

# THE ROMANIAN AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE THESIS OF THE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY\*

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**Abstract.** Although the perspective of religious identity as a crucial element of national identity has been less “visited” lately, diverse opinion polls indicate that there is a sound correlation of religious and national identities. The paper investigates this thesis of the convergence of national and religious identity after the communist atheist dominance, which is in Romania and Europe not only a landmark event, but also a favourable factor for a relative renewal of the correlation. There are common values and ideals appreciated by individuals as constitutive for both their national identity and religious identity. Take for instance an imperative such as “Blessed are the peacemakers!” and the correlated civic attitude and action promoting hopes and renewed solidarities. The paper addresses the fortunate correlation of religious principles and values with social security themes and with climate change themes. We notice that in the Romanian case, religious identity has played a very important role in the constitution of the Romanian State, and, in contemporary times, in the Romanian case, we see indeed a convergence of the national and religious identity and a confirmation of the announced thesis.

**Keywords:** *National Identity; Religious Identity; Atheism; Civic Attitude; Social Issues and Climate Issues*

## *The Theme of National Identity and Religious Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An Introduction*

The perspective of religious identity as a founding, or at least consolidating, factor for national identity has been less “visited” lately. Terrorist events have brought fundamentalism, intolerance and violence to light. Discourse and the religious trigger of violence have often been correlated, and yet the correlation

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between religion and violence is not absolutely necessary, as all religions follow more or less the imperative “Blessed are the peacemakers!”

Ziya Meral<sup>1</sup>, specialist in Security Studies at Foreign Policy Research Institute has recently signed “Religion, Identity and Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” a study interpreting violence as a factor leading to religion, which may alter or reform religions, while religions may add new traits to conflicts and terrorism (phenomenon studied especially after the attacks of September 11). Anyway, both religion and violence are inscribed into a deeper and specific human nature.

In this analysis, both are answers of adaptation at the bio-social hardship of survival. The disputable or simplistic explanations of the current realities proposed visions such as the clash of civilizations, or glorifying science and education as guaranteed saviours, in fact all explanations returned to the symbolic discourse about the “other”, always to blame, always wrongfully violent, opposed to “us” always right in defending the right identity, values, religion and faith. Ziya Meral shows that eventually religion does not qualify to be studied with the same attention as, let’s say, economy, and religions are solely manipulative resorts of specific actors and political agendas.

At the same time, the analyst emphasizes that this is not quite the core of the matter and it is also simplistic. Religions matter deeply for people, even if they do not matter for all people and to the same extent. They should be taken seriously. Fact is that a serious study is extremely difficult since all aspects are contextual and particular, religions are part of people’s lives and universal conclusions are too difficult to be reached. So, while people believe that religion should offer them a better future life and that religions have a moral influence on people, more important is that religion offers determinant significance for lives in a chaotic world that makes personal fulfilment a difficult goal.

Religion contributed to the survival and progress of the species, establishing enduring identities and visions of the world, selves and communities. We should study religions, religious language, religious ideologies and personalities, for all yield founding narratives for individuals and communities. For instance, we may remark along with the analyst the legitimating (national and supranational) importance granted by white extremist people to Christianity. But religious nationalism is present all over the globe in Turkey, India, Russia, Hungary and the United States. This is at once a local and global phenomenon. Religions offer a solution to cope with anomy, with the contemporary feeling of disintegration of norms, standards, values meanings and explanations which constitute the basis of individual identities and the communities’ glue. “Anomy” a term proposed by Émile Durkheim for the study of the changes undergone by the labour forces during Industrial Revolution and modernization, is still central in sociological investigations of the disappearance of the grand narratives, the widespread confusion and fragmentation, worsen by the impact of new technologies and pandemics.

<sup>1</sup> Ziya Meral, “Religion, Identity and Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, available at <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/11/religion-identity-and-politics-in-the-21st-century/>, issued at 20 November 2020, accessed at 20 February 2022.



It was also Durkheim who emphasized that religion is a genuinely social thing. In our view for those who can embrace it, religions are a source of comfort, truth, meaning in a dissolving world, wrecked by climate change, economic and political crises, complicated international relations and wars, and eventually also by the difficulties of human interaction, aggravated by the cultural hegemony of *political correctness* pushed to the brink of ridicule.

Sacrifices and symbolic scape goats, spectacles of distractions and true tragedies involve religious aspects, even nowadays (see the current Russian war against Ukraine). During the pandemics we have witness the rise of “Science”, “belief in the virus” and “belief in the vaccine” as true and powerful divinities of the day, competing with the ones proposed by traditional religions. Fact is that the truth, when engaged in legitimacy games, becomes less of a principle and more of a rhetorical ideological element. Discourses about “true science”, “true religion”, “true safety and security”, “true freedom” or “true democracy” mark the end of tolerance, as good will, in terms of mutual acceptability among people and the beginning of social dissolution.

As Meral also shows, religions are “alive” and they do not exist in a “vacuum”, but in historical cultural, socio-political, economic, national, communion contexts: the eternal truths of religion are protected, interpreted and applied in mediated, particular, profoundly human and contextual manners, via particular language and national and political “geographies”. Religions act through contextualized and imperfect people, guided by their hopes and illusions, as by their principles and by their more or less principled interests. These people may source of solutions or part of our problems.

In this current democratic context with a significant role in raising awareness of various socio-political factors in relation to the problems and challenges of a common European and global future, it is relevant to discuss the thesis of the convergence of religious and national identity. Before moving on to the image of European and Romanian religious realities, as reflected in the results of opinion polls, it is clarifying to acknowledge the minute Christian-Islam positive instances of relationship (as in Romania, Bulgaria etc.) and the positive civic and social influence of Christian principles and values, so far, rather “visible” and active in Europe.

