ROMANIA AND POLAND VS RUSSIA IN THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS' WAR (1914–?)

GHEORGHE IACOB

Keywords: Romania, Poland, Russia, Crimea, Ukraine, European Union, NATO, Second Hundred Years' War.

ARGUMENT

On the scale of history, the relations between the Romanian Principalities and especially those between Moldavia Poland were much broader than is usually thought even in expert circles, where expertise is limited to one historical period or other. In fact, the proximity during the interwar period and the common interests in relation to the threat from the east enhanced some ties of medieval tradition timewise.

In the 20th and 21 st centuries, the two World Wars, the Iron Curtain, the Soviet domination during the Cold War, the new course of history after 1990, accession to NATO and the EU, the occupation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and then the attack on Ukraine in 2022 – all these placed Romania and Poland on the same side of history.

Poland and Romania are the largest countries on the eastern border of NATO and the EU. It is up to them to convince the allies that the only solution is to mobilize all resources to deter the aggressor.

Given the topicality of the subject, we will revisit an article published in 2014 and discussed in various conferences on the relationship between Romania and Poland in 2020 and 2021[1], to which we add some fresh perspectives.

I. THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS' WAR (1914–?). STAGES

After 1991 the historians' debate on globalization has taken a number of turns towards the possible historical classification of the last decades. Other professionals have joined in: political scientists, journalists, politicians, and many others, more or less connected with the domains, but most of them with variable, measurable, and

[1] Gh. Iacob, *The Second Hundred Years' War (1914–2014). Geopolitical Implications for Romania*, in "Transylvanian Review", vol. XXIII, no. 4, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 3–11; v. Dan Prisacaru, Petre Otu, Marius Iorgulescu (coordinators), *România și Polonia în avanpostul securității europene. Tradiție și continuitate (1919–2022)*, București, 2024, p. 63, 211–218.

rewarded interests. Thus, phrases such as "a new Cold War", "back to a bipolar world" (or multipolar), or even "the Second Hundred Years War" have recently come into the limelight.

Among the first authors to write about the "new Cold War" was Gilbert Achcar in 1999[2]. Taking on his idea, as well as on Neagu Djuvara's book *Războiul de șaptezeci de ani și premisele hegemoniei americane (1914–1991)*[3] [Eng. *The Seventy Years War and the Premises of American Hegemony in 1914-1991*], we suggested integrating the concept of a "new Cold War" in a more detailed analysis starting from the periodization of a "Second Hundred Years War." Subsequent research found the phrase "Second Hundred Years War" in an article by the American journalist Barry Casselman[4].

In a recent work we find a chapter entitled *A 100 Years' War*, from which we take some significant line: "In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Plantagenets, the Capet dynasty, then the Valois disputed the supremacy over their small contemporary Western world, in confrontations waged between England and France. Their conflict lasted, on and off, from 1337 to 1453. In retrospect, historiography gave these war episodes the generic name of the "Hundred Years' War", although the participants thereof certainly had no perception of a long-lasting confrontation.

And so, how will tomorrow's historiography define our era, where the world has hardly known any universal, real peace since the beginning of the 20th century, which we could establish in 1914, the year of the first world conflict? The impact of the First World War on states, societies and mentalities grew into an avalanche of situations, behaviors, multiple effects similar to the aftershocks of an earthquake[5]. [...]

Any resemblance to the hesitant behavior of the Western world today towards Putin's political and territorial claims is not at all accidental[6] [...]

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, opens a new era. The stakes do not change in nature, even if the main actors are no longer exactly the same[7] [...]

The new world order, with China aspiring to be its self-proclaimed prophet, can only worsen this balance of power. Chinese-inspired totalitarianism is as effective as that invented a hundred years ago by Lenin, with the addition of new technologies that can enslave the population more efficiently. Meanwhile, Islamism seems to extinguish the Lights wherever it triumphs"[8]

As far as we are concerned, this phrase represents a pretext for an analysis of the current situation in Europe and Romania with facts contextualized and compared against those from 1914. Additionally, we aim to outline the stages of the period 1914–2014.

---

[2] Gilbert Achcar, *Noul război rece. Lumea după Kosovo*, Bucureşti, 2002.

