

# Filling the Ideological Void: ‘Restorative’ Nostalgia and the Radical Right Parties in Romania

Alexandra Alina Iancu<sup>1</sup>

Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

**Filling the Ideological Void: ‘Restorative’ Nostalgia and the Radical Right Parties in Romania.** The article examines the role occupied by nostalgia as a group-based emotion in shaping the ‘micro-politics’ of the radical right parties. The paper argues that the high ideological eclecticism of RRP is primarily due to the strategies deployed in the weaponization of the past. As a discursive strategy, nostalgia substantially conditions party appeals well beyond the symbolic and mythological references, contaminating broader policy-oriented assertions. The study is focused on two paired examples of ultranationalist parliamentary parties: the Greater Romanian Party and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians. Content analysis of primary and secondary sources emphasizes that despite a 30-year time gap, the two Romanian RRP showcase remarkably high levels of programmatic and discourse overlap due to nostalgia-based strategies of boosting nationalist identities.

Sociológia 2023, Vol. 55 (No. 2: 220-243)

<https://doi.org/10.31577/sociologia.2023.55.2.8>



**Key words:** *Nostalgia; political emotions; radical right parties; Romania; PRM; AUR; nationalism*

## Introduction

In recent years, the so-called ‘new nostalgia epidemic,’ taking us back to an idealized place and time, has been associated with nationalistic surges (Wodak 2015; Campanella – Dassù 2020). Particularly in East Central Europe (ECE), historical legacies related to the fascist interwar regimes and the communist period continuously resurfaced in a ‘romanticized’ version of local populisms (Buštíková – Kitschelt 2009; Gherghina – Mișcoiu 2014). Despite a wide diversity of cases (Campanella – Dassù 2020; Krastev – Holmes 2020; Bankov et al. 2021), the new democracies still suffer from region-similar ‘fantasies of salvation’ (Tismăneanu 1998), which tend to resurface unexpectedly. Romania is an example. In the early 1990s, the conflict between the nationalist and the anti-nationalist positions, the latter opposing an ‘ethnic’ party and parties representing extremist and anti-Hungarian views, added content to the structural consolidation of the Romanian party system (Mungiu 2018). The Greater Romanian Party (Romanian acronym, PRM), the ‘star party’ of the Romanian radical-right populism (RRP), gained momentum in the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections. However, PRM disappeared from the

---

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence: As. Prof. Alexandra Alina Iancu, PhD., Faculty of Political Science, Str. Spiru Haret no 8, Bucharest, 010175, Romania, E-mail: alexandra.iancu@unibuc.ro

National Assembly immediately after Romania acceded to the EU. Twelve years later, the empty parliamentary space was filled by a newcomer: the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR, 2019-present). With AUR's electoral surge, 'fantasies of salvation' and radical nationalism have found a renewed avenue of expression. Starting from the Romanian example, this paper investigates how the two radical right parties used homologous nostalgic claims to replace the inherent RRP ideological void and to shape their (convergent) policy proposals.

The mainstream literature on the RRP amply recorded radical parties' tendency to rely on political reinstatements of the past. However, nostalgic cues had been primarily attached to specific populist tropes (Mudde – Kaltwasser 2018). Ideational responses to crises and regional patterns of democratization became the main factors explaining the political ascent of nationalism in the ECE (Bušítková 2018). More recent literature demonstrated that the new surge of populism, specifically RRP, came with strong renationalizing trends embedded in emotional appeals (Betz 2004; Wodak 2015; Demertzis 2006; Salmela – von Scheve 2017). Anger, blame, fear, and *ressentiment* provided additional accounts for the success of identity politics. According to such accounts, nativism based on 'Heartland' imagery and the dream of a 'Golden Age' has been systematically connected to the emotional distortions of reimagined narratives of the Great Nation (Wodak – Forchtner 2014; Salmela – von Scheve 2017: 11). So far, despite the intensification of the political recurrences to the past, the mechanisms of revitalizing nationalistic tropes through nostalgia remain blurrily defined and subjected to country-variability (Elçi 2022).

My paper combines the ideational and emotion-based approaches in understanding the RRP's revival by questioning the assumption of the radical right parties' polymorphic ability to reimagine the historical past only to serve (or reinforce) specific and predefined thematic ends. I argue that nostalgia projected on a particular (reimagined) past substantially conditions party appeals well beyond the symbolic and mythological reference. In doing so, I show that, at least for the Romanian case, the imagery of historical events contaminates and conditions broader policy-oriented assertions/choices. In the Romanian case, nostalgia, while instrumental in nature, has led to increased RRP programmatic and discourse convergence levels despite a 30-year time lag.

The relevance of this paper is threefold. First, the research identifies collective nostalgia as a previously non-accounted explanatory factor in shaping long-term RRP ideational continuities and specificities. In doing so, it

shows how nostalgia, as a group emotion, *can* function as a *foundational* trait of the RRP, better explaining the apparent RRP ideological eclecticism. Second, the analysis points to some caveats in identifying nostalgic mechanisms. The case study shows that, even though references to the historical past can be rhetorically inflated in the RRP discourses, hidden discursive continuities with more recent political/historical experiences and representations can – in some cases - better explain the rise of populist tides. Third, by focusing on two paired examples – *the Greater Romanian Party and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians* –, the research deepens the knowledge of the Romanian RRP’s constitutive features and provides an alternative explanation to the most recent RRP revival. This paper emphasizes that although previous explanations in the literature refer to the active role of the Romanian (orthodox) church in endorsing AUR (Gherghina – Mişcoiu 2022) or, more generally, to the role of the political environment which favored the legitimation of anti-system claims – namely, the political clashes surrounding the rhetoric of post-communist/anti-communism (Popescu – Vesalon 2022) – political mimicry and rhetorical transplants from the 1990s remain the main explicative factors for the recent political success of AUR. However, I also highlight that nostalgia is the main political instrument facilitating such political convergence.

The paper comprises four sections. The first section revisits the relationship between nostalgia and radical right parties. The second section briefly presents the case selection and the methodological approach. The third section points to the quasi-identical party proposals of the two Romanian RRP. Finally, the fourth section scrutinizes the hidden nostalgic mechanisms employed by the Romanian parties and explains their logic in the overall construction of the party discourse.

### **Populism and emotions: ‘restorative’ nostalgia and the radical right parties**

Nostalgia commonly refers to a feeling of the recent decline in values and a loss of moral compass (in contrast to a reimagined Golden Age – Stauth – Turner 1988). The presence of nostalgia, a group-based emotion – on a demand side – has been easily grasped through cultural products, historical reinstatements, and media content (Özyürek 2006; Asavei 2020; Niemeyer 2014). On the supply side, few studies encompassed nostalgia’s role as a political legitimator (Gaston – Hilhorst 2018) or acknowledged ‘nostalgic nationalism’ as an analytical category (Campanella – Dassù 2020).

