

NATIONAL UNITY AND DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: National unity is very important for the Romanians. After so many years of struggles and turmoil, Romania has the chance to increase her unity pursuing true democracy by implementing and following democratic principles, and by accepting and living core values like integrity. In both areas the Romanians need to act and take ownership of their actions: implementation and application of democratic principles on a micro and macro dimensions and embracing integrity as one of the most important core values a nation has. And all these with God's help and blessing. In this article, the author studies two important aspects of unity, social unity and moral unity. Social unity is given by implementing and following democratic principles, and moral unity is realized by accepting and living core values like integrity.

Keywords: democratic principles, democracy, integrity, national unity, Romanian history

Introduction

Romania celebrates this year a century since Țările Române, Moldova and Țara Românească, united with Transylvania, creating the new country called Romania. This historical event requests deeper reflection on how Romanians understand today unity, when a young democracy strives to emerge from a totalitarian past. For the human beings, unity is very important. Unity in the family is vital for the welfare of the people in the family. Unity in an institution or company is vital for the development of it, but the unity in a nation is vital for every single person of the country and is essential for the national integrity. In this article, the author studies two important aspects of unity, social unity and moral unity. Social unity is given by implementing and following democratic principles, and moral unity is realized by accepting and living core values like integrity.

Lessons from History

To understand democracy in Romania someone should look back in the Eastern Europe twenty century's history and learn from there, because Easter Europe experienced many changes in a very short time spin. As Mazower noticed,

Eastern Europe has been the unfortunate laboratory for all three of the century's ideological experiments. The first, that of the liberal democratic victors of 1918, lasted more than a decade, before collapsing in the aftermath of the world depression. Hitler's New Order lasted only half as long. Nazi defeat opened the way for Stalin to make a third attempt, and his creation—the People's Democracies—were to prove more durable than any of their predecessors.¹

The author of this article will focus more on the third experiment, “the People's Democracies” that shaped the Romanian social culture, ideology and relationships for forty-five years, and its influence is felt even today, almost thirty years later. Some people are still nostalgic about “the good old days”, when Romanians were united. However, they do not know that after the WWII, the strategy to “unite” the nation was like this,

...government by coalition, in which the Communist Party played an influential and dominant part; then, marginalization and outright repression of those parties and splinter groups which remained outside the coalition. Finally, elections, which gave the Government Front 89 per cent in Poland, 98 per cent in Romania (up in 1948 from 91 per cent in 1946!) and 79 per cent in Bulgaria. By 1947-8, this process had succeeded in crushing the agrarian and socialist parties which were the most serious threat in a democratic setting to communist hegemony.²

Burleigh also described the political and social estate of Europe in the same way: “Within a remarkable short time totalitarian rule had been reimposed on half a continent using a combination of force and fraud.

¹ Mark Mazower (1999). *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. Alfred A. Knopf. New York, NY. P. 250

² *Idem*, pp. 258-259

Democratic political life was brutally extinguished in favor of single-party states with a monopoly of opinion.”³

The conclusion is that unity in Communism was a Machiavellian strategy to control, not to unite the Romanian nation. True unity is not done by eliminating “the outsiders” and the opponents; it is starting the dialog and finding the common ground and common values and cherish them.

The apparent unity was denounced in a few key moments: in the 50’s and 60’s when ended the nationalization of private companies and was closed the agricultural expropriation of the land from the landlords; 80’s when the country was divided economically in *nomenklatura* and the rest of the nation; and the Romanian nationalistic sentiment against the Hungarian minority. All these years, the Church was a potential opposition against Communism, or at least this was the governmental perception. Because of this, the Christians were under surveillance and persecution that affected the national unity as well. However, the Churches played an important role in the overthrow of Communism.⁴

After the fall of Communism, the Romanians faced the challenge of understanding and implementing democracy. This was not a small job recognizing that Romania missed a group of leaders that knew how to function in a real democracy; many of the old political class that led before communism, died of old age or in the communist prisons during the years of persecution.

Social Unity: Implementing and Following Democratic Principles

Before talking about democratic principles, the author defines democracy, especially the Romanian democracy. After that, the author will present the democratic principles that should be applied in Romania, in order to establish and strengthen the young Romanian democracy.

Defining Democracy

In explaining true democracy, Condoleezza Rice writes,

³ Michael Burleigh (2007). *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, From the Great War to the War on Terror*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY. p.344.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 344.

