

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY STUDIES

INDIA AND ROMANIA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN 1957-1967.
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ROMANIAN SOURCES

ABSTRACT

PhD supervisor:

GLIGOR Viorica-Mihaela, PhD, Hab., Senior Researcher

PhD candidate:

NUC (mar. NUC-ROȘU) Alexandra-Iulia

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DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

Through this thesis, entitled *India and Romania diplomatic relations between 1957-1967. From the Perspective of Romanian Sources*, we aim to make a comprehensive scientific contribution to a subject that has not yet been researched, namely the diplomatic relationship between Romania and India. Our study considers the economic, political, and cultural aspects that were part of the process of developing Indo-Romanian relations.

The historical importance of researching this topic lies in the novelty it brings to the field of Romanian foreign policy during the communist period. Studying such a topic offers a unique perspective on how an ideologically controlled communist state from Eastern Europe managed to establish diplomatic relations with a non-aligned, developing country. This thesis highlights elements of Romanian foreign policy characterized by attempts to assert autonomy from the USSR, with India becoming a necessary diplomatic partner due to the promotion of a foreign policy based on dialogue and equality.

Bilateral relations between Romania and India have a long history, accentuated during the communist period as a result of the foreign policies adopted by the two countries. Their historical relevance is also due to the cultural, ideological, and geopolitical differences between the two states, united only by the specific dynamics of the situation after the end of World War II and the evolution of the Cold War.

The historical study of the development of relations between Romania and India helps not only to understand the past, but also to learn about current diplomatic and political realities. Diplomatic relations exist and continue to develop today, with the support of institutions involved in foreign policy, particularly embassies and ministries that work together to achieve new economic agreements and cultural exchanges that contribute to a more sustainable rapprochement between the two countries.

The period chosen for the study marks key moments in diplomatic cooperation between India and Romania and also captures the major changes on the Romanian political scene up to the moment when Nicolae Ceaușescu took power. From a historical perspective, the period analyzed is particularly important for the way in which the two states relate to each other and understand how to strengthen their political, economic, and cultural ties.

Nevertheless, the doctoral thesis introduces a subject that has not yet been researched, using unpublished and unexploited sources and based on archival documentation. Thus, this work aims to become a reference source for future researchers who wish to explore episodes in the history of diplomatic relations between Romania during the communist period and India.

Introduction and background

During the 1950 decade, the two countries underwent significant changes, each playing a specific role on the international stage and pursuing different ideals. In 1957, India was a country that had emerged from foreign rule and was governed for the first time by a president, Rajendra Prasad, and a prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The prime minister's goals were economic recovery and the establishment of foreign relations with as many countries as possible, regardless of their political sphere and industrial development. Romania was under Soviet control, and decisions regarding social, cultural, and foreign policy were made with foreign approval. During the period in question, Romania was administered by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, then by Nicolae Ceaușescu. Both advocated for establishing as many relations as possible with other states, regardless of their status on the world stage. Thus, both the foreign policy situation of the two states and their aspirations for progress led to the intention to create and develop diplomatic relations between the two states.

The period chosen for research was not random. The year 1957 marked the elevation of diplomatic relations between the two states to embassy level, which triggered the signing of several trade and cultural agreements and focused the attention of the two governments on improving diplomatic relations. Romania replaced Mihai Magheru, extraordinary envoy and minister plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of Romania in India, with Nicolae Cioroiu, Romania's first ambassador to India. As for India's representative on Romanian territory, Rajeshwar Dayal remained co-accredited ambassador in Bucharest, based in Belgrade, until 1958. It was not until 1963 that Romania welcomed India's first ambassador to Romania, based in Bucharest: Khem Chand Rewa Chand Fateh Chand Khilnani.

The choice of 1967 was not chosen at random. That year marked the end of the mission of K.R.F. Khilnani, who had contributed substantially to maintaining the Indo-Romanian diplomatic relations established ten years earlier. Also, Chivu Stoica, an important figure in the development of economic relations and trade links, was

replaced as president of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania by Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Purpose and objectives

First of all, there is no scientific work in historiography focused on the history of diplomatic relations between Romania and India. Thus, we wanted to start a comprehensive, systematic, and documented research on an original subject.

The objectives we pursued throughout the writing of this paper were: to bring to light new information related to the history of communist Romania's foreign relations with Asian countries; to clarify details regarding India's attitude towards communist countries; to identify the main economic and cultural agreements signed between the two states; to create a chronology of the history of diplomatic relations; to highlight and present the main episodes in Indo-Romanian diplomatic history.

