



## THE SMALL STATE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS OF FINLAND AND ROMANIA IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD –

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The study analyses the concept of a small state, its role in international relations and the way it can ensure its security in relation to the great actors. The concept of a small state emerged in the post-war period, being definitely imposed in the 60s-70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are two important schools of thought in this research area. The first is the positivist approach that defines the small state starting, mainly, from the geographical criteria – surface, population, resources etc. The second introduces, along with the physical-geographical criteria, the geopolitical framework, namely the way the respective state influences European and world political affairs as well as the decisions of other states. Regardless of the approach paradigm, the small state is not necessarily a victim of the great powers, having its definite role in the dynamics of international relations and the main goal of ensuring its survival in a most often anarchic international environment.

Moreover, the study provides an analysis of the regional security strategies of Romania and Finland, two states located far from each other in the interwar period, showing that Romania tried to compensate for the security deficit by concluding regional alliances with Poland (1921), the Little Entente (1920-1921) and the Balkan Entente (1934), while Finland was very reluctant to such formulas. It joined neither the Baltic Entente nor the Nordic Group, but collaborated with them.

As the entire international order established by the Paris Peace Conference collapsed at the end of the fourth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Romania and Finland found themselves at the discretion of the two great totalitarian powers – Germany and the Soviet Union. Their conduct during the years of the Second World War influenced their post-war destiny.

Keywords: Romania; Finland; small power; buffer state; regional security arrangements;

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## FEATURES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The First World War, also known as the "Great War", brought major changes in the life of the old continent. Four great empires disappeared – Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, Russian and German – which had long been important actors in international life. It created a political vacuum, which was taken full advantage of by the peoples who had been integrated into those great state structures, most often against their will. Through a process of national emancipation, more than once accompanied by violent internal movements and military conflicts, the political map of Europe was radically modified. New states were formed – Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania. Poland rebuilt itself after the divisions of 1772, 1793 and 1795 and subsequent experiments, others completed their state construction by reuniting all the kindred people under the same institutional roof. It was the case, first of all, of Romania, but also of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929, Yugoslavia).

On the ruins of the former empires, specific state constructions were born – Austria and Hungary in the case of the Austro-Hungarian empire; The Weimar Republic, the successor of the Second Reich; Soviet Russia (the Soviet Union starting on 30 December 1922), which took on the messianism and imperialism of the tsars, to which was added the ideological expansionism crystallized in the doctrine "World Communist Revolution"; The Republic of Turkey, the modern creation of Kemal Pasha, known as Atatürk.

Developments in the international situation "the 20-year truce", according to the expression of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, commander of the Allied forces on the Western Front from April 1918 until the end of the conflict, stood out for certain distinct features: the inability of the victorious countries (France and Great Britain) to enforce compliance with the provisions of the peace treaties concluded in 1919-1920, under the conditions of the US withdrawal from European affairs;

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the weakness of the League of Nations, an international organization created at the initiative of US President Woodrow Wilson to manage crises and prevent the outbreak of a new world conflict; the revisionist and revanchist conduct, increasingly virulent, as the years went by, of the defeated (Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria), of the excluded (the Soviet Union, although Moscow nuanced its position, accepting, for opportunistic reasons, the thesis of “collective security” (extensively, in Constantiniu, 2010) and of some dissatisfied winners (Italy and Japan); the “conciliation policy” of the Franco-British tandem in relation to those tendencies, the intensification of the arms race and the modification of strategic paradigms in military construction etc.<sup>1</sup>.

The years between the two world wars were marked by numerous initiatives, within and outside the League of Nations, aimed at preserving peace, stability and political-territorial order. Their enumeration would be too extensive for this study, but we mention a few of them: the Geneva Protocol (1924-1925); The Locarno Conference and Pact (1925); Germany’s admission to the League of Nations (1926); The Briand-Kellogg Pact (1928); the Moscow Protocol (1929); Aristide Briand’s plan to achieve a European federation (1929); the Conference on Disarmament (1932-1935) etc.

As can be seen, most of them were consummated in the third decade, making room, in the following decade, for the crises that generated major tensions in the interwar international system and that, in the end, led to the collapse of the political-territorial order established on the banks of the Seine in 1919-1920. The road

<sup>1</sup> From the very rich bibliography dedicated to the evolution of international relations in that period, we note, for example, the following volumes: Moisuc, V. (2002). *Istoria relațiilor internaționale până la mijlocul secolului al XX-lea*. București: Editura Fundației Românie de Măine; Alter, P. (2004). *Problema germană și Europa*, translation: Irina Cristea, foreword: Florin Constantiniu. București: Editura Corint; Johnson, P. (2005). *O istorie a lumii moderne. 1920-2000*, translated by Luana Schidu, 2nd revised ed. București: Editura Humanitas; Duroselle, J.B. (2006). *Istoria relațiilor internaționale, vol. I, 1919-1947*, translation Anca Airinei. București: Editura Științelor Sociale și Politice; MacMillan, M. (2006). *Les artisans de la paix. Comment Lloyd George, Clemenceau et Wilson ont redessiné la carte du monde*, translated by André Zavriew, with the support of Centre National du Livre. Paris: JC Lattès; Gray, C.S. (2010). *Războiul, pacea și relațiile internaționale. O introducere în istoria strategică*, translated by Ramona Lupu. Editura Polirom, pp. 127-152; *Encyclopedia of World History. Crisis and Achievement 1900 to 1950*, vol. V (2008). New York: Bold, Em., Ciupercă, I. (2010). *Europa în derivă (1918-1940). Din istoria relațiilor internaționale*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed., general index Alexandrina Ioniță. Iași: Casa Editorială Demiurg; Carr, E.H. (2011). *Criza celor douăzeci de ani (1919-1939). O introducere în studiul relațiilor internaționale*, translated by Cătălin Dracșineanu. Editura Polirom etc.

to the final catastrophe was punctuated by many events, such as: the occupation of Manchuria by the Japanese Empire (1931); the accession to power of the Nazis led by Adolf Hitler (1933); the reintroduction of compulsory military service in Germany (1935); Italy’s aggression against Ethiopia (1935-1936); the occupation of the Rhineland by Hitler (1936); the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939); the Sino-Japanese War (1937); the occupation of Austria (1938); the Munich agreement (29 September 1938) and the fateful Soviet-German agreement of 23 August 1939, between Germany and the Soviet Union, preamble to the outbreak of the Second World War.

It has been rightly concluded that there are two contrasting decades. In the first of them, despite all the existing crises and tensions, the spirit of collaboration prevailed, with hopes that collective security would be materialized and peace would be saved. In the second decade, the abundance and virulence of crises highlighted that peace was no longer a certainty, and war was looming on the horizon.

### THE SECURITY OF THE SMALL STATE. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL MILESTONES

In international politics, regardless of the historical period, the decisive role is played by the great actors, the great powers, although the concept belongs more to the realist and neorealist paradigm, widely shared by the theoreticians of international relations<sup>2</sup>.

