

HADRIAN GORUN, *România și Marele Război: introducere la o istorie și teorie a relațiilor internaționale* [Romania and The Great War: An Introduction to the History and Theory of International Relations] (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut & Mega, 2021)

The First World War, as a decisive moment in history, continues to be a subject of research for both historians and political scientists (particularly from the International Relations field). Being a hegemonic war,¹ it attracted all the great powers of the world, not sparing the weaker ones. Romania was therefore drawn in as well.

Our country's actions in The First World War have stirred the interest of native and foreign historians and political scientists.² Hadrian Gorun has made an important contribution to what we know about Romania's intervention in the First World War. Hence, I chose his book, *România și Marele Război: introducere la o istorie și teorie a relațiilor internaționale* [Romania and The Great War: An Introduction to the History and Theory of International Relations] to be the subject of my review.

¹ For some insights regarding the character of hegemonic war, see Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap. 5 and Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, No. 4, (Spring 1988), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/204816>.

² In the Romanian literature, from the historical side, regarding the participation of Romania in the First World War, see Jean-Noël Grandhomme, *România de la Tripla Alianță la Antanta: (1914-1919)*, transl. by Ionela-Felicia Moscovici, Georgiana Medrea Estienne și Valentin Trifescu (Iași: Editura Universității „A.I. Cuza”, 2018), Glenn E. Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, transl. by Dan Criste (Bucharest: Meteor Publishing, 2018), Comisia Română de Istorie Militară, Centrul de Studii și Cercetări de Istorie și Teorie Militară, *Istoria militară a poporului român. Evoluția organismului militar românesc de la cucerirea independenței de stat până la înfăptuirea Marii Uniri din 1918. România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, Vol. V (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1988), chap. IX-XIV, Mihail E. Ionescu, *Romania orientală: 160 de ani (1848-2009)* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2009), 107-122, Hadrian Gorun, "Romania and the Great Powers during World War I. A Historical and Theoretical Synthesis," *Research and Science Today Journal*, 2(14) (Autumn 2017), <https://www.rstjournal.com/?mdocs-file=1825>. From the political science side, see Andrei Miroiu, *Balanță și hegemonie: România în politica mondială, 1913-1989* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2005), 78-134, Șerban F. Cioculescu, "România și decizia de a intra în război în august 1916. Balansare, sub-balansare, aliniere," *Revista de Istorie Militară* (2016): 43-50, Adrian Eugen Preda, "Hegemonii potențiale și orientări ale elitelor politice. Cazul României în secolul XX" (PhD diss., SNSPA, 2021), 90-101, Adrian Eugen Preda, "In Search for Profit. Bandwagoning and the Intervention of Romania in The First World War," *Annals of The "Constantin Brâncuși" University of Târgu Jiu, Letter and Social Science Series*, 2 (2021), https://als.utgjiu.ro/?mdocs-file=4086&fbclid=IwAR3NfMovsa4lQ_6pixwsvP9gnsj1t7rKBheHf3J-bqrvt76A26xQlZhhLk.

Published in 2021, Hadrian Gorun's work is one of the most recent and relevant to the study of Romania's involvement in the First World War. His theoretical and historical approach brings new insights on the subject. *România și Marele Război...* functions like a bridge between History and International Relationships. As an immersive study in Romania's engagement in the Great War, it uses basic concepts from the International Relations Theory and Political Science, such as national interest, neutrality, balancing and bandwagoning, holder of the balance or rational actor.

While a historical contribution, *România și Marele Război...* represents an intellectual effort within the International Relations Theory's realist school of thought. This work goes beyond history and International Relations, bringing them together in its audacious approach. There is an inherent distinction between History and Political Science, with International Relations as a subfield. As Immanuel Wallerstein argued, history is related to the idiographic disciplines and treats the social phenomena individually, while Political Science is nomothetic and aims to find scientific laws.³ In his book, Hadrian Gorun combines the idiographic and nomothetic perspectives, contributing to both fields, as far as Romania's participation in the First World War is concerned.

