

# 國學院大學學術情報リポジトリ

## Obsession with Conspiracy Theories : The Ideology of the Romanian Ultranationalist

メタデータ	言語: English 出版者: 国学院大学法学会 公開日: 2024-10-31 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: 藤嶋, 亮 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.57529/0002000986">https://doi.org/10.57529/0002000986</a>

# Obsession with Conspiracy Theories : The Ideology of the Romanian Ultrationalist

Ryo Fujishima

Almost since the founding of the modern Romanian state in the middle of the 19th century, Romanian ultrationalists have been obsessed with conspiracy theories and in paranoid fear of potential external threats, traitors, and internal enemies. This type of thinking and the discourses founded on it reflect the frustrating political history of Romania, which depended in large measure on the whims of the Great Powers. Typical examples of these types of political formations include the inter-war Legionary Movement (often called the Iron Guard) and Ceaușescu's national communism. How have such ultrationalist narratives and discourses been repeated or transformed as Romania pursues Euro-Atlantic integration? This study fo-

---

The original version of this article was prepared for the Society for Romanian Studies 2018 Conference in Bucharest, Romania, June 25-30 (Panel : The politics of contemporary Romanian nationalism). I thank Prof. Dr. Monica Heinz for her constructive comments.

(1) In this paper, conspiracy theory is defined as a way of thinking or belief that certain powerful, usually small groups, with often sinister intentions, operating behind the scenes, are framing, organizing, and carrying out plots against other groups and are secretly controlling the course of world or local events according to their scenario. On conspiracy theories, see, for example, Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 3-40 ; Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide : the Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, New York : Harper & Row, 1967.

cuses on conspiracy-minded thinking and heightened threat perceptions, exploring the ideology of the most significant and representative ultranationalist group in post-communist Romania, the Greater Romania Party (PRM). In the examination of the ideology of the party, we adopt a qualitative text analysis. Intensive and thorough analysis of party papers brought detailed insights into the core elements of PRM's ideology and the appeal of ultranationalists. This study demonstrates the persistence of conspiracy narratives and their transformation, which reflects the Europeanization of Romania.

## 1. Ultra-nationalism in Post-Communist Romania

### 1) Perceived External Threats and Nationalist Sentiments

The perception of external threats affects the strength of nationalist sentiments and the diffusion of nationalist discourse. When external threats, whether real or imagined, grow, so too do nationalist sentiments. Conversely, the more peaceful and stable the international environment is, the weaker nationalist sentiments are. The drastic change in the international environment surrounding Romania from the late 1990s to the early 2000s deserves special consideration in this context. Accession to the EU and NATO has anchored Romania in a geopolitically and economically secure environment for the first time since the modern Romanian state was formed in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It would thus be reasonable to assume that this historical change would affect nationalist sentiment and discourses.

This paper examines changes in the discourses of ultranationalists in Romania following the country's Euro-Atlantic integration and European-

ization. We focus on the Greater Romania Party (PRM) as a primary representative nationalist body because of its popularity, electoral success, and organizational persistence. In particular, this study identifies significant features and patterns of party discourse and their transformations via a detailed examination of the party's weekly magazine *România Mare* (Greater Romania).

Several publications of the ideology of ultranationalists in post-communist Romania, especially the PRM and its leader, exist. Among these, the following five are particularly important for this paper : Katherine Verdery's pioneering work on (ultra-) nationalist sentiment in post-communist Romania,<sup>(2)</sup> Vladimir Tismăneanu's book on political myths and populist nationalism in post-communist Eastern Europe,<sup>(3)</sup> Michael Shafir's series of pioneering articles on the PRM and its leader,<sup>(4)</sup> George Voicu's unique and comprehensive analysis of conspiracy theories from the end of communism to 2000 Romania,<sup>(5)</sup> and Radu Cinpoș's insightful and detailed examination of the discourse of the PRM in a historical perspective.<sup>(6)</sup> The findings of this previous work contribute to the unique point of this paper, which is its pri-

---

(2) Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania," *Slavic Review*, vol. 52, No. 2 (1993), pp.179-203.

(3) Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation : Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1998.

(4) In particular, Michael Shafir, "The Mind of Romania's Radical Right," in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.) *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, Pennsylvania : Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, pp. 213-232 ; Idem, "The Greater Romanian Party and the 2000 Elections in Romania : How obvious is the obvious?" *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2001), pp. 91-126.

(5) George Voicu, *Zei și zeițe : cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă*, Iași : Polirom, 2000.

(6) Radu Cinpoș, *Nationalism and Identity in Romania : A History of Extreme Politics from the Birth of State to EU Accession*, London : I. B. Tauris, 2010.

mary focus on the *transformation* of the discourse itself and its clarification of the process of this transformation through an examination of primary sources.

## 2) PRM, its Leader and the Euro-Atlantic Integration of Romania

PRM was founded in June 1991 by Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Eugen Barbu, one year after they started the weekly magazine *România Mare*, which functions as the party's mouthpiece and as the most important way in which its activity is publicized and its ideology is propagated. Tudor had been the undisputed leader of the party since its formation. It thus seems reasonable to pay particular attention to his discourse. Under his charismatic leadership, the party experienced steady growth, participating in coalition government in 1995. It reached the peak of its electoral success in 2000, when it more than quadrupled its vote share (19.5%) and became the second-largest party. At the same time, Tudor received over 28 percent of votes in the presidential election and managed to enter the second round. However, the party entered a period of decline in the mid 2000s, and in the 2008 general elections, it failed to secure any seats in parliament. Since then, the party has had no representation there.