Political scientists often ignore nostalgia in their analyses. Although the Golden age and the identity loss tropes have played significant roles in defining populist characteristics (Taggart 2004; Albertazzi – McDonnell 2008; Sullivan 2021), authors considered such historical *renvois* as rhetorical instruments. Despite myriad of empirical cases piling up (Elçi 2022; Morini 2020; Campanella – Dassù 2020), the ideational approach of RRP has been reluctant to grant nostalgia foundational status. While ‘nostalgic deprivation,’ namely the gap between ongoing status frustrations and recollections of the past, had been directly connected to the ascent of RRP, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2018: 1676) maintained that there are no grounds to confine nostalgia to populism or RRP ascent. According to the authors, the ideational definition of RRP should remain anchored in the traditional features of the concept - the division between ‘the purity of the people’ and the ‘corrupt elite,’ with an emphasis on ‘sovereignty at any cost’ (Mudde – Kaltwasser 2017). RRP would entail the primacy of predefined and restrictive topics: counter-minority politics and anti-immigrant positions coupled with some forms of Euroscepticism.

Conversely, over the past decades, sociological approaches have increasingly outlined the role of emotions in shaping collective action, social and political processes (Stets – Turner 2006, 2014). Group-based emotions have been associated with the resurfacing of populist appeals on demand and supply sides (Betz 1994, 2018; Beuzamy 2013; Wodak 2015; Salmela – von Scheve 2017; Demertzis 2006, 2020; Kinnvall – Svensson 2022). Fear and *ressentiment* as emotional replies to social inequities, trauma, and significant crises were the main factors leading to the RRP success stories (Wodak 2015; Salmela – von Scheve 2017; Demertzis 2006). For example, Salmela and von Scheve (2017) consider transforming shame into anger and emotional distancing (the self-perceived status decline) as central RRP tenets. Similarly, Demertzis’s (2006, 2020) research on Greek parties highlights the role of *ressentiment* - a complex emotional reply to inequities, injustice, and inefficiency- in boosting populism (Demertzis 2020: 205). More recently, focusing on the Covid pandemic, Kinnvall and Svensson (2022) argued that hatred and contempt are deeply rooted in the ‘fantasies of the past’ which constitute contemporary responses to ontological insecurities, cultural deprivation, and to the feeling of helplessness (Kinnvall – Svensson 2022: 538). Paradoxically, the analytical accounts scrutinizing the role of emotions in explaining the populist surge also downplayed the role of nostalgia as a key/central RRP emotion. Moral and emotional reactions fueling populism/RRP were more likely to go hand in hand with an entire dynamic nexus, which only included nostalgia as one amongst many other emotions (i.e., disappointment, anger, fear, shame,

guilt, etc. – Demertzis 2020: 155, 207; Wodak 2015; Salmela – von Scheve 2017).

The epistemic marginality of nostalgia in political processes has been partly due to the ambivalent or contradictory accounts of its inherent mechanisms. Ray et al. beautifully summarized the literature's dilemma on intergroup emotions: 'At their worst, intergroup emotions can motivate cycles of violence ... At their best, collective pride can bind a community together' (Ray et al. 2014: 248). In this vein, for some authors, nostalgia has been portrayed (along with yearning and hope) as a form of a first-order type of emotional elaboration, resulting primarily from the couple *satisfaction-happiness/disappointment-sadness*, a 'useful' emotion able to foster social integration and solidarity (Turner 2014: 19). At the opposite end, authors pointed out that nationalist and populist appeal usually embrace various forms of historical revisionism built on temporary/fluid or sectoral forms nostalgia. Safeguarding the 'Fatherland' mobilizes belief sets and familiar narratives about heroes, villains, etc. Forms of longing for an 'imaginary' past based on selective memorialization would quasi-automatically entail political (populist and nationalistic) mythization (Demertzis 2020). Yet, such beliefs remain only fragmentary narrations, confined strategies in building gendered or racialized populist themes (Wodak 2015). In a more recent study, Kinnvall and Svensson (2022) similarly singled out the imaginary and collective 'memorization' as sources of identity politics and exclusion typical of contemporary populism. In their view, the *power of imagination* constitutes the RRP's focal point in tandem with insecurity and anxiety. The RRP *fantasies of the past* were merely paranoid 'images that have been retroactively constructed' (Kinnvall – Svensson 2022: 532-533). Political fiction writing epistemically replaced nostalgia.

Contradictory and shifting accounts of the role of emotions in politics continue to surface, highlighting the ambivalent role of nostalgia. An attempt to solve the theoretical conundrum of the nostalgia-RRP relationship distinguishes amongst various forms/types of nostalgia. According to Boym (2001), not all forms of remembering the past are detrimental to democracy. Only 'restorative nostalgia,' aiming to bring a mystified version of history to life, would lead to nativism, polarization, or conspiracy theory rhetoric (Boym 2001; Pickering – Keightley 2006: 921; Campanella – Dassù 2020: 42-45). Longing for the revitalization of the Golden Age leads to destructive effects as it encourages the political intertwinement of nostalgia and sovereigntist tropes. While elegant, such a conceptual subdivision only partially accounts for the 'nostalgia' dilemma. Creating a particular category of 'malignant' nostalgia is not

necessarily conducive to discriminant validity. RRP parties are hardly aiming at promoting genuine and coherent restorative political projects, whereas traditional/mainstream parties are barely (if at all) disregarding restorative tropes from their political repertoires.

By bringing together the RRP analyses of the ideational approach and the sociology of emotions, my paper starts from the assumption that it is more likely that mythological structures remain deeply embedded in the legitimation processes of ordinary politics (Str ath 2005; Hansen – Williams 1999). If nostalgia's performative role differs, it is not by political context, power structures, or the type of nostalgia. It *is simply by the agency* that such differentiation occurs. While traditional parties may weaponize nostalgia for political/rhetorical ends, the impact of such instrumentalization on party programs or actions should fundamentally differ from those of parties with 'thin-centered ideologies' (as Mudde described the RRP, Stanley 2008). In the latter case, the choice of nostalgia cannot be politically neutralized or confined to incoherent (imaginary) narratives due to the RRP's inherent lack of alternative ideological content. RRP parties, due to their scarce principles and methods to specify/derive their programmatic ends, are not only prone to borrow from other thick-centered ideologies (such as conservatism) but they should also be susceptible to transfer features from the identity politics' frames in all policy areas. In the case of the RRP, longing for the past should have, at least in theory, a solid predisposition for becoming foundational.

### **Case selection and methods**

Compared to other countries in the region, Romania presents a much more sinuous and ambivalent story of democratization (Tismăneanu 1998; Pridham 2007). The violent regime change, continuities of the past, and slow economic development delayed the process of readjustment/post-communist modernization. EU accession came late, in 2007, and took a *sui generis* form. The oversight mechanism that the Romanian authorities negotiated with the EU Commission, the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism on the independence of the judiciary and the fight against corruption, as well as the post-accession political crises, singled out Romania as a political system that was still transitioning towards an established democracy (the CVM was only lifted in 2022).

