

CAROL I OF ROMANIA, 1866-1914: A DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT¹

Paul E. MICHELSON*

The paper attempts to assess the domestic achievements of the long rule of Carol I (1866-1914) by analyzing three issues that are historically associated with the developmental process in modern Europe. These issues are the problem of Romanian national identity, the problem of establishing regime legitimacy in modern Romania, and the problem of political participation in the new Romanian state. Overall, the author concludes that Romania made a good deal of progress between 1866 and 1914, but also failed in many significant respects, so that the overall assessment of Carol's regime has to be negative.

Keywords: Carol I, modernization, Romanian national identity, political legitimacy, Constitution of 1866, economic development, political participation, centralism, bureaucratization.

CAROL I AL ROMÂNIEI, 1866-1914 – O EVALUARE DIN PERSPECTIVA DEZVOLTĂRII (Rezumat)

Lucrarea încearcă să evalueze realizările interne în timpul lungii perioade de domnie a regelui Carol I (1866-1914), analizând trei aspecte care sunt asociate istoric cu procesul de dezvoltare în Europa modernă. Aceste aspecte sunt: problema identității naționale românești, problema stabilirii legitimității regimului în România

¹ The following account is largely based on research conducted for my *Conflict and Crisis: Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871*, New York, Garland Press, 1987; *The Modern Age*, in Kurt W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, third edition, Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997, pp. 227-329, 351-389; *Romanian Politics, 1859-1971: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol*. Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998; *Romania (History)*, in Richard Frucht (ed.), *Encyclopedia of East Europe: From the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000, pp. 667-690; and *Romanian Development, Nationalism, and Some Nationality Issues Under Carol I, 1866-1914*, in Al. Zub, Venera Achim, Nagy Pienaru (eds.), *Națiunea Română: Idealuri și realități istorice*, București, Editura Academiei, 2006, pp. 333-344. The relevant bibliography and documentation may be found in these pieces. These are supplemented by two recent collections of papers on Carolist Romania: Gheorghe Cliveti, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Ionuț Nistor (eds.), *Cultura, politică, și societate în timpul domniei lui Carol I. 130 de ani de la proclamarea Regatului României*, Iași, Casa Editorială Demiurg, 2011; and Liviu Brătescu, Ștefania Ciubotaru (eds.), *Monarhia în România – o evaluare. Politică, memorie, și patrimoniu*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, 2012.

* Profesor universitar dr., Huntington University.

modernă și problema participării politice în noul stat român. În general, autorul ajunge la concluzia că România a făcut progrese remarcabile între 1866 și 1914, dar, de asemenea, a eșuat în multe privințe, astfel că bilanțul regimului regelui Carol I trebuie să fie negativ.

Cuvinte-cheie: Carol I, modernizare, identitate națională românească, legitimitate politică, Constituția din 1866, dezvoltare economică, participare politică, centralism, birocratizare.

Concluziile în limba română

Autorul încearcă să evalueze realizările pe plan intern ale lungii domnii a lui Carol I (1866-1914), analizând trei aspecte care istoric sunt asociate cu procesul dezvoltării în Europa modernă. Aceste chestiuni sunt: problema identității naționale, problema construcției legitimității regimului și problema participării politice în noul stat român modern.

1. Identitatea

În ceea ce privește problema identității naționale române, rezultatele evoluției din timpul domniei lui Carol sunt atât bune, cât și rele. Cele mai multe componente importante care ar fi condus la rezolvarea acestei crize de dezvoltare existau deja în 1866. Această situație a fost probabil consolidată. Separatismul ca opțiune politică a fost scoasă din calcule. După 1871, unirea principatelor nu a fost deloc supusă dezbaterii. Totuși, pentru că tendințele regionaliste au continuat, naționaliștii români le-au privit cu îngrijorare.

Interesant este că, deși se poate presupune că această problemă a fost rezolvată, ea nu a fost, de fapt. O parte din problemă o constituie continuele speculații și dezbateri despre identitatea națională română și caracterul românesc. Un simptom al acestora este graba românilor cu care consideră drept trădător de neam pe oricine îndrăznește să chestioneze chiar și cel mai mărunț aspect al identității române.

În al doilea rând, e încă discutabil dacă naționalismul românesc e întrutotul sănătos. Lord Acton ne atenționa încă din 1862 de pericolul naționalismului modern, din moment ce acesta este fatal pentru libertate, dezlănțuie statul total, duce în mod logic la ceea ce azi numim genocid și, în cele din urmă, „consensul la care aspiră e imposibil”².

O mare parte dintre aceste probleme nu sunt din vina lui Carol, dar au fost produse în criza identitară care a avut loc în timpul domniei lui. I-aș da, cu indulgență, o notă de trecere.

2. Instaurarea legitimității regimului

Carol I nu a stârnit niciodată o susținere politică plină de căldură, de care s-a bucurat înainte Cuza, dar a ajuns să fie respectat și recunoscut, în special pentru meritele creării unui regat independent al României (1878-1881). Menținerea lui Carol în 1871 și după se pare că a pus capăt instabilității de pe tronul României,

² Lord Acton, *Nationality*, în idem, *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, edited by J. N. Figgis and R.V. Laurence, London, Macmillan, 1907, pp. 279-300.

care era o problemă veche de sute de ani. Construirea și legitimarea unei noi ordini politice în România păreau să fie încheiate. Cu toate acestea, exista încă o mare discrepanță între imaginea și realitățile României lui Carol. În cuvintele lui Caragiale: „În adevăr, poate că nici într-un stat, din Europa cel puțin, nu există atâta extravagantă deosebire între realitate și aparență, între ființă și mască”³. Această legitimitate a fost subminată de răscoala țărănească din 1907, fără a fi însă amenințată.

Și la acest punct i-aș acorda o notă de trecere.

3. Participarea

În ceea ce privește problema participării, lui Carol I și regimului său li s-ar putea da note foarte slabe, într-adevăr. Încercările prin care a trecut Carol în anii 1860 și începutul anilor 1870 i-au potolit optimismul tineresc și l-au convins că un regim mai autocratic, în parteneriat cu anumite figuri ale elitei, trebuia să fie soluția potrivită.

Existența unui electorat restrâns în România lui Carol I a avut efectul de întârziere a apariției partidelor politice reale. Nu existau partide în adevăratul sens al cuvântului și, atâta timp cât doar câțiva oameni puteau participa în politica românească, aceasta rămânea o chestiune legată de personalități, cluburi, facțiuni și alte entități asemănătoare. Era totodată regretabil că acțiunile electorale din România de regulă au dezvăluit mai multe despre cine le-a controlat, decât despre opinia publică. În plus, a dăinuit un neobișnuitul fenomen ca un vot de blam în guvern să conducă mai degrabă la dizolvarea parlamentului decât la demisia ministrului. Una era să fii bun la vorbe, și alta era să fii bun la fapte.

