



ORIGINAL PAPER

“East” and “West” in the Second Half of the 19th Century – between the Need for Models and the Establishment of a Romanian National System

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Abstract:

Undoubtedly, the two concepts, which are usually attributed to the second half of the 20th century, from the desire to show the differences of culture, civilisation, political concept in Europe, can be studied, through translation, a century earlier, that is in the second half of the 19th century. During this historical era, there was carried out a significant political fight, between the necessity to follow certain models, and that of creating a governing and administration system, original and representative for the Romanian state and the Romanian nation.

Keywords: *East, West, cultural model, revolution, reform*

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The first question that seeks an answer in this presentation is: which was the position of Romania, at the moment of 1848. Practically, 27 years earlier, in 1821, Wallachia and Moldova had been exiting from an era of regress, with a strong oriental influence (Berindei, 2003: 56). Surprisingly, it was not the West that had opened the door for modernity, although it had had some collateral influences. In 1821, despite numerous memoirs of the boyars, and the activity of boyar Dudescu, Napoleon Bonaparte, considered the factor who had propagated the ideas of the French Revolution around the world, did not regard the Principalities as an advantage for winning his battle with Russia, involving the Ottoman Empire in his plans. Consequently, an exponent of the “West” was making an alliance with a power of the “East”, against another great “eastern” force, which had registered progress under the occidental influences, in the age of Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great.

The Organic Regulations, from 1831 and 1832, represented the constitutional documents that Russia had imposed in the Principalities, for their modernisation, replacing the form of the medieval system, of Byzantine and Ottoman inspiration, whose peak was represented by the Phanariote Era. The great success of the Regulations had been the idea to abolish the internal customs between the Principalities, an essential and necessary premise, on the way towards the political union. Russia did not seem to care much if it would annex the separated or the united Principalities, because that was the political strategy of the Empire, on medium term period (Stan and Iosa, 1996: 12-13).

Then, the moment of the 1848 Revolution arrived. There had already been formed a political elite, made of the young sons of boyars, who had studied in the Occident, where they had come in touch with the revolutionary ideas, especially the French ones. Tudor Vladimirescu had been training to be a clerk, in the country, a military strategist, but, although he had also got used to some of the occidental ideas, he could not completely renounce the Russian influence, Russia representing, in his view, the force that could remove the Ottoman oppression. A possible explanation, of the mistrust on addressing the Habsburg Empire, was the way in which this occidental organising power, yet reactionary and conservative in their way of thinking, was treating the Romanians from Banat, Transylvania, Bucovina. The memories of the Austrian occupation of Oltenia had not faded away, an occupation that lasted between 1718 and 1739, and which was manifested through an excessive taxation policy, a situation that had been hardly endured by the Romanians.

A century before Tudor Vladimirescu, Constantin Brâncoveanu and Dimitrie Cantemir had tried, in their specific way, to become emancipated. Brâncoveanu had oriented himself towards the Habsburgs, Dimitrie Cantemir had directed himself towards Peter the Great. Nonetheless, the two rulers had been bearing a grudge, and the intrigues of the Cantacuzin family, eager to obtain the throne from Bucharest, had led Brâncoveanu before the executioner from Constantinople, along with his four sons and the counsellor Ianache Văcărescu. At the execution, the diplomatic representatives of France and England were present, as occidental Christian powers, but the interests of these great forces from Europe, could not be stopped by the execution of this ruling family from Wallachia. For the Principalities, the Phanariote era had started, which, with feeble exceptions, was a reactionary one, based on systematic pillage. The reforms of Constantin Mavrocordat, and, generally, any reform could not survive a regime, in which the rule was who was earning more, before their rival would come and make a better offer.

The condition of the Principalities was due to the fact that they were regarded, by Constantinople, only as “imperial storehouse”, an immense storage room, with products for the Ottoman Empire. Turnu, Giurgiu, Brăila, Tighina and Hotin were the rayals, citadels on the Ottoman territory, through which the pashaliks were controlling the economic monopole, this situation prolonging until 1829, when the rayals were abolished (Stan and Iosa, 1996: 13-14).