For most of the post-communist period, all Romanian mainstream parties (and the Romanian public) have been continuously and almost homogeneously Europhiles. The RRP parties that emerged in the early 1990s (with PRM as the primary representative) politically declined against the backdrop of accession

to the EU. Mainstream parties' populism has been infrequent and tame, and incremental reforms have led to slower yet steady democratization (Iancu 2018). Nevertheless, the long and yet successful story of Romanian Europeanisation has not been entirely free of *fantasies of the past* shackles. At the grassroots level, empirical studies pointed out that the social memory of the communist period remains dominated by distortions and 'imperfect assimilation' (Sorea – Bolborici 2021). In 2021 and 2022, an INSCOP survey showed that over half of respondents (54%, 57%) considered the overall situation in Romania worse than in 1989. In 2019, another survey showed that 27% of the respondents openly declared that the communist regime did 'more good than bad' (INSCOP 2019). Similarly, at the political level, various forms of political instrumentalization of the past continuously resurface (Sorea – Bolborici 2021). The Romanian Parliament recently welcomed a new RRP.

In my study, Romania constitutes a pathway case (Gerring 2007: 238), further clarifying the underlying causal mechanisms linking nostalgia and the RRP political discourse. To do so, two parties will be analyzed as continuous forms of radical-right 'nostalgic parties' in Romania: the Greater Romanian Party - PRM (1991-2008) and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR 2019-2022). Both parties gained parliamentary representation one year after their official registration. The Greater Romanian Party is the most notorious case of Romanian RRP. The party dominated the ultra-nationalist discourse from the 1990s until the mid-2000s by adopting ethnocentric and sovereigntist stances (Gallagher 2005). PRM came in second in the 2000 legislative elections, when the party president qualified as the runner-up in the presidential race. Against the backdrop of Europeanisation, PRM lost its 'edge' and parliamentary representation in 2008. The party failed to meet the electoral threshold and has never politically recovered since.

While Romania seemed to become a regional exception - as no RRP gained seats in the legislature for more than a decade, the swift emergence of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) brought the reinstatement of radical-nationalistic claims in Romanian parliamentary politics. This party emerged in 2019 and gained momentum in the 2020 legislative elections, when it entered Parliament with over 9% in both houses. AUR had not received traditional media coverage or notice before entering the Parliament (Popescu – Vesalon 2022). Its electoral success came as a shock. Like its predecessor, AUR endorses anti-establishment, anti-minority appeals, and sovereigntist positions.

The two-paired examples are analyzed primarily during the first one-year and a half of their parliamentary experience (a period that coincides with the

public articulation of the party discourse). This research aligns with the strong genetic assumption that the parties' ideological imprints are conditioning the long-term party trajectories (Panebianco 1988; Bolleyer 2013). The study traces the micro-politics of right-wing populism based on the *discourse-historical approach* (DHA) (Wodak 2015; Wodak – Boukala 2015), looking at identifying the contents or topics of political speeches, the strategies employed by political actors and the linguistic means mobilized to convey the political messages (Wodak – Boukala 2015: 93). The research includes both primary and secondary sources official party documents and political discourses. However, the focal point of the analysis is the in-depth scrutiny of the parliamentary speeches of the two RRP presidents by looking at the argumentation strategies. The focus on parliamentary speeches strengthens the research as it allows a systematic recording of the institutional discourse of the two-party leaders (thus avoiding selection biases). The article, therefore, considers the PRM's leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor's 47 parliamentary allocations in the Romanian Senate (October 1992 – March 1994) and AUR's President George Simion's 95 parliamentary interventions from the Chamber of Deputies (December 2020-April 2022). The transcripts of all debates are published in the Official Journal (Part II). Recent debate transcripts are also available on the official website of the National Assembly.

The first phase of the analysis proceeds to identify the main discourse topics of the Parliamentary speeches concerning the ideational RRP features: clericalism, criticism concerning the minorities (ethnic minorities but also the presence of heteronormative narratives (Wodak 2015), anti-corruption, and Euroscepticism/Sovereignism (Mudde 2007; Pirro 2016; Buřtíková 2018). I conduct a comparative thematic analysis of the political speeches to map the party discursive constellations according to the classical 'coding' of the RRP (the main arguments put forward by the leaders of the two parties in Parliament). The main predication and nomination strategies are explored (Reisigl – Wodak 2009). To grasp the policy-oriented approaches of the two parties, a secondary analysis concerns the central party positioning (as expressed by their leaders) on an economic, social, and political. This form of clustering of political proposals maps the policy constellation of the two parties. Policy proposals were surveyed on the three standard dimensions: economic, social, and rights & freedoms (democracy). Issues that did not match the above categories were labeled 'Other.' Looking at party manifestos controls for ideological dimension but also facilitates the analysis of interdiscursivity (levels of connection between topics and subtopics) and intertextuality (relationships amongst speeches) (Reisigl – Wodak. 2009). In doing so, I seek



to diachronically assess the continuity and change of the standard RRP features of the two Romanian parties.

The second part of the research concerns the analysis of discursive strategies and the ‘means of linguistic realization’ (Wodak 2015). Differently from DHA, I focus less on this stage on the structures of argumentation (although I do not entirely obliterate the references to fallacies), as I am primarily interested in the elements of nostalgia as forms of recontextualization. How do the direct connections with past events/political figures or by ‘allusions and evocations’ transfer in the parties’ discourses? I am examining whether the promotion elements of the ‘moral evaluation and mythopoesis’ strategy have led to interdiscursivity (regarding policy appeals). I isolate thus in the political speeches the uses and abuses of specific moral stances and historical narratives (myths) mobilized in the RRP quest to legitimize the ‘Othering.’ I trace the mythological structures based on Boia’s (1997) categories by looking at the political reinterpretations of national ideology (as forms of continuity and unity), modernization, the relationship with ‘Others,’ and the ‘National Pantheon’ (Boia 1997). I check for nostalgic cues in leaders’ discourses and their connection to the already identified policy appeals/proposals. In doing so, the study aims at assessing the potential for nostalgia contagion well beyond the usual policy suspects (i.e., anti-immigration bills, anti-Semitic and xenophobic appeals, and anti-gendered claims).

