

**„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA  
FACULTY OF EUROPEAN STUDIES**

**PHD THESIS**

**~ABSTRACT~**

# **Romanian Institutions and mentalities in the Process of European Unification**

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## **Table of contents**

### 1. Introduction

1.1 General guidelines and conceptual framework

1.2 Research methodology

### 2. Mentalities and institutions between East and West. Romania at the confluence of civilisations

2.1 The Balkan confluence

2.2 Eastern and Central-European influences

2.3 Mentalities and institutions between East and West

### 3. 1989 – a turning point in the shaping of Romanians' mentalities and in the institutional reconstruction of the state

3.1. The European significance of the moment 1989

3.2 A comparison to classic revolutions

3.3 Interpretations of the year 1989

3.4 The Romanian post-revolutionary context: power void, institutional crisis and remaining communist mentalities

3.4.1 The socio-political context

3.4.2 The transfer of power

3.4.3 The institutional crisis

3.4.4 Remaining communist mentalities

3.5 Models of institutional reconstruction of the Romanian state

3.5.1 The general model suggested by Zbigniew Brzezinski

3.5.2 The first models of Romanian transition

### 4. Romania in the process of European Union integration

- 4.1 Key moments in the process of integration of Romania into the European Union
- 4.2 The shaping of Romanian institutions and mentalities after joining the new European paradigm
- 5. Romanian institutions in the process of European unification. Case study: the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Parliament
  - 5.1 The Romanian Orthodox Church
    - 5.1.1 Relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the state
    - 5.1.2 The relation between Church and politics
    - 5.1.3 The Romanian Orthodox Church, an actor of European integration
  - 5.2 The Romanian Parliament
    - 5.2.1 History of Romanian parliamentarianism
    - 5.2.2 The Romanian Parliament in the process of transition
    - 5.2.3 The role of the Romanian Parliament in the post-accession period
    - 5.2.4 Intervention and collaboration mechanisms
- 6. Conclusions
- Bibliography
- Annexes

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*Institutions, mentalities, East, West, confluence, transition, modernisation, Romanian Orthodox Church, Romanian Parliament*

**General guidelines and conceptual framework**

The objective of the PhD thesis entitled “Romanian mentalities and institutions in the process of European unification” is to study the influence of the geographical location and dominant religion, throughout history, as well as of the new European paradigm – chiefly over the last two decades – on the evolution of institutional organisation and the mentalities of the Romanian people. The analysis will thus focus on two institutions that are representative of the research we are undertaking: the Romanian Parliament and the Romanian Orthodox Church. We aim – by means of the study dedicated to the two institutions – to follow first and foremost their connection to popular mentalities and, on a larger scale, to the endeavour our country resorted to in order to join and integrate into the European Union.

This research focuses on institutions in a larger sense, without limiting itself to considering the latter as “bodies entrusted with the enforcement of political power”<sup>i</sup>, according to their usual juridical definition, but by perceiving them as an “ensemble of bodies and mechanisms within the Romanian society at a given time, whose activity is regulated through juridical norms, so as to attain a predetermined and durable goal”.<sup>ii</sup>

The prominence of mentalities, amid the transition period our country has gone through, along with the deepening of the European unification process, have emphasised the need to carefully observe the former, as well as the study of the evolution of Romania’s institutional setting, after the change which occurred in December 1989.

With regard to the concept of mentalities, we shall refer to them as an ensemble of customs, beliefs and behaviours specific to the general level of the Romanian people, including elements pertaining to social awareness, regarded as a species of mentalities and not as a distinctive working instrument.<sup>iii</sup>

We are aware of the risks entailed by the attribution of a common mentality to the entire Romanian society, as well as of the danger of ignoring or minimising regional particularities – since we cannot speak, either in Romania or elsewhere, about societies composed of individuals that think alike. Nevertheless, we consider that the use of the concept of mentalities is appropriate, in the sense attributed by Paul Ricoeur: “Mentalities function automatically, without the knowledge of their carriers; they are not so much thoughts, conceived and expressed, as inheritances, more or less used, views on the world that are instilled into what we dare call the collective unconsciousness”.<sup>iv</sup>

## **Research methodology**

Our doctoral thesis relies on a set of research methods which are compatible with the area of social sciences and, particularly, the study of history. The analyses our endeavour is based on have to be regarded, from a methodological perspective, as taking into account a combination of qualitative methods – which prevail in this case, and quantitative ones.

The research strategy has consisted of a series of logical steps, carefully pursued by the researcher, in order to ensure the quality of the scientific endeavour. Hence, as it results from the structure of the thesis, we have considered it necessary to establish a set of research premises, which are, in fact, immutable convictions of the author, acquired whilst going through a vast bibliography, meant to ensure the consistency of

the text and to avoid unwanted contradictions, at the same time. These premises are aimed, *inter alia*, at placing not only Romanian mentalities, but also institutions, at the confluence between East and West, from a historical perspective, with a certain continuity at present; a critical view on the moment 1989 and its implications at the social, political and institutional levels; the adoption of the European paradigm by the Romanian state, as the sole viable alternative so as to overcome transition; the existence of at least two essential institutions in the processes described, namely the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Parliament.