Caragiale conchidea: „Administrația e compusă din două mari armate. Una stă la putere și se hrănește; alta așteaptă flămânzind în opoziție. Când cei hrăniți au devenit impotenți prin nutriție excesivă, iar cei flămânzi au ajuns la completă famină, încep turburările de stradă... Plebea, clienții, cu studenții universitari, și școlarii din licee, conduși uneori de profesori universitari, cer numai decît răsturnarea guvernului. Facțiunea dela putere, supranutrită, este incapabilă a mai ține piept torentului popular, adică facțiunii răzbite de foame; iar Regele, gelos de reputația europeană de liniște și ordine a Statului său, este silit să concedieze, *avec force compliments*, cabinetul, care avea aproape unanimități în Parlament, pentru a însărcina pe capul opoziției cu formarea unui nou cabinet, cu dizolvarea Parlamentului...”⁴.

Din cauza acestor chestiuni, România nu și-a dezvoltat cu adevărat un sistem parlamentar pe model occidental sau partide politice reale. Nici nu și-a rezolvat complet problema alternanței pe cale pașnică la guvernare. Un efect semnificativ a fost formidabila instabilitate ministerială, cu toate problemele aferente: politice, administrative și financiare.

Cele mai mari defecte au fost blocarea accesului maselor (predominant țărani) în sistemul politic și nerezolvarea chestiunii agrare, care a fost subiect de discuții și în egală măsură o mostră de inacțiune. În consecință, politica din România a rămas

³ Ion Luca Caragiale, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 172. Caragiale nu a fost singurul care a lansat comentarii critice cu privire la Regatul lui Carol I. Vezi și Șt. M. Zeletin, *Din Țara măgurilor. Însemnări*, București, I. Brănișteanu, 1916.

un ansamblu al intereselor personale ale elitei, garantat de clientelism și corupție, iar țărănimea, deși a fost slăvită ca „talpa țării”, nu a contat deloc în sistem.

În această zonă au fost înregistrate cele mai mari eșecuri, eșecuri care au ruinat și alte aspecte ale dezvoltării României. Per ansamblu, cu greu am putea contrazice concluzia lui Adrian-Paul Iliescu: „Dacă problema agrară și problema națională erau problemele majore ale României sfârșitului de secol XIX și începutului de secol XX, atunci Carol I nu a fost un mare om de stat...nu numai că atitudinea adoptată de el (conservatoare, de menținere a statu quo-ului) în ambele cazuri a fost departe de a fi atitudinea optimă”⁵.

Carol I și Românii au realizat progrese însemnate între 1866 și 1914, dar atât de mult s-ar mai fi putut obține. Împrejurările au fost descurajatoare, în special înainte de 1881, dar nu există nici o scuză pentru nereușitele care au urmat între 1881 și Primul Război Mondial. Prea multe șanse au fost ratate și prea multe oportunități au fost pierdute, îndeosebi pentru că ideea principală a fost prezervarea statutului privilegiat al lui Carol și a elitelor conducătoare. S-ar putea pune întrebarea judicioasă dacă regele Carol a fost mai bun decât contemporanii săi est-europeni, din Serbia, Bulgaria și Grecia. Din păcate, la această întrebare nu s-ar putea răspunde cu ușurință, dar chiar și un răspuns pozitiv nu ar diminua insuccesele pe care el și colaboratorii săi le-au avut atunci când s-au ocupat de problemele fundamentale ale dezvoltării. Așadar, cu părere de rău afirm la comemorarea centenarului de la moartea regelui Carol I că aprecierea regimului său în ansamblu trebuie să fie negativă.

I. Introduction

Carol I (1839-1914) was a descendant of the South German, Catholic, Sigmaringen branch of the Hohenzollern family, and the second son of Bismarck's liberal predecessor as Prussian Prime Minister. He was trained and educated in the Prussian army and served in the Danish war of 1864. His background was reflected in his character and public persona: serious, rigidly disciplined, methodical, proud, unbending, and moderately liberal. He ruled Romania from 1866 until the advent of World War I. It was the longest reign in Romanian history, and a period in which both Romanian ruler and elite devoted their efforts to building a westernized state⁶, economy, and society⁷.

Carol became Prince in 1866 when the native ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866) was forced to abdicate: the hope was that choosing a foreign prince would bring an end to intrigues for the throne, would curb separatist agitation in Moldova, and would give Romania international support for its autonomy and unity.

⁵ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Monarhia și problemele-cheie ale societății*, în Liviu Brătescu, Ștefania Ciubotaru (coord.), *op.cit.*, p. 181.

⁶ On Romania as a “Western” state, see my *Romanians and the West*, in Kurt W. Treptow (ed.), *Romania and Western Civilization*, Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997, pp. 11-24.

⁷ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1994, easily the best book on the topic, is precisely “about modern nation-building, a process that absorbed the energies of the Rumanian political and intellectual elite...”, p. vii. On the elites and modernization, see Viorella Manolachi, *Monarhia – model elitist și/sau suveranitate expusă*, în Liviu Brătescu, Ștefania Ciubotaru (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 260-270.

As prince (and after 1881, king), Carol was the lynchpin of the post-1866 political system. He carefully cultivated an image of being above politics, yet a later characterization by Queen Marie is apt and revealing: “King Carol was as well versed in foreign as in home politics. In fact everything was politics, they were his very *raison d’être*. He carefully weighed all that he did and said, always calculating the consequences, thereby, according to my negligible judgment, infinitely complicating life and creating difficulties out of things which might have been quite simple if taken more simply”⁸.

It is generally agreed that Carol played a crucial role in the emergence and development of the modern Romanian national state. What is less agreed is the degree to which his forty-eight years on the throne might be described as successful or not. This evaluation will focus on key aspects of the internal political development of Romania under Carol I. Internal development cannot be easily or clearly distinguished from external development and certainly one affects the other, but – without getting caught up in the *Primat der Innenpolitik vs. Primat der Aussenpolitik* debate – assessment of Romania's diplomacy under Carol will have to be left for another occasion.

The paper will argue that the domestic policies of Carol can usefully be evaluated by asking the question “How well did Romania under Carol I deal with three problems that historically are associated with the developmental process in modern Europe?” These three problems are the problem of Romanian national identity, the problem of establishing regime legitimacy in modern Romania, and the problem of political participation in the new Romanian state. (Two remaining issues – economic development and political penetration – are not dealt with here for reasons of space, though some components of them will be included where they overlap with identity, legitimacy, and participation⁹.)

On the basis of this analysis, the paper will conclude by drawing up a balance sheet, the plusses and minuses for the long reign of Carol I in the internal sphere. There are, of course, other ways in which such an assessment might be made, and it is not claimed that what follows is either definitive or excludes other analyses¹⁰.

⁸ Marie of Romania, *The Story of My Life*, New York, Scribner's, 1934, pp. 290-291. She later qualified this by adding that the King “was political, but not false or wily; he was hard and straight” (p. 369).

