

## REALISM AND DECISIONAL DILEMMAS IN ROMANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE NEUTRALITY

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**Abstract** This study represents a historical and theoretical analysis of the Romanian foreign policy during the Romanian neutrality. We tried to articulate and elaborate a strong theoretical framework for our analysis. Thus we used different concepts belonging to the theory of international relations, such as national interest, alliances, realism, structural realism, constructivism etc. The Romanian political class aimed to achieve the national interest. We demonstrated that the Romanian state played the role of a rational actor, deliberately delaying the intervention in the war. The authorities were aware of the precariousness of military instruction, of the low level of competitiveness and, especially, the poor supply of war materials and munitions. Ion I. C. Brătianu decided on the involvement in the Great Conflagration only when he considered that the entry into action will require, if possible, minimal risks and losses with maximum benefits. Romania's decision to join the Entente was also delayed because of the presence of Russia in this alliance, even if France tended to assume the role of mediator during the Russo-Romanian negotiations, especially during 1915. Then, the Romanian diplomacy strove to obtain the recognition of all its claims regarding the future frontiers of the Romanian state. We emphasized the reasons of the Romanian Kingdom's apprehensions to the great power of the East. These apprehensions originated in the historical precedents.

**Keywords** foreign policy, realism, Romania, Russia, neutrality

After the outbreak of the World War I, the authorities in Bucharest were faced with a major dilemma regarding the decision that would be most favourable to Romania's national interest. There were three possible solutions: 1) intervention on the side of the Central Powers in order to honour the treaty of the alliance signed in 1883, 2) neutrality in order to attentively and responsibly observe the events or 3) the alliance with the Entente. We could wonder why

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Romania did not opt for the first solution. On this issue we share the opinion of the historian Glenn E. Torrey. The dignitaries who attended the Crown Council of Sinaia (21 July 21 / 3 August 1914) decided on neutrality. Most of them considered that the unilateral and aggressive action of Austria-Hungary against Serbia absolved Romania of any commitment assumed in the treaty of 1883.<sup>1</sup> That treaty had a quasi-secret character. Until the moment of the Crown Council of Sinaia, the existence of the treaty was unknown to the public opinion and to the majority of the Romanian political class. King Carol I was among the very few who knew its contents. According to Rudolf Dinu, before the outbreak of the world war, diplomacy was a domain reserved for the king. The monarch was perceived, in the context of parliamentary life, as the sole guarantee for the continuity of the foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> The Crown Council's decision put an end to this state of affairs, because it was not in accord with the will of the sovereign. After he informed the audience about the text of the treaty, the king demanded the immediate entry in war on the side of Central Powers.

In fact, the majority of the treaties concluded between states were secret until the end of the World War I. The secret diplomacy was strongly criticized by the inter-war idealism which rejected it as one of the causes of the World Conflagration. This type of diplomacy represented the appanage of an elite and the will of the people was not taken into account. The secret diplomacy involved the avoidance of the rational debates that would have been very necessary in order to make the optimal decisions.

According to inter-war idealism, the entire international community, as well as the public opinion should have learnt the texts of the international treaties. This way, they would have been capable of finding out the necessary information to anticipate the events which turned the siege of Sarajevo at the end of June 1914 into the pretext of the world conflict. In these conditions, The Great War would not have taken place.<sup>3</sup> The representative of idealism, the American president Woodrow Wilson requested the abolishment of the secret diplomacy in his 14 points of January 1918.

Regarding the treaty of 1883, the principle *casus foederis* could not apply because in 28 July 28 1914, the Dual Monarchy was in fact the aggressor, not the victim of Serbia's aggression. As a consequence, the treaty signed by Romania, renewed for the last time in 1913, became obsolete. Bucharest did not assume any assignment of intervention to support the Dual Monarchy. Taking into consideration Russia's presence among the powers of the

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<sup>1</sup>Glenn E. Torrey, "Romania and the Belligerents 1914-1916" in *Romania in World War I* (Iași, Oxford, Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1999), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Dinu, "Romania's way from neutrality to War. An analysis regarding the Romanian Foreign Policy", in *La Grande Guerre. Histoire de la mémoire collective en France et en Roumanie*, coord. Christophe Prochasson et Florin Țurcanu (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2010), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Stefano Guzzini, *Realism și relații internaționale*, transl. by Diana Istrățescu (Iași: Institutul European, 2000), 48-50

Entente, the only one reasonable solution remained neutrality, at least in the beginning<sup>4</sup>. Romanian diplomacy negotiated with both alliances throughout the period of neutrality. Romanian government did its best to keep all discussions concerning the alliance with Entente secret, in order to not provoke the susceptibility of the rival military block and to avoid becoming the target of an attack. For tactical reasons, the Romanian state later signed a trade agreement with Germany. Actually, we can say there was a benevolent neutrality towards Entente. After Turkey's entry in war alongside the Central Powers, Romania decided to ban on its territory the transportation of war materials destined to Turkey. But Romania had to facilitate the military transportations for Serbia.<sup>5</sup> This decision represented an act of courage because it could be interpreted as defiance towards Germany. In fact, Romania's declaration of neutrality caused discontentment in Berlin.

