

# **Romania and its aggressive foreign policy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**



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## **Abstract**

The aim of the thesis is to provide a closer insight within Romania's foreign policy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and provide an answer to Romania's aggressive actions toward its allies. In order to that, the thesis is split between two main components. The first component is a historical perspective of Romania in WWI and WWII. This part deals with Romania's past from its founding until the end of the Second World War. The central personalities that shaped Romania's internal and external policy are described and analysed in detail in order for the viewer to obtain a clear look at the challenges faced by the Romanian society. The external political actors that had a role in Romania's evolution are also described and analysed in details. The second component is the analysis which is mostly based on a neo-realist perspective. The aim of this component is to reveal and discover if neorealism can properly explain Romania's foreign policy. Notable scholars such Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer's works are used in order to provide the reader with the possible explanations at hand.

The first chapter offers a historical perspective of Romania before and during the First World War. This chapter has a special emphasis on the founding of Romania as a processed that was under the influence of the great powers. The chapter also has an important insight in Romania's struggle to find its way in international politics. As a new state, Romania faced serious challenges from both great powers and new neighbours. Great powers like Austria-Hungary tried to contain Romania and influence its policy in order stall its possible actions in favour of the Romanians living in Transylvania, which was at that time part of the Empire.

The second chapter provides an analysis in regarding with Romania's decision to join the Entente in the First World War against Austria-Hungary. Using neorealism, this chapter aims to discover if the theory could provide of an understanding on why Romania attacked its former ally.

The third chapter looks at the historical perspective of Romania in the Interwar period and during the WWII. The aim of this chapter is to describe the nationalist and fascist ideologies which emerged in the aftermath of the WWI.

The fourth chapter delivers and analysis of Romania's actions around WWII and its decision to attack the Soviet Union. The conclusion offers an overview of the research and in the same time provides a possible future for the research topic.

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## **1. Introduction**

Romania's foreign policy in first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was seen as an attempt made by the political class in order to achieve the final goals: the fulfilment of Greater Romania which was done by the Treaty of Versailles and then the keeping of status quo against revisionist countries like USSR and Hungary (Webb, 2008, p. 53).

The proposed research topic is to analyze a case study of Romania's policies during the two World Wars and to found out why Romanian politicians decided to act as an aggressive actor in the international arena. Both internal and external factors will be taken in consideration as the purpose of this paper is to discover how and why Romania's foreign policy became aggressive. But how should the aggression is defined? According with the definition of aggression and guilt within the Treaty of Versailles, Germany, Austria-Hungary and their allies were the main and the solely countries responsible for the war (Neff, 2005, p. 289). As noted in the famous 231 art. within the Treaty: "The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and their Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies" (Treaty of Versailles, 2017). Romania, being on the winning side was not affected by the treaty. Even so, if Romania's actions in 1916 would be analyzed by the definition of 1919, then Romania could be described as an aggressor. Romania attacked Austro-Hungary without warning and imposed a war of aggression upon the nationals of the empire. Romania was also an aggressor in 1941 when the Romanian Army invaded the Soviet Union alongside Germany. This action was justified by the aggression of the USSR when Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia. The Romanian government recovered Bessarabia in 1941 but Hitler requested further assistance, thus being the moment when Romania changed from being an oppressed country and became an aggressor, annexing Transnistria, a territory which was never a part of Romania. Both Romania and USSR were signatories on the Convention for the Definition of Aggression in 1933 (Convention for the Definition of Aggression, 2017). Articles II of the Convention stated that it is defined as a war of aggression when a "Declaration of war upon another State" is made or when an "Invasion by its armed forces, with or without a declaration of war, of the territory of another State" occurs (Convention for the Definition of Aggression, 2017). Furthermore, the convention stated that:



“No political, military, economic or other considerations may serve as an excuse or justification for the aggression referred to in Article 2” (Convention for the Definition of Aggression, 2017). Both Romania and USSR broke the Convention in the early stages of the World War Two.

Excepting a few notable exceptions Romanian historiography has been avoiding to describe Romanian policy as aggressive during the wars. The most common version is this: in the First World War Romania attacked its ally, Austria-Hungary because Romanians from Transylvania were oppressed by Hungarian authorities (Boia, 2001a, p.23). In 1941 Romania participated in Operation Barbarossa in order to recover Bessarabia which was annexed by USSR in 1940.

As historian Lucian Boia (2001b) said: “As is so often the case with historical events, the participation of Romania in the First World War has taken on a much simpler shape in the Romanians memory than it had in reality. It is imagined that there was a quasi-unanimous preference for the consummation of national unity by the liberation of Transylvania” (p. 27). Prior to the war Romania could not hope of challenging the Habsburg Empire by itself. Still, Romanian politicians were deeply involved in matters that concerned ethnic Romanians within the empire, but that was the maximum they could do.

Another subject covered in this paper will be the rise of nationalism which affected the entire Europe in both wars. While Romania was not affected by it as much as Serbia for example during the First World War, the situation is very different when speaking about the Second one. Fascism almost became a state policy in the second part of the 30'. What exactly is nationalism and how it should be defined? Has nationalism a different meaning for Eastern Europe than its Western counterpart? Yes and no. As Armour explained: (2012) “Herder was in fact the first person to use the term ‘nationalism’, in 1774, to describe the concept of loyalty to the nation, the ‘conscious cherishing’ of the nation’s language, its cultural roots, its ‘soul’. With time, nationalism came to mean something else: the right of the nation to self-determination, in other words to a state of its own. The world especially in Eastern Europe is still living with the murderous fallout from this ideology” (p. 6). Political scientist Margaret Canovan proposed five elements that could be used in order to understand nations (1996) “as states, as cultural communities, in terms of the subjective identities of individuals, as ethnic groups, and as product of modernization” (p. 50). Those points will be taken in consideration in order to explain how and why Romanian nationalism developed an aggressive stance. Nationalist politicians emerged

more powerful than ever trying to impose racial laws similar with the ones in Germany. It was an attempt in order to win Hitler's sympathy which was seen as the most powerful ruler in Europe during those times (Webb, 2002, p. 22).

Nationalism will be analyzed in order to discover if it can be seen as an answer to Romanian external policy. Romanian nationalism developed beginning with the eighteenth century in regions inhabited by Romanians: the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, Transylvania and districts of Maramureș, Crișana and Banat which were at various times under the rule of: Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs while Bukovina under Austrian control since 1775, and Bessarabia, eastern part of Moldova which was annexed by Russia in 1812. Starting with 1848 Revolution „unification at all cost” became the national credo of the political class (Livezeanu, 2000, p. 4). The Transylvanian nationalist appealed to the past in order to boost the morale of their cause. They promoted glorious past leaders such as medieval prince Michael the Brave who united the three Romanian principalities for brief period of time in 1600 and they stretched the importance of the Romanian people as descendants of the Romans (Manzies, 2005, p.39). Until the Great War of 1914 nationalism in Romania targeted only national unity. After that darker emotions like anti-semitism and anti-hungarianism aroused and spread very quickly.

Another potential answer for the aggressive policies could be explained by economic reasons. Did Romania attack its allies for potential territorial gains that would boost its economy? At a first look it seems unlikely as the regions attacked by Romania were inhabited by fellow nationals. A reason for this question is that Romania's economy boomed after the acquiring Transylvania in 1918 (Federal Research Division, 2002, p.46).

### **1.1 Problem Formulation**

The choice of this topic was made because there have been very few attempts to discover the reasons of this policy. In both wars Romania acted as an aggressive power, in particular during WW1 when Romania attacked its ally: Austria-Hungary. Also, during WW2 Romania and Germany launched Operation Barbarossa without any declaration of war. In both wars, Romania betrayed her allies: in 1918 when the government made peace with Central Powers and in 1944 when Romania joined the allies. Those facts led me to consider that only neorealism can explain Romania's foreign policy during the two world wars, therefore I propose this research

question: **Why did Romania conduct an aggressive foreign policy during WW1 and WW2?** Other theories as neoliberalism or neo-classical realism will not be ignored as I want to find out if these theories are able to offer a better understanding of the events.

In order to answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were posed: **Which were the reasons behind Romania's aggressive policies in relation with its allies and neighbors? Regarding the foreign policy of Romania, which influences were stronger: the internal or the external ones? Why did USSR keep a relative good relation with Romania in the interwar period if it had territorial claims over Bessarabia?**

The foreign policy of Romania in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is not seen as aggressive according to most scholars. Even the history books hail the aggressions on Austria-Hungary and USSR as war of national struggle for the liberation of fellow ethnic Romanians. The interesting fact is the next one: before the first WWI Transylvania it was part of Hungary. It was ruled by a Romanian prince only for a brief period in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Still Romanian civil society was strongly in favor for a war against Austria-Hungary even if it meant attacking an ally. Similar with Transylvania, the biggest part of Bessarabia was not integrated in a Romanian state before WWI. After the Russian Revolution, Romania united with Bessarabia but the union was never recognized by USSR or the USA. As a consequence, bilateral relations between them were tense. For both regions the historical argument was weak because these states were not part of Romania. The main argument was the ethnical one. Both regions had Romanians as the majority population. Over one and half million of Hungarians were inside Romania's new borders after the Treaty of Trianon (Horvath, 2014, p. 116). The meant that Hungary was in the same position as Romania before WWI. Such never ending circle is also a point of debate for this research topic. Could there have been a peaceful solution in order to settle the matter of Transylvania? Probably not as great powers like USA and Germany tried to solve it at different times without achieving success.

Neorealism's primary focus is centered on international events and how those events form the external policy of a state. Internal forces cannot produce external events, that being a reductionist theory (Waltz, 1979, p. 60). The research paper will deal with internal forces. Even if such a research is not agreeable in Neorealist perspective, those sensitive issues cannot be ignored.

## **1.2 Synopsis**

The introduction's aim is to inform the reader about the topic and the intentions which are meant for the research. The classical assumptions regarding Romania's history are also showed in order to prepare the reader for the upcoming research.

The first chapter will deal with the First World War and how Romania saw it as a chance to extend its territory. There will be a short description of what happened during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, how Romania was formed and how it became an independent country in 1878. Also external actors like Russia, Ottoman Empire and Austria that influenced internal political life will be described. Most of the politicians of that period were educated in France and Germany. (Boia, 2001, p. 93). That is why it is important to demonstrate in what circumstances western ideas arrived in what is today Romania. Then 1914-1916 period of time will be outlined in detail in order to have a clear image of why Romania chose an alliance with the Entente and not Central Powers.

