximity.

In economic terms, the modernisation of the Middle East beyond exclusive dependence on oil and gas brings additional challenges and a focus on Asian economies, particularly China. Currently, a policy of orienting MENA states towards the East/Look East is taking shape, anticipating entering an era of global politics known as the “Asian Century” (Middle East Council on Global Affairs 2023). The lack of alternatives in the Middle East from Western major powers leads to China’s consolidated presence. Conversely, the EU is recommended to promote solutions to maintain on-ground presence and diplomatic valence. The strategic absence of Europe in managing crises and offering crisis exit strategies must be urgently addressed, especially considering the US’s disengagement in the region compared to the Arab Spring period, as highlighted in the US security strategy of 2022 regarding the Middle East compared to the Indo-Pacific area. The growing competition for power is constantly evolving, far from European interests, representing another reason for urgent EU involvement, including Romania.

The European Neighbourhood Policy for the South has generally been a failure compared to the funds injected, for example, the transfer of funds to Iraq through the EU Mission located in Baghdad since 2005 amounts to about 12 billion euros to guarantee stability and humanitarian assistance without bringing proportional benefits (EEAS 2024). Therefore, a strategic agenda is needed for a Europe that acts during crises and stands out in the changing world of the Middle East. These actions manifest in an incipient stage through the specific EU action of managing the refugee and illegal migration crisis.

A stable and prosperous Middle East is more advantageous for Europe, engaging economically rather than working ad-hoc on urgent issues – such as the situation in Gaza – or being a donor to promote liberal causes. Opportunities for cooperation exist, but await to be capitalised on by more European states, not just those with traditional policies oriented towards the Middle East, a goal increasingly difficult to achieve within the bureaucratic structure of the European Commission and high representatives. Economic analyses from PwC Middle East in 2024 support the idea that: “Oil demand plays a key role in influencing growth in oil-exporting countries in the Middle East. However, strong growth in the non-oil sector is expected to counterbalance these effects.” In addition to the immense revenues obtained from oil sales, the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will seek economic growth based on the implementation of expansionary fiscal policies to boost economic diversification efforts. Some non-GCC states are tightening fiscal policies to reduce macroeconomic imbalances (Egypt under pressure from international financial institutions, Turkey applying drastic fiscal policies to avoid the harmful effects of inflation), and the EU can get involved to increase structural impact – through investments, relevant not just for projecting external funds intended for disadvantaged communities. Most likely, tourism will become an expanding industry for the economies of the Persian Gulf region, although geopolitical tensions present some risks. However, that area is characterised by more stability than, for example, the Levant region.

Governments across Europe have followed the US trend of pivoting towards the Indo-Pacific, considered the new center of gravity for the global economy and the region where major strategic issues of the century will be addressed (with a particular emphasis on China). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) can be seen as a move by China on the global chessboard to shape the future balance of power at the international level.

Against the backdrop of the crisis in Ukraine, European security has risen on the list of priorities for European decision-makers, but the subsequent energy crisis has forced them to turn again towards the East. Oil and gas producers in the region – the Persian Gulf, Eastern Mediterranean, and North Africa – represent the best short and medium-term alternative for Europe. Thus, Romania can also pursue an integrated strategy within the European framework of cooperation in a proximate area in both oil and non-oil industries, where technology and innovation will play a key role. Romania, with its IT industry and agricultural resources, already presents opportunities for cooperation with these changing and growing economies. The economic valences in this volatile region bring both benefits and new power alliances.

3. New Alignments: Relations with Regional Powers

The emerging multipolar New World Order cannot be ignored, regardless of the normative force of the Euro-American values that dominated the 20th century. The EU faces tough tests with multiple elections in 2024, the US likewise at the end of the year, and NATO has to respond to mixed – asymmetric, unconventional, and hybrid – challenges. These facets precisely indicate the tensions related to the nascent global structures. In response to these developments, Romania can diversify and intensify its cooperation with a geographically proximate area that is part of larger integrative and evolving projects, such as BRICS+ and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Regional powers have also reconfigured their expectations and associations recently. For example, the Arab world is laying the groundwork for reconciling with the Syrian authorities. The Arab world, which is in the process of restoring relations with the government in Damascus, is driven by the desire to ease tensions and reduce the risk of regional conflicts disrupting their socio-economic agendas. Nevertheless, numerous challenges impede the establishment of peace and a lasting resolution regarding Syria. Changes in regional politics could be seen as deliberate recalibrations aimed at managing conflicts and reducing economic vulnerability. These new connections also require deliberate international support. In this context, Romania can define for itself a significant role, as it is seen as a neutral state in the region, not imposing normative changes. Thus, it could effectively exploit its mediator status.

The Arab states of the Persian Gulf, in particular, consider the removal of regional tensions essential to securing their internal economic objectives and protecting their national security amid a perceived US withdrawal from the region (Dorsey, 2024). The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to accelerating this trend. Saudi Arabia's pursuit of its economic objectives from Vision 2030 (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2024) in foreign policy involves more dialogue and diplomacy with former rivals such as Qatar, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has led the regional effort to resume relations with Syria, which Saudi Arabia followed later. The UAE normalised relations with Syria in 2018 and hosted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in 2022 for his first foreign visit since the war began. Abu Dhabi hosted him a second time in March 2023. A senior Emirati official stated to Crisis Group in July 2022 that the UAE focused on diplomacy and building regional economic connectivity with both Syria and Iran, despite the challenges posed by Western sanctions. Only at the beginning of 2023

did Saudi Arabia publicly position itself as the leader of normalisation efforts with Syria. In May 2023, members of the Arab League voted in support of Syria's return to the Arab League (The Crisis Group, 2023), Riyadh resumed diplomatic relations with Damascus, and the Syrian president attended the Arab League meeting convened in the Saudi capital the same year (The Crisis Group, 2023). Although the Middle East region includes states with significant economic powers in oil and gas production, with the general trend of reducing dependence on oil, authorities are promoting strategies for economic diversification to generate a new era of growth in the medium and long term. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are among the largest economies in the region.

Hereinafter, we will highlight the cooperation possibilities for Romania in this dynamic current context, also taking into account cultural knowledge and cordial relations with regional states throughout the 20th century.

Relationship with Turkey can develop in multiple areas. There is already a strategic partnership that can transform into a consolidated partnership, with both strategic and economic concerns in the Balkans and Black Sea regions. The foundations of cooperation already exist, including official meetings, so deepening relations can focus on prioritising segments for Romania and Turkey and extending relationships in the Balkans and Black Sea area.

Relationship with Iran - Official relations with Iran can be eased, given regional developments and past cordial relations with this state, which transcend ideological or religious orientations. After normalising relations between Iran and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf (especially with Saudi Arabia) and good cooperation with Turkey, Iran finds itself blocked in its relationship with the West due to opposition from the US (and Israel), thus unable to achieve the desired economic status corresponding to its vast natural resources. Romania can maintain relations with both Israel and Iran, following the model promoted by China - focused on economic benefits - to mediate stability in the East, a context that will increase economic gains. The EU itself considers the energy route from Iran via Europe a competitive solution in the current oil and oil derivatives market.

Relationship with Saudi Arabia - The relationship with Saudi Arabia is not being utilised to its full potential by Romania, lacking a complete understanding of its role as a leading regional player, currently re-conceptualising its political and economic visions. Closer ties with Saudi Arabia would allow Romania to benefit from its strengths in the global energy and capital markets and integrate into political/diplomatic processes that will add value to the Middle East. Saudi Arabia has an ambitious economic plan in Vision 2030 (PwC Report) where plans for economic integration and investments, especially in the hi-tech sector, are accepted.

Relationship with Egypt - Egypt represents not only a regional hub but also a relevant voice of the Arab world - a country with a long history and culture. Currently, the authorities in Cairo balance power relations with the West, East, and Africa (as part of the Global South). A closer relationship with this pivotal state represents a strategic positioning in a changing world. Moreover, with its large population and limited agricultural resources in the Nile basin, Egypt needs imports of agricultural products and technology for managing drinking and wastewater. Romania can capitalise on economic exchanges and expertise in the educational field, alongside strategic involvement.

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NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU, GEORGES POMPIDOU AND ROMANIA – FRANCE RELATIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF 1970'S

Ovidiu Bozgan

ABSTRACT: *In 1972, Nicolae Ceaușescu sent a message to President Georges Pompidou to relaunch Romanian-French relations and solve some problems in which France played an important role. This political act was occasioned by his African tour and the possibilities that Ceaușescu believed he had discovered for profitable bilateral cooperation. The idea was bold even for the Detente years. Unsurprisingly, the French side declined the proposal, considering that at least French-speaking Africa was a region reserved for economic and French action. On the occasion of the same tour, Ceaușescu conferred with the Egyptian president. Starting from here and from the Israeli prime minister's visit to Romania, the Romanian leader became increasingly involved in the process that would lead to the reconciliation between Egypt and Israel a few years later, a process in which he would have liked to attract France as well. Finally, one problem, which actually had the appearance of litigation, was Romania's access to the system of generalised preferences to which, to the surprise of the Bucharest communist regime, France was opposed. For the critical contextualisation of the Ceaușescu-Pompidou correspondence, I favoured the use of French diplomatic archives.*

In 1972, there was an exchange of messages between Nicolae Ceaușescu, the initiator, and Georges Pompidou. This practice was established by mutual agreement during the visit of the communist leader to France in June 1970. From the French perspective, these messages - published in the appendix - were expected to be motivated by the emergence of significant interest developments for both parties. From Ceaușescu's perspective, who was a fervent supporter of personalised bilateral relations, this type of correspondence was an instrument for reviving bilateral relations, in this case, the Franco-Romanian ones, which seemed, at least from Bucharest, to be affected by a certain lack of interest, shrouded in routine. Consequently, it is necessary to assess the state of bilateral relations and the ongoing issues. For the elaboration of this text, I chose the French perspective, which required favouring unique diplomatic sources from France.