⁹ The “developmental crises” approach is that elaborated by Lucian W. Pye and his colleagues. I use here two now-classic volumes: Leonard Binder et alii, *Crises and Sequences in Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971; and Raymond C. Grew (ed.), *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978, which were part of the Studies in Political Development series of the Social Science Research Council under Pye's chairmanship. For an introduction to the issues at hand, see Leonard Binder, *The Crises of Political Development*, in Leonard Binder et alii, *op.cit.*, pp. 52 ff.; and Raymond C. Grew, *Crises and Their Sequences*, in Idem, *Crises of Political Development...*, 1978, pp. 15-28.

¹⁰ For example, the modernization approach, which overlaps somewhat with the approach taken here. See the *locus classicus*: C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization. A Study in Comparative History*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1967. Black's *Modernization Syndrome* (pp. 1 ff.) is described by five aspects: 1) industrialization and the creation of a consumer society; 2) urbanization, which resulted in a shift of political and economic power to the cities facilitated in part by industrialization and the mechanization of transportation; 3) the spread of education and literacy throughout society; 4) increasing political participation, the emergence of mass politics; and 5) a trend toward the rationalization of politics, with conscious efforts to direct the transformation of societies

However, this approach appears to provide a reasonable basis for assessing Caroline Romania that seems both fair and illuminating.

II. Problem of Development: Romanian National Identity

Let us turn to the problems of political development that confronted 19th and 20th century Romania. The first of these was the problem of identity¹¹, that is, the difficulties involved in establishing in the three Romanian lands (the two Danubian Romanian Principalities and Transylvania) a common national identity and political community¹², primarily in a shift of “the cultural basis of identity away from religion toward nationalism”¹³.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Western development experienced what has been called the Triple Revolution: a series of dramatic changes, beginning with the economy, followed by political upheaval, and ending with cultural change¹⁴. In the Romanian lands, the West European sequence was reversed, with cultural development occurring first, followed by political change, and only finally showing movement in the economic sphere¹⁵. This was significant.

The Romanians' situation was rendered problematic by the fact that the three Romanian lands were part of or under the domination of three surrounding empires: Tsarist Russia, the Habsburgs, and the Ottoman Empire. Being located at the crossroads of Southeastern Europe, and surrounded by expansionistic empires and peoples was a long term impediment to Romanian development¹⁶.

and a rapid bureaucratization of government. No. 1, 2, and 3 can be correlated with the developmental crisis of distribution, no. 4 is identical with the developmental of political participation, and no. 5 is part of the developmental crisis of penetration. For modernization in the Romanian case, see the papers in Bogdan Murgescu (ed.), *Romania and Europe. Modernisation as Temptation, Modernisation as Threat*, București, Editura Alpha, 2000; and Mirela-Luminița Murgescu, Bogdan Murgescu, *Tranziii, tranziții: conceptualizarea schimbării în cultura română*, in Victor Neumann, Armin Heinen (eds.), *Istoria României prin concepte. Perspective alternative asupra limbajelor social-politice*, Iași, Polirom, 2010, pp. 419-446.

¹¹ For an elaboration, see Lucian W. Pye, *Identity and the Political Culture* in Leonard Binder et alii, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-134.

¹² I have dealt extensively with these issues in the following: *Unity and Continuity in Romanian History*, in “Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism”, vol. 8 (1981), Bibliography, pp. 29-69; *Romanian Perspectives on Romanian National Development*, in “Balkanistica”, vol. 7 (1981-1982), pp. 92-120; *Romania*, in Gale Stokes (ed.), *Nationalism in the Balkans*, New York, Garland Press, 1984, pp. 38-45; *Myth and Reality in Rumanian National Development*, in “International Journal of Rumanian Studies”, vol. 5 (1987), nr. 2, pp. 5-33; and *Themes in Modern and Contemporary Romanian Historiography*, in S. J. Kirschbaum (ed.), *East European History*, Columbus, Slavica Publishers, 1988, pp. 27-40. Two recent collections of studies are also relevant here: Vasile Boari, Natalia Vlas (eds.), *Cine sunt românii? Perspective asupra identității naționale*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2009; and Vasile Boari, Ștefan Borbély, Radu Murea (eds.), *Identitatea românească în context european. Coordonate istorice și culturale*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2009.

¹³ Leonard Binder, *The Crises of Political Development*, in Leonard Binder et alii, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁴ Robert Anchor, *The Triple Revolution*, in Idem, *The Modern Western Experience*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1978, p. 1.

¹⁵ Cf. Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român*, București, Editura Univers, 1998, pp. 31 ff.

¹⁶ For the difference that this made, see my *Perceptions on Imperial Legacies in the Balkans: The Romanian Lands*, in “Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes”, vol. 36 (1998), pp. 65-77.

The precariousness of their geopolitical situation doubtless was a major factor in Romanian political culture. As a result, the Romanian elite (mostly intellectuals) tended to be “philosopher-patriots”¹⁷. The Romanian intellectual was “always the man of the fortress, whose work was bound up in the citadel’s destiny. His own destiny... could not be freed from the vicissitudes of the moment. This destiny nourished the *cearta pentru istorie*” that typified modern Romanian development¹⁸.

Leadership in the formation of Romanian national identity was initially taken by the Transylvanian Romanians, both in Transylvania and in the Danubian Principalities. In the end, it was the “generation of Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania who reached maturity between 1830 and 1848” that “provided the theoretical underpinnings of the modern Romanian national movement...”¹⁹.

Eugen Lovinescu has argued that Romanian culture was heavily influenced by the Eastern Orthodox variety of Christianity, with important consequences for their development in the 19th and 20th centuries²⁰, and Romanian evolution followed the model that the political scientists expected. This included secularization, as Hitchins has further demonstrated²¹.

After the abortive Revolutions of 1848, identity debates in the Romanian lands diverged owing to regional circumstances and the emergence of a Romanian state east of the Carpathians. Since our focus is on Carol I, who came to rule this state, our concern for the further development of national identity narrows somewhat.

The events of 1849-1866 demonstrated that this issue had been more or less resolved. A final outburst in April of 1866 of Moldovan separatism raised a small cloud on the horizon, but this effort turned out to be the last gasp of those who opposed the union of Danubian Principalities. Nevertheless, the bogey of separatism was a reason for the continued strangling grasp of the centralist mind-set on Romanian politics.

In addition, the substantial sacrifices in terms of money, resources, and manpower (some 10 000 men killed in the fighting) in the 1877-1878 Russian-Romanian-Turkish war which led to Romanian independence further cemented

¹⁷ For the philosopher-patriot, see Alexandru Duțu, *Cultura română în civilizația europeană modernă*, București: Editura Minerva, 1978, p. 47.

