

**AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF ROMANIA'S ROLE  
IN THE SINO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT  
(REFLECTIONS UPON NIXON'S DIALOGUES  
WITH CEAUȘESCU)**

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**Abstract.** *The present article explores Romania's role in the Sino-American rapprochement by analysing two monumental dialogues that took place between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon in Bucharest, in 1968 and 1969. Divided into three distinct sections, it firstly exposes a brief history of Romanian-Chinese contacts that serves as a fundamenta inconcussa. Secondly, it examines Ceaușescu's venture with then-United States President, and tries to grasp the events that preceded these dialogues by means of connecting omnidirectional evidence that revolves around the Sino-American rapprochement. Ultimately, the present article attempts to acknowledge a set of pleas that could address a certain surmount for the Romanian-Chinese relations within the New World Order. Imperatively, as China's positioning captures a new dimension, this article highlights a restored character of the history of Chinese avouchment whose resolution impacted the proportion of the post-Westphalian era.*

**Keywords:** *Diplomacy, Romanian-Chinese Relations, History of International Relations, Normalization of US-China relations.*

*Introduction*

The current state of affairs between Romania and China prevails a political stagnation. For the past decades, Romania was preoccupied with the extent of a thorough Euro-Atlantic integration, while China – continuing to grow at an unprecedented tempo – advanced an extremely pragmatic blueprint in obtaining parity within the New World Order. It is of great importance to assess major events in order to become able to depict a groundwork that can enable current assessments of various IR dimensions. Beyond doubt, Romanian-Chinese contacts exist at different bilateral and multilateral levels, yet further initiatives need to take

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shape in order to launch a new agenda; one that needs to contain a consistent *reheating effect* for bilateral ties.

In the early 1970's, as is it noted in existing specialized literature, Romania had been chosen to play a role in the Sino-American rapprochement<sup>1</sup>. It is very puzzling to determine the exact nature of this involvement, and indeed little scholarly attention is paid to this particular topic. Characterized as a (secret) "dialogue tunnel"<sup>2</sup> by Iulia Monica Oehler-Şincai and Liu Minru, Romania's role is quite ambiguous. Competition arose *inter alia* from this context, notably since both the Americans and the Chinese have approached different channels for the same purpose. Romanian support in this matter would later further increase in intensity and credibility due to its "firm stance to support PR or Communist China on reinstating its membership in the United Nations and the Security Council in 1971"<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the imperative objective of this article is to elucidate the dimension of Romania's role in the Sino-American rapprochement.

*Per se*, the Sino-American rapprochement was a *complex affair* due to the geopolitical features of post-Second World War Era. Henry Kissinger notes that, immediately after proclaiming the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong travelled to Moscow with a design to secure an alliance and unconditional support<sup>4</sup>. "Instead, the meeting inaugurated a series of moves that would culminate in transforming the hoped-for alliance into a triangular diplomacy by which the United States, China, and the Soviet Union maneuvered with and against each other"<sup>5</sup>. For this reason, it was robustly intuitive for degenerations to come into being and, throughout time, ramifications to form. Giovanni Salvini summarizes the incipient matrix of the rapprochement, and debates succinctly those major events that occurred in February 1972, when American President Nixon visited Beijing<sup>6</sup>.

On the other hand, Enrico Fardella asserts that if Nixon and Kissinger would not have been determined to initiate the normalization process among PR China and the United States, Carter's administration later on would have not been successful in concluding it<sup>7</sup>. Fardella connects the events, that are, in essence, outlined by Salvini, up to the point in which he affirms: "the historic period [...] that was in some ways unique, unique in being a "bridge" between two simultaneous processes: the crisis of détente between the two superpowers and the epochal transition of the PRC..."<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Henry Kissinger, *On China*, Penguin Press, New York, 2011, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Iulia Monica Oehler-Şincai and Liu Minru, "Sino-Romanian relations under the New World Order", in *China's Relations with Central and Eastern Europe. From "Old Comrades" to New Partners*, Weiqing Song (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2018, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Salvini, "The Relations Between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States (US)", in *Understanding China Today. An Exploration of Politics, Economics, Society, and International Relations*, Silvio Beretta, Axel Berkofsky and Lihong Zhang (eds.), Springer, Cham, 2017, pp. 96-97.