In the second chapter the analysis of Romania's actions defined in the first chapter will take place. Using neorealism as primary theory an attempt will be made in order to discover the reasons behind the aggression of Romania on Austria-Hungary. Did Romania make an alliance with Austria-Hungary in order to betray it later or there was no alternative at that moment, other than to attack it? This question will find its answer in this chapter.

At the end of the second chapter a partial conclusion will be set in order to have an overview of what was found until then. This conclusion will not be finite as many matters can change during the research.

The third chapter will begin with an historical inquiry of the Interwar period and the evolution of Greater Romania after the Treaty of Trianon. Then the first years of the war will be carefully described so that all the details to be set for the analysis in the next chapter. Romanian traditional alliance with France and also the regional alliances with Poland and Yugoslavia will receive much attention as the answer to next question will be searched: Why did not Romania keep its

alliances with France, Poland and Yugoslavia and chose Germany instead? Which were the reasons for the alliance with Germany? The benefits and the consequences of this alliance will also be shown.

The fourth chapter will analyze the involvement of Romania in the Second World War and its aggressive policies toward Soviet Union. The next questions will be answered: How could extreme nationalism developed so fast after the First World War? Why did Romania failed to settle its border problems with USSR? Why did Romania continue its advancement deep within the Soviet Union after recovering the territories which were lost in 1940? It was purely a strategic decision to betray Germany and join the Allies? All those questions are crucial when trying to find out a proper answer for the matter at hand.

The conclusion will offer the results of the research regarding if are positive or not. There will also be an attempt to find out I which direction has Romania evolved both domestically and externally.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The research method that was chosen is qualitative research because the main purpose of this paper is to find out what has driven Romanian leaders into making alliances and pacts with great powers like Austria-Hungary in 1883 or The Third Reich in 1940. Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer noted: (1994), “Qualitative research is now used to explore and understand a diversity of social and public policy issues, either as an independent research strategy or in combination with some form of statistical inquiry. The wider use of qualitative methods has come about for a number of reasons but is underpinned by the persistent requirement in social policy fields to understand complex behaviors, needs, systems and cultures” (p. 173). Some methods as the interview cannot be used in this research but the memoirs will provide a closer look into the lives of the people who decided what direction Romania should take.

The case study research is a method with origins in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and as Robert K. Yin defined it (2003), “As a research strategy, the case study is used in many

situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (p. 1). Two case studies will be analyzed: the foreign policy of Romania around WWI and WWII. It can be argued that Romania should represent only a single case study. I tend to disagree as Romania from 1899 is an almost radically different comparative to Greater Romania in 1930. As an example, Romania in 1899 had a population of 5 million of which 92.2% were ethnic Romanians, while Romania in 1930 was a completely different state: a multiethnic one of which only 71.9% of the population declared themselves Romanians (Webb, 2008, p. 217). The case study of the topic at hand is an explanatory case study, which comprises of idiographic explanations and has a “theoretical dimension” (De Vaus, 2001, p. 221).

A case study description will be followed concentrated around how and why questions (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 545). The decision making process on how and why Romania conducted an almost aggressive foreign policy before, after and during the world wars will be made in order to present the case in different aspects (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 546). The explanatory research has as its main purpose in this paper to serve in finding out why a certain event happened in the way it did (Yin, 2009, p. 8-9).

#### **1.4 Theoretical Approach**

In his book first published in 1959, “Man, State and War”, K. Waltz describes three images of the world politics. While the first two emphasize the importance of leaders and internal economic or social system in causing wars, the third view relies on the anarchical structure of the international system (Waltz, 2002, p. 160).

The neo-realist ideals were clear from the very beginning. As Bieler noted (2017): “states are unitary, functionally similar actors. They are the only important actors in international politics; the international system is characterised by anarchy, the distribution of power capabilities is the main, system-level variable to explain state behaviour” (p. 3).

Different theories were considered for this paper but as stated in the introduction Neorealism was chosen because it seemed the most suited for the topic. As primary theoreticians and developers for Neorealism: Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer books will be used for this paper. As Anarchy the main characteristic that governs over IR in Neorealism there is a good starting point for this thesis. Romania was involved in different alliances in both wars but throughout that time

and from various reasons; the government chose to betray or simply ignore its allies. As Kenneth Waltz points there are more ways than the military power for a state to exert its influences in the international arena. Even if a state has no military power then such a state could use its economic capabilities (Waltz, p. 130). As Romania did not retain a great economic influence over the other neighboring countries, the big advantage in both wars was represented by the fact that territories invaded by Romania were at least 50% inhabited by ethnic Romanians. Those people were rather loyal to Romania than Austro-Hungary or USSR and were used in order to inflict chaos into the enemy camp.

As interdependence was used by Kenneth Waltz to describe how an economic event in US for example can have an impact on Eastern Europe. In his opinion, in the early twentieth century economic interdependence reached its zenith (Waltz, 1979, p. 140). Before and in the first phase of its existence Romania was easily overwhelmed by the economic might of the great powers. To counter these weaknesses Romanian governments tried to boost local businessmen by encouraging them to invest and develop heavy industry. This policy worked only partially. Romania was still a major agricultural country, becoming the second cereal exporter in the world around 1900 as well as the third in oil production. (Boia, 2001b, p. 95). Based on those facts mentioned above; the next question will be put: Did economic difficulties that came from Romania's neighboring countries like Austro-Hungary or Russia be a reason for its aggressive policies?

Waltz's defensive realism can be very well suited for Romania's situation during both wars. Still there are not enough facts in this stage of the research to suggest that only defensive realism could explain Romania's actions.

Mearsheimer's offensive realism seems at a first look not to be suited in explaining the actions of a minor power as Romania. As Mearsheimer himself putted when talking of bandwagoning as a strategy that cannot find its place in offensive realism: (Mearsheimer, 2001), "Bandwagoning is employed mainly by minor powers that stand alone against hostile great powers. They have no choice but to give in to the enemy, because they are weak and isolated. Good examples of bandwagoning are the decisions by Bulgaria and Romania to ally with Nazi Germany in the early stages of World War II and then shift their allegiance to the Soviet Union near the end of the war" (p.163). Even under these circumstances, offensive realism will take into account as

Romania tried in both wars at some time to take advantage and become a regional power in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

A theory such as neoliberalism is called reductionist by neo-realists. Put it straight forward, it means that such theory is simplistic one. As Waltz noted: (1979) “ Theories are reductionist or systemic, not according to a what they deal with, but according to how they arrange their materials. Reductionist theories explain international outcomes through elements and combinations of elements located at national or subnational levels. A reductionist theory is a theory about the behavior of parts. Once the theory that explains the behavior of the parts is fashioned, no further effort is required” (p. 61).

The Neorealist view of the world is concentrated around anarchy that shapes the international system. Neorealist scholars argue that the research of anarchy and its uncertainty is the one of the strong suits of the theory (Copeland, 2000).

The critique of Neorealism is built around the “obsession” to study the different sources of power. Neorealism is criticized by neoliberal scholars for ignoring important international institutions, norms and non-state actors (Cai, 2011). Confronted with these critique, neorealists responded by saying that neoliberals are being naïve when saying that norms and international institutions could play a defining role in avoiding the war. In the end, neorealists argue that states have only permanent interests and no permanent enemies or allies (Cai, 2011).

I consider neorealism to best suited theory for this research because of various reasons. Greater Romania was the outcome of the pre-war actions made by the Romanian state. Waltz noted that neo-realism is a theory that explains the international outcome of the actions made by states (Waltz, 1979). For example, Romania’s aggressive actions were forced upon itself by external factors such as the fear that states like Bulgaria or Austria-Hungary will emerge even more powerful after the war and will pose a threat to the already isolated Romanian state. Romania was involved in the war without its knowledge when the Ribentrop-Molotov Pact was signed. USSR was to annex Bessarabia which was then part of Romania (Hitchins, 1995, p. 445). In the WWII Romania was almost “forced” by its ally to participate at Operation Barbarossa. Romania participated at this campaign hoping to recover territories that were lost in 1940 (Henig, 2007, p. 97).



## **2. Literature Overview**

The selection of the literature could be put in three categories: general books regarding the wars, involvement of Romania in the wars, and memoirs which were used as primary sources. The literature is a mixed of world renown scholars and Romanian scholars in order to have better understanding and overview. Books of universal scholars like James Joll and R. J. Q. Adams but also Romanian ones like Lucian Boia and Irina Livezeanu will be used.

Lucian Boia's book *Romania: The Borderland of Europe* was of tremendous help when inquiring about Romania's recent past and events that were put in a new light, as he walked away from the nationalistic tone of the mainstream Romanian historians. As Boia noted: (2001) "What can I do myself but select and interpret in the light of my own opinions? At least I can try not to make excessive simplifications, and to explain as much as possible. Romania is certainly more 'normal' than the more extreme interpretations would make it seem. Of course, it has its specific characteristics. But these should not be thought of as absolutes. I doubt if there is such a thing as a 'typical Romanian'. Romanians differ among themselves, and at the same time they have much in common with people everywhere. The regions of Romania also present a varied picture. When all of these elements are brought together, the resulting synthesis will present certain characteristic traits – perhaps, for a Westerner, even oddities. There is no timeless Romania, however. It is my view that the country's distinctive characteristics are to be explained by history and by the current social situation. Today's Romania does not much resemble yesterday's. Nor will the Romania of tomorrow be much like that of today" (p. 10).

Keith Hitchins – "Romania 1866-1947" books contains very detailed description of the events that shaped Romania's history and uses a big amount of primary sources. That is why his book plays a central role in the research.

Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer's books offered precious debates for the analysis and their ideas influenced my personal opinions and helped me in the process of better understanding the Neorealism and its use for the research.

Most of the primary sources came from Romanian and foreign politicians. Memoirs and official documents will be used with the intention to have an insight as closer as possible to the events. The memoirs of the first King of Romania will offer a powerful explanation for Romania's neutrality during the first two years of the First World War. Memoirs of top politicians before and after the wars will be closely inspected as to have a clear view and detect possible mistakes or errors made by historians. At least two primary sources will be consulted when researching vital events as some politicians add or remove facts from memoirs in exchange for a beautiful legacy.

Secondary sources came from historians from Romania, Western Europe or America as sometimes opinions differ. It is not the purpose of this paper to become analyze a debate among scholars. Different books will help the research in discovering and analyzing facts as it happened.

## **2.1 Limitations**

The proposed research topic has certain limitations regarding the studied period of time and the use of only one theory.