[3] Neagu Djuvara, *Războiul de şaptezeci de ani şi premisele hegemoniei americane (l914–1991)*, București, 2010.

[4] http://barrycasselman.blogspot.ro/2012/12/the-praire-editor-new-hundre-years.htm, 10.09.2014.

[5] Thierry Wolton, *Întoarcerea vremurilor barbare. De la un război la altul*, București, 2024, p. 157 (my translation from the Romanian version of the book).

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 162.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 169.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 171.

The main argument of this perspective is that the period 2008–2014 (the crisis in Georgia and Ukraine) indicates the return to a "logic of conflict" typical of the year 1914. In fact, as early as the 1990s, some analysts foresaw that Europe might go back to the "interwar model" of political disputes.

In anticipation of some criticism from professional historians who might object to the research method, it is a good place to prevent the readers that we will adopt a political, even discursive perspective, as it is more appropriate for a "stroll through the century" and for a meditation on the current period[9].

*

Therefore, we propose some observations, premises, and especially questions regarding the developments in international politics and the situation of Romania over the entire 20th century and early 21st century.

The first issue is the structure of this period, which is essential to understanding the cause-effect chain and in order to justify a comparison. We propose the following stages, partly based on the already established timeline, but integrated in the economy of the Hundred Years War and complete with some new ones:

- the First World War (1914–1918);
- the interwar Armistice (1918–1939);
- the Second World War (1939–1945);
- the Cold War (1945–1990/1991);
- the post-Cold War Armistice (1990/1991–2008/2014);
- the Second Cold War (2008/2014–?)

Thus, starting from the identified time segments, we will go on to outline the main features of each stage, which will clarify their intrinsic implications but also help us place them in a wider context of historical (dis)continuities.

Looking at the events around the First World War (1914–1918) and the implications it had for Romania, we notice that the Romanian state was poorly prepared from the military and economic point of view. The country had gone through political disputes around the imminent alliance with one or the other block (the Entente or the Central Powers). Once the choice made, in August 1916, the Western allies, bit especially Russia, failed to honor their commitments as stipulated

[9] See Urs Altermatt, *Previziunile de la Sarajevo. Etnonaţionalismul în Europa*, Iaşi, 2000; Arnaud Blin, Gérard Chaliand, François Gere (coord.), *Puteri şi influenţe. Anuar de geopolitică şi geostrategie 2000–2001*, Bucureşti, 2001; Pasacal Boniface, *Vers la Quatriéme Guerre mondiale?*, Paris, 2005; Idem (coord.), *Atlas des relations internationals,* Paris, 2003; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Marea tablă de şah. Supremaţia americană şi imperativele sale strategice*, Bucureşti, 2000; R.J. Crampton, *Europa răsăriteană în secolul al XX lea... şi după,* Bucureşti, 2002; Martin McCauley, *Rusia, America şi războiul rece. 1949–l991*, Iaşi, l999; Herve Macquart, *Thémes d'actualité géopoliques*, Paris, 2006; Loukas Tsoukalis, *Ce fel de Europă?*, Bucureşti, 2005; Maurice Vaïsse, *Les relations internationales depuis 1945*, Paris, 2004.

in the military Convention, which resulted in isolating Romania and increasing its war effort to unbearable heights. Apparently, even to this day, no matter the political regime, Russia has kept its ways unchanged, which can only be a bad omen for Romania. The financial collapse of the British Empire, followed by its political and territorial disintegration, had a snowball effect on its smaller European allies, including Romania. The difficulties caused by the length of the frontline, the economic and military weakness, and by the allies, were compensated by Ionel Brătianu's tactful diplomatic efforts, as the army demonstrated an impressive combat activity, far beyond its technical and operational capability. Then, Romania had a historic opportunity in the fall of the two neighboring powers: the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian empires. After 1918, Romania saw a change in its European status – it became a mid-ranking country, number 7 and 8 by territory and population. Also, it became a relatively important actor in international relations, far above the status it had had by 1914.