Bilateral relations are based on a whole set of agreements, conventions, protocols, etc., which try to cover all the areas that may interest the partners and prevent unwanted disputes. Obviously, these diplomatic instruments, for the period under discussion, are not neutral towards the political-ideological conditions and have some specific notes corresponding to the typologies of the two parties. In the case of relations with an important Western state, the construction of this device starts from

the regulation of financial disputes, the so-called “arierate” in the jargon of Romanian diplomacy, which originated from the abusive behaviour of the communist regime at the beginning of the Cold War. With France, the regulation of financial issues was made on February 9, 1959, an act that unblocked the process of negotiation and signing of bilateral relations instruments. Thus, the enumeration is selective: the scientific and technical collaboration arrangement (July 31, 1964), the cultural agreement (January 11, 1965), the scientific and technical collaboration arrangement between the Superior Council of Agriculture and the French Ministry of Agriculture (October 4, 1965), road agreement (March 1966), film co-production and exchange agreement (April 22, 1966), nuclear energy cooperation arrangement (December 15, 1966), economic and industrial cooperation agreement (February 2, 1967), veterinary convention (February 1967), collaboration protocol between RTVR and ORTF (March 30, 1968), consular convention (May 18, 1968), collaboration agreement in the field of informatics (December 4, 1968), agreement for the establishment of the joint government commission for economic, scientific and technical cooperation (January 1969), agreement on the creation of libraries (June 25, 1969), etc.

The Bucharest regime was primarily interested in the economic and financial aspects of Franco-Romanian relations, and France’s role in Romania’s industrialisation was far from negligible. From a synthesis material prepared by French diplomats, it follows that between 1959 and 1971 (the first half), the contracts concluded by French companies in Romania amounted to 2.129 billion francs, the peak being in 1966 when the Renault contract was concluded for the construction of the car factory in Pitesti.

Commercial relations were given particular attention in Bucharest, with constant interest in their amplification. Regarding the values of commercial exchanges, a spectacular evolution can be noted, which went from 358 million francs in both directions in 1965 to 962 million in 1971 and to 1030 million francs in the first 11 months of 1972. Unfortunately for the Romanian side, the trade balance was constantly in deficit; in 1972, the deficit reached 230 million francs¹. In the field of cooperation, Romania won France’s contest in directions that can be considered strategic and “sensitive”. Notorious is the cooperation in the automobile industry in which the Renault state directorate was involved. At the beginning of the 1970s, there was the question of manufacturing a small car in Romania, with Renault, Honda, FIAT and British Leyland competing. In 1970, the first contract was signed with SNIAS to manufacture the Alouette III helicopter, and later, the company switched to manufacturing the SA-300 Puma helicopter. Romania owes a lot to France regarding the IT industry, obtaining from CII the license to manufacture the IRIS-50 computer, known on the banks of Dâmbovița as Felix-256². Cooperation with France has also known less traditional forms, such as joint-stock companies with headquarters in France, such as DECOFRA, created in 1967 for the sale of Romanian chemical products, SOTECOM, created in 1968, focused on the sale of machine tools and to other products of the Romanian machine construction industry, DACOMEX, created in 1972, which is not related to any French company but to

¹ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (hereafter AMAEF), Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3533, Note, Relations économiques franco-roumaines, Paris, le 19 janvier 1973.

² *Ibidem*.

the company of Iosif Constantin Drăgan, but has its headquarters in Paris; ROVALTEX, created in 1973 for the valorisation of light industry products³. Things did not stop at this level because the possibility of Franco-Romanian cooperation on third markets emerged. In January 1970, on the occasion of the 2nd session of the Governmental Mixed Commission, led by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Manea Mănescu, a Franco-Romanian cooperation committee was created which met for the first time in Paris in May 1970, without notable results. The next session was scheduled for November 1972, but it was postponed at the request of the French side after the statements made by Ceaușescu during his African tour⁴, which will be discussed below. The main person responsible for this postponement was Giscard d'Estaing, who was also Minister of Economy and Finance.

From the perspective of political-diplomatic relations, the situation was at least good. After the Ceaușescu couple visited France in June 1970, Corneliu Mănescu's official visit to France followed in November 1971, when he was received by President Pompidou and had consistent conversations with his counterpart Maurice Schumann. Among the topics addressed by the two was the issue of the European Conference for Security, the conflict in the Middle East and above all, a problem that came to obsess the communist authorities in Bucharest: Romania's access to the benefit of the generalised preferences system⁵.

The event, but also a very opportune pretext, that generated Nicolae Ceaușescu's message is his tour in Africa between March 11 and April 6, 1972. On April 18, 1972, the day when the new French ambassador, Francis Levasseur, presented the letters of accreditation, the Romanian leader commented on his long African trip, proposed cooperation between the two countries to achieve economic goals on this continent and informed him that he had sent a personal message to President Pompidou. The message was handed by George Macoveșcu, first deputy of the foreign minister, on the occasion of his presence in Paris for consultations between the two foreign ministries; on April 21, he was granted an audience with the French president⁶.

As early as 1971, the French ambassador Pierre Pelen noted in a detailed report Romania's interest in South Saharan Africa, a primary economic interest which targeted the raw materials of this continent for a booming industry to reduce dependence on raw materials imported from the USSR. Of course, Romania also sought outlets for its mediocre products, which were generally rejected by Western markets. "Au fond", remarked the ambassador brutally, "la jeune puissance industrielle roumaine ne cherche

³ For all this, see the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter AMAE), Fond Telegramme ieșite Paris, noiembrie-decembrie 1975, Telegrama 057297, 30 decembrie, Constantin Flitan către Direcția economică, ff. 364-371; idem, Telegrama 057298, 30 decembrie 1975, Constantin Flitan către Direcția Economică, ff. 371-375; idem, Telegrama 057299, 30 decembrie 1975, Constantin Flitan către Direcția economică, ff. 376-379.

⁴ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3532, Note pour M. Brunet, Comité mixte franco-roumain de cooperation sur les pays tiers, Paris, le 27 juin 1972. It is interesting to note that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had a different agenda, although it accepted the exclusion of Francophone Africa from cooperation with Romania, partially disapproved of Giscard d'Estaing's conduct, in the following terms: «L'attitude négative du Ministre des Finances apparaît de plus quelque peu inopportune, alors que les Roumains sont particulier sensibilisés en raison du déficit important de leurs échanges avec nous et de la position que nous avons prise à l'égard de leur demande concernant les préférences généralisées».

⁵ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3550, Télégramme circulaire no 406, Paris, le 20 novembre 1971.

⁶ AMAE, Problema 220/1972/Franța, Consultări între ministerele de externe, Raport privind consultările între ministerele de externe ale RSR și Franței, Paris, 18-21 aprilie 1972, ff. 162-176.

rien d'autre que l'établissement à son profit de relations commerciales classiques qu'on pourrait même être tenté de rapprocher des échanges de type colonial"⁷. Somewhat paradoxically, Levasseur's report from the following year, analysing President Ceaușescu's recently concluded tour, reaches different conclusions. For Levasseur, the importance of the tour was political and symbolic – "il a, de toute évidence, recherché, avant tout, pour son pays un profit politique plus encore qu'économique" – a prestigious operation to be part of the original policy that the Bucharest regime wanted to take it to the international stage. Romania did not neglect the support these states could have given Romania in international organisations. On the other hand, Romania sought to arrogate its quality as a mentor in the Third World and a mediator between industrialised and developing countries. Economic reasons are not ignored, but they are on the back burner for now. Although with limited resources, Romania opened credit lines – the most important for Algeria of 100 million dollars and for Egypt of 130 million dollars in order to purchase Romanian industrial equipment – and concluded some collaboration agreements in fields in which the Romanian side possessed skills (geological surveys, construction materials, agriculture, etc.)⁸. It should be noted that this tour also included return visits to the visits of Mobutu, President of Zaire, Bokassa, President of the Central African Republic, and sinister figures of contemporary Africa, both made in 1970.

After his return from the African tour, Ceaușescu was very optimistic about the economic possibilities that Africa offered, and it was one of the moments that contributed to the consolidation of the economic strategy that led to the bankruptcy of the regime. Now, in 1972, Ceaușescu was exuberant and had a conversation on April 10 with André Bettencourt, Minister of Planning and Territorial Development – perhaps better known as the head of the L'Oréal group – about the prospects for Romanian-French cooperation in Africa⁹. The Romanian leader also referred to his talks in Egypt, which were directly related to the conflict in the Middle East, and informed the French minister of his intention to send a message to Pompidou¹⁰. France's intimate desire was to reserve French-speaking Africa to Paris's economic and political actions, which, in return, would have been willing to cooperate in those countries where Romania was better placed.

Finally, it is worth noting an important observation of the French diplomats stationed in Bucharest about the recrudescence of the cult of personality motivated

⁷ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3546, Pierre Pelen, Ambassadeur de France en Roumanie à Son Excellence Monsieur Maurice Schumann, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, La Roumanie et l'Afrique, Bucarest, le 17 juin 1971. Pelen's report documents Romania's relations with each African state with which it had established diplomatic relations.

⁸ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3546, Francis Levasseur, Ambassadeur de France en Roumanie à Son Excellence Monsieur Maurice Schumann, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Voyage de M. Ceausescu en Afrique, Bucarest, le 18 avril 1972. In July 1972, the French ambassador reflected on the results of the tour undertaken by Ceaușescu, insisting on its political effects: "Les résultats économiques correspondent-ils aux efforts déployés ? On peut encore en douter. Sur le plan politique, la Roumanie cherche à se constituer un capital de sympathie en Afrique et semble y réussir", AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3546, Francis Levasseur, Ambassadeur de France en Roumanie à Son Excellence Monsieur Maurice Schumann, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Bucarest, le 24 juillet 1972.