¹⁸ Al. Zub, *Adevăr și militantism*, in *Biruit-au gîndul (note despre istorismul românesc)*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1983, p. 33.

¹⁹ Keith Hitchins, *The Cult of Nationality*, in idem, *The Idea of Nation: The Romanians of Transylvania, 1691-1849*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985, p. 141. See also Idem, *The Rumanian National Movement, 1780-1849*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1969, and Idem, *Orthodoxy and Nationality. Andreiu Șaguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania, 1846-1873*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1977; as well as Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1997.

²⁰ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, București, Editura Ancora, [1924], vol. I, pp. 7 ff.

²¹ Keith Hitchins, *Laic și ecleziastic în mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania (1830-1869)*, in idem, *Cultură și naționalitate în Transilvania*, Cluj, Editura Dacia, 1972, pp. 30-72; and *Cultură națională sacră: intelectuali români și biserica din Transilvania, 1834-1869*, in idem, *Conștiință națională și acțiune politică la românii din Transilvania (1700-1868)*, pp. 115-151.

national unity and identity. These efforts included both volunteers and financial contributions from Transylvania and Bucovina. On the negative side, the double-dealing by Tsar Alexander II was the tipping point in Romanian-Russian relations. Though there was always an undercurrent of hostility to the Russians in 19th century Romania, after 1878 Russophobia became a widely-accepted and sometimes deadly component of Romanian nationalism.

Nevertheless, Romanians continued to be preoccupied (perhaps even obsessed) with their national identity²². Questions such as “Where have we come from? And where are we going?” engendered fierce debate. As a leading analyst of this debate wrote: “It is incontestable that in the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, Romanian consciousness was absorbed above all by the process of our becoming”²³.

Why did this occur? It was part of a rationalization process in which Romania tried to move relatively late into the European mainstream. Tudor Vianu summarized this as follows: “Our culture found itself in an interesting process of rational adaptation....centuries old traditional forces weakened, at a certain moment....It was then that this preoccupation appeared in our literature about who we are, thinking about Romanian culture and its purposes”²⁴.

In the end, far too many of modern Romania’s political leaders came from its none too substantial intellectual strata. Though naturally there were exceptions, Romanian intellectuals were no more effective in politics than elsewhere. They displayed the same talent of intellectuals everywhere for well-intentioned, but overly-theorized and technocratic approaches to public life whose consequences for the development of civil and free societies have been less than satisfactory²⁵. Unfortunately, these same intellectuals were also the principal national spokesmen of Romania. As already mentioned, prior to World War I, Romanian intellectuals had something of a fortress mentality. Between 1866 and 1914 what may be called the historicizing of Romanian civilization and life crystallized²⁶. This created a culture which tended to over-intellectualize its concerns.

The Junimists were a case in point. Their ideology, summarized in Titu Maiorescu’s famous phrase *forme fără fond* (“forms without foundation”), signaled a rejection of the artificial, the slavishly imitative, of fads and superficiality in general²⁷. Their withering cultural critique was spectacularly effective; their political impact much more modest and disappointing. Wheel their political leader, P. P. Carp, could never resist the occasion to speak the truth, particularly if it

²² See Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2001.

²³ Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, second edition, București, Editura Eminescu, 1978, p. 23.

²⁴ Tudor Vianu, *Filosofia culturii*, second edition, București, Editura Publicom, 1945, p. 287.

²⁵ On the general fecklessness of intellectuals in politics, see Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972, *passim*. On elite (i.e. intellectual) political culture, mass culture, and identity, see Lucian W. Pye, *op.cit.*, pp. 124 ff.

²⁶ See Al. Zub, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

²⁷ On *forma fără fond* see Adrian Marino, *Din istoria teoriei “forma fără fond”*, in “Anuar de Lingvistică și Istorie Literară”, vol. 19 (1968), pp. 185-188.

offended someone, in the final analysis, the uncompromising intellectual bent of the group was responsible for their equally spectacular failure politically, even in a heavily managed electoral system.

III. Problem of Development: Establishing Romanian Regime Legitimacy

The second problem of Romanian development to consider was the problem of legitimacy²⁸, that is, how successful was the effort to establish a stable, modern political order in Romania and gain acceptance for it? This also involved affirmation of nationalism as a theory of legitimacy. Finally, what contributions to this problem were made by Romanian economic development?

The forced abdication of Prince Cuza in 1866 made possible a fresh start on legitimizing the post-Crimean system. The 1866 constitution was a remarkably liberal document²⁹. It had much in common with the Belgian constitution (though not as derivative as is often asserted), and its internal arrangements were in principle the equal of any in Europe, particularly in the realm of civil liberties. Restrictions on the press were completely abolished and even though the law was modified in the 1870's and 1880's, many Romanians in the interwar era looked back at it as "too liberal".

The constitution also established the principle of the separation of powers: legislative power was to be exercised both by a two-chambered Parliament that voted the laws and by the prince who sanctioned and promulgated them. All in all, the new Romanian constitution provided for a relatively more open society than those of its neighbors. By comparison with Russia, Austria, and Turkey, the tiny new state seemed further along the road to constitutional government than others in the vicinity.

There were, however, several major flaws. Two of the main ones were a restrictive Prussian-style collegial voting system based on income, which effectively disenfranchised the majority of the population and proved unfortunate for Romanian political development; and the withdrawal of proposals to grant citizenship to non-Christians, i.e. Jews, who had been born in Romania. Both of these contributed to the problem of participation (discussed below) and plagued Romanian politics throughout Carol's reign.

By far the biggest flaw of the constitution of 1866, as R. W. Seton-Watson pointed out, was that it is "not enough to pass enlightened laws; it remained to enforce them and to imbue public opinion and the governing class with respect for the principles they embodied"³⁰. Thus, though the separation of powers was

²⁸ For an elaboration, see Lucian W. Pye, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-158.

²⁹ On the evolution of the Romanian constitution and electoral laws, see Eleodor Focșeneanu, *Istoria constituțională a României, 1859-1991*, second edition, București, Editura Humanitas, 1998; Ioan Stanomir, *Libertate, lege, și drept. O istorie a constituționalismul românesc*, Iași, Polirom, 2005; Ion Mamina, *Monarhia constituțională în România. Enciclopedia politică, 1866-1938*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2000; and Edda Binder Iijima, *Conceptul de constituție în istoria gândirii juridice românești*, in Victor Neumann, Armin Heinen, *op. cit.*, pp. 299-321.

³⁰ R.W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians*, Hamden CT, Archon Books, 1963, p. 319.

enshrined in the constitution, governing officials had fairly wide powers whose abuse could easily undermine the whole document.

Such abuses derived in part from the wide-open political dispute and conflict of Carol's first decade in Romania. Between 1866 and 1871, nearly a dozen governments ruled. Following an abortive revolt in Ploiești in 1870 and a nearly successful urban riot in 1871, Carol felt constrained to hand in a notice of his abdication. It looked as if he had failed as much as his predecessor to establish a legitimate political system capable of peaceful change and evolution. The result was increasing electoral abuses and the establishment of the idea in Romanian political culture that elections were to be "made" not held.