Three major caveats are worth mentioning. First, the empirical research incorporates a path-dependent bias in the interpretation of the role of the discursive choices of the founding party leaders and in their ability to replicate over time (despite the rapidly changing environments and the shifting meaning structures in transitional settings). Second, the analysis partially downplays some of the changes in the political opportunity structures. While both RRP presidents had become MPs one year after their respective party registration, the institutional and legislative frameworks in which they could express themselves highly differ due to the 30-year time gap. One example is illustrative in this regard. During the PRM’s President’s first parliamentary mandate, virtually no regulations could have prevented Corneliu Vadim Tudor from adopting a restorative discourse based on violent exclusionary appeals. The Decree-law 8/31.12.1989 on creating political parties had already mentioned that parties should serve democratic ends and protect rights and liberties. However, until 2002, there were no straightforward legal means to penalize Holocaust denial (EO 31/2002). Third, as in all analyses referring to political narratives and hidden mythological structures, there is a danger of

subjectivity (Jing - Ahn 2021). To avoid such limitations, I start from the assumption that ‘the images of the past and the future are not just linear relationships from the present, but also depend on the accumulation of previous such relationships and their continuous constitution and reconstitution’ (Str ath 2005: 257). Distortions of the past could have not only a destructive potential but can also fulfill a performative function leading to the creation of new meanings ‘reflective of contemporary power structures and social problems’ (Ibid.: 260). The elements of nostalgia identified in political discourses will be thus de-normativised through a contextualized analysis and compared with previous literature on collective memory distortions and identity politics in Romania.

### **‘Restorative’ nostalgia revival: topoi overlap the cases of PRM and AUR**

PRM emerged early in post-communism as the leading representative of Romanian nationalism, endorsing heated anti-minority positions (Tismăneanu 1998; Gallagher 2005). Even though PRM identified itself as center-left, throughout the 1990s, the so-called ‘National Doctrine’ became its central discursive pillar, with a ‘Golden Age’ set in the interwar period (1918, Greater Romania was the reference point – marking the territorial unification of the country with Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania, which doubled the size of the country). The historical choice was in harmony with the party’s central unionist claims (protecting Romanians from Bessarabia and Bukovina). Starting in 2004, the electoral support of the party continuously declined. Thirty years after the creation of PRM, AUR filled the space left unoccupied. The new party rediscovered the unionist claims but seasoned the accounts with contemporary tropes referring to the large Romanian diaspora and the protection of the Romanian citizens working and living abroad. AUR does not acknowledge any form of continuity with PRM. Discontinuity is actually underlined. This newer party was branded as a right-wing-oriented alternative to the mainstream and a progeny of the Romanian Revolution. And yet, despite the foundational differences and the consistent time lag, there is a significant overlap in the programmatic claims of the two parties (see Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1: **Main discourse topics and themes of the Romanian RRP: PRM vs. AUR**

	<b>PRM (1992-1994)</b>	<b>AUR (2020-2022)</b>
<i>Main objective</i>	<i>Unionism; Bessarabia and Bukovina</i>	<i>Unionism; Bessarabia and Bukovina; United Romanian diaspora</i>
<b>1. Anticorruption</b>	Fight against corruption and Mafia; criticism of prosecutors; fight against speculation.  Proposals: Parliamentary inquiry committee on corruption; confiscation of illicit assets; controlling for assets; the creation of a National Anti-Usury Department.	Fight against corruption; criticism of prosecutors (and selective indictments)  Proposals: Parliamentary inquiry committee on public procurement (Covid crisis); confiscation of illicit assets; measures against political privileges (scrapping special pensions, party subventions); no parliamentary immunity; decrease of the intelligence service budgetary allocations and strong endorsement for the Anticorruption Directorate
<b>2. Ethnic Minorities</b>	Criticism of UDRM = unconstitutional; fighting Hungarian revisionism; anti-Semitism	Criticism of UDMR; the ‘ethnocide of the Romanian historical communities’; anti-Semitism
<b>3. Clericalism</b> (heteronormative)	Christian family; against LGBT rights; decreasing abortion; the role of the Orthodox Church	Supporters of traditional family; against same-sex marriage; decreasing abortion (introducing sexual education in schools); social protection of traditional families; ‘gender ideology - a theoretical aberration’
<b>4. Sovereignism</b>	Against world finance; anti-‘Soros network’; ‘no more orders from foreign embassies’; fear of becoming a colony	Against the IMF; conspiracy theory undertones; no more orders from foreign embassies; ‘we are becoming a colony’; ‘Europe of nations’; anti ‘EU-driven migration’

Source: Based on the analysis of the transcripts of the party presidents’ parliamentary speeches and party programs of PRM (1992) and AUR (2020).

The two Romanian RRP display remarkably high levels of programmatic congruence. Comparing programs and parliamentary speeches reveals quasi-identical political agendas in line with the RRP's main political dimensions (Table 1). Fighting 'grand corruption' and staving off the 'theft of the nation' are the main rhetorical pillars. Both parties aim(ed) at the 'corrupt establishment', and both denunciate(d) the alleged and natural prosecutorial biases in grand corruption cases. The agenda for integrity reforms is also symmetrical: setting up parliamentary inquiring committees to investigate corruption, prompting measures such as controlling and confiscating illicitly gained assets, and institution-building to eradicate corruption. AUR, unlike PRM, also targeted the secret services' propensity towards budgetary expansion and their alleged activism in party and judicial politics. The fundamental antagonism between the 'corrupt elites' and the 'purity of the people' goes hand in hand with nationalistic views. The two parties formally reunited on the main unionist objectives (recreating 'Greater Romania' (as it stood between 1918-1940)). In doing so, a large part of their rhetoric was dedicated to protecting the rights of the Romanian minorities living abroad. Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (former territories of the Romanian Kingdom in the interwar period) occupy a central role. The essentialist view on the Nation enhanced the domestic criticism of ethnic minorities. The Hungarian minority ethnic party (UDMR) is *the* main political target. In both cases, denouncing the so-called Hungarian revisionism 'sabotaging' the Romanian national interests and oppressing ethnic Romanians, particularly those living in Transylvania, became central to constructing Otherness. While the PRM's leader's anti-Semitism ran high on the party agenda, AUR tried to distance itself from accusations of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, in a press release from January 2022, AUR accused the Romanian Government of downgrading essential educational topics such as the Romanian language, literature, and history in national curricula in favor of 'minor issues such as sexual education and the history of the Holocaust' (Times of Israel, January 8, 2022).

Clericalism complements the ultra-nationalistic claims (Stan – Turcescu 2000; Chen 2003; Gherghina – Miscoiu 2022). Both parties recurrently emphasized the role of Christian values and the Romanian Orthodox Church in forging and preserving the Romanian nation. Such forms of clericalism also encouraged heteronormative positions (Norocel 2011). Praising 'the Christian family' and opposing LGBT rights became a salient issue. Some differences do however exist. While PRM directly referred to the Romanian Orthodox Church's tradition, AUR adopted a broader/inclusive formula of 'Christianity', while maintaining highly conservative viewpoints on the role of the traditional family. The nationalist and conservative character of the two parties also included high levels of support for sovereigntist positions, seasoned with

conspiracy theory undertones (against the IMF, world finance, foreign embassies, etc.). Euroscepticism was not a foundational feature of the PRM, although, in the 2000s, the faction embraced some euro-critical positions. AUR proclaims itself as a pro-European party. Nevertheless, the party's political position is recognizably Eurosceptic, as expressed through the formula of a Europe of Nations (in line with other European RRP).

