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**Alexandru CRISTIAN**

**Romania and the United States of America**

**- Past, Present and Future -**



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## FOREWORD

The Romanian-American relations have long been at the center of various research studies pertaining to multiple disciplines. They do remain, however, insufficiently accessible to larger audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. As such, a new book, from a tested, albeit interesting, perspective, is more than welcome. As a collection of opinions-editions pieces, most of which were published in Romanian quality journals, the present volume shines in terms of readability and comprehensibility.

Alexandru Cristian, a young historian with a grasp on defense and international security studies, contextualizes the bilateral relations between Romania and the United States, devoting particular attention to their latest achievement – the Strategic Partnership, by placing them into a larger picture shaped by geopolitics.

A common belief which pervades the Romanian popular culture, insofar as to be even considered part of the foundational narratives of this nation, relates to its fate of being located “at the crossroads of Great Empires”, a true burden it had to bear in order to ensure its survival. This sense of space, and its adversity in this case, has deeply penetrated the national consciousness, from little to no connection to the advent of political geography as a discipline.

This bit of conventional wisdom, shared one way or the other by most nations in the area, broadly and inadvertently postulated these inescapable ties of geography and international politics. It found ground in the works and studies of scholars and statesmen

## **140 Years of US - Romanian Relations - a case study Partners without a Partnership**

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### **Introduction**

Romania and the United States of America share some history which is similar in many respects. Both states have struggled to gain their independence, sovereignty, and historical recognition. That in which they have followed a different path was pertaining to the civilization pattern according to which each of the two states was established.

We need to remind here, and pay all the due respect to them, the Romanian and American historians who have dealt with the early matters of the US-Romanian relations, that is Paul Cernovodeanu, Cornelia Bodea, Ion Stanciu, Dumitru Vitcu, Constantin Bușe, Keith Hitchins, Stephen Fischer-Galați, Radu R. Florescu, James F. Clarke, and many others.

The US-Romanian relations celebrate 140 years of an extremely challenging existence, which has eventually proved both states' admiration for the civilization pattern – Romania for acquiring its national independence and for implementing a genuine democratic model, whereas the United States of America for the cultural and linguistic miracle represented by the Romanian people. There has been a joint history which proved to

both people what a struggle for being acknowledged by history meant.

The history of the United States of America has been written with outstanding sacrifice just like the one of our country, while both countries have suffered for being subject to foreign domination. In the very year 1764, before the US gained its independence on *July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776*, a pamphlet signed by Isaac Hunt was published, which compared the state of colonized America to the one in Transylvania, and in which the governor of the British crown was compared to the Transylvanian Voivode. That is quite a suggestive piece of writing about the value of the peoples' freedom. After having become independent, the United States of America would launch into a continental and commercial territorial expansion hardly seen in the history of humankind. Guided by that *Manifest Destiny*, the American people has continued to enlarge the territory on which the American nation and consciousness have been shaped, as the new state was to become by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a true competitor of the hegemon of that time, the British Empire, only to outperform the latter.

The tumultuous 19<sup>th</sup> century brought for our country the unification of the two Romanian principalities, the reign of a foreign ruler, the turning of our country into a kingdom, and the continuous modernizing of the new Romanian state. Tudor Vladimirescu's 1821 uprising, the 1848 Revolution, the 1859 Little Unification, and the proclamation of independence, followed by the 1877 Independence War are all historic landmarks having helped turn the Romanian countries into a new modern state.

The official diplomatic relations between Romania and the United States of America were established on June 11, 1880, by having the first US diplomatic representative to our country

appointed. Prior to establishing those relations, there have been intensive diplomatic and commercial contacts between our country and the United States of America.

This study is dedicated to the Romanian-American relations since their very beginning until the Great Unification of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918. We analyzed the factors which have drawn closer the two countries separated by a large distance – the two capital-cities, Bucharest and Washington D.C. are 7,977.6 kilometers away from each other. We need to add that this study is the early stage of some broader, more complex research.

### 1.I. Preliminaries of the US-Romanian relations

Communication between the two states could only be possible due to the technological and scientific evolution of mankind. The two industrial revolutions allowed these two states to get closer to each other. Let's not forget the commercial spread of the young North-American state. The invention of the steam engine and the use thereof on large ships have connected the Old and the New World, and thus the relations have developed between the Romanian Principalities and the United States of North America, as they used to be called in the press and in the studies of the time drafted in the Romanian countries.

**The first factor** to help establish such relations was the commercial importance of the Danubian principalities at the Danube entrance, as the Romanian countries used to have harbors to the Black Sea.