The period under study extends from 1996 to 2004. The main focus of the analyses is on the period 2000-2004, when Euro-Atlantic integration and the Europeanization of Romania became reached their full extent. At the same time, because this paper focuses on the *transformation* of nationalist discourse, the period 1996-1999 is also focused on as a prelude for the Euro-Atlantic integration of Romania. Furthermore, this timeframe

---

(7) He died in September 2015, at age 65.

covers three important elections (1996, 2000, and 2004) that show the rise and fall of the PRM.

## 2. PRM Discourse Before 2000 : A Flood of Conspiracy Theories

In this section, we examine core features in PRM's discourse on perceived threats before 2000. Three categories of discourse are identified here : division of Europe into spheres of influence by the Great Powers, foreign influence, and secessionist/irredentist ambitions of Hungarians within and outside of Romania. We also consider PRM's attitude toward the Euro-Atlantic integration relative to its perception of threats.

### 1) Anxiety over Division of Europe into Spheres of Influence or Being Dictated to by the Great Powers

#### 1-1) Historical Repetition

There has been anxiety in Romania over the division of Europe into spheres of influence by the Great Powers beginning with (or even before) the formation of modern Romanian state in the middle of the 19th century. This can be regarded as a natural outgrowth of Romania's frustrating political history, which long has depended on the whims of the Great Powers. Typical examples in the 20th century, which are also frequently mentioned in *România Mare*, include the Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact in 1939 and the Second Vienna Award in 1940, which together led to the collapse of Greater Romania ; the wartime conferences and agreements of World War II, such as the percentages agreement between Churchill and Stalin in 1944 and the Yalta Conference in 1945, which forced Romania into the Soviet Bloc.

Therefore, Romania has often been described in historical narratives as a victim of a cynical agreement among the Great Powers, in disregard of the will of the Romanians.<sup>(8)</sup> This view is also emphasized in the PRM's most important document, *Doctrina Națională* (*The National Doctrine*). "The political game of the great powers," it argues, "functions again at the expense of Romania,... Betrayed in several major meetings of Great Powers, Romania was practically occupied by the USSR, and it lost Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina."<sup>(9)</sup>

In this context, discourses of Western betrayal or a Western double standard are also often seen. For example, Tudor claimed the following at a meeting of the Senate Committee, attended by the ambassadors of NATO member countries. On the one hand, the West approved the reunification of Germany and recognized the Independence of the Baltic states from the Soviet Union. However, Romania has not been allowed to regain Bessarabia or Northern Bukovina, which were "arbitrarily taken away by Stalin." "Unfortunately, the principle that applied to these other countries does not apply to Romania."<sup>(10)</sup> This nightmare is recalled again and again as, for example, when Romania's accession to NATO was delayed.

## 1-2) Narratives of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989

The Romanian Revolution of December 1989 is seen as another, the latest, in a string of major occurrences of the historical repetition that the PRM finds in Romania's history. Here we examine PRM's narratives on 1989 in

---

(8) Voicu, *op. cit.*, 142.

(9) "Doctrina națională," *România Mare* (hereinafter called "RM"), Nr. 307, May 24, 1996 (All translations from Romanian texts are mine.).

(10) Corneliu Vadim Tudor (hereinafter called "Tudor"), "A venit timpul ca Occidentul să repare greșelile grave pe care le-a comis de-a lungul istoriei împotriva României," *RM*, No. 344, February 14, 1997.

detail. The principal here is that interpretations of and narratives on momentous political events of the past influence the interpretation of the present situation and long-lasting patterns of political confrontation, and vice versa.<sup>(11)</sup>

According to PRM's interpretation of the revolution, the events of December 1989 formed part of a carefully staged coup d'état, which was entirely manipulated by foreign interests. It completely denies that the revolution was a spontaneous mass movement or an uprising against unjust rule. The conspiracist storytelling here can be summarized as follows (although the details do sometimes vary).<sup>(12)</sup>

The coup began, it argues, at the Malta Summit between US President Bush and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev at the beginning of December 1989. There, in Malta, it was decided to overthrow Ceaușescu because he had become a real source of danger, not only to the Soviet Union but also to the US and international finance through the independence of his foreign and economic policy. The Soviet Union maintained numerous agents inside Romania, which were the core of the conspiracy group. These consisted of pro-Soviet elements within the Communist Party, the army, the Securitate [security forces], and agents of ethnic minorities. It is sometimes added that Jewish-Masonic networks were used to form groups and contact foreign forces. This small group of plotters, including Ion Iliescu, Petre Roman, Silviu Brucan, Nicolae Militaru, and Virgil Măgoreanu, assumed power through manipulation of events, using foreign

---

(11) See Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of 1989*, Ithaca and London : Cornell University Press, 2007, pp. 275-279.

(12) Contele Incappucciato, "Diavolul în Țara lui Dumnezeu (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)," *RM*, No. 319/320/321/322/323, 16/23/30 August, 6/13 September, 1996 ; Garda Moare, dar nu se preda! "Războiul axiologic contra României (1)," *RM*, No. 348, March 14, 1997 ; Tudor, "Ce ne-a adus nouă Revoluția," *RM*, No. 320, August 23, 1996.



assistance, mainly the KGB, working with Hungarian security forces. At the same time, using techniques of “electronic and psychological warfare,” they misled the people, manipulated them,<sup>(13)</sup> “creating the illusion that what had happened was the effect of their own will.”<sup>(14)</sup>

If foreign forces targeted Romania once, they must still be continuing to work against it today. Those who once betrayed the country then must be still traitors now. This way of thinking is also used in the interpretation of post-1989 Romanian society, as shown below.