<sup>7</sup> Enrico Fardella, "The Sino-American Normalization: A Reassessment", *Diplomatic History*, vol. 33, 2009, pp. 545-546.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

The complexities of this major political event, engraved in a savage bipolarity and tensioned context at PR China's periphery, indicate a series of sensibilities and affinities in the habitual IR system. After a long period of failed courtesy and unsuccessful attempts, Nixon "used the occasion of an around-the-world trip in July 1970 to tell his hosts in Pakistan and Romania that he sought high-level exchanges with Chinese leaders and that they were free to communicate this to Beijing"<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the American President "was looking for a forum less bureaucratically constraining"<sup>10</sup>, and the conjecture was the ideal moment to re-launch the pursue of a direct contact with Chairman Mao Zedong. Romania, at the time, was well regarded as "a member of the Warsaw Pact known for its quest for independence from Moscow"<sup>11</sup>. Thus, Romania was perceived as a pragmatic and reliable instrumentalist that could deliver efficiency upon the Sino-American inquisition.

Divided into three parts, this article resembles a structure that, *firstly*, exposes the history of bilateral relations, as suggested by the Latin expression consigned. *Secondly*, it analyses various transcripts of the successive dialogues between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, which took place in 1967 and 1969, in Bucharest. And *lastly*, based on this emblematic event, it tries to sketch a matrix that could advance a platform to encourage debate, assessment, and address innovation in guiding the *reheating* process of the bilateral Romanian-Chinese relations.

*A brief history of Romanian-Chinese contacts:  
A Capite Ad Calcem<sup>12</sup>*

The Romanian Sinologist Romulus Ioan Budura, Ambassador of Romania to Beijing between 1990-1995, is a figure who extensively wrote about the history of the Romanian-Chinese relations, and beyond. Ambassador Budura points out that the bilateral relations entangle "some unique characteristics"<sup>13</sup> in comparison to China's other similar contacts in Central and Eastern Europe. First contacts are recorded to have begun during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As Oehler-Șincai and Liu point out, Nicolae Milescu Spătarul, "writer, diplomat and traveller, [who] was the first known Romanian who arrived in China"<sup>14</sup>. He served, until 1678, as the "ambassador of the Russian Empire to Beijing, the capital of the Qing Dynasty of China"<sup>15</sup>. His writings remain even today a testimony of a scholar who made "China known to Europe"<sup>16</sup>, based indeed on an anthropological study. Later on, several Romanian intellectuals successively wrote about the Far East and, implicitly, China: Nicolae Iorga ("Far East war" in 1905), Mihai Negru ("Aspects of the

<sup>9</sup> Romulus Ioan Budura (coord.), *Relațiile româno-chineze: 1880-1974: Documente*, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 939-941.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 936.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 928-929.

<sup>12</sup> Latin expression meaning from head to toe, from the beginning until the end.

<sup>13</sup> Iulia Monica Oehler-Șincai and Liu Minru, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

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

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Chinese civilization and thought, from the very beginning until now” in 1917), and Vasilescu Nottara (“Traveling through China from Shanghai to Beijing” in 1930).

Despite these assertions, the first official contacts only took place in January 1881, in Paris. According to the *Annals of the Romanian Diplomatic Institute*, China is mentioned for the first time in various messages emitted by diplomats to the Romanian government. These Annals comprise “documents [that] come from *The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* and *The National Central Historical Archives*... telegrams, rapports, notes, memoranda, bulletins...”<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, Mihail Kogălniceanu reports that the Romanian representation (referred to as legation) received a congratulatory note from China’s representative in Sankt Petersburg. The message was addressed to Carol I of Romania by Emperor Guangxu, and was meant to offer a dimension of “mutual recognition” between the two states<sup>18</sup>.

