

Victor Rizescu is associate professor at the Department of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, with studies in History and in Philosophy at the University of Bucharest, at the Central European University and at Oxford University.

Books published: *Ideologii românești și est-europene*, București, Editura Cuvântul, 2008 (editor.); *Tranziții discursive. Despre agende culturale, istorie intelectuală și onorabilitate ideologică după comunism*, București, Corint, 2012; *Ideology, Nation and Modernization: Romanian Developments in Theoretical Frameworks*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2013; *Canonul și vocile uitate. Secvențe dintr-o tipologie a gândirii politice românești*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2015 (sec. ed.: București, Pro Universitaria, 2020); *Development, Left and Right: Ideological Entanglements of Reformist Projects in Pre-communist Romania*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2018 ("Nicolae Bălcescu" prize of the Romanian Academy); *Statul bunăstării pe filiera românească. Fracturi ale dezvoltării și rupturi ale memoriei*, București, Pro Universitaria, 2019; *Eseuri despre politica memoriei. Accente și recalibrări aniversare*, București, Neverland, 2020.

Among the translated and edited books: Daniel Chirot, *Schimbarea socială într-o societate periferică. Formarea unei colonii balcanice*, București, Corint, 2002; Daniel Chirot, coord., *Originile înapoierii în Europa de Est. Economie și politică din Evul Mediu până la începutul secolului XX*, București, Corint, 2004; Constantin Stere, *Scrieri politice și filozofice*, București, Dominor, 2005

Victor Rizescu

**Ideology, Nation
and Modernization:
the Romanian Patterns in Comparative
and Theoretical Frameworks**

Second edition revised



CETATEA DE SCAUN
EDITURA

Paul Dragoș Aligică
Membru corespondent al Academiei Române
Manuel Guțan
Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu

Redactor: Mirela Ivan Nobel
Tehnoredactare: Adriana Andreiaș
Coperta: Dan Mărgărit

Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României
RIZESCU, VICTOR

Ideology, nation and modernization : the Romanian patterns in comparative and theoretical frameworks / Victor Rizescu. - 2nd ed., rev.. - Târgoviște : Cetatea de scaun, 2024
Conține bibliografie
ISBN 978-606-537-715-8
32

Toate drepturile de reproducere, integral sau parțial, prin orice mijloace, inclusiv stocarea neautorizată în sisteme de căutare sunt rezervate. Reproducerea se poate face doar cu acordul scris al editurii, cu excepția unor scurte pasaje care pot constitui obiectul recenziilor și prezentărilor.

Ediția originală:
Ideology, Nation and Modernization: Romanian Developments in Theoretical Frameworks, București, Editura Universității din București, 2013

ISBN: 978-606-537-715-8
© Editura Cetatea de Scaun®, Târgoviște, 2024
editura@cetateadescaun.ro www.cetateadescaun.ro
Tipărit de Editura Cetatea de Scaun

Contents

Preface..... 7

1. Introduction 9

Part I

Nationalism and the Peripheral Predicament

2. Romania as a Periphery: Social Change and Ideological Development..... 31

3. Some Distinctions within a Classical Distinction: Revising the Civic-Ethnic Dichotomy against the East European Background 55

Part II

Modernization and Sociologies of the Elites

4. A Divide over the Oligarchy: Competing Uses of Marxism in Pre-communist Romania 89

5. Paradigm Change in Critical Sociology: Center and Periphery Perceptions 121

Part III

Ideological Patterns and Canonical Histories

6. Subverting the Canon: Oligarchic Politics and Modernizing Optimism in Pre-communist Romania 157

7. Historical Canons and Eccentric Voices: a Typological Approach to Romanian Ideological Development..... 217

8. Multiculturalism as Collective Memory: Reflections
around the Treaty of Trianon 299

9. On Trianon in the Age of the New Anti-racialist Protest:
Two Species of the Dialogue with History and an Attempt
at Harmonization 317