## 2) Foreign Influence

### 2-1) Global Finance and Occult Forces

The economic crisis, widespread poverty, and the scandal-ridden privatization process in post-communist Romania offered fertile ground for the discourses blaming exclusively external factors, such as large international banks and financial institutions (such as the IMF, The World Bank). These foreign forces, the party claims, are exploiting the Romanian people, using the Romanian ruling class as instruments.

Furthermore, some occult actors, such as the transnational mafia, Jewish mafia, international freemasonry, and the Judeo-Masonic cabal, are often picked out as the masterminds plotting to destabilize the country.<sup>(15)</sup> When Tudor attended the Congress of the French National Front party in 1997, he described the threats approaching Romania and France in the fol-

---

(13) “Noul pact secret dintre Germania și Rusia,” *RM*, No. 327, October 11, 1996 ; Viorel Roman, “Un război civil regizat?” *RM*, No. 435, November 13, 1998.

(14) Voicu, *op. cit.*, p.140.

(15) Tudor, “Manifest pentru minerii din Valea Jiului,” *RM*, No. 444, January 15, 1999 ; Conte Incapucciato, “Diavolul în Țara lui Dumnezeu,” *RM*, No. 319, August 16, 1996 ; R. Alexandru, “Noua Ordine Mondială și Sataniștii (1),” *RM*, No. 331, November 8, 1996 ; Cristian Negureanu, “România sub ocupație (1),” *RM*, No. 342, January 31, 1997.

lowing way. “A team of foreign agents and Trojan horses from inside,” he claimed, “dazzle the world with a few clichés...such as democracy, human rights, and European integration — but, in reality, they are implementing a policy of denationalization, of the programmed starvation of populations... of the hemorrhage of national patrimonies, the tenacious destruction of industry, agriculture, the military, and tourism, transforming our countries into third-class colonies without identity, without national specificity.”<sup>(16)</sup> This conspiracy theory holds that not only the economy and resources of Romania but its culture, political, social, and historical values as well are being attacked.<sup>(17)</sup>

Patriots and nationalists, the party claims, are under constant attack. *România Mare* claims that the greater part of the domestic press, which displays a dangerous anti-national orientation, is led and blackmailed by the S. R. I. [the Romanian intelligence service], which is in turn closely linked with or under control of foreign intelligence services out to harm Romania’s national interests, such as the KGB and Mossad [the Israeli foreign intelligence service]. They also seek to eliminate the nationalist political parties and politicians, such as Tudor himself, from Romanian politics through media manipulation and other tools.<sup>(18)</sup>

## 2-2) Anti-Semitism

As noted above, anti-Semitism, which has a long tradition in Romanian ultra-nationalism,<sup>(19)</sup> occupies a special place in PRM’s conspiracy discourse. Tu-

(16) Tudor, “Pentru o Europă a Națiunilor,” *RM*, No. 351, April 4, 1997.

(17) Garda Moare, dar nu se predal, “Războiul axiologic contra României (2) (3),” *RM*, No. 349/350, March 21/28, 1997.

(18) Un Grup de ofițeri S. R. I., “Acest personaj este expresia concentrată a geniului răului în societatea românească (1),” *RM*, No. 300, April 5, 1996.

(19) See, for example, Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism : the Case*

dor himself has often made anti-Semitic speeches, though he has often insisted that he is not an anti-Semite.

Tudor's argument, like that of many other anti-Semites, begins with the idea that international Jewry, with an instinct to rule the world, is involved in a worldwide conspiracy. The world, in this view, is controlled<sup>(20)</sup> by a Jewish mafia, or a narrow group of powerful Jews, specifically, "several Zionist political – financial bodies," such as "the World Jewish Congress and the Committee of 300."<sup>(21)</sup> This world government, he argues, entered "its ultimate and decisive phase" in 1989. As a result of their operations, "no one can make a single move, except within the frames drawn by these centers of absolute power. They own world finance, they have command centers, they control the most influential politicians. Whoever does not obey is blackmailed, frightened, and then mercilessly crushed."

Tudor is obsessed with Israel and Zionism, even stating that Zionism is "older and more dangerous than the two" [fascism and communism] and that "both fascism and communism are creations of aggressive Jews."<sup>(22)</sup> Furthermore, it is self-evident to him that "the US is a colony of Israel."

The Jewish mafia, he claims, targeted Romania for many years. Ceaușescu fought for the independence of the country against Jewish interference. In relation to this, he applauded Ceaușescu's deal with Israel, in which Israel paid a huge sum of money for Romania to allow Romanian Jews leave the country.<sup>(23)</sup> However, today, foreigners, mainly Jews, have in-

---

*of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, Oxford/New York : Pergamon Press, 1991 ; William Oldson, *A Providential Antisemitism : Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania*, Philadelphia : American Philosophical Society, 1991.

(20) Tudor, "Pi șentru bre! România n-a fost și nu va fi colonia nimănuil" *RM*, No. 302, April 19, 1996.

(21) Tudor, "Inimă de slugă," *RM*, No. 343, February 7, 1997.