Ambassador Budura, furthermore, notes that “a marked interest in establishing diplomatic relations and promoting trade between Romania and China”<sup>19</sup> becomes more accentuated only in the 1920’s. In this regard, Victor Cădere, “the head of the Romanian mission in Siberia”<sup>20</sup>, proposed a formula to establish legations in Tokyo and Beijing, as well as consulates in Shanghai and Harbin<sup>21</sup>. Cădere motivates his recommendations remarking, amongst others, “economic interests”<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, in July 1928, Aurel Vasiliu, based at the Romanian representation in Tokyo, initiates the process of establishing a legation in China. Due to external opposition coming from Moscow and Tokyo, the proposal did not eventually come into being until 1939. When the German government decided to transform all legations into consulates, Lone Liang, China’s representative in Prague, requested permission to move the Chinese legation in Bucharest. Thence, as Budura continues to highlight, it was only after 59 years since the *de jure* recognition of the two states took place for bilateral relations to be effectively materialized. However, these “were discontinued [...] following recognition by the Romanian government of the pro-Japanese Nanjing government”<sup>23</sup>.

In 1949, upon the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, Romania, after the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, recognized “China’s new government”<sup>24</sup>. As the same Iulia Monica Oehler-Șincai and Liu Minru point out, based on Budura’s assertions, this “was the start of four *golden* decades of friendship, mutual support and understanding”<sup>25</sup>. The peak of this became known by the world in the 1960’s:

<sup>17</sup> Romanian Diplomatic Institute: Laurențiu Constantiniu and Alin-Victor Matei, *Romanian Diplomatic Documents*, series II, vol. 18, part I, p. XIV.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Bucharest, Romania (ANIC), Chancellery, RCP CC, 109/1969, published in Romulus Ioan Budura (coord.), *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Iulia Monica Oehler-Șincai and Liu Minru, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Bucharest, Romania (ANIC), *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Iulia Monica Oehler-Șincai and Liu Minru, *op. cit.*

“The Sino-Soviet rivalry was a defining factor in the relations between the Soviet bloc and China during the second half of the Cold War... Questioning “revisionist” Nikita Khrushchev’s ability to right to lead the communist movement and the socialist camp, Mao Zedong offered an alternative pole of leadership, selling his revolutionary creed as the only true faith to Soviet satellites and undecided onlookers in the communist bloc and in the third world. Beijing of course aspired to win over Moscow’s closest allies as well, courting in particular the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Poland (Albania had already defected from the Soviet-bloc to side with China in 1960-61, and a few years later Romania began to stake out a more equidistant position, though Bucharest did not go as far as Tirana in its warmth toward Mao’s regime).”<sup>26</sup>

A turning point for the Romanian-Chinese relations is addressed throughout this period. Hershberg *et. al.* take note of the “equidistant position”, while Elena Dragomir extensively debates (at least) one of the reasons of this stance. Accordingly, Romania’s position aside the Sino-Soviet dispute was one of the reasons that aggregated a Romanian role in the rapprochement. It was only in 1962 when Romania’s open support for the Soviet side diminished<sup>27</sup>, which paved the way for major geopolitical actors, in fact, to appraise Bucharest’s dissociation from Moscow.

Beyond doubts, the complexities that gravitate around the bilateral Romanian-Chinese relations during the *four golden decades* are overwhelming. A generic in this regard is sketched by Chiriu and Liu, as it follows:

“Zhou Enlai’s open support to Romania’s independence in the wake of Prague’s events in 1968, Bucharest’s role in the Sino-US approach, Ceausescu’s triumphal visit to Beijing in 1971, all testify the intensity of the relationship. Trade ties reached their apex in 1979. Since then, Romania and China undertook different paths: Ceausescu decided to pay back Romania’s huge external debt, forcing the country in a difficult economic position, while the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping pushed the People’s Republic to a path of reform and opening to external markets. During the 1980’s, the bilateral relationships remained cordial on a political and diplomatic level, but Romania was not an important economic partner for China anymore”<sup>28</sup>.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Romania’s trajectory inclined propitiously toward both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the European Union. Remaining constant in its support of the Chinese government regarding issues such as Taiwan and Tibet, Romanian-Chinese relations remain “«friendly» from the political and diplomatic standpoints”<sup>29</sup>. In 2004, President Hu Jintao paid a

<sup>26</sup> James Hershberg *et. al.*, *The Interkit Story: A Window into the Final Decades of the Sino-Soviet Relationship, Cold War International History Project*, Working Paper no. 63, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2011, pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Elena Dragomir, *Cold War Perceptions: Romania’s Policy Change towards the Soviet Union, 1960-1964*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015, pp. 129-135.