Bibliography 333

Preface

All throughout the decades following after the demise of communism, the reinterpretations of particular topics of Romanian history went together with a search for the re-conceptualization of the historical evolution of the country taken over the long run. Various layers of the process of change could be selected as privileged targets for the deployment of such an effort. The present book has to be seen as an instance of this collective search. It is premised on the conviction that any meaningful engagement with specific subjects involving the interplay between ideological patterns, social structures and public policies over the modern and contemporary periods of Romanian history can only have as a precondition the forging of an appropriate broad vision regarding the unfolding of basic political ideas from the beginning of modernization on the western model to the installation of the communist regime.

Several other convictions are closely connected with this one. There is, first, the belief that contrasting the ideological landscape of Romania to that of the West can only be rewarding if associated with the enterprise of placing the former in an appropriate comparative perspective, within the setting of the East European region to which it belongs. Connected to this, there is the need of taking seriously the West-East lags of development when studying ideologies, in no less a fashion than in the case of focusing on any other compartment of the historical process. There further follows from this a demand for broadening the range of comparisons, such as to place Eastern Europe at large in relation to the global peripheries of the western civilization (the very historical identity of the region over

the same modern centuries having to be defined as deriving from the role it has played as both the earliest of such peripheral areas and the closest to the West in terms of geographic proximity and cultural profile). There is, then, the view – elaborated at length in the introduction – that delineating the process by the means of which the bodies of thinking built around the defining patterns of liberalism, of the Left and of the Right have been transplanted from their western context of emergence into Romania has to be accompanied by disclosing the main contours of the critical sociology of modernization elaborated in the local milieu with a view to understanding the condition of a society suffering the impact of dramatic changes induced by outside influences. For sure, special compartments have to be devoted to the morphology of the national question, again with an effort of deepening the implications of the peripheral predicament in this particular area of historical growth. Three chapters are concerned with this question alone.

Pursuing in his series of works the kind of investigation defined above – leading, that is, from general to ever more particular areas of research – the author has felt the need of recurrently coming back to the specific accents and conceptualizations laid down here, in order to elaborate further upon them without ever discarding the basic statements advanced. The second edition of the book is the result of this search for clarifying broad meanings behind historical details.

1. Introduction

When considered in relation to the western sources of modern social and political thought, ideological development in the countries of the East European borderlands can be described as having consisted primarily in a dynamics of acculturation or as having been driven mainly by a thread of reactions to the pressures of modernization. Historical accounts taking the first path will focus on the process by which ideological trends of western provenance have been entrenched – on the basis of contextual adjustments and after suffering corresponding distortions – in local cultural milieus, thus contributing to the refashioning of political cultures inherited from old regimes and traditional societies. When taking the second path, the historian will bring to the forefront a consideration of the historical nexus between the growing consciousness of living within the horizon of modernity displayed by educated strata and their increasing self-understanding as both integral parts of the global society and segments of local social units affected by the interconnectedness of international life. No matter how hard they strive to combine the two perspectives, historical approaches in the field are most often led to privilege one of them.

1

The component parts of the present book are no exception. The two chapters of Part III elaborate in outline a typology – placed in an appropriate comparative framework – of ideological patterns in the modern history of Romania, issued from the adoption and elaboration in the local setting of the various parts of the modern political spectrum. Chapter 7 (“Historical Canons and