In essence, a *great power* is the state that has a considerable capacity for political, economic, cultural and military influence at global level (Serebrian, 2006, p. 169). The term *great power* was first used by Count Ernst Friedrich Herbert zu Münster (1766-1839), in August 1815, with direct reference to the states that defeated Napoleon. At that time, the Congress of Vienna (1815) defined five great powers: Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia and Prussia. Subsequent developments, such as the rise of the USA, Germany and Japan, led to their number rising to eight before the First World War – the USA, Germany, Great

<sup>2</sup> For the mentioned aspects, see also: Morgenthau, H.J. (2007). *Politica între națiuni. Lupta pentru putere și lupta pentru pace*, translated by Oana Andreea Bosoi, Alina Andreea Dragolea, Mihai Vladimir Zodian. Editura Polirom, pp. 43-55; Goldstein, J.S., Pevenhouse, J.C. (2008). *Relații internaționale*, translated by Andreea-Ioana Cozianu, Elena Farca, Adriana Ștraub. Editura Polirom, pp. 95-140; Vasquez, J.A., Elman, C. (2012). *Realismul și balanța de putere*, translated by Crisia Miroiu. Editura Polirom, pp. 44-78, 137-150, 190-222 etc.



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Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, the Russian Empire, Japan and Italy. In the interwar period, the USA, the USSR, Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Japan were considered great powers. Besides them, considering the concept of territorial state in the international system, imposed after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), there were also a number of smaller formations, generically called *small states (powers)* (Maass, 2017).

The concept of *small state security* emerged in the post-war period, the most extensive research being carried out between the '60s and '70s of the last century, when it was definitively imposed. Research in the field has been distinguished by a variety of approaches<sup>3</sup>. One of the most important problems was and remains the concept of a small state. In this field, two schools of thought are distinguished. The first of them is the positivist approach, which defines the small state starting mainly from geographical criteria – area, population, resources etc. Simon Kuznets, Nobel Prize winner in economics, said that one can speak of a small state when it has less than 10 million inhabitants<sup>4</sup>.

These criteria, however, do not cover reality well enough. Here is a significant example: Sweden has an area of 450,000 square kilometres, and Japan has 372,000 square kilometres. The former is considered a relatively small state, while the latter is considered a great power, with a chance of occupying a seat on the UN Security Council.

Other analyses, considered realistic, introduce, along with the physical-geographical criteria, the geopolitical framework, namely the way in which the respective state influences European and world political affairs, as well as the decisions of other states. In Anglo-Saxon literature, it is used the term "*small power*", which in a certain sense better covers reality. Robert L. Rothstein, an important American analyst

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<sup>3</sup> From the wide debate on the small state, we mention the following: Baker Fox, A. (1959). *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II*. Chicago: Chicago University Press; *Small states in world politics: Explaining foreign policy behavior* (2003), ed. J.A.K. Hey. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, pp. 1-11; *Small states in international relations* (2006), ed. Christine Ingebritsen, Iver Neumann, Sieglinde Gsthöl, Jessica Beyer. University of Washington Press; *Small states and international security: Europe and beyond* (2014), ed. Clive Archer, Alyson Bailes, Anders Wivel. London, Routledge; *The Concept of the State in International Relations, Philosophy, Sovereignty and Cosmopolitanism* (2015), ed. Robert Schuett and Peter M.R. Stirk. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press etc.

<sup>4</sup> There are other perspectives on the small state. The World Bank considers a small state to be an entity that has less than 1.5 million inhabitants. Based on this characteristic, it is estimated that there are 50 such states in the world, www.diplomacy.edu, retrieved on 22 August 2022.

in the field, considers that the small power is the state that recognizes it cannot ensure its security by using its own capacities and it must rely on the help of other states, institutions, alliances (Rothstein, 1968, p. 16). The insufficiency of the small power in ensuring its own security must be recognized by the other states involved in international politics. It would represent, along with the physical-geographical dimensions, one of the main differences between a large and a small power.

The opinion is also expressed that the analysis of the security of the small powers is irrelevant, because international politics is the prerogative of the great powers. But their survival is largely similar to that of a large state. Also, sometimes, in the clashes and in the permanent struggle for hegemony between the great powers, the small state can play an important role.

The analysis of the security of a small power and, implicitly, of its geopolitical and geostrategic position at a given moment involves the use of two well-defined levels – "*given characteristics*" and "*circumstantial characteristics*". "*Given characteristics*" represent elements of a physical-geographical order (surface, population, natural resources, nature and structure of neighbourhoods etc.). The second level is circumscribed to the geopolitical and geostrategic elements, namely the place and role of the state in the set of international relations, the nature of relations with regional, continental and global power centres<sup>5</sup>.

If the first level of analysis has a relatively static character, the second is predominantly dynamic, international developments being able to impose changes in the interest of the major actors in the state in question. Therefore, events can project the small state into the forefront of world politics, a situation that can have great servitudes, but also some advantages.

Sometimes, the small state can end up in the position of a buffer state. Such a state is a weak power, placed between two or more stronger states, maintained or sometimes created with the aim of reducing the conflict between them (Wight, 1998, p. 168).

<sup>5</sup> See the classic work of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 67-202. For the neorealist version, the most important author is Kenneth N. Watz, *Teoria politicii internaționale / Theory of international politics* (2006), translated by Nicoleta Mihăilescu, introductory study by Lucian-Dumitru Dîrdală. Editura Polirom, pp. 147-180.



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*Buffer states are usually divided into oscillating, neutral, and satellite. Oscillating is the buffer state that promotes a policy that prudently encourages the rivalries of the big players, in the hope that it will be able to survive better. Neutral buffer states do not have their own active and visible policy, thus trying to go unnoticed in the international arena. A buffer state becomes a satellite when foreign policy is controlled by one of the important geopolitical actors.*

As a rule, a buffer state is created in a region and in a period characterized by a “*power vacuum*”, as happened with the Pontus-Baltic isthmus at the end of the First World War, when the simultaneous dissolution of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German empires created the possibility of the affirmation of smaller states.

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As A.J.P. Taylor, author of a famous work on the origins of the Second World War (Taylor, 1999, p. 173), points out, a tradition has been formed in European history. Great Britain and France were supporters of the creation of buffer states, and the Germans, seconded by the Russians, considered that the division of states or the existence of buffer states were the best solution for achieving peace between the great powers. The most significant example for the latter case is Poland, a buffer state between Germans and Russians. It was divided, in the course of three stages (1772, 1793, 1795), by Prussia, Russia and Austria.

At the end of the First World War, France and Great Britain accepted the reconstitution of Poland, which regained its status as a buffer country between Germany and Russia. On 23 August 1939, as I mentioned, through the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement, the two great powers decided on the fourth partition of Poland, materialized by the treaty of 28 September 1939.

It should also be noted that the scope of buffer states is different, to some extent, from that of small states. As a rule, the small state should be in the vicinity of one or more great powers, which exercise or try to exercise the strictest possible control. But the quality of buffer state can also be held by a somewhat larger state, as was the case of interwar Poland, mentioned above.