<sup>28</sup> Andrea Chiriu and Zuokui Liu, *Sino-Romanian Relations – From the First Ponta’s Government to Klaus Werner Iohannis’ Victory in the Presidential Elections*, Working Paper Series of European Studies, Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, vol. 9, no. 1, 2015, pp. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Iulia Monica Oehler-Şincai and Liu Minru, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.

historic visit to Romania<sup>30</sup>. During this visit, both countries signed “a comprehensive friendly and cooperative partnership”, although ever since this agreement came into being, “Romania lost numerous opportunities, including the historical advantages in developing economic cooperation with the largest emerging economy, China”.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, having debated briefly the evolution of the Romanian-Chinese bilateral relations, it is of crucial importance to emphasize that these have experienced a set of distinctive postures, in accordance with the international circumstances. This ascertainment should be regarded as a landmark of any existing bilateral contacts in the post-Westphalia era. The constant character of these relations denotes an interest in maintaining a linear dialogue regardless of those circumstances that have fragmented, in time, the narration of bilateral ties.

*The venture of Romania's role in the Sino-American rapprochement.  
A dialogue between Ceaușescu and Nixon*

According to historiography, the monumental event that concluded during Carter's administration – *i.e.* the normalization of the Sino-American relations –, is a unique moment in the contemporary era. However, little is known that, in Bucharest, Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon debated broadly this topic, which remains largely undiscovered by the Romanian general public and academia, if not even by the Chinese ones, although the American specialized literature is vast in this respect. The multitude of details, the impartial nature of the dialogues, and the trust the two leaders offered to one another are exceptional rarities. This could be explained in the light of a few disclosures enunciated by Mircea Munteanu, namely that “Both Ceaușescu and Maurer seemed impressed that Nixon and his team were attentive to Bucharest's interpretations of the status of the international system”<sup>32</sup>. In addition to this, as Ambassador Budura points out in a candid interview which took place in July 2018, Romania's diplomatic service has been largely mobilized to concede a positive resolution. Ambassador Budura recalls having successive dialogues with American representatives in Australia, as a Consul General in Sydney (from 1968 to 1972), which actively sought opinions and recommendations on how to approach the Chinese leadership in this regard. Along these lines, as a result, this article argues the importance and geostrategic positioning of Romania in international politics, as well as the fact that Romanian contribution to the Sino-American rapprochement could not be endorsed during the Cold War visibly and openly due to the hegemonic status of the Soviet Union within the Iron Curtain.

In another train of thoughts, the first fragment that has been analysed reflects various particularities. Nixon believed that until the Vietnam War will not come to an end, the possibility of communicating straight with and to Beijing is distant, having said that “the Chinese problem is the big problem”. Thereupon, Ceaușescu's

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 175.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Mircea Munteanu, “Communication Breakdown? Romania and the Sino-American rapprochement”, in *Diplomatic History*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2009, pp. 616-618.

answer provides an incentive according to which China's nuclear capabilities have been brought to the discussion, as well as the Chinese desires to make concessions in this regard; an important feature of the political agenda of the time. Ceaușescu categorizes this solution as "reasonable enough", one that "mirrors" a quite "rational" consideration of the Chinese leadership, suggesting that a first step in conceding a path to communication between Beijing and Washington could be frank and mutual understanding. He affirms that the Chinese leadership, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, has demonstrated "wisdom" and was "very careful" in "resolving international issues". The Romanian rhetoric, which becomes noticeable toward the end of the dialogue, attempts to convince Nixon that there was not even a single threat coming from PR China. One of these is linked to PR China's United Nations membership, Ceaușescu implying that "the first step" toward normalization "should" be represented by PR China's admission into the United Nations<sup>33</sup>. Certainly, as a derivative of this conversation, it is easy to depict a portrayal that embodies a convoluted amalgam of topics. Taiwan is yet another one of these, especially since Ceaușescu already recommended that it "should be resolved and approached in a more realist spirit"<sup>34</sup>.