First of all, to have a complete view over the foreign policy of Romania on a period that spans around 68 years is almost an impossible task to handle in only six months of research.

Furthermore, in order to have an extensive understanding of Romania's actions in international politics, the thesis will deal with an important amount of internal policies and debates that influenced the external policy. In the attempt to have a clear and a concise research, some relevant events may be shortened or only summary explained. Those shorten events will not receive proper attention mainly because of the limited research period and because it could alter other situations that were even more relevant for the thesis.

## **3. Historical perspective: Romania and its aggressive policies before and during World War I**

What was to become Romania were initially two different states under Ottoman suzerainty: Wallachia in the south and Moldova in the east. Romania gained its independence in 1878 following a war against the Ottoman Empire in which the young state participated alongside

Imperial Russia. In 1881 Romania became a kingdom and in 1883 joined the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany. The royal house of Romania was Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen and the first king of the country: Carol was a strong pro-german king, but most of the elite were Francophile. In 1914 king Carol died and was succeeded by his nephew: Ferdinand I. Romania joined the Entente in 1916 and attacked Austro-Hungary.

### **3.1 The founding of Romania and its political evolution**

A milestone in Romanian history is represented by the Russian influence over Wallachia and Moldavia which in the first place was positive because ottoman influence began to fade away. Until 1817 the language used in administration was greek and the church used Slavonic. This began to change very fast with both institutions using Romanian in wake of the troubles made by the greeks in the principalities during 1821 revolt which began in Moldavia (Armour, 2000, p. 163).

The modernization of Romania began even before its existence came into place. The war between Russia and the Turks from 1828-9 took place in Romanian lands: Wallachia and Moldavia. The principalities were occupied by the Russians until 1834. General Pavel Kyselyov (Kisseleff) was named governor. He and the boyars formulated the 'Reglement Organique' which acted as the first constitution in both territories. (Boia, 2001, p. 76). Even though Kisseleff's time in office was remarkable in terms of modernization and administration for the principalities; Romanian boyars began to fear that their lands will be annexed by Russia. Initially Romanians saw Russians as liberators from the Ottoman rule but after this episode gears began to arise (Isar, 2005, p. 21).

French influence and culture became widespread in principalities and Romanian nobles took and promoted values like nationalism, liberalism or human rights. Armour: "During the Russo-Turkish War of 1806–12, Russian troops were in occupation, the presence of the French-speaking noble officers among them paradoxically reinforcing the spread of French cultural influences, and hence nationalism, already under way among the Romanian elite" (p. 162). In 1829 the Ottoman Empire lost the war against Russia thus Wallachia and Moldavia came under Russian control. French influence came in the Danubian Principalities through Russia. Romanian nobles began to send their sons in France for studies instead of Turkey as it was the custom until

then (Hitchins, 1994, p. 4). In this way the French model was installed; Romanian high social class begun to speak and dress as the French did.

Russia lost its influence on the two principalities after the Crimean War in 1856 (Kellogg, 1995, p.138). This event proved to be decisive in Romanian history. The Russian protection was replaced with that of the great powers: Great Britain, France and Prussia.

After the war Romanian principalities situation was brought to the table during the Treaty of Paris. The Romanians were also consulted. Assemblies made up from all social classes decided for the unification of Wallachia and Moldova under a foreign prince. The great powers decided otherwise: the principalities were to be united in a very vague manner with each region choosing a local prince with different government, parliament and army (Boia, 2001, p. 79). In order to bypass this matter, Romanian assemblies in both principalities elected the same ruler in the person of Alexandru Ioan Cuza in 1859 (Armour, 2012 p. 163). Cuza managed to introduce important reforms and also convinced the great powers to accept one single government for both lands. The capital was settled in Bucharest and the name was changed from United Principalities into Romania. The country remained under Ottoman suzerainty. Cuza's reign came to an end in 1866 when he was deposed by an unlikely coalition led by conservatives and liberals (Hitchins, 1994, p. 11). The member of this coalition will form the parties that will dominate the political life of the country until 1918; the national liberal party and conservative party. The voting system was based on census thus the number of voters being very small it was easier for the two parties to hold the power (Hitchins, 1994, p. 20).

Leading Romanians politicians chose Philip of Flanders from the House of Belgium as the next prince but he refused. Then Karl (Carol) of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was chosen and he accepted. Before accepting Karl asked for the consent of Napoleon III and Bismarck and both of them agreed thus Karl becoming Prince of Romania on 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1866 (Armour, p. 165). The first years of Karl's reign were troubled. There was an attempt to remove him by Francophile and liberal politicians in 1871 (Bachman, 1989). However he managed to keep and secure his throne and he begun to modernize the country and the army in order to be ready when the time will come for war. Romania even though had complete control over its affairs it was still under ottoman suzerainty (Armour, 2012, p.165).

The new prince was a rather bizarre character for the Romanians as he was a serious, disciplined and devoted to his duties in contrast with the much bohemian country's elite. He is described perfectly by historian Lucian Boia (2001): "In the conditions of the time, Carol was the ideal monarch. He was punctual to an exasperating degree for Romanian politicians, who finally learned from him what punctuality meant. He was also extremely distant; he rarely offered his subjects his whole hand, but only one or two fingers, according to the importance he assigned to the person in question! He knew how to place himself high above everyone else. He was, in fact, just what the Romanians had wanted: a true Prince, of a different stuff from the boyars who had succeeded each other on the throne for centuries" (p. 89). Even though the new prince was a strong character; his powers were limited by a liberal constitution (Hitchins, 1994, p. 18).

After 1871 attempt to remove him Karl chose Lascăr Catargiu from the Conservative Party as prime-minister thus bringing stability for the next five years. The Conservative's rule proved to be harsh on the average Romanian: in 1872 an agrarian law which forced the peasants into working for their landlord under harsh conditions was established; also the conservatives enabled a law which allowed the government to remove local officials at will (Hitchins, 1994, p. 30).

The Liberals sought solutions to return to power and thus in 1875 founded the National Liberal Party. Their electoral basis was comprised of merchants, landowners and rich peasantry (Hitchins, 1994, p. 31). It worked and Liberals won 1876 elections.

In foreign policy both conservative and liberal governments tried to forge alliances with regional actors against the Ottoman Empire. Also Bulgarian revolutionaries who sought to establish a Bulgarian state were sheltered in Bucharest. A treaty of mutual defense with Serbia was signed on 20 January 1868 (Hitchins, 1994, p. 32). The governments and the King also cultivated good relations with the Great Powers particularly after the Franco-Prussian war from 1870-71 when Romania's patron was defeated. Support for Bulgarian independence movement was repudiated (Hitchins, 1994, p. 33).

Karl searched for an opportunity to achieve independence by war if necessary. This opportunity came in 1877 as Russia and the Ottoman Empire were on the brink of war. Russia and Romania signed a treaty which would allow Russian forces to enter Romania and attack Turkish Bulgaria (Armour, 2012, p.198). At first Romania was to support the Russian Army only with supplies

and ammunitions. As the war begun Russian troops were repulsed at Pleven by the Turks and the leader of the Russian army; Grand Duke Nicholas requested help from Prince Karl (Boia, 2001, p. 91). Karl and his ministers had a deep distrust of the Russians. This was seen during the negotiations under which Russian armies were to transit Romania. Writing to his PM during negotiations Karl said: (Jelavich, 1963), “My impression has always been that the day when we would back up the Russians on the battlefield or give them our assistance in any manner whatsoever, they would try to wipe us out or absorb us” (p. 263).

The Romanian and Russian armies under the leadership of Karl managed to break through the defense of Pleven and the Ottoman army surrendered after being cut off from the supply route. As the Russian troops advanced toward Sofia the Turks requested a truce. An armistice was accepted by the Turkish government on 31 January 1878 at Adrianople. No representative of Romania was invited and thus tensions begun to arise between Bucharest and Petersburg (Hitchins, 1994, p. 47). Romanian independence was recognized under the Treaty of San Stefano but Prince Karl and his were angered: Russia annexed Southern Bessarabia compensating Romania with northern Dobruja. Under the cooperation treaty signed before the war; Russia promised to respect Romania’s territorial integrity. This action angered Romanian politicians with the minister of foreign relations saying that Russia treats Romania as a conquered province (Hitchins, 1994, p. 48).

The Great Powers were not satisfied with the Treaty of San Stefano mainly because they feared that the creation of Greater Bulgaria under Russian control will threaten their interests in the region. New peace talks were called in Berlin (Boia, 2001, p. 92). The Treaty of Berlin recognized the independence of Romania but as showed in the map below; Southern Bessarabia was lost to Russia and Northern Dobruja was obtained (Hitchins, 1994, p. 50).



(Romania at the end of 1878)

After 1878 Romania faced new challenges regarding its economic and social future. In 1863 a group of young Romanian intellectuals founded conservative movement called Junimea or The Youth (Trencsenyi, 2016, p. 321). Junimea criticized the new liberal movement considering that is not enough just to copy the western institutions and implement them in the country. Titu Maiorescu was the founder of the movement and his forms without substance theory is still debated even today in the Romanian society. As in the words of Maiorescu (Trencsenyi, 2016) “the forms without substance not only fails to bring any benefits, but is downright damaging, because it destroys a powerful means of culture. Therefore, we shall say: it is better not to start any school than start a bad school, it is better not to have art galleries than have one which has no fine art; it would be better not to have bylaws, organizations, honorary members, and plain members of an association than to have them without having the associate spirit in the persons that constitute it; it would be better not to have an academy with its sections, solemn meetings, speeches with receptions, with academic journals for publications, than to have all this without the scientific maturity that is the only reason for its existence” (p. 323). The Junismists were not against western ideas; they were educated there and they embraced its cultural spectrum. Instead they were against the method of copy-paste western ideas and institutions without linking them to local ones. Lucian Boia sees the Junimea movement as being a reaction to the overwhelming French influence from Romanian intellectuals educated in Germany: (Boia, 2001), “The

supporters of the German model highlighted the order, rigour and stability which characterized German society; France, on the other hand, was the very image of instability, mingled perhaps with a dose of superficiality. Romania had emerged from its revolutionary phase and now had to quieten down, to settle on secure foundations; from this point of view, the German model seemed more convincing. And the King was German!” (p. 195).

The Junimea movement was an important chapter in early years of the Romanian state but the liberal order and French influence were to prevail at least until the 30’.