In 1846, promoting the magazine “Dacia literară”, Mihai Kogălniceanu stood against the imitation of the cultural models, especially the French ones, in the Romanian literature. The great politician and man of culture, was requesting expressively the ceasing of translations, the creation of qualitative work, of Romanian inspiration.

Imitation was regarded as a situation incompatible to the journalistic ethics, an encroachment upon the Romanian traditional values that would remain, in this way, undiscovered and not popularised.

“Dacia literară” needed to have four sections: creation, information from the journals of that time, literary critique and advertisements on the publishing of different works, scientific meeting arrangements (Kogălniceanu, 2012: 4-5).

Thus, in the period before the revolution from 1848, the Romanian men of culture wanted to develop themselves, starting from the French model, without becoming confused with it.

Nicolae Bălcescu makes the best description of the moment and meaning, of the Romanian Revolution from 1848. This is what the great historian, revolutionary man and Romanian patriot wrote, in 1850, while he was still in exile, away from the country, fighting with his disease, which would prove to be fatal, two years after: “*The Romanian Revolution from 1848 was not a spontaneous, ephemeral, without past and future event, without any cause but the fortuitous will of a minority, or the participation to the general European movement. The general revolution had constituted the opportunity, not the cause of the Romanian revolution. Its cause can be found in the deep past, its planners are the eighteen centuries of toil, pains and labour of the Romanian people, for themselves*” (Bălcescu, 1928: 24).

Although the revolution from 1848-1849 was defeated, the reactionary Habsburg Empire being saved by Russia, an equally reactionary force, as a reminiscence of the Holy Alliance from 1814, would not hesitate to support the Ottoman Empire, “the sick person” of Europe, within the Crimean War, along with France and England, the progressive powers.

In the Principalities, the social condition was a problematic one. The political rights belonged to the well-off, who were representing the categories based on qualifications when voting, while the reformers, exponent of the many, and without rights, could barely meet the conditions of wealth, in order to be elected in the internal legislative and executive forums.

The first major influence of the Occident, on the Principalities, was felt when it was brought up the idea of forming a buffer-state of the United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia that would prevent Russia from advancing towards the Gorges. The new projected state, after the Peace Congress of Paris, in 1856, and formed through the Paris Convention from 1858, was to be put under Ottoman suzerainty, but with the collective guarantee of the Great Powers. Russia had already been deprived of the access to the Danube mouths, though the taking of the southern Bessarabia from Russia, and the annexing to Moldova. Yet, the union of the people and language, along with the fight of

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the 1848 generation, created the modern profile of the united Romanian state, made of Moldova and Wallachia.

The political failure of the revolution did not mean the death of the 1848 spirit. A decade later, which had been just a desiderate, became reality. Wallachia and Moldova were united in ne state, through the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, on the 5th of January and, respectively, 24th of January 1859.

In order to depict, as well as we can, the historical mission of the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, we are reproducing the speech delivered on the occasion of the elections from Moldova, by the continuously active statesman and highly cultivated man, Mihail Kogălniceanu: *“After 154 years of torment, humiliation and national degradation, Moldova has been repositioned on its rightful place, consecrated through its capitulations, the right to make a choice according to its will, the Ruler. Through you rising on the throne of Stephen the Great, the Romanian nation itself has been risen... by choosing you, as Ruler in our country, we intended to show the world which is the desire of the country: for new laws, new people. Oh Lord! Such great and beautiful is your mission. The Constitution from the 7 (19) of August brings a new age before our eyes, and Your Greatness is called to open it for us! Therefore, be the man of an era; make the law replace the arbitrary; make the law strong, and you, Your Greatness, as a Ruler, be kind and good-hearted; be kind especially to the people that almost all the other Rulers were inconsiderate and mean... Do whatever, so that everything would be peaceful and righteous; conciliate the passions and the grudges amongst us, and bring back, amidst us, the old brotherhood. Be simple, Your Highness, be gentle, be a citizen Ruler; may your ear be open for ever for the truth, and closed for the lies and fawning. You bear a beautiful and dear name, that of Alexander the Good. May you live long, my Lord! May we reach again, due to the justice shown by Europe, through the development of our institutions, and owing to your patriotic feelings, those glorious times of our nation, when Alexander the Good was telling the ambassadors from Byzantium that Romania does not have another protector than God Himself and His sword. May you prosper Your Greatness!”* (Scurtu, Curculescu, Dincă and Soare, 2000: 94).