A benevolent neutrality towards a belligerent block most likely represented a prelude of the accession to the respective alliance sooner or later. Concerning Romania, the events that followed clearly confirmed this tendency.

During Romanian neutrality (1914-1916), the Balkan region was characterized by a special dynamic. Always loyal to a typical realistic way of acting, the Romanian Kingdom played the role of a balancer in the functioning of the Balkan balance of power during the first years of World War I. Bucharest assumed a similar mission in the second Balkan conflict. Romania intervened with the clear intention of preserving the balance of power. Defying Vienna, which had assumed the position of Sofia's protector, Romania opposed the possibility of Bulgaria gaining too much power and thus affecting the territorial status-quo.

A victory obtained by Bulgaria over its former allies of 1912, namely Serbia and Greece, would have compromised the Balkan balance of power. The state south of the Danube would have become a regional hegemonic power,<sup>6</sup> an undesirable situation for the Romanian men of state.

During the neutrality, the Romanian Kingdom always resisted the pressures exerted by the great powers of the two alliances (pressures that sometimes alternated with implicit threats). It also resisted some temptations generated by the Entente's promises or by the developments of the front operations.

The representatives of the internal interventionist public opinion considered that the Russian victory in Lemberg (September 1914) and Italy's entry in war (May 1915) represented favourable occasions for the Romanian intervention easily failed by Ion I. C. Brătianu government. The Russian diplomacy insisted on Romania's entry in the war during difficult moments in order to relieve the military pressure exerted by the Central Powers' troops.

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<sup>4</sup>Hadrian Gorun, "Considerations on the Romanian-Russian and Romanian-Bulgarian relations at the Beginning of World War I. A few Romanian and French Documentary Evidence", in *Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Istorie*, XIX, no. 1 (25)/2014, 69.

<sup>5</sup>Constantin Kirițescu, *Preludiile diplomatice ale războiului de întregire* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Centrală, 1940), 12.

<sup>6</sup>H. Gorun, "Considerations on the Romanian-Russian...", 70.

Naturally, on the contrary, the internal pro-interventionist activity gained ground when the military situation was more favourable to the Allies. The governmental authorities also preferred the intervention to happen in a moment of military superiority of the Entente. This is just one reason for the adjournments. The further developments would prove that president of the Romanian Council of ministers was right, thus confirming his diplomatic tact. After King Carol's passing, it was Ion I. C. Brătianu who became the main foreign policy decision maker while Queen Mary was the strongest promoter of the Entente's cause.<sup>7</sup>

The president of the Romanian Council of ministers did not adopt decisions quickly especially if they were vital for the success of the foreign policy of his country. Glenn E. Torrey considered Ion I. C. Brătianu to be the most suitable person for the diplomatic dissimulation necessary to temper the Central Powers, while he was discussing the terms of Romania's military involvement with the Entente's representatives. Brătianu was able to very rigorously calculate all the possible consequences of his moves. He often preferred to avoid responsibility rather than make a decision with fatal repercussions.<sup>8</sup>

The agreement with Italy in September 1914, renewed in February 1915, concerning the conditions of renouncing neutrality for the two states is not surprising, if the head of the government himself compared Romania's struggle for unity to that of Italy. Brătianu was aware of the importance of his mission. At the end of 1912, after the new development of the relations with the great republic of the West, he declared to the French plenipotentiary minister Jean-Camille Blondel that the Austro-Hungarian dualist empire would suffer a dissolution and: "that is why we have to be prepared [...] to receive our brothers from Transylvania<sup>9</sup>." In the years of the Great Conflagration, Ionel Brătianu managed to exert a growing influence on the Royal House (on King Ferdinand I and Queen Mary as well), through the agency of the Prince Barbu Știrbey, the administrator of the Crown land. The latter became the close adviser of the king, a kind of "political guardian", of the monarch between 1914 and 1918.<sup>10</sup> Glenn Torrey also emphasised Ion I. C. Brătianu's accuracy of the predictions. The American historian considered that after the French victory on the river Marne (6 September – 13 September) which saved Paris, Brătianu foresaw the Entente's final triumph. Later, animated by this conviction, he tried to fulfil the Romanian national program through all foreign policy démarches.<sup>11</sup>

In Rudolf Dinu's opinion, in the beginning Brătianu tried to avoid the participation in the conflict using the neutrality solution. Then, the Romanian man of state adopted a *bandwagoning* behaviour, deciding the entry in war alongside the more powerful camp, at the

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<sup>7</sup> R. Dinu, "Romania's way from neutrality to War...", 14. See also Ion Bulei, *Regina Maria* (Bucharest: Meteor Publishing, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *România în primul război mondial*, transl. by Dan Criste (Bucharest: Meteor Publishing, 2014), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, "Romania and the Belligerents...", 14; R. Dinu, 14.

optimal moment.<sup>12</sup> We share the aforementioned historians' points of view, who carried out very valuable analyses of the Romanian foreign policy during the Ion I. C. Brătianu government.