Table 2: **Specific narratives of party programmatic institutionalization in Romania**

<b>PRM vs. AUR policy proposals</b>		
	<b>PRM (1992-1994)</b>	<b>AUR (2020)</b>
<b>1. Economy</b>	Against shock therapy; Protective – social issues, farming, national industry; raise of salaries medical sector; social protection (pensions); state intervention in setting prices	Support for de-regulation and transparency (program). (Discourse): Highly Protectionist (pensions, national industry (mining, energy, transportation), farming; increasing the healthcare budget; railway infrastructure development
<b>2. Rights and freedoms</b>	Transparency of parliamentary sessions (radio), media freedom (no condemnation of journalists)	Transparency of parliamentary sessions (Facebook live), media freedom, 5G networks, against WhatsApp restrictions
<b>3. Social dimension/ Charity</b>	Yes (support for nursing homes, poor children, churches, free medication for Bessarabia, support for the orphans of the Revolution)	Yes. Private donations (building a party hospital) ‘give and you shall receive’
<b>4. Other policy interests</b>	Support for cultural heritage; green politics (against deforestation; stopping demographic decline in rural areas; tech-industry development; support for army and war veterans	Against COVID restrictions; support for cultural heritage, green politics (against deforestation), bio farming and green industries development, support for IT sector; stopping the demographic decline; support for war veterans

Source: Based on the analysis of the transcripts of the party presidents’ parliamentary speeches and party programs of PRM (1992) and AUR (2000).

Despite divergent ideological self-identification, discursive similarities between the two factions are striking. Programmatic overlaps cover the RRP features but include broader policy appeals (Table 2). Economically, the two

parties endorsed symmetrical platforms. While AUR stands for a right-oriented preference for a free market-centered night-watchman state (as opposed to PRM, which identified social-economically with the center-left), all of the AUR president's speeches called for state intervention, the protection of national industry, and safety nets for working people left behind. The provision of social assistance for those in need, the increase of pension benefits, and increased budget appropriations to the healthcare sector were on the agenda of both parties.

State aid for farming was a shared priority as well. Complementarily, both parties adopted an agenda advocating the importance of charity work and a strategy of 'leading by example.' PRM recurrently organized public events surrounding its charity work – helping the orphans of the Romanian Revolution, supporting nursing homes, etc. Similarly, AUR transformed charity-focused social campaigns into a salient political issue (and publicity bonanza). For example, AUR declares that the party saved all the state subsidies (which all parties receive by law, on par with parliamentary representation). The party publicly advocates a change in the party finance law that would empower parties to discretionarily use such subventions for social work (e.g., building a hospital). Similar policy innovations emerged in both cases: protecting cultural heritage and endorsing green politics means safeguarding national resources (*see* deforestation).

Divergences between the programs/political claims remain marginal to date and linked to context-related issues. Both parties rallied for freedom of speech due to the attacks on their radical viewpoints and media isolation. Instead, the two parties advocated for the importance of the transparency of parliamentary work to disseminate their activity. PRM, used as the primary vector of communication in the party newspaper (*România Mare*), focused on the freedom of the press and accused external pressures of being placed on mainstream media content. Conversely, AUR, which is intensively social-media driven, endorses broader appeals such as Facebook live-streaming of parliamentary activity, fighting WhatsApp restrictions and the 5G networks, etc. AUR also focused more on the Romanian diaspora (part of their electoral success was due to the diaspora vote – Ulceluse 2020). At the height of the Covid crisis, the party leaders took vitriolic positions in response to restrictions. According to national surveys, anti-vaccination and street rallies against restrictions boosted the party support during the COVID crisis. They placed AUR in January 2022 high in the polls, with a voting intention of 20% (INSCOP January 2022).

### **The rear-view mirror of nostalgia and its political mechanisms**

At first glance, both PRM and AUR (have) favored a type of restorative nostalgia referring to ‘Greater Romania’-style nationalism. Nationalist positions from the interwar period served as a proxy and legitimator. PRM claimed an ideological continuity with the nationalist movement of Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), a well-known historian and politician who launched the openly anti-Semitic Nationalistic Democratic Party (1910), only to fall prey to the Iron Guard. PRM (Corneliu Vadim Tudor) complemented the historical referencing with the whitewashing of Marshall Ion Antonescu, convicted and executed as a war criminal, accountable for numerous crimes against the Jews and the Roma (Kaplan 2016). The party rebranded-reinvented Antonescu as a national hero who fought for the ‘lost cause’ of country unity against the Soviet regime (for Bessarabia, for unity, meaning that, according to them, he was in reality a protector of the Jews from the Holocaust).

Conversely, AUR portrayed itself as a progeny of the Romanian revolution, claiming an anti-communist identity without assuming any pre-communist ideological-historical lineage. Some of its leaders’ press declarations also pointed to the heroic roles of Ion Antonescu or presented Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (the head of the interwar fascist movement) (Clark 2020; Gherghina 2022) favorably. However, as this section will argue – such connections to the interwar past are – at least in part – misleading, as the form of nostalgia conveyed by political speeches refers more to the socialist views on the Romanian national identity.

PRM adopted since its inception ambiguous positions vis-à-vis the communist past. Starting with the first PRM Congress, Corneliu Vadim Tudor proposed an interpretation of the Romanian nation in the continuity of communist ideology. The ‘glorious’ past did not stop in 1945, as Romania was entitled to be proud of ‘gaining Soviet respect when Soviets were in their most expansionist phase.’ The ‘evil part of’ communism, the age of terror, was, in their reading, a mark of foreign imposition. Ethnic minorities – particularly the Jews – were to blame for the repressive regime of the 50s. This interpretation overlaps with the political imagery of Romanian communism’s ideological turn in the mid-60s and early 70s. Nicolae Ceausescu’s ‘July Theses’ reshaped the official communist party discourse in line with the Chinese and North Korea’s examples, a process often dubbed in the literature as the ‘mini-cultural revolution’ (Petrescu 2009). The symbolic-ideological turn to nationalism referred to the effort of ‘displacing a rhetoric of communist internationalism with one of the national values’ (Verdery 1991: 103). While national identity, as portrayed during the 1970s and 1980s, reveals continuities with interwar nationalistic movements (Verdery 1991; Chen 2003; Korkut 2006), the view on

the past and the central tropes Corneliu Vadim Tudor had employed in his post-communist speeches followed the pre-1989 ideological realignment closely. The Iron Guard's assassination of Nicolae Iorga or Antonescu's opposition to the Iron Guard already elicited mixed historical accounts during the nationalistic phase of the communist regime (Boia 1997). PRM's historical narratives referred to the interwar period, viewed through the late-communist historiographic lens. This is the reason why the literature on RRP recorded PRM as an atypical case in the region, bringing to life elements of socialist nostalgia immediately after the fall of communism (Buštíková 2018: 802; Tismăneanu 1998).