In the summer of 1969, accompanied by Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Henry Kissinger, Ceaușescu and Nixon have a second round of discussion and exchange of opinions in respect to China and the normalization of Sino-American relations. A point that has thoroughly caught attention is the fact that Nixon reiterated the United States' opposition to PR China's admission into the United Nations. Nixon points out that Asia's problems cannot be solved without PR China indeed, and articulates that, in fact, American opposition is due to Beijing's foreign policy in its proximity, namely to circumstances linked to Korea, Taiwan or Indonesia. *Ergo*, the American President denies that the United States would take part in any international act that might embody PR China's avouchment.

In an equally noteworthy remark, beyond several generic diplomatic clichés, Nixon questions whether Romania would take responsibility to act as a mediator between PR China and the United States, claiming that Washington would indeed very much appreciate such efforts. In reply, Ceaușescu offers an insight regarding PR China, highlighting that Beijing has a desire to establish and develop diplomatic relations with all countries. Likewise, Ceaușescu points out that it is necessary to take into consideration PR China's "practical" activity, not only public statements and the reports issued by mass-media<sup>35</sup>.

The turning point of the discussion is, however, Ceaușescu's sharp observation, that is America's consistent ability to approach PR China, including direct, indispensable instruments. Hence, he does neither see nor understand the need to appeal to mediators: "We have told and we will tell the Chinese, however, our opinions regarding international issues, including those related to relations with the United States". Immediately after, Nixon apologized for "not

<sup>33</sup> Bucharest, Romania (ANIC), Chancellery, RCP CC, 109/1969, republished in Budura, *op. cit.*, p. 936.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

using the appropriate word”, while Ceaușescu assured him that “by principle” Romania will continue to act toward achieving understanding and cooperation<sup>36</sup>.

In an overwhelming proportion, it is known that Ceaușescu was not necessarily a fine acquaintance of diplomacy. Accordingly, Nixon decides to postpone the discussion until the next day in order to further discuss the Vietnamese issue. And indeed, on August 3, Ceaușescu and Nixon resume their conversation. A peculiarity of this is a remark that has been noted by the person in charge of recording the dialogue between Ceaușescu and Nixon: on the special page of the recording, the interpret comments “unique copy”, singular specimen. With no connection to the discussion, Nixon asked: “Are the Chinese able (capable) to keep a secret?” Ceaușescu replied affirmatively<sup>37</sup>.

The dimension forged by these passages prove the United States’ desire to establish direct ties to PR China as well as Romania’s ability to insert judgments worthy of the great diplomatic manoeuvres. However, Ceaușescu’s clear setbacks in regard to a more promising and assumed position within this conjecture is linked to pressures coming from the Soviet Union. Further examples in this regard are represented by the pressure exercised in respect to Romania’s position aside the Sino-Soviet dispute (until 1962) and other international events, Soviet intervention in Romanian domestic affairs and the control over the evolution of totalitarianism in Romania.

Mircea Munteanu, another iterated Romanian-American scholar, does admit that “the public closeness between Beijing and Bucharest offered the Romanian leadership a chance to sell itself as a valuable go-between in Nixon’s triangular policies”<sup>38</sup>. And indeed, as expected, Munteanu endorses what has already been understood only from analysing the conversations, namely that “Bucharest’s channel to Beijing has generally been discontinued... perhaps fearful of Soviet penetration”<sup>39</sup>. Forthwith, due to both Chinese and American desires to “open discussions... through any available channel”<sup>40</sup>, “new evidence”<sup>41</sup> demonstrated that, in fact, “Romanians were not discounted...”<sup>42</sup>. Genuinely, due to Romania’s reluctance “to transmit a critical Chinese response to Washington”, Pakistan – the other channel chosen for the same purpose –, had already conveyed “that same message”<sup>43</sup> in a more effective form. Despite these ascertainment, several valuable insights that explain the closing factors of the issue are laid down by Munteanu, suggesting that there was a “communication breakdown”<sup>44</sup>:

“When Ambassador Bogdan met Kissinger on January 11, 1970 to deliver the message from Zhou Enlai and the Chinese leadership, the cards had already been dealt. Nixon, hopeful that the Pakistani channel would continue

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Mircea Munteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 616.

