

Hadrian Gorun, *Romania and the Great War. Introduction to a History and Theory of International Relations*, Argonaut and Mega publishing houses, Cluj-Napoca, 2021, 191 p.

As it is known, the First World War is the phenomenon that had the deepest implications on the very dramatic twentieth century. Its impact was devastating and led to disastrous historical events such as the establishment of the communist regime in Russia, the great economic crisis of the interwar period or World War II. Obviously, considering the formation of Greater Romania in 1918, its historical, but especially its national dimension, it enabled the writings of an important number of Romanian historians, thus resulting in a significant proportion of historiographical productions dedicated to the subject. On the other hand, the quantitative side has been prevailing the qualitative side of our historical writings for too long, although, at least lately, some excellent works have appeared, which distinguished themselves primarily by a serene and, consequently, lucid approach. Even in these conditions, still, there was the lack of a study based, from a theoretical view, on the analysis of the concepts specific to the theory of international relations.

In this context, it is worth analyzing the work of the historian Hadrian Gorun, “Romania and the Great War. Introduction to a History and Theory of International Relations”, published by Argonaut and Mega publishing houses this year. In fact, Hadrian Gorun has a long activity dedicated either to the field of international relations or related to the history of Romania in the years of the World War I, an activity materialized in several works such as “International Relations in the Twentieth century: Fundamental Concepts, Schools of Thought, Historical Landmarks” (2011), “Romanian-French Relations in the Years of Romania’s Neutrality (1914-1916)” (2006), “Romania’s Political, Diplomatic and Military Relations with France in the First World War” (2009) or “Romania and the Great War: Between the History and Theory of International Relations (Syntheses)” (2016). However, this work represents, according to the author, “the restructuring, refining and processing of the raw form of all those syntheses”.

I was, therefore, not dealing with a collective paper, which would narrate the tribulations of the Romanian Kingdom during the conflict, but an analysis of its directions of action from the perspective of international relations, which necessitated the use of specific concepts such as foreign policy, national interest, balance of power, regional hegemony, rationality, public opinion and others. Also, such a study needed to be based on a good

knowledge of the main currents of thought, which have shaped the field of international relations. For example, liberalism, which emerged in the interwar period, also known as utopian idealism, and developed in the desolate context of the aftermath of World War II, interpreted the failure of the balance of power through the force policy that characterized international relations between 1815 and 1914. Or, the inherently conflicting nature of nation-states could be avoided by promoting the best interests of humanity, supported by morality. From this point of view, there was an urgent need to give up the old, worn-out and dangerous diplomacy, in favour of an open and especially rational approach, in the system of international relations.

On the other hand, after the World War II, precisely as a reaction to the liberal current, realism developed, an extremely well-articulated concept, which has remained dominant until today. Realist thinkers have emphasized the nature of the anarchic system of the international system, especially in the absence of a world government, which means that international relations can be understood in the context of the distribution of power between states. However, power has always been distributed unequally, which has led to a perpetual competition between states, governed by the selfish, therefore conflicting nature of man. Realists, as it is written, have always been fascinated by conflict. In his massive volume, "Politics between Nations", one of the most influential works ever written in the field of international relations, Hans Morgenthau set out the principles of political realism, to which the others are subsumed: politics is governed by objective laws, rooted in human nature; the main indicator of political realism is the concept of interest, defined in terms of power; this key concept is a universally valid category, but it does not have an immutable fixed meaning; political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action; political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of an individual nation with the moral laws that govern the universe; therefore, there are profound and real differences between political realism and other schools of thought.

By no means could the Marxist current be missing from this list, which obviously emphasizes the social character of the relations of production, while the system of international relations was dominated by capitalist states with obvious imperialist or expansionist aims. Unfortunately, in Romania, historiography has been subordinated to Marxist imperatives. At first, for example, our state was presented, especially in textbooks written by Mihail Roller, as an aggressor, who took advantage of Russia's weakness to annex Bessarabia, a tone which is rather reminiscent of the final note of the summer of 1940. Whereas, during the Ceausescu

regime, Romania's participation in the First World War gained just and glorious values, while Greater Romania was the corollary of the centuries-old struggle for freedom and unity of the Romanian people, a thesis that continued to reverberate in our historiographical space even after the collapse of the communist regime.