Usually, in their relations with great powers, the weaker states incline towards bandwagoning, rather than to balancing. In relations with actors with a similar power, these states will rather opt for balancing.<sup>13</sup> Concerning Bulgaria (a state with military capabilities quite similar to those of Romania) the officials of Bucharest preferred to opt for balancing. But in its relations with the Entente's states, the Romanian Kingdom naturally chose to adopt a bandwagoning behaviour. When a state actor or an alliance has the biggest chances of winning in a conflict, the states prefer to join the stronger camp, rather than form coalitions. In these circumstances, the states will opt for bandwagoning.<sup>14</sup>

Romania will decide to intervene in the war on the side of the Quadruple Alliance (a name it received after Italy's entry in conflict, during the spring of 1915), in a favourable moment to the latter, when the final victory had become more clear. From this perspective, a state joins the stronger part intending to share with it the advantages and benefits after the obtainment of the final victory.<sup>15</sup> Romania's and Italy's options of foreign policy and alliance in World War I are relevant for this type of bandwagoning.<sup>16</sup> Each were promised territorial awards at the expense of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, as a reward for the participation in the war. The weak states, unlike the great powers, express a special interest in the neighbouring powers. They are concerned mainly about the events which take place in the proximity of their own borders. Moreover, the weak state actors can balance when they are threatened by states with quite similar capabilities. Actually they tend to bandwagon when they feel that their security and territorial integrity are endangered by a great power.<sup>17</sup> The policy of balancing Bulgaria's power, adopted by the Bucharest government is relevant.

However, if we take into consideration the main hypothesis regarding bandwagoning, approached by Stephen Walt, Romania's alliance with the Russian empire is not surprising. Thus, for the Romanian Kingdom, Russia represented the most serious external threat. According to Walt, the states are inclined to join the most menacing power. The closer a great power is, from a geographical point of view, the more inclined are the neighbouring states to form a coalition with that great power.<sup>18</sup> Russia was situated in Romania's immediate neighbourhood. So the alliance between Romania and Russia starting with 4/17 August 1916,

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<sup>12</sup> R. Dinu, 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Șerban Filip Cioculescu, *Studiu introductiv* at Stephen M. Walt, *Originile alianțelor*, transl. by Mihaela Boca (Iași: Institutul European, 2008), 28.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Teoria politicii internaționale*, transl. by Nicoleta Mihăilescu (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 176.

<sup>15</sup> S. Walt, 61.

<sup>16</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The First World War* (New York, 1989), 88-90, 153, in S. Walt, 61.

<sup>17</sup> S. Walt, 71.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

as a result of the bandwagoning policy of the former does not appear so surprising in this context.

In order to obtain the Romanian Kingdom's help as quickly as possible, the Entente's powers used the influencing factors (positive and negative as well) specific to the international negotiation.<sup>19</sup> They combined promises regarding some rewards (mainly concerning the union of the Romanian territories that were under Austro-Hungarian rule with Romania) – if Romania were to decide for a military intervention as soon as possible – with implicit threats, if the government Ion I. C. Brătianu were to adjourn the entry in war over and over again. In this respect, we must note the tone of the expression “*now or never*”, used by the Entente's diplomacy in 1916 when the negotiations were in the final stage. France and Great Britain were willing to provide financial aid to Romania<sup>20</sup>, in order to obtain its military support. Thus, they used a positive influencing factor during the negotiations.

The neorealist thinker John Mearsheimer wrote that the primordial objective of all state actors was their survival and that is why the states cannot trust other state actors to guarantee their own national security. Starting from this thesis, the representative of the offensive neorealism very expressively defined the alliances. According to him, the alliances represent: “*only temporary marriages of convenience, where today's alliance partner might be tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy might be tomorrow's alliance partner.*”<sup>21</sup> Romania will fight against Germany and Austria-Hungary in the Great War, although the two powers were earlier its allies. The Russian Empire will become the Romanian Kingdom's ally, although the relations between the two states during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were rather cold. Due to Russia's exit from the war and seizure of the power by the Bolsheviks, Russia once again became Romania's enemy, especially after the arrest of the diplomatic representative in Petrograd, Constantin Diamandi. It is well known that the interests determine the forming of the alliances. The alliances do not establish the interests of the actors, the members of those alliances.