**The second factor** was the willingness of the United States of America to conclude commercial treaties and to establish commercial routes to enable them to develop their trade, as economy has always relied on active trade.

**The third factor** was cultural, namely the scientific competition of the Enlightenment century, as well as the emergence of the worldwide modernization by means of the new technological conquests.

The first accounts on the Romanian countries are to be found with the explorer John Smith, who described the events following prince Michael the Brave's assassination in 1601, and the destruction of the unification hopes of the three Romanian territories in his travel memoirs. John Smith (1580-1631) arrived to America in 1605 and explored the continent until 1609. He was the one to borrow his name to the region in the North-Eastern part of the American state which currently comprises the states of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, connecting that area to New England, a region currently sharing the border with the state of New York and the present-day Canada.

The first inhabitant of the Romanian principalities certified on the American soil was the Saxon reverend Johannes Kelp, who settled in Pennsylvania at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to preach puritanism.

An interesting moment related to the first Romanian-American contacts is the one when one of the founding fathers of the United States, scientist Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and the Transylvanian Orthodox priest Samuilă Damian got into contact as they were both very fond of science. Father Damian is a pioneer of the study of electricity in our country. As he travelled from England to America, he met Franklin in 1748, an encounter that the great scientist described in his memoirs. Samuilă Damian then travelled to Jamaica, to the New Spain – the current Mexico, and nothing has been reported about him since then. Worried, Franklin wrote in his memoirs that the priest might have died on the road.

We mentioned Hunt's pamphlet above. We should also add that there used to be a colony called *Transylvania* in the state of Kentucky between 1775 and 1777.

John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), US ambassador to Petersburg in the Czarist Empire from 1809 until 1814<sup>1</sup>, mentioned the situation of the Romanian countries in his information to the Department of State – notes sent to the secretary of state James Monroe<sup>2</sup>. The American ambassador informed James Monroe about the intention to initiate relations with the Danubian principalities, and to get closer to the South-Eastern part of Europe. John Quincy Adams then served as the US Secretary of State from 1817 until 1825, and as a President of the United States of America between 1825 and 1829. His mission was to be pursued by the following American ambassador to Petersburg, Henry Middleton, in office from 1820 until 1830. In his information reports sent to the Department of State, the latter mentioned the fight of Alexandru Ipsilanti's (1792-1828) *Filiki Eteria*, Tudor Vladimirescu's (around 1780-1821) 1821 uprising, Greece's struggle for independence, and the sacrifice mission of the famous English poet Lord George Gordon Byron (1788-1824).

The first extensive historical description of the Romanian Principalities was published in October 1828 in Boston in *The North American Review*: it was a historical study reflecting a thorough knowledge of the domestic situation of the Romanian Principalities. A historic journey which also made reference to the

<sup>1</sup> The designation of the time was minister plenipotentiary of the United States to Russia.

<sup>2</sup> James Monroe (1758-1831), Secretary of State of the United States of America between 1811-1817, *President of the United States of America* between 1817-1825, initiator of the famous Monroe Doctrine, announced on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1823, which ruled that the European powers would not interfere in the newly established states in North and South America anymore, nor would they colonize that part of the world anymore.

matter of tribute (taxes) paid since Mircea the Old's reign (he lived around 1355-1418 and ruled from 1386 until 1418).

The American Department of State sent important orders to its diplomatic agents in Constantinople on September 12, 1829. Those orders included the incentives of the American president James Buchanan (1791-1868, serving as a president from 1857 until 1861) to initiate new commercial routes to connect the Bosphorus Strait and the Black Sea; the first commercial treaty between the United States of America and the Ottoman Empire thus came into force on May 10, 1831, which has brought the United States closer to the Danubian Principalities.

The American consul in Constantinople, John Brown urged in 1839 the Department of State to establish consular offices with a vice-consular rank in the Romanian Danube harbors, according to the English model<sup>3</sup>. Along with this urge, he enclosed the report of Charles Cunnigham, vice-consul, then consul of England to Galați and Brăila from 1836 until 1860, on the trade in the Romanian harbors at the Danube, a report drafted on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1838. With this report, the consul also sent information needed to make a decision. According to historians Paul Cernovodeanu and Ion Stanciu, this is the very *first informative material received by the US Department of State about our country*.