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Each major geopolitical actor, at the height of power, absorbed one or more buffer states. If the dominant power suffered a defeat or went through a certain eclipse of its power, it had to make concessions to the incorporated state, which even went so far as to achieve independence. In this context, Finland is a classic case in the history of international relations. It was incorporated into the Swedish kingdom for a long time. The rise of Russia, as a great power in the Baltic basin, placed Finland as a buffer formation between it and Sweden. The competition was won by the Russian Empire which, in 1809, through the Peace of Friederikshamm, annexed Finland (Dragomir, Miloiu, 2011, pp. 102-105). After a century or so, in 1917, Russia’s implosion created conditions for it to accede to the status of independence.

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The first of them is **the strategic or geostrategic importance of the small state, from the perspective of the main actors of international life**, namely how it is seen by one or the other of the dominant powers and to what extent it arouses the interest of the closest one. Given the disproportion of forces, the small state will consider itself permanently threatened. Practically, the question that will arise is to what extent the small state can be used by a great power against one or more rivals. In this case, the small state will be seen as a possible adversary and may end up in a situation where it will have to endure the punitive actions of a great power. It is the classic “*security dilemma*”, formulated by John Griffiths in the ’50s (apud Griffiths, 2003, pp. 41-46).

For large and small states, the “*security dilemma*” is presented in practically the same parameters, the assessment of potential threats being a key factor for any kind of security strategy. The essence is that smaller states, because of their limited possibilities, are at the disposal of the major actors of international life.

Returning to Finland and Romania, the object of our analysis, we will say that the Soviet Union was the great power that proved to be, by virtue of historical tradition, the most interested in the evolution of the two countries. Historians have demonstrated most eloquently



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the continuity of doctrine and ideology in matters of imperialism between tsarism and communism<sup>6</sup>. Stalin, quoting Peter the Great, would have said that the ladies of St. Petersburg could not sleep as long as Finland's guns were under foreign control (cf. Knudsen, p. 142). As for Romania, the Kremlin saw it as a real obstacle to achieving much older goals – reaching Central Europe and the Straits (Casso, 2003).

A second variable is **related to the voltage level between the great powers**. In other words, the probability of an armed conflict between them. In periods of maximum tension, which can even lead to war, the strategic position of the small state suddenly acquires a special importance. In this situation, the great power concerned may come to act against the small state in order to paralyze its possible hostile reactions or to prevent the use of its territory by another competing great power.

The third variable is **the phase of the power cycle in which the closest of the great powers is found**. As Robert G. Gilpin shows, every major international actor goes through cycles of power, so that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the world witnessed a succession of hegemonies (Gilpin, 1981, pp. 10-11). The most important were, however, the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the American one for the following century.

For the small state, the cycle of the nearest power is essential. If it is also a neighbour, the problem becomes more complicated. Usually, the existence of a smaller power on the border of a major actor is a limit to the latter's own expansion. The existence of a small state, under these conditions, represents a compromise, even temporarily accepted by the great power, determined by the relationship between the ambition to control the small state and the costs of this control.

<sup>6</sup> Among the most recent studies on this topic, we point out: Marchizul de Custine, A.L.L. (2007). *Scrisori din Rusia. Rusia în 1839*, editor, foreword Pierre Nora, translated from French by Irina Negrea. București: Editura Humanitas (classical paper related to the Russian Empire); Sillion, B. (2004). *Rusia și ispita mesianică. Religie și ideologie*. București: Editura Vremea XXI; Țăcu, O. (2004). *Problema Basarabiei și relațiile sovieto-române în perioada interbelică (1919-1939)*. Chișinău: Editura Prut Internațional; Bold, E., Locovei, R.O. (2008). *Relații româno-sovietice (1918-1941)*. Iași: Casa Editorială Demiurg; Mironov, A.-M. (2013). *Vremea încercărilor. Relațiile româno-sovietice 1930-1940*, foreword by Constantin Bușe. București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului; Mihai, F.R., Buga, V. (coordinators) (2020). *Problema Basarabiei în relațiile româno-sovietice 1918-2018*, foreword by Ioan Scurtu. București: Editura Litera etc.

Another important factor intervenes – the moment when the small state on the border of a great power was formed. If the small state gets individualized when the great power is at its peak, the chances of becoming viable increase greatly. If, on the contrary, the small state is formed or gains its independence at the moment when the great power is at the lowest point of its power, it will have difficulty in subsisting. The great power, once it overcomes the eclipse, will tend to recover what it lost in the period of decline (Knudsen, p. 144).

Finland gained its independence at the time of the dissolution of the Russian Empire, which had ruled it for over a century. The new regime installed in Petrograd, being in an extremely difficult situation, was forced to recognize the new political-territorial reality.

The case of Romania is partially identical, Bessarabia joining the Romanian Kingdom against the background of the same events. The new Soviet regime never recognized the belonging of the province between the Prut and the Dniester to Romania, so in 1918-1924 it organized numerous aggressive actions, the most important of which was the “*rebellion*” in Tatar-Bunar<sup>7</sup>.

As a result, Finland gained its independence, and Romania enlarged its eastern border at a time of eclipse of the Russian power. The Bolshevik regime in Petrograd and, later, in Moscow considered that both countries took advantage of Russia's “*weakness*” to obtain political and territorial advantages, impossible under normal conditions.

In conclusion, the two countries had a “*problem*”, throughout the interwar period, with the Soviet Union, a country that managed to consolidate itself internally, to be recognized on the international arena and to become, in the fourth decade, an important player on the European continent and in the world. As the Soviet Union consolidated its status, Finland's and Romania's international standing became more and more fragile.

Another important factor for the security of the small state is **the policy promoted by the great rival powers towards it**. Faced with the pressure of the big neighbouring power, the small state tends

<sup>7</sup> For further details, see also: Tătărescu, Gh. (1996). *Mărturii pentru istorie*, Sanda Tătărescu-Negroponte (ed.), foreword by Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca. București: Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 75-109; Răuș, N., Neacșu, Gh., Moraru, D. (2017). *O agresiune sovietică la adresa României; Tatar Bunar în documente și în presa vremii*. Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun; *Tatar Bunar 1924. Documente* (2024), Ion Giurcă, Liviu Corciu (eds.). București: Editura Militară.



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to protect itself by appealing to large competing actors. It leads the ruling elite of the powerful neighbour to look at the small state with suspicion and, more than once, with hostility. The same feelings are nurtured by the elite of the small state. Therefore, unequal power relations create mistrust, historical memory and unsettling prospects for the future, poisoning mutual relations.

Another aspect is also discussed. Sensing the danger that a competing great power will use the small state against its interests, the neighbouring great power is thus compelled to be prepared for any kind of situation. Including for a preventive intervention against the small state, in order to prevent another power from gaining an advantage there.

Finally, another important variable is **the existence of a multilateral security framework**, through the cooperation of all actors, large and small, on the international scene. From this point of view, the end of the First World War brought a premiere in the history of international relations, the creation of the League of Nations. Its existence was viewed with great confidence by smaller states, as they hoped that it would be an instrument that would protect them from the interference of the great powers.