The national interests are not permanent and therefore the alliances tend to change as well.<sup>22</sup> Realism emphasized this incontestable situation proved by the events of World War I.

After they declared the neutrality in 1914, Italy and the Romanian Kingdom joined the Entente in 1915 and respectively in 1916. Officially, in the moment of the outbreak of the war, both states were Germany's and Austria-Hungary's allies. So, the former allies will become enemies during World War I. Analysing the causes for the destruction of the alliances, Joseph

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<sup>19</sup> Joshua Goldstein, Jon Pevehouse, *Relații internaționale*, transl. by Andreea-Ioana Cozianu, Elena Farca, Adriana Ștarb (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 104-105.

<sup>20</sup> H. Gorun, *Relații politico-diplomatice și militare ale României cu Franța în Primul Război Mondial*, forwarded by Lucian Nastasă (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2009), 39.

<sup>21</sup> John Mearsheimer, *Tragedia politicii de forță*, transl. by Andreea Năstase (Bucharest: Antet, 2003), 27; Idem, “The False Promise of International Institutions”, in *International Security*, Winter 1994/95, XIX, No. 3, 11, available online at the address <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0021.pdf>, accessed on 05.30.2016, 23:02.

<sup>22</sup> J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 131.

Nye affirmed that the states ceased to be allies when they began seeing each other as unimportant or as threats to their own security.<sup>23</sup>

For Romania, the Dual Monarchy represented an obstacle in the way of achieving territorial and national unity. Moreover, the relations between Romania and France once again improved at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly during the Romanian neutrality. In this context, the alliance with Germany gradually became an alliance lacking viability. Italy also aimed to obtain South Tyrol, Trentin and Trieste. In these circumstances, Italy's alliance with the Dual Monarchy became impossible, due to this objective of war. There are several important differences between an alliance and a coalition. In principle, the coalitions do not last very long.<sup>24</sup> Coalition-building is often informal, implicit and the commitment to help the partner is a moral and/ or strategic one.<sup>25</sup> The creation of alliances is facilitated, among other things, by the existence of the same or a similar ideology, similar political regimes, cultural similarities and/or identities and also other common features between the actors which form an alliance.<sup>26</sup> Taking into consideration this last aspect, the improvement of the relations between Bucharest and Paris just before the beginning of the Great War and the later alliance between the two states is not an accidental one at all.

According to Stephen Walt, the states form alliances mainly in order to balance, to counteract the threats. The threats also depend on level of power, geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and the manner in which a state actor perceives the intentions of other state.<sup>27</sup> Generally, states are inclined to fear state actors which they consider to potentially be menacing more than other states that are great powers. Starting from this argument, Germany was greatly superior to Russia from an economic and military point of view at the beginning of World War I. But the Romanian Kingdom perceived the possible threat coming from the Eastern neighbour more acutely. When we explain this manner of perception, we need to take into consideration different elements such as the past events, Russia's more or less hidden hegemonic tendencies and the geographical position that was very close to Romanian borders. The Romanov Empire was seen in Bucharest as a possible threat for Romanian territorial integrity.

Among the theories on international relations, constructivism is interested in the manner in which the actors define their own national interests, as well the threats to these interests and to the relations with the others.<sup>28</sup> The interests of the actors are not necessarily

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Nye, *Descifrarea conflictelor internaționale: teorie și istorie*, transl. by Ion Vlădoiu (Bucharest: Antet, 2005), 71 cited from S. Walt, 26.

<sup>24</sup> S. Walt, 120-121.

<sup>25</sup> Ș. F. Cioculescu, 22.

<sup>26</sup> S. Walt, 29, 75.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 43-44.

<sup>28</sup> J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 172.

determined by the distribution of power in the international system.<sup>29</sup> The national interests derive from the preferences of the actors. The manner in which the international actors perceive other actors is essential in constructivism. According to the respective perceptions, a state can perceive another state as an enemy, as a rival or as a friend regardless of the level of power held by the two actors.<sup>30</sup> Thus, France was perceived as a friend by the Romanian authorities, while Russia as a potential enemy, although the two great powers were members of the same military block and the Romanian Kingdom's accession to the Entente involved the formal alliance with both states, with the French Republic and with Russia as well.

Some Romanian authors<sup>31</sup> approached the issue of the confrontation between two opposite tendencies that regarded the Romanian political class and also the public opinion at the beginning of the Great War. The first tendency was based on the so-called "calculation policy" and emphasized the Russian threat to the national security and the territorial integrity of the Romanian state. The other one, based on the so-called "feeling policy" militated for the liberation of Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina from the Austro-Hungarian domination, minimising the Russian danger and pleading for Romania's immediate entry in war conflict on the side of France.