The ruling of Alexandru Ioan Cuza was influenced by the political model imposed by the Emperor Napoleon III, the president who was proclaimed an emperor. The radical liberals from Romania were inspired by political ideas that belonged to the French republic spirit, but, nonetheless, they were aware that, in front of the Romanian state, had to be a foreign prince, from a European ruling family. The double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza had been a “fait accompli” before Europe, the attitude of winner, of the Emperor Napoleon III, after 1865, had imposed the tacit acceptance of the double election, by the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, even only during the lifetime of Cuza (Adăniloie and Berindei, 1967:161-215). The civil and the penal codes, the codes of procedure, the civil and fiscal legislation, was definitely influenced by the code of laws, of Napoleon Bonaparte. Yet, the increasingly authoritarian governing of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the introduction of the senate, in 1864, as Corp Ponderator (Moderating Body), determined the coalition of the extremes, the liberals and the conservatives, who wished to remove the ruler, for a new prince, a foreign one, that would bring along a parliamentary life. Certainly, the Romanian parliamentarism, being just at the beginning, could not show the efficiency of the British one, strengthen amidst a revolution that had been taking place for over four decades.

The ruling of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, between 1859 and 1866, had created a united Romania, with reforms of certain occidental influence. The edifice created by Cuza,

through authoritarianism, resisted until his abdication, the new-arrived Prince, Carol de Hohenzollern –Sigmaringen, being the one who brought, in 10 years, the national independence (Platon, 1985:210).

The Constitution from 1866, promulgated by the Prince Carol I, in July 1866, two months after his enthroning, on the 10th of May 1866, was inspired by the Constitution of Belgium. This country had gained its independence in the 1830s, 19th century, and had registered an outstanding progression. The King of Belgium had succeeded in obtaining a personal domain, the important African colony of Congo. It should also not be forgotten that the Deputies of the Hospodar, the leading instance after the 11th of February 1866, when Cuza was dethroned, had proclaimed King the brother of the King of Belgium, Leopold II, but he had refused, giving the impression of an imminent dissolution of the united Romania. Yet, Ion C. Brătianu, faithful to the connection with Emperor Napoleon III, succeeded in proposing the young Prussian prince, Karl de Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Prince Carol, relative of the Emperor Napoleon III. Owing to the fact that France had good relations with Great Britain, the latter one being ruled by a family with German origins, the young prince managed to be accepted by all the powers of Europe: Russia had to obtain the prestige that it had been seriously diminished after 1856, Turkey was in debt with the English-French friendship, which had saved it in the Crimean War, and Austro-Hungary, in competition with Germany, for the accomplishment of the German union, was oscillating cleverly between Italy, Germany and France, because Napoleon III had made, at some point before, the plan to exchange the provinces, Venice to the newly rebuilt Italy, while Austro-Hungary would have received the new-formed Moldova and Wallachia, an idea that the Austrians themselves did not agree with, due to the fact that it was involving the recognition of the Romanian nationality from Transylvania, and, implicitly, the detaching of Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina from the domination of Wien. Thus, Austria, which had become Austro-Hungary since 1867, declared itself satisfied with the enthroning of Prince Carol, owing to the fact that he would not have started an anti-Austrian campaign.