If the smaller states looked with optimism at the existence of a multilateral security framework, such as the League of Nations or the United Nations, after the Second World War, the great powers appreciated them only in relation to the way in which they could achieve their interests. If a great power considered that such a framework (organization) prevented their materialization, then it ceased to participate in it.

For example, in the interwar period, the USA, although promoters of the League of Nations, no longer participated in its activity, and Germany, later accepted as a member, left the organization, because the Berlin regime considered that it had become an obstacle in promoting interests. Likewise, the Soviet Union was admitted to the Geneva organization and then was excluded at the end of 1939.

The variables analysed above must be understood as cases that condition each other, that interact with each other. From their connection, stable or unstable states of affairs result, which can be beneficial or unsuitable for any state, large or small. The factors, taken

together, define the political security environment, characterized from the perspective of the small state, by inequality of power. Depending on it, on the analysis it makes, the political elite of the small state can decide what strategies it accepts in order to preserve its state entity. It is good to specify that the small state cannot and should not be condemned to a passive acceptance of everything that surrounds it. It may be able, in some circumstances, to influence, however, within certain limits, the international security environment. In other words, the small state, if it wants to preserve its individuality, to survive, has the obligation to act, not just to react<sup>8</sup>.

In interaction, not all variables are of equal importance. For example, the strategic (geostrategic) position can be an important factor in the inequality of power, but without the tension between the major actors, it does not appear to be decisive. Therefore, the main operational variable is the voltage between the great powers. It actively interacts with the phase of the cycle of power, both of which shape the course of things, the evolution of events.

In this case, small states have few possibilities to intervene, but the duty of the political elites is to lucidly analyse the international environment and to establish those directions of action that generate as few negative effects as possible.

### THE REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS OF ROMANIA AND FINLAND IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

In the interwar period, the geopolitical position of Romania and Finland was characterized by a series of common features, but also by some marked differences. The first category included the neighbourhood with Russia. Both countries, however, were in the front line of the offensive of the new regime, established on 25 October/ 7 November 1917, launched in the “*name of the world communist revolution*”. The result was a civil war in Finland and a low-intensity conflict on the Dniester (1918-1924), to use a modern term, widely used today. Finland managed to normalize its relations with the Soviet

<sup>8</sup> For the theoretical aspects, see also: Miroiu, A. (2005). *Balanță și hegemonie. România în politica mondială 1913-1989*, foreword by Mihail E. Ionescu. București: Editura Tritonic, pp. 67-77; Walt, S.M. (2008). *Originile alianțelor*, translated by Camelia Boca, introductory study by Șerban Cioculescu. Iași: Institutul European.



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*Finland was placed on a secondary strategic direction, with only the south of its territory being of greater interest to Russia. The peace with Finland did not entail great geopolitical and geostrategic losses for Moscow, while the renunciation of Bessarabia, by recognizing the unification with Romania, meant a postponement of the achievement of a very important goal. This fact influenced, in a decisive manner, the Romanian-Soviet relations throughout the interwar period.*

state through the Treaty of Tartu (Dorpat) (14 October 1920) (Dragomir, Miloiu, pp. 223-224).

Romania had a series of talks with Soviet Russia in various capitals to resume diplomatic relations, but they were not completed (Cojocaru, 2018). It was only in 1934, with a delay of 15 years compared to Finland, that this stage was reached (*Romanian-Soviet Relations, Documents*, vol. I, 1917-1934, 1999, pp. 248-150). Both countries, however, remained at war with the Third International (the Comintern), created in March 1919 as a world communist party, with the mission of leading the international proletariat to the victory of the “*world communist revolution*”. Moscow used, with relative success, the communist parties (considered sections of the Comintern) of the two states, which became, from the very moment of their establishment, instruments in the hands of the Soviet Union.

The Romanian state was located on the strategic axis that led to the Balkan Peninsula, to the Straits (in particular), and to the Eastern Mediterranean. The domination of these regions has been one of the most important goals of Russian diplomacy since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other hand, Finland was placed on a secondary strategic direction, with only the south of its territory being of greater interest to Russia. The peace with Finland did not entail great geopolitical and geostrategic losses for Moscow, while the renunciation of Bessarabia, by recognizing the unification with Romania, meant a postponement of the achievement of a very important goal. This fact influenced, in a decisive manner, the Romanian-Soviet relations throughout the interwar period.

Other significant differences between the two countries were added. Romania was, in those years, part of the French security system, along with other neighbours – Poland and Czechoslovakia. At the same time, two other neighbours – Hungary and Bulgaria – were pursuing a revisionist policy, and the relations with Germany, especially after the Nazis came to power, were tense.

Finland, however, apart from its powerful eastern neighbour, did not have such problems with Sweden, although the linguistic dispute cast a shadow on bilateral relations.

Despite the geographical distance and the lack of traditions of knowledge and cooperation, Romania and Finland proceeded to mutual recognition and establish diplomatic relations, although their course was a winding one.

In the period between the two world wars, Romania and Finland, starting from their geopolitical position and their own potential, which highlighted similarities and differences, sought to ensure their security and promote their interests abroad in a specific manner, without collaborating too intensely. From this point of view, the efforts of the ruling class in Bucharest and Helsinki were, to a large extent, parallel.

Along with the multilateral formulas of international cooperation, such as, for example, the League of Nations, and the relations with the great powers, especially with the neighbouring or close ones (USSR, Germany), the Romanian and Finnish diplomacies promoted, with particular degrees of intensity, the idea of regional security arrangements.

Materializing such an orientation, the Romanian diplomacy conformed to the principle summarized by Nicolae Titulescu: “*From the national, through the regional, to the universal*”. Throughout the interwar period, the dimension of regional cooperation in Romania’s foreign policy was an important component, concluding, in the early 1920s, the alliance with Poland and the Little Entente.

The alliance with Poland, concluded on 3 March 1921, was of particular importance, because it protected the eastern border against an unprovoked attack by the Soviet Union, the most dangerous opponent of the two countries<sup>9</sup>. That was also the reason why the alliance was improved or renewed several times. The first time,

<sup>9</sup> The alliance between Romania and Poland benefits from a consistent bibliography, of which we note: Popescu, M.C. (2001). *Relațiile militare româno-polone în perioada interbelică*. Editura Sigma; Anghel, F. (2008). *Construirea sistemului “Cordon Sanitaire”. Relații româno-polone 1919-1926*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun; *Despre relațiile polono-române de-a lungul timpului în anul Centenarului Independenței Poloniei și Marii Uniri a României* (2019). Suceava; Hrenčiu, D. (2020). *Patriarhul Miron Cristea vs relațiile româno-polone în anii ’30. Contribuții*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega; Nowak, K., Walczak, H. (2020). *Jeden naród o dwóch sztandarach. Przymierze polsko-rumuńskie(1919) 1921-1926. Dokumenty i materiale/Un singur popor cu două drapele. Alianța polono-română (1919)1921-1926*. Warsaw; *România și Polonia: un secol de alianță/Romania and Poland a Century of Alliance. Documente/ Documents*, coordinators: Rijnoveanu, C.-S., dr., Pavelescu, Ș., dr. (2021). București: Editura Militară; *România și Polonia în avanpostul securității europene. Tradiție și continuitate (1919-2022)*, coordinators: Prisăcaru, D., Otu, P., Iorgulescu, M. (2023). București: Editura Militară, Centrul Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei.