### *Religious Identity as a Part of National Identity*

A recent study of PEW shows that “At almost a quarter of a century after the fall of the Iron Curtain and Soviet Union, an opinion poll realized at Pew Research Centre indicates that religion is reaffirmed as a important part of individual and national identity in many Eastern European countries were once the communist regimes repressed religious practice and promoted atheism.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pew Research Centre, May 10, 2017, “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”, p. 6.

### *National and religious identities converge in a region once dominated by atheist regimes*

Roughly a quarter of a century after the fall of the Iron Curtain and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, a major new Pew Research Center survey finds that religion has reasserted itself as an important part of individual and national identity in many of the Central and Eastern European countries where communist regimes once repressed religious worship and promoted atheism.

Today, solid majorities of adults across much of the region say they believe in God, and most identify with a religion. Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism are the most prevalent religious affiliations, much as they were more than 100 years ago in the twilight years of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires.

In many Central and Eastern European countries, religion and national identity are closely entwined. This is true in former

### **Religious landscape of Central and Eastern Europe**

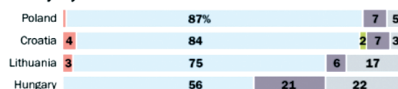
% who identify as ...

Orthodox Catholic Muslim Unaffiliated Other

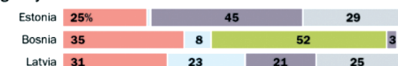
#### **Orthodox majority**



#### **Catholic majority**



#### **Religiously mixed**



#### **Majority religiously unaffiliated**



Note: 13% of respondents in Hungary identify as Presbyterian. In Estonia and Latvia, 20% and 19%, respectively, identify as Lutherans. And in Lithuania, 14% say they are "just a Christian" and do not specify a particular denomination. They are included in the "other" category. A negligible share of respondents in each country decline to answer the question. They are included in the "other" category. Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe"

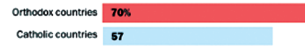
*Figure 1. "The religious landscape of Central and Eastern Europe", according to a PEW Research Centre survey: "13% of respondents in Hungary identify as Presbyterians. In Estonia and Latvia, 20% and 19% respectively are Lutherans. In Lithuania 14% simply recommended themselves as Christians without specifying a membership; some may be included in the category "and others". A negligible percentage declines the answer to the question (no answer). They are included in the "and others" category. Survey conducted between June 2012 and July 2016. See [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org).*

This European religious "landscape" can be interpreted in many ways. As far as we are concerned, since a negligible percentage declines the answer to the question of religious affiliation, religious identity is a real issue, faced by the population with a positive or neutral attitude. This is a favourable context for emphasizing the convergence of religious and national identity. Only the Czech Republic is an exception, with a majority of the population not religiously affiliated. The representation below highlights the orthodox dimension of the "strong" correlation between religion and national identity, according to data obtained from the same research.

**Strong association, especially in Orthodox-majority countries, between religion and national identity**

% who say being Orthodox/Catholic is very or somewhat important to truly share their national identity

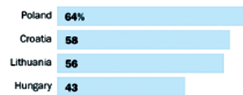
**Median results of surveyed countries**



Among those in Orthodox-majority countries, % who say being Orthodox is very or somewhat important to truly be a national of their country



Among those in Catholic-majority countries, % who say being Catholic is very or somewhat important to truly be a national of their country



Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries.  
See Methodology for details.  
"Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe"  
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

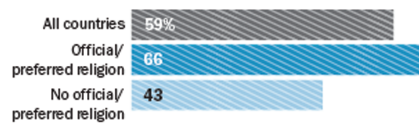
Figure 2. Strong association between religion and identity in Orthodox – majority countries

The central result of the research clearly indicates that: Many Europeans in Central and Eastern European countries see a link between religion and national identity. In the explicit interpretation of the authors of the research, today, adult Europeans declare their faith in God solid. As can be seen in the graphic representation above, Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism are the most widespread religious affiliations, as they were more than 100 years ago in the final years of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. In many Central and Eastern European countries, religion and national identity are closely linked. This is true in former communist states, such as the Russian Federation and Poland, where most say being Orthodox or Catholic is important to being “truly Russian” or “truly Polish.” The harsh communist atheist propaganda climate accentuated the pre-communist nostalgia for religious identity as well. It has become associated with a national myth of the golden age. After the atheist communist overbidding of a national mythology with its apogee in the future, followed an overbidding of the myth of the golden age with the situation of national identity in the past, anchored in faith. Research shows that this is also the case in Greece, where the church played a central role in Greece’s struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire and where three-quarters of the public (76%) believe that being Orthodox is important to being “truly Greek.” From a democratic, pluralistic and tolerant perspective, such formulations can be speculated propagandistically to the detriment of solidarity, a functioning democracy and national unity.

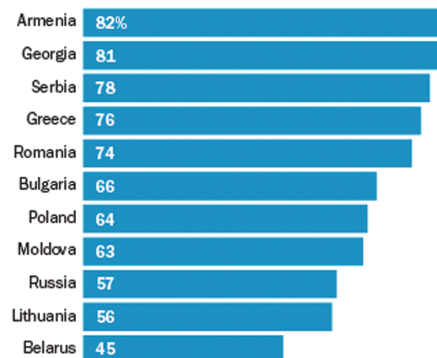
### Official or preferred religion seen as very important for national identity

% who say being part of dominant religious group is very or somewhat important to truly share their national identity

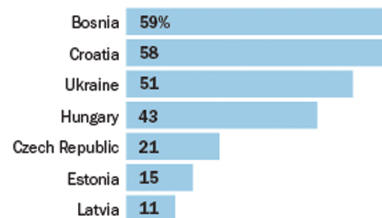
#### Median results of surveyed countries



#### Among those in countries with an official or preferred religion...



#### Among those in countries with no official or preferred religion...



Note: In each country, "dominant religion" was replaced with the specific denomination. For example, in Russia respondents were asked about being Orthodox and in Poland about being Catholic. In Estonia and Latvia, respondents were asked about being Lutheran; in Bosnia respondents were asked about their own religious group — for example, Muslims were asked if one had to be Muslim to truly be Bosnian.

Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Analysis of official or preferred religions from Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

"Many Countries Favor Specific Religions, Officially or Unofficially"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 3. "Many Europeans in Central and Eastern European countries see a link between religion and national identity", cf. [https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/03/many-central-and-eastern-europeans-see-link-between-religion-and-national-identity/pf\\_17-10-03\\_restrictionsstate-religions\\_identity/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/03/many-central-and-eastern-europeans-see-link-between-religion-and-national-identity/pf_17-10-03_restrictionsstate-religions_identity/).

The study shows that many people in the region embrace religion as an element of national affiliation, although they are not very observant. Relatively few Orthodox or Catholic adults in Central and Eastern Europe say that they regularly attend worship services, pray often, or that religion is essential to their lives. For example, an average of only 10% of Orthodox Christians in the region say they go to church weekly. Indeed, compared to the many populations that the Pew Research Centre has previously questioned – from the United States to Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa – Central and Eastern Europeans, the East has relatively low levels of religious involvement. From our point of view, a significant part of the explanation for this conclusion is the French and German models of secularism and state-church separation that played an important role during the modernization of this state, through national elites educated at major French universities and German.

Romania is a typical part of the European context, especially from the perspective of the dominant features in Central and Eastern Europe: “Romanian State, the separation between religious life and the institutions of law in Romanian society, can serve as a model for others. Of course, the system of relations between Church and State is defined only at the constitutional level. Laws to be adopted by the Romanian legislature are to have their say in this field. Given the fact that it is customary to look at Europe ‘mesmerizingly googling it’, without analysing Europeanization in all its manifestations, we run the risk of heading for something we do not know exactly what it is. For these reasons, we consider it useful to analyse the role and place of the Churches in the European Member States, because this approach provides us with a wide range of concrete situations.”<sup>3</sup> The author of this quote is Priest Patriciu Vlaicu, who conducts an interesting transversal analysis of the European constitutions: “In France, the cults enjoy a special status in the departments of Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, and Moselle, a legal status that was in force before the introduction into French law of December 9, 1905, on the separation of church and state. This special status distinguishes between recognized cults and unrecognized cults. There are four recognized denominations: the Catholic cult, the Lutheran Church of the Augsburg conference, the Reformed Church, and the Israelite cult. The appointment of Catholic bishops, as well as leaders of recognized cults, is done only with the approval of the French government, and these religious staff receive special treatment, consisting of material advantages. Muslim, Orthodox, Protestant cultures are not attached to the recognized one and the various sects are not recognized. The decree of 18 March 1959 makes the exercise of these cults subject in principle to an authorization, but in fact the text has not been applied. Believers in these cults are organized into associations, which acquire legal personality and legal capacity, by registering with the clerk of the court competent for their headquarters. Following the decision of the Council of State of 4 July 1980, the administrative authority may not oppose the registration of a religious association for reasons beyond the control of public policy.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Priest Patriciu Vlaicu, *Locul și rolul recunoscut bisericilor în țările Uniunii Europene* [The Place and the Role recognized for Churches in the European Union's Countries], Cluj-Napoca, Arhidiecezana Publishing House, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations, The Committee for Human Rights, CCPR/C/46/Add2, 26 august 1987, No. 384, apud P. Vlaicu, *op. cit.*

The separation Church-State is a vital prerequisite for the State to be able to grant the freedom of religion. For instance, in the study mentioned, Article 22 of the Luxembourg Constitution states: "The intervention of the State in the appointment and installation of the heads of cults, the manner of appointment and removal of other employees of the cults, the faculty for some or others to keep in touch with their superiors and to publish their acts as well as the Church's relationship with the State, are the subject of conventions. they must be brought up for discussion by the Chamber of Deputies, for provisions that require their intervention". It is noted that the text of this article does not refer to the Catholic Church, but from the general historical context and the concordat tradition of Luxembourg it can be linked to this Church.<sup>5</sup> The author points out that a law dated 23 November 1982 recognizes the Reformed Protestant Church in Luxembourg, giving it legal personality and determining the functions and activities remunerated by the State. Sweden guarantees every citizen "freedom of religion, that is, the freedom to practice one's own religion, alone or in association with others."<sup>6</sup> The author observes that even in cases where the institution of the recognition of cults appears, it does not have as its objective the restriction of religious freedom, but is only a guarantee for the protection of public peace and good morals. Article 41 of the Portuguese Constitution states that "freedom of religion is 'inviolable'" and that "no one may be persecuted, deprived of rights ... on the grounds of beliefs" or "religious practices". In States where there is a privileged regime for one or more Churches, religious freedom is satisfactorily guaranteed. Father Vlaicu observes that only the kings of Denmark and England are not free to belong to any cult.

Lilly Weissbrod has published a study on religion as a national identity in a secular society since 1983.<sup>7</sup> The researcher highlights the role of religion in providing values that strengthen national identity. Although the role may not be universal, it is fulfilled, even in secular societies. The hypothesis is especially true in Israel where secularization was an important part of the establishment of national identity. A very interesting idea presents the national symbols as secular versions of the religious ones, while the secular national ideology includes the messianic idea, of a religious nature. The role of national and religious values is both fundamentally integrative and central, vital to stability, no matter how pluralistic or secular a society is. What is certain is that most Europeans identify with their religion, and recent studies conducted in Romania nuance this aspect.

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<sup>5</sup> P. Vlaicu, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Art. 6 of the Sweden Constitution, 1975. *Ibidem.*

<sup>7</sup> Lilly Weissbrod, Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society", *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 24, No. 3, March 1983.