(22) *Ibid.*

sidiously penetrated positions of major responsibility in the Romanian state and have influence over political and economic decision making of the government. Furthermore, he claims that foreign officials in Romania, such as the United States ambassador, are under the orders of the Jewish lobby or Jewish mafia to intervene in the internal affairs of Romania. According to Tudor, this interference, along with threats to the territorial unity of the country, are a serious infringement of Romanian sovereignty and independence.

### 3) Hungary and Hungarian Ethnic Minorities

Romania's neighbor Hungary and the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transylvania are the most often mentioned threat. In the opinion of Romanian nationalists, the distinction between the two is meaningless because they share an irredentist claim. In almost every issue, *România Mare* reports on the Hungarian threat and their plots. Whatever the pretext, their activities, according to this interpretation, are meant to undermine the integrity of the Romanian state.

In this context, any demands of the Hungarian minority for the autonomy of the region, where the population is majority ethnic Hungarian are examined with serious suspicion. Such an action, it argues, is nothing but a potential step toward the federalization of Romania, which will ultimately lead to a full annexation of Transylvania by Hungary, as occurred

---

(23) *Ibid.*

(24) *Ibid.*; Tudor, "Pi pentru brel România n-a fost și nu va fi colonia nimănuil" *RM*, No. 302, April 19, 1996.

(25) Voicu, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

(26) Grigore Nedel, "Cum a rezolvat Ceășescu problema maghiară (24)," *RM*, No. 435, November 13, 1998.

(27) Cinpoș, *op. cit.*, p. 102-103.

in 1940. The Hungarian minority party, the UDMR (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania), is a main target of anti-Hungarian discourse on the part of the PRM. The UDMR is ceaselessly accused of fascism, irredentism, terrorism, and plotting to “forcefully magyarize Transylvania” and undermine the “Romanian national unitary state.”<sup>(28)</sup> Furthermore, in its governing agenda, the PRM states that “the government will initiate a ban on the Horthyst party UDMR, which is a political formation based on an ethnic criterion, which operates beyond the law, systematically violates the constitution of the country, and openly militates for the federalization and territorial dismantling of Romania.”<sup>(29)</sup>

#### 4) PRM's Attitude toward Euro-Atlantic Integration

PRM has supported Euro-Atlantic integration, at least formally, since the party signed the Snagov Declaration in June 1995, a statement signed by all major political parties in Romania, pledging their full support for EU membership. Romania, the party argues, needs Euro-Atlantic structures to guarantee security, and furthermore, the country is located in the heart of Europe, both geographically and historically, and thus belongs in European groupings.<sup>(30)</sup> The *National Doctrine* also states that the party favors “Romania’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures” and “will actively militate against all the forces that try to isolate Romania from the international har-

---

(28) Tudor, “PNȚCD s-a aliat cu UDMR împotriva Poporului Român”, *RM*, No. 401, March 20, 1998 ; Tudor, “Universitatea Horthy · Hitler”, *RM*, No. 430, October 9, 1998 ; Costică Ciurtin, “Împotriva Universității Maghiare de Stat”, *RM*, No. 416, July 3, 1998.

(29) “Unirea în belșug – programul de guvernare al Partidului România Mare –”, *RM*, No. 387, December 12, 1997 ; Comitetul Director al PRM, “Strategia – fulger a Partidului România Mare pentru guvernarea Țării”, *RM*, No. 306, May 17, 1996 ; Tudor, “Țara e în paragină”, *RM*, No. 328, October 18, 1996.

(30) Tudor, “Români, vă conjur, nu vă pierdeți speranța!” *RM*, No. 331, November 8, 1996 ; “Doctrina națională,” *RM*, Nr. 307, May 24, 1996.

(31) mony of values.” Moreover, it states that such integration “will not negatively affect the national unity and the living standards of the Romanian people ; on the contrary, it will represent a factor of progress,” on the condition that “the country is not treated as a second-tier country” and “its tradition and dignity are respected.”<sup>(32)</sup>

In fact, PRM has made relatively few criticisms of the EU. However, PRM’s attitude toward NATO is more ambivalent, and it has sometimes vehemently criticized this organization. These criticisms bear mainly on the following two situations.

The first was when Western requirements for Romania’s accession to NATO were, in the party’s view, incompatible with vital national interests.<sup>(33)</sup> A typical example was the treaty signed between Romania and Ukraine in June 1997, which confirmed the existing borders between the two countries. The PRM’s most important and non-negotiable goal is the reunification of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia (now part of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, respectively) which were “arbitrarily annexed”<sup>(34)</sup> ; therefore, Tudor condemned the treaty with Ukraine as an “act of high treason.”<sup>(35)</sup>

The second situation involved NATO’s military intervention, in particular, its bombing campaign against Serbia, during the Kosovo conflict in 1999. Tudor condemned the bombing “as more than a crime against humanity,” and declared, “I propose... that Romania officially denounce NATO as a criminal alliance that should be banned under international law. I will

---

(31) “Doctrina națională,” *RM*, Nr. 307, May 24, 1996.

(32) *Ibid.*

(33) Cinpoș, *op. cit.*, p.103.

(34) “Doctrina națională,” *RM*, Nr. 307, May 24, 1996.