Economic issues remained secondary to the symbolic, ideological form of nationalism. In PRM's view, post-communism rapidly brought the decline of the glorious past, notably the extinction of national industry. In Tudor's speeches, the history of communist enterprises is restored through personal recollections from the 1980s. A vast majority of Corneliu V. Tudor's addresses enhanced, through different means, forms of socialist nostalgia using the basic themes and mythological structures (Boia 1997). The 'richness of the country,' 'the granary of Europe,' 'the creative genius of the people,' 'the glory of the homeland factories,' 'a country endowed by God with riches still untapped,' but also 'the misfortune of our location at the crossroads of great powers' replicate recognizably foundational late-socialist themes. Throughout the 1980s, schoolbooks and the Romanian national television program routinely amplified such frames of reference (Zamfira 2022). The PRM's rhetorical strategies to promote anticorruption relied on a similar approach. The description of corrupt profiles of the political opponents employed communist tropes and nostalgia. To give just one example, the mayor of Bucharest, Crin Halaicu, was a *belfer* [wealthy person] hovering on clouds of Kent smoke' 'and left the city in dire straits to spend holidays at the villas in the Prahova Valley' (Kent cigarettes were the prohibitive 'luxury' brand in communist Romania, associated to the members of nomenklatura. In the mass culture, Prahova Valley was the place of holiday gathering for members of nomenklatura). Virtue-related descriptions also use nostalgic tropes. Speaking of a political ally, C.V. Tudor emphasized that 'Mr. Văcăroiu still dresses old-fashion, in his suits from before 1989, and on top of that, he still dares to stay in the neighborhood of Militari, in a (communist-era) block of flats, in an apartment on the ninth floor.'

Compared to PRM, AUR seems like a brand-new party, which has nothing to do with socialism/communism recollections. The faction openly accused communism and routinely styled itself modern and even hip (e.g., extensively using social media: Facebook, Tik-Tok, WhatsApp, etc.). Nevertheless, the new party substantially mimics and mirrors PRM's rhetoric through different



means. The reference to the socialist past indirectly glorifies the independent tendencies of the past. In most cases, official party messages shun direct forms of nostalgia, hinting at the previous regime's positive sides ('our parents and grandparents left us a debt-free country. Today, we borrow a billion per hour'). The portrayed political decline would be a post-communist systemic failure. Nostalgia-infused discourses seasoned with sovereigntist themes suggest that economic decline is compared not to the interwar but rather to the late 1980s ('I was a child, I was young in the 1990s when the IMF came and dictated the foreclosure of the Romanian industry. Then I could not say 'no' to the loss of national sovereignty and the destruction of the Romanian economy'). In the first year and a half in Parliament, AUR's President, George Simion, systematically focused on bringing to the parliamentary agenda emotionally charged themes related to the national industrial loss allegedly resulting from destructive politics and the hidden interests of foreign companies. Against the background of energy price liberalization, AUR primarily addressed the national energy sector. Simion recurrently quoted in his parliamentary addresses the layoffs at the Crucea Mine, the last uranium mine in Romania, the closure of Termo Mintia, the protests at the Băița Română Mine generated by the government's refusal to authorize the operation, the Târgoviște Special Steel Plant, the bankruptcy of the company Romelectro, the protests of the miners from Gorj and the Oltenia Energy Complex. His message is simple and related to the national discourse: the destruction of the national economy should be stopped, or else 'today's miners, who still have their health and strength, will end up asparagus pickers in Germany. If you will, this is the curtains falling on an exhausted political class.' The reference to an imminent decline of the national industry chimes with some PRM narratives. Following scripts from the 1990s, AUR also adopted PRM-like types of denunciation: historical references and the original names of the factories restore the image of a grand industry now defunct: 'Last week, I was in Buzău where there is a Romanian plant. From the foreign steel industry to the so-called Russian investors, we managed to recover at least that rolling mill, the former 'Ductil').

Furthermore, if the official narration of the communist past has changed or was cleared of ambiguities, the substantialist view of the nation stays untouched. Mobilizing the cultural Pantheon of Romanian nationalism remained the primary stylistic strategy in sketching the party-political imaginary. Mihai Eminescu's works (national poet - 1850-1889 - that PRM amply cited as well) and the poetry of Adrian Păunescu (a communist-era cultural mandarin) are brothers in arms, used interchangeably for endorsing nationalistic claims. The latter poet, also described as Ceaușescu 'Court Minstrel,' was well-known during state socialism as the founder and the organizer of *Cenacul Flacăra* (*Song of Romania Festival* – bringing to life and

amplifying nationalistic themes in the palatable form of pop-/folk- culture (Verdery 1991). Similarly, the nationalistic lyrics of the folk musician Tudor Gheorghe, criticizing the political present while praising glorified predecessors, constitute a reference point. The instrumental value of the nationalist imaginary is apparent. And yet, erroneous references suggest a shallow interest in the cultural dimension of nationalism. For instance, in a Euro-critical discourse, George Simon falsely attributed to Mihai Eminescu (the canonical Romanian 19th-century poet) the lyrics of an obscure (and yet unpublished) poet, Marian Bamboi, who wrote a poem entitled *Eminescu is rolling in his grave*: ‘Our great Eminescu had a poem that fits very, very well with the tally of our vote today. Yours, because we are not voting to increase the budget allocation to Brussels, from the Romanians’ money...’ Eminescu’s lyrics were: ‘For years and years you have fallen into the abyss, / Nothing works for you anymore / / Shame on you forever / That you betrayed your ancestors / you would be related to the Huns!’

Unlike PRM, AUR prefers looser nostalgic appeals, and the reference to the communist period is indirectly valued as a time of growth. It appears thus that at least for the time being, AUR is not the sole result of a hard conservative turn. Instead, socialist nostalgia is present in a filtered version of the Romanian nationalism of the early 1990s. It would thus not be by chance that since its parliamentary entry, AUR has particularly emphasized ‘leftist,’ i.e., protectionist economic proposals.

The political choice to rely on emotional appeals has created feelings of identification with a more recent past. The political will of rejecting communism but transplanting part of its rhetoric is (at least partially) based on instrumentalism. Unlike PRM’s case, there are no elite continuities with the communist past. Over time, around half of Romanian citizens have had a positive outlook of the communist regime (53% of the population in 2006, 61% in 2010, 44% in 2014, decreasing to 40% in 2018) and genuine, active liberals/democrats remain few and far between. However, the nostalgia-infused meaning structures once settled in AURs repertoire filled in the ideological vacuum of the newly invented party. As in the case of other political identity-based political narratives, the images of the past are continuously rebuilt and adjusted to fit the new political challenges.

