

# A b s t r a c t s

Oliver Jens Schmitt  
One hundred years of solitude  
Fundamental features of the history of Romania

Greater Romania was created in 1918 from the hereditary mass of three empires. Throughout all the regime changes, the political elites have pursued the goal of creating a homogeneous state and society. To achieve this aim, they made use of an uncompromising form of ethno-nationalism. The elites pursued a policy of centralist, authoritarian rule. This authoritarianism is essentially a consequence of the country's precipitous, and later aborted, departure towards a modern mass society. It was supported by the secret services, the church, the army and the Academy of Sciences. These institutions survived throughout the entire period. However, in 2019, democracy has better chances of prevailing than ever before in the history of Romania.

Hans-Christian Maner  
Marginality and centrality  
Concepts of Europe in Romania's historiography

For Romanian historians, "Europe" has been at the heart of any reflection on their community's role in the world since the dawn of the modern age. Their works show in which way the desire to belong to "Europe" as well as attempts to distance oneself from "Europe" characterises the country's self-image. "Europe" has an influence on nation building and the relationship between sovereignty and integration. However, Europe is not a fixed entity. Its meaning changes in relation to space and time.

Constantin Iordachi  
Democracy in Romania  
Historic roots and the latest development

Romania is often seen as being a special case, where democracy has particularly shallow roots. However, on closer inspection, it emerges that there have by all means been liberal tendencies in Romania's history. Over the past 200 years, Romania has moved with the flow of events in Europe – from the introduction of the constitutional monarchy in the 19th century to the mass democracy of the 20th.

Free elections were still being held in Romania in 1937, when dictatorships dominated in most of the other states of central-eastern Europe. After that, the fate of the country was determined by various dictators. However, the democratic tradition has not been lost. Over the past ten years, democracy in Romania has experienced a notable upturn and has defied all attempts to quell it.

**Harald Roth**  
**The German minority**  
A historical and present-day perspective

The history of the Germans in Romania can be traced back to the 12th century. After Greater Romania was founded in 1918, the German minority consisted of around 714,000 people. Unlike the Germans in most eastern-central European countries, those living in Romania supported the new state. While the Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia were expelled after the Second World War, in Romania, they were permitted to stay. Under the Ceausescu regime, increased disenfranchisement, the restriction of national freedoms and the precarious supply situation led an increasing number of Germans to emigrate, however, with way over 200,000 people moving to the Federal Republic of Germany. This exodus weakened social and cultural life for those who remained. Thanks to a modern social infrastructure and international cooperation, the situation within the German minority is now very good.

**Mariana Hausleitner**  
**Romania and the Holocaust**  
Ion Antonescu as the destroyer and saviour of Jews

During the 1990s, some Romanian politicians and journalists demanded that Ion Antonescu, the “State Leader” from 1940 to 1944, should be rehabilitated. Antonescu had been executed as a war criminal in 1946. Now, some historians were claiming that in 1942, he had not turned over Romania’s Jews to the SS. Yet previously, tens of thousands of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina had been killed after he had ordered them to be deported. During the Romanian occupation of Transnistria, over a hundred thousand Ukrainian Jews had been murdered. Serious academic research into these violent excesses did not begin in Romania until after 2003.

**Dragoş Petrescu**  
**Violent revolution, paradox consequences**  
The overthrow in Romania in 1989 and its legacy

The essence, progress and outcome of the “Romanian revolution” still raises questions today. Who bears responsibility for the thousands of people who were killed or injured? Does the term “revolution” apply at all, in fact, when a communist regime

was overthrown, but at the same time, a high degree of continuity in terms of personnel and institutions remained intact? The upheaval in Romania had paradox consequences. While the transition to democracy may have been more difficult than in Poland and Hungary, unlike in those countries, in Romania, no national populist, anti-European, authoritarian consensus emerged between the government and the people. For Romanian society, 1989 marked the beginning of a new protest culture against continued rule by corrupt, authoritarian coteries.