(35) Tudor, “Victor și Victoria Reformei asupra întregului Popor,” *RM*, No. 361, June 13, 1997.

also submit to the National Council of PRM to give up supporting Romania's attempts to enter NATO, because it is immoral to want to place the country in such a 'factory of death'<sup>(36)</sup>." This was the peak of Tudor and PRM's anti-NATO sentiments. The following points can be attested to explain this stance. In addition to humanitarian concern for civilian victims of NATO bombing, NATO's military action and the support of the Romanian government were highly unpopular among the public, and NATO's intervention reminded them of their nationalist nightmare, namely, the "Yugoslavization"<sup>(37)</sup> of Romania, which also has sizable ethnic minorities as well.<sup>(38)</sup>

### 3. PRM Discourse in 2000–2004 : From Partial Adaptation to Transformation

In this section, we examine the transformation of PRM's discourse in 2000–2004, as Euro-Atlantic integration and the Europeanization of Romania became reached their full extent. This timeframe covers four important milestones for the country's Euro-Atlantic integration. In December 1999, the Helsinki European Council agreed to open accession negotiations with Romania. In late November 2002, the organizers of the Prague NATO Summit invited Romania to begin accession talks. On March 29, 2004, Romania joined NATO formally. In December 2004, EU accession negotiations closed, and the European Council set January, 1, 2007 as the target date for Romania to join the EU. It thus seems reasonable to divide this period into

---

(36) Tudor, "America, Antichrist, Apocalipsa," *RM*, No. 456, April 9, 1999.

(37) Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "Return of Populism – The 2000 Romanian Elections," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (April 2001), p. 243.

(38) Tudor, "Noua Eră se va numi 'Aquarius' și va fi anticreștină," *RM*, No. 458, April 23, 1999.

two at the end of November 2002.

### 1) Partial Adaptation (2000–2002)

This period is characterized by PRM's slow and partial adaptation to the changing international environment. Briefly, on the one hand, little change took place in PRM's discourse on the perceived threats mentioned in the previous section. However, Tudor, and the party as well, gradually became more conciliatory toward NATO.

#### 1-1) Reluctant Choice

As noted above, Tudor and PRM's anti-NATO discourse reached a peak during the Kosovo conflict in 1999. However, Tudor's attitude toward Euro-Atlantic integration changed before March 2000, when he was officially nominated to be the party's presidential candidate. On this occasion, Tudor stated that "a world government, which controls all political, financial, and monetary power, has come into being in the last 10 years."<sup>(39)</sup> The world government, he claimed, dominates countries, eliminating inconvenient regimes, such as those of Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Austria, and politicians, such as Ceaușescu and Noriega. In this context, he argued, "Europeans are convinced that, by unifying the continent, they can successfully oppose the peril of forced Americanization and the loss of their identity."<sup>(40)</sup> In reference to the construction of a united Europe, Tudor said, "Perhaps we should not even oppose it, as long as we have the freedom to fight from within to achieve better status for our country."<sup>(41)</sup>

Subsequently, after a statement consisting of Tudor's thoughts on

---

(39) Tudor, "Fapte, nu vorbe," *RM*, No. 504, March 10, 2000.

(40) *Ibid.*

(41) *Ibid.*



the national interests of Romania in a post-Cold War era, he called for the following foreign policy.<sup>(42)</sup> For Romania, “it would be far more appropriate to remain among the neutral countries.” However, the Non-Aligned Movement “disappeared.” Therefore, “a small country like Romania, which is exhausted, menaced, and perpetually threatened with territorial dismemberment,” had no other choice but to join the EU. This was the lesson that was taught by Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Austria. The change here, he insists, “is not capitulation...but pragmatism and realpolitik.” Moreover, Tudor supported this argument with his own historical interpretation : “Romanians have an ancestral political instinct that cannot fail and will prevent them from ruining their country for illusions. This instinct has been called Byzantinism by some, and thanks to it, we have never disappeared as a state in history, while Hungary disappeared twice, and Poland vanished three times.”

Finally, Tudor spoke of Romania’s choice “between isolation leading to an absurd autarky and an integration that could lead them to the world, with substantial funds.” He concluded, as a result, that Romanian politicians must fiercely negotiate all conditions for joining the EU.<sup>(43)</sup>

This speech shows that Tudor’s discourse on Romania’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures developed in a more conciliatory direction during the 2000 presidential election campaign. However, his discourse remained rife with conspiracy thinking, and the difference seems to have sprouted from political necessity brought on by the changing international situation.

## 1-2) Jumping onto the NATO Accession Bandwagon

How did Tudor’s discourse change in the spring of 2001, when the Roma-

---

(42) *Ibid.*

(43) *Ibid.*

nian Parliament unanimously passed a declaration in favor of accession to NATO. In short, his discourse shifted from the aforementioned passive stance to a more positive one.

First, Tudor argued for the necessity of Romania's joining the NATO, taking the perspective of the geopolitical configuration.<sup>(44)</sup> "Romania's place is among the countries of civilization," he argued; for this reason, Romanians "need NATO's shield of protection."<sup>(45)</sup> More specifically, joining NATO is, he claims, "the only logical and efficient option for the future of Romania, for its security and development among the moving sands of its neighborhood, near the unpredictable Russian colossus."<sup>(46)</sup> He also emphasized the need to exit the difficulty of Hungary's accession to NATO, because Romania "must permanently keep an eye on Hungary."<sup>(47)</sup>

Subsequently, after stating that PRM had been strongly and consistently committed to joining NATO, ever since the party was founded, Tudor claimed that he and PRM shared a categorical will to contribute to Romania's accession to NATO.<sup>(48)</sup>

Romania's changing international situation had a certain impact on Tudor's perception of pressing threats, which may have led to this shift in his discourse. On the other hand, his impatience to jump onto the NATO accession bandwagon is evident in his discourse.