Eccentric Voices”) thus delineates several stages in the evolution of local liberalism, in order to address, then, the national varieties of the left-wing (populist-peasantist, socialist and communist) ideological trends and the historical morphology of right-wing thinking belonging to the conservative, traditionalist and fascist generic families. Migration of ideas is surveyed, here, in connection to the underlying disparities of structural conditions between West and East, and regional patterns of intellectual transformation are disclosed as fully operating in the narrower Romanian context. A gradual drive to the Right of the liberal current of thought was certainly connected, as such, with the growing influence – accompanied by inescapable radicalization issuing into fascism – of the right-wing forms of ideological pleading themselves, with the doctrine of corporatism – locked in a competing flirtation with fascism – strayed across the liberal tradition and that of conservative nationalism (yet mainly evolving from within the fold of modernizing authoritarian liberalism). While liberal thinking is vindicated as more variegated than canonical interpretations presented it so far, the Right is discovered as less pervasive than it is usually deemed, to the same extent as the Left is depicted as exercising a greater diffuse influence over the various compartments of politics and culture than we are accustomed to think about it. Ideological traditions of western provenance did not merely get embodied into clearly cut local ideological groups, but they also got employed as intellectual instruments suited to addressing specific contextual puzzles and put to work for different ideological purposes. The most obvious case is definitely that of Marxism, discovered as pervasively operating in such a guise and as incorporated into three forms of liberal social and political theory and in at least one significant expression of traditionalism, besides staying at the basis of the three

recorded varieties of the Left. The Marxist original inspiration of the populist agrarian trend is argued against a strangely persistent tendency to deny or disregard it.

Chapter 6 (“Subverting the Canon”) introduces this typology by both a closer examination of the varieties of pre-communist liberalism and a deeper consideration of the interpretative canons in the history of Romanian ideologies. The subject of the local forms of liberalism is once again treated as holding a core position within the domain of studies involved, this time with more precise reference to cultural fashions and historiographical traditions that have nurtured the tendency to disregard it as unproblematic, in favor of the related emphasis on the development of right-wing cultural and ideological trends. The need for a reconsideration of the Left, together with a renewed interest for understanding, in a post-communist frame, the social and economic dimensions of pre-communist ideological constructions, are vindicated alongside the same pleading. Liberal thinking is approached by taking a new look at its conjunction with westernizer advocacy and modernist projects of social change. The established interpretative view on the topic is found as patterned in the 1970’s and the following two decades by the works of Z. Ornea, written from the standpoint of a sociologically informed approach to the history of literary currents, but approximating a broadly conceived analysis of ideological trends (and despite the fact that the author himself has never been truly established as a canonical figure of exegetic literature). When contributing heavily to the consecration of Ștefan Zeletin and Eugen Lovinescu – the two foremost westernizer defenders of National Liberal Party policies of modernization in the interwar era – as classics of national ideological correctness (a pervasive opinion in the scholarship, although disseminated for a wider public to

a lesser extent after the demise of the communist regime than before that moment), Ornea also drew their historical and sociological insights into the body of contemporary secondary literature produced in the field of Romanian intellectual history, with a marked tendency to disregard the need of clarifying their status as actors of the very same history (a tendency rapidly magnified in school and university textbooks and in a large welter of popularization works).

Interwar liberal modernists argued as both defenders of Enlightenment rationalism against traditionalist culture of Romantic progeny and spokesmen for the necessary adaptations of the liberal doctrine and practices in the context of peripheral modernization and delayed state building. Ornea, in his turn, appropriated their Enlightenment advocacy – most usually branded as “modernism” by himself and his fellow exegetes – as part of a new surge of opposition against the culture of anti-western nationalism, following the refurbishment of the later in the context of communism. His inability to come to terms with the peculiar brand of liberalism that Zeletin and Lovinescu had advanced in connection to their westernizer and modernist stance was largely dependent, for sure, on the ideological limitations imposed by the same communist context. The chapter engages on redressing these drawbacks of the prevailing interpretation. Zeletin’s and Lovinescu’s arguments designed with a view to ascertain the soundness of interventionist economic practices and moderately authoritarian politics disguised as standard constitutional parliamentarianism in the Romanian context of delayed and accelerated development – anticipated by A. D. Xenopol, a pioneer of protectionist economic theory, more prodigious as a historian than his two followers yet less ready to cast his historical accounts as legitimizing narratives – are set in opposition to the