Democracy requires balance in many spheres: between executive, legislative, and judicial authority; between centralized government and regional responsibility; between civilian and military leaders; between individual and group rights; and ultimately between state and society. In functioning democracies, institutions are invested with protecting that equilibrium. Citizens must trust them as arbiters in disputes and, when necessary, as vehicles for change.⁵

In other words, Dr. Rice asserts that unity and congruence in a democratic society is given by the equilibrium and the balance in all social and political relationships and functions. She is not talking about a perfect society, but on how an imperfect system can function in unity. However, when disruptions come, the unity is not destroyed, and the democratic institutions do not feel threatened by them, because disruption “is built into the fabric of democracy.”⁶

Defining and preserving the Romanian democracy

In a world of continuous change, in this time of transition, the Romanian society should answer the following two important questions: 1) What kind of democracy we are, and 2) How to preserve and develop true democracy? The answers are not easy because in the 20's century, the world experiences more than one political condition. For the first question we should take in consideration the past and the present of Romania. Dr. Rice speaks about four situations:

Democratic institutions are not created in a vacuum. At the outset we identified four institutional landscapes: totalitarian collapse that leaves an institutional void; totalitarian decay that leaves institutional antecedents; authoritarian regime and the struggle for meaningful political space; and quasi-democratic regimes with fragile and vulnerable institutions. All bring particular challenges...The most difficult situations come from the collapse of totalitarian regimes. Since these cults of personality infuse every aspect of life—*totalitario*, in Mussolini's immortal word—the landscape is barren.⁷

⁵ Condoleezza Rice (2017). *Democracy: Stories from the Long Road to Freedom*. Twelve, New York, NY. p.8

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 9

⁷ Rice, p. 418.

Romania comes out of the first three situations: totalitarian collapse, totalitarian decay, and authoritarian regime. All three created institutional void, with antecedents of abuse and corruption, and a struggle for meaningful political space. Without a clear demarcation and strategy to overcome the past, all these are undermining not only the unity but the Romanian democracy itself.

For the second questions, “How to preserve democracy?,” Dimond comes with some important principles and solutions to keep and develop democracies:⁸

1. Horizontal relations of trust and cooperation must be constructed, ideally across ethnic and regional divides—to challenge elitist hierarchies and personal rules. This requires building a dense, vigorous civil society, with independent organizations, mass media, think tanks, and other networks that will generate social capital, foster civic norms, and press public interests, raise citizen consciousness, break the bonds of clientelism, scrutinize government conducts, and lobby for good government reforms.
2. Effective institutions of governance must be conducted to constrain the nearly unlimited discretion of rules, to open their decisions and transactions to inspection, and to hold them accountable before the law, constitution, and the public interest. This means building institutions of vertical and horizontal accountability.
3. Poorly performing democracies need better, stronger, and more democratic institutions linking citizens not just to one another but also to the political process. Primarily, this means political parties, parliaments, and local governments. Of course, in all democracies, by definition, these institutions exist in a formal sense. But in shallow democracies, they constitute what the Carnegie Endowment scholar Thomas Carothers calls *feckless pluralism*, that is political participation does not really amount to much except occasional voting because politics is so elite-dominated, corrupt and unresponsive.
4. Reforms must extend into the economic sphere, foremost with reforms generating a more open market economy in which it is

⁸ Larry Diamond (2008). *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*. Times Books, New York, NY. pp.300-302

possible to accumulate wealth through honest effort and initiative in the private sector—with the state playing a limited (and not primarily a productive) role. The wider the scope of state ownership of and control over economic life, the wider is the scope for rent seeking and control by abusive, predatory elites.

In conclusion, without clear and precise understanding of democracy and without implementing concrete democratic principles, the unity is frail or inexistent, and the society becomes antagonistic or gets back to the totalitarian lifestyle experimented during the dark communist days.

Moral Unity: Accepting and Living Core Values

As an European country, Romania has European values that originally were Christian values: integrity, honesty, respect, fairness, hard work, and involvement, based on the teaching of the Bible and Christian faith. Dr. Ieremia Rusu emphasizes that the morality has its origine in the moral character of God, because the human being was created in His image, „Man’s identity is given by the way he was created, as bearer of *imago Dei*.”⁹

However, those values are more than intentions or even objectives. As Kouzes and Posner wrote, “For values to be truly hard, they must be more than advertising slogans: they must be deeply supported and broadly endorsed beliefs about what’s important to *us*.”¹⁰ Due to the limited writing space, the author will focus on integrity as one of the main core values that nurture national unity.

Integrity

One of the most important elements that can keep people together is integrity. However, in a world of compromise and corruption, integrity has little value. In her book, *Integrity: Doing the Right Thing for the Right Reason*, Dr. Killinger writes:

9 Ieremia Rusu (2014). „Identitatea creștinului – baza conduitei creștine”, *Conferința științifică internațională : Puterea de a fi altfel*, Timișoara, 30-31 octombrie 2014. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, Bucharest, Romania. pp. 131-139.

10 James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner (1995). *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA. p. 216.

We live in an increasingly valueless society where success is measured primarily by status, prestige, and power. Materialism and its partner, consumerism, nurture the evils of greed, envy, lust, and shame—all enemies of integrity. Recent reports of outrageous acts of corporate fraud have sent shock waves of alarm around the world...Narcissism is the antithesis of integrity. Our era, which Christopher Lasch has called the Age of Narcissism, is suffering from the fallout of the Enlightenment and the rise of individualism, which champions the rights of the individual over the welfare of the state and its citizens. Solid values that consider the common good have declined in this impersonal, fast-track, technological world.¹¹

This description is true not only in the Western societies, but in Romania as well. Even more, for many Romanians integrity is not an issue because cheating and lying were surviving skills during the difficult times of the Romanian history. Somehow, it looks like dishonesty became part of the Romanian national D.N.A. However, the absence of integrity is also one of the major reasons the Romanian nation lacks unity; everyone goes on his or her own way, without looking for the common good.