The arriving of Prince Carol, was made in socio-cultural-political environment with Balkan influences, a transition between the Ottoman orient and the West of Europe, enabled by the predomination of the French language, as the language of culture, of the French models in education, and even in army. Gradually, along with the increase of the potential conflict between France and Prussia, after the defeat of Austria, at Koniggratz in 1866, there started to be felt the emerging of the conflict, on addressing the cultural models. Prince Carol, introduced, in Army and the military rules, the Prussian element, much more favourable to him, but unpleasant for the French-model trained officers. Moreover, the German rigour, the intransigence of the young prince, his punctuality, his coldness in the relation with his ministers, made him look disagreeable, as compared to the French typical good-nature, the occidental model that was much closer to the oriental-Balkan passivity. The political men were witnessing how the prince had asked a veto right in the Constitution, how his ideas were moving towards the conservatives' ones (who would look more like the Prussian Junkers), being bothered by the radicals and the moderate liberals, who would promote openly their preference for France and Emperor Napoleon III. France and Prussia had reached, in four years, an active teasing situation, the open war, circumstances that used to be favourable to the liberals. The radicals were dissatisfied that the Prince did not offer them the entire power in the government, while the conservatives were waiting for the end of the main external confrontation. The period

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between 11th of May 1866-7th of August 1870 was an agitated one, from the point of view of the governing. No govern resisted more than seven months (Hitchins, 2013:31).

In the summer of 1870, amidst of the increasing French-Prussian conflict (the breaking out of the war was on the 7th/19th of July 1870), at Ploiești, there took place an event that, in the collective memory, it was called “The Republic from Ploiești”. Al. Candiano Popescu, Eugeniu Carada, inclusiv Ion C. Brătianu, C.A. Rosetti were among the conspirators. The pro-French were convinced of the eventual success of France against Prussia and wished, in that manner, to be noticed by the Emperor Napoleon III, by removing the Prince of Hohenzollern. The rumours on addressing the overthrowing of Prince Carol, which Candiano Popescu, the self-proclaimed Prefect of Prahova County and leader of Telegraful din Ploiești spread, did not have the expected effect, and certain clerks, who the conspirators had called to help, preferred to announce the government of the moderate Manolache Costache Epureanu. Furthermore, the military men, lured by the conspirators, along with a majority of them, including Ion C. Brătianu and C.A. Rosetti, were proposing the expectative. The excitement of Al.Candiano Popescu was actually fatal for the action, which was annihilated, a situation that determined Nicolae Iorga to call it “the ridiculous few-hour republic of Candiano-Popescu”. In September 1870, the disaster from Sedan removed the Emperor Napoleon III from the first position, when he was taken prisoner by the Germans.

The echoes of the conspiracy could still be heard, when, in 1871, another trouble emerged. Prince Carol was invited by the German Colony from Bucharest to attend the party dedicated to Kaiser Wilhelm I. The population from Bucharest stoned the reception hall, the prefect of Bucharest missing mysteriously from his duties, which generated the idea that he was part of the conspiracy.

Consequently, the preferences of the Romanians for the French model were still manifesting, the prince having to use a political manoeuvre, of pretending to abdicate. The convoking of the Deputies of the Hospodar from 1866 fuelled the fear that the prince could abdicate. The radical liberals stepped back and, for five years, the prince signed the decrees for the appointing of conservatives prime-ministers.

Yet, the French model stuck, owing to the fact that the German culture was hardly penetrating, the French language continuing to be the language of diplomacy. Moreover, the conservatives were not popular, due to their opposition against the idea of reconsidering the agrarian reform, initiated in 1864 by Alexandru Ioan Cuza. New anti-dynasty manifestations were emerging, this time endorsed by Russia. In 1873, the ruler Cuza was dying in exile, after the county of Mehedinți had offered him the position of deputy in the 3rd college. The bringing of the passed-away into the country was a grieving moment for the many peasants who joined the funeral procession. The Russian propaganda used manifests with the portray of Alexandru, the elder son of Cuza, on which there was written that Russia had supported the idea of the agrarian reform of the ruler. Alexandru Ioan Cuza himself had been accused of pro-Russian affinity, when sending 30,000 Russian arms to the Serbian king, Miloș Obrenovic, a fact that had represented an issue for his dethroning from 1866.