wide-ranging critical culture eager to demolish the credentials of mainstream liberalism of acting in resonance with the national interest and in accordance with the demands of modernization over the long run. In conjunction with the vindication of a high degree of theoretical soundness and empirical accuracy on the side of precisely that brand of social criticism that standard modernists scorned as immersed in traditionalist prejudices, there is set here the baseline for the larger typology of ideologies advanced in the following chapter (summarized above), by delineating, alongside the only liberal-modernist ideological attitude retained so far by the interpretative canon, two minority liberal stances. Manifested primarily in the guise of “anti-oligarchic modernism”, they criticized National Liberal Party liberalism on account of either its falsification of free-trade wisdom and of the principles of philosophical individualism – as in the case of H. Sanielevici, Ștefan Antim, George Strat and a score of other voices connected with a hitherto neglected but very significant periodical of the 1930’s – or of its reluctance to embark upon democratization and welfare policies, in faithfulness to the spirit of oppositional left-liberal rhetoric of the 1848 revolution era – as in the case of the Durkheimian sociologist Dumitru Drăghicescu.

2

Precisely the other approach mentioned above is followed in Part II. The search here is for disclosing the contours of an intellectual structure forged during the XIXth and the early XXth century Romania and induced by the growing perception of the disruptive changes brought about by modernization under the impact of western and world capitalist influences. Previous attempts to recover in this way the main thrust of the Romanian reflection on the consequences of modernizing change have tended to

LBRIS

We know
books

Part I
Nationalism and the Peripheral Predicament

2. Romania as a Periphery: Social Change and Ideological Development

Comparative development studies with a focus on East European modernization are surveyed here in order to draw (tentative) general statements regarding the dynamics of ideological change in a peripheral setting. Long-standing regional – and particularly Romanian – prejudices towards conceptualizing local historical evolution on the basis of the “center-periphery” dichotomy are opposed, with special attention paid to their refurbishing in the post-communist cultural and ideological environment and in connection to the broader alterations of paradigms after the Cold War. The debate on Eastern Europe as a periphery – again, with an emphasis on Romania – is related to the academic discussions about the German historical peculiarities conducive to Nazism. Pre-communist ideological trends are highlighted as prodigiously original on the side of the insights they produced into the patterns of peripheral social change and the prevalence of nationalist concerns they exhibit is itself disclosed as intrinsic to the predicament of intellectual evolution in non-western contexts. Although with a hindsight it emerges as somewhat too ambitious, the theoretical and methodological frame outlined here does inform the engagements with the same issues in the following chapters.

Previous version in Bogdan Murgescu, ed., *Romania and Europe: Modernization as Temptation, Modernization as Threat*, Bucharest, ALLFA & Edition Körber Stiftung, 2000, pp. 29-40. A version delivered at the conference “Romania and Europe: Modernization as Temptation, Modernization as Threat”, organized by the Körber Foundation and held at Sibiu on September 15-24, 1999.

It has long been customary in western and especially American scholarship on Eastern Europe to describe the region as a periphery of the West. At the time of decolonization, several decades after the Paris Peace Settlement, when "East European studies" had already become an old-established academic domain, and "Third World studies" were just emerging as a burgeoning new one, some analysts in the West discovered that these two areas of research could shed considerable light on each other, and correspondingly the concepts and theoretical models elaborated for the understanding of each of them had to prove their validity by being tested against the other one as well. As one scholar wrote:

The recent history of Asia, Africa and Latin America has shown that many phenomena previously considered to be specifically East European were not so at all, but merely characteristic of the impact of western influences on non-western societies. [...] These developments place the history of Eastern Europe [...] in a new perspective, which the observers in 1914 could hardly have foreseen. [...] The wider interest of Eastern Europe's history lies in those aspects of social and cultural development in which it resembles or differs from the history of Western Europe on the one side and of the non-European, "under-developed" countries on the other. But to see these resemblances and differences it is necessary [...] to see the real social forces, without preconceived notions of the universal validity of Victorian categories.¹