During the interwar "armistice" (1918–1939), Romania relied on the Versailles "system" but also tried joining some regional alliances (the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente) and bilateral treaties (with France and Poland), all derived from the original strategy of maintaining a *status quo*. As a matter of fact, Romania stood by its Western allies until the summer of 1940 when, forced by the context – territorial dismemberment and the pressure of revisionist states – it found itself entering the German sphere of influence. This is a historical fact too easily overlooked in Western political circles. In Romania, the authoritarian regime would only be established in 1938, even though many other European countries had tried this type of political experiment (even with a totalitarian edge) considerably earlier.

We must also remark that Romania was a victim of the constant decline of the allied side in the First World War: the United States of America took the path of idealism in the sense of focusing on its domestic affairs to the point of virtual non-involvement in Europe's problems. Great Britain had its share of economic difficulties and was losing its grip on the colonies. France was under great stress because of political disputes and a lack of vision regarding its military strategy. For its part, Romania, with its still weak economy relying on exports of raw materials (food and oil), was badly hit by the economic crisis of 1929–1933 which lingered in this part of Europe until the Second World War.

In home politics, after the union laws, too little was done for the deep structure consolidation of the Great Union; only too late did it become clear that it was necessary to have a state-of-the-art army. In external politics, the support of the allies was taken for granted; moreover, Romanian diplomacy put the country's interests second for the sake of their principles which would later be underestimated anyway.

Another problem was the internal political disputes that peaked to bloody conflict and murder, which further weakened the country by the summer of 1940. One perhaps marginal explanation for this comes from daily life, especially in the capital's elite circles: at the time there was a preoccupation with recovering the assets lost in the Great War, which deterred attention from the dangers looming at the country's borders.

During the Second World War (1939–1945), Romania was, again, too small a country for "such a big war" and found itself again between two "forces of evil": Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia. For the second time, the Romanian army was poorly equipped and trained, and its officers were stuck on bad decisions in a series of crucial moments (June 1940, August-September 1940, the crossing of the Dniester River, etc.) Just as in the Great War, the sacrifice of over 800,000 people, out of whom 170,000 on the Western front, saved a large portion of the country's territory, and the nullification of the Vienna Dictate is the direct consequence of this contribution.

Unlike the end of the First World War, when the Great Powers made a decisive contribution to the union and re-establishment of the states in the center and east of Europe, after 1945 this space was given up to the Soviet domination. In this context, Romania lost Bessarabia, the north of Bukovina, the Herza and Cadrilater provinces. Then followed a fifteen-year lapse of isolation; only at the beginning of the 1960s did Romania resume its political and economic ties with the West.

The Cold War period between 1945-–1990/1991 is subdivided in several stages determined by internal and external factors including Stalin's death (1953), the Sino-Soviet clash of ideology (in the early 1960s), the "Declaration of Independence" (April 1964), Nicolae Ceaușescu's coming to power (March 1965), the Czechoslovakian crisis (August 1968), Ceaușescu's visits to China and North Korea (1971), the 1977 earthquake (for its economic effects), Nicolae Ceaușescu's decision to pay Romania's external debt (early 1980s), and the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to head of the Soviet Union (1985).

From a political perspective, Romania was to remain for the entire period behind the Iron Curtain established by the Western allied powers and the Soviet Union in the wake of the Second World War, with significant differences between various stages and moments as to its connections with the West.

The new world order (with twice as many independent states) created the necessary conditions for Romania's economic development, as well as for the "third world" countries. The growth in all the branches of the economy (albeit pushed hard towards the end of this period) entailed a general improvement as compared to the interwar period.

The new international context, the country's new status, as well as Nicolae Ceaușescu's ambitions, enabled Romania to play a vital role in some post-war international events: the Sino-American relationships, the Middle East crisis, some UNO resolutions, etc. This historical stage prepares the way for globalization, with its positive and negative effects.

The post-Cold War armistice (1990/1991–2008/2014) sees Romania come back into the "free world", its main external political goals being to join NATO and the European Union. The consequences of the 9/11 events and the USA's new defense strategy enabled Romania to join NATO in 2004. Globalization, the restructuring of political and economic relationships in the world, and in Europe and Asia in particular, speeded up the EU expansion and so Romania became a full member in 2007.