<sup>39</sup> Romanian National Archives, telegram 25.III.1964 Mc/2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Mircea Munteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 629.



to work better than the Romanian channel, told Kissinger to cool contacts with the Romanians as to “not appear too eager [to the Chinese] and wait for them [the Chinese] to respond to our initiative.” No message was sent again through the Romanian channel. On January 29, Bogdan called again on Kissinger to inquire, prior to his departure to Bucharest, if a response was forthcoming from the White House. Kissinger only suggested that the United States was prepared to talk, wherever the Chinese were willing, and that the United States was not committed to having discussions through the Warsaw channel...”<sup>45</sup>

Theoreticians notice the high secrecy that has been placed on the rapprochement issue by the American government, and thus have decided to put an end to the Romanian channel. Moreover, other issues on the agenda, such as Taiwan or Indochina, “would find out about the thaw between Beijing and Washington before the administration was ready to make it public...”<sup>46</sup>. Not only were the Americans the ones to decide to cut off further development of the Romanian courtesy; the Chinese had already decided to do the same; a move that became noticeable only in the spring of 1971, when Zhou Enlai ordinarily thanked a Romanian delegation visiting Beijing. In the end, “preparations for the historic meeting between Kissinger and Zhou Enlai were made through Pakistan, while the Romanians remained on the outside”<sup>47</sup>. Ceaușescu was asked, in June 1971, as Munteanu finally narrates, what were his thoughts on Mao’s ping-pong diplomacy, but “the discussion [with Mao] was limited to a few comments”<sup>48</sup>.

*What could Romania learn from this momentum  
in order to reheat the current state of affairs?*

Romania, in the aftermath of the fall of the Iron Curtain, has “lost numerous opportunities, including the historical advantages...”<sup>49</sup> in its relation with PR China. In the attempt to debate such consequences, it might be argued that there is an inconsistency at the level of political correctness. The sudden and successive domestic changes have impacted Romania’s foreign relations, especially those with the Far East. Romania lacks pragmatism when tackling international relations due to the internal struggles *inter alia*, while things seem to have already been caught up in some sort of a vicious repetitiveness. The establishment became incapable of generating leadership stances and pertinent strategies abroad. Also, the same establishment did not aggregate innovation, or perhaps vigorousness that could have had impacted Romania’s representation. Similar stances could also be related to Romania’s foreign policy strategies in Southeast Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

From the past conjecture, Romania can learn that it is not imperative to have, for example, nuclear weapons in order to count within the complex system of

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 628.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Iulia Monica Oehler-Șincai and Liu Minru, *op. cit.*

international relations. On the contrary, diplomacy and the art of negotiation can represent, with a well-structured dialogue and a long-term strategy, tools that may become more effective in dealing with and reporting on various events. Around this context, Romania was given the clause of the most-favoured nation<sup>50</sup> by the United States government, and as demonstrated, on the other hand, the essence of the Romanian-Chinese relations was unwavering.

It is important for Romania to use the *smart* inference created by its accessions to North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, the prospect of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Romanian-Chinese bilateral relations, the rotating presidency of the European Union Council, or the Centennial Anniversary. Romania, as this article argues, is not aware of its true potential at the moment; a potential that is diminishing due to domestic political disagreements. It is noteworthy that the current strategy of Romania's foreign policy, from a generic perspective, is based on only a few pillars, as Romanian President Iohannis stated<sup>51</sup>. For this reason, several questions are raised through this article, namely *Is Romania ready to step up engagement and reach domestic political consensus? When will Romania devote foreign policy pillars to East Asia?* Perhaps a *re-professionalization* of the Romanian foreign service could be the key response to many issues of agendas at the moment.

In addition, an effective solution to this can be represented by a *tête-à-tête* cultural-educational exchange in order to cultivate young generations of Romanian Sinologists and institutions that could nurture an advancement bounded by the historical contacts between the two nations. Yet, as long as Bucharest does not maintain a dynamic interest, and will not rise to the claims of contemporary geostrategy, nothing beyond morbid statements may take shape. Eventually, the "networking push effect"<sup>52</sup> (or "snowball effect"<sup>53</sup> as Ming Wan argues) might trigger some changes, and determine some concessions in this regard, in the future.