⁹ The Romanian leader gave as an example the railway that would connect Bangui to the ocean, likely to be built jointly. France, in fact, had previously given up on this project due to high costs. Levasseur concluded, about this cooperation, that "l'on peut imaginer que nous serions les payeurs et les Roumains les exécutants", AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3548, Télégramme, Bucarest, le 19 avril 1972.

¹⁰ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3551, Télégramme, Bucarest, le 11 avril 1972.

by Ceaușescu's international policy. This phenomenon had already been recorded after his return from China in 1971.

In his message to the French president, Ceaușescu advances a collaboration proposal to resolve the conflict in the Middle East, starting from his visit to Egypt and the talks with President Sadat. Egypt was the last stop on his African tour and was different from the other African destinations in terms of the importance given to the conflict in this area. Romania had a heretical position in relation to the Soviet bloc in 1967, and its credit in the Arab-Muslim world was damaged. The elevation of the Romanian and Israeli diplomatic representations to embassy level on August 17, 1969, was a gesture that further irritated the Arab states, with Syria and Sudan breaking diplomatic relations with Romania and Iraq and Egypt recalling their ambassadors from Bucharest. So, for Romania, there was the problem of restoring credibility in the Arab states¹¹ and subsequently groping for the possibility of intervening in resolving the conflict. French diplomats in Cairo conscientiously analysed bilateral relations and positioning towards the conflict in the region. Romania, as mentioned, had opened a credit line of 100 million dollars for the realisation of some industrial projects (the main project was the creation of a truck factory) and another line of 30 million for the purchase of some Romanian industrial equipment. On the occasion of the visit, several agreements were signed. As a sign of goodwill towards Romania, Sadat accepted the conclusion of an agreement between the Arab Socialist Union, the only party in Egypt with no less than the only PCR. In the Middle East issue, Ceaușescu had made statements that satisfied the Egyptian side, primarily the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories, according to Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967. In Egypt, Ceaușescu also met with Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO. In conclusion, both parties could consider themselves satisfied with the results of the visit¹².

The balancing act interpreted by Romanian diplomacy in the Middle East problem was a success, considering the stakes for the Romanian state. Maintaining very good relations with Israel was justified, among other things, by the use of the Eilat-Ashkelon oil pipeline for the transit of Iranian oil to the country. On the other hand, the Arab states could become sources of raw materials, primarily hydrocarbons, and could represent important votes in international bodies in favour of Romania. But sometimes, this meticulous concern for maintaining balance can lead to inconclusive results. According to a note drawn up at the Quai d'Orsay, Romania was not yet credible in the Arab world "tandis qu'Israël ne leur manifeste qu'une consideration relative"¹³. This policy of balance is commented upon even after Ceaușescu's return from the African tour, with the clarity specific to French diplomacy, by the new ambassador Levasseur, well documented on his mission country: "L'aspiration à une diplomatie universelle et indépendante, l'ouverture vers l'Occident, et particulièrement vers les Etats-Unis, une

¹¹ Representing Romania at Nasser's funeral in 1970, Maurer declared that his country was ready, without conditions, to restore normal relations with the states that were vexed by the August 1969 act. AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3543, Note, La Roumanie et la crise du Moyen-Orient, Paris, le 21 janvier 1971.

¹² AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3544, Bernard Dejean de La Batie, chargés d'affaires a.i. de France en République Arabe d'Egypte à Son Excellence Monsieur Maurice Schumann, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Le Caire, le 15 avril 1972.

¹³ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3544, Note, La Roumanie et le conflit du Proche-Orient, Paris, le 9 novembre 1971.

certaine soif de technologie, expliquent sans doute que la Roumanie se soit refusée à rompre avec Israël. Parallèlement, son hostilité affirmée à toute solution de force, la solidarité anti-impérialiste, les exigences de l'unité du camp socialiste, la nécessité enfin, de diversifier ses approvisionnements en matières premières, lui commandent de ménager soigneusement les pays arabes¹⁴. Levasseur recognised that Ceaușescu wanted the French authorities to be informed about the steps taken in the complex issue of the Middle East¹⁵.

Ceaușescu's message to Pompidou was sent before one of the most spectacular events related to the Middle East, when the Israeli prime minister's visit to Romania took place. The news about Golda Meir's visit to Romania caused an unpleasant surprise in Egypt, but the French embassy in Cairo believed that Sadat had inadvertently created, during the talks, Ceaușescu's impression that he could get involved in unlocking the diplomatic impasse¹⁶.

Prime Minister Golda Meir's visit to Romania occurred between May 4-7, 1972. For the Bucharest regime, it has double significance: to keep a balance between the parties in conflict and to be informed, from the most authoritative source, of the positions of the State of Israel in the regional conflict. Israel, for its part, quickly accepted this visit and was interested in the results of Ceaușescu's visit to President Sadat. The succession of events, as well as the impressions of diplomatic circles, more or less justified, about Romania's involvement in the opening of peace negotiations in Vietnam and the start of the dialogue between the USA and communist China, by cumulative effect, have thoroughly accredited Romania in the position of mediator in the Middle East. Commenting on Golda Meir's visit, Ambassador Levasseur concluded that "il s'agitait pour eux (Romanians - n.n.) de s'efforcer de demeurer l'intermédiaire de confiance auquel les deux parties porteuint éventuellement faire appel"¹⁷. Ceaușescu's offer to cooperate with France for a political solution in the Middle East had very little chance of being accepted - Pompidou's answer is clear in this regard - due to the great difference in approach to the subject, France being the promoter of a solution based on the permanent members of the Security Council - USA, USSR, Great Britain and France.

I mentioned above the problem of the system of generalised tariff preferences for which the communist Bucharest regime had developed a maniacal passion¹⁸. The Generalised System of Preferences was conceived during the GATT debates. In essence, it was an innovation in international trade based on the principles of reciprocity and the most favoured nation clause until then. This system involves the total exemption from

¹⁴ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3544, Télégramme no 332-334, Bucarest, le 15 avril 1972.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, Télégramme 382-385, La Roumanie et le Proche-Orient, Bucarest, le 22 avril 1972.

¹⁶ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3544, Télégramme 741-744, Le Caire, le 26 avril 1972. During the Franco-Romanian consultations in Paris, Macovescu told Hervé Alphand, the secretary general of the foreign ministry, that Ceaușescu's talks with Sadat indicated a chance to settle this conflict politically. In addition, before arriving in Paris, Macovescu had been to Jerusalem, where he formed his conviction that Israel wanted a political solution through direct negotiations with the Arab states, see AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3544, Circulaire 204, Consultations franco-roumaines. Moyen-Orient, Paris, le 24 avril 1972.

¹⁷ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3544, Francis Levasseur, Ambassadeur de France en Roumanie à Son Excellence Monsieur Maurice Schumann, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Visite officielle en Roumanie de Madame Golda Meir, Bucarest, le 17 mai 1972.

¹⁸ For a well-documented analysis of this issue, see Elena Dragomir, *O relație asimetrică. România și Piața Comună (1957-1989)*, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, Târgoviște, 2022, vol. 1, p. 167-202. Volume 2 contains a series of documents of interest to the subject extracted from the Romanian archives.

customs duties or their reduction below the level that would result from the application of the most favoured nation clause for finished and semi-finished products originating in developing countries. The system is unilateral, non-negotiable and does not imply reciprocity on the part of the beneficiaries. The purpose of this system was to facilitate the process of industrialisation in developing countries.

Romania has shown interest in this system since the fall of 1970 when the UNCTAD Geneva meeting took place and formally requested to be a beneficiary. On 30 March 1971, the Ministerial Council of the EEC decided to apply this system, starting on 1 July 1971, with the beneficiaries being the members of the Group of 77, including Yugoslavia. Under these conditions, Romania continued its efforts and on January 30, 1972, Cornel Burtică, the Minister of Foreign Trade, sent a letter to Gaston Thorn¹⁹, an important Luxembourg politician, future president of the European Commission between 1981-1985, then the acting president of the Council, requesting the granting of generalised preferences to Romania. Thus, a situation emerged from the theatre of the absurd, in which internally, the regime exalted the achievements of the Romanian economy, and externally, the same regime sought to convince its Western interlocutors that Romania was a developing country. If some CEE members such as Italy or FRG support the Romanian candidacy, France was the main opponent²⁰, considering that Romania, considering the progress of industrialisation, does not qualify for the status of a developing country. Stunned by this refusal, Romania will lead a real campaign in which the embassy from Paris, the ministry of foreign affairs, the government and its leader Maurer and, of course, Ceaușescu, who mentioned this issue in his message, were implied.

At the Paris consultations in April 1972, the issue was debated between Macovescu and Alphand²¹. The Romanian ambassador in Paris, Constantin Flitan, was active in this regard and met with the French officials involved in this issue, especially after June 6, 1972, when, at the Ministerial Council in Luxembourg, Maurice Schumann again opposed the granting of the system of generalised preferences for Romania. Romania invokes the fact that, not being the beneficiary of this system, its losses would amount to 30 million dollars annually. There were also some hints regarding the change in attitude towards France, primarily in the economic field, basically, a camouflaged threat of reprisals, as it was recognised at the Quai d'Orsay that "le risque serait grand de voir la Roumanie conduite à une révision fondamentale de ses rapports avec la France"²².

Romania's formal request to be a beneficiary of the system of generalised preferences had not gone unanswered because a variant had been developed but contained many restrictions. On the other hand, the EEC members could not ignore that Romania had addressed the community bodies, implicitly recognising the EEC, unlike the rest of the Soviet bloc. For this reason, the Bucharest regime rejected the suggestion of France and the other community members that Romania conclude an

¹⁹ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3538, Note, Roumanie et les préférences généralisées, Paris, le 24 avril 1972.

²⁰ France also opposed the candidacies of Spain and Israel.

²¹ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3550, Circulaire 201, Consultations franco-roumaines. Préférences généralisées, Paris, le 24 avril 1972.

²² AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3548, Note, Paris, le 16 juin 1972.

agreement with the EEC, which would certainly have provoked the irritation of the USSR²³.

In fact, President Pompidou's response concerning the system of generalised preferences, as he informed Flitan at the reception at the Elysée on the 14 of July, was that the solution must be sought outside the system of generalised preferences.

Even under the conditions of the French president's refusal, Romania did not disarm and continued to insist. In the days of September 11-13, 1972, a Romanian delegation tried to convince its interlocutors from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs - although the most staunch opponents were the Ministries of Economy and Finance and Industry - that Romania is a developing country, that an agreement between Romania and the CEE is unacceptable and French inflexibility could lead to changes in Romanian economic policy towards France²⁴. In October 1972, Macovescu summoned Levasseur and used the political argument, which probably should have been invoked earlier and which annihilated the French economic argumentation: "J'ai l'impression, a conclu M. Macovescu, que l'aspect politique de notre demande n'a peut-être pas été bien compris à Paris"²⁵. For the time being, France's refusal was also maintained at the Ministerial Council of November 6-7, 1972, but the following year changed Paris's position. At the session of the Ministerial Council of June 4-5, 1973, Malta, Turkey and Romania were admitted to the benefit of the system of generalised preferences, which was to apply from January 1, 1974²⁶. The final stage of this race to obtain access to generalised preferences was consumed on December 17-18 when the Council of Ministers adopted the offer elaborated by the European Commission for Romania, based on the lists of products advanced by the latter (as was normal, it did not there was no negotiation, being a unilateral decision).

Returning to the Ceaușescu-Pompidou correspondence, even if we anticipated the outcome of the file regarding the generalised preferences, Ambassador Levasseur presented Ceaușescu with the French president's answer. Ceaușescu, disappointed, flanked by Macovescu, discussed in particular the problem of generalised preferences, insisting on the fact that Romania is a developing country and will remain so for another 20-30 years, anticipating, without wanting it, the failure of his policy and alluding to Soviet pressures for the bloc's members not to negotiate directly with the EEC, transferring this mission to the CAER²⁷.

Overall, President Pompidou's response, in a tone of unmistakable courtesy, to the issues dealt with in the previous pages - cooperation in Africa and the resolution of the conflict in the Middle East, admission to the system of generalised preferences - was not encouraging and there was no trace of concrete commitment that the Romanian side will take advantage of. According to the assessment of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the only brighter point is the reaction to the invitation to visit Romania, which "marks a more obvious interest than in the past towards the continuation of

²³ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3538, Note pour le ministre. La Roumanie et préférences généralisées, Paris, le 16 juin 1972 ; *Ibidem*, Télégramme 160-165, Paris, le 21 juin 1972.

²⁴ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3538, Télégramme, Roumanie et préférences généralisées, Paris, le 12 septembre 1972.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, Télégramme 1042-1045, Bucarest, le 31 octobre 1972.

²⁶ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, carton 3547, Télégramme, Delfra-Bruxelles, le 6 juin 1973.

²⁷ AMAEF, Europe 1971-1975, Roumanie, carton 3547, Télégramme, Bucarest, le 24 juillet 1972.

high-level contacts²⁸. In reality, this assessment was too optimistic. Pompidou, unlike his predecessor, privileged the dialogue with the USSR and never visited any country of the communist East²⁹, considering that this region must remain in the sphere of Soviet influence, as such, not encouraging semi-independent attitudes towards Moscow.

APPENDIX

The Socialist Republic of Romania
State Council
President

Bucharest, 18 April 1972

His Excellency, Mr Georges Pompidou, President of the French Republic

According to our agreement to exchange information and opinions whenever the need arises, or matters of particular interest arise, I consider it necessary to address this personal message to you.

I am happy to note the positive evolution of Romanian-French relations in all fields following the fruitful talks we had together in Paris, and I express my conviction that this happy trend will be further consolidated in the interest of both countries and peoples. I want to highlight, in this sense, the importance of contact between the official representatives of the two states at different levels for better knowledge and mutual understanding. In our opinion, there are real possibilities for developing bilateral economic exchanges in areas of mutual interest by carrying out new cooperation actions in production, including in third markets. In connection with this, it would be particularly important for France to grant generalised customs preferences for Romania and support this requirement within the European Economic Community.

In the spirit of the good relations established between Romania and France, I would like to share with you some conclusions resulting from the analysis of the official visits I made between March 11 and April 6 in Algeria, the Central African Republic, the People's Republic of Congo, Zaire, Zambia, Tanzania, Sudan, and Egypt.

I would like to mention from the beginning that the welcome I received everywhere, both from the officials and the population, was particularly friendly and cordial. The conversations held and the concrete results with which the eight visits ended are all positive.

The joint statements that we signed with the leaders of these states broadly reflect the topics of the discussions and the content of the agreements concluded to expand and deepen bilateral collaboration in various fields.

I noted the African leaders' concern, which we fully share, to act to ensure the progress of the respective peoples in all areas and strengthen their political independence from the state. The need for stronger international action to reduce existing gaps,

²⁸ AMAE, Problema 20/1972, Franța, Planuri de muncă, rapoarte (...), Nota, Referitor: răspunsul președintelui Franței la mesajul adresat de președintele Consiliului de Stat, Nicolae Ceaușescu, 19 august 1972, ff. 143-144.

²⁹ Lavinia Betea erroneously states that Georges Pompidou visited Romania (Ceaușescu și epoca sa, Corint Publishing House, București, 2021, p. 507).

eliminate discrimination and artificial barriers, improve terms of trade, and increase the effectiveness of support from more advanced countries was also stressed everywhere. From our side, the importance of each country's national efforts for their economic and social progress has been advanced, but we have highlighted, at the same time, the need for African countries to develop broad relations of cooperation among themselves, as well as with other countries of the world. The visits confirmed our appreciation that African countries have great material and human potential for accelerated economic development and that there is a desire to use more widely the advantages of international collaboration to capitalise on their own resources by achieving large-scale objectives, especially in the field of transports, hydrotechnical constructions, mines, oil, etc.

In our opinion, the construction of such objectives that would provide the opportunity for the participation of several states on a mutually beneficial basis claims to satisfy the interests of all participants and is called to favour, at the same time, the development of the national economies of African countries. In this context, I believe there is the possibility of engaging in cooperative actions between Romania and France, between Romanian and French companies to achieve some economic objectives in African countries in areas of common interest and under conditions that would be agreed upon. I am addressing you with the proposal that the authorised representatives of our countries examine this matter concretely and establish practical ways of working.

Concerning the international issues discussed, I observed a deeper understanding by African leaders of the need to promote a dynamic and active foreign policy that considers the great changes and mutations that have taken place and continue to take place in international life.

From the discussions with the leaders of the visited states and the leaders of the liberation movements, I concluded that the preoccupation with the liquidation of the remnants of colonial rule in Africa, especially with regard to the Portuguese colonies, has increased in intensity, with the real prospect of reaching the conquest independence of those peoples in the next few years.

We had long discussions on the issue of the Near East, especially with the leaders of the Arab countries. Following these discussions, I noticed a real concern related to the difficulties created by the current state of immobility and the fact that no progress is being made toward a political solution. Of course, the situation remains complex, with the rigidity of Israel's position contributing to it. In our conversations, I promoted the idea of a political solution and emphasised the need to activate efforts in this regard. I have had the satisfaction of finding that this point of view is received with receptivity. I believe that at the moment, it is necessary to initiate new actions at the international level to support a political, even partial, settlement of the conflict. We would be happy if Romania and France could contribute to realising this desire.

I also noted the more pronounced concern about the negative influence that the tension in the Near East exerts on the evolution of the situation in the Mediterranean basin and its possible repercussions on the overall issue of European security.

Of course, during the talks with the African leaders, the end of the war in Indochina, disarmament, strengthening the role and effectiveness of the UN and other current international issues were examined.

During the visits, I noticed the concern to ensure strict compliance with the fundamental norms of equality of rights, independence and sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs—principles that are required to be fully and permanently applied by all states in their external relations as a premise of maintaining and strengthening international peace and security.

These are the general reflections my trip to Africa gave me. I focused more on the common elements, which have generalising value, but of course, each country has its specific individuality and interests, which must be taken into account.

I want to use this opportunity to refer to an issue close to us as European countries—the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Recently, progress has been made in this direction, which is also favoured by the general positive evolution of inter-European relations. The phase of active consultations is approaching in a multilateral framework to concretely approach and agree on some essential aspects of the preparation and organisation of the conference. Under these conditions, I am convinced that the increased efforts of Romania and France, their close cooperation, can make a significant contribution to the achievement in the shortest possible time of positive understandings between all interested states regarding the practical ways of convening and holding the European conference, as well as to future actions in the direction of building security and collaboration in Europe.

Since our meeting, Mr. President, important events and changes have taken place in Europe and the world, with lasting repercussions on the evolution of the international situation. I appreciate that, under these circumstances, continuing our direct discussions would be particularly helpful. I would therefore be happy if your visit to Romania, according to the understanding reached on the occasion of my visit to France, would take place in a mutually acceptable period. We are waiting for you with pleasure and we are convinced that your coming to Bucharest, the talks we will have, will mark a new important stage in the development of friendly relations between our countries and peoples.

Mrs. Elena Ceaușescu joins me in conveying our sincere wishes for health and personal happiness to you and Mrs. Pompidou.

With high regards,
Nicolae Ceaușescu

Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Issue 220/1972/France, Consultations between Foreign Ministries, ff. 147-150.

Président de la République

Paris, le 19 juillet 1972

Monsieur le Président,

Je vous remercie du message que vous avez bien voulu me faire parvenir le 24 avril dernier en vue de m'exposer vos vues sur un certain nombre de problèmes auxquels votre gouvernement et le mien portent le même intérêt.