In his analysis, Hadrian Gorun uses concepts that belong to the realist school of thought. The book is divided into three great chapters, *I. Interes național, neutralitate și aliniere* [National Interest, Neutrality, Bandwagoning], *II. Alianțele, interesul național și balanța puterii. Cazul României și cel al sistemului balcanic* [Alliances, National Interest and Balance of Power. The Case of Romania and of the Balkan Subsystem] and *III. Regatul României – actor rațional* [Kingdom of Romania – Rational Actor].⁴

In the first chapter, Hadrian Gorun offers a general view of three main theoretical paradigms from the International Relations Theory (Realism, Liberalism and Marxism), focusing on Romania's case. The last two subchapters revolve around neutrality and bandwagoning, The first reveals the Romanian rationale's view regarding the neutral stance and the factors of the Entente, while the second regards the bandwagoning behavior of the prime minister Brătianu, as the main influent figure in Romanian foreign policy.

Starting from a neorealist perspective, Hadrian Gorun argues that Brătianu adopted a bandwagoning behavior by entering the conflict at the right moment, on the stronger side.⁵ The alliance with Ententist Russia, as Stephen M. Walt also noticed,⁶ was dangerous, given how threatening this power was. The use of International Relations concepts in a historical analysis is useful for the understanding and explanation of the presented phenomena, as shown in this work.

³ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Pentru a înțelege lumea. O introducere în analiza sistemelor-lume*, transl. by Ovidiu Țichindeleanu (Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design & Print, 2013), 18.

⁴ The titles of the chapters were translated by the author of the present review.

⁵ Hadrian Gorun, *România și Marele Război: o introducere la o istorie și o teorie a relațiilor internaționale* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, Mega, 2021), 54.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

In the second chapter, Hadrian Gorun's statement is worth noticing: Romania was the balance holder in the Balkans after the end of the Second Balkan War in 1913, which offered some maneuver space and independence, its key role being perceived by the Central Powers, the Entente in Europe and the Balkans.⁷ Starting from John J. Mearsheimer's perspective, which saw alliances as convenience marriages, Hadrian Gorun argues that Romania's preference for the Entente was based on national interest.⁸

In the third chapter, Hadrian Gorun assumed a realist position, arguing that Romania's behavior in the First World War fits in the paradigm of the rational actor. Hadrian Gorun argues that, in relation with its war objectives and in its negotiations with the Entente followed a realist line of action, based on rationality, aiming to maximize the benefits (the territorial gains), while minimizing the losses, an argument in congruence with the classical realist perspective offered by Hans J. Morgenthau and with the strategic realism of Thomas Schelling.⁹ From the perspective of the game theory, Hadrian Gorun argued that Romania practiced a zero sum game with Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, while the interactions with France and Russia were regarded as non-zero sum game.¹⁰ The paradigm of the rational actor also characterizes, in Hadrian Gorun's view, the nature of the Romanian diplomatic conduct regarding the two belligerent sides in the Great War, as the Romanian elites had to evaluate their chances based on the quality of the armed forces.¹¹ Following the classical realist line, Hadrian Gorun argued that, besides efficient diplomacy and military force, there is the issue related to the quality of the government that can influence the foreign policy of a nation, an aspect which finds its application on the Romanian political elites, who had to adjust the objectives to the internal resources available for Romania.¹²

As a conclusion, Hadrian Gorun's book represents an important and a remarkable contribution from several points of view. Firstly, there is an important historiographical contribution, as Gorun grounds his arguments on various historical sources, which are passed through the filter of the International Relations concepts. Secondly, the book under review represents an important contribution to the field of International Relations, based on a complicated issue, namely Romania and its intervention in the First World War. In particular, the book is of great relevance for the Romanian literature on International Relations, as a theoretical contribution, while also marking its contribution to the local debate around the participation of Romania in the First World War, based on theoretical grounds. Thirdly, the combination of both

⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹² *Ibid.*, 120.

historical and conceptual perspectives could represent the strongest point of the book, based on the fact that Hadrian Gorun not only offers an analysis based on historical sources, but also one grounded on important International Relations concepts, such as national interest, neutrality, balancing and bandwagoning, balance holder, rationality etc. Therefore, Hadrian Gorun's contribution deserves to occupy an important place in the historical and International Relations debates from Romania and abroad.

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