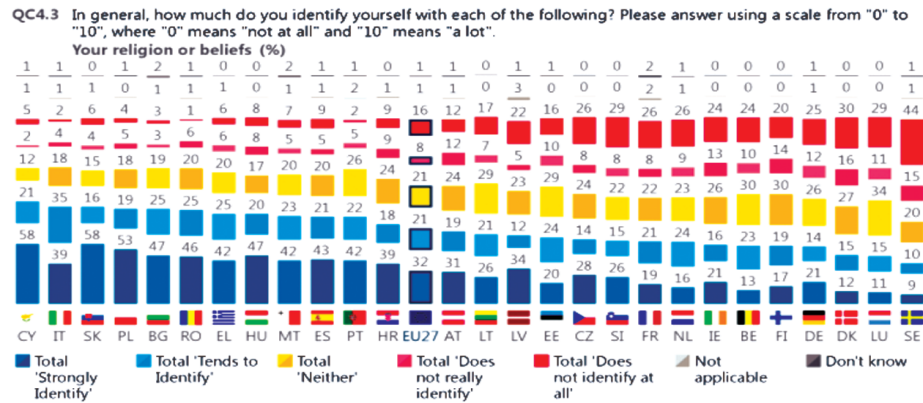


Figure 4. "Almost half of Europeans identify with their religion".  
Cf. Special Eurobarometer 508, November 2020-November 2021

### *On Religious Identity and Being "Truly Romanian"*

An analysis from 2013, investigating the interaction between majority orthodoxy and the state in fulfilling its role in asserting national identity in the context of a modernization process focused on national and geostrategic issues.<sup>8</sup> Historically, the separation of the State Church has gone through various stages. Recognized as a symbol of national identity, the Orthodox Church had a special status and was part of the main institutions of the project of modernization and national constitution seen as a state church that accepts the prerogatives established by secular power. In the interpretation of C. Schifirneț, the Orthodox Church became a church forged in the modernization process decided by the state, as a result, a series of ambivalences characteristic of the modernization process itself ambivalently influenced the role of Orthodoxy in asserting national identity.<sup>9</sup> We can remember that during the Romanian communist regime there was both a partnership with the communist power and a marginalization of this church and an oppression of the faithful.

From our perspective, national identity is based on the tripartite correlation behaviour-feeling of belonging-religious belief. The barometers of religious life in Romania conducted in December 2020 and December 2021 highlight this aspect and bring confirmation to the nuance of the stated thesis: "the convergence of national and religious identity accentuated by the atheism of the communist regime." As there are no major differences between the answers obtained in the two opinion polls conducted in 2020 and 2021, we will use and further comment on the recent results of the December 2021 survey.

We will start with a seemingly contradictory result. The 40% percentage is discouraging. But if we add up the percentages for "More religious than during

<sup>8</sup> Constantin Schifirneț, "Orthodoxy, Church, State and National Identity in the Context of Tendential Modernity", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 12, issue 34, Spring 2013, pp. 173-208.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.



communism” and for “As religious as during communism” we come to the idea that “a majority is as or more religious than during communism.” Sure, this is just an interpretation. We can still interpret, without forcing things, that there is an inclination towards the answer that confirms the stated thesis. In fact, the answers obtained according to the slide below speak more about the secular nature of society, about pluralism and diversity in Romanian society and about a certain reluctance to a possible fundamentalist image of Romanians, than about the irrelevance of religious identity for Romanians.

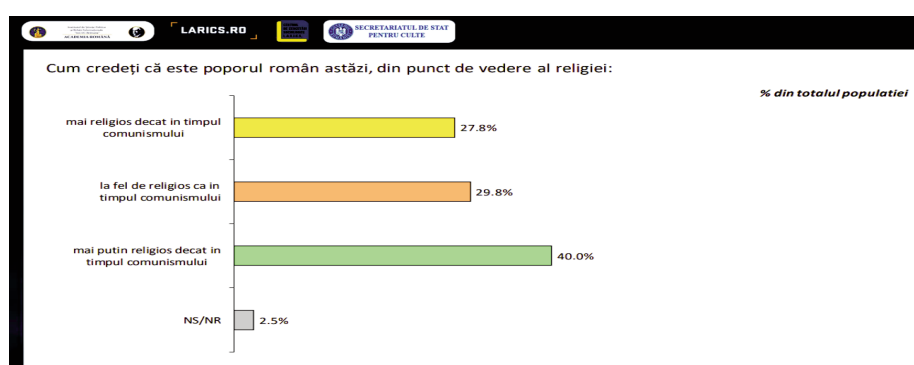


Figure 5. Comparison of degrees of religiosity in public opinion between the communist past and the present; cf. [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

The comparison leads to an apparent contradiction of the thesis that we analyse appearance that will be clarified in the answers received to the other questions of the study. Immediately to the question “Do you consider yourself a religious person?” we get a majority of answers that confirm the religiosity of the population (56.7% answer “Surely, yes”).

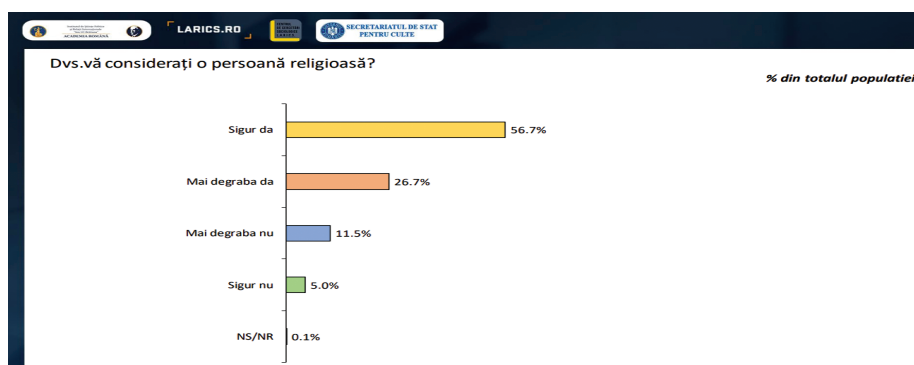


Figure 6. “Do you consider yourself a religious person?”, cf. [https://larics.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

When we correlate the first two answers, we reach an impressive 83.4% of respondents who are rather religious and certainly religious. The picture is very clear: only a religious dominant of society can be justified in relation to these results.