Therefore, due to the lack of popularity on addressing the conservatives, the French model was still present, although lots of men of culture and politicians, as Petre P.Carp, Vasile Pogor, Titu Maiorescu, the younger Mihai Eminescu, Ion Luca Caragiale, had become supporters of the German cultural models (Iordache, 1999, 5-9).

To them, there were added, in the next decades, numerous men of culture and politicians from Transylvania, Banat, Bucovina, who, because of the persecution against

the Romanians that they had witnessed, found in Romania the appropriate ground for their aspirations.

It was the problem of the Romanians from Transylvania that generated antipathy, as regarding the German political and cultural model. Although the attitude of Russia at the Treaty of Berlin was somehow unfavourable to Romania, meaning that Dobrudja became part of Romania only after the Southern Bessarabia had been annexed to Russia, and the political class from Bucharest attributed this responsibility to the Germany led by Bismarck.

Basically, in three decades, that is from 1848 to 1878, Romania had known a remarkable internal and international progress, from the two Principalities “who had been on the way of all the troubles”, to a national, unitary and independent state.

Only after 1881, the Narodnik influence started to be felt, yet, the electorate who voted based on qualifications, was little drawn towards the Eastern ideas. The liberals were blaming the conservatives for the still unsolved agrarian question, which was again bringing forward the French model of development. Paris was a decisive influence on the Romanian culture and architecture. The French architects were more numerous than the German ones, and the builders were Italian. The affinity based on Latinity was another advantage in fighting against “the Teutonic nature”.

During the entire period when Romania adhered to the Triple Alliance, seen by Ion C. Brătianu as a necessary evil, but kept hidden from the public opinion, the attitude of Austro-Hungary had negative repercussions on the German model of perception (Stan, 1995: 21).

An expressive manifestation of the moderate conservatism was the Junimea literary circle, but their orientation, especially of the conservatives towards the Central Powers, was again manifested with certain reservations, on addressing the German spirit.

The theory of forms without content, enounced by Titu Maiorescu, was a protest against the imitation of the French model. The fact that the Romanians had copied institutions that in France were glorious, the university, the theatre, the opera, in Romanian not existing qualitative literature and gifted people, who would make themselves noticed, used to be criticised by Titu Maiorescu. He wished that the national specificity to be improved through the external influence, not the exterior to be adapted to the Romanian reality.

In 1868, Titu Maiorescu was publishing the study “*Against the nowadays direction from the Romanian culture*”, from which we are going to reproduce a quotation, essential for the vision of this man of culture and politician, on the relation between the followed model and the originality of the cultural approach.

The author gives a harsh criticism on the way in which there are analysed the essential deficiencies from the Romanian society. Thus, the Romanian had imported political models from abroad, before analysing if there is a compatibility with the internal political situation. Moreover, there were skipped essential stages in the building of the educational edifice, meaning that the institutions appeared before the selection of the teaching staff. The scientific research was severely affected by the absence of the appropriate researchers, who would work in the researching institutions, rapidly founded according to the western model. Therefore, at that time, there were no specialists, able to investigate the historical past, the resorts of the Romanian language, the processes of the natural sciences:

Titu Maiorescu brings forward the particular situation of Romania, which is that the great majority of the population is made of peasants, who constitute the category that

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does not enjoy any political rights, but who carry the burden of producing, paying taxes, duties, and bring money for the state's budget, who represent, when needed, the defending force:

The technical and cultural performances from the Occident made possible, in the opinion of Titu Maiorescu the true perceiving of the Romania cultural, educational and research mockery, which is, for Romania, an extremely serious situation. The author considered that the image of Romania was a disastrous one, that the foreigners were referring to Romania using criticism and derision:

Titu Maiorescu appeals to the involvement of the real potential personalities, those with true intellectual capacity that would allow them to erase the Romanian discrepancy, in relation to the occidental world. It is obvious that, for Titu Maiorescu, the historical time was representing the sine qua non condition. He was hoping that the progress of the Romanians would take place in the same time, both efficiently and rapidly, because the evolution of the western world would not stop either, which could lead to major differences, at some point becoming impossible to be removed (Maiorescu, 1989: 122-130).