J'attache comme vous la plus grande importance à tout ce qui concerne les rapports existants entre la France et la Roumanie. Je ne puis donc que me féliciter des progrès déjà accomplis par nos échanges dans divers domaines.

Votre activité à la tête de la diplomatie roumaine vous a amené à visiter plusieurs pays du continent africain. Les dirigeants de ces États vous ont marqué leur souci de voir les conditions des échanges s'améliorer et l'appui que leur accordent les pays développés devenir plus efficace. Certes, comme vous l'écrivez vous-même, l'effort propre des pays en voie de développement est essentiel. Il doit se conjuguer avec l'aide des pays industrialisés pour que s'amorce et que s'amplifie le processus de développement. Entre pays industrialisés et pays en voie de développement une coopération étroite et permanente est donc indispensable. Les travaux de la III^{ème} Conférence des Nations Unies pour le Commerce et le Développement³⁰ l'ont récemment rappelé. Cette conférence a vu se poursuivre le dialogue entre pays développés et pays en voie de développement. Elle a ouvert de nouvelles perspectives de coopération. On peut cependant regretter que, dans des domaines aussi importants que celui de la stabilisation des prix des produits de base, les résultats de la Conférence aient été finalement décevants. Vous savez que mon gouvernement a, sur ce sujet, présenté des propositions concrètes.

La France a, par les efforts qu'elle a consentis, marqué l'importance qu'elle attache à la coopération avec les États du tiers monde et notamment avec les pays africains. Vous avez vous-même, Monsieur le Président, eu l'occasion de confirmer au cours de votre visite en Afrique l'intérêt que porte la Roumanie à ces problèmes. Que, dans certains cas, les efforts que nous poursuivons puissent utilement se conjuguer sur les marchés des pays-tiers, c'est ce que l'expérience a déjà prouvé. Lorsque les conditions locales le suggéreront et lorsque les capacités des entreprises de nos deux pays le permettront, il n'y aurait certes que des avantages à ce que se renouvelle une telle coopération dont il pourrait être traité cas par cas selon les procédures habituelles.

En ce qui concerne la crise du Proche-Orient, je ne puis qu'être d'accord avec vous quant à l'inquiétude que crée dans la région l'absence de tout progrès vers une solution politique. C'est là, bien entendu, une situation préoccupante, compte tenu notamment des répercussions qu'elle peut avoir, comme vous l'observez, sur l'ensemble des problèmes ayant trait à la sécurité européenne.

Il est sans nul doute difficile de faire sortir la négociation de l'impasse où elle se trouve. Mais j'estime, comme vous, que la communauté internationale doit renouveler ses efforts, par l'entremise du Conseil de Sécurité, en particulier de ses membres permanents et du représentant spécial du Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies, ainsi qu'avec le concours de tous les pays de bonne volonté pour tenter d'obtenir que la résolution du Conseil du 22 novembre 1967 soit intégralement appliquée.

J'aimerais vous faire part des réflexions que m'inspire l'élargissement de la Communauté Économique Européenne. Il s'agit là, vous le savez, d'un processus qui entre cette année dans une phase décisive, et qui aura des conséquences à long terme pour l'Europe tout entière. Je tiens, Monsieur le Président, à vous assurer que la Communauté ainsi agrandie conservera son caractère ouvert, et que ses membres, au premier rang desquels la France, entendent fermement renforcer les liens de tous ordres qu'ils ont déjà noués avec les États extérieures à la Communauté.

Ce souci d'ouverture anime constamment la Communauté et ses États membres. La manière dont peut être atteint cet objectif varie selon les situations qui se présentent.

³⁰ The third conference of UNCTAD was held in Santiago de Chile from 13 April to 2 May 1972.

Si l'on prend exemple des échanges de produits manufacturés et semi-finis, on s'aperçoit que le système des préférences généralisées peut être la réponse aux besoins de certains pays. Pour d'autres pays une solution se révélera plus satisfaisante que le bénéfice plus ou moins limité d'un tel régime. Je voudrais vous dire que dans cette affaire nous gardons très présents à l'esprit les problèmes qui sont les vôtres et que sans nous enfermer dans telle procédure ou tel système nous cherchons à trouver des solutions. Cela est d'autant plus vrai que, comme M. Maurice Schumann l'a écrit à M. Manescu le 22 juin, nous portons beaucoup d'attention aux rapports existant entre nos deux pays et nous avons pleinement apprécié la portée du geste que vous avez fait quand vous avez adressé une lettre au Président du Conseil des Communautés.

Notre commun dessein est la constitution d'une Europe de paix et de coopération. Notre devoir est de travailler au succès de la Conférence sur la Sécurité et la Coopération en Europe, à la préparation de laquelle votre gouvernement comme le mien attachent un intérêt fondamental. Vous avez bien voulu me faire part de votre conviction qu'une étroite coopération entre la France et la Roumanie apportera à cette préparation une contribution à la mesure de leurs efforts. Je partage votre sentiment et les récentes conversations de M. Macovescu à Paris montrent assez que vous et nous marquons dans nos actes notre volonté de contribuer chacun à ce dépassement des blocs hérités de la guerre froide, dont nos deux États ont fait l'un des objectifs majeurs de leur action diplomatique.

Vous voulez bien, enfin, me rappeler l'invitation que vous avez eu l'amabilité de formuler à mon égard à l'issue de votre séjour à Paris. Je vous en remercie. C'est avec plaisir que je reprendrai avec vous nos conversations amicales et fructueuses d'il y a deux ans, à une date qui nous conviendra mutuellement.

Ma femme et moi gardons le meilleur souvenir de la visite que vous avez faite à Paris en compagnie de Madame Ceausescu. Nous vous transmettons tous nos vœux pour votre bonheur personnel.

*Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Président, les assurances de ma très haute considération.
Georges Pompidou*

Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Problema 20/1972/Franța, Planuri de muncă, rapoarte, ff. 138-142.



TWELVE FEMINIST LESSONS OF WAR, BY CYNTHIA ENLOE

Liliana Popescu-Birlan

Cynthia Enloe was chosen as one of the 100 people in the world whose name appears on the *Gender Justice Wall* at the International Criminal Court in the Hague. Over the years, she received a plethora of awards for her activity: the International Studies Association's Susan Strange Award in 2007, the Susan B. Northcutt Award in 2008, the Peace and Justice Studies Association's Howard Zinn Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010, "Outstanding Teacher" award from Clark University received three times. In 2020 Professor Enloe joined the board of the *Eastern and Southeastern Europe Fanel Network* initiated by the National University of Political and Administrative Studies SNSPA, Romania, and enthusiastically supported the activities of the network – because she blends her research and teaching with feminist activism.

An outstanding professor of political science and women studies at Clark University in the USA, Cynthia Enloe became known worldwide after publishing a groundbreaking book about the importance of women in times of war (*Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 1990). She then called attention to the notable absence of a gendered perspective in looking at wars and militarised societies. In order to have a complete picture of international relations researchers need to pay attention to women in times of war, not to men only.

Her most recent book, *Twelve Feminist Lessons of War* (London: Footnote Press Ltd, 2023), is a display of deep knowledge of women's condition throughout the globe. Having a tremendous international experience, having participated in many feminist gatherings around the world, having an open mind and an immense number of connections among feminist organisations globally, her newest book is a joy for any open-minded reader.

"Women's wars are not men's wars", she writes. Women's wars are different from men's wars because women are subjected to rape at large scale in wars, because women and girls become pregnant subsequently, because women are expected to take on added unpaid labour in wartime (keep the farm going with fewer workers, care for children and elderly relatives, feed the household despite food and fuel shortages), and because of many more reasons. Societies tend to appreciate, recognise and reward wounded male soldiers, but not wounded civilian women or women who manage on their own to keep alive whole families. Societies expect women to make sacrifices without acknowledging them, but rather considering them as "normal".

To say that the roles of women in war are generally different from men's roles is a rather trivial observation. But this is not Cynthia's point. She is showing that "if we don't pay careful attention to women, *all sorts of women*, **we won't be realistic about war**" (p. 7, my emphasis).

The book is raising a very rich array of topics related to the relationship between women and wars. It shows the importance of research and concepts related to war, as

well as their practical consequences for the condition of women in various societies at war. Enloe specifically refers to the concepts of systematic wartime rape, rape as a weapon of war, and sexual slavery. The systematic wartime rape concept challenges four patriarchal wartime assumptions “what happens to women in war is not interesting, not political, not subject to public accountability and does not need to be taken seriously by experts on war” (p. 28). The feminist research and results in the last decades have been crucial to including in the Rome Statute that founded the International Criminal Court provisions that prosecute sexualised abuses against women endured in wars. The experiences of so many women in recent wars – from Bosnia-Herzegovina, to Ethiopia, Rwanda and many other places – were documented, researched, and conceptualised. All this work resulted in the practical ways of defending women rights on the international arena.

Cynthia’s writing style is witty, realistic, humoristic at times – charming, in one word, despite the gravity of the subject approached. She recalls at some point the importance of the international Congress in the Hague (April 1915), initiated by the Dutch feminist Aletta Jacobs, when 180 British women delegates wanted to cross the English Channel to participate, but only three made it because of the administrative obstacles encountered. Winston Churchill, then Minister of Munitions, called them “these dangerous women”! The Congress adopted some vanguardist resolutions, like the democratic control of foreign policy and the enfranchisement of women. *The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* (WILPF) was set up as a direct result of that congress. WILPF is a very important international non-governmental institution that genuinely acts for world peace. It celebrated its centenary in 2015.