Romania became a kingdom in 1881 and entered in a period of relative stability for the next twenty years. In the Balkans the situation was far from being stable. Aided by Russia, Bulgaria started to plan its independence from the Ottoman Empire. In same time Serbia, Greece and eventually Bulgaria were all looking to extend their territory on the expense of the Ottomans.

### **3.2 Entering World War I: Neutrality and aggression on Austro-Hungary**

The World War One found Romania in a strange position. The public opinion was strongly Francophile while the king wanted for Romania to join Germany. The treaty signed in 1883 with Austro-Hungary was a defensive one and Romania refused to join the war by saying that Austro-Hungary was not attacked by anyone. King Karl died in 1916 and was succeeded by his nephew Ferdinand. The new monarch decided to join the allies hoping to obtain Transylvania (Boia, 2001, p. 96). This proved to be a disastrous decision on short term as most part of Romania was invaded and occupied by the Central Powers. Even under these hard circumstances Romania managed to win the war on the winning side and the Treaty of Versailles recognized the new borders. Greater Romania was created.

Romania did not involve in the First Balkan War that took place during October 1912 – May 1913.

Bulgaria was invaded in the Second Balkan War (29 June – 10 August 1913). Bulgaria was forced to cede southern Dobruja; which was part of its territory from the Black Sea to Romania. The Balkans War put at risk Romania’s alliance with Austro-Hungary and set the stage for the



future alliance with France (Hitchins, p. 149). Romania emerged from the war as a strong regional actor with a high boost of confidence (Hitchins, 1994, p. 153). This sentiment of superiority will have a negative effect in first months of the 1916.

The assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 started a series of discussions between King Karl who was supported by Germanophiles and wanted an alliance with the Central Powers against the majority of politicians and public opinion that were in favor of the Entente (Hitchins, 1994, p. 251). In the end it was decided at a Crown Council on 3 August that the country will remain neutral. Except Petre Carp who was a senior of the Conservative Party; no other politician supported the King. This decision was also influenced by Italy (Hitchins, 1994, p. 251). The Crown Council was an unofficial consultative body. The King had the right to declare war but he chose to respect the council decision. As an eye witness at the Crown Council, leading conservative Take Ionescu wrote in his memoirs that the king was sure of a German victory. As he noted, (1920) “When at the Crown Council of August 3, 1914, the King told us that by our refusal to allow him to enter the war at the side of the Central Empires we had destroyed the whole great work of the Roumanian renaissance, that we had ruined our country forever, and that the immediate future would show us how right he was, he was perfectly sincere. He was sure of a German victory, and King Charles was never one of those who can rise to the level of understanding that it is better to be beaten in the defense of right than to follow the call of triumphant wrong” (p. 132).

The Liberal Government tried to modernize the army and prepare for war but the lack of a proper industry and skilled workers the only solution was to buy military equipment from other countries (Hitchins, 1994, p. 258).

King Karl died in October 1914 and was succeeded by his nephew Ferdinand (Boia, 2001, p. 98). Prime-minister Ionel Bratianu carefully and slowly maneuvered the King to an alliance with the Entente and a convention with France, Russia and Great Britain was signed in August 1916. The territories inhabited by Romanians from Austro-Hungary were to become part of Romania after the war. (Boia, 2001, p. 99). On the night of August 27/28 Romania attacked Austro-Hungary and begun its advance into Transylvania but as Bulgaria with German aid attacked the defensive lines of the Danube, the campaign turned into a fiasco (Hitchins, 1994, p. 263). The Romanian army was inferior in both numbers and fire power in front of the combined armies of Bulgaria,

Germany and Austro-Hungary (Armour, 2012, p. 242). The King and the government retreated in the north east of the country at Iasi. Bucharest was occupied by German and Bulgarian troops on 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1916 (Hitchins, 1994, p. 265).

With the southern part of the country occupied; the government retired in the north east and defensive live was established in the former frontier of Wallachia with Moldavia by January 1917. The situation was almost disastrous the new capital of Iasi as general Averescu then Chief of Staff of the Army noted in his diary: (1935), “The population is dying of starvation and cold. The number of sick people is growing and we are facing a typhus epidemic. The number of infected people is growing because sick people are meeting with those who are coming from the front line. I dispatched the army to help the civilian population” (pp. 135-136).

In 1917 the Romanian Army won a series of defensive battles at Marasesti and Marasti but once with the Russian Revolution the country lost its primary ally and was surrounded by enemies from every direction; thus a separate peace with the Central Powers was signed in Bucharest in May 1918 (Boia, 2001, p. 99).

The armistice called by Germany on 11<sup>th</sup> of November prompted Romania to rejoin the war and thus as the Germans left the occupied zone; Romanian troops took their place and begun its advancement in Transylvania (Hitchins, 1994, p. 279). A war with Hungary for Transylvania was fought until the collapse of Budapest on 6 August 1919; Greater Romania was created after the decision of the Romanians from Austro-Hungary and Russia to join their Fatherland was confirmed by the Treaties of Versailles and Trianon (Boia, 2001, p. 100).



[\(Greater Romania in 1918\)](#)

#### 4. The analysis: Romania's foreign policy before and during First World War

Using a Neorealist perspective the foreign policy of Romania will be analyzed mainly by using the works of renowned researchers as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. As the historical context was described in the previous chapter; this part will deal mostly with Neorealism and if Romania conducted a foreign policy according to such a theory.

The concept of anarchy in Waltz's view is based on the fact that the international system does not have a hierarchy and thus the system is anarchic (Waltz, 1979, p. 88). The Romanian state was founded on such system. Even if the great powers specifically requested that Wallachia and Moldova should have different rulers, the assemblies chose Alexandru Ioan Cuza as prince of both principalities. The fact that Austria was losing the Italian War helped the Romanian cause as the rest of the great powers were preparing for negotiations and simply chose to ignore or neglect what happened (Armour, 2012, p. 112). In doing so, the Romanians acted against the Great Powers.

"In anarchy, states form alliances to protect themselves. Their conduct is determined by the threats they perceive, and the power of others is merely one element in their calculations (albeit an important one). The power of other states can be either a liability or an asset, depending on where it is located, what it can do, and how it is used" (Walt, 1997, para. 10). Romania chose an alliance with Austria-Hungary in order to protect itself from Russia but the alliance proved to be a liability for Austria-Hungary on the long term (Armour, 2012, p. 240). The alliance with Austria-Hungary was made in 1883 at the initiative of Bismarck and was meant to halt the advancing influence of Russia in the Balkans (Hitchins, 1994, p. 142). This alliance lasted until Romania decided that it won't intervene in the Serbian affair.

Interdependence as described by Waltz could increase the influence of a state onto another if one state is depending on the other to provide it with different goods; or if a state is also specialized on producing goods just in a certain field (Waltz, 1979, p. 106). Similar to other countries in Eastern Europe; Romania's economy was predominantly agrarian (Armour, 2012, p. 241). This meant that it was in many ways at the mercy of powerful neighbors like Austria-Hungary or Russia.

In neorealism self-help system can be used in order for great powers to threaten weak powers with war against other weak power but usually weaker powers join forces against the stronger opponent as Waltz says: (1974) "In self-help system, external forces propel weaker powers toward one other. Weaker parties, our theory predicts incline to combine to offset the strength of the stronger" (p. 202). It is possible for this phrase to apply to Romania in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the great powers treated the Balkan countries like client states (Armour, 2012, p. 398). But this definition could not have been applied in some cases: the Balkan states indeed

make an alliance against the Ottoman Empire but quickly turned against each other when disagreements on how the new acquired territory will be divided aroused (Armour, 2012, p. 399).

Mearsheimer has a more direct approach on the self-help: (Mearsheimer, 2001), "Each state tends to see itself as vulnerable and alone, and therefore it aims to provide for its own survival. In international politics, God helps those who help themselves. This emphasis on self-help does not preclude states from forming alliances. But alliances are only temporary marriages of convenience: today's alliance partner might be tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy might be tomorrow's alliance partner" (p. 33). Romania did not involve in the First Balkan War (8 October 1912-30 May 1913) and started negotiations with Bulgaria. Romania was to receive a relatively small part of Bulgarian territory and Bulgaria had to chance to extend its border on the expense of the Ottoman Empire. When the negotiations failed, Romania attacked Bulgaria in the Second Balkan War that started on 29 June 1913 (Hitchins, 1994, pp. 152-153). It was a naïve mistake made by Romania as Bulgaria was a potential ally and was now turned into a bitter enemy that will attack Romania in 1916 (Niculae, 2016, p. 626). The Prime-Minister Bratianu received assurances from Sofia that Bulgaria will not attack Romania if the government in Bucharest declares war on Austria-Hungary. It was a trick and Bulgaria declared war and attacked the Danube frontier four days after Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary (Niculae, 2016, p. 627).

Mearsheimer (2001) noted, "The stronger a state is relative to its potential rivals, the less likely it is that any of those rivals will attack it and threaten its survival. Weaker states will be reluctant to pick fights with more powerful states because the weaker states are likely to suffer military defeat" (p. 33). This statement is to a certain point similar with Romania's position of neutrality in the first two years of war. Even if the majority of the politicians in Bucharest wanted to join the Entente; there was no shame in waiting to see who is going to win between Austria-Hungary and Russia (Armour, 2012, p. 245). As Austria-Hungary was losing in the first months of the war; it became clear that Russia has the upper hand. Still it was too soon to call as Russia was losing against Germany (King, 1972, p. 50).

#### **4.1 Potential IR theories that could explain Romania's foreign policy better than Neorealism**

While Neorealism seems to be the most suited theory for the topic at hand, other theories such as neoliberalism and neoclassical realism. This part intends to explore how and why other IR theories would have been better suited for the topic or not.

According to Zakaria (2008), "A further complication: when I write of the rise of nationalism, I am describing a broader phenomenon—the assertion of identity. The nation-state is a relatively new invention, often no more than a hundred years old. Much older are the religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups that live within nationstates. And these bonds have stayed strong, in fact grown, as economic interdependence has deepened. In Europe, the Flemish and French in Belgium remain as distinct as ever" (p. 38). If this definition would be applied on Romania's situation before WW1; then it could be said that even if Austria-Hungary developed itself, Romanians within the empire obtained closer links with their nationals in Romania. But just how important was nationalism in Prewar Romania? It could be said that nationalism was a central part of the Romanian political class with every party claiming its honest and powerful adherence to the ideals of the nation: to unify all Romanians into one single state. While this credo was not always the official one as it would have upset countries like Austria-Hungary and Russia. Instead, those ideas were perpetuated by the media and non-political influencers. Since its creation Romania had laws that excluded foreigners from political life, mostly the Jews. Naturalization wasn't possible because of their faith. Only the intervention of the great powers changed this fact (Livezeanu, 1995, p. 192).