Taking into account the complexity of the phenomena that lie at the core of the research conducted as part of this thesis, we have attempted to obtain the confirmation of the authenticity of the information from multiple sources in historiography, prior to subjecting them to qualitative analyses. The historical approach that prevails in the contents of our paper is based on direct observation only to a lesser extent, as this occurs only in the case of recent events.

The analysis of materials from historiography is the principal means of conducting qualitative research in our study. Our experience and documentation ensure the availability of a considerable amount of primary information, which is of paramount importance in any research endeavour of this kind.

Moreover, the success of our research has been largely reliant on the accurate use of comparative methods, which, in the case of social sciences, are in an evident state of compatibility with qualitative ones. In our thesis, comparisons play an essential role in the analyses regarding the mentalities and institutions that enter the equation of Romania's modernisation and Europeanization. The historical periods we are referring to present numerous conflicting elements, whose scrutiny, in parallel, denotes elements of continuity and discontinuity with an incontestable scientific value. The horizon of

comparisons also refers to the similarities and differences between modernisation patterns that manifest themselves in Western Europe, on the one hand, and East-Central Europe, on the other hand.

It is our view that any ample research has to be achieved by a case study, which is meant to individualise certain events or aspects of the central topic, whose thorough understanding will lead to a comprehensive perception of the theme of the research. The case study in our thesis focuses on the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Parliament, as important actors in the process of Romania's European integration.

## **Structure of the thesis**

The first chapter of the thesis is the one through which we enunciated the theme of the research, by encompassing general guidelines and the necessary conceptual framework, as well as by explaining the methodological approach utilised.

Without insisting in our paper on the position – uncomfortable, but at the same time valuable – of Romania at a confluence point of European culture and civilisation, as a considerable number of prominent studies already exist on the topic and exceed the immediate interest range of our research – we have attempted, in the second chapter of our thesis, to analyse the imprint left, in time, by the area of interference of civilisations we are located in, on the evolution of mentalities and the process of institutional construction and consolidation.

The meaning and consequences of the year 1989 have been assessed in the third chapter of the thesis. We have focused on the importance of the moment across Europe, in comparison to classic revolutions, regarded from a Romanian perspective as generating a power void and an institutional crisis, amid remaining communist mentalities, so as to identify models suggested for institutional reconstruction.

Furthermore, we have insisted exclusively on the case of Romania, by establishing the political and social context in the aftermath of the change in regime occurring in December 1989. For a better clarification of what we deem to be an extremely important turning point in history, we have aimed to identify the principal models considered at the time, so as to reform/reinvent the institutions of the state and, chiefly, to observe the extent to which they occurred at a later time.

The fourth chapter of our thesis is dedicated to the history of Romania's accession to the European Union, with particular emphasis on the imprint this has left on the process of tailoring Romanian mentalities and institutions to a new paradigm, the European one. We have set the goal of critically examining the position of the population towards our country's involvement in the process of European unification and integration, by answering a question we believe requires at least a very serious debate in the years to come, if not a definitive answer: Is the Romanians' decision to be part of the European construction process a real one, or are we confronted with fake propaganda data, covering a reality which does not entirely correspond to this image?

We have further attempted, in the fifth chapter of our paper, to analyse the extent to which the evolution, stagnation and sometimes even involution of the Romanian society – in the areas we are interested in: mentalities and institutions – were prompted by the dominant religion. In addition to the Romanian Orthodox Church, we have studied in this chapter another institution of paramount importance in Romania – Parliament – so as to comprehend the role it has had throughout the process of Romania's European integration and to assess the extent to which this institution remains, to date, a forum dedicated to debates and decision making in this respect.

While taking the risk of simplifying and reducing such a general topic, within too restrained a space, we have suggested, by means of our thesis, an approach to the



Romanian society not only from an institutional perspective, but also from that of dominant mentalities, given the obvious bidirectional link between institutions and mentalities and the understanding of the fact that the Romanian institutions that become tuned to western realities often overlap with mentalities whose origins lie, from a plethora of viewpoints, in an eastern past reality.

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<sup>i</sup> Ion Deleanu, *Drept constituțional și instituții politice*, vol. II, Ed. Europa Nova, Bucharest, 1996, p.47.

<sup>ii</sup> Tudor Drăganu, *Drept constituțional și instituții politice*, vol. I, Ed. Lumina Lex, Bucharest, 2000, p.114.

<sup>iii</sup> For a dissimilar opinion, see Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2000, p.39.

<sup>iv</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memoria, istoria, uitarea*, Ed. Amarcord, Timișoara, 2001, p.238.