Bibliography and methodology

The research methodology was based on collecting primary sources, storing information, and analyzing major events. The main sources used for writing the doctoral thesis were documents kept at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive (M.F.A.A.), in the archive collection named *Post-War India*. The archive contains reports written by the diplomatic representatives of the two countries, information notes, and telegrams, which provided us with sufficient information to reconstruct the important moments that led to the development of political, economic, and cultural ties.

Up to this point, these documents have not been scientifically used in studies and/or teaching materials, and their use in this work brings to light new and completely unknown information about diplomatic relations between India and Romania and the history of these ties. Thus, as a result of extensive research in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have identified several key moments in Romanian-Indian diplomatic relations between 1957 and 1967.

In addition to the archive sources, we also use documents held at the National Historical Central Archives, the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, and the National Archives of Romania.

The press of the time was a great help to us, and we also used it as a primary source: daily newspapers that had a section dedicated to international news (*Scînteia*,

România Liberă, Pentru Socialism, Informația Bucureștiului); weekly newspapers (*Drum Nou, Steagul Roșu, Crișana*), but also bimonthly (*Lupta de clasă, Tribuna*); specialized monthly magazines on science, technology, economics, culture, or various other fields (*Petrol și Gaze, Viața Economică, Gazeta literară, Revista de Folclor, Revista de Chimie*); almanacs (*Almanah Știință și Tehnică, Almanahul Cooperăției de Consum*); scientific bulletins (*Buletinul Institutului Politehnicei București*) or annals (*Analele Institutului de Studii Istorice*).

When it comes to using historical documents in our quotes, we tried to keep the original spelling as much as possible, with our few changes only affecting punctuation. In many places throughout the chapters, we let the documents speak for themselves.

Structure of doctoral thesis

The work is structured in an accessible and easy-to-follow manner, with three main chapters preceded by an explanatory introduction and followed by solid conclusions, annexes related to the topics discussed, and a substantial bibliography.

The introduction contains information on India's internal situation, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts to develop the country, and details on India's status on the global stage after gaining independence. I also analyzed Romania's internal situation under communism and its relationship with other states. An important aspect of approaching the history of the relationship between the two countries was recounting Romania's knowledge of India prior to establishing diplomatic relations, through the lens of the press and existing works.

The first chapter presents the main information that contributed to the creation and development of political relations. The history of Indo-Romanian political relations has seen moments of stagnation, but also moments when relations underwent a continuous process of evolution. In this case, we chose to use the documents found at M.F.A.A. and to bring to the reader's attention unknown details about the beginning of the formation of ties in a diplomatic setting. On this subject, we have highlighted and described the important moments in the transition from an informal to a formal relationship: 1948 - establishment of relations at the legation level; 1955 - opening of the Romanian diplomatic office in New Delhi; 1957 - upgrading of diplomatic relations to the embassy level; 1959 - opening of India's diplomatic office in Bucharest. During the period 1957-1967, Romania had three ambassadors sent to

New Delhi, namely Nicolae Cioroiu, Iancu Horațiu, and Aurel Ardeleanu, who contributed to shaping and maintaining diplomatic relations. Their activity was analyzed on the basis of the same documents in the custody of the M.F.A.A. and the press available for consultation.

As regards India's diplomatic representation in Bucharest, things proved more difficult, as until 1963 India did not have an ambassador based in Bucharest. According to documents held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives and the Romanian press, until 1963, India's representatives in Romania were Rajeshwar Dayal, Indian Ambassador to Belgrade, and Jagan Nath Khosla, Bejoy Krishna Acharya, and Mohan Prakash Mathur, Indian Ambassadors to Prague. Between 1963 and 1967, Khem Chand Rewa Chand Fateh Chand Khilnani was Ambassador of India in Romania, based in Bucharest. Before becoming Ambassador, he was Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and head of trade delegations to West Asian and Eastern European countries, so he was very familiar with the economic situation in Romania. His mandate saw progress in India's economic life and in Romanian-Indian economic relations. Therefore, researching his diplomatic career and, in particular, his role in strengthening ties between Romania and India, was an essential part of studying the history of political relations.

The context of 1957 highlighted the desire of the two states to continue and improve relations by organizing further bilateral political visits. Among these, we considered it useful to use documents and press reports to recount the visit of the Romanian delegation led by Prime Minister Chivu Stoica. The historical importance of this visit resulted in the strengthening of trade and economic relations through the transport of a considerable number of agricultural machines to India, the signing of the agreement on the construction of the first Indian state refinery in Gauhati (October 1958), and the signing of a Trade and Payments Agreement in 1959.