Success in achieving Romanian independence in 1877-1878 and in transforming Romania into a kingdom in 1881 solidified both Carol's position and helped legitimate the 1866 order of things. Except for a peasant uprising in 1888, domestic harmony increasingly could be taken for granted. Of course, from time to time, the politicians found it necessary to "resolve" the question of legitimacy by cloaking themselves in the mantle of "defenders of the nation", thus seeking to postpone dealing with important issues. The piper would have to be paid eventually.

By the end of the century, Romania was widely perceived as a commendable exception to the rule in Southeastern Europe, and in 1906, the regime staged splendid (and costly) celebrations to recognize forty years of reign by King Carol³¹. This self-congratulatory spectacle further persuaded the Romanian elite, mostly by repetition, that all was well. They took pride in observing that compared to Romania's neighbors, who frequently experienced peasant jacqueries, political violence, and other "Balkan" style unpleasantnesses, modern Romania was a model of social harmony, peaceful development, and orderly political change.

But appearances were deceiving. Perhaps Romania's passive *mioritic* culture made things seem calm when they really were not. At any rate, these fantasies were rudely interrupted by the great peasant uprising of 1907 which showed how shallow and tentative a good deal of Romanian development had been. The uprising began in February 1907 in northern Moldavia. Peasant protests, at first relatively peaceful in nature and focused on absentee owners and trusts, soon escalated. By the time they reached Muntenia in the south, the peasantry was attacking town halls and burning contract registers, destroying boyar estates, seizing stored crops, and engaging in bloody confrontations with the police and army.

The revolt was put down with vigorous and ruthless repression. The army bombed some villages with artillery, arrested scores of village teachers, intellectuals, and peasants, and may have killed as many as 11 000 people in quelling the revolt. The full extent of the costs of the 1907 revolt has never been revealed, but the myth

³¹ A 464 page book celebrating Carol's forty years and proving through a profusion of statistics the material basis for naming the King "The Wise and Victorious", was published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, Commerce, and Royal Domains: I. Popa-Burcă, *România, 1866-1906*, București, Soccec, 1907.

of an exemplary, stable Romania was shattered. So, too, was the image of a docile, long-suffering Romanian peasantry³².

Ion Luca Caragiale cogently captured the moment: “Europe had become accustomed for many years to the knowledge that the young Romanian Kingdom was the most substantial element of civilization among the Balkan states, a lover of peace and understanding, both in the relationship among social classes and in international relations – an orderly state *par excellence*. Last year, this young Kingdom even celebrated forty years of peaceful and glorious rule by its wise sovereign: as a crown to the work of progress achieved in this time, a beautiful jubilee exposition was built which accomplished so much success in the eyes of European civilization. It was a true triumph of work and peace, and the King was rightly proud and pleased. It was of course natural, then, that the recent uprising of the peasant masses, which assumed the proportions of a decidedly terrorist revolution, nearly a brutal civil war, produced in Europe such a sensation and astonishment”³³.

The economic problems of political development are not covered in this paper other than for their political implications in connection with the problem of legitimacy. Especially after 1907, the legitimacy of the Carolist regime was severely undermined by that fact that economic growth in Romania remained at a very rudimentary level, certainly far below the kind of rising expectations that Westernization brought to Europe, both East and West. The peasant revolt was one symptom of this.

A major obstacle to economic development and stability was, obviously, the neglect of the agrarian sector. Conservatives didn't want any further tampering with the social basis of Romanian society; the Liberals were more concerned with industrialization and their urban power base. The population of Romania was largely rural: 85% in 1859, 82% in 1912. Naturally, this population was primarily involved in agriculture, where the amount of arable land under cultivation expanded rapidly, from 20% in 1860 to 46% in 1915. Unfortunately, Romanian agriculture was heavily focused on grain, which comprised 84% of the total. Romanian exports told the tale: 69% of its total exports in 1913 were in wheat, ranking it fourth in the world in such exports behind Russia, Canada, and the United States. It was also third in world corn exports. At the same time, agriculture also dominated industry. In 1914, 49% of the value of production of Romanian industry was related to food processing.

The principal efforts of the Romanian elite were devoted to industrialization, but what was really lacking was deep economic development. The growth of the state was an impediment as was the pervasive appeal of state employment, which

³² It is surprising that Philip G. Eidelberg's *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt of 1907. Origins of a Modern Jacquerie*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1974, remains the most useful treatment of this problem.

³³ Ion Luca Caragiale, *1907 din primăvară până'n toamnă. Câteva note*, in Ion Luca Caragiale, *Opere*, vol. V, edited by Șerban Cioculescu, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă “Regele Carol II”, 1938, p. 167. For background on this illuminating piece, see Marin Bucur, *Opera vieții. O biografie a lui I. L. Caragiale*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1994, vol. 2, p. 272.

siphoned off the efforts of many of the best and brightest. Market liberalism, an important correlative for the expansion of political liberty and the creation of a modern civil society, did not really exist, and it is doubtful that other than a tiny minority of the Romanian elite were in sympathy with it³⁴.

The actions of the state in infrastructure increased the extent of improved roads (970 km in 1864; 27 000 km in 1910) and railroads (none in 1864, 3 600 km in 1914). But inefficiency and unwise choices placed enormous burdens on state finances. The loans contracted to pay for them mounted up as did the interest owed (it is true that German pressure in support of the shareholders of a defaulting German entrepreneur could not have been resisted).

State budgets tended to escalate and the public debt followed. Between 1899 and 1903, Romanian governments – both Conservative and Liberal – were swamped by financial crises and simply paralyzed³⁵. An oversupply of government functionaries, costly public works projects, and inefficiency-producing meddling in the economy combined to produce huge debts and economic chaos.

Confidence was not increased by the slow pace with which banking and credit institutions were developed and used. Agricultural credit was a particularly backward area, made worse because of the predominantly agricultural nature of the country. In 1872 and 1873, Conservatives created a rural credit bank, but its purpose appeared to be to funnel state subventions into the pockets of the rural oligarchy. Ironically, this *Creditul Funciar Rural* later fell under Liberal control and became one of the vehicles they used to reward their clientele.

The National Bank of Romania, formed in 1880, was also noteworthy more as a vehicle for solidifying the grasp of the Liberals on Romanian politics than for substantial contributions to economic development. And in the early 1900s, local credit bank legislation and a village cooperative law were passed. These reflected nostrums popular in the reformist wing of the Liberals (e.g. Haret and some of the recruits from the social democrats), but affected only a tiny portion of the peasantry, those who were already successful.