This slide contradicts the “indifference” to religion stated in the slide above and confirms our interpretation. A majority of 89.8% of respondents assert their faith in God. After all, what should be our acceptance of being religious? Dictionaries build the definition by “religion”, “godly”, “pious”. The online religious dictionary, by Ion M. Stoian, Garamond Publishing House, 1994 adds to the definition of the term “religious” the term “church”. If people believe that they believe in God, then they are religious. This statement is only in apparent contradiction with “indifference to religion”, which should be understood in the sense of tolerant neutrality and democratic pluralism, as I have previously interpreted.

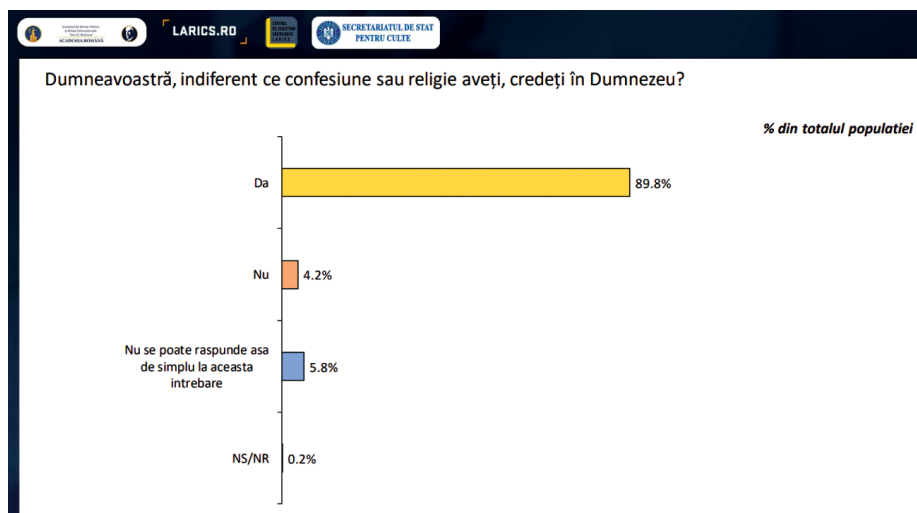


Figure 7. “Regardless what denomination or religion you have; do you believe in God?”, [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

When it comes to religious practice, we get other values. Frequent participation does not characterize the vast majority; however, we should notice that the great majority does not refuse or avoid at all costs this participation. In fact, people welcome it at all the important family holidays and events (in our view, as a validation of the importance of the event). In our interpretation, this is the relevant aspect.

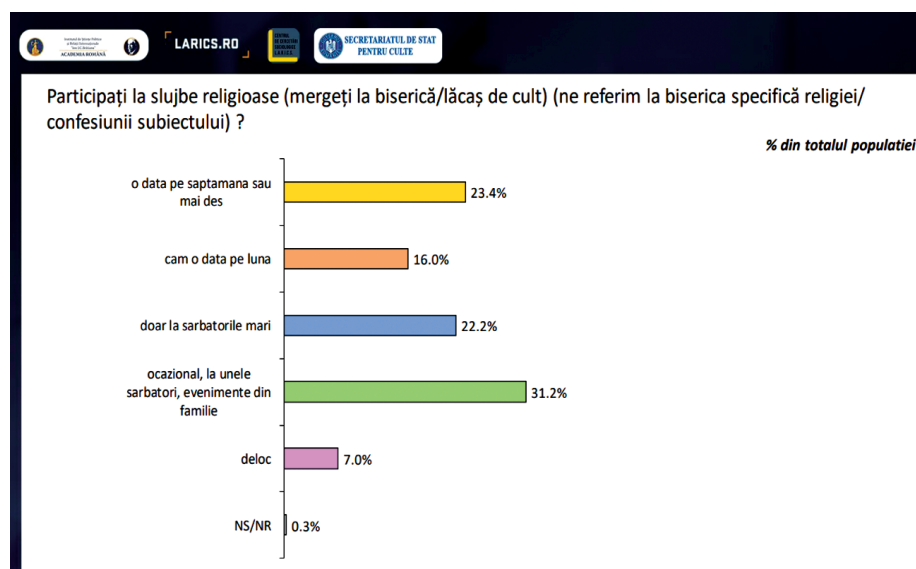


Figure 8. “Do you take part in religious sermons (...)?” [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