## Politics, Economy, and Society

Reinhard Veser

### Layers of conflict

The case of Dragnea, politics and the law

Since the PSD party won the election of December 2016, Romania has experienced an exacerbation of the conflict that flared up during the early 2000s with the judicial reforms in preparation for EU accession. The powerful onslaughts on the constitutional state by the government are an indirect indication of a positive development: they are a response to successes in establishing an independent judiciary, which is also taking action against powerful individuals in the fight against corruption. These successes were made possible by an ongoing conflict between the government and the president. Judges and state attorneys have been forced against their will into taking a political stance as a result of the continued dispute surrounding the judiciary – including many people in society, who have come to regard them as a type of substitute opposition in light of the lack of political alternatives.

Gábor Hunya

### A marathon with stumbling blocks

Growth and economic policy in Romania

Romania's domestic economy has grown significantly since it joined the EU in 2007. The country has come closer to the average level among EU states, although it has not reached it yet. To do so, the state must implement a better economic policy and ensure that the environment becomes more stable. In the past decade, a pro-cyclical fiscal policy has intensified crises rather than mitigating them. In addition, the institutions remain weak. The upturn resulted mainly from transfers from the EU, foreign investment and an expansive fiscal policy. Romania should invest in infrastructure and in training workers, and should maintain the rule of law and democracy.

**Dietmar Müller**  
**Farewell to the “eternal farmer”**  
Agriculture and rural regions in Romania

One-third of agricultural businesses in the European Union are Romanian. Most of these are small-scale and serve as subsistence farms. Larger operations produce mainly grain and sunflowers. Romania is the largest exporter of grain in the EU. Historically, the rural regions were a guarantee of stability for the ruling regime. Since the rural population was dependent on the goodwill of the bureaucracy, the farmers are easy to manipulate in elections. Today, the number of people working in agriculture is decreasing. Rural regions are beset by structural problems such as over-ageing and migration. In the past, the rural population moved to the cities. In recent years, however, they have mainly decided to leave the country to work elsewhere, initially as seasonal labourers, and then as permanent employees.

**Tamás Kiss**  
**Hungarians in Romania**  
Demographics, Romanian minorities policy and national policy in Budapest

The number of Hungarians living in Romania has decreased sharply over the last 20 years. The two main causes are migration and low birth rates. In addition, an increasingly large portion of this group, which used to dominate urban civic society in Transylvania, has become socially marginalised. This is also a result of Romanian minorities policy. While this policy places no limit on the social and political self-organisation of the Hungarian population, it does not grant this group any statutory right to participate in decision-making. The Hungarian politicians have therefore embedded themselves in the dominant clientelist system of patronage in order to divert resources to the areas settled by Hungarians. However, this model has come under pressure for several years. The government of Viktor Orbán in Budapest has not only granted Hungarian citizenship to many Hungarians living in Romania, but has also succeeded in incorporating the Hungarian politicians in Transylvania into its own clientele network.

**Robert Santa**  
**A population on the move**  
Migration, demographics and the consequences

Romania's population figures have been subject to intense fluctuation since the Second World War. After Ceausescu's rigid family policies forced a sharp increase in the population, the numbers declined steeply after 1989. One key reason for this was a very high level of emigration. This initially relieved the burden on the employment market, but is now causing considerable economic and social problems. For

several years, the country has attempted to counteract this development. In individual areas, migration has been having a positive effect, however. Overall, it is likely to have significant consequences for a long time to come.

**Sorina Soare**  
**Swan song or new beginning**  
On populism in Romania

Eastern Europe's post-communist countries provided an ideal breeding ground for the development of populism. Romania stood out as a test laboratory. Populist parties came to power in the parliament earlier in Romania than elsewhere. Peoples' tribunes set the "people" against the "elite" and mobilised their voters with nationalist bluster. They disparage the principles of liberal democracy such as the law, the division of power and civil and minority rights. However, after the elections of 2008, no more populist parties were represented in the parliament. The reasons for this are ambivalent. On the one hand, socio-economic changes have caused the voter base to shrink. On the other, the centrist parties have incorporated the issues espoused by the populists as their own, and in so doing, have absorbed their members. It would be premature to claim that populism has been defeated.