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it took place on the occasion of Józef Pilsudski's visit to Romania (14-16 September 1922), during which the chiefs of the two staffs, Generals Constantin Christescu and Tadeusz Rozwadovski, signed a new military convention. Compared to the previous document, only Article 1 was modified, which specified that, if one of the signatories was attacked, under conditions that constituted a *casus belli*, the untacked state undertook to enter the war immediately.

On 26 March 1926, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, I.G. Duca and Józef Wielowiejski, signed the *Treaty of Guarantee between Romania and Poland*, which meant a renewal of the 1921 one. On the same occasion, a Technical Arrangement was signed that resumed the provisions of the 1922 convention. It is worth noting that the political treaty established the formula *erga omnes*, but it was no longer found in the military convention, which established the granting of assistance only against an unprovoked attack from the east. The duration of the treaty was five years, and it could be denounced after two years, with six months' notice.

At the expiration of the validity period, the Romanian-Polish alliance was renewed. The event took place on 15 January 1931, in Geneva, the documents being signed, on the Romanian side, by Prime Minister Gh.G. Mironescu, and on the Polish side, by Foreign Minister August Zaleski. According to the Treaty of Guarantees, which reproduced for the most part the Convention of 26 March 1926, Poland and Romania undertook to respect each other and to maintain their territorial integrity and political independence against any aggressor, the formula *erga omnes* finding a more nuanced expression.

In the middle of the fourth decade, namely in the period 1932-1936, the Romanian-Polish alliance went through difficult, tense moments. First of all, there was the failure to conclude the Romanian-Soviet non-aggression pact, for which Poland, together with France, put great pressure on Bucharest.

Then, it was the policy promoted by Nicolae Titulescu, of rapprochement with the Soviet Union, which is circumscribed to the Paris-Prague-Moscow triangle. That option worsened bilateral relations because, if successful, Poland, which was in dispute with Czechoslovakia over the Teschen region, would have been left alone

between Germany and the USSR. There were also the personal rivalries between Nicolae Titulescu and Józef Beck, which amplified the misunderstandings. Basically, in the years 1932-1936, the alliance functioned with great difficulty. A sign of the mentioned tension, unprecedented in relations with the neighbour to the north, was the fact that, in 1936, the General Staff, within the framework of strategic planning, elaborated, for the first time, an operations plan against Poland (*Romanian Military Strategy in the Modern Era*, 1999, p. 119). After the removal of Nicolae Titulescu from the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, relations were revived, but they did not reach the levels of the first interwar decade.

It should also be mentioned that Romanian diplomacy did not give up on Take Ionescu's older plan, that of achieving an alliance of the countries of the Ponto-Baltic isthmus, which would include Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Romania and, possibly, Greece and Turkey.

In the instructions given by Nicolae Titulescu to Raoul Bossy on his departure for Helsinki, he asked him to carefully follow the formula of a bloc of the Baltic neighbours of the Soviet Union: *"It is a very delicate place because of Finland's proximity to Russia and the forming of the Baltic Entente. That is why, Titulescu told him, we need a balanced man like you there, all the more so, since we will soon enter into official relations with the Soviets"*. (Bossy, 1993, p. 231). The guideline was that *"the bloc should be enlarged, so that Romania can also participate in it"*. (Ib., p. 236). Bossy will closely follow the evolution of the *"Baltic Entente"*, but the connection with Romania will not be achieved.

The Romanian-Polish alliance fell apart, without being able to enter into force, as a result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (Mareş, 2010). On 1 September 1939, Poland was attacked by Germany, in which case Romania had no obligation. On 17 September 1939, the Soviet Union also attacked the Polish state, already defeated by the Wehrmacht. According to the contractual provisions, Romania was supposed to provide assistance, military included, to its former neighbour to the north. But at that time, Poland no longer existed as a state, and the Polish authorities did not even ask for the agreement to be implemented. On the night of 17 to 18 September 1939, the high Polish authorities (president, government, supreme commander



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According to Nicolae Titulescu, the Organization Pact transformed the Little Entente into an important actor on the European scene, giving it the character of a unified international body. As if foreseeing the future evolution of events, Titulescu offered the spiritual leadership of the reorganized Little Entente to Italy, but Benito Mussolini refused the offer.

of the armed forces) crossed into Romania. Another 100,000 citizens (60,000 military and 40,000 civilians) followed them in the coming hours and days<sup>10</sup>.

Another very important alliance, also created at the beginning of the '20s and which continued to function in the fourth decade of the last century, was the Little Entente, made up of Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia (Ionescu, 1921; Campus, 1997; *România și Mica Înțelegere. Alianța defensivă la centenar/Romania and the Little Entente. The defensive alliance at the centenary*, 2021). In the evolution of this regional alliance, a significant event was the signing, on 16 February 1933, in Geneva, of the Organization Pact. On behalf of Romania, the document was signed by Nicolae Titulescu, on behalf of Czechoslovakia, by Eduard Beneš, and on behalf of Yugoslavia, by Bogoljub Jevtič.

The pact provided for the creation of a Permanent Council, composed of the foreign ministers of the three countries (or special delegates), as the governing body of the common policy, the decisions being taken unanimously. The Council met at least three times a year and could decide that the representation or defence of the point of view of the Little Entente, in various matters of international life, should be entrusted to a single delegate. It also stipulated the establishment of an Economic Council to coordinate the economic policy of the three countries, a permanent secretariat, with headquarters for one year in the capital of the incumbent president. It also had a permanent section at the League of Nations. Also, the existing military conventions between the three partners were extended indefinitely.

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<sup>10</sup> Poles in Romania after 1939 (1996). Craiova, *Polscy Uchodźcy w Rumuni 1939-1947. Dokumenty z Naraodowych Archiwów Rumunii/Polish refugees in Romania 1939-1947. Documents from the National Archives of Romania* (2013). Warsaw, Bucharest etc.

The worsening international situation affected the functionality and viability of the Little Entente. Yugoslavia, led by the government of Milan Stojadinović (1935-1939), began to detach itself from its alliance partners. Responding to pressure from Berlin and Rome, Yugoslavia concluded the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression with Bulgaria (24 January 1937) and then the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Italy (25 March 1937). The two treaties were appreciated in Romanian historiography as the first steps on the road to the disintegration of the Little Entente (cf. Retegan, 1997, p. 122).