To the question “On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important, how important is religion in your life?” it turns out that religion is extremely important for 42.9% of Romanians and very important for another 11.4% and 15.2%, with high scores of 8 and 9. These data also indicate arguments for a state of affairs characterized by increased religiosity, in support of the thesis stated and investigated in this study. In all probability, this result was to be expected.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In a world where the present imposes confusion, uncertainty and loneliness, not just a plethora of issues of acute importance, such as the clash of civilizations, pluralism, globalization, human rights, migration, interreligious dialogue with the perennial themes of education, culture and the nation, life and coexistence of the Orthodox Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is much more challenging. We find a similar argument in the work entitled *Orthodoxy Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. Inter-Christian and interreligious themes for the 21st century*, signed by Adrian Boldișor, who describes the ideal of the Orthodox Church to be “the living presence of Christ in the world”; a quality in which in author’s opinion engages people in “doing good” and in-depth communication about Orthodoxy and “heavenly bread.” In the subtext, as in the “first text”, in some places the theme of the intellectual as a spiritual leader is the major concern that runs through themes such as “clash of civilizations” and the reconfiguration of “global politics along cultural lines.” The “seeds” that Orthodoxy has to offer are the protagonists of the spiritual dialogue that the author raises to the rank of a path to communion through otherness, a method of illuminating the potential for mutual enrichment between different cultures and civilizations, beyond and in spite of or through their various “clashes”. Adrian Boldișor, *Ortodoxia ieri, azi, mâine. Teme intercreștine și interreligioase pentru secolul XXI* [Orthodoxy Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. Inter-Christian and Inter-Religious Themes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century], Craiova, Mitropolia Olteniei Publishing House, 2019, pp. 22-23.

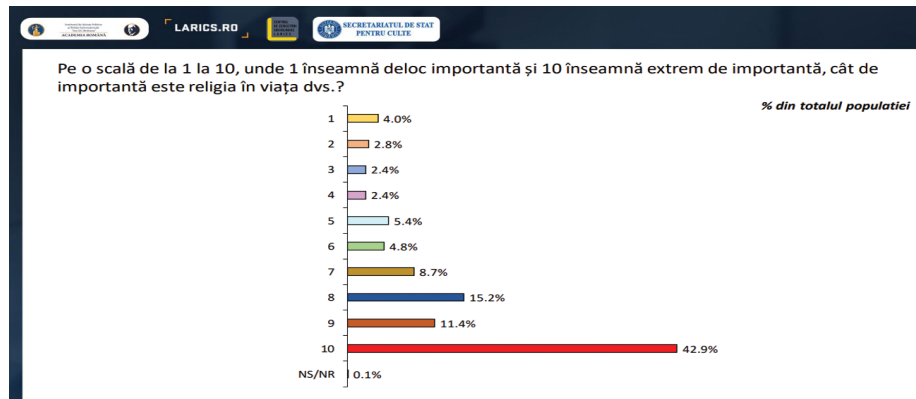


Figure 9. “On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important, how important is religion in your life?”, [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

Today’s perception of adults is that their parents were “extremely religious” and “very religious.” Whether or not this perception accurately corresponds to the past communist reality, from our point of view, such answers speak more about the careful and respectful reporting to religion of those who are the adults nowadays, for whom the parents are, to a large extent, genuine symbols loaded with respect and role models.

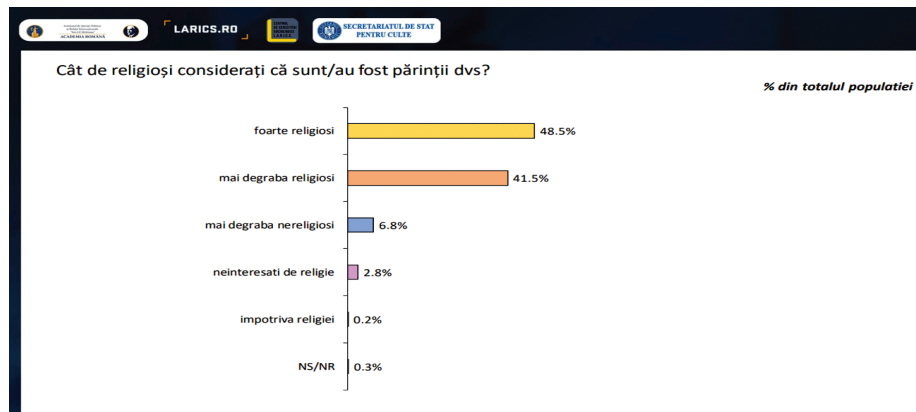


Figure 10. “How religious were your parents?”, [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

When asked explicitly what statement they agree with, the respondents answered in 59.9% that “Religion is fundamental for the national identity of Romanians”, a clarifying confirmation of the thesis of the convergence of national and religious identity.

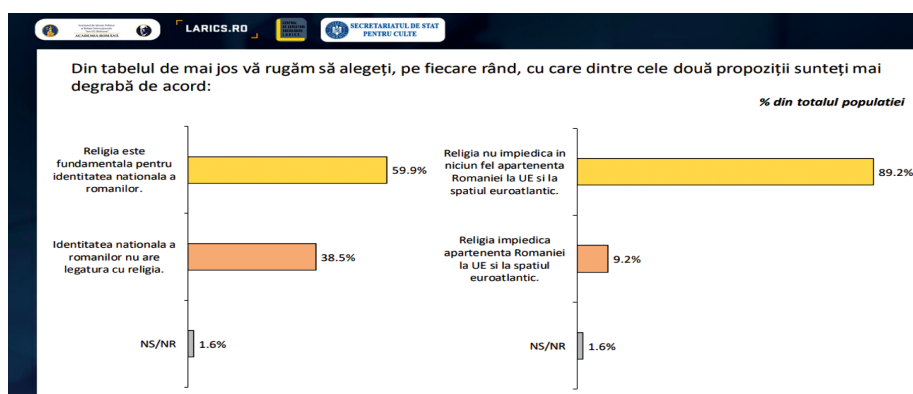


Figure 11. “Religion is fundamental for the national identity of Romanians” (59.9%), [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

The relationship between the State and the cults actually transposes in more concrete terms the functional realities of the democratic separation between State and Church. 43% of respondents believe that it is balanced and correctly. Although it is not a majority, we have a consistent percentage and we can interpret things in the sense of a functional State-Church relationship, by virtue of institutional separation. Responses such as “The state is trying to subordinate and limit cults” and “Cults are trying to take over state responsibilities” indicate a stronger atheist attitude, a more committed religious attitude, indicators of normalcy in a pluralistic democratic society, especially since none of the positions reaches a majority percentage. However, the more pronounced religious attitude accounted for a higher percentage than the more pronounced atheist attitude relevant, though not decisive, rather confirming the thesis under investigation.