Hadrian Gorun interprets Romania's foreign policy actions during the First World War from the perspective of the realistic current. First of all, the Romanian state pursued its national interest, materialized in the annexation of the nearby provinces, which had a significant Romanian population, if not a majority. Even if, as Lucian Boia pointed out, there was a not at all negligible "Germanophile" current, the option balanced towards an Alliance with the Entente, which would have materialized in the incorporation of Transylvania, Bukovina and Banat, under Austro-Hungarian rule. On the other hand, the period of neutrality must be a rational act meant to maximize the potential gains of the Romanian Kingdom, a benevolent neutrality towards the Entente, to which the eyes of the Romanian ruling elite turned more and more. The entry into the war was to take place after obtaining firm guarantees in connection with the territorial clauses, but also at an unfavorable moment from the military point of view of the Central Powers. This is all the more so as Russia has always been reserved in connection with the wishes of the Romanian state: "In other words, Romania was to join the military alliance that would offer it satisfaction, in exchange for participating in the war, in terms of one of the most important aspects, namely that of territorial rewards. The moment of adopting the decision depended on the extent to which the Entente's powers would give a positive response to the Romanian requests, as well as on the promptness of the response."

However, how can Romania's accession to an alliance of which Russia was a part be explained, in the context in which it had long been the most serious threat to Romanian statehood? As Hadrian Gorun points out, according to Stephen Walt, states are inclined to ally with the most threatening power, while ethical sentiments, it must be added, find no place in the process of negotiating the national interest. After all, this has been the case in Austria in modern times. Against Prussian aggression, Austria allied with France before the war of 1756-1763, despite a feisty past between the two states, just as, after Germany became the dominant power in central Europe, it allied with it. The context has always imposed this kind of musters, which should therefore not be surprising. Likewise, the beginning of the First World War found Romania in the camp of the Central Powers, followed by the alliance with the Entente and implicitly Russia and the attack on Austria-Hungary. At the end of the war, Romania was again in

conflict with Russia after the unification with Bessarabia, an act that led to the rupture of diplomatic relations and the confiscation of the Romanian treasury. Alliances are, John Mearsheimer wrote, "only temporary marriages of convenience: today's alliance partner can be tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy can be tomorrow's partner."

The whole attitude of Romania during the First World War must be understood, also, from a realistic perspective. Ionel Brăţianu, who firmly led the foreign policy, wanted for Romania, along with the eventual territorial gains, the acquisition of an international prestige, especially taking into account the previous status of the Kingdom. The author's assessment according to which, following the Peace Treaty of Bucharest in 1913, Romania became a regional hegemon must be nuanced, but it can be correct, in fact. However, the negotiation process between Romania and the Entente was a laborious one, long and marked by numerous promises, but also threats, as it usually happens in the power relations of the states. According to Hadrian Gorun, Romania aimed to pursue a rational foreign policy along with promoting effective diplomacy. The obvious goal was the maximum, but not intangible. Instead, our state was obliged to set its objectives according to its real military capability, correlated with the correct assessment of the potential of the opposing camp. Considering the military disaster of 1916, Romania does not seem to have correctly intuited these aspects or at least a fundamental one, that the Romanian army was almost incapable of coping with the rigors of a modern war. And, in this case, diplomacy, no matter how effective, could not make up for this fundamental shortcoming.

Finally, despite the recovery of the Romanian army through the French military mission led by General Berthelot and the victories of 1917, Romania could not escape capitulation, especially following the Russian defeat. This period was also diplomatically intense, especially as the member states of the Entente pressed for a refusal to sign a separate peace treaty. It is true that this was an express clause of the Convention signed by Romania in the summer of 1916, but the Peace Treaty of Bucharest, although ratified by the Parliament, was not recognized by King Ferdinand. Romania came into conflict again, formally, the day before the armistice was signed, which had some impact. On the other hand, the Allies did not fully comply with their clauses on the delivery of ammunition or the launch of an offensive in the Balkans, while Russian aid was more than oscillating.