## Conclusions

My paper shows - differently from Mudde and Kaltwasser (2018) - that the ideational eclecticism of the RRP is not simply the result of a mixture of populist appeals and other ideologies. Conversely, *weaponizing nostalgia is conditioning broader RRP programmatic proposals*, and the collective memory

politicization inflicts on meta-programmatic agendas. This is not to acknowledge recent evolutions in the RRP but to include the distorted/amnesic recollections of the past as the primary facilitator. Investigating the particularities of the 'chosen past' could explain the wide variation in the RRP discourse (regionally clustered) and, in some cases, the blurred line between left- and right populism leading to theoretical and analytical hurdles. However, as my case study suggests, it is not the restorative nostalgia per se that infuses the RRP discourse. The two Romanian parties in this study show that *declared claimed* political lineage had no significant consequence in articulating *specific policy proposals*. While historical elements from all walks of time often emerge in political discourses, the hidden forms of nostalgia -- factoring in socialist mystifications of the past-- are more useful in the overall understanding of the ideological eclecticism of the Romanian RRP.

Over two decades ago, Vladimir Tismăneanu (1998) warned against the future trajectory of the post-socialist democracies, arguing that: 'Given the strength of the anti-Enlightenment, ethnocentric forces in the pre-communist period, and how they were coopted and even officially encouraged in many of these countries during the late communist stage, it is reasonable to fear that their latter-day revival is a grim omen for the future' (1998:4-5). Such 'fantasies of salvation' are metamorphous in nature and fed by the distorted memory lanes of historical recollection. Do such accounts of the Romanian RRP justify downplaying the role of nostalgia? My study suggests that both parties used as an example in my research are heavily indebted to various forms of diffuse nostalgia. They reconstruct a political agenda and programmatic ends heavily inspired by the past. However, the nostalgia the two parties have used is neither typical nor straightforward. In the case of AUR, 30 years after the creation of PRM, the quasi-automatic forms of replication of the political divisions have maintained the 'rear-view mirror' approach (McLuhan 1997) by projecting hidden continuities with more recent past experiences. The new time reference became the beginning of post-communism, following PRM's success story recipe. Contemporary RRP eclecticism could be linked to the socialist period; however, political polarization surrounding the RRP agenda is a mediated process. From this perspective, AUR is 'right' to assume a post-communist identity, as the party's rhetoric passes through the 'fantasies of salvation' of the early 1990s.

#### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

*Alexandra Alina Iancu is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest, teaching courses on Comparative Politics, European Political Parties, and Democratization. She holds a joint Ph.D. in political science from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the University of Bucharest. Main research interests include democratic backsliding in the ECE, party politics, and the history of (anti-corruption).*

#### REFERENCES

- ALBERTAZZI, D. – McDONNELL, D., 2008: Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre. In Albertazzi, D. - McDonnell, D., (eds.): *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 251. ISBN: 978-0-230-01349-0.
- ASAVEI, A., 2020: *Art, Religion, and Resistance in (Post-)Communist Romania: Nostalgia for Paradise Lost*. London: Palgrave. 309. ISBN: 978-3-030-56255-7.
- ASAVEI, A., 2022: Radical right populist entrepreneurs and the use of religious representations through popular culture: George Becali as the ‘Saviour of Romania’. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 25(1): 43-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549420973205>.
- BANKOV, P. – GHERGHINA, S. – SILAGADZE, N., 2021: Walking the walk or just talking the talk? VMRO-BND’s efforts to become a mass party. *Politics and Governance* 9(4): 307-316. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4562>
- BEAUZAMY, B., 2013: Explaining the rise of the Front National to electoral prominence: Multi-faceted or contradictory models. In Wodak, R. - Khosravinik, M. - Mral, B., (eds.): *Right-wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury. 368. ISBN: 9781780932453.
- BETZ, H.-G. – JOHNSON, C., 2004: Against the current-stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9(3): 311– 327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263546>.
- BETZ, H.-G., 2018: *The Radical Right Populism*. in Rydgren, J. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*. Oxford: OUP. 734. ISBN: 978-0190274559.
- BOIA, L., 1997: *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*. Bucharest: Humanitas. ISBN:978-973-50-5395-6.
- BOLBORICI, A. M. – SOREA, D., 2021: The Anti-Communist Resistance in the Făgăraș Mountains (Romania) as a Challenge for Social Memory and an Exercise of Critical Thinking. *Sociológia - Slovak Sociological Review, Sociológia* 53 (3):266-286. <https://doi.org/10.31577/sociologia.2021.53.3.10>
- BOLLEYER, N., 2013: *New Parties in Old Party Systems Persistence and Decline in Seventeen Democracies*. Oxford: OUP. ISBN: 9780199646067.
- BOYM, S., 2001: *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books. ISBN: 978-0465007080.

- BUŠTÍKOVÁ, L. – KITSCHOLT, H., 2009: The radical right in post-communist Europe. *Comparative perspectives on legacies and party competition. Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 42 (4): 459-483. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2009.10.007>.
- BUŠTÍKOVÁ, L., 2018: The Radical Right in Eastern Europe in Rydgren, J. (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*. Oxford: OUP. 734. ISBN: 978-0190274559.
- CAMPANELLA, E. – DASSÙ, M., 2019: *Anglo Nostalgia: The Politics of Emotion in a Fractured West*. New York: OUP. ISBN: 9780190068936.
- CLARK, R., 2020: Is fascism returning to Romania? Online: <https://www.open-democracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/fascism-returning-romania/>
- CHEN, C., 2003: The Roots of Illiberal Nationalism in Romania: A Historical Institutional Analysis of the Leninist Legacy. *East European Politics and Societies* 17(2): 166-201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325403017002002>
- DEMERTZIS, N., 2006: Emotions and Populism. In: Clarke, S. - Hoggett, P. - Thompson, S. (eds.): *Emotion, Politics and Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 192. ISBN: 978-1-4039-9681-7.
- DEMERTZIS, N., 2020: *The Political Sociology of Emotions. Essays on Trauma and Ressentiment*. London: Routledge. 247. ISBN 9780815380733
- ELÇI, E., 2022: Politics of Nostalgia and Populism: Evidence from Turkey. *British Journal of Political Science* 52(2): 697-714. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000666>
- GALLAGHER, T., 2005: *Theft of a Nation: Romania after Communism*. London: Hurst. 446. ISBN: 978-1850657163.
- GASTON, S. – HILHORST, S., 2018: At home in one's past. Nostalgia as a Cultural and Political Force in Britain, France, and Germany. <https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/NostalgiaInEuropeReport.pdf>
- GERRING, J., 2007: Is there a (viable) crucial-case method? *Comparative Political Studies* 40(3): 231-253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006290784>
- GHERGHINA, S. – MISCOIU, S., 2014: A Rising Populist Star: The Emergence and Development of the PPDD in Romania. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 22 (2):181-197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965156X.2014.959325>
- GHERGHINA, S. – MISCOIU, S., 2022: Faith in a New Party: The Involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 2020 Election Campaign. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2022.2080669>
- GHERGHINA, S., 2022: Romania. Still on the Fringes? Far-Right Parties and Identity in Romania. In *The Many Faces of the Far Right in the Post-Communist Space. A Comparative Study of FarRight Movements and Identity in the Region*. CBEES. State of the Region Report, Södertörn University.
- HANSEN, L. – WILLIAMS, M. C., 1999: The Myths of Europe: Legitimacy, Community and the 'Crisis' of the EU. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 37(2): 233-249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00161>