Women’s opposition to war manifested in various ways throughout our recent history. Nicaraguan women demonstrated against the call up of their sons to wage war against the Contras in the ‘80s, Serbian women took to the streets to protest in 1991 against the Milosevic regime conscription; more recently, military wives and mothers in Russia, mobilised and protested against the killings of their husbands and sons in the first six months of Russia’s war against Ukraine (p. 45). However, since the 1980s, writes Cynthia Enloe, **transnational feminist anti-violence activism has become part of international politics** (p. 102). The book gives ample space to instances in which feminists in one part of the world supported concretely feminists in other parts of the world. For example, various ways in which Swedish feminists displayed solidarity with African feminists, who were experiencing tough consequences of living in autocratic regimes.

The many local wars that occurred ever since the end of the second world war left deep marks on millions and millions of women’s lives (and children, consequently). Gradually, feminists took on more and more research into the condition of women living in war areas. The feminist activism at global level within and outside the UN became more ample (Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, Beijing in 1995). This buildup contributed to the adoption of the **UN Security Council Resolution 1325** (2000). It was the first time the UNSC passed a resolution devoted to the rights and well-being of women in war in its 75 years of existence. Enloe is discussing in her book the importance of this resolution, emphasising its main elements: (1) the international acknowledgement of women’s experiences in war, as victims and survivors of sexual violence, which are to be explicitly addressed by national and international political decision makers;

(2) every cease-fire peace agreement and postwar recovery plan must be negotiated with meaningful participation from women in civil society (p. 117). The consequences in terms of pressure on governments to take policy measures in favour of war survivors are considerable. So should be the pressure to include women in international negotiations.

Cynthia Enloe's book is an invitation for us to think gender equality in different terms. Whereas part of feminists insists on getting parity for women participating in the military, Enloe takes a stand saying that women as soldiers is not liberation (Chapter 4). Her suggestion is that **certain masculinities are in need of change rather than having women "achieve equality" in using violent means**. However, she notes that some militaries in the world are more open than others in involving people regardless of gender. On the other hand, she remarks the presence of racial and economic inequalities within military corps at state level (giving the example of the US) and at international level. For example, the United Nations peacekeeping missions are filled mainly with military from "the global south" and the ratio women/men is 9/1 (p. 64). Inequalities in treatment can be noticed with respect to women insurgent veterans – from Vietnam, Nicaragua etc. Women fought for a common good, but they did not get the liberation and equitable societies after the fight was over. "[W]hen a civil movement becomes an armed insurgency, it is likely to simultaneously become top down in its structure, intolerant of internal descent, and masculinized in its culture, celebrating the combat fighter." (p. 77)

Irony is part of Cynthia's writing style, like when she refers to the very often used expressions: "the fog of war" and "collateral damage". "The fog of war is the perfect stage set for impunity" (p. 96). To refer to the systematic rape of women belonging to the enemy side, counting thousands or tens of thousands of raped women, as "collateral damage" it is ridiculous and sad at the same time. "The reliance of militaries on both secrecy and force continues to be at odds with the deeper values of feminist-informed democracy. At their core, despite reforms, militaries remain patriarchal institutions and tools for patriarchal foreign policy." (p. 65)

A recurrent theme of the book is that the "normalisation" of war practices is detrimental to women. Beyond systematic rape and the use of rape as a weapon of war, the patriarchal acceptance of male soldiers visiting brothels or exchanging food for sex with local women is yet another example of the "normalisation" of war practices. In this respect, the historical prevalence of male war reporting bears part of the responsibility for this normalisation. Enloe approaches this subject too in her book, writing that "the masculinization of war coverage helped sustain the fog of war" (p. 97). What many male journalists consider to be "normal" would not be normal for a female journalist. In the last few decades, more and more women journalists got involved in war reporting. The fact that women reporters matter is suggested by the example of Afghani women, who studied journalism between 2001 and 2021. When the Taliban took power in August 2021 among their first moves was to oust women from media organisations.

The richness of Cynthia Enloe's book is difficult to capture in a few pages. Her cosmopolitan culture, her extensive knowledge of international politics, particularly her understanding of women's presence in conflicts and wars is amazing. Her examples take us from Bosnia to Rwanda, from Nicaragua and Colombia to Vietnam, from Somalia and Sudan to Ukraine and Türkiye. And her book carries deep messages for feminists worldwide: build solidarities across nations, give support to women in war zones, be

mindful of women's grief and silences, stay strong and work together for peace on Earth.

Cynthia is not a romantic, she is fully aware of things as they are, and precisely because she knows how things are on the battlefields, she is mindful of alternative ways of seeing human relations, of alternative ways of dealing with international conflicts, of beneficial femininities and masculinities. If I were to characterise Cynthia Enloe in short, I would say she is a radical promoter of peace.

ACADEMICIAN ALEXANDRINA CERNOV

Delia Voicu



On June 5, we lost a great and close friend, Alexandrina Cernov, a distinguished representative of Romanian letters, chronicler, historiographer, and standard-bearer of Bukovina.

She was a part of the scientific board of the magazine *România occidentală*, and she was our wise advisor and precious collaborator. From Chernivtsi, she reported on how our compatriots beyond the northern border live, the tragedy of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in a journal written amidst the deafening noise of air alarms, in the cold caused by the lack of electricity, and the fury coming again from the east, as in so many other moments that have marked our existence on the territories that today belong to Ukraine. In those pages, Alexandrina Cernov noted: "For the North Bukovinian Romanians, a new microhistory begins today. They still retain the memory of those post-war years when they were deported, starved, massacred at Fântâna Albă, Lunca, Herța, and other localities. Back then, there were no rockets, but there were other methods... Prisons, deportations, massacres, hunger, moral oppression... Archives hold documents that have not yet been researched. Many have been destroyed, others contain falsifications... Historians, also constrained by unfavourable circumstances against historical

truth, have remained silent. But the memory has remained alive. Since 1945, 77 years have passed. From grandparents and parents, young people, today reaching the fourth and fifth generation, know the troubles they went through, and memory still retains unrevealed silences." She dedicated her last volumes to these terrible realities: *The Refuge. 1940-1945; The Drama of the Romanians in the Chernivtsi Region. Massacres, Deportations, Hunger in 1940-1941, 1944-1947; The Destiny of the Romanian Church in Northern Bukovina during the Soviet Period; Fântâna Albă - The Golgotha of the Nation*, all published by Nicodim Caligraful Publishing House from Putna.

A magister of rare vocation, she trained numerous classes of students at the National University of Chernivtsi. She shaped exceptional destinies and left behind inheritors of her high values and ideals. Among these, the closest to her were political scientist and journalist Marin Gherman, today a name of authority, and professor Cristina Paladian, an eminent philologist, who today succeeds Alexandrina Cernov at the Romanian language department, where the extraordinary teacher taught for over thirty years.

Alexandrina Cernov's voice resounded before the Great National Assembly in Chişinău on August 27, 1991, when the Republic of Moldova became an independent and sovereign state. Her message came "from Bukovina, severed from the homeland," transmitted with courage and enthusiasm before hundreds of thousands of people. Her voice symbolically identified with 'The Voice of Bukovina,' the magazine founded by Sextil Puşcariu in the year of the Great Union of 1918 and banned in 1941, which Alexandrina Cernov revived in 1994, leading it until the end of her exemplary, instructive, and diligent life. In his farewell speech at Alexandrina Cernov's side, the President of the Romanian Academy, Ioan-Aurel Pop, said: "For me, she was, for many decades, 'The Voice of Bukovina,' with her ancient forehead haloed by Eminescu. In fact, the departure is apparent, as the professor from Chernivtsi watches over us and guides us on good paths so that we do not stray. Her great work and gentle voice will remain forever in the heritage of the Romanian Academy and in the treasury of the Romanian people."

In the place where she wrote her last books and lived her last moments, at the Putna Monastery, academician Alexandrina Cernov now sleeps her eternal rest in the sacred soil of her homeland.

We would like to thank the authors and publishers who have kindly sent us their books, and we would like to mention these latest volumes received by the editorial office:

- Teodor Baconschi, *Legătura de chei. O mărturie diplomatică în dialog cu Armand Goșu*, revised and added edition, Spandugino Publishing House, Bucharest, 2024;
- Igor Cașu, Ion Gumenăi (coord.), Alexandru Cerbu, Alexandru Argint, Tudor Ciobanu, Tatiana Chirtoaca (eds.), *Agenția Națională a Arhivelor. Album de fonduri și colecții*, National Archives Agency/State University of Moldova, Chisinau, 2023;
- Alexandrina Cernov (coord.), *Fântâna albă - Golgota neamului*, second edition, Nicodim Caligraful Publishing House, Putna Monastery, 2022;
- Alexandrina Cernov (coord.), *Drama românilor din Regiunea Cernăuți. Masacre, deportări, foamete în 1940-1941, 1944-1947*, Nicodim Caligraful Publishing House, Putna Monastery, 2019;
- Alexandrina Cernov (coord.), *Destinul Bisericii românești din Nordul Bucovinei în perioada sovietică*, second edition, Nicodim Caligraful Publishing House, Putna Monastery, 2022;
- Alexandrina Cernov (coord.), *Refugiul. 1940-1945*, Nicodim Caligraful Publishing House, Putna Monastery, 2023
- Ștefan Hostiuc, *Dialoguri septentrionale. Interviuri*, DrukArt Publishing House, Chernivtsi, 2023;
- The collection of *Mesager Bucovinean* journal, published with the support of MFA - Department for Relations with Romanians Abroad, Chernivtsi-Bucharest.