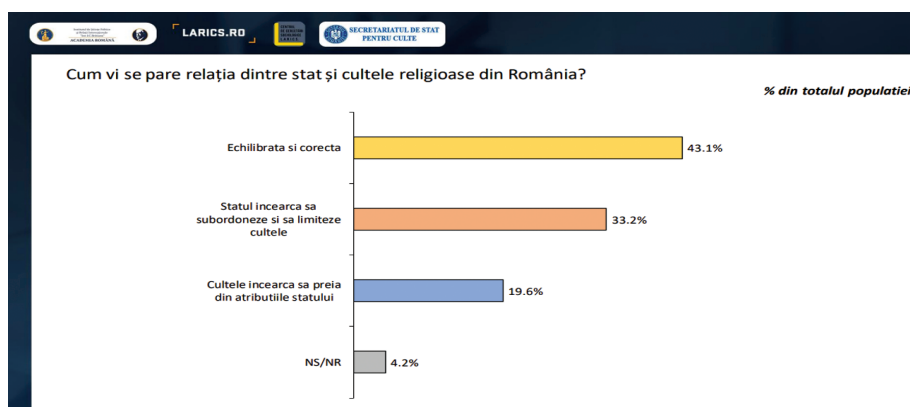


Figure 12. “How do you see the relation between the State and the religious cults in Romania?” (“Well-balanced” 43%), [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

Free and pluralistic public discourse is a sign of a healthy contemporary democracy. In this sense, we interpret the percentage of 47.7% in favour of the fact that it is only democratic for some leaders to express themselves against the Church and religion. The fact that this may be ineffective for their political careers in a country where the electorate has a pronounced religious identity is another issue. However, without tilting the balance decisively in favour of the investigated thesis, these data are an indication of the democratic character of the Romanian society and of the interest for a varied range of themes, aspects, perceptions and religious attitudes of the society.

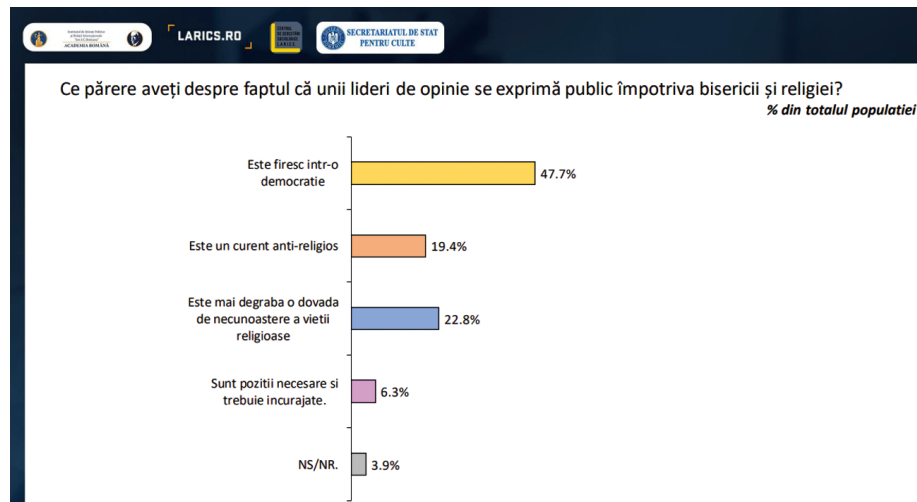


Figure 13. "What do you think of the fact that some leaders expresses publicly against Church and religion?", [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

We also have the pair-question "What do you think about the fact that some leaders speak out in favour of Church and religion?" Although we can keep the above interpretation, in general, the fact that we have an agreement of 60.9% (that is, 60.9% of respondents consider that it is natural in a democracy for some leaders to express themselves publicly in favour of the Church and religion, a lot more than those who considered it is normal to speak against these things is a confirmation of an electoral profile in which the religious component can still play a role which we deem not only representative, but also a crucial component, able to tip the scales against the atheist candidate in a specific conjuncture. It is more than a matter of choice; it is an indicator of a clear trend towards a higher appreciation of religious identity.

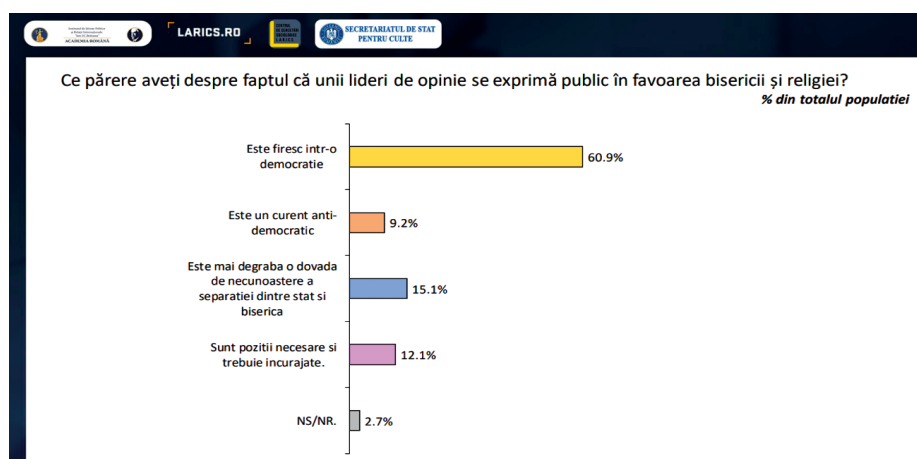


Figure 14. “What do you think of the fact that some leaders express favourable opinions to Church and religion?”, [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).