- KAPLAN, R. D., 2016: The Antonescu's Paradox. Hitler's Romanian Ally led to a barbaric regime. *Foreign Policy*. Online: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/05/the-antonescu-paradox-romania-world-war-ii-hitler/>
- KINNVALL C. – SVENSSON, T., 2022: Exploring the populist 'mind': Anxiety, fantasy, and everyday populism. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 24(3):526-542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221075925>
- KORKUT, U., 2006: Nationalism versus internationalism: The roles of political and cultural elites in interwar and communist Romania. *Nationalities Papers* 34(2): 131-155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990600617698>
- KRASTEV, I. – HOLMES, S., 2020: *The light that failed, Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy*. Pegasus Books. 256. ISBN: 978-1643133690.
- IANCU, A., 2018: Questioning Anticorruption In Post-Communist Contexts: Romanian MPs from commitment to contestation. *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society* 66(3): 392–417. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2018-0030>
- JING, E., – AHN, Y.-Y., 2021: Characterizing partisan political narrative frameworks about COVID-19 on Twitter. *EPJ Data Science* 10, Article number 53 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-021-00308-4>.
- McLUHAN, M. – ZINGRONE, E. – ZINGRONE, F. (eds.), 1997: *Essential McLuhan*. London: Routledge. 416. ISBN: 978-0415162456.
- MORINI, M., 2020: *Lessons from Trump's Political Communication. How to Dominate the Media Environment*. London: Palgrave. 126. ISBN: 978-3-030-39010-5.
- MUDDE, C., 2004: The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 541-563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.
- MUDDE, C., 2007: *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University. ISBN: 9780511492037.
- MUDDE, C. – KALTWASSER, C. R., 2017: *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford: OUP. 136. ISBN: 978-0190234874.
- MUDDE, C. – KALTWASSER C. R., 2018: Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda. *Comparative Political Studies* 51(13):1667-1693. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018789490>
- MUNGIU, A., 2018: Romania's Italian-Style Anticorruption Populism. *Journal of Democracy* 29(3): 104-116. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0048>
- NIEMEYER, K., 2014: Introduction: Media and Nostalgia. in Niemeyer, K. (eds): *Media and Nostalgia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137375889\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137375889_1).
- NOROCEL, C. O., 2011: Heteronormative Constructions of Romanianness: A Genealogy of Gendered Mataphors in Romanian Radical-Right Populism 2000-2009. *Debate: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 19(1-2):453-470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965156X.2011.626121>.

- ÖZYÜREK, E., 2006: Nostalgia for the Modern. State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey. Duke University Press. 240. ISBN: 978-0822338956.
- PANEBIANCO, A., 1988: Political Parties: Organization and Power. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 336. ISBN: 978-0521314015.
- PETRESCU, D., 2009: Building the nation, instrumentalizing nationalism: Revisiting the Romanian National Communism, 1956-1989. *Nationalities Papers*. 37(4):523-544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990902985728>.
- PICKERING, M. – KEIGHTLEY, E., 2006: The Modalities of Nostalgia. *Current Sociology* 54(6): 919-941. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392106068458>.
- PIRRO, A., 2016: The Populist Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe: Ideology, Impact, and Electoral Performance. London: Routledge. 222. ISBN 9780415791205.
- PRIDHAM, G., 2007: Romania and EU membership in comparative perspective: A post-accession compliance problem? – The case of political conditionality. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 8(2): 168-188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15705850701322491>.
- POPESCU, L. – VESALON, L., 2022: “They all are the red plague”: anti-communism and the Romanian radical right populists. *East European Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2022.2086862>.
- RAY, D. G., – MACKIE D. M., – SMITH, E. R., 2014: Intergroup emotion: self-categorization, emotion, and the regulation of intergroup conflict. In: von Scheve, C., Salmela, M. (eds.): *Collective Emotions. Perspectives from Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 480. ISBN: 0199659184.
- REISIGL, M. – WODAK, R., 2009: The Discourse Historical Approach. In: Wodak, R.- Meyer, M. (eds): *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 272. ISBN: 9780761961543.
- SALMELA M. – von SCHEVE C., 2017: Emotional roots of right-wing political populism. *Social Science Information* 56(4): 567-595. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018417734419>.
- STAN, L., – TURCESCU, L., 2000: The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-Communist Democratization. *Europe-Asia Studies* 52(8): 1467-1488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713663138>.
- STAUTH, G. – TURNER, B., 1988: Nietzsche's Dance: Resentment, Reciprocity and Resistance in Social Life. 244. Oxford: Blackwell. ISBN: 978-0631154075.
- STANLEY, B., 2008: The Thin Ideology of Populism. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(1): 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310701822289>.
- STRÁTH, B., 2005: Methodological and Substantive Remarks on Myth, Memory, and History in the Construction of a European Community. *German Law Journal* 6(2): 255-271. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2071832200013626>.
- SULLIVAN, A., 2021: The Reactionary Temptation. Available from <https://sites.nd.edu/world-politics2021/the-reactionary-temptation/>

- TAGGART, P., 2004: Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9(3): 269–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263528>.
- TISMĂNEANU, V., 1998/2009: *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*. Princeton University Press. 256. ISBN: 978-0691144382.
- TURNER, J. H., 2014: The evolution of Human Emotions. In: Stets, J.E. -Turner, J.H. (eds.): *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions: Volume II*. New York: Springer. ISBN 978-94-017-9129-8.
- STETS, J. E. – TURNER, J. H. (eds.) 2006: *Handbook of the sociology of emotions*. New York: Springer. 657. ISBN 978-0-387-30715-2.
- STETS, J. E. – TURNER, J. H. (eds.) 2014: *Handbook of the sociology of emotions*. Vol II. New York: Springer. 579. ISBN: 978-94-017-9130-4.
- ULCELUSE, M., 2020: How the Romanian diaspora helped put a new far-right party on the political map. Available online: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/12/17/how-the-romanian-diaspora-helped-put-a-newfar-right-party-on-the-political-map/>
- VERDERY, K., 1991: *National Ideology under socialism. Identity and cultural politics in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkley: the University of California Press. 231. ISBN:0520072162.
- WODAK, R. – FORCHTNER, B., 2014: Embattled Vienna 1683/2010: right-wing populism, collective memory and the fictionalization of politics. *Visual Communication* 13(2):231-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357213516720>.
- WODAK, R. – BOUKALA, S., 2015: European identities and the revival of nationalism in the European Union: a discourse-historical approach. *Journal of Language and Politics* 14(1): 87-109. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.14.1.05>
- WODAK, R., 2015: *The Politics of Fear. What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage 2015. 256. ISBN: 978-144624700.
- ZAMFIRA, A., 2022: The Romanian Television (RTV) Program in German in the Context of the National Communist Regime's Minority and Cultural Policies (1969-1985). *Studia politica* XXII (1): 123-146.