Romania has gained recognition – through its contribution and the sacrifice of the military – as an active and reliable member of NATO. On the other hand, Romania "has earned its adherence to, but missed (in the sense of delayed) integration" in the EU.

After 2007, Romania is still struggling to define, build and implement a national strategy. The political environment is dominated by sterile fights for power and easy money among various sides of a hybrid elite – from downright criminals to intellectuals. All sectors of the economy are marred by excessive political involvement. In the name of democracy, economic freedom, the right to free expression, and fight against corruption, Romania has become the playground of foreign states, multinationals, and Romanian and international citizens with a criminal record. After 1990, the access into the country of informative entities had devastating effects for the national interest. It will probably take another generation to return to normality.

The Second Cold War (2008/2014–?). After the conflicts in Georgia and, more recently, Ukraine, more and more "observers" (historians, journalists, political analysts, etc.) have come to accept the description of the current stage as a return to the "logic of the Cold War." In a multipolar world, we witness numerous conflicts, with uniformed regiments, with regiments in uniforms without signalia, with mercenaries hired on ideological or religious grounds, etc. Romania, along with other East-European countries, is the victim of Putin's Russian aggression, of the weak and disparate reaction of the EU and NATO, of Germany's multidirectional game, and of the US' lack of strategic vision (or maybe just the lack of interest in this part of the world, as compared to the Pacific). Thus, once again, Romania, lacking a national project supported by the entire political elite and by its citizens, fails to forward a clear, coherent, credible, and universally assumed response to the challenges of the new geopolitical situation in this region.

II. GENERAL REMARKS

Starting with the brief analysis of the main internal and international factors of the last century, we propose a set of questions designed to open new debate perspectives on this topic:

In 1914 a world war broke into history, is it still ongoing today, in various forms?[10]

Is this assessment justified by the return, in 2008/2014, to a logic of conflict?

Can we consider that a post-Cold War armistice is established in 1991?

If we accept the phrase "New Russia", can we also speak of a "new Cold War," albeit devoid of its ideological component?[11]

Did the Western management of the Yugoslavian crisis[12] leave some diplomatic gaps that Russia took advantage of after 2008?

[10] http://barrycasselman.blogspot.ro/2012/12/the-praire-editor-new-hundre-years.htm, 10.09.2014.

[11] Gilbert Achcar, *op.cit*.

[12] See: Dr. Nicolae Nițu, Iulian Nițu, *Destrămarea Jugoslaviei*, București, 2006; Doina Mureşan, *Securitate şi insecuritate în Balcanii de Vest: criza interetnică din noua federaţie iugoslavă*, București, 2008.

Did the 9/11 and the solidarity between the US and Russia against terrorism only delay the new conflict?

Who is on the offensive side: the West, Russia, or both?

To what extent does the level of trust indicate the status of the relationship between the two sides of this conflict, and especially between the US and Russia?

Where will we put now a new "Berlin Wall" as it were: on the Prut river? On the Dniester? The Dnieper? The Don?

Has the American lack of interest in the Eastern Europe after 2008 (in favor of the Pacific region) rushed Russia's radical position?

How did the economic crisis influence the European and world relationships of power?

Was the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest a mere pretext, or the last straw in building the conflict?[13]

The current crisis was triggered also by cultural differences: the association agreements of Moldova and Ukraine with the EU were perceived in the West as a technicality, but did Russia give them a strong political meaning?

Provided we accept the idea that Russia returns to a logic of conflict typical of the 19th and 20th century, should we reply in the same language, or with a modified logic, or a combined one?

Should we worry about Andrei Pleșu's opinion about the ability and responsibility of the current world leaders to decide upon international relationships? (He says: "I've said it before: having dealt with most of the important world leaders one way or another over two years, I have come to the conclusion that I am presented with the proof of God's existence. Because only rarely have I witnessed a match between the tasks laid before these leaders and their ability to carry them out. And so I have come to believe that, since the world seems to still go on even with such power holders, it must be the hand of Providence…"[14])

Is it possible to have a war without human losses? And, apart from professional military personnel, are there other soldiers willing to give their life for principles and national rights?