We do not fully agree with the syntagm "feeling policy" if we think about the decision makers responsible for the elaboration of the foreign policy objectives of a state. The public opinion can be characterized by different feelings, emotions, and passions. However the political class decides the goals and the priorities in a foreign policy process. We share the point of view of the most famous representative of the classical realism, Hans Morgenthau. According to him, the national interest represents the foundation for all the actions of the state actors in the international arena. Moreover, the politics (and implicitly the foreign policy) is governed by objective laws. So, the emotions of the actors do not really have to be taken into consideration in the theory of international relations. This is a very unstable variable.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the power politics determine all the *démarches* of the state actors. We cannot categorically and perhaps even simplistically label that tendency *only* as "feeling policy". Romania and France had some similar foreign policy objectives, namely the obtainment of the Romanian territories under the Dual Monarchy's rule, respectively the obtainment of Alsace and Lorraine. Germany got the two provinces after the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871). The treaty of Frankfurt (May 1871) confirmed that state of affairs.

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<sup>29</sup> Edward A. Kolodziej, *Securitatea și relațiile internaționale*, transl. by Ramona-Elena Lupu (Iași: Polirom, 2007), 321; Șerban Filip Cioculescu, *Introducere în teoria relațiilor internaționale* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2007), 262.

<sup>30</sup> *Manual de relații internaționale*, coord. Andrei Miroiu and Radu-Sebastian Ungureanu (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 157-158.

<sup>31</sup> Radu Voinea, "Semnificația participării României la primul război mondial", in *Memoriile Secției Istorice a Academiei*, 12, 1987, 30.

<sup>32</sup> See Jean-Jacques Roche, *Théories des relations internationales*, 3-e édition (Paris: Editions Montchrestien, 1999), 32.



The control over the Straits and Constantinople represented Russia's fundamental war goal. The Straits are vital from a geopolitical and geostrategic point of view. Bosphorus and Dardanelles were disputed by Russia (a continental power, *par excellence*)<sup>33</sup> and Great Britain, a great maritime power. Russia tended to dominate the Straits to prevent maritime powers from exerting their influence over the Black Sea.<sup>34</sup> Taking into account the proximity between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, the control over the Straits could have offered Russia the possibility of simultaneously becoming a maritime power. In order to safeguard the national interest, the Romanian government firmly pleaded for the internationalization principle of Bosphorus and Dardanelles. This principle could allow the complete freedom of navigation through the Straits. Bucharest's concern on this issue will grow due to the rumours regarding a secret agreement between Great Britain and Russia, in terms of which the latter got the right to exert its control over the North Bosphorus.<sup>35</sup>

The President of the Council of ministers, Ion I. C. Brătianu, considered that the intervention in the war should take place in a moment favourable to the Entente. This option concerning a very important foreign policy decision was perfectly legitimate. From another viewpoint, the wish of the Allies' decision makers could also appear as legitimate. They wished for the extent of the concessions in favour of the Romanian Kingdom to be inversely proportional with the pretensions of the Bucharest authorities. The words of the Romanian plenipotentiary minister in the Russian capital, Constantin Diamandi does not need additional remarks: "First of all, these powers wanted that we should enter in war on their side unconditionally and as soon as possible. And if in exchange we had settled for a quarter of Bukovina and half of Transylvania, I do not think they would have had any objection. On the contrary, we would have been praised for our kindness and modesty."<sup>36</sup>

It was obvious that the Entente's powers – particularly Russia, Romania's direct partner in the negotiations concerning the Romanian territorial demands – were willing to offer just a few territorial rewards mainly in Bukovina, where the Rutenian ethnic element was numerous. It was hard to conciliate the Entente's interests with the Romanian national interest. The Russian Empire hardly accepted the legitimacy of the Romanian aspirations only after numerous insistences of France and only if the Romanian intervention and cooperation

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<sup>33</sup> The dichotomy continental powers vs. maritime powers was analysed by famous geopoliticians, such as Halford Mackinder and Karl Ernst Haushofer. The latter elaborated the theory of the continental block. The most important continental powers were Russia and Germany, while U.S.A. and France were the representative maritime powers. See Paul Dobrescu, *Geopolitică* (Bucharest: Editura Comunicare.ro, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Aymeric Chauprade, *François Thual, Dicționar de geopolitică. State, concepte, autori*, transl. by Șerban Dragomirescu (Bucharest: Editura Corint, 2003), 454.