**Codru Vrabie**  
**Don't fight it – prevent it!**  
The wrong way to handle corruption in Romania

Corruption is an endemic phenomenon in Romania. It is only since the mid-2000s that serious attempts have been made to fight it. This was due solely to pressure from the EU prior to Romania's succession. During the 2010s, corruption was increasingly fought through penal law. This is the wrong approach, since it leads to an ongoing political conflict that prevents the problem from being tackled at the root. This is reflected not least by the battle between the government and the DNA, the state prosecution service, which has damaged the independence of the judiciary. Transparent legislation, a limitation of the omnipotence of the executive, better funding of the local authorities and ongoing training for all employees and public servants are paving the way for a society in which the law is not available for purchase.

**Bogdan Iancu**  
**Rashomon in Bucharest**  
The fight against corruption as a battle zone

Fighting corruption in Romania is a highly contentious issue. Often, it is presented as the universal key to resolving the wide range of structural challenges that Romania faces. However, this is not only a gross simplification, but also gives rise to a serious of other problems. Moral categories are instrumentalised, social divides are

being deepened, and terms such as “the rule of law” and “the independence of the judiciary” are used as weapons in the fight against political opponents. To date, those on the centre-right have been the main beneficiaries of this approach. It is not only the Social Democratic Party that has been discredited, but the left-wing *per se*. The EU institutions and a large section of the western press are knowingly or unknowingly contributing to this development.

**Dan Lazea**

**Urgently needed**

Romania and the European Union

Romania’s path to membership of the European Union was a difficult one. The initial situation in 1989 was more complex than in the eastern-central European states, and it was only much later that democracy and the rule of law began to be established. That this was made possible is largely thanks to the European Union. Romania benefitted significantly from its entry into the EU in 2007. However, some fundamental conflicts remain unresolved. In dealing with politicians who are worried to lose their privileges, Romanian society urgently needs the support of Brussels. In its turn, the Romanian electorate has expressed a pro-European stance in the European parliamentary elections in 2019, which the EU urgently needs at a time when national populist movements are on the rise.

**Cristian Vasile**

**A national church in disguise**

The Romanian Orthodox Church and the political arena

During the communist era, the relationship between church and state was characterised by collaboration and conformism. After the regime collapsed, the church leaders pursued a “policy of forgetting”. They assigned almost no importance to processing what had happened in the past. According to its constitution, Romania is a secular, confessionally neutral state. 86 percent of the population is Orthodox. In effect, politicians implicitly grant the Romanian Orthodox Church the status of a national church. However, it has not succeeded in asserting its position with regard to socio-ethical issues such as abortion or equal rights for homosexuals.

**Sabina Fati**

**Bosom buddies**

The secret services and politics

Unlike the repressive Ceausescu-Regime, modern Romania is not a secret service state. However, the Securitate throws long shadows. In some cases, the same individuals still hold their posts today. Leading politicians surround themselves with ex-Securitate officers as advisers, or are themselves former members of the secret

services. Worldviews have been retained beyond the upheaval of 1989, such as the notion that the Hungarian minority poses a threat to Romanian statehood. There are no clear dividing lines between politics and the secret services. The domestic secret service in particular has repeatedly involved itself in everyday political affairs. With its intransparent practices, it is undermining the formation of political will, the credibility of the institutions and the principle of free elections.

**Cornel Micu**  
**A contested public sphere**  
Politics and the media in Romania

In Romania, the socio-economic preconditions for the creation of a civic public sphere were lacking until the 20th century. Under the communist regime, the media were pure propaganda instruments. After the upheaval of 1989/1990 and the abolishment of censorship, the media sector flourished and became more professional and pluralistic. In the meantime, it has become dominated by two trends: the spread of social media in the wake of digitalisation and a process of concentration and merging of business and the media. Businesspeople and politicians use the media in their inner political power struggle in order to discredit their opponents and assert their own interests. In doing so, they also benefit from the lack of any constitutional regulation of the media.