---

(44) Tudor, "La muncă, PRM!" *RM*, No. 556, March 9, 2001.

(45) Tudor, "Idealismul moare, dar nu se predă!" *RM*, No. 557, March 16, 2001.

(46) Tudor, "Aderarea continuă la NATO – păcăleală de 1 aprilie, sau un nou Festival 'Cântarea României,'" *RM*, No. 560, April 6, 2001.

(47) Tudor, "La muncă, PRM!" *RM*, No. 556, March 9, 2001.

(48) Tudor, "Aderarea continuă la NATO – păcăleală de 1 aprilie, sau un nou Festival 'Cântarea României,'" *RM*, No. 560, April 6, 2001.

## 2) Transformation of Tudor's Discourse (2003–2004)

After 2002, Tudor and PRM's discourse began to fully support Euro-Atlantic integration, as Romania's accession to NATO seemed imminent. Relatedly, the discourse on perceived threats, as described in the previous section, also showed a considerable change. In particular, anxiety over the division of spheres of influence by the Great Powers was generally no longer expressed, fierce attacks against foreign influence were somewhat de-radicalized, and Tudor proclaimed a conversion from anti-Semitism to philo-Semitism.

However, at the same time, anti-Hungarian discourse became more intense. That is for a few reasons. Among these, a 2003 constitutional amendment granted minorities the right to use their own language with local administrative entities and the courts.<sup>(49)</sup> Furthermore, ethnic Hungarian demands for autonomy grew in strength, and the Szekler National Council was established in Székely Land (Harghita, Covasna, and parts of Mureș counties), where the majority of the population is ethnic Hungarians.<sup>(50)</sup>

## 2-1) Pro-NATO and Pro-USA

Following NATO's decision to invite Romania to begin accession talks in late November 2001, an article with a symbolic title, "From anti-NATO to

---

(49) Tudor, "Marea coaliție a trădării de țară," *RM*, No. 686, September 5, 2003 ; Tudor, "Dacă mîncare ne e, nimic nu e..." *RM*, No. 689, September 26, 2003 ; Tudor, "Un Referendum militarizat," *RM*, No. 691, October 10, 2003 ; Biroul de Presă al PRM, "Partidul România Mare cere membrilor și simpatizanților săi să nu se prezinte la Referendum," *RM*, No. 670, October 17, 2003.

(50) Gică Agrigoroaie, "Extremiștii unguri se pregătesc să obțină autonomie teritorială prin acțiuni militare și teroriste," *RM*, No. 705, January 16, 2004 ; Gheorghe Funar, "Pînă cînd va mai fi tolerat terorismul UDMR-ului?" *RM*, No. 707, January 30, 2004 ; See also Cinpoș, *op. cit.*, pp.116–117.

pro-NATO!"<sup>(51)</sup> was published in *România Mare*. This article claimed that the departure point of the party's foreign policy was the pursuit of "an active neutrality of Romania in exchange for the reunification of Romanian territories, that is, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina." However, it states, this political solution "was constantly denied by the Kremlin, which did not want to explicitly condemn the consequences of the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact as it regards Romania." Therefore, PRM decided to support Romania's accession to NATO, which would be "a first step in Romania's return to the Occident, its natural place, after a tumultuous and profaned history of fascism and bolshevism." Thus, "for the majority of Romanians, the Prague Summit of November 23, 2002 was a moment of satisfaction and hope."

This article also praised President George W. Bush's speech in Bucharest following the Prague Summit as "exceptional and historical," because "he assured Romania of US support in the event of an external aggression, no matter who the aggressor is."<sup>(52)</sup> Furthermore, after the statement that Romanian should not forget the United States's support for the political birth of Greater Romania, after World War I, it contended that "Romanians do not want to ally with a world gendarme like the defunct Soviet Union," and they "really believe in the values of American democracy." For this reason, it concludes, "Romanian governments, regardless of their political color, must take Romania's relationship with the US seriously and fulfill their obligations within NATO."<sup>(53)</sup> Moreover, "the Romanian economy needs a strong capital infusion, an American one most of all."<sup>(54)</sup>

This type of openly pro-American discourse had never been seen

---

(51) Florin Iordache, "De la anti-NATO la pro-NATO!" *RM*, No. 652, January 10, 2003.

(52) *Ibid.*

(53) *Ibid.*

(54) *Ibid.*

before. The trend became only more obviously the party's official position, as discussed below.

At the end of July 2003, Tudor announced a political 10 Commandments for himself, a form of promises in advance of the launch of presidential campaign of the following year. Among these, he pledged to respect all treaties and partnerships with NATO : “No one needs to fear the phrase ‘Greater Romania,’ which, in our sense, is more an idealistic and historical symbol than a materialist and geographic one.”<sup>(55)</sup>

He also declared a full commitment to promote EU accession and to friendship with the US and even with Israel. Similarly, only PRM, he states, “can protect the US military and their families” in Romania. He also showed a more conciliatory attitude toward the World Bank and the IMF, although his party had consistently been hostile toward these international actors. With reference to foreign investment, the PRM, Tudor argues, welcomes “strategic investors, especially those from the US, Great Britain, Germany, and France” because Romania’s economy needs “finance, know-how, raw materials, and access to markets.” It is self-evident, he claims, that Romanian “cannot return to autarky and isolation.” Therefore, it is indispensable to “create optimal conditions to attract large foreign investors.”<sup>(56)</sup>

Finally, Tudor acknowledged the concern that might be shown by foreign players about the evolution of his views, and he assured “such skeptics” that “the time of improvisations and mistakes has passed” and that the “Romanian people have reached a sufficient level of understanding.” He affirmed that “the age of my full maturity”<sup>(57)</sup> had come.