<sup>35</sup> H. Gorun, *România și Aliții* (Târgu-Jiu: Editura "Academica Brâncuși", 2010), 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, *Revendicările României privind Transilvania, Banatul și Bucovina în perioada neutralității (1915). Mărturii documentare franceze și românești*, in *Analele Banatului*, S.N., Arheologie-Istorie, XX, 2012, 336; Constantin Diamandi, "Cum s-a negociat harta României Mari", in *România în timpul primului război mondial. Mărturii documentare*, coord. D. Preda et alii, 150.

were valuable and useful from the perspective of the Russian political and military objectives. Hans Morgenthau's postulate, according to which the international politics is first of all a struggle for power, is once more confirmed. Thus, the ethical principles are sacrificed in favour of the need to assure the success of the foreign policy.<sup>37</sup>

The clauses of the Petrograd Agreement of 18 September / 1 October<sup>38</sup> have to be understood as a provisional solution, as a compromise. In the last instance, the ceaseless diplomatic pressures on the Romanian Kingdom could have opposite effects, making Romania's accession to the Entente more difficult or, in the unhappiest and most undesired case, to bring it back on the side of Central Powers. In fact, during the neutrality and also after the Romanian military involvement, the Romanian-Russian relations evolved under the sign of the compromise. The alliance itself between the Russian Empire and the Romanian Kingdom represented a compromise solution, a circumstantial alliance. The French diplomacy had the merit of bringing the two states together in the same camp. France was the Western power which desired and appreciated the alliance with the Romanian Kingdom the most, its military intervention on the side of the Entente. We can start from the following syllogism to better understand the circumstantial alliance between Romania and Russia: if a state A is allied with a state B and if another state C develops cordial relations with the state A, the states B and C will not adopt totally irreconcilable attitudes, despite some possible frictions or disputes between them.

The power A should mediate the disputes between the power B and the state C. France was Russia's ally. Romanian-French relations permanently improved. So, Romania's alliance with Russia appears as natural. There was rather a temporary coalition. Between the two states there was no affinity or other cohesion factors, necessary for the creation, functioning and consolidation of a lasting alliance. The points of view of France and Great Britain generally coincided concerning the necessity to attract Romania into war for the Entente's consolidation. Yet Russia tended to consider its own expansionist objectives to be superior to the Entente's interests. It possibly attempted to subordinate to its purposes the Romanian Kingdom's entry in the war.

Hans Morgenthau wrote that the so-called "ideological solidarity" represented the decisive element, the main catalytic for the creation of the alliances. The "ideological solidarity" refers to the alliances that form between states with the same politics, a similar culture or other common features. According to this principle, the more similar two or more states are, the more likely their alliance will be.<sup>39</sup> Yet, between Romania and Russia, there was no political, cultural or other similarity. From a political point of view, the first was a constitutional monarchy, while Russia was an autocratic monarchy. But the similarities are incontestable in the case of Romania and France. Actually, according to realist and neorealist

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<sup>37</sup> See J. J. Roche, 32.

<sup>38</sup> H. Gorun, *Relații politico-diplomatice...*, 43-44; Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Fond Diamandi, d. 187, f. 23.

<sup>39</sup> See S. Walt, 75.

logic, the main reason for which the states create alliances is the need to prevent external menaces.<sup>40</sup> From this perspective, we could interpret the signing of Russian-Romanian agreement of 18 September / 1 October as a response to the Austro-Hungarian threat. Subsequently, we could affirm that the alliance with Russia, after Romania's accession to the Entente also materialized due to the necessity to counterbalance the power of the Dual Monarchy.

France enjoyed a remarkable power of decision in the alliance. Romania was perceived rather as a pawn on the European chess table. But it was a pawn with a very important geopolitical position, particularly in the Balkan area. The Romanian Kingdom was an important geopolitical pivot<sup>41</sup> in South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In these circumstances, its military, economic and demographic support was truly precious. To some extent, Romania could also play (at least in this region) the role of a geostrategic player. But this status was conditioned by the capabilities that were absolutely necessary to try to limit the influence of some great powers in this region, (such as the Dual Monarchy) or to oppose the supremacy tendencies of others (for instance, the Russian Empire). The promotion of the great powers' interests (from both alliances) in the Balkan area also depended on the position (favourable, reluctant or hostile) which Bucharest would assume.

Even in 1915, Ion I. C. Brătianu expressed the following conditions in exchange for Romania's participation in the war on the side of the Entente: the recognition of the Romanian territorial claims and the delimitation of the frontiers for those territories, the obtainment of some guarantees from Russia regarding Dardanelles, the clarification of Italy's intentions, clear information about the moment of the ammunitions' obtainment, the signing of military conventions with Allied General Staffs.<sup>42</sup> We share the opinion of the historian Gheorghe I. Brătian, who considered that two major questions had been the main topics during Romania's negotiations for the accession to the Entente: a question of principle concerning the territorial claims and a problem of opportunity, regarding the decision which had to be made and the optimal moment for a military intervention. Of course, two issues were interdependent.<sup>43</sup> In other words, Romania had to join the military alliance which would offer satisfaction in exchange for its intervention on the issue of one of the most important aspects (namely that of the territorial claims).

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<sup>40</sup> S. Walt, 75-76.