FROM AMONG RDI'S RECENT ACTIVITIES

In the first semester of this year, the Romanian Diplomatic Institute continued its activity on the two main levels: training and research. Therefore, the RDI organised and hosted the following courses:

- **Communication, protocol and etiquette in diplomacy**, organised between February 26 and March 27, 2024. Guest speakers (in chronological order according to the professional training program): prof. Dumitru Borțun, PhD Faculty of Communication and Public Relations; Andrei Țârnea, Director General, Department of Communication and Public Diplomacy, MFA; prof. Gabriela Melania Ciot, PhD, Babeș-Bolyai University, former Secretary of State for European Affairs, MFA; prof. Simona Mălescu, PhD, Associate Professor at UNAP and Oxford University - "Diplomatic Studies Program"; Alexandru Victor Micula, Ambassador of Romania to Ukraine; Liviu Mihai Dănilă, Head of Service of the Operative Center for Special Emergency Situations MAE (at the time of the lecture); Doru Costea, Ambassador; Leonard Orban, former Minister of European Affairs, former European Commissioner, former Chief Negotiator of Romania with the European Union, former Presidential Advisor on European Affairs; Edward Iosiper, Director of the Department of General, Financial, Internal and Justice Affairs, Department of the European Union; Călin Fabian, Ambassador of Romania to the Slovak Republic; Adriana Romașcan, Foreign Policy Advisor, Presidential Administration; Cosmin-Victor Lotreanu, Minister Plenipotentiary, Directorate of Diplomatic Strategies and Policy Planning, MFA; Mihai Sîrbu, Director, Protocol Directorate, MFA; Virgil Mănescu, Protocol, Diplomacy and Hospitality trainer; Alexandrina Cernov, honorary member of the Romanian Academy, former university lecturer at the Department of Romanian and Classical Philology of the National University of Chernivtsi; Vasile Pușcaș, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy; Igor Cașu, historian, lecturer and director of the Center for the Study of Totalitarianism at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, State University of Moldova, Director of the National Archives Agency, Republic of Moldova;

- **Leadership in diplomacy and governance**, held from April 3 to June 12, 2024. The program aimed to develop the managerial and leadership skills of employees with managerial functions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, central and local public administration structures, as well as similar managerial positions in companies with majority state capital;

- **Foreign Policy and Diplomacy**, organised from 13 May to 12 June 2024;
- **Ethical Values, Rules of Conduct and Integrity in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, organised from 17 to 18 June 2024).

Moreover, IDR provided analysis to the MFA, issued thematic papers and studies, and contributed to public information and debate on European and international relations issues by organising conferences and by ensuring a constant presence in the media:

- *Eroding democracy through digitization, exporting repressive digital technologies to African states* by Sînziana Dumitrescu and Claudiu Codreanu, in the journal *România occidentală*, vol. 2, no. 2/2023;
- *Romanian Diplomatic Documents. 1914-1918*, volume edited by Daniel-Valeriu Boboc, Ovidiu Bozgan (coordinator), Cristian-Tudor Șerban, Delia Voicu, Monitorul Oficial Publishing House, Bucharest, 2024;
- *Elections in Taiwan. The victory of democracy and the failure of China?* by Sînziana Dumitrescu, thematic study no. 37, IDR;
- *MIKTA, a new formula for international cooperation* by Sînziana Dumitrescu, bulletin no. 1/2024, IDR;
- *Maritime warfare in the Black Sea and unmanned naval systems* by George Vișan, in IDR Bulletin no. 2/2023, analysis for MFA, April 2023;
- *Strategic Partnership between Romania and Bulgaria - Regional Policy Instrument and Integration into International Organizations* by Alexandru-Ionuț Drăgulin, in Romanian and English, thematic study no. 38, IDR;
- *Developments in US domestic politics*, analysis for the MFA by Valentin Nicolescu, in collaboration with external experts;
- Monthly contributions, with editorials for the Veridica.ro website, by Dragoș Mateescu, on developments in Turkey, the Black Sea, the South Caucasus, the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

Some of the participations of the RDI representatives in seminars, conferences, working visits are as follows:

- **January 19.** Dragoș Mateescu participated, online, in the seminar “War in the contemporary world”, with a presentation on the situation in the Black Sea in the context of Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine;
- **March 12.** Dragoș Mateescu participated as a speaker at the conference “Georgia’s Foreign Policy and Growing Security Challenges in the Black Sea Region”, held by Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Parliament of the Republic of Georgia, IDR;
- **April 4.** Mihai Constantinescu participated in the round table “20 years since Romania’s accession to NATO. Perspectives for Ukraine”, event organised by the Romanian Consulate in Chernivtsi, Chernivtsi, Ukraine;
- **April 13-20.** Dragoș Mateescu participated in the program “Caspian Basin Studies” organised by the Institute for Development and Diplomacy of ADA Baku University and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku;
- **April 14-15.** George Vișan participated in the second Black Sea Security Conference of the International Crimean Platform, organised in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria;
- **April 17.** Valentin Nicolescu participated in the webinar “Understanding Tensions in the Red Sea Region,” organised by the Portuguese Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic;
- **April 25.** Valentin Nicolescu organized and co-moderated the roundtable “Current developments in U.S. Domestic Politics (I)” at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute;

- **May 14.** Valentin Nicolescu gave the lecture "Introduction to International Relations" as part of the Foreign Policy and Diplomacy course organised by the RDI;

- **May 17.** Dragoş Mateescu gave a presentation on the "Relationship between Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy" as part of the Foreign Policy and Diplomacy course at the RDI;

- **May 21-22.** Alexandru-Ionuţ Drăgulin participated in the National History Colloquium organised by the National Cotroceni Museum, with the paper "Titulescu's Doctrine in the Foreign Policy of Small and Medium States: Romania's Euro-Atlantic Integration;"

- **May 23-24.** Dragoş Mateescu participated, as a speaker and contributor, at the launch of the book "The Century of Harmony: Romanian-Turkish Relations 1923-2023/ Uyum Yüzyılı: Romanya-Türkiye İlişkileri 1923-2023," edited by Silvana Racheru, published by Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Press, Iaşi, 2023. The event took place in Ankara and was supported by the Romanian Embassy in Türkiye and the Turkish Studies Center at the University of Bucharest.

- **May 24.** Alexandru-Ionuţ Drăgulin participated in the webinar "European Parliament 2024 Elections and the Territorial Dimensions of Populist Euroscepticism," organised by the European Studies Center, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration.

- **May 28.** Alexandru-Ionuţ Drăgulin participated in the workshop "How Do We Communicate Europe in Hostile Contexts? A Storytelling Workshop about the EU on the Eve of Elections," organised by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration.

- **June 5-12.** Valentin Nicolescu held the "Fundamental Texts" courses as part of the Leadership in Diplomacy and Governance course organised by the RDI.

- **April-June.** Claudiu Codreanu participated in the series of virtual workshops organised by the European Cyber Conflict Research Initiative (ECCRI).

- **June 6.** Dragoş Mateescu participated, as a speaker, in the workshop "Truth or Challenge? A Guide in 5 Questions to Detect Fake News in a Super-Electoral Year" at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest.

- **June 12.** Claudiu Codreanu gave the lecture "Managing New Technologies in Foreign Policy - Cybersecurity" as part of the Foreign Policy and Diplomacy course at the RDI.

- **June 18.** Sînziana Dumitrescu participated in the event "European Diplomatic Academy. From Idea to Reality," organised by the EEAS in partnership with the College of Europe, Brussels.

- **June 20-21.** Sînziana Dumitrescu participated in module IV "EU Foreign Policy in Action: Promoting Europe's Interests and Values in the World," organised by the EEAS, Brussels.

- **June 26.** Dragoş Mateescu participated, as a speaker, in the conference "National Security in the Era of Strategic Competition: The Role of Intelligence for Defense," organised on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Defence Intelligence General Directorate, at the National Military Circle, Bucharest.

- **January-June.** Dragoş Mateescu commented on developments in international politics in specialised programs on: TVR 1 and TVR Info (Theme of the Day, Europe Between the Lines, Global, Education at Power, news programs), Radio Romania Cultural (Present Time), B1 TV (Check Media, news programs), Digi 24 (Live! with Rotaru and Kiss, news programs), RFI Romania (news programs), Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA).

During this time, the agenda of the general director of the RDI, Mrs. Liliana Popescu-Bîrlan, included participation in international events, lectures in training programs and various conferences, meetings with Romanian and foreign ambassadors. Among all these activities, we mention:

1. January 17 – Meeting with H.E. Mrs. Sofia Grammata, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.
2. January 22 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Radko Vljakov, Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to Romania at the RDI headquarters.
3. January 23 – Working meeting with Mrs. Leonela Leca, Executive Director of the Economic Section at GLOBSEC.
4. January 30 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Osama Yousef A.A. Alwaradawi, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.
5. February 15 – Moderation of the event “Optimizarea diplomației economice pentru promovarea intereselor României” (“*Optimising Economic Diplomacy for Promoting Romania’s Interests*”), with keynote speakers: Lazăr Comănescu, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, currently Secretary General of the BSEC; Luca Niculescu, Secretary of State for Romania’s OECD accession and Rareș Burlacu, President of ARICE.
6. February 21 – Awarding diplomas to the graduates of the second edition of the professional development program “Leadership in Diplomacy and Governance” (LDG).
7. February 23 – Visit by invitation of the NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division to the organisation’s headquarters in Brussels, along with a group of opinion leaders and content creators from Romania.
8. February 26 – Working visit by Mr. Adrian Dupu, Secretary of State at the General Secretariat of the Government - Department for Relations with the Republic of Moldova.
9. February 28 – Moderation of the event held by Mr. Oleg Serebrian, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration of the Republic of Moldova, and H.E. Mr. Victor Chirilă, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova, on the “Economic, Social, and Security Situation in Transnistria.”
10. March 4 – Launch of the issue dedicated to Africa of the RDI’s journal *România occidentală* (*Western Romania*).
11. March 8 – Moderation of the conference “The Status of Women in the World Today. Discussing Disparities. Finding Solutions Together” (keynote speakers: H.E. Mrs. Luminița Odobescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, H.E. Mrs. Kathleen Kavalec, Ambassador of the United States to Romania, and H.E. Mrs. Therese Hyden, Ambassador of Sweden to Romania). The event was attended by most of the female ambassadors accredited to Romania, as well as other distinguished guests.
12. March 14 – Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between RDI and the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute, during an event celebrating one year of the Romania-Bulgaria strategic partnership. The event was attended by Mrs. Daniela Gîțman, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Mrs. Elena Shekerletova, Deputy Foreign Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, and the ambassadors of the two countries, H.E. Mrs. Brândușa Ioana Predescu and H.E. Mr. Radko Todorov Vlaykov.
13. March 19 – Moderation of the event “Workplace Harassment: From International Law to National Public Policies”; keynote speakers: Prof. Iulia Motoc, Judge at the International Criminal Court in The Hague and former Judge at the European Court of

Human Rights, and Prof. Ionela Băluță, University of Bucharest, Director of the Center for Gender Equality Policies.