---

(55) Tudor, “Primele 10 măsuri pe care le voi adopta ca președinte al României,” *RM*, No. 681, August 1, 2003.

(56) *Ibid.*

(57) *Ibid.*

His declaration contained remarkable elements, which had not been seen before in Tudor's or PRM's public statements. In particular, pragmatic discourse on the issue of the "ancestral territories" and the new positive and friendly attitudes toward foreign investors indicated that the former discourses of conspiracy had changed considerably.

## 2-2) Getting out of the Gray Zone between the Power Blocs

The final step of the transformation of Tudor's discourse is seen in his speeches from the spring of 2004, when Romania formally joined NATO. Tudor explains his reason for celebrating this event : NATO is "not a perfect organization," he argued, but it "treats us as partners, stretching out a friendly hand to take us out of our isolation."<sup>(58)</sup> Moreover, the disparity and disequilibrium, "which was artificially created in this part of Europe with Hungary's accession to NATO,"<sup>(59)</sup> was hereby canceled. He stated that it had been long enough since 1990 "for all of us to understand that we cannot remain on the outside of this process."<sup>(60)</sup>

Furthermore, Tudor drew attention to the historical significance of Romania's accession to NATO : "PRM welcomes this event as a triumph of reason and a return for our country to rejoin the civilized states of the world... History has been like a stepmother to Romania, especially in the 20th century, through the serious betrayal in Yalta... when we were brutally ripped from the orbit of our natural evolution. If Romania had not been abandoned by the Occident in February 1945, it would have had the same status as Spain or Greece today. Now, a great historical injustice can begin

---

(58) Tudor, "Pur și simplu mi-a venit rindul," *RM*, No. 712, March 5, 2004.

(59) *Ibid.* ; Tudor, "Prin intrarea României în NATO începe să se repare o mare nedreptate istorică," *RM*, No. 716, April 2, 2004.

(60) Tudor, "Pur și simplu mi-a venit rindul," *RM*, No. 712, March 5, 2004.

to be repaired. Better late than never.”<sup>(61)</sup>

In sum, it seems that Tudor finally expressed a recognition that Romania was leaving the gray zone between the power blocs or the nightmares of Yalta and Malta. This meant that even he began to find holding an old-fashioned conspiracy theory difficult.

### 2-3) Tudor's Conversion?

A more radical and sudden change occurred in Tudor's anti-Semitism discourse. No change was seen in this area until fall 2003. In fact, as late as July 2003, Tudor insisted that “there was no Holocaust in Romanian territory” ; rather, “Romanians protected Jews.”<sup>(62)</sup> However, international pressure forced Romania “to recognize the existence of the Holocaust in Romania” to “subject Romania to a regime of sanction and compensation.” This is, he claimed, a falsification of history, and Romanians have “an obligation to counter it.”<sup>(63)</sup> Tudor's argument was a typical selective negationism of the Holocaust, in Michael Shafir's term.<sup>(64)</sup>

However, Tudor made a complete 180-degree turn at the end of 2003. His transformation is clearly seen in an following open letter he published, in which he declared that he would abandon the selective negationism toward the Holocaust as follows :<sup>(65)</sup> “It was a mistake to have denied the

---

(61) Tudor, “Prin intrarea României în NATO începe să se repare o mare nedreptate istorică,” *RM*, No. 716, April 2, 2004.

(62) Tudor, “Nu mai insultați Poporul Român” *RM*, No. 678, July 11, 2003.

(63) *Ibid.*

(64) Michael Shafir, “Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’ : Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, ACTA No. 19, 2002, pp. 47-54.

(65) Tudor, “Mulțumesc Poporului Evreu, care ne-a dăruit Biblia,” *RM*, No. 710, February 20, 2004.

Holocaust in Romania, which took place between 1941 and 1944 under the Antonescu Regime... I admit that the Romanian government, led by Antonescu, was responsible for the liquidation of about 400,000 Jews.” Further, confronting the idea of the “retrocession of Jewish property in Romania,” he agreed that “that property – both private and community property – must be returned to its true, genuine owners.”

Tudor also promised to ensure Holocaust education was taught in public school if he was elected president, because, he said, “the next generation of Romanians must also know the historical truth of the Holocaust in Romania.” Similarly, after expressing his regret for “having made aggressive statements against Jewish personalities,” Tudor promised that he “would not allow anyone in the party leadership or in the pages of *România Mare* to make any kind of critical or anti-Semitic statements against the Jewish people in the future.”<sup>(66)</sup>

Finally, Tudor apologized “to all the Jews” he “had offended with his pamphlets or verbal excesses,” and he affirmed that he “has changed.”<sup>(67)</sup>

To communicate his sincerity, Tudor performed a series of sensational public gestures. To begin with, a statue of Israel’s assassinated prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, erected by PRM, was unveiled in Braşov in January 2004.<sup>(68)</sup> Tudor also decided to hire an Israeli company, Arad Communications, to guide his 2004 electoral campaign.<sup>(69)</sup> A PRM delegation, led by Tudor,<sup>(70)</sup> visited the extermination camp at Auschwitz in May 2004. Finally,

---

(66) *Ibid.*

(67) *Ibid.*

(68) “Statuia lui Yitzhak Rabin a primit aprobarea consiliului local al municipiului Braşov,” *RM*, No. 708, February 6, 2004.