Pursuant to the reports of the Austrian consul to Iași, a certain John Bradish was appointed consul of the United States to Galați in 1844, yet the Department of State has never endorsed him. The first commercial vessel sailing under American flag, *Acafi*, arrived to Brăila on October 10, 1843, this event marking the first direct contact between the two states. According to other sources, the first American ship got to the Sulina branch or to the Galați

<sup>3</sup> The American ambassador was David Porter, a very good American diplomat writing for *The New York Daily Tribune* articles about life back in those times in the Romanian Principalities.

harbour in 1844. *The inconsistency of such data is not relevant; what matters is that the United States of America have developed a commercial route with the Romanian countries less than seven decades after they were established as a state.*

In 1850, *Gazeta de Moldova* and *Journal de Bucharest* announced that the industrialist Anton Negroponte was appointed vice-consul of the United States of America to Galați, a honorary position subordinated to the American office in Constantinople, and to the American ambassador George Perkins Marsh, the one who preceded in office Carroll Spence, to be mentioned below. The consular office has lasted for three years. It was suspended by the American President Franklin Pierce (1804-1869, in office from 1853 until 1857). The activity of the vice-consulates in Brussa and Dardanelles was suspended along the office in Galați. Yet the Galați-born entrepreneur Anton Negroponte struggled to have this consular office preserved; his insistence made it be reopened in 1857.

The narratives on the Romanian states become more and more numerous as an increasing number of observers took an interest in the evolution of the small Danubian states.

An interesting account on life back during that time in the Romanian states is due to James Oscar Noyes, an American surgeon serving in the Ottoman army during the War of Crimea (1853-1856), and a correspondent of *The New York Daily Tribune*.

The American diplomat Carroll Spence (1818-1896), the American ambassador to Constantinople between 1853 and 1857, was a fierce supporter of the goals of the Romanian Principalities. *Spence has always expressed the Principalities' right to get united and become autonomous.*

The American President James Buchanan (1791-1868, in office between 1857 and 1861) sent to the American Senate the nomination of Henry T. Romertze as the first American career

consul to Galați (Moldova), on March 16, 1858. The consul received the position acknowledgement from the Ottomans on April 4, and the acceptance of the ruling prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza in October. The Romanian ruler emphasized that the American government had to first address the Romanian government, and the Ottoman one afterwards. The consul submitted his letters of acknowledgement in the military camp of Florești on November 10, 1859. Alexandru Ioan Cuza passed the message to Romertze that he accepted his nomination as a sign of respect for the American government and people, and that he required that all the institutions in both principalities acknowledge the latter as a United States consul. Moreover, Cuza proposed a cooperation, trade, and navigation treaty, yet the American government declined his offer as it feared negative response from the Ottomans. Such a treaty was to come into force after our country acquired its independence.

### **1.II. Diplomatic relations prior to the institutionalization of the US-Romanian relations**

We must emphasize that the United States of America wished to enhance its relations with the United Principalities, but the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire and the potential consequences on the Black Sea trade made the American governments wait for the appropriate time to improve the diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations. After the vice-consulate in Galați was established, some other American consulates were created, one to Ismail in 1860, one to Brăila in 1861, and one to Iași in 1861; those consulates have not been operating for long, nor did they have much business because the first consulate general of the United States was set to Bucharest.

The first consulate general of the United States of America to Bucharest was established in 1864, the first consul being Adolf Hartman, who had been a consul to Galați. After Hartman's short term, Hungarian-born Louis Czapkay residing in California was appointed consul on June 20, 1866. The new consul proposed the vice-consulate in Galați be directly subordinated to the one in Bucharest instead of the American legation in Constantinople. Czapkay was a consul committed to enhancing the Romanian-American relations, he thus drafted reports on the political, social, and economic situation of the new Romanian state.

During that period, we need to emphasize the mission of Major Nicolae Dabija, the representative of the Romanian ruler Charles I (1839-1914, prince from 1866 until 1881, and king from 1881 until 1914) for concluding collaboration contracts and agreements with the American weapon manufacturing companies. The Romanian army had been equipped with 25,000 Peabody rifles and with steam machinery able to manufacture 3,000 metal bullets a day prior to Major Dabija's mission to Prussia. In December 1868, Major Dabija announced the prince that the mission was successfully completed, and that the army could be equipped for acquiring the country's independence.

An interesting character was the consul succeeding to Czapkay, Benjamin F. Peixotto (1834-1890), in office from 1870 until 1875: a consul struggling to have the difficult Jewish matter settled. His mission resulted in the action he took to make the stakeholders aware of the settlement of that issue.

The American consul to Galați, Alexander C. Hepites, in office between 1872 and 1878, was a tireless diplomat who sent many informative reports on the American citizens living or working in the Danubian harbors. The American consul drafted reports about the Romanian harbors based on the trade documents regarding the export and import operations issued by