There is an obvious correlation between age and the importance of religious identity, but we can see that it is particularly relevant that this correlation reaches percentages of over 50% in all age groups over 24 years. Therefore, self-image as a religious person is an option for young maturity and maturity; so, it is an option for the “present” and not just for old age and vulnerable categories. These data support the thesis of the convergence of religious identity and national identity.

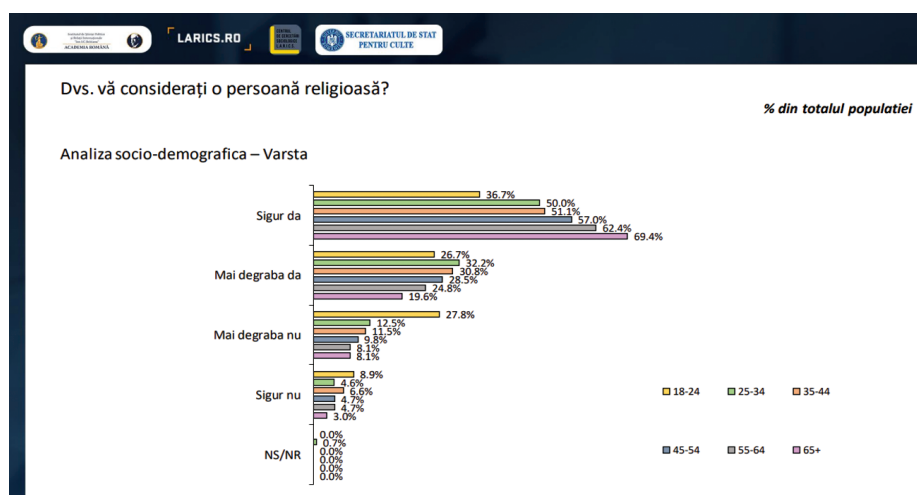


Figure 15. “Do you consider yourself a religious person?”, [https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase\\_decembrie-2021.pdf](https://larics.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Barometrul-Vietii-Religioase_decembrie-2021.pdf).



All these suggest and sustain from different perspectives and with different accents, the stated thesis, of the convergence of religious and national identities, with a surplus of arguments and nuances, in the Romanian case. As Adrian Boldișor pointed out: "In the current globalized world, as in the past, the Orthodox Church has emphasized and continues to emphasize the value of the human person. Individual rights, as seen today, despite many positive elements, often disfigure the specific truth of the person, because the human person is seen beyond individuality and individual rights. Being created in the image of God and striving to be like Him, man must embrace all of humanity."<sup>11</sup> The human person expresses his national and religious identity, intertwined due to the historical and personal events lived with consistency and continuity, in Romanian. Family life does not move away from eventual religious life. Of course, all cults emphasize the value of the human person with different nuances and specific details, and all cults and religions do not want a separation from society and the world, but want to contribute to improving life and (by) spiritualizing the concrete life of man to prepare him for spiritual, eternal life. Orthodoxy cannot be isolated either, says A. Boldișor, but it must become a presence, both practical and spiritual, in national or international societies, in the context of globalization, but also of discussions about the tensions of modernism-postmodernism, West-East, traditionalism-modernism and so on. The Good News of the Kingdom cannot be confiscated by or locked up in certain spiritual schemes, in certain nations, or in certain epochs.<sup>12</sup> How, when and in what way can the Church make heard recommendations, with „weight“, to state decision-makers and those associated with financial-economic mechanisms? Will we welcome in a reasonable time the restoration of the symphony, or of some suites of worldly and ecclesiastical spiritual symphonies, or at least the realization of ecumenism; and in what way?

Authentic pluralism, authentic recognition of the plurality of the world and the corresponding plurality of denominations, a truly moral discourse constructed in the spirit of the Kantian categorical imperative can only be achieved by relativizing the truth and renouncing the claim to the absolute, the claim to the property of truth. The future of the State-Church relationship cannot be separated from pluralism, the relativization of truth, and the renewed philosophical understanding of the subtle relationship between tolerance and power.<sup>13</sup>

There is a process of democratic redefinition of the relationship between the State and the Church in Romania. In this process, the Romanian actors considered both the Romanian history and the Romanian religious traditions, as well as the experience of the Western European countries, finding it difficult to identify a single model suitable for this specific relationship compared to all the others.

<sup>11</sup> Adrian Boldișor, *Ortodoxia ieri, azi, mâine. Teme intercreștine și interreligioase pentru secolul XXI* [Orthodoxy Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. Inter-Christian and Inter-Religious Themes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century], Craiova, Mitropolia Olteniei Publishing House, 2019, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> Henrieta Șerban, "Democratization and the Role of the Democratic State in Relationship with Church in Romania", in Bogdana Todorova (editor), Henrieta Anișoara Șerban (co-editor), Nina Dimitrova (co-editor), *The Balkans as Reality. Democratization, Religious Identity and Fundamentalism in Romania and Bulgaria*, Veliko Tarnovo, "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University Press, 2018, pp. 13-49.

The relations between the State and the Church are complex and the consecrated church model present in the discourse of the leaders of the Orthodox Church and in the discourse of the intellectuals who emphasize the importance of Orthodoxy in preserving the Romanian traditions and identity. However, sometimes freedom of expression and freedom of religion can lead to alternative or even contradictory views that appeal to the state in its role as moderator.<sup>14</sup>

We therefore have sociological and interpretive arguments confirming the thesis of the convergence of religious and national identity, especially in Romania (as well as in other European states in Central and Eastern Europe), following the communist regime. Beyond these interesting contextual aspects associated with the democratic character of the debates and attitudinal orientations, and also with the efficiency of the State-Church separation in Romania, a state of affairs characterized by increased religiosity is validated, in support of the thesis stated and investigated in this study, connecting religious and national identity.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.