Another neoclassical realist, Gideon Rose noted: (1998): "Foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being. This means that over the short to medium term countries' foreign policies may not necessarily track objective material power trends closely or continuously. Furthermore, those leaders and elites do not always have complete freedom to extract and direct national resources as they might wish" (p. 147). Indeed, for most part of its first 50 years, Romania was at mercy of industrialized countries like Germany or Austria-Hungary. In 1880, as a condition to recognize Romanian Independence, Bismarck

urged King Karl I to settle the dispute with German investors that were building the railways. Needless to say, it was a bad business for the Romanian government (Hitchins, 1994, p. 51).

Rose's critique of neorealism's argument that physical resources are decisive when talking about a state's power is meant to promote neoclassical realism because as he says, there are more than just resources that contribute to a country's influence in the international affairs. Even if neorealism does not ignore the internal influencers within a state, it has a tendency to concentrate more on how a state acts on the international arena (Rose, 1998, p. 149).

As the natural adversary of neorealism, neoliberalism deserves its spot on the list. First of all, the reason that excluded neoliberalism from being the main theory of this paper is: the institutionalism which stays at base of neoliberalism. This concept states the importance of international institutions such as "transnationally and transgovernmentally" businesses and alliances which shape the international system (Keohane and Nye, 2012, p. 29). This concept could hardly be applied in Romania's case before WWI because the country was not developed enough in order to be affected by such institutions. The foreign investments were rare and had almost no influence on the life of average Romanian. Another aspect against the use of neoliberalism for the subject at hand is the lacking of international institutions at the time such as the League of Nations. It was simply no higher power to appeal in case of a threat from a great power; the only possible reaction was to woo a great power for help as it happened when Romania successfully appealed to France in order to get Dobruja after the Independence War of 1878 as a compensation for the loss of southern Bessarabia to Russia (Damean, 2011, p. 106).

## **5. Historical perspective: Romania and its aggressive policies before and during World War II**

The creation of Greater Romania was made with huge costs suffered by the local population, which was composed mostly of peasants. This chapter will look into the Interwar Romanian and how its society and elites developed and prepared for the Second World War. The rise of the authoritarian rightist regime of King Karl II (Carol II), the fascist Iron Guard and Marshal Antonescu's regime and alliance with Nazi Germany will be detailed.

The military deaths after WWI were around 250,000 but the number of civilian deaths was even higher: 430.000 died because of diseases and lack of food (Mougel, 2011, p. 10).

The Interwar Romania was a totally different country: its territory was double reaching 295,000 sq km and the population grew from 9 to 18 million, from which only 71.9 percent were ethnic Romanians (Boia, 2001, p. 102). Greater Romania was a strong centralized state as written in 1923 constitution, which was the work of the liberals in opposition with Romanian politicians that favoured a federal system (Dragulin, 2013). Universal male suffrage was established. The two-party system ended because the conservatives lost their electoral power and only the National-Liberals managed to keep their influence. The new rival for the Liberals was the National Peasant Party which was ruled by Romanian inhabitants of Transylvania (Boia, 2001, p. 103). The new electoral law provoked political instability as often no party was able to secure a strong majority in order to govern.

Romania remained a mostly agricultural country with 80% of its population living in the countryside. As Hitchins noted (1994): “On the one hand, her economic and social structure preserved in broad outline its prewar configuration. Agriculture remained the foundation of the country's economy, and its organization changed but little, despite an extensive land reform. The great majority of the population continued to live in the countryside and to draw its income primarily from agriculture. In international relations Rumania remained dependent on the West as a market for her agricultural products and raw materials and as a source of many kinds of manufactured goods and investment capital” (p. 335).

In the first ten years of Interwar Romania, the Liberals maintained the power for most of the time. Their economic view was that Romania must develop “through itself” and that is why they encouraged the development of the industry sector. New universities were founded as new specialists were required (Scurtu, 2005, p. 16). Between 1923-1938 the Romanian industry grew with 5.4% per year (Scurtu, 2005, p. 17). Romania’s economy suffered during the Great Crisis as politicians failed to find successful solutions. Some minor successes were registered when the government invested in armament as new jobs were created and the industry flourished (Murgescu, 2007, p. 270).



## **5.1 Interwar period and the rise of fascism**

In the first chapter, the historical perspective contained a strongly descriptive view. This chapter will take a more debatable approach of the historical perspective. The purpose of this part is to offer powerful starting points for the analysis in the next chapter. Since the second part of the 19th century Romanian scholars, regarding their background had put the next questions: What is the mission of the Romanian people? What makes them unique? Which model should the Romanian nation use: western or oriental? Where lies the spirit of the Romanians: in the urban or the rural? Should there be a special model created by the Romanian people for their development? (Verdery, 1995, p. 110). These questions were part of the main debate within Greater Romania. The pro-western adherents concluded that Romania should follow this path because the Romanian people originated from Ancient Rome, the orientalist argued that Orthodox Church and Thracian legacy were strong enough reasons for this path, while a third movement called indigenism agreed that Romanians were Dacians thus being unique and different from western or eastern values except some influences from Slavs and Thracians (Verdery, 1995, p. 111). These questions were far from getting an answer in Interwar Romania as the debate stretched around most of the first half of the 20th century without finding a proper answer. The scholars had powerful arguments for their theories: for example, the poet Lucian Blaga, an indigenist and orientalist who was arguing: “We think ourselves merely latins – lucid, rational, temperate, lovers of classical form but willy – nilly, we are more than that. A significant percent of Slavic and Thracian blood seethes in our veins. The Romanian spirit may be dominated by Latinity, a peaceful and cultured force, but we have also a rich latent Thraco-Slavic foundation” (Verdery, 1995, p. 112). Instead, pro-westerner literary critic, Gabriel Ibraileanu, argued: “In the twentieth century, history has set Romanians the following problem: will Romania continue to be a semi-asiatic, oriental country or will enter the ranks of European peoples and European culture. This problem has been answered by history. For various reasons, Romania could not exempt itself from the European influence [that] penetrated into our country. It penetrated through a very fact of its superiority” (Verdery, 1995, p. 113). The examples are boundless, with scholars often arguing over and over again without a unique solution prevailing.

Why is such a subject relevant for the research topic? This subject is relevant because political confrontations in Interwar Romania started from the question mentioned above.

The Interwar period is seen as a golden age in Romanian history: the urban population grew, more universities were founded, and the culture flourished. Nevertheless, Romania remained a mostly agricultural country where just 57% of the population could read and only 1.6% studied at a university (Boia, 2001b, p. 107). Romania continued its development at a slow pace even when compared with countries like Hungary or Czechoslovakia.

Romania's main economic force was still represented by agricultural production which has suffered after the war. As Croft noted: (2006) "Low productivity was caused by many factors, including the limited use of manures and fertilizers, primitive crop-rotation practices, the low quality of livestock, backward techniques of cultivation, shortage of implements and farm machinery – though many farms were no doubt too small to use equipment effectively – and of course the prevalence of strip farming. Shortage of capital and credit and the burden of taxation acted as further disincentives to improvement and modernization" (p. 86). These problems were to be part of the everyday life of Interwar Romania as mainstream politicians failed to provide with the much need policies for the modernization of agriculture. In turn, the peasants turned their hopes to populists, fascists and authoritarian personalities and movements of the era.

The politics of Interwar Romania was dominated by the confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism and fascism. The main political forces were the National Liberal and the National-Peasants Party (Hitchins, 1995, p. 377). The Liberals were rather progressive conservatives than liberals; nevertheless their model was France (Webb, 2006, p. 27).

It worth noting the word National that was part in both parties names. The Romanian nationalism before WWI was preoccupied with educating and elevating the low status of the peasants who revolted against their landlords in multiple occasions (Chiorpec, 2016). This changed after the war. As Livezeanu (1995) noted "The primary task of postwar Romanian nationalism was to fuse

the recently unified Romanian provinces by nationalizing their elites, cultural institutions, and urban areas, and by Romanizing or excluding ethnically non-Romanian population. In part, the peasant question had been alleviated by the land reform; in part, it was obscured by the pressing need to realize the political unification. Nationalism thus took on political problems instead of social ones, although the political issues that gained primacy in the interwar period did not in themselves lack social content. Most immediately this nationalism focused on the Jews” (Livezeanu, 1995, pp. 192-193). Romania was not a fully developed democracy as the main parties often cheated during the elections. The Party which was in power, usually it had the biggest chances of winning the elections. In this sense, Romania’s Parliament was more or less just a shadow of its western counterparts (Hitchins, 1995, p. 379). The universal male suffrage opened the life for other political entities than the mainstream parties (Hitchins, 1995, p. 382). While this change could be seen as positive factor, there was also a negative one. The undereducated Romanians began to search their salvation in the hands of the radical nationalist movements such as the Iron Guard or even the Communist Party. Nevertheless, for the most time in interwar Romania, the peasants voted for the traditional democratic parties. The first ten years of Greater Romania were dominated by the National-Liberal Party which wrote a new constitution that was approved in 1923 (Grozoiu, 2016, p. 85). The Liberal’s constitutional project was built around the need of as strong centralized state where the individual liberties were restrained (Hitchins, 1995, p. 409). The opposition militated for more liberty in both administration and individual liberty, but no success was obtained (Hitchins, 1995, p. 410). New parties did not win major victories in the elections before the crisis of 1929-33.

Both Liberal and Peasants parties maintained a close relation with western countries. France remained Romania’s main ally. In order to counter revisionist states like Hungary and Bulgaria, Romania took part in regional alliances that were meant to keep the status quo. Little Entente was formed in 1920 by Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia (Scurtu, 2005, p. 61). It was targeted against Hungary. A similar treaty called the Balkan pact was signed in 1934 by Romania, Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia. Romania also had a military alliance with Poland which was targeted against the Soviet Union. This latter alliance had a structural problem. Poland wanted Romanian assistance in case of military invasion from Germany. Romania did not agree as USSR was considered to be great threat (Scurtu, 2005, p. 63).

There were strong fascist movements such the Iron Guard or the Nationalist Democratic Party of historian Nicolae Iorga, but these parties did not win more the ten percent in the elections (Weiner and Ozbudun, 1987, p. 394).