Romania demonstrates today a blurred long-term vision; one that has not been doubted in the past, yet it remains questioned in the present. In spite of the fact that its predecessors had pragmatically combined statecraft with tact and lucidity so as to avoid scenarios similar to those of Belgrade or Tirana, today's Romanian leadership does not possess the ability to stimulate the same manoeuvring space in regional and international politics. Apart from any ambiguity, membership of the European Union channels opportunities, and could lodge averment to Romania; thus far such privileges are neither apprehensive nor appealing to the Romanian establishment. The fundamental problem remains at the level of representation, and of political correctness. Therefore, this article claims that any reheating procedures must take place bilaterally in order to affect the multilateral level within the international relations realm.

<sup>50</sup> Mircea Munteanu, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Andrea Chiriu and Zuokui Liu, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Mircea Munteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>53</sup> Ming Wan, *The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Construction of Power and the Struggle for the East Asian International Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 48.

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### Conclusion

The process of Sino-American rapprochement, and implicitly the final resolution of this event represents a turning point not only in the history of Asian international relations, but also in the assertion process of the modern Chinese nation and state. The result, in its aggregated form, is a culmination of the Maoist era that concluded diplomatic yielding with the vast majority of the conventional establishment, and one that sketches a division within the Soviet nomenclature. Although Ceaușescu's facilitations remain under different signs of qualm, Romania being in a "neither-nor-position"<sup>54</sup> as Dragomir points out, it is indeed important to acknowledge an extent of contribution brought to the Sino-American rapprochement. Hence, Romania's role was mainly determined by successive sequences that slowed down reactions in the process of transmitting messages between the actors of the event. It remains undisputed that the impregnated influence of the Soviet Union has determined an *expectant attitude* for Bucharest.

Nevertheless, as Mircea Munteanu induces, Romania's role in the Sino-American rapprochement remains under a substantial desolated function for extensive debates and various analyses. *Per contra*, these debates have a potential to be revived in order to define and determine precisely the nature of the context, yet only if a serious commitment will arise within the political establishment and academic sphere. As it has been narrated throughout this article, apart from the pressures exerted during the Sino-Soviet split, repercussions were felt based on countless suspicions of Soviet intelligence osmosis. In contempt of Romania's disassociation from the Soviet Union throughout the 1960's, similarly to that of PR China, polemics caused inside the international communist nomenclature remain vastly discussed. This narrow character of the studies, that indeed gravitate around ideological substances and major geopolitical implication, remains unambiguously in need for further development. After all, Romania's contribution to the Sino-American rapprochement, despite being regarded as having a limited aspect, dwarfed by the failure of some scholars and political contexts, must be further studied and exposed to a much more relevant analysis for it could bring awareness and liability in today's Romanian foreign strategies. Therefore, it is indicative to support the assumption that Romania's changing foreign policy directives toward the Soviet Union had also contributed to the role Bucharest later on had in the Sino-American rapprochement.

Current studies that belong to the specialized international relations dimension tend to lose sight of the undetermined nature of both Romanian and Chinese autochthonous political developments. More concretely, there are very few factual studies that seek to highlight potential orientations of Romanian foreign policy in relation to East Asia, and the lack of specialists is already an endorsed challenge, unequivocally. On the other hand, PR China has already distanced itself, specifically under the leadership of Xi Jinping, from the policy of its predecessors, according to which PR China's profile must remain

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<sup>54</sup> Elena Dragomir, *op. cit.* p. 136.

somewhat reduced and imperceptible in international relations. On the contrary, President Xi architects an ambitious vision of PR China's presence in world politics, with rigorous responsibilities and duties worthy of a great power. And indeed, this ambition, for instance, could be perceived in the light of the well-known Chinese Dream – “a junction of both government political ambitions and the realistic needs...”<sup>55</sup>.

At the beginning of the last century, the famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, in an anthropological essay about China, formulated a metamorphosis, according to which time changes the flowers of an open field, but time could not change the glow of gold from (of) the depths. And from this surmise, as the case may be, could there still be prospects for Romania to maximize the historical benefits of the Romanian-Chinese symbiosis? Is Romania ready to scrutinize the accuracy of this archival past, and to project this to avail associations in order to cope with today's contentions?

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<sup>55</sup> Ana Pantea, “The European Union and China: On the Challenges of the Strategic Partnership”, in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Europaea*, vol. LXII, no. 3, 2017, p. 292.