There was a flurry of new legislation after the events of 1907, including a new law on agricultural contracts, a law for establishing a rural credit bank that would facilitate peasant land purchases and leases, and a law abolishing lease trusts. Some peasants were able to obtain land. Peasant leasing cooperatives flourished in some areas. On the other hand, like much previous agrarian legislation, these laws were poorly enforced, a completely inadequate amount of land was made available for purchase, and the vast majority of the peasantry didn't even qualify for most of the assistance made available.

The rising generation of Liberals subsequently realized that half-measures would no longer be effective. They wanted more rapid, Romanian-dominated economic development, and more substantive agrarian and electoral reform, though

³⁴ See my *Romanian Liberalism, 1800-1947: Definition, Periodization, and a Research Agenda*, in "Xenopoliana", vol. 13 (2005), pp. 9 ff.

³⁵ Cf. Sorin Cristescu, *Regele Carol I și criza financiară din România (1899-1902)*, in Liviu Brătescu, Ștefania Ciubotaru (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 205-219.

the illiberal nature of the former likely would have cancelled out most of the benefits of the later. They continued to encourage the peasant leasing cooperatives, which went from 100 in 1907 to 600 by 1914. But when they left office in 1910, very little had actually been done, except to dangerously raise expectations.

The Conservatives, led by P. P. Carp, tried their hand at reform: their economic legislation revealed the incoherence of the by-now standard approach to society and economy. On the one hand, Carp promised support and subsidies to larger scale industry. On the other, he tried to save the moribund artisan craft industry, i.e., the kind of economic activity that subsidized large scale industry was destroying. He made available additional land to the peasantry, but avoided actual reform.

Further impetus for real reform came with Romania's participation in the 1913 Second Balkan War. Sending Romanian troops into war against Bulgaria had a highly ironical outcome: Romanian peasant soldiers were astounded when they compared their material situation with that of the supposedly more backward Bulgarians. They came back home more than ever convinced that it was time for political and agrarian reform.

A reform Liberal government under Ionel Brătianu came to power in January 1914, "swept" the usual rigged elections, and had ready by April revisions of the constitution which would prepare the way for expropriation of land for the peasants and for the establishment at long last of universal manhood suffrage³⁶. In May a constituent assembly was elected, but the outbreak of World War I two months later effectively pulled the plug on any further domestic politics.

On the whole, industrial progress was modest, but showing movement despite state impediments. Agriculture was productive, but at great cost to an exploited and down-trodden peasantry. A significant agricultural "middle class" never emerged. There was much that could be pointed to as positive; there was more that would lead us to a pessimistic prognosis. The balance is tipped in the latter direction by the role of the state in the economy, which was principally carried out for political reasons more than anything else.

In the end, both Liberals and Conservatives, especially the former, pursued economic policies designed to solidify their share of oligarchic power³⁷. A kind of master-servant relationship was perpetuated in both economy and politics which stifled entrepreneurial growth and further exaggerated the disequilibrium of Romanian economic development. The situation was not hopeless, but the lack of competition and the costly inefficiencies of such a system did not bode well for the future.

As a result of all of this, the legitimacy of the Carolist regime came under severe stress, though not as much as it had been in 1871. A sense of *deja vu*, disillusionment, and pessimism set in. More and more people came to see the Caroline 1866 system as dysfunctional. It would be difficult to envision a peaceful

³⁶ Obviously there was no thought here of expanding the vote to women, but Romania did not differ in this respect from the rest of Europe.

³⁷ See Angela Harre, *Conceptul de progres: relația conflictuală dintre liberalism și intervenția statală*, in Victor Neumann, Armin Heinen, *op.cit.*, pp. 173-199.

resolution of Romania's many internal problems, had not the Great War intervened less than a decade later³⁸.

One final issue connected with material and institutional development relates to its genuineness and viability. Rădulescu-Motru accused the politicians of producing reforms that were merely simulacra that would impoverish future generations³⁹. This was, in part, a revival of the "forms without foundations" critique of Romanian culture made by his mentor, Titu Maiorescu all the way back in 1868: "Before we had political parties...we founded political journals...Before we had village teachers, we founded village schools and before we had capable professors, we opened high schools and universities...We have politics and science, we have journals and academies...we even have a constitution...But in reality all of these are dead productions, pretenses without foundation, phantoms without body, illusions without truth...null and without value"⁴⁰. This sentiment gives an increasingly negative turn to the evaluation of the success that the regime had had in establishing long-term legitimacy.

IV. Problem of Development: Political Participation in Romania

The third problem of political development in Romania was the problem of political participation⁴¹, that is, were real political parties and a true representative electoral system created in Romania before World War I? Also involved here were issues connected with the widening of the electoral franchise⁴². Finally, what were the contributions of bureaucratization and politicization and the expansion of the Romanian state to this issue?

The constitutional provisions described in the previous section dealing with legitimacy were also critical here. Participation was dramatically restricted by a Prussian-style voting system based on four colleges, i. e. groupings of the voters based on income, which relegated the vast majority of the population (mostly peasants) to indirectly voting for only 20% of the deputies.

³⁸ Adrian-Paul Iliescu notes that though Carol I seems more impressive in comparison with his successors, the ease with which P. P. Carp and others could suggest getting rid of the dynasty during World War I "demonstrates that their [the Romanian Hohenzollerns] legitimacy was still rather fragile". Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Anatomia răului politic*, București, Ideea Europeană, 2005, p. 116.

³⁹ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Cultura română și politicianismul*, 3rd edition, București, Librăria Socecu, 1904, passim.

⁴⁰ Titu Maiorescu, *În contra direcției de astăzi în cultură română*, in "Convorbiri Literare", vol. 2 (1868), reprinted in idem, *Critice 1866-1907*, ediție completă, 2nd edition, București, Minerva, 1915, vol. 1, p. 160. On *forma fără fond* see Adrian Marino, *op.cit.*, pp. 185-188.

⁴¹ For an elaboration, see Myron Weiner, *Political Participation: Crisis of the Political Process*, in Leonard Binder et alii, *op.cit.*, pp. 159-204.

⁴² For a review of Romanian political development in this era, see Apostol Stan, *Putere politică și democrație în România, 1859-1918*, București, Editura Albatros, 1995; Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence*, West Lafayette IN, Purdue University Press, 1995; Edda Binder-Iijima, *Die Institutionalisierung der rumänischen Monarchie unter Carol I. 1866-1881*, München, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003; and Sorin Cristescu, *Carol I și politica României (1878-1912)*, București, Editura Paideia, 2007.

Conservatives, of course, wanted to keep the riffraff out of the polling places. More revealing was the fact that the “Liberals” went along with this because they feared that universal suffrage would lead to a swamping of “intelligence” by mere “numbers”. The system effectively disenfranchised the majority of the population and cemented the power of a perennially minuscule ruling group. The creation of a centrally-controlled French-style bureaucratic regime gave the government enormous patronage and leverage over most local and national political matters and led to a society in which a traditionalist agrarian oligarchy alternated in power with a nationalist, somewhat modernizing one.