The rise of the Iron Guard which was a fascist religious movement begun in the 20' but made its marks only after 1930. The Iron Guard popularity was built around the charismatic leadership of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Payne, 1995, 280). The leader of the Iron Guard was one of the most notorious politicians from Interwar Romania. While Codreanu was not the only nationalist figure that influenced the political life of Romania, his legacy endured even under the communist regime. He promoted anti-Semitism, religiosity and sought to replace the democracy perpetuated under the Constitution of 1923 (Payne, 1995, 281).

Codreanu never obtained power; his greatest achievement was when he became Member of the Parliament. A dignity which he didn't enjoy, as he said in many occasions, also admitting that he didn't have the oratorical skills when fighting against mainstream politicians: *I was alone in the midst of an enemy world. I lacked the experience of this parliamentary life and the talent of democratic oratory which is full of empty, but pompous, shiny phraseology, of mirror-studied gestures and a large dose of impertinence* (Codreanu, 1976 p. 210,).

As Romania was one of the most anti-Semitic countries at that time (Brustein, p. 12, 2003) it was not hard for Codreanu and the Iron Guard to gather support. But his popularity did not come only from the anti-Semitism of the movement he founded. He also promoted a much closer relation with the Orthodox Church and despised the mainstream political class of the country. He saw in them the reasons of Romania's economic problems, because they allowed Jews to become the dominant force in commerce. (Payne, 1995, p. 282). Codreanu portrayed himself and his movement as the only way to save the Romanian state in front of its imminent destruction.

Codreanu's movement was from beginning against democracy. He saw democracy as a tool used by the ruling class in order to gain wealth and keep the poor under control. He suggested purely Romanian parties divide Romanians instead of uniting them. Also he pointed out what in his view were the main weaknesses of the democratic state: Jews who could take advantage by using the system and lack of development caused by governments unable to stay in power more than a few years (Codreanu, 1976, p. 212). Indeed interwar Romania was for the biggest part of its

existence ruled by parties who kept power only for one or two years. This instability helped Codreanu and his movement in their quest for support. Youth, peasants, students and even urban residents voted for the Iron Guard. Those people were tired by the old parties' promises and hoped that Codreanu and his movement could solve the harsh economic conditions that the country endured after the Great War (Payne, 1995, p. 282). An interesting fact about the Iron Guard is how they achieved their greatest electoral success in 1937. Even if the country recovered after the economic crisis, the Iron Guard managed to increase its popularity (Muhlberger, p. 291). Their political achievements were not bound only by promises made in front of the electorate. Codreanu initiated a project in order to help the Romanian merchants who had economic difficulties. Also the Legion organized big charity in the cities. They gave free food and distributed different goods to the poor people. This "marketing" project worked, common people and even illustrious intellectuals joined their ranks.

He believed in constructing a Romanian state whose values would include: faith, hard work, patriotism and spiritual purity (Brustein, 2003, p. 59). Those values were polluted by the Jews and by the elite whose Codreanu perceived as puppets manipulated by Judaism and its allies: bankers and politicians. Codreanu linked the bolshevism to Jews (Brustein, 2003, p. 60). This rhetoric worked especially in regions of Romania that were part of the Russian Empire. He considered them aliens who were polluting the soul of the Romanians (Muhlberger, p. 292).

Codreanu's charisma was very different from ones of other fascist leaders from his time. He was not a good public speaker and he could not manipulate the masses as Hitler or Mussolini. For those reasons every public appearance was carefully planned. As historian Nicholas Nagy-Talavera remarked after he met Codreanu: "Charisma is an inadequate word to define the strange force that emanated from this man. He was more aptly simply part of the forests, of the mountains, of the storms on the snow-covered peaks of the Carpathians, and of the lakes and rivers. And so he stood amid the crowd, silently. He had no need to speak" (Scurtu, 2005, p.78). Codreanu's favourite way of communicating was sending letters to his political rivals. Those letters were detailedly made in order not to threaten directly the receiver. He always used "we" when addressing public personalities. That's because he wanted to point how important he and his movement are and how big their power is.

The Iron Guard was a unique fascist movement compared with the rest of Europe. Its power came from the charisma of Codreanu at first, but it developed even after his death. Codreanu was killed by the order of King Karl II in 1938. Horia Sima tried to keep the movement unified, but he did not achieve this goal. Still, Sima was able to successfully rule the Legion until it was ousted from power under Antonescu regime (Payne, 1995, p. 288).

## **5.2 The alliance with the Third Reich and its consequences**

The alliance with Nazi Germany was a natural one. It was dictated by rationality as Romania's aims when the war began was at first to preserve its territory, and then to recover the lost territory and keep its existence. The Romanian political elite sought to preserve the independence of the country. Romania's allies: France and Poland were defeated by 1940. Germany and the Soviet Union remained the only choices. The Soviet Union was seen as an aggressor when it took Bessarabia and Bucovina in 1940. Germany was seen as the rising power, and the Romanian leader, Ion Antonescu chose Hitler as he was certain that the Reich will emerge victoriously from the war (Scurtu, 2005, p. 79).

In order to have a wider view of Romania's alliance with Nazi Germany, a closer insight into Antonescu upbringing is necessary. Dennis Deletant made a short but clear description of him and his regime: (2006) "While he inherited the Axis alignment, this is not to say that he saw an alternative to it, and bore no responsibility for the internal political chaos he was called on to manage. This is the major paradox of his regime. There were others, however. He was a war criminal who sent tens of thousands of Jews to their death in Transnistria, and yet he refused to send other Romanian Jews to the death camps in Poland. He was an anti-Semite and yet, despite the deportations to Transnistria, more Jews survived under his rule than in any other country within Axis Europe. While up to 300,000 Jews were victims of Antonescu's policies, some 375,000 Jews are estimated to have survived, principally in Wallachia, Moldavia and southern Transylvania. For five months he led a Fascist-style government, yet in January 1941 he removed that government after three days of street fighting and installed a military dictatorship" (p. 2).

Antonescu took part in the battles of the WWI and became a popular figure in Interwar Romania mainly because of his association with the Iron Guard. He was also a political rival of King Karl II who took the throne in 1930. As King, Karl wanted to rule in an authoritarian way. His policies led to clashes with the mainstream parties in the first years of his reign. Karl tried to make an alliance with Hitler and he imitated the Fuhrer by initiating racial laws similar with those established by Nazi Germany in 1935 at Nuremberg (Ionescu, 2015, p. 36). Those actions did not have the expected results as Romania was forced by USSR and Germany to cede Bessarabia, Northern Transylvania, the southern part of Dobruja in 1940.



Territorial losses suffered by Romania in 1940 are in light pink.

Those events led to a political crisis and King Carol II named Antonescu as prime-minister. Instead of helping the king, Antonescu forced Carol to abdicate and then named himself Conducator, the equivalent of Fuhrer and granted upon himself the title of Marshal of Romania (Boia, 200, p. 105). King Carol was succeeded by his young son, Michael who served only in a ceremonial role,

the real power being in the hands of Antonescu (Scurtu, 2005, p. 87). General Antonescu asked the mainstream parties: the liberals and the national peasants to form the government with him, but he was declined (Scurtu, 2005, p. 89). He then appeal to the Iron Guard that was under the leadership of Horia Sima. The Guard accepted and thus with Antonescu as prime-minister and Horia Sima as his deputy, the national-legionary state was declared in September 1940 (Chiriac, 2008, p. 22). The government was formed by military and guardists.

Antonescu sought to cultivate good relations with Germany and visited Hitler on 22 November 1940. It was the first meeting between the two leaders. Antonescu tried to persuade Hitler to revoke the Second Vienna Award from 1940, but Hitler only said the borders will not be the same after the war (Deletant, 2006, p. 62). Antonescu and the Iron Guard did not have a very good relationship; there was a continuous struggle to obtain Hitler's favor (Chiriac, 2008, p. 23). Hitler preferred Antonescu because he was head of the army and was seen as a man who can keep the order. Romania was of strategical importance for the Reich as it was the main oil supplier for the Wehrmacht (Scurtu, 2005, p. 90). Hitler was also considering using the Romanian army for the upcoming Operation Barbarossa. The conflict between Antonescu and Guard took a new shape when Antonescu dismissed the legionary minister of foreign affairs. The legionary minister was accused of misinforming the general regarding the actions of the German minister in Bucharest. Antonescu requested a meeting with Hitler around 10 January 1940 in order to settle the dispute. Sima was also invited but refused to go as he was afraid of being sidelined by Antonescu (Deletant, 2006, p. 63). It was a serious political mistake made by Sima and a significant gain for Antonescu. Hitler subtly suggested Antonescu to take the leadership of the Guard or even to remove it from power if needed. Antonescu took the opportunity provided by Hitler and tried to remove the legionary minister of interior for alleged incompetence over the murder of a German officer in Bucharest. The minister of interior and other dismissed officials simply refused to leave their posts. The event became known as the Legionnaires' rebellion and it took place in 21-21 of January 1941 (Scurtu, 2005, p. 91). The rebellion was quickly crushed by the military with the remaining leaders taking refuge in Germany. A new cabinet was appointed on 27 January 1941 made almost entirely of military officers (Deletant, 2006, p. 69).