Another significant visit was that of Indian President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1965). Due to accessible press coverage and several documents preserved in the archives, we have described his itinerary through the Socialist Republic of Romania and the importance of the official visit for economic cooperation between the two countries.

The following chapter examines economic relations between Romania and India during the period 1957-1967. History records the signing of two trade and payment agreements (1959, 1962). The first *Trade and Payments Agreement* signed in 1954

(amended in 1957), the *Long-Term Trade Arrangement* (1960), and the creation of the economic sector within the Romanian Embassy in New Delhi (1961) were of equal historical importance. According to the trade agreements signed, the two signatory parties undertook to contribute to the development of trade relations by fulfilling the clauses mentioned in the documents. The agreements contained lists of goods that could be traded, so petroleum products, cereals, medicines, carbon black, electrical instruments, lumber, and others were transported from the People's Republic of Romania to India, while iron ore, coffee, tea, essential oils, cotton, fish oil, films, etc. were brought from India. Protocols on the exchange of goods were signed annually with the aim of maintaining good economic cooperation. The products were transported from the port of Constanța to the port of Calcutta, passing through the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Indian Ocean.

The documents held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives contain information about trade between the Republic of India and Romania. Between 1957 and 1967, there was an increase in both exports and imports. It is important to note that imports of iron ore into the People's Republic of Romania increased after 1962. By 1964, import contracts worth 20 million rupees had been signed with India, consisting of ore, coffee, and pepper. In terms of exports to India in 1964, contracts worth 15 million rupees were signed, consisting of drilling equipment, spare parts for the Gauhati refinery, brick factories, caustic soda, soda ash, and alternators. The following year, the volume of trade between Romania and India rose to 74 million rupees, which represented a 74% increase compared to 1959. In conclusion, the period between 1957 and 1967 saw progress in trade between two countries.

One of the most memorable events in the history of economic relations between India and Romania was the assistance provided by the People's Republic of Romania in the oil sector. During this period, Romania and India signed two agreements on the construction of state-owned refineries in India. In 1958, they signed the *Agreement on the construction of the Gauhati refinery*, and in 1967, the *Agreement between the Republic of India and the Socialist Republic of Romania on the establishment of an oil refinery in Haldia* was concluded. In 1959, an agreement was signed between the Soviet Union and India for the construction of the Barauni refinery, with Romania as the third signatory. For Romania, these agreements meant sending its best engineers abroad to provide assistance and training to Indian workers. They had to remain in India until the refinery was inaugurated: in 1962 for the Gauhati refinery, in 1965 for

the Barauni refinery, and in 1975 for the Haldia refinery. Thanks to M.F.A.A., we presented how these refineries were built, the administrative problems encountered, but also the efforts of the Romanian staff to integrate among their Indian colleagues.

The analysis of economic relations for this period presents the methods by which the two countries collaborated so that each could develop economically, create and maintain a place for itself on the international economic stage. The most important role played by economic actors at that time was to establish an essential basis for the development of bilateral relations.

In the last chapter, I focused on the establishment and development of cultural relations between Romania and India, starting with the signing of the first cultural agreement in 1957 (called the *Agreement between the Governments of India and the Romanian People's Republic on close cooperation in the field of culture and science*). Following its signing, cultural relations began to take shape, so that between 1957 and 1967, several cultural programs were carried out between the two states, such as literary translations, bilateral visits for cultural and scientific purposes, and the organization of exhibitions and artistic events. The following cultural agreements were signed only in 1965 (*Program of Cultural and Scientific Exchanges between the People's Republic of Romania and India for the years 1965-1966*) and 1966 (*Program of Cultural and Scientific Exchanges for the years 1966-1967*).

These agreements were signed to facilitate the development of cultural relations, using a diplomatic method of spreading the ideology of the communist regime. During the communist period, the dissemination of literary works, the organization of bilateral visits by Romanian personalities, and the staging of exhibitions with Romanian content abroad were used to create a positive international image.

In order to promote its writers and literature in India, Romania circulated works describing the life of Romanian peasants, the importance of agricultural development, and the struggle for independence. Thus, works such as *Mitrea Cocor* (Mihail Sadoveanu, translated into Punjabi); *O scrisoare pierdută* (I.L. Caragiale, translated into Telugu); *Bordeienii* and *Hanul Ancuței* (Mihail Sadoveanu, translated into Hindi); *Muzeul satului*, *Urgent*, *Domnul Goe* and *Triumful Talentului* (I.L. Caragiale, translated by Amita Bhose into Bengali).