**Joachim Pranzl**  
**Political corrective**  
The rise and transformation of civil society in Romania

Since the upheaval of 1989, civil society in Romania has changed dramatically. At first, it hardly existed at all. Around the start of the new millennium, the number of NGOs began to increase, and they became more professional and capable of taking action. In recent years, an increasing number of people have protested against bad governance, corruption, austerity measures and environmental destruction. Mass protests have changed the country. Romanian civil society has become politicised. It benefits from the increased mobility provided by social media and the contribution of a politically mature diaspora that takes its responsibilities seriously. Civil society has become the most important corrective to corrupt policies.

## Music, Literature, Film

**Armin Heinen**

**The art of sarcastic realism**

Notes on political jokes in Romania

Political jokes are offensive, break taboos and go beyond the limits of what people are permitted to say. Political jokes are a reflection of political culture, of those in power and the society of a country. In Romania, jokes made it easier for people to resist the excessive and unreasonable demands made by the dictatorship. However, the functions and consequences of this culture of the joke are ambivalent in nature. In a way, it makes the transition to democracy more difficult. The more recent Romanian political jokes define the deficits of the present as unchangeable national character traits. In so doing, they undermine trust in the ability of the country to change among both those who tell the jokes and their audience. This also applies to rebellion against the government in the form of major demonstrations since 2012. While they put pressure on the political class, moral outrage dominates over the search for political alternatives.

**Valentina Sandu-Dediu**

**National school and new music**

Romanian composers on their path to the modern era

George Enescu gave Romanian music the decisive impulse of the European modern era. However, no contemporaries or successors of equal calibre were available. The communist regime, the ideological and aesthetic constraints of "Socialist Realism" and the isolation of Romania under Nicolai Ceausescu severely restricted composers' artistic freedoms and led to a marginalisation of Romanian musical culture in Europe. Commissioned pieces were imbued with nationalist-communist ideology. After the upheaval of 1989, the music industry and the public turned their backs on Romanian composers, and their works were no longer performed. Thanks to the generation of composers led by Stefan Niculescu, a connection could be made to western models. Today, New Music has a good infrastructure in Romania, with festivals, scholarships and prizes. However, the market for New Music is narrow, erratic and unpredictable.

**Markus Bauer**

**A reflection of change**

Literature and social upheaval in Romania

The Romanian literary scene is characterised by vibrant diversity. Writers such as Gabriela Adameșteanu, Mircea Cărtărescu and Norman Manea stand for a generation for whom experiences of repression, self-censorship and exile became central



themes. Beyond the rigid structures of the Romanian writers' association, with its alimentation system that remains in place today, literature always provided its own opportunities for criticising the system. At the turn of the millennium, a countermovement sprang up in the form of the Club 8, which brought young writers together and focussed on new issues. They wrote in a fresh, provocative and rebellious style. Currently, authors who are part of this movement, such as Lavinia Braniște, are attempting to portray the fundamental changes in Romanian life resulting from the post-revolutionary transition and globalisation.

## Claudia Spiridon Serbu

### A banished curse

#### The Securitate in Romanian film

The terror of the Securitate has left deep scars in Romanian society. However, since the fall of the Ceaușescu regime, it has taken a long time for politicians, legal experts and academics to engage with the crimes committed by the secret service. During this period, the suffering of the victims was portrayed in films, which also told their stories from a personal perspective and in an accusatory tone. During the 2000s, the black-and-white approach was abandoned and the tone of remembrance changed, with the adoption of a more critical view. The "New Wave" films avoided clear assignations of good or evil, and instead offered a space for a more nuanced portrayal of events. In recent years, film directors have portrayed Romania's communist past from a certain distance and without resentment.

## Thomas M. Bohn, Albert Weber

### On the fringes

#### Why Romania is being ignored

Even though Romania has been a member of the European Union since 2007, the country has almost no presence among the German general public. It is ignored by the sciences and research. It is the focus neither of eastern European research nor south-eastern European research. Romanian studies have been almost entirely abolished at German universities. On the one hand, this lack of awareness is due to cultural geographical and historical science traditions. Other reasons are the Romanians' mythical self-identification as part of European Romania and the lack of willingness among the Romanian political elites to promote external cultural relations and to build a stable infrastructure for developing tourism. As a result, "Dracula" – a mythological figure created by the West – has become the most well-known symbol of Romania.