The Czechoslovak crisis of 1938-1939 sanctioned the death of this regional defensive organization. In the report 1293/27 October 1938, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Operations Section of the General Staff showed that the Little Entente, although formally not disbanded, was, in fact, non-existent due to the amputation of Czechoslovakia (AMNR, Collection 948, 3<sup>rd</sup> Operations Section, file no. 455, p. 7). There was a sad truth – “a sure lesson from recent events is that the value of alliances and military political commitments in peacetime are very relative” (ib., p. 11). The dissolution of Czechoslovakia, in mid-March 1939, determined the cessation of the existence of the Little Entente, which, for almost two decades, was a priority for Romanian foreign policy.

In the fourth decade, Romania completed its system of regional alliances by creating the Balkan Entente<sup>11</sup>. On 9 February 1934, the foreign ministers of Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Turkey signed the Balkan Entente Pact in Athens. For Romania, the importance of the new alliance must be seen in the light of the problem of ensuring security on the eastern border. It was hoped that Turkey, through the good relations it had with the Soviet regime, would succeed in smoothing the way for a Romanian-Soviet agreement. The first two articles defined the essence of the organization. Article 1 stated: “Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece mutually guarantee the security of all Balkan borders”. (Titulescu, p. 398). The second article

<sup>11</sup> This regional alliance has benefited from consistent analyses, among which we mention: Popișteanu, C. (1971). *România și Antanta Balcanică. Momente și semnificații de istorie diplomatică*. București: Editura Politică; Campus, E. (1972). *Antanta Balcanică*. București: Editura Academiei R.S.R.; Idem (1980). *Din politica externă a României 1913-1947*. București: Editura Politică; Calafeteanu, I. (1980). *Diplomația românească în sud-estul Europei 1939-1940*. București: Editura Politică; Oșca, Al., Nicolescu, Gh. (1994). *Tratate, convenții militare și protocoale secrete, 1934-1939*. Pitești: Editura Vlasie; Oșca, Al. (2024). *Pactul Balcanic. Acțiune diplomatică și cooperare militară*. București: Editura Ștefădina etc.



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Romania considered that the new alliance should be a continuation of the Little Entente, in order to secure the rear and flanks of the Romanian strategic device, which would have been engaged with the main forces towards the centre of Europe. Yugoslavia shared the Romanian vision, but was preparing to inaugurate a new course, through agreements with Germany and Italy. Turkey appreciated the Balkan Entente in strictly regional terms, being practically in conflict with the Romanian thesis.

read as follows: *“The High Contracting Parties undertake to consult on the measures to be taken in the event of eventualities which may affect their interests, as defined by this Agreement. They undertake not to take any political action towards any other Balkan country which is not a signatory to this Agreement without prior mutual consent and not to take any political obligation towards any other Balkan country without the consent of the other Contracting Parties”* (lb.).

The pact was accompanied by an *“annex protocol”*, which was part of it. The document contained references to the non-aggressive character of the alliance, to the possibilities of putting the provisions into practice, to the conclusion of military conventions, to the maintenance of the *territorial status quo* (lb., pp. 399-401).

Particularly important to Romania was the secret annex to the pact, which largely shattered illusions about securing the eastern border. At the time of signing, Tevfik Rüstü Bey, Turkish Foreign Minister, made the following statement: *“On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Turkey, I have the honour to declare to you that under no circumstances will Turkey be considered as engaged to take part in any acts directed against the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics”* (lb., p. 401).

In the activity of the organization there are three major periods. The first of them is chronologically fixed from its establishment to the middle of 1936, in which an attempt was made to harmonize the multiple controversies between the members of the alliance. The Turkish reserve was joined by that of Greece, which announced that *“it cannot, under any circumstances, in the execution of the commitments assumed by the pact, wage war against one of the great powers”* (Oșca, Nicolescu, p. 120).

The visions of the four allies were different. Romania considered that the new alliance should be a continuation of the Little Entente, in order to secure the rear and flanks of the Romanian strategic device, which would have been engaged with the main forces towards the centre of Europe. Yugoslavia shared the Romanian vision, but was preparing to inaugurate a new course, through agreements with Germany and Italy. Turkey appreciated the Balkan Entente in strictly regional terms, being practically in conflict with the Romanian thesis.

Finally, Greece had an even smaller strategic vision, its main concern being to avoid a war with Italy.

The second stage, that of effective military collaboration, was until the end of 1938. During this period, the military conventions were concluded – first the tripartite one (6 November 1936), between Romania, Yugoslavia and Turkey, and then the fourfold (quadripartite) one, concluded on 10 November 1936. During the two years, conferences of the chiefs of the general staffs and exchanges of military delegations were held, plans of operations were drawn up etc.

It should be noted that, politically, the Balkan Entente tried to accommodate itself to the new realities in Europe. The most significant moment was the signing of the Thessaloniki Agreement with Bulgaria (31 July 1938). The two signatory parties undertook to refrain from the use of armed force in their relations.

The events of the autumn of 1938 and the spring of the following year also left their mark on the relations between the partners of the Balkan Entente. In the third stage of its existence, 1938-1940, military contacts became rare, political dialogue became less consistent, and each contracting party gave priority to its specific interests. The Alliance survived the outbreak of the Second World War, but it was of no use in Romania’s drama in the summer of 1940.

In the interwar years, Romania’s security arrangements, seen from the perspective of regional alliances, seemed to coagulate into a perfect system. The Romanian state had to cover three strategic directions to defend, in other words, three border segments – east, west and south. That was also the order of importance established by the General Staff. Each of them was secured by a defensive alliance. In the event of an attack by the Soviet Union, the alliance with Poland came into force. If Romania endured an aggression on the western border, it automatically enjoyed the protection of the Little Entente. Finally, a possible attack by Bulgaria determines the materialization of the Balkan Pact.

Theoretically, the model was almost infallible, but, faced with the dramatic evolution of the international situation, it did not work. As a result, Romania remained politically and militarily isolated, which facilitated its dismemberment in the summer of 1940.



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Romania's regional alliances in the interwar period, their lack of efficiency in terms of ensuring security, brings into question an important principle in international relations – the impossibility of small and medium-sized countries to achieve lasting alliances on their own. The Convention with Poland, the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente were formed without the participation of a great power. That was also their great weakness, because they could be “played” by the important actors of the international scene.

The alliance with Poland was burdened by its problems with Germany. Under the Little Entente, Czechoslovakia had great difficulties with the same Germany, and Yugoslavia with Italy. In the Balkan Entente, the interests of the members were equally divergent. Turkey wanted to avoid any confrontation with the Soviet Union, and Greece with Italy.

By virtue of its obligations, although it had no territorial disputes with Germany and Italy, Romania took upon itself the enmities of its allies. Conversely, it did not benefit from effective protection against the most dangerous adversary – the Soviet Union. Neither Czechoslovakia nor Yugoslavia made any commitment in that regard, and Turkey explicitly stated, at the time of signing the Pact, that it did not want a conflict with the Soviet Union. From this point of view, both alliances – the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente – proved ineffective.