Healthy political participation in Romania was also dealt a serious blow at the outset by Carol’s early Liberal governments’ disregard for constitutional niceties. Electoral fraud, including violence, soon became a “normal” way of achieving power and ruling in modern Romania. Carol’s acquiescence in this practice was an important error. Indeed, after the elections in the fall of 1866, Romania did not have another “unmanaged” election until after World War I. Little chance for much participation under such circumstances.

A second problem – which was more or less a consequence of a limited franchise and political fraud – was the failure of the regime to foster a fully functioning system of political parties in Romania. Controlled elections coupled with the minuscule size of the ruling elite (a few thousand people at most) made the creation of permanent organizational structures and concrete communities of interests unnecessary. The system of 1866 also effectively excluded large categories of the population from access to political life. Thus, not more than 2% of the population had the right to a direct vote, while another electoral segment of about 15% voted indirectly.

Whereas in a representative political order, the outcome of elections usually determine the government, in 19th century Romania, the government determined the outcome of elections. The lack of open participation in the system and the throttling of local initiatives and representation prevented the development of true political parties. Romanian “parties” remained merely factions or quasi-kinship groups organized more around personalities and patron-client relationships rather than ideas, ideologies, or programs.

The experiences of 1861-1871 had caused Carol and much of the Romanian leadership element to regard honest parliamentary government as impossible or even undesirable in Romania. The problem, however, was not that constitutional government had been tried and shown wanting; but rather it was that the application of and adherence to these principles were faulty or half-hearted. The central agenda for Romanian politicians after 1871 became to discover how they could rule within this constitutional framework without loosening their hold on the levers of power. Unfortunately, on the whole, they were able to do this pretty well until World War I.

Between 1882-1884, the Parliament debated proposals by the veteran Liberal leader C. A. Rosetti to widen the franchise by eliminating the voting colleges in favor of a single electoral body. In the end, his colleague and collaborator of forty

years, the increasingly dictatorial Prime Minister Ion C. Brătianu, forced a snap decision on his own scheme, which reduced the number of colleges to three but which also contained new restrictions on the freedom of the press to criticize the King. It was the effective end of Romanian liberalism as an ideology, though not as a political faction⁴³.

Constitutional changes weakened the Conservatives, but did not significantly broaden political participation. The number of voters did expand as economic growth proceeded. In 1888, there were about 60 000 voters; this rose by 1911 to 100 000. This preserved the oligarchic system of 1866. As a result, between 1884 and 1914, no government ever “lost” an election. The consequences of this for future Romanian development cannot be overestimated.

In the end, the masses were never brought into the political system, and politics in Romania remained an aggregate of purely personal interests. Quoting Caragiale once more: “Political parties in the European sense of the word...do not exist in Romania. The two so-called historical parties which alternate in power are in reality nothing more than two great factions, each having only clients, not partisans”⁴⁴.

Nor can the fact that nationalism was often used in this era to delay expansion of political participation under the pretext that the nation needed to remain united in the face of internal and external national desiderata. Of course we are all too well aware today that national security is a handy pretext for expansion of governmental bureaucracies, which never seem to diminish in size once the crisis has passed⁴⁵.

Another participation issue deserves mention here: the disenfranchisement of the Jews. Their situation under the 1866 constitution was slightly ameliorated after the Russo-Romanian-Turkish War of 1877-1878. Great Power recognition of Romanian independence had been made contingent on changing the Constitution of 1866 to allow Jewish citizenship. This the Romanians did grudgingly and more or less *pro forma*. Approval of citizenship for Jews had to be done on a piecemeal basis by separate laws passed through the Romanian Parliament. In practice this resulted in relatively few Jewish naturalizations (perhaps fewer than a thousand between 1879 and 1914), while the debate the matter evoked demonstrated that whatever claims were being made to the contrary, the Jewish problem was still a problem.

By the early 1900s, cynicism over the political process was seriously mounting. The philosopher and writer Constantin Rădulescu-Motru published a book in 1904 entitled *Cultura română și politicianismul* in which he charged that Romanian politicians had turned their jobs into a kind of “trade”, thereby “transforming public institutions and services from a means of accomplishing the

⁴³ See my *The Strange Death of Romanian Liberalism*, in Liviu Brătescu (ed.), *Liberalismul românesc și valentele sale europene*, Iași, Editura PIM, 2011, pp. 143-157.

⁴⁴ Ion Luca Caragiale, *op.cit.*, p. 171-173.

⁴⁵ For a case study, see Robert Higgs, *Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987.

public good...into the means for accomplishing personal interests”⁴⁶. Further, “Politicianism...is produced either by a degeneration of true politics...or by an inconsistency between the mechanisms of political life and the spiritual base of the people called to practice them”⁴⁷. Whether Carol’s interest in political intrigue alluded to above by Queen Marie was part of his natural bent or whether it was a natural result of trying to cope with the Romanian political milieu, the result was the same: he responded to, was part of, and contributed to the politicization of Romanian society for which it paid dearly in the 20th century.

The same theme can be seen in the rising critique of *ciocoism*, the growing number of parvenus whose primary aspiration in life was a government post of any sort⁴⁸ (this was a favorite theme of Caragiale’s plays). The main displays of entrepreneurial skill unfortunately came to be channeled into politics. A governmental post, however modest or useless, was the career objective of far too many educated Romanian youth and the educational system itself was too often seen mainly as preparation for service as a state functionary. In Romania, the bureaucratized state escalated to such an extent that by 1900, some 2% of the population was employed as state functionaries. This compared to 3% employed in Romanian industry, only a quarter of whom were in enterprises with 25 or more workers.

A further problem was the establishment of a centrally-controlled French-style bureaucratic regime of prefects, sub-prefects, and mayors. These jobs were filled, directly and indirectly, from București, and gave the government enormous leverage over virtually all local political matters including elections. The compatibility of strong, honest civic traditions with a strong centralized bureaucracy is questionable. “Power tends to corrupt”, Lord Acton has taught us, and it is difficult to see how the bureaucratic mentality that existed could have avoided undermining the kind of initiative and respect for rule of law necessary for building a civil society and a democratic political culture.

The political centralism of Romanian political culture is explicable even if we now can see its perverse impact. The basic factors were the influence of the French and (later) Prussian centralist models, a fear of incipient separatism, the growing 19th century popularity among intellectuals of social engineering and holistic theories of society, and, finally, the desire for control that tended to dominate the Romanian environment. Few people even recognized the dangers.

All of this resulted in the rapid expansion of bureaucratized, centralized state mechanisms which were a prominent feature of the period after 1878. In the early 1890s, Junimist promises to pursue decentralization fell by the wayside as control of the central bureaucracy over the counties and local governments was further increased, and a rural police force was established to give the government a speedier response to local unrest. The role of the state in Romanian society was exaggerated

⁴⁶ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *op.cit.*, p. iii.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. iv. On the subject, see Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Anatomia răului politic...*, pp. 125 ff.