To what extent will economic interference, the multinationals, and Russia's resources, influence political and diplomatic decisions?

Is there an understanding (for a few years now) between Russia and Germany regarding the eastern border of the European Union?

What role will Hungary play in this part of Europe, as it is supported by Russia, tolerated by Bruxelles, encouraged by the diaspora as well as by some right-wing forces inside the European Union?

Will the current crisis lead to the consolidation of the European Union and NATO, or just NATO?

Will we see a movement from the "peaceful coexistence" of the first Cold War to a "peaceful co-evolution" by avoiding conflicts and mutual support for the development of resources?

---

[13] See: Iulian Chifu, Monica Oproiu, *Războiul ruso-georgian. Reacţiile decidenţilor în timpul crizei,* Bucureşti, 2009.

[14] Andrei Pleşu, *Din vorbă-n vorbă. 23 de ani de întrebări şi răspunsuri*, Bucureşti, 2013, p. 443 and the next.

Does Russia's action envisage an advantageous position in the future negotiations with the European Union and the USA? Is this how we should explain the support Russia has shown to the federalization of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine?

Does the recent European-Asian Union marks a point of advantage for Russia?

Does Russia need this crisis in order to redefine itself inside and outside its borders?

Has the Scotland referendum closed or opened another old issue of Europe? Do concessions solve or deepen a crisis?

Are we on the verge of post-democracy?

III. REMARKS ON ROMANIA

History has shown that, last century, Romania was somehow on the wrong foot in difficult moments.[15] In the last twenty-five years, although it joined NATO and the EU, the Romanian diplomats have shown weakness, incoherence, lack of attitude and joint support from the political class. It is enough to compare it to Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria.[16]

Perhaps we, and the politicians, should ask ourselves: how did East Germany adapt so quickly to the new economic system? How come Czechoslovakia has not put its industry down? Hungary has not undermined its agriculture? Poland did not experience the economic crisis? Bulgaria is always ahead of us in tourism? The former Yugoslavian republics – after a devastating war – now breed elite sportsmen? And all of them have better roads than ours!

Currently, Romania is in desperate need of a new national project. We must be aware that we are the largest country in the south-east of Europe and that the matter of its borders will never again be renegotiated. The international conferences and treaties, as well as the sacrifice of over 1,500,000 Romanians in the two world wars, should be sufficient defense against any threat.

It is necessary to create some sort of universal solidarity among all political parties, civil society, and public opinion on the national interests. Romania must capitalize on its geographical position at the crossroads between East and West, North and South, as it has a real potential to become a model for the eastern and south-eastern part of Europe. One such model is the way it institutionalized the relationship between majority and minorities.

Romania can play an important role in the EU and NATO politics on the East – now with the current events still unfolding – especially since, lately, just Poland and Romania are still standing by the commitments they made upon joining NATO and the EU.

Romanian diplomacy should be more active and alert to the various "axes", be they publicly asserted or discrete: Moscow-Washington, Moscow-Berlin, Moscow-Budapest, Moscow-Beijing, Moscow-Sofia, Moscow-Belgrade, and so on.

---

[15] See: Mihail E. Ionescu, *România Orientală – 160 de ani (1848–2009)*, Bucureşti, 2009.

[16] Andrei Pleşu, *op.cit.*, p. 44 and the next.

Also, it should pay more attention to the relationship with the Republic of Moldova, given its many hesitations on the way from East to West, even at the time of strong pro-European and pro-Romanian assertions.

Romania needs to be more sensitive than other countries to recent events for a number of reasons: we have been around Russia for three hundred years, we have had our share of invasions (thirteen), and we have always had neighbors willing to speculate on such an opportunity.

NATO cannot defend us against an unconventional or psychological war – i.e., manipulation, in many ways, of some political forces, of the NGOs, the media, public opinion, etc.

Romania must cautiously assess the attitude of the West, which is known to hold different positions, in the current crisis, for each country (maybe as a result of the above-listed factors, apart from some other economic interests).

The pro-American option must be strongly and persistently upheld, and observed by Western, not Balkan, standards.