When Operation Barbarossa commenced on 22 June 1941 Romania invaded the Soviet Union alongside Germany. Romania recovered Bessarabia, then occupied and annexed Transnistria, a



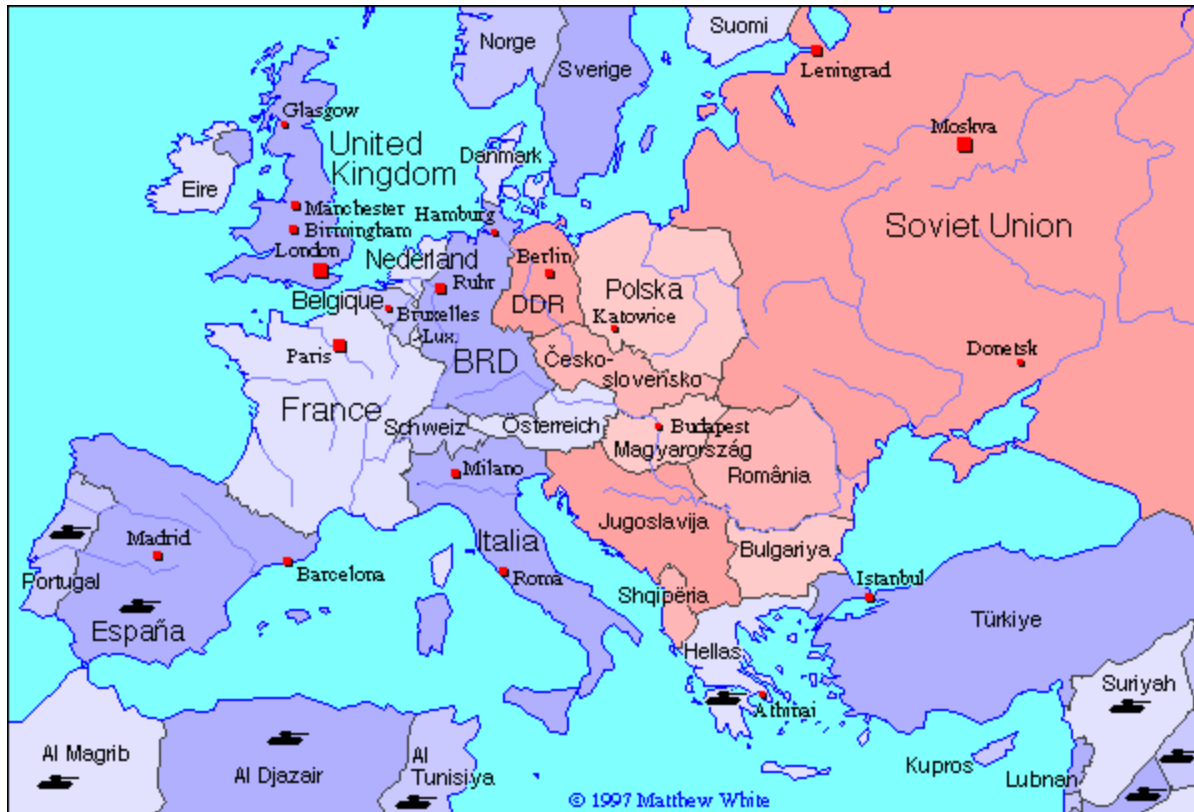
territory which was never part of Romania, and containing a population mostly made up of Slavs.



Romania in July 1941

The Russian campaign proved to be a disaster for the Romanian Army as more than 155,854 casualties only at Stalingrad alone (Axworthy, 1991, p. 18). Those disasters and the approaching of the Red Army to the Romanian borders led to a growing opposition. King Michael and the leaders of the Liberal and National Peasant Parties began to plot a coup against Antonescu (Scurtu, 2008, p. 95). At first the opposition tried to persuade Antonescu to make peace with the Allies. Antonescu agreed but he expressed doubts that such a peace could be achieved without a strong support from a great power. This power was to be Italy. Antonescu and his government tried to persuade Italy in order for both countries to leave the war together. As Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister noted, Mussolini did not agree with this kind of action (2001) “Taking my cue from Bova’s report I told the Duce what I thought. The Duce began by replying that ‘he

was sure that the Germans would hold tenaciously'. Then he listened to me attentively. He naturally refused Antonescu's offer, saying that 'the Danube is not the way we must follow'. But he did not react when at a certain point I said openly that we too should try to make some direct contact" (p. 568). The opposition met frequently to discuss a possible coup throughout 1944, and at the request of the Allies, the tiny and until that moment, insignificant Communist Party was included (Deletant, 2006, p. 238). King Michael and the opposition informed the Allies that they will launch the coup. The plan was simple. The king would invite Antonescu to the palace and request of him nothing more than conclude the armistice immediately and if the Marshal should refuse, then he would be arrested and demoted from office (Deletant, 2006, p. 238). The coup was set for 23 August. Antonescu met in that morning with a Gheorghe Bratianu, a liberal leader and said that he will agree with the armistice if he would have a letter from the main opposition leaders that would back his actions (Deletant, 2006, p. 239). Bratianu was to return with the letter by 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but he was unable to find the leaders of the two main parties. Antonescu refused to meet the king without this letter (Scurtu, 2005, p. 99). Finally, the Marshal was persuaded by a general within the royal palace to meet up with the king because the situation was critical. Antonescu refused to conclude the armistice without consulting Hitler, and the king asked if he would step out of his office (Scurtu, 2005, p. 100). When Antonescu refused, the king simply said that he is removed from office and left the room. The Marshal was immediately arrested and a new military government was named with the sole purpose of concluding the peace (Deletant, 2006, p.242). The consequences of Romania's alliance with Germany were hard both socially and politically. The military losses were heavy and almost in vain because Romania lost Bessarabia once again after the coup. Politically, Romania entered under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. Romania had to pay a huge debt both in money and resources to the soviets. Romania became a communist country for the 45 years. The traditional parties were quickly dissolved and the monarchy was abolished (Boia, 2001, p. 114). The partially positive aspect was the recovering of Northern Transylvania. Nevertheless, Northern Transylvania was used as bargain tool by the soviets in order to for the King to name a pro-communist government.



Postwar Romania

## 6. The analysis: Romania's policies before and during Second World War

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Romania tried to keep a closer relation with its western allies in the 30'. Romania was surrounded by countries that had territorial claims: Hungary wanted Transylvania, Bulgaria aimed for southern Dobrudja and USSR for Bessarabia. Even with Yugoslavia the relations were tensed in the aftermath of WWI because of a dispute over the historical region of Banat which was inhabited by Romanians and Serbs alike.

In Waltz's view, an international political outcome can be explained by using a theory, but not to explain economic or social realities. As Waltz noted (1979) "An international-political theory serves primarily to explain international-political outcomes. It also tells us something about the foreign policies of states and about their economic and other interactions. But saying that a theory about international economics tells us something about politics, and that a theory about international politics tells us something about economics, does not mean that one such theory can substitute for the other. In telling us something about living beings, chemistry does not displace

biology” (p. 39). It could be argued as discussed earlier, that Romania’s foreign policy in the aftermath of the Great War was in a direct connection with the conflict itself. In other words, Romania was guided toward an alliance with Poland not necessary by economic or social factors within both governments. The international political evolutions led to such development.

Palmer, Morgan and Clifton developed a theory on the analysis of foreign relation which may seem simplistic at a first view. As they noted “The two-good theory, of course, assumes that states pursue two things— we will call them change and maintenance— through their international behavior and component foreign policies and that they allocate foreign policy resources as efficiently as possible to maximize their utility. That simple statement contains the central components of the theory; but, as we will show, it leads to a large number of implications. Here we introduce some of the basic elements of the theory” (p. 19). Interwar Romania was interested in keeping the status quo. In the same time, Hungary and the Soviet Union were not. Germany was also interested in changing the provisions of the Versailles treaty and so keeping good relations with Hungary and USSR came naturally as all those countries had conducted a revisionist policy. By applying this theory to Interwar Europe, then anarchy is the word to describe the international relations of those times. The League of Nations main purpose was to “contain” the anarchy within the system and bring order, but it did not happen. Why? No super national entity could have contained a great power as was proven when Germany left the league without any repercussion in 1938 (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 308).

The analysis will be concentrated mostly around Waltz’s offensive realism and Mearsheimer defensive realism and its critique. As May, Rosecrance and Steiner noted, “Defensive realism,” in contrast, is less certain that nations have to expand “offensively.” They may find the status quo acceptable for short periods of time. But they can never reach a lasting accommodation” (p. 3).

### **6.1 Could Neorealism give a proper explanation for the actions of Romania against Soviet Union in 1941?**

Romania’s situation at the beginning of 1941 was not a good one both internal and external. Internally, the Romanian state was recovering after the unproductive rule of the Iron Guard. Externally, Romania was isolated between Germany and USSR. Diplomatic relations with Hitler’s Germany were poor before Antonescu came to power, and Hitler had a better

relationship with Hungary, Romania's traditional ally. While still maintaining diplomatic relationship with USSR, Marshal Antonescu was ready to commit his army to the upcoming invasion in order to recover Bessarabia. The connections with the west were almost non-existent after the fall of France in 1940, Romania's traditional ally.

Firstly, let's look at the war and its developing since 1939. Germany started the war by attacking Poland, but in 1941 it was almost impossible to control the chain of events that were about to happen. In order to have a proper understanding of the events, a neorealist perspective of power and war will be set. As Mearsheimer noted, Waltz's argues that states who act irrationally, tend to be punished by the International system, (2010) "Instead, Waltz relies on 'the process of selection', which means that 'those who conform to accepted and successful practices more often rise to the top', while those who do not 'fall by the wayside'. In essence, Waltz's theory is predicated on the assumption that states often ignore balance-of-power logic and act in non-strategic ways; when they do, the system punishes them. On the other hand, states that act rationally are usually rewarded for their smart behavior" (p. 242). The following questions has to be addressed: Did Germany act as an irrational or rational state in 1939? A possible answer is made by Rosecroce, (2010) "He undoubtedly hoped that when he crossed that normative line (as he did on March 15, 1939) the democracies would not act. Initially, they did not do so, despite their guarantees to Poland and Romania. When Hitler signed the non-aggression pact with Stalin on August 23, 1939, he believed the democracies could not act, even if they wanted to. They had no offensive strategy with which to threaten Germany and in fact depended on Stalin to do their fighting for them. Thus, in theory, they would have to hesitate even as Hitler ramped up the pressure on Poland and Colonel Beck. In a heroic act, however, Britain and France declared war on Germany without any idea of how Germany would be defeated. The two western allies would not aid Poland, and they were waiting for Germany to attack them. Unless Hitler had done so, the "phony war" might have been prolonged. The record to this point demonstrated the power irrationalities of Britain and the return to the "bulldog spirit" as much as any misconception on the part of Adolf Hitler "(p. 17). Germany was a great power, but acted irrationally. Those actions are in contrast with a neorealist perspective which says that a great power acts rationally. As Mearsheimer noted, "The fifth assumption is that great powers are rational actors. They are aware of their external environment and they think strategically about how to survive in it. In

particular, they consider the preferences of other states and how their own behavior is likely to affect the behavior of those other states, and how the behavior of those other states is likely to affect their own strategy for survival. Moreover, states pay attention to the long term as well as the immediate consequences of their actions” (p. 31). Germany did not manage to survive the war and as consequence, lost its status as a great power in the aftermath of 1945.