The image of Eastern Europe as the "first under-developed area" and as a laboratory suited for studying the effects of the westernization of the world became

¹ Hugh Seton-Watson, "The Intellectuals and Revolution: Social Forces in Eastern Europe since 1848", in Richard Pares, A. J. P. Taylor, eds., *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, London, Macmillan, 1956, pp. 429-430. See also Idem, *Neither War, Nor Peace: the Struggle for Power in the Post-war World*, New York, Praeger, 1960.

deeply entrenched, so much so that the region started to be used as a training-ground for American diplomats specializing in Asian and African affairs.² Behind that part of its heritage that Eastern Europe undeniably shares with the West – and regardless of the traditional infatuation of the East Europeans with their European identity – we have to distinguish – as it was argued – structural features that make the comparison with non-European regions more meaningful, and scientifically more rewarding, than the comparison with the western half of the European continent. New analytical instruments were required for making this comparison effective – while also replacing the obsolete "Victorian categories" – and they were forged accordingly, most often being placed in the conceptual rubric of "periphery". These instruments were employed for building social science models and historical explanations that contrasted the evolution of the West to that of the peripheral world, of which Eastern Europe, over the last several centuries, was considered to be a part.

Of course, not even within the American academic circles has this view been universally accepted. Some authors who have tackled big issues of social and political development in Eastern Europe tended to ignore the demand for a special set of concepts and theoretical models, maintaining – or implying – that the evolution of the area could be conveniently grasped by employing the conceptual apparatus originally forged for the study of western societies.³ Some others have maintained that,

² Henry L. Roberts, "Politics in a Small State: the Balkan Example", in Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, eds., *The Balkans in Transition*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1974 [1963], p. 378.

³ Cyril E. Black, "Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans", L. S. Stavrianos, "The Influence of the West on the Balkans" and Traian Stoianovich, "The Social Foundations of Balkan Politics, 1750-1941", all in Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, eds., *The*

although we do have to distinguish between different paths that societies might take during the transition from the agrarian, traditional world to modernity, the same theoretical models could account for any such variety of modernization processes, whether in a large or in a small country, in the East as well as in the West. Thus, the three routes to modernity identified by a scholar like Barrington Moore on the basis of broad comparisons between the largest western and Asian societies could be found replicated inside the belt of small East-Central and South-Eastern European states, in spite of Moore's own suggestion that the decisive factors in the evolution of the small countries lie outside their borders, and as such societies of the kind are not appropriate to be taken as independent units of research.⁴

Scholars who did share the view mentioned above have identified a pattern of modernization in the area displaying successive stages of evolution that have to be seen not as equivalents of the developmental stages followed by the West, but as mere distortions of them. For some authors of the kind, who have taken a (however qualified) "world-system" or "dependency" approach, such distortions are to be blamed on the perverse influences in the region of the world capitalist market centered in the West and explained by reference to the intrinsic mechanisms of global capitalism.⁵ This view does not

Balkans in Transition, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1974 [1963], pp. 145-183, resp. 184-226, 297-345. See also Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: a Study in Comparative History*, New York, Harper, 1966.

⁴ Gale Stokes, "The Social Origins of East European Politics", *East European Politics and Societies* 1: 1, 1986, pp. 30-74. See also Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967, pp. 413-483.

⁵ Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: the Creation of a Balkan Colony*, New York, Academic Press, 1976. See also

raise any more such an enthusiastic approval as it used to attract during the last decades of the Cold War, and successive critical departures towards it have been taken within the field of comparative modernization studies.⁶ Still, the very notions of "core" and "periphery" are often seen as a preserve of it. They smack of mere militant neo-Marxism and of an ideological denunciation of the plutocratic nations with an anti-western slant. As it has often happened in the history of ideas, the tenets of a wider school of thought have come to be associated with one particular variety of it alone. Hence, the conceptualization of the region as a "periphery" tends to be suspiciously rejected in post-communist Eastern Europe, where "liberal" and (renewed) westernizer circles are careful to take a critical distance from dependency theory, perceiving it as coming in the same package with the indigenist and illiberal form of nationalism.