⁴⁸ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Anatomia răului politic...*, pp. 123-125.

and its baneful influences and effects condoned, ignored, or overlooked. Modern Romania came to be dominated by an urban oligarchy anchored in a bureaucratic, self-perpetuating political order.

In the end, the lack of political participation and the lack of a more honest effort to resolve the problem of political participation were beginning to call the entire system into question⁴⁹. Ralf Dahrendorf has argued in his stimulating study *Society and Democracy in Germany* that “liberal democracy can become effective only in a society in which, (1) equal citizenship rights have been generalized; (2) conflicts are recognized and regulated rationally in all institutional orders; (3) elites reflect the color and diversity of social interests; and (4) public virtues (that is private charitable activities) are the predominant value orientation of the people”. The failures of the Romanian experience confirm this hypothesis⁵⁰.

V. A Balance Sheet

Let us turn now to an assessment of political development under Carol I.

1. Identity

With regard to the problem of Romanian national identity, the results of development during Carol's reign was both good and bad. Most of the principal components that would lead to a resolution of this developmental crisis were already in place by 1866. This was, perhaps, consolidated. Separatism as a political option came to an end. After 1871, the union of the principalities never came into serious question. However, though regionalism continued, Romanian nationalists tended to view it with alarm.

Interestingly, though it could be claimed that this problem had been resolved, it was not. Part of the problem is that speculations and debates on Romanian national identity and character have continued right up to the present, becoming an addiction or habit of Romanian political culture. One symptom of this is the fact that Romanians are all too quick to identify anyone who questions even the smallest aspect of Romanian identity as a *trădător de neam*.

Secondly, whether Romanian nationalism is entirely healthy is debatable. Lord Acton warned us as early as 1862 of the dangers of modern nationalism since it is fatal to liberty, it unleashes the total state, it logically leads to what we now call genocide, and, in the end, “the settlement at which it aims is impossible”⁵¹.

Much of this was not Carol's fault, but it was a product of the crisis of identity that took place during his watch. I would give him a barely passing grade.

2. Establishment of Regime Legitimacy

Carol I never really elicited the warmth of response that Prince Cuza did, but he did come to be respected and recognized, especially for the establishment on an independent Romanian Kingdom (1878-1881). Carol's survival in 1871 and after

⁴⁹ On politicianism and on Motru, see also Lovinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. II, 1925, pp. 177 ff.

⁵⁰ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Garden City NY, Doubleday, 1969, pp. 27-29.

⁵¹ Lord Acton, *Nationality*, in idem, *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, edited by J. N. Figgis and R.V. Laurence, London, Macmillan, 1907, pp. 279-300.

seemed to end the instability of the Romanian throne, which had been a problem for centuries. The establishment and legitimation of a new political order in Romania appeared to have been solved. However, there was a rather large gap between image and reality in Carol's Romania. In the words of Caragiale: "In truth, perhaps in no state, at least in Europe, does there exist such a huge discrepancy between reality and appearances, between actuality and pretense"⁵². This legitimacy was undermined by the peasant revolt of 1907, though not really jeopardized.

I would give him a low passing grade here as well.

3. Participation

In terms of the problem of participation, one would have to give very poor marks indeed to Carol I and his regime. Carol's baptism by fire in the 1860s and early 1870s severely blunted his youthful optimism and left him convinced that a more autocratic regime in partnership with selected elements of the Romanian elite was the solution.

The establishment of a narrow electorate in Carol I's Romania had the effect of retarding the appearance in Romania of real political parties. There were no real parties as such and as long as so few people could actually participate in Romanian politics, it was to remain a matter of personalities, clubs, factions, and the like. It was also the unfortunate case that electoral operations in Romania generally revealed more about who was conducting them than about public opinion. In addition, there remained the curious phenomenon in Romania that a vote of no confidence in the government generally meant the fall of the parliament rather than the ministry. It is one thing to talk the talk; it is another to walk the walk.

Caragiale summarizes: "Administration is composed of two great armies. One holds power and feeds itself; the other waits in opposition starving. When the well-fed have become impotent through excessive appetite, and the starving have reached complete famine, then street disturbances ensue...Plebeians, clients, along with university and high school students, often led by university professors, demand the overthrow of the government. The faction in power, fattened with spoils, is incapable of maintaining itself against the torrent of the masses, that is the faction consumed by hunger, while the King, jealous of the European reputation for the peace and order of his state, is forced to dismiss, *avec force compliments*, the cabinet which has an almost unanimous majority in the parliament, and call the head of the opposition to form a new cabinet and to dissolve the parliament..."⁵³.

Because of these issues, Romania never really developed a parliamentary system on the Western model or real political parties. Nor did it ever completely resolve the problem of peaceful governmental change. A significant result was tremendous ministerial instability with all of its attendant problems: political, administrative, and financial.

⁵² Ion Luca Caragiale, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 172. Caragiale was not alone in his biting commentary on Carol's Kingdom. Compare Șt. M. Zeletin, *Din Țara măgarilor. Însemnări*, București, I. Brănișteanu, 1916, a thinly-veiled satirical look at a "Land of Jackasses" which appears to have a lot in common with pre-World War I Romania.

The greatest flaws were that the masses (largely peasants) were never brought into the political system and the agrarian question remained a subject of much talk and an equal amount of inaction. As a result, politics in Romania remained an aggregate of purely personal elite interests guaranteed by clientelism and fraud, the peasantry was hailed as the *tâlpa țării*, but counted for precisely nothing in the system.

It is in this area that the greatest failures occurred, failures that blighted other aspects of Romanian development as well. Overall, it is hard to disagree with Adrian-Paul Iliescu's conclusion: "If the agrarian problem and the national problem were the principal problems of Romania at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, then Carol I was not a great statesman...not only because he did not find suitable solutions for these problems, but also because the attitudes he adopted (conservative, maintaining the status quo) in both cases were far from being optimal"⁵⁴.

Carol I and the Romanians made a good deal of progress between 1866 and 1914, but sadly so much more could have been achieved. Circumstances were daunting, especially before 1881, but there is simply no excuse for most of the failures which followed between 1881 and the World War. Too many chances were missed and too many opportunities were lost, especially because the bottom line was the preservation of the privileged status of Carol and the ruling elites. It could be usefully asked if Carol did any better than his Eastern European contemporaries in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. Unfortunately, this is not a question easily answered, but even a positive response would not mitigate the lack of success that he and his collaborators had in dealing with key developmental issues. Thus, it is with regret and disappointment that on the 100th anniversary of Carol I's death, the overall assessment of his regime has to be negative.

⁵⁴ Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Monarhia și problemele-cheie ale societății*, in Liviu Brătescu, Ștefania Ciubotaru (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 181.