Departing from this question, another one more relevant for the research topic has to be made: Did Romania act as a rational or irrational actor in 1941? If Romania would have been a great power, then it would have acted irrationally in 1941 as did Germany. As the weaker power, Romania had no choice, other than to submit to great powers like Germany and USSR. In 1939 Romania submitted to USSR when it ceded Bessarabia and in 1941 submitted to Germany when it agreed not only to participate in the invasion of the USSR, but also to send troops at Stalingrad. From a political point of view it was not rational move to send troops at Stalingrad after Romania recovered its lost territories in the east. The only argument was a military principle, the principle of destroying your enemy military capabilities. In my opinion, the military reason was just an excuse for the political reality of Europe. Romania was obliged to submit to the power of Germany. Not only that, but it was in its interest to invade USSR in order to recover the territories lost in 1939. The fact that Romania shifted from an alliance with Germany to one with USSR when the war reached its borders, it's a natural one when talking of a weak state as Romania was in 1941 and 1944(Boia, 2001, p. 98). As Mearsheimer noted, (2001) “Bandwagoning is a strategy for the weak. Its underlying assumption is that if a state is badly outgunned by a rival, it makes no sense to resist its demands, because that adversary will take what it wants by force anyway and inflict considerable punishment in the process” (p. 163). There two demands in Romania's case: The demand of territorial concessions made by USSR in 1939 and the demand made by Germany for oil and soldiers for the invasion in 1941. Both demands were met by Romania. Romania acted irrationally but not from its own will, but through the will of Germany which Romania chose to follow almost blindly. Romanian minister in Moscow recalled how Molotov said to him during their last meeting in June 1941 that a solution for Bessarabia could have been found in order to avoid the war (Gafencu, 2008, p. 85). Even so, it was too late for Romania to turn its back on Germany at that point. Neo-realism did provide to some extent satisfactory answers regarding Romania's actions against the Soviet Union. The relation between power and war as explained by Waltz offered a

strong argument in favour of his “process of selection” concept, while Mearsheimer argument favouring rational actors failed when analysing the cases of Germany and Romania. Mearsheimer’s “bandwagoing” was successfully applied when discussing Romania’s decision of joining Germany against USSR.

## **6.2 Romania and Nazi Germany: an alliance based on fear or interests?**

The Ribentropp Molotov pact paved the way for what was to become the spheres of influence shared by Germany and USSR and Eastern Europe. Romania came under the influence of Germany (Coalson, 2009).

Fear is not enough to control the international relations. As Waltz argues, (1979) “The use of force, or the constant fear of its use, are not sufficient grounds for distinguishing international from domestic affairs. If the possible and the actual use of force mark both national and international orders, then no durable distinction between the two realms can be drawn in terms of the use or the non-use of force. No human order is proof against violence” (p. 103). Mearsheimer has a slightly different approach. In his view, fear is central when analysing the competition between great powers. The level of fear possessed by a state is in direct relation with its power. Plainly said, a state generates much or less fear in different periods of time as Germany in 1930 was less feared than Germany in 1939 (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 43). USSR feared Germany, but Romania feared both. Romania was aware of Germany’s growing power and tried to contain by allying with France and Germany. Hungary was another important ally of Germany and received a preferential treatment in 1940 when it was granted Northern Transylvania. Romania had strong reasons of fearing Germany and USSR as both countries had territorial or economic interests. Germany wanted to use Romanian oil for the Wehrmacht while USSR wanted Bessarabia and eventually the installing of a communist regime in Bucharest (Sandache, 2016). Germany began to fear USSR when that latter annexed territories of Romania that were not part of the non-aggression pact. As Ferguson noted, (2006) “In June 1940, in violation of the secret protocols of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, he unilaterally demanded that Romania cede to him Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, which included some of Romania's most productive agricultural land. This was land the Germans had been hoping would provide them with soya beans and other valuable imports; it was also home to substantial ethnic German communities, not least in the town of Cernauti (Czernowitz). The Soviet acquisition of this territory brought

them to within 120 miles of the Ploiesti oilfields, a crucial source of fuel for the Wehrmacht” (p.430).

Romania’s alliance with Nazi Germany was more a necessity than an actual choice. The sole purpose that Romania found within the alliance was to re-establish Greater Romania. If Romania would have postponed the request for military support against USSR, then a key moment for action would have been lost. As Waltz argues, (1979), “Weak states operate on narrow margins. Inopportune acts, flawed policies, and mistimed moves may have fatal results. In contrast, strong states can be inattentive; they can afford not to learn; they can do the same dumb things over again. More sensibly, they can react slowly and wait to see whether the apparently threatening acts of others are truly so. They can be indifferent to most threats because only a few threats, if carried through, can damage them gravely. They can hold back until the ambiguity of events is resolved without fearing that the moment for effective action will be lost”. (p. 195). Romania’s choice of allying with Germany was its ultimate mistake as the soviets ultimately installed a communist regime in Bucharest. Romania was just a pawn at the disposal of the great powers. Would Romania’s fate had been different if chose otherwise? Probably not as countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia suffered the same fate as Romania despite being an ally of the UK and France since the war started. Fear of Russia formed the alliance with Germany. As Deletant noted, (2006), “Fear of the Soviet Union drove Romania into alliance with Nazi Germany. 'Nothing could put Romania on Germany's side', remarked a member of the Romanian Foreign Ministry to the British Minister Sir Reginald Hoare in March 1940, 'except the conviction that only Germany could keep the Soviets out of Romania’” (pp. 2-3).

Romania’s fear of the Soviet Union was also an ideological one. The Romanian elite considered USSR to be barbaric nation which main purpose is to destroy Romania’s soul by imposing bolshevism (Livezeanu, 1995, p. 194). When Romania was cornered by the soviets in August 1944, the country betrayed Germany and joined USSR. Fear and interests prevailed. Romania feared that a soviet occupation would be catastrophic (Biedelux and Jeffries, p. 496). The interests were centered on two main objectives: the recovering of Transylvania and the survival of the Romanian state. By 1944, Germany was not in a position to help Romania in neither issue. Fear and interests both contributed to Romania’s alliance with Germany. Fear of the Soviet Union and the interest recovering the lost territories.



## 7. Conclusion

The research proved to be more challenging than expected because of the short amount of time and to the many new sources which I encountered.

First of all, it is essential to go back to the problem formulation and its main question: **Why did Romania conduct an aggressive foreign policy during WW1 and WW2?** The results of the research in the case of the First World War were fruitful. As indicated in the introduction, Romania's aggressive policy in 1916 was the result of an intensive nationalist agenda promoted by the ruling parties. This agenda was constructed around the unofficial project of uniting all Romanians into one single state. The research demonstrated that Romania betrayed Austria-Hungary because of two reasons. First, the wish of annexing Transylvania and second, the military situation of the Eastern Front which seemed to favor the entrance in the war. The trick of wait and see proved to be successful as Romania chose the winning side.

The situation presents a certain degree of complexity when talking about the Second World War. While the research delivered some certain answers regarding Romania aggressive policies toward the Soviet Union, some question remained. There is not is still a clear answer to whether Romania extended its aggression on Soviet Union at its will or at the will of Germany. The results of the research suggest that Romania was rather involved in the conflict without its will. Indeed, it was the will of Romania to recover Bessarabia, but the will of sending Romanian Armies at Stalingrad came more for Berlin than Bucharest.

The first two sub-questions received their answer: **Which were the reasons behind Romania's aggressive policies in relation with its allies and neighbors?** There were two points discussed in order to answer this question. The first relies on the chaotic situations of the Balkan in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a common practice to have a conflict with a neighbor or even more neighbors. This practice was set in motion by the nationalist fervor which was part of every Balkan state since obtaining the independence. The second reason is in direct connection with the great powers. Countries like Russia or France used their influence in order to manipulate weak states like Romania or Yugoslavia.

**Regarding the foreign policy of Romania, which influences were stronger: the internal or the external ones?** There is no doubt; Romania's internal evolution had an impact in the developing of its foreign policy in both wars. Even under these circumstances; the influence of external forces on Romanian policy makers was without question higher than any internal influence. It is enough to see the Romanian external agenda prior to WWI when Bismarck, Wilhelm II and even the Russian Government had a much higher influence on the king and its ministers than any party or internal entity. The gap is even higher around the WWII as Romania's foreign policy was shaped by international actors almost entirely. Romania was caught between USSR and Nazi Germany and had to adapt rapidly to the changes posed by the two great powers.

The last sub-question: **Why did USSR keep a relative good relation with Romania in the interwar period if it had territorial claims over Bessarabia?** The research showed how USSR was keen to have diplomatic relationship with countries like Romania or Poland; countries that had territorial disputes with USSR. The Soviet government commitment to a final settlement over these disputes was just a strategy in order to trick Romania and Poland into believing peace is possible. As the historical perspective demonstrated, USSR acted as an aggressor when it had the opportunity.

The methodology was of tremendous help mostly for the pre-research and the beginning of research period. The qualitative method helped in selecting and using the best possible sources for the research. The explanatory research paved the way for a concise insight in Romanian history in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Overall, the methodology successfully delivered the tools for a proper and smooth research.

Neorealism contributed to the research progress with mostly good results as it is seen in both chapters that deal with analysis. The anarchical basis to which the international system is conducted offered an excellent explanation for Romania's aggressive tendencies in both wars. The fear and interest concepts, as defined by Mearsheimer and Waltz helped me to better understand the complex machination to which Romania was subject as a pawn between the great powers. Neorealism failed to provide in one important aspect: the internal influences. While international evolution strongly influenced Romania's foreign policy, the internal influence is mostly disconsidered by neorealist scholars. Therefore, the using of neo-classical realism for the

research might have been a better solution because this theory treats the domestic influences in relation with the external influences.

The project would have been more relevant if a greater period of time had been dedicated to the research. The estimated research period for such a topic should span for one to three years. Even if today's technology allows every scholar to work from home, the access to the archive of Romania would have been a great asset for the research. Unfortunately, the limited period of research and the bureaucracy of the Romanian state prevented me from accessing the national archive. Furthermore, better financial and logistical possibilities could have been helpful for the research. The Archives of UK or France just to give two examples could have offered a new perspective on how great powers deal and treat Romania. In my opinion, the research on Romania's foreign policy from both wars has the potential of growing. New perspectives are needed not necessary to contradict the old ones, but at least to challenge them.

There is still tracing of negative and manipulative foreign influences in present Romania. The nationalistic (populist) current which affected Western Europe and USA reached Romania. Romania is considered one of EU's most trusted members from the East and it was until recently. Nowadays, a conservative offensive is spread alongside the country. This offensive came up with the one of populism in Europe. Many scholars argue and point to Russia as the responsible actor. Too few look at the western hemisphere. Those influences regarding their origins, East or West are present in our daily life: in the media or in the society. Concluding, I argue for a Romanian society which is not very different from how it was eighty or one hundred years ago. It is still trapped by dilemmas regarding its present and future.

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