Although equally concerned with the distorted nature of East European modernization, other scholars place the blame for it not on the inescapably perverse influences of world capitalism, but on the strategies and policies that the regional elites have developed in order to meet the challenge of modernization or, in more general terms, on the

Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-economy: Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979; Thomas R. Shannon, *An Introduction to the World-system Perspective*, sec. ed., Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1996.

⁶ Theda Skocpol, "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: a Theoretical and Historical Critique", *The American Journal of Sociology* 82: 5, 1977, pp. 1075-1090; Charles Ragin, Daniel Chirot, "The Modern World System of Immanuel Wallerstein: Sociology and Politics as History", in Theda Skocpol, ed., *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 276-312; Daniel Chirot, "Causes and Consequences of Backwardness", in Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1-14; Idem, *How Societies Change*, sec. ed., Los Angeles, Sage Publications, 2011.

responses of peripheral societies at large to this challenge.⁷ On this view, Eastern Europe has been transformed into a periphery precisely because of its eagerness to catch up with the West at an accelerated pace and without the required prerequisites. While in the West modernizing change has run its course as an organic process, issuing from spontaneous transformations in the realm of economy and society, on the periphery the driving force has been the desire to imitate – or “emulate” – western civilization. While in the first model the modern state only emerged as a consequence of changes in the infrastructure, in the second one the political superstructure of the western type was erected first, in the absence of corresponding social foundations, and assigned the role of the main instrument of social change. The sequence of development was thus reversed, leading to the ascendancy of the state over all aspects of social life, and to the hypertrophy of its bureaucracy. While in the core countries the category of state officials was recruited from different segments of society, and mirrored the class-division of society, produced by the dynamics of economic forces, in peripheral countries

⁷ Andrew C. Janos, “The One-party State and Social Mobilization: East Europe between the Wars”, in Samuel P. Huntington, Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: the Dynamics of Established One-party Systems*, New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1970, pp. 204-236; Idem, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe, 1780-1945”, *World Politics* 41: 2, 1989, pp. 325-358; Idem, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Post-communism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000. For the neo-Weberian pedigree of this perspective see Reinhard Bendix, “Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9: 3, 1967, pp. 292-346. Another comparative perspective on modernization issuing from the same school of historical sociology: Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2001.

bureaucracy became an interest group in its own right,⁸ and the states “became instruments of revenue raising as well as of income transfer from the societies at large to the new bourgeoisie of state officials”, or else instruments of “income equalization, not, to be sure, between the various economic strata of peripheral societies, but between the elites of the backward and the advanced industrial societies of the continent”.⁹ Some trappings of parliamentarianism were adopted as a façade, but the peripheral political class “integrated the administrative and parliamentary systems into a single machine in which the bureaucracy was in charge of manufacturing safe majorities whose votes provided legitimacy for the essentially bureaucratic regime”,¹⁰ a machine which “enabled the bureaucratic arm of the government, usually under liberal and progressive labels, to turn out predictable majorities, thereby debasing parliamentarianism without abandoning it”.¹¹ The attempt to imitate the West was followed by equally futile attempts to find a shortcut to the modern society of affluence on the basis of an authoritarian, corporatist political design,¹² or

⁸ Seton-Watson, “The Intellectuals and Revolution”, p. 397; Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1969 [1951], pp. 338-339; Janos, “The One-party State and Social Mobilization”; Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1974, pp. 19-22.

⁹ Janos, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe”, pp. 338, 342.

¹⁰ Idem, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: the Case of Romania”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, p. 87.

¹¹ Idem, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe”, p. 342.

¹² Idem, “The One-Party State and Social Mobilization”, pp. 213-214; Philippe C. Schmitter, “Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu and the Political Consequences of Delayed-Dependent Development on the Periphery of Western Europe”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a*