Hadrian Gorun's work focuses on the aspects that I have tried to outline above. Starting from the theoretical analysis of the field of international relations, going through the presentation of the main currents

and specific schools of thought, the author deciphers two significant moments from a diplomatic point of view, first of all: the period of Romania's neutrality and the signing of the Bucharest Peace Treaty, bringing into discussion also relatively new aspects or, in any case, less discussed in the specific literature. The whole approach is, in fact, unique, which in itself represents an indisputable historiographical gain. Moreover, it can be unreservedly appreciated that the author managed to write a deeply necessary study with meticulousness and seriousness, a study that can only stand out in the multitude of mediocre works dedicated to Romania's participation in the First World War. Hadrian Gorun has the necessary distance of the professional historian in relation to the studied phenomena and, consequently, he shows lucidity and objectivity in a volume that will undoubtedly become a reference. If the history school in Iași offers us Claudiu-Lucian Topor, who wrote two exceptional works on Romania and the period of the First World War, the history school in Cluj does not sit back and proposes Hadrian Gorun and his rigorous interpretation of a decisive sequence for the evolution of Romanians in history.

Without being massive, Hadrian Gorun's work captures exactly the essence of this difficult period in the history of Romania as well as the tribulations of the relevant actors involved. In fact, at the end of the book, the author proposes further developments of some extremely important aspects, such as the issue of supplying Romania between 1915-1917 with war materials and ammunition from abroad, the extent to which the Allies complied with the clauses of the agreement signed with Romania, the preparation of critical editions of documents from the French and / or Romanian military archives, the publication of an anthology of fiction related to the First World War or even an extensive study to capture how the conflict was reflected in important universal literature of the twentieth century. Given the way in which this paper was conceived, these perspectives can only delight both specialists and history lovers.

Frederic Wilhelm (1713-1740), considered the founder of modern Prussia, had important health problems throughout his life, being affected by gout, migraines or cramps. When he became seriously ill again, which would bring him to his end, next to his bed, the mourners sang a verse from a favorite hymn: "I came into the world naked and I will leave it naked." The king awoke from a coma and he replied firmly: "It is not true. I will wear my uniform. ” It seems to me that the Romanian historiography was born empty of content and refused, for the most part, the gala dress for a long time, but it started a few decades ago, not without great difficulties, to wear the uniform, and accordingly to be governed by objectivity and

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scientific seriousness. At least Hadrian Gorun's work fully strengthens this conclusion.

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Michael Questier, *Catholics and Treason - Martyrology, Memory, and Politics in the Post-Reformation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022, 688 p.

An interesting title and a complex topic approached. This is how it could be briefly described Michael Questier's latest book. The academic background of the author comes also to testify the quality of the demarche. Honorary chair at the Centre for Catholic Studies at the Theology Department from University of Durham and former professor of history in the University of London and in other important universities from the English space, the author has already published valuable works on the history of the Catholicism and its specificity in the aforementioned area.

With *Catholics and Treason – Martyrology, Memory and Politics in the Post-Reformation*, released at Oxford University Press in 2022, he comes now to emphasize a topic that was not enough valorised until now by the contemporary research. From the very beginning the author defines the keywords of his investigation (p. IX-XVII) and shows that the martyrdom “*especially when discussed in a Catholic context, has remained highly controversial and, by and large, off limits for genuinely historical discussion*” (p. X). In order to defend his conception, Questier realizes a complex presentation of the historiography of the topic (p. XI), insisting on the influence that authors like Foxe had on it.

Then, the book, segmented in three important parts, come to bring into attention the relationship between martyrdom and Catholics in the English space. From the beginning, the author questions himself about the martyrs trying to say if they were or not martyrs of the Faith (p. 3-21), to bring into attention the image of the Catholic martyrdom in the writings of English Reformation history (p. 23-25) and to link the idea with the construction of martyr narratives (p. 47-74).

Later, in the second part of the book, the discourse goes deeper in the historical area. Therefore, the 4th chapter of the investigation deals with the „Elizabethan Settlement and the Coming of Intolerance (1558–1582)” (p. 77-117), the next one with its application after Campion (p. 119-139), the 6th one with the Catholic martyrs and the political crises from the mid of 1580s (p. 140-178), and the next one with „the Incestuous Bastard Queen Persecutes the Faithful Servants of Christ” (p. 179-228). Later, the conflicts between the Catholic Radicalism and the re-emergence of Catholic loyalism (p. 229-258), different forms of tolerance (p. 259-287) or the appeal to Rome and the struggle for the memory (288-330) come into attention.