There is also another important aspect – the lack of strong support from Great Britain and France, the guarantors of the Versailles system. They regarded those regional organizations as mere instruments for achieving their interests. As they changed, more than once, during the interwar period, the support fluctuated from stage to stage, ending up being ignored. It was the case of the Little Entente, a member of it, Czechoslovakia, being amputated in Munich, without the alliance being consulted. In that case, the great powers practiced security by compensation, the restoration of the understanding between them being made at the expense of a smaller country.

Unlike Romania, which had also based its security on promoting regional cooperation, Finland had been very reluctant to such an idea. The political circles in Helsinki, regardless of the political colour, considered that it was counterproductive, from the perspective of security interests, to join blocs of states opposed to each other.

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Finland therefore rejected the idea of a Baltic alliance, led by Poland, the Parliament refuting the agreement concluded by Rudolf Holsti in Warsaw (1922).

However, Finland continued to cooperate with the Baltic States<sup>12</sup>. In 1925 a new Baltic conference was organized in Helsinki, during which, at the proposal of the Finnish delegation, the text of a convention of conciliation and arbitration between the five Baltic states was drafted. Basically, the provisions of the Geneva Protocol of 20 October 1920, which stipulated the recourse to arbitration for all disputes between the signatories, except for territorial problems, were expanded at regional level. It was the first concrete result of the collaboration of the countries of the Baltic region, although it should be mentioned that Latvia did not ratify the agreement (AMAE, Special Files Collection, file no. 185, p. 65)<sup>13</sup>.

The Fourth Baltic Conference was to be prepared by Estonia, which wanted to push things further and complete the Helsinki Agreement with a solemn pact, which followed the fundamental obligations of the League of Nations Pact. It was also intended to institutionalize the conference of the Baltic countries, their representatives to meet every two years. Participation was open to any state, subject to the consent of the signatory governments. The Estonian project was opposed by several states, including Finland, so that, by the beginning of the fourth decade, the “Baltic Entente” was out of the sphere of concern of the diplomats in this region (National Archives, Council of Ministers Collection, file no. 15(83)/1937, pp. 37-38).

In the 1930s, Finland maintained its option of non-employment in regional formulas, but there were some mutations compared to the previous period. The country was faced with two possibilities – to commit to a Baltic Entente or to turn to the Scandinavian bloc, made up of Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Finland had interests in both regions, but also servitudes that fuelled fears.



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<sup>12</sup> Between 1921 and 1926, Finland participated in 31 Baltic conferences, held in various localities (Riga, Helsinki, Tallinn, Warsaw, Moscow, Geneva) (Cf. Dragomir and Miloiu, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-262).

<sup>13</sup> See also the study by Dașcovici, N. (1926). *Pactul siguranței baltice, Polonia, România/ Baltic Security Pact, Poland, Romania*, in “Societatea de Mâine”, year III, no. 33-34, pp. 550-552. Dașcovici appreciated that: “In the midst of external dangers and contradictory inclinations, Finland sought to make a policy of perfect balance and neutrality between the different hostile or divergent groups”.



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The project of the "Baltic Entente" was rediscovered against the background of negative developments in international life, in which the Nazi party taking power in Germany played an important role. The most active were Latvia and Estonia, which feared both Berlin's expansionism and Moscow's pressures (AMAE, Special Files Collection, file no. 185, pp. 7-8). Lithuania viewed those initiatives with great reservations, as it was afraid that the future entente would not show solidarity with Poland regarding the city of Vilnius. After a series of negotiations and contacts, on 29 August 1934, in Riga, the treaty of understanding and collaboration between the Baltic states was concluded. The document was signed on 12 September, the same year, in Geneva (National Archives, Council of Ministers Collection, file no. 15(83)/1937, p. 40-53; AMAE, Special Files Collection, vol. 185, pp. 172-259).

Through the very place chosen, the city that hosted the headquarters of the League of Nations, it was intended to set the framework for cooperation between the three Baltic countries. They undertook to provide political and diplomatic support in their foreign relations. A periodic conference of foreign ministers was established, which was to meet twice a year, with the president being the representative of the host country. It was also stipulated that any contentious issue should be settled amicably (Miloiu, 2003, p. 185). The Baltic Entente was open, Article 7 being worded as follows: "This Treaty shall remain open to the accession of third States, such accession being effected only by mutual agreement of the High Contracting Parties" (AMAE, Collection 71/Finland, 1920-1944, file no. 1, p. 179). Such a clause was inserted for the eventuality of Finland and Poland joining it.

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However, the authorities in Helsinki did not neglect relations with the Baltic countries. The strongest relations existed between Finland and Estonia, the peoples of the two countries being related, and the weakest with Lithuania.

In the years 1934-1936, Finland's ties with the Baltic States were quite close, with countless political-diplomatic, military, and cultural contacts taking place. However, the Finnish government "does not want to give the impression that it identifies with the politics of the three Baltic states, whose interests are not the same as its own" (ib., p. 421). Until the end of the interwar period, although it flirted with the Baltic Entente, Finland did not join this regional organization.

The international crises of 1938-1939 determined, as in the case of the Little Entente, the considerable weakening of the Baltic Entente. The small countries in this region were "swallowed up" by the Soviet Union by applying the secret provisions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Baltic Entente illustrated, once again, the lack of viability of alliances between small states.

A project that was much discussed in European capitals in the mid-1930s, and in which both Finland and Romania were involved, was that of the "Eastern Pact", called in some documents "Eastern Locarno". The idea belonged to Paris, namely to Louis Barthou, the foreign minister, who wanted to involve the Soviet Union into European security arrangements. The plan was completed at the beginning of June 1934, after the failure of the Conference on Disarmament<sup>14</sup>. It basically contained three treaties. The first of them, also called the "A" treaty, was a mutual guarantee between neighbours, which also included military aid, in case of aggression, between the USSR, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, which could be joined by other states, for example, Lithuania. The second treaty, also called "B", was one of Franco-Soviet assistance, the USSR adhering to the Locarno Pact, and France to the Eastern one. Finally, the third document was a general declaration, according to which the first two treaties were drafted in the spirit and letter of the Covenant of Organization of the League of Nations. All three treaties were to enter into force when the Soviet Union was admitted to the Geneva forum (Duroselle, 2006, pp. 132-133).

The materialization of the mentioned project depended on the agreement of Germany and Poland, but the two countries refused to adhere to that formula. As can be seen, only Finland was among

<sup>14</sup> In the spring of 1934, the French dignitary made a trip to a number of Eastern states, visiting, among others, Poland (April) and Romania (2-23 June).



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the countries that were to be part of the future security arrangement, Romania being excluded.

Nicolae Titulescu claimed the merit of having introduced Romania into the envisaged "Eastern Locarno", using, among other things, the good offices of E. Beneš, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and future President of Czechoslovakia (Titulescu, 1994, pp. 118-119).