The year of 1916 was practically a reconsideration of the pro-French attitude from 1866, that of one century before. France wanted retaliation before Germany. King Ferdinand was not the short, rigid and impenetrable German that King Carol I had been, deceased in October 1914, and Queen Maria was greatly involved in policy, her influence on her husband being more than obvious.

Briefly, the French cultural current was obviously preferred, owing to the fact that the founders of modern Romania had been educated in French schools. Although Prussian, Prince Carol was related more to Napoleon III, than the ruling family of Germany. He understood that the country would have only one future, because its position at the Lower Danube, and in the neighbourhood of the sea, it could not renounce the French culture in the spirit of which most of the political men had been educated. Moreover, Prince Carol considered the attitude of Austro-Hungary, on addressing the Romanian question, as refractory and harmful. If he had refused to marry a Russian princess, his heir, Prince Ferdinand, could not avoid the marriage, especially after the unfulfilled love story with Elena Văcărescu, a story of a romantic, and in the same time dramatic character, specific to the French.

At that time, the capital of Romania, Bucharest, was called “the little Paris”, but the expression was continued through the affirmation that it was placed “amid a great village”. Then, the cultural and political models were acting only in the urban environment. The world of the villages was getting in touch to the French inspiration progress through the great landlords or industrialists, bankers, who also had landed properties. From the villages, at most the employees of the landlords could become acquainted to the occidental fashions and culture. The rest of the village remained untouched, with its secular traditions. The relations between the workers and the landlords could be close to the “new-serfdom”, theorised by Constantin Dobrogeanu Gherea in 1910, when the Occident had radically different methods of development.

The socialist current had developed in the German Occident, being embraced by the Russian intellectuals, and reaching the Romanian space. Yet, the criticism of the German theoreticians, on addressing the history of the Romanians and the reforms of Cuza, made the German cultural model an unpopular one again, from easily to understand reasons (Dobrogeanu Gherea, 1910:50-51). The collaborationism of the last great conservative leader, Alexandru Marghiloman, with Germany, as occupationist, led to the

political death of the conservatism, immediately after the Great Union (Iordache, 1999, 10-15).

The French political model won the confrontation with the German political model. As a state positioned between the interests of the great empires, Romania was dependent culturally, socially and politically to the models of the developed countries, which had the statute of great power. The Romanian intellectuals did not manage to find an original way of development in the modern age. Neither did the so-called nationalist and extremist movements from the third decade of the 20th century have an exclusive Romanian feature, but, underneath, there were the occidental extremist ideologies, with racist and xenophobe accents. They represented the matrix, in which there were created the Romanian nationalist currents between the two world wars, as much as the extreme left movements had as substrate the model of the Russian socialists, with ramifications in the Francophone space, in France and Switzerland. In 1917, Germany was the state that contributed to the promotion of the radical doctrine of Vladimir Ilici Lenin, starting from April 1917, and culminating with the revolution from the 25th of October 1817. The ideology of the communism got the Soviet Russia out of the World War I. Paradoxically, in 1919, Romania removed the pro-Bolshevik government, of Bela Kun, from Hungary, on the reason that it did not recognise the historic action from the 1st of December 1918.

In conclusion, 40 years had passed from the gaining of state independence of Romania, and our country had become Great Romania. The Great Union brought together the Romanians, the Hungarians, the Saxons of Transylvania, the Szecklers, the Jews, along with the Lippovans, the Turks, the Tatars, the Serbians, the Swabians, the Ruthenians, but, after the model of the German state had disappeared from the former Romanian provinces from Austro-Hungary, the Romanians were even less tempted by the German model. The reforms of the period between the two world wars were continuing to be the French ones (Scurtu, 1982: 41). The failure of the German Republic from Weimar, the emerging of the extreme right, the ascension of Adolf Hitler, brought back, after 1927, the year when the Regency was installed, the German model. Already, in 1937, the right extreme in Romania, which wanted to become legitimate through the relating to the values promoted by the Nazi Germany, became the third political force of the country. The world was sliding towards the World War II, at an amazing speed.

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