IV. ROMANIA AND POLAND. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

General similarities

a. similarities that bring us closer: – geopolitical position; – the largest countries in Eastern Europe; – we have endured invasions, divisions and territorial losses; – we were part of the Warsaw Treaty; – we are NATO and EU partners; – we have become the main "actors" of the eastern flank of the EU and NATO.
b. differences that bring us closer – Pope John Paul II stated: "Poles are the only Catholics of Slavic descent, and Romanians are the only Orthodox nation of Latin descent."
c. differences in collective mentality – regarding Romania, we revisit some opinions:

When judging the "achievements" of the Romanian people in the process of modernization, certain "features" must be considered, which can be considered a form of "historical determinism":

- the Roman origin;
- the "Slavic component" (unlike the other peoples of Roman origin, who have a Germanic component);
- Orthodoxy (the only Orthodox people of Latin descent);
- the predominance of serfdom in the Middle Ages (over 70% of the population was in this situation);
- the Communist regime.

In the end, the question must be answered whether the group, or individual, mentality represented an incentive or a break on the process of modernization, in all its aspects: political, economic, social, cultural etc. In Western countries, the socio-economic transformations specific to the modern era – over several centuries – came with the gradual change in mentality which, at times, announced and prepared true

"revolutions" in technology and science. In Eastern Europe – and in other underdeveloped parts of the world – mentalities will struggle to keep up with the renewal process. The pace of attaining the achievements of the Western world increased constantly, making it impossible for these countries to adapt at the same level, especially if we consider the entire society. Because, in addition to the specific features of "agrarian societies", one needs to think of the "legacy" ensuing from the proximity and cohabitation with the Eastern world. "Balkanisms" were found in all layers of society, which made it even more difficult to meet the "standards" of Western civilization. Political interests had a significant influence on mentalities. Unlike Western countries – Great Britain, Germany, the USA – where the rulers adopted rigid legislation – which they also enforced – with a view to steer the citizens' transition – sometimes, out of sheer necessity – to modernity, Romania seemed to cherish speculation, improvisation, political protection, jobs in state institutions etc., many of which being the government's "initiative" and "protection". Western countries had them too, but their economic mechanism and social behavior were impacted to a considerably smaller extent.

It is safe to say that, for the entire Romanian society in these decades, the mentality of the classes and social strata, of individuals, in general, represented more of a "brake" than an "incentive" in the process of modernization, of aligning to Western Europe. Only in the interwar period, when education was considerably more available for the population, would mentalities catch up with the achievements of modernization. With the implementation of the agrarian and electoral reforms, in the new framework of the Romanian unified national state, those "regenerative forces, endowed with all the moral qualities that can stabilize and energize the life of a people, and grant a future built on solid foundations" will play a more active part in the process of modernization[17].

As for Poland, we are venturing into a little-known territory. However, we can advance a few observations that pertain to "historical determinism" as well:

- the Catholic faith of a Slavic people "tamed" the nation and imposed a certain rigor in social life;
- the status of the peasants in the Middle Ages – most were free, which instilled a certain sense of pride and "integrity";
- the tradition of the Medieval Kingdom, a historical strength in Eastern Europe, inspired faith in the nation's destiny;
- the elite trained in higher education since the Middle Ages;
- the cult of bravery, built over time. Suffice it to recall the deeds of the cavalry units in the army of Napoleon I, the resistance of September 1939, the Polish airmen in the Battle of Britain of 1940, the insurrection of August 1944;
- the visible and effective resistance to the regime imposed by the USSR, favored by a specific framework of state organization (in political life, in the structure of property, etc.), by the role of the Church, of Pope John Paul II, and of the "Solidarity" Trade Union;

[17] N. Iorga, *O viaţă de Om aşa cum a fost*, Valeriu and Sanda Râpeanu (editors), Bucureşti, 1972, p. XL.

– the size of the territory and population, which, last but not least, has always been an extremely important factor.

In stages, along the 100 years plus

1. The First World War

a. similarities: – the two peoples fought for the fulfillment of the national ideal and for the defense of the whole/recreated state.

b. differences: – Romania defended itself in the west (in 1916 and 1919), in the south, and in 1918, in the east and north. Poland, after the restoration of the state, defended itself in the east.