The third and the last part of the book deals with aspects like the tolerance and intolerance in England during the reign of king James Vith (p.

3330375, the „mid-Jacobean confessional politics and anti-Popery (p. 376-421), the „Protestant Turn Turns Sour” (p. 422-448), the changes of time and attitude in late Jacobean and Caroline Britain (p. 449-490), the situation of the topic during the Civil War (p. 492-536), and the „Restoration and the Popish Plot” (p. 538-558). The demarche is accompanied also by a rich conclusion entitled: „The Afterlife of the Early Modern English Martyr Tradition” (p. 560-568), a rich list of select bibliography (p. 569-574) and an index (p. 575-658) meant to be an useful tool for a reader interested in a specific topic.

Bringing into attention a complex topic and offering a history of the Catholic, Reformed and Anglican Churches in England, Michael Questier’s book entitled: *Catholics and Treason - Martyrology, Memory, and Politics in the Post-Reformation*, published by Oxford University Press in 2022 represents not only an useful tool in the understanding of the history of the Christianity in Britain, but also a lecture that enriches any category of reader, inviting him to discover sources, memorials or documents and to see the complexity of a beautiful story.

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Ben Clements, Stephen Bullivant, *Catholics in Contemporary Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022, 261 p.

Scholars with a complex academic background, both Ben Clemens and Stephen Bullivant, come to offer a dynamic analysis of the way how the Catholics are represented, perceived and work in the contemporary Britain. First of them, Associate professor at the „School of History, Politics and International Relations, University of Leicester”, the second, professor of Theology and the Sociology of Religio at „St Mary's University” published previously different research on topics related with the one of the book also previously (see, for example: *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Segmented into 6 big parts and accompanied by two appendixes, the book comes to fill a gap in the British sociology of literature (p. 3) and to offer a well-realized survey that not only provides a radiography of the contemporary society, but also tries to offer solutions and to understand in a predictive way the social mechanisms. Santa ComRes organization, member of British Polling Council helped to the online collection of the information, while the literature helped them to understand the current situation, to formulate the methodological question and the ones from the questionnaires or to compare the situation with the one from other spaces.

Therefore, the first chapter, entitled: „Britain's Catholics: Definition and Demography” (p. 9-31) comes to show who are the Catholics from the contemporary Britain and to emphasize aspects related with their number, sex, age, ethnicity and National Background, education, but also other aspects. Later, in the second one (p. 32-64), aspects related with the behaviour, the feeling of belonging, but also ideas like reconciliation are presented there. Later, the doctrinaire aspects are approached in the 3rd chapter. Here, the way how the Catholics see and understand God and the relationship with him, aspects like the celibacy of the priests and the social perception on it, or sacraments, are taken into attention. The 4th chapter is dedicated to the social morality issues and the Catholic perception on it, but also to the society perception on the Catholic attitude towards them. Those, aspects like the abortion, the assisted suicide, contraception, marriage and divorce and s. o. are emphasized there in an analysis that could be surely extended, when the data will be collected to the global Catholic community.

The 5th part of the approach deals with another delicate aspect from the spiritual life. Entitled: „Party Support and Voting Behaviour” (p. 121-143), it comes to talk about aspects like the attempts of the Catholics to understand the political life and to contribute to its polarization on a certain

direction. The last section of it comes to emphasize the way of aspects popularity and performance are understood in relationship with Pope Francis, the bishops and the Catholic schools (p. 144-169). Different attitudes of the aforementioned ones are there presented together with the social impact that they have on the social life and seen thorough the lengths of popularity. The epilogue later comes to bring into actuality the situation (p. 170-174) and to speak also about the pandemic times. It is accompanied by the two appendix, one containing the questions of the survey, the other precious information.

Bringing into attention an interesting topic and offering a detailed analysis that is useful both from the sociological, historical and theological point of view, Ben Clements and Stephen Bullivant’s book entitled: *Catholics in Contemporary Britain* published at Oxford University Press in 2022 is not only an useful tool in the sociological field, but also a lecture that could be considered useful for any category of reader interested in understanding the way how Catholicism can be encountered in Britain.

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