In order to fulfill one of the clauses of the cultural agreements signed, translations of Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* (Autobiografie), Rabindranath

Tagore's *Garland of Love* (Ghirlanda dragostei), and Mulk Raj Anand's *Story of an Indian Child* (Povestea unui copil indian) appeared in Romania.

Thanks to these literary translations, Romanians became more interested in Indian culture, traditions, and philosophy. And Indians heard and learned more about Romanian writers, which is why the names of I.L. Caragiale and Mihail Sadoveanu still resonate in the minds of the Indian people.

Another step taken to strengthen relations with the Republic of India was the organization of bilateral visits. The dispatch of cultural figures to India and the invitation of Indian cultural figures to Romania were carried out according to a pre-established program and on the basis of the agreement in force at that time. Representatives from various fields were sent and received, such as medicine (gerontologist Ana Aslan, virologist Ștefan Nicolau), literature (literary critic Tudor Vianu, author Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, linguist Raghu Vira), restoration (Andrei Pănoiu and Zidaru Gheorghe), and physics (Indian physicist C.V. Raman). The purpose of organizing bilateral visits was to exchange experiences, participate in conferences and sessions to obtain new information related to their fields of activity, but also to build a good reputation for the two countries.

By sending exhibitions with Romanian content to India, Romania sought to show that it has a rich culture, well-preserved traditions and crafts, and to reinforce the idea that the political regime has brought progress in agriculture and science. Consequently, exhibitions on various aspects of Romanian daily life were organized in many areas of India: art, philately, literature, children's life in Romania, and archaeological monuments. According to documents kept at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the period 1957-1967 saw the most Romanian exhibitions organized in India, compared to the following years.

Organizing shows in India was a visual and auditory way for the regime to show its openness to other cultures and solidarity with other peoples, especially developing countries. Between 1957 and 1967, Romania gained international recognition thanks to Romanian ensembles and artists, especially the renowned choreographer Petre Bodeuț. He was invited to India by Indira Gandhi herself to teach Indians Romanian folk dances. His time in India was reported in the Romanian press and in the few archival documents that exist.

During the period 1957-1967, the Romanian state offered a series of scholarships to foreign students, usually for specialization or study. Indian students

also benefited from these scholarships. Some of them were mentioned in documents and are recalled in this paper. On the other hand, Romanian students also had access to scholarships abroad, with the obligation to praise the political system in Romania. A different case was that of theologian Andrei Scrima, who managed to leave, study in India, and return to the country only after the fall of communism.

A close cultural bond was created through cinema. After 1957, Romanian films were sent to India and screened for the Indian people. The play "Steaua fără nume" (The Nameless Star) was staged, and the Romanian film "Ochii oraşului meu" (The Eyes of My City) was included in the Indian television program.

During the communist era, cinema was a popular leisure activity, and Indian films introduced Romanians to a different culture. Romanian cinemas were often packed when films such as "A Flower and Two Gardeners", "The vagabond", and "The Chain of Memories" were shown. A special moment in the history of cultural ties was the premiere of the Indian film "Article 420" and the arrival in Romania of Indian actor Raj Kapoor.

Diplomatic relations between Romania and India between 1957 and 1967 enjoyed continuous development, with many economic and cultural successes, despite the problems encountered due to financial reasons or distance. Most of the events that took place during that period have an impact on the current state of Romanian-Indian relations.

The 39 annexes at the end of the thesis are related to the topics discussed and serve to add new information. The images and documents attached were collected from preserved archives and accessible Romanian press and arranged according to the subchapters of the doctoral thesis.

Also, at the end is a dense bibliography, organized by chapters and divided into archives, press, papers, articles and studies, online resources.

We believe that this thesis has achieved its stated aims and objectives, presenting information on the history of communist Romania's foreign relations with Asian countries and showing that the regime was open to cooperation with states outside its political sphere. We have also clarified several aspects regarding India's attitude towards communist countries and its openness to collaborating with as many countries as possible, with the aim of rebuilding its economy and finding its place on the international stage.

However, the main objectives of this work were to identify the main economic and cultural agreements signed between the two countries, to compile a chronology of diplomatic relations, and to highlight and present the key episodes in Indo-Romanian diplomatic history. Thanks to archival documents and the Romanian press, in the three main chapters I was able to follow these directions and provide the reader with new information about the initiation and development of diplomatic relations between Romania and India in the period 1957-1967.

We are convinced that the current doctoral thesis will serve as a starting point for research on the subject and will contribute substantially to the historiography of the topic, being a reliable source for understanding an essential chapter in the history of communist Romania's foreign relations, the history of independent India's relations, and the history of Indo-Romanian diplomatic relations.