2. The interwar period

a. Similarities: – both countries fight to defend the *status quo*. Together they are part of the alliance system based on France and Great Britain. It also concludes bilateral alliances: the 1921 Convention and the 1926 Treaty.

b. differences: – following the course of European history, authoritarian regimes are established in the two countries. Romania was the last country to establish this form of government, in 1938. Poland took advantage, in March 1939, of the breakup of Czechoslovakia following Hitler's aggression, whereas Romania declined. Poland was forced to enter the war on September 1, 1939, Romania in June 1940 – following the Soviet ultimatum – although it did so "actively" in June 1941.

3. The Second World War

a. similarities: – the two countries were pushed into war by the aggression of Germany and the USSR. Poland disappears as a state; Romania was in this danger but managed to save itself by relinquishing territories to the north, east, south and west (approximately a third of the country's territory). It must be emphasized that Romania was supportive of Poland, respected its international and moral commitment of solidarity with a neighbor in distress, risked the aggression of Germany and the USSR by allowing access into the country for the Polish government, the Bank of Poland treasury, a part of the army and the civilian population (over 100,000 people). This moment of solidarity and risk is often unjustly forgotten.

b. differences: – Poland fights alongside the Allies from the beginning of the war, first at home, then in the west, Romania joins in after August 23. Poland loses territories to the USSR but receives compensation in the west. Romania loses territories to the USSR and Bulgaria. After huge sacrifices in the east and west, its historical right to Transylvania is recognized.

4. The socialist period

a. similarities: – both countries were occupied by the USSR and the socialist system was imposed on them; – they were in the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA; – the Russian army was present on their territory at different times, but the danger of invasion was permanent, because peace in Europe during the Cold War was more of an illusion; there was a perpetual security crisis, especially in Eastern Europe, maintained by the USSR.

b. differences: – there were many, we will mention just one: resistance to the new regime, which was permanent and took various forms; in Romania it

was intense in the 1950s, through partisans, who hoped, just like a large part of the population, that the Anglo-Americans would come; in Poland, especially through the Roman Catholic Church and the "Solidarity" Trade Union in the 1970s–1980s.

5. *After 1990*

a. similarities: – rapid adaptation to the new domestic and international political and economic context.

b. differences: – Poland found its way faster through firm domestic measures – especially economic – and bold foreign policy initiatives. As a result, it built a resilient market economy, joined the Visegrad Group (1991), NATO (1997) and the EU (2004). It is also worth mentioning the role of the diaspora as a factor of influence in the Western world. Romania indulged in sterile struggles for power, positions, wealth, preservation of old privileges, etc. Externally, Romania had an incoherent, timid policy that lacked initiative, a policy that was restricted to a reactive stand, often led by people without experience or integrity. The effects were soon to be seen. Romania was late in joining NATO, the EU, and Schengen, it has the largest emigration rate in Eastern Europe, a body of population left largely unintegrated, but which does not find better conditions at home.

6. *Consequences following the occupation of Crimea (2014) and the aggression against Ukraine (2022)*

a. similarities: – Poland and Romania directly feel the threat from Russia, especially since the fear of danger from the east has been reignited, a century-old fear in this geographical space, passed on to descendants with stories and information that cannot be forgotten. That is why we strongly support the need to strengthen the eastern flank of NATO and the EU. Some projects, such as the "Three Seas Initiative" (2015), the "Bucharest Nine (B9)" group (2015), the economic and, especially, military relations between the two countries represent a renewed hope.

b. differences: – the size of NATO forces present in the two countries, economic performance, military capabilities, presence and visibility in international relations, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

Romania and Poland have similar destinies. In the last three centuries, the greatest danger came from the Tsarist Empire[18] (regardless of political color), sometimes in agreement/competition with the empires of central and eastern Europe. The only chance for survival as independent states is internal consolidation – economic, military, political –, as well as solidarity and alliances with Western democracies in the EU and NATO.

[18] Armand Goșu, *Putin împotriva Occidentului. Războiul din Ucraina și noua dezordine mondială*, Iași, 2023, *passim*; Thierry Wolton, *op.cit.*, *passim*.