(69) “Eyal Arad : “Dl. Corneliu Vadim Tudor va fi viitorul preşedintele al României!” *RM*, No. 714, March 19, 2004.

(70) *RM*, No. 722, May 14, 2004.



addressing himself to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, when referring to a notorious forgery created in the early 20th century, the following text was added to articles in *România Mare* : “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a fake, made by the Czarist police.”<sup>(71)</sup>

This transformation can reasonably be regarded as an opportunistic attempt by Tudor to improve his image and that of his party for international consumption and to acquire credit abroad.<sup>(72)</sup> At the same time, this clear denial of anti-Semitism, even though it was not translated into anything but symbolic or discursive action, created a distance of Tudor and his party from the tradition of Romanian ultra-nationalism, where overt anti-Semitism was consistently a core feature.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has examined how ultranationalist discourse in Romania changed as the country underwent Euro-Atlantic integration and Europeanization. As has been seen, PRM and Tudor, its leader, became more conciliatory toward Euro-Atlantic integration after 1999 and were strongly committed to it from the end of 2001, when NATO invited Romania to begin accession talks. In parallel, discourses on perceived threats also exhibited considerable change, with the single exception of anti-Hungarian discourse. Specifically, anxiety over the division of Europe into spheres of influence by the Great Powers and the phenomenon of Western betrayal was largely removed from PRM’s public positions, the previously fierce attacks against foreign influence were to some extent de-radicalized, and Tu-

---

(71) Marian Ciurea, “Vadim dă frisoanel!” *RM*, No. 708, February 6, 2004.

(72) A chameleon-like character is one of features of populist politicians (Paul Taggart, *Populism*, Buckingham/Philadelphia : Open University Press, 2000, p. 4).

dor apologized to Jews, declaring his abandonment of anti-Semitism.

Tudor's change of discourse may have been dictated by necessity and political pragmatism. He and his party stood accused by the international community of extremism, xenophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism, and mainstream parties announced that if Tudor were elected president, Romania would be excluded from Euro-Atlantic integration. The party needed to clean up its tainted image to acquire international legitimacy as Romania was being Europeanized. In a certain sense, the transformation of his discourse is only the latest example of the theory of *formele fără fond* (forms without substance).

However, if this transformation is considered in the broader context of the history of Romanian nationalism, it can be seen in the following way : Romania's acceptance into the Euro-Atlantic structure anchored the country in a geopolitically and economically secure environment for the first time since the modern Romanian state was formed. As a result, traditional sources of the heightened perception of threats and the wellspring of conspiracy narratives for ultranationalists was to a considerable extent lost, which led to the weakening of the credibility and effectiveness of traditional ultranationalist discourse. The Euro-Atlantic integration, therefore, was literally an epoch-making event in the history of Romanian nationalism.

## References

- Cinpoș, Radu. *Nationalism and Identity in Romania : A History of Extreme Politics from the Birth of State to EU Accession*, London : I. B. Tauris, 2010.
- Cohn, Norman. *Warrant for Genocide : the Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, New York : Harper

& Row, 1967.

Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1996.

Mungiu-Pippidi, Alina. "Return of Populism – The 2000 Romanian Elections," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (April 2001), pp. 230-252.

Oldson, William. *A Providential Antisemitism : Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania*, Philadelphia : American Philosophical Society, 1991.

*România Mare* (Bucureşti).

1996 : April 5/19, May 17/24, August 16/23/30, September 6/13, October 11/18, November 8.

1997 : January 31, February 7/14, March 14/21/28, April 4, June 13, December 12.

1998 : March 20, July 3, October 9, November 13.

1999 : January 15, April 9/23.

2000 : March 10.

2001 : March 9/16, April 6.

2003 : January 10, July 11, August 1, September 5/26, October 10/17.

2004 : January 16/30, February 6/20, March 5/19, April 2, May 14.

Shafir, Michael. "Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization' : Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe," The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, ACTA No. 19, 2002, pp.47-54.

Shafir, Michael. "The Mind of Romania's Radical Right," in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.) *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, Pennsylvania : Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, pp. 213-232.

- Shafir, Michael. "The Greater Romanian Party and the 2000 Elections in Romania : How obvious is the obvious?" *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2001) , pp. 91-126.
- Siani-Davies, Peter. *The Romanian Revolution of 1989*, Ithaca and London : Cornell University Press, 2007.
- Taggart, Paul. *Populism*, Buckingham/Philadelphia : Open University Press, 2000.
- Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Fantasies of Salvation : Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Verdery, Katherine. "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania," *Slavic Review*, vol. 52, No. 2 (1993) , pp. 179-203.
- Voicu, George. *Zei și zeițe : cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă*, Iași : Polirom, 2000.
- Volovici, Leon. *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism : the Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, Oxford/New York : Pergamon Press 1991.

#### Acknowledgement

This work was supported by Kokugakuin University Overseas Research Grant 2017.