<sup>41</sup> We used the concepts "geopolitical pivots" and "active geostrategic players", analysed by the Polish-American political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski, when he wrote about the challenges towards American supremacy in world politics, during the post-Cold War era. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Marea tablă de șah. Supremația americană și imperativele sale geostrategice*, transl. by Aureliana Ionescu (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2000), 53-69.

<sup>42</sup> Vasile Vesa, *România și Franța la începutul secolului al XX-lea (1900-1916)* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1975), 108.

<sup>43</sup> Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Originile și formarea unității românești* (Iași: Editura Universității „A. I. Cuza”, 1998), 258-260.

The moment of Romania's decision depended on the extent to which the Entente's powers would answer positively to Romanian demands. The promptitude of the answer was also important. On the topic of the Straits, it was difficult for Russia to offer guarantees to the Bucharest government due to Petrograd's propensity to exert a permanent control over these strategic points. Russia's intentions regarding Bosphorus and Dardanelles and its duplicitous attitude increased the apprehensions of the Romanians. The natural consequence was the deferment of the moment for the military intervention. Italy gave up neutrality in April 1915, when it signed the Protocol of London. A month later, the Italian military was involved on the side of the Entente.

The topic of the recognition by the Entente of Romania's future borders and the *démarches* of the Romanian diplomacy and military authorities for an adequate supply of the army dominated the negotiations with France and Russia. Romania also adopted a type of behaviour specific to realism on these two major aspects. The Romanian state performed as a rational actor, inclining towards the maximization of the territorial benefits and to a minimization of risks, costs and losses. In fact, Romania as actor in World War I acted for the maximization of its power, of the military capabilities (reaching a satisfactory level of the military training and improving supplies) and of the demographic ones (obtaining the territories inhabited by Romanians).

According to the fundamental principles of the political realism formulated by Hans Morgenthau, the foreign policy of a state is labelled as good if it is able to minimize the risks and maximize the advantages.<sup>44</sup> We could affirm that the manner in which the Romanian government acted could also belong to strategic realism. Strategic realism was approached by Thomas Schelling.<sup>45</sup> Strategic realism focuses mainly on foreign policy decision-making. When political leaders confront fundamental diplomatic and military issues, they have to think strategically-instrumentally, if they want to be successful. Thomas Schelling sought to provide analytical tools for strategic thought. He perceived "diplomacy and foreign policy as a rational-instrumental activity that can be more deeply understood by the application of a form of logical analysis called *game theory*."<sup>46</sup> Joshua Goldstein made a distinction between the so-called zero-sum games and non-zero-sum games. In the first case, the benefit obtained by a player is equivalent to the loss of the other player. In the second case, both players can win or lose.<sup>47</sup> In a zero-sum game, the negotiations and communication between parts are absolutely useless, because they have completely opposite interests.<sup>48</sup> During World War I, we identify such a situation concerning the relation between the Romanian Kingdom and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and even regarding the relation between Romania and Bulgaria. The

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<sup>44</sup> See J. J. Roche, 32.

<sup>45</sup> See Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to international relations. Theories and Approaches*, 4th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 114.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

different interests and objectives of these states were irreconcilable. Non-zero-sum games could be applied to Romanian-Russian and Romanian-French relations during World War I.

Game theory is closely linked to the thesis on the rationality of the state actors postulated by classical and structural realism. Thus, in a non-zero-sum game, the coordination of the actions of the actors can result in the maximization of the whole reward for the players. But every state takes steps to get a part as substantial as possible from this total reward.<sup>49</sup>

By intervening in war on the side of the Entente, the Romanian state aspires to enjoy the advantages appropriate to a victorious state at the end of the conflict. A military report belonging to the Belgian captain Labert<sup>50</sup> implicitly referred to this non-zero-sum game. The Ion I. C. Brătianu government demanded that the Entente's powers should commit themselves to treat the peace – only then would Romanian aspirations have been fulfilled. Great Britain and France were on the point of agreeing to this stipulation that involved a relative commitment. In fact, there were two alternatives: the Allies would either prevail, in which case Romania will be compensated according to the commitments assumed (being a member of the winning alliance), or they would not be victorious and Romania, together with the entire alliance, would endure all the consequences of the defeat.<sup>51</sup>

Romania aspired also to obtain a very respected and privileged status in the international arena. Thus we can explain Bucharest's efforts for the recognition (by the Entente) of the Romanian rights over the entire Banat and of the Prut River as the Eastern border of the Romanian state. Romanian diplomacy also demanded that the Romanian Kingdom should be treated on an equal footing during the peace negotiations and at the general peace conference as well. This demand generated Russia's discontent and negative reaction.<sup>52</sup> The great power status of the Empire of the tsars allowed it to adopt a contemptuous attitude and to take into account the use of force in its relations with smaller powers, such as the Romanian Kingdom. In fact, in relations between states, the will of the small states had often been broken. Thus we must note a definition for the concept of power that explained it in terms of influence.<sup>53</sup>

Actually, as Joshua Goldstein and John Pevehouse affirmed, the victory in a war could not compensate the price paid. It could be possible for the rational actors to calculate the costs and benefits wrong, mainly when they do not have enough information.<sup>54</sup> Even if the Romanian Kingdom had been rewarded from a territorial point of view for the participation in war alongside the Allies, the human losses and material costs were huge. The following developments were relevant. During the 1916 campaign, the Romanian army was not well-

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> H. Gorun, *România și Aliții...*, p. 57; *1918 la români. Desăvârșirea unității național-statale a poporului român*, vol. I, colecția de documente (Bucharest: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1983), 757.