14. March 27 – Launch of the volume *Documente Diplomatice Române. 1914-1918 (Romanian Diplomatic Documents. 1914-1918)*; keynote speakers: academicians Alexandrina Cernov and Vasile Pușcaș, prof. Bogdan Murgescu, vice-rector of the University of Bucharest, Igor Cașu, Director of the National Archives Agency of the Republic of Moldova, and Doru Liciu, Head of the Diplomatic Archives Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

15. April 3 – Opening of the third edition of the professional development program “Leadership in Diplomacy and Governance” (LDG).

16. April 9-12 – Delivering a lecture on: “Black Sea Economic Security and Diplomacy Issues. A Viewpoint from Romania” at the international conference “Leadership Meeting on Economic Diplomacy” organised at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (Latvia).

17. April 19 – Keynote speaker at the conference “The Role of Diplomacy in the Current Geopolitical Context,” organised by SB-Act (the Union of Bucharest Students). The conference also featured as speakers: H.E. Victor Chirilă, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Romania, H.E. Olivia Todorean, Ambassador of Romania to the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Luca Niculescu, Secretary of State for Romania’s OECD accession, and H.E. Sorin Ducaru, Director of the EU Satellite Center.

18. April 23 – Meeting with H.E. Mrs. Enkeleda Mërkuri, Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.

19. April 23 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Talal Mansour Aljeri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.

20. April 23 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Sami Nagga, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.

21. May 23 – Initiator of the conference “Why Latin America Matters to Romania?”, co-organised by RDI and the Romanian MFA. Keynote speakers: Charles Powell, Director of the Elcano Royal Institute in Madrid, Mr. Traian Hristea, Secretary of State for Global Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rareș Burlacu, President of ARICE, and H.E. Mrs. Déborah Leticia Ojeda Valedón, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Romania, Dean of the GRULAC group.

22. June 11 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Issam T.H. Masalha, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.

23. June 12 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Yerlik Ali, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.

24. June 13 – Lecturer, by invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, on “Epistemological Dimensions of Countering Disinformation”, within the training program dedicated to representatives from sub-Saharan African states: “Building Resilience to Disinformation in a Changing Communication Environment,” organized by the MFA, together with the International Development Cooperation Agency (RoAid), in Bucharest.

25. June 14 – Invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania to deliver a lecture on the theme “The Black Sea – A Comprehensive Approach for Connectivity and Security,” during the “Nicolae Titulescu” International Courses for Young Diplomats, in Poiana Brașov.

26. June 18 – Participation in the “Inaugural Meeting of the EU Diplomatic Academy Steering Committee,” in Brussels, on the occasion of the official launch of the European Diplomatic Academy, as a new institution within the EEAS.

27. July 2 – Meeting with a Ukrainian delegation consisting of representatives of local authorities from Chernivtsi (Cernăuți) region and academic community members from Chernivtsi and Kyiv.

28. July 3 – Visit to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Romania, by invitation of H.E. Mr. Tigran Galstyan.

29. July 18 – Meeting with H.E. Mr. Han Chunlin, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Romania, at the RDI headquarters.

Additionally, the Director General of RDI has been periodically invited to TV shows, such as TVR, TVR Info, Digi24, Prima TV and B1 TV.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Liliana Popescu-Bîrlan is Director General of the Romanian Diplomatic Institute and university professor at SNSPA Bucharest, where she directs doctorates in the field of political sciences. She holds a doctorate (PhD) in political theory from the University of Manchester, UK (1996). She was advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, director (Directorate of Political Planning, 1998-1999) and vice-rector of SNSPA (2012-2022). Her publications include the books: *Construction of the European Union* (Bucharest: C.H. Beck, 2009); *Individual Freedom and Political Manipulation* (Bucharest: Politeia-SNSPA, 2003). She co-founded the English-language journal *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* (2001). She was an ambassador of the publication *Foreign Policy Romania*. Liliana Popescu has studied for the last 17 years the Eastern neighbourhood of the European Union, the post-Soviet space and has published articles on Russia, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova. The last profile article published concerns the Russia – China partnership (RJE, December 2021). It has a history of pioneering and involvement in the field of civic campaigns in support of the rights of women and minority groups in society.

Luminița-Teodora Odobescu is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania from 15 June 2023. A career diplomat, Luminița-Teodora Odobescu was Presidential Adviser from November 2021 to June 2023, as Adviser for European Affairs to the President of Romania, also coordinating the Foreign Policy Department, and the Permanent Representative of Romania to the European Union between September 2015 and November 2021, successfully managing, in this capacity, the first Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU (the first semester of 2019). Luminita Odobescu was State Counsellor, adviser on European Affairs and External Relations to the Romanian Prime Minister, between November 2012 and August 2015. In December 2014, she was granted the diplomatic rank of Ambassador. Between February and November 2012, she was State Secretary on European Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and between June 2008 and February 2012 she was Director General of the European Union Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinating the EU Affairs and the bilateral political dialogue with the EU Member States, the acceding states to the EU (including Turkey), as well as the EFTA countries. Between 2002 and 2007, she held various positions in the Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union in Brussels, being responsible for several chapters of negotiation in the context of Romania's accession to the EU (energy, economic and monetary union, taxation, trade). Moreover, she was in charge with the trade relations and trade defence measures between Romania and the EU. Following the signing of Romania's Accession Treaty to the EU, Luminița Odobescu took responsibility for coordinating and preparing the meetings of the EU's Committee of Deputy Permanent Representatives (COREPER I),

while also participating to several working groups of the EU Council and the European Commission. Luminița-Teodora Odobescu was head of unit within the Department of Foreign Trade between 1999 and 2002, being responsible for the management of trade relations between Romania and the European Communities, in the framework of the European Association Agreement. From 1995 to 1999, she held various positions in the European Union division of the same Department. Between 1992 and 1995 she was researcher to “Virgil Madgearu” National Institute. She holds a PhD in International Economic Relations from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, a degree obtained in 2003. In 1992, she graduated the Faculty of Commerce at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. In 2007 she was conferred the “Order of Diplomatic Merit” in the rank of Officer for the contribution to the process of Romania’s accession to the European Union. In 2015 she was conferred the French National Order of the Legion of Honour in the rank of Knight, and in 2023 the “Grand Cross of Merit with Star” of Germany. In November 2019, Luminița-Teodora Odobescu was awarded the National Order “Star of Romania” in the rank of Knight for her significant contribution to the success of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first semester of 2019.

Laura Popescu is Romania’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as of March 4, 2021, and Romania’s Permanent Representative to the International Maritime Organization (IMO). She is a career diplomat (since 2004) and holds the diplomatic rank of ambassador. In April 2023, she was named European Diplomat of the Year by the diplomatic corps in London, at the Diplomat Awards by *Diplomat Magazine*. In the first half of this year, Laura Popescu held the role of Acting President of the Women in Diplomacy Network London. She was director of the Western Europe and Central Europe Directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016–2019), for which she also acted as deputy director (2014–2015). Between March 2015 and September 2016, Laura Popescu was an adviser at the Department for Foreign Policy of the Presidential Administration of Romania. Among the previous missions are those of deputy head of mission, respectively head of the political section at the Romanian Embassy in Berlin (2009–2014). Laura Popescu is a doctor of philology at the University of Bucharest, also holding a master’s degree in anthropology and ethnology. She studied at the Diplomatic Academy in Bucharest and at the Diplomatic Academy in Berlin.

Ștefan Tinca is currently Romania’s Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey. He graduated from the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Bucharest. He started his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996, as a diplomatic attaché in the UN Directorate. After two positions within the Romanian Mission to the EU, between 1997 and 2000, respectively between 2002 and 2006, in 2007 he became the political director of the MFA. Between 2012 and 2016, he was the ambassador of Romania to the Kingdom of Belgium. In April 2016, he was appointed Secretary of State for Defence Policy at the Ministry of Defense and returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early 2017. In April 2017, he was reappointed as Political Director of the MFA, a position he held until his appointment as ambassador to Ankara in January 2021. He is the author of many articles and studies on European construction, security and the transatlantic relationship, the Black Sea and the Eastern neighbourhood.

Raluca Trușcanu has been working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2007, mainly in the area of cultural and public diplomacy. As a diplomat, she has been posted in Canada (Ottawa) and Portugal (Lisbon). Since October 2021, she is managing the Division for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication of MFA.

Monica Joița is a graduate of the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest (1990) and of the Faculty of International Relations, National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest (1995). She has a PhD in Philology (2000) and a PhD in Educational Sciences (2013). She was awarded the “Vasile Pârvan” scholarship at the Romanian Academy in Rome (2002–2004). Between 1990 and 1995, M. Joița was a senior researcher at the G. Călinescu Institute of History and Literary Theory at the Romanian Academy. Between 2005 and 2012, she was deputy director and interim director of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice. Since January 1996 she is a diplomat at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Cultural and in the Diplomatic Archives Department, and currently a Minister-Counsellor at the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Joița moderates events with foreign translators of Romanian literature for the International Festival of Literature and Translation in Iași, and is the author of several books, studies and articles in the cultural press. Her main areas of specialisation are Romanian culture and literature in the 17th and 18th centuries, its relations with European civilisation and the history of cultural diplomacy in the 20th century.

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