Definition of Integrity

Using the *Oxford Dictionary*, Dr. Claud defines integrity as follows:

1. The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness. "He is known to be a man of integrity."
2. The state of being *whole* and *undivided*: "upholding territorial integrity and national sovereignty."
3. The condition of being *unified*, *unimpaired*, or *sound in construction*. "The structural integrity of the novel."
4. *Internal consistency or lack of corruption* in electronic data.

And, the origins of the word we can see in the French and Latin meanings of *intact*, *integrate*, and *entirety*. The concept means that the "whole thing is working well, undivided, integrated, intact, and uncorrupted." When we are talking about integrity, we are talking about being a whole person,

11 Barbara Killinger (2007). *Integrity: Doing the Right Thing for the Right Reason*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, Canada. pp. 4-5

integrated person, with all of our different parts working well and delivering the functions that they were designated to deliver.¹²

From this exhaustive definition, and the summary given by Dr. Claud, the wholeness and completeness aspects are emphasized.

To this definition, Dr. Killinger brings the individual involvement of a person: "Integrity is a personal choice, an uncompromising and predictable consistent commitment to honor moral, ethical, spiritual, and artistic values and principles."¹³ To this author, the most striking aspect of this definition is 'un uncompromising and predictable consistent commitment' that brings upfront the idea of resisting tendencies to focus only on personal preferences and filter things through personal biases. Dr. Killinger continues:

There is no integrity in saying on thing and doing another. To be predictable to ourselves and others, our spoken and written words must be consistent with our subsequent choices of action or behavior. Issues of trust are fundamentally important in our relationships within marriage and the family, as well as in the wider world of commerce where the honoring of contractual agreements is essential to fair trade and profitable dealings. In the gray areas where right and wrong are not immediately obvious or truth remains elusive, integrity requires us to spend a serious commitment of time and energy in moral reflection. Consultation with others whom we respect and trust can also prove to be an invaluable practice that encourages humility. Ultimately, the wisdom of our choices will largely depend on our level of maturity and on how well the character traits of honesty, sympathy, empathy, compassion, fairness, self-control, and duty have been integrated into our personality.¹⁴

When integrity is part of a person's character, his or her actions and motivations of their heart bring harmony and unity in their relationships and create an equilibrium in their environments: family, work place, church, office or community. The reverse is also true: lack of integrity in one's life brings turmoil, uncertainty and disunity.

¹² Henry Claud (2006). *Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY. p.31.

¹³ Killinger, p. 12.

¹⁴ Killinger, p. 12.

Integrity in the Public Service

Addressing the issue of integrity in public service, Peter Kemp focuses on integrity and public accountability¹⁵. As a starting point Kemp uses Psalm 15:1-6 in which he sees someone owing his loyalty to other people. His observation is striking,

In too many contemporary discussions of integrity we hear little about God or religion or the ancient traditions. Indeed, in the typescript of one of the papers circulated before the Balliol colloquium the word 'religion' had been crossed out and 'ideological' put in its place. There is an interesting separate question as to why we are so nervous about this dimension; and it is a practical point too, because it leads us into looking for solutions for things for which it maybe that there are no solutions to be found. And from the point of view of government and the State it is even more practical; because they have to pick up the bits left behind when religion becomes unfashionable—to pick them up both physically, in the sense of providing for a good deal of material welfare and the like, and spiritually, in the sense of the overriding eventual fallback position.¹⁶

In other words, Kemp observes that without God and Christian morality and ethics it is hard, even impossible, to achieve integrity on both personal and public service levels. More that this, taking God out of the contemporary society, makes the job of the State a lot harder in providing for its citizens, and meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people. This shortage of goods and services can also create unhappiness in people and the society can be fractured by social protests. For these reasons, the public servants should be public accountable about their work. In Kemp's opinion, it shouldn't be conflict "between the distinct demand of integrity, public accountability and good government; but that is not always—some might say ever—going to be easy to achieve."¹⁷

When public servants work with integrity, they use the resources according to the needs of people, not following their own pleasure. As a

15 Peter Kemp (1999). *Integrity and Public Accountability* in *Integrity in the Public and Private Domains*, Edited by Alan Montefiore and David Vines. Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 304-315.

16 *Idem*, p. 305.

17 *Idem*, p. 306.

result, the welfare of the nation increases. This attitude brings peace and safety nationwide and takes away the fear and the shame a public servant can experience if he or she distributes discretionary public resources. Unfortunately, not many Romanian citizens feel that they have the duty to help the State and its agents when they wrestle with questions of integrity.

Conclusion

National unity is very important for the Romanians. After so many years of struggles and turmoil, Romania has the chance to increase her unity pursuing true democracy by implementing and following democratic principles, and by accepting and living core values like integrity. In both areas the Romanians need to act and take ownership of their actions: implementation and application of democratic principles on a personal and institutional dimension and embracing integrity as one of the most important core values a nation has. And all these with God's help and blessing. Without God's presence all our actions will be futile, and all our efforts will be in vain: the nation will disintegrate physically, morally, and spiritually.

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