<sup>51</sup> *1918 la români*, 759-760.

<sup>52</sup> H. Gorun, *România și Aliții...*, 56.

<sup>53</sup> J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 98.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 111.

trained and sufficiently prepared. Moreover, the supply with war materials, weapons and ammunitions was quite poor.

Another key concept that was also exploited by Thomas Schelling is that of the “*threat*”. His analysis concerns how statesmen can rationally deal with the threats and dangers.<sup>55</sup> The Romanian political class and particularly the president of the Council of ministers, Ion I. C. Brătianu, acted in this manner when they strived to delay the moment of the intervention as long as possible. Thomas Schelling defined diplomacy as *bargaining*:

*“[...]it seeks outcomes that, though not ideal for either party, are better for both than some of the alternatives...The bargaining can be polite or rude, entail threats as well as offers, assume a status quo [...]and assume mistrust rather than trust. But...there must be some common interest, if only in the avoidance of mutual damage and an awareness of the need to make the other party prefer an outcome acceptable to oneself. With enough military force a country may not need to bargain.”*<sup>56</sup>

As we demonstrated, during the negotiations for Romania’s accession to the Entente, the powers of this alliance made certain offers, but they also uttered several implicit threats. The relations between Romania and Russia were characterized by constant mistrust before the military mobilization and after the Romanian intervention as well. The discussions between Romania, France, Russia and the Balkan states aimed to obtain advantages for every part and the reduction of damages. Romania did not enjoy a significant military force, neither during its neutrality, nor after 15 August 1916. That is why its decision-makers had to resort to *bargaining*. Thomas Schelling’s conception follows the realist tradition. According to realism, states are rational actors endowed with the ability to think strategically. They plan all external démarches taking into account all the costs and advantages, although the obtainment of absolute benefits is impossible. So, the state actors will try especially to minimize the losses.

Romania strived to carry out a rational foreign policy and to promote an efficient diplomacy. The foreign policy involves the decision-making process. The states act in such a way because some members of the cabinet opt for that action.<sup>57</sup> The so-called *rational pattern* represents the general starting point in the decision-making process.<sup>58</sup> According to this pattern, the decision-makers establish the essential objectives and calculate the costs and advantages for every way of action. They surely prefer that way of action that involves (or

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<sup>55</sup> See R. Jackson, G. Sørensen, 70.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: 1980), 168, cited from R. Jackson, G. Sørensen, 70.

<sup>57</sup> J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 198.

<sup>58</sup> Graham Allison, Philip Zelikow, *Esența deciziei. O explicație a crizei rachetelor din Cuba*, transl. by Mihaela Răileanu (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 29-76, cited from J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 199.

seems to involve) the maximum advantages and minimal costs.<sup>59</sup> It is obvious that the essential objective for the Romanian Kingdom was the obtainment of the territories inhabited by Romanians, belonging to the Dual Monarchy. On 21 July / 3 August 1914, the decision-makers (led by the president of the Council of ministers, Ion I. C. Brătianu) gathered in the Crown Council of Sinaia chose the neutrality solution. Taking into consideration the existing difficulties, even in the context of the entry in the war after two years, an intervention that would have taken place in 1914 would have been completely irresponsible, even a military adventure for that matter. On 14 August / 27 August 1916, after the Entente assumed some diplomatic and military commitments (through the agency of the two conventions), Ion I. C. Brătianu and his government decided that the optimal moment for action had come.

Starting from Joshua Goldstein's assertion, according to which some decision-makers are relatively inclined to risk and others tend to avoid the risks, in this respect we can see a clear difference at the Crown Council of Sinaia. On the one hand, there were the partisans of a risky foreign policy, namely King Carol I and the old conservative leader Petre P. Carp, who insisted on the urgent entry in the war alongside with the Central Powers (despite Romania's precarious military situation). On the other hand, there were Ion I. C. Brătianu and his followers. *The National Action*, an interventionist organization headed by Nicolae Filipescu, also militated for the immediate mobilization of the army. But *The National Action* was just a part of the public opinion, not a decision-maker.

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<sup>59</sup>J. Goldstein, J. Pevehouse, 199.