As for Finland's membership of that European security arrangement, the authorities in Helsinki viewed the French initiative with distrust. "The Finnish government", Raoul Bossy said in September 1934, "maintains its attitude without hesitation: it refuses to participate in the pact, considering that this formula would not offer it any new element of security, but could, on the contrary, drag it into conflicts that do not concern it" (AMAE, Collection 71/Finland, 1920-1944, file no. 1, p. 159). However, the same diplomat notes that the interest and passion with which the public opinion and the press commented on the initiative to create the Eastern Pact demonstrated that, contrary to the official attitude, Finland viewed it with interest (Ib., p. 161). The formula of the "Eastern Pact", after its rejection by Germany and Poland, left the sphere of interest of the two diplomacies.

If Finland viewed the Baltic Entente with great reservations, refusing to take part in the project, the same cannot be said about the Scandinavian collaboration, where the Helsinki authorities were much more active. The importance of cooperation with the Nordic countries increased as the League of Nations lost its credibility.

But this orientation in Finland's foreign policy also ran into quite great difficulties. In the first place, if Finland perceived the Soviet Union as the greatest danger to its integrity and looked with a certain sympathy towards Germany, Sweden felt threatened by the latter. Secondly, the problem of the Swedish minority and language became, in the middle of the fourth decade, very acute for Finnish society. In 1934, the Kivimäki government, under pressure from the unionist and agrarian parties, but especially from the nationalist movement I.K.L. (the former Lapua movement), tried to reduce the share of courses taught in Swedish at the University of Helsinki (Ib., pp. 233-244/Raoul Bossy's report of 5 January 1935). That action practically divided Finnish society in two, and the disputes were particularly heated.

In the end, the government project was amended, "Finnishing" resulting in modest results.

Despite those internal and external constraints, Finland resolutely moved towards cooperation with the Nordic countries. In the autumn of 1933, it joined the Oslo Group, formed in 1930, which included Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The Oslo Group had customs and trade objectives, but it also acquired an increasingly pronounced political character. After all, the member states, through close cooperation, hoped to strengthen their neutrality (Hentilä, Jussila, Nevakivi, 1999, p. 230). Finland also participated, for the first time, in the autumn of 1934, in the Stockholm meeting of the foreign ministers of the Nordic countries.

During the summer of 1935, the Finnish government led by Kivimäki obtained the agreement of the political parties in the country, with the exception of the I.K.L., for close cooperation with the countries of the Oslo Group. As an expression of this orientation, political, cultural and military contacts between the Scandinavian countries and Finland intensified.

In July 1936, against the background of the Abyssinian crisis, the states of the Oslo Group published a joint declaration, in which they reserved the right to decide, each individually, whether or not to participate in the sanctions stipulated by Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Nor did the internal political changes of 1937, when President Per Evind Svinhufvud lost the elections to Kyösti Kallio, change the orientation towards the Scandinavian countries. The strengthening of collaboration had been achieved, among other things, by abolishing visas and introducing a travel identity card in the Nordic countries.

At the end of May 1938, during a meeting of foreign ministers, the Nordic countries signed a proclamation of joint neutrality, the content of which was based on a declaration published by the Scandinavian countries in 1912 (Ib., p. 240).

The growing tension in international relations reactivated the problem of the Aaland Islands, solved, through a compromise, by the League of Nations in 1921. In May 1937, Rudolf Holsti, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent to his Swedish counterpart, Rickard Sandler, a draft drawn up by the Finnish General Staff, proposing that Finland



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and Sweden should coordinate their efforts to ensure the protection of the mentioned islands.

Sweden was hesitant to accept the Finnish suggestions, believing that the problem could not be solved without the Soviets. However, in July 1938, the Finnish and Swedish military authorities developed a project to defend the Aaland Islands. The intergovernmental agreement was concluded in Stockholm (hence the name “*Stockholm Protocol*”) at the beginning of January 1939, the signatory on behalf of Finland being Eljas Erkko, appointed foreign minister in place of Rudolf Holsti.

The entry into force of the Stockholm Protocol was dependent on the approval of the League of Nations and the signatory states of the 1921 agreement. To speed up its entry into force, Finland and Sweden invited the Soviets to sanction the agreement. Moscow categorically refused, although its other guarantors (Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Poland, Latvia, Estonia) approved it. Paralysed by the Soviet Union’s categorical refusal, the League of Nations abstained from any decision.

In the summer of 1939, the tendency of the Scandinavian countries, mainly Sweden, to diminish cooperation with Finland in order to preserve their neutrality was evident. At the beginning of June 1939, the Swedish government declared that it was abandoning the project concerning the Aaland Islands, the reason given being the negative attitude of the USSR.

At the same time, Sweden proved to be extremely cautious about war material. After long and arduous negotiations, the government in Stockholm accepted, in August 1939, by virtue of the principle of reciprocity, to cede to Finland or another Nordic country the surplus of its arms production. The condition was that the host country commit to remaining neutral in the event of war.

The outbreak of the Second World War, on 1 September 1939, left Finland without the protective shield of the Oslo Group, without the support of the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden. As in the case of Romania, Finland’s regional security arrangements had no value at critical moments. Both countries remained at the discretion of the Soviet Union and Germany. The consequences were devastating.

## CONCLUSIONS

Romania and Finland, in their political and territorial conformation in the interwar period, were among the small states, although there were certain differences between them. Finland’s area was larger than Romania’s. Romania, on the other hand, was a much larger state than Finland in terms of population and economic and military potential. However, both had a subordinate role in relation to the great actors of international life of the time – Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, the Soviet Union, the USA.

The fundamental problem was to ensure the security through which to achieve survival as state entities. That goal was set with particular acuity in the fourth decade, a period in which the Versailles system entered a deep crisis from which it would never be able to escape. Therefore, in Helsinki and Bucharest there was a certain feverishness in the search for the most effective security arrangements.

To the challenges of an increasingly hostile international environment, the responses that the two countries tried to give have many similarities, but also quite a few differences. Both states remained faithful to the League of Nations, an organization with a universalist vocation, which had aimed to preserve international peace and stability and prevent a new world war. They generally supported the initiatives of the Geneva forum, which were in line with the achievement of the objectives included in the Pact. At the same time, they were deeply dissatisfied and worried by the weaknesses manifested on the occasion of the Chinese crisis and, especially, the Abyssinian crisis. However, in both capitals there were certain hopes for the revival of the organization, which, however, did not materialize.

The failure of the League of Nations forced the two countries to find new solutions. One of them was the preservation of relations with the Soviet Union (in the case of Finland) and their resumption and improvement (in the case of Romania). Moreover, Bucharest considered it opportune to rally to the French proposals and to try to conclude a treaty of mutual assistance with Moscow.

From this point of view, Finland and Romania tried the option of understanding with the most dangerous adversary, in the hope of appeasing its expansionist appetite, of facing its force of attraction. As the evolution of events showed, such a strategy was ultimately



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King Carol II and the governments of that period (Tătărescu, Octavian Goga, A.C. Cuza, Miron Cristea, Armand Călinescu) rejected Germany's advances. As the influence of Great Britain and France in South-Eastern Europe had steadily diminished since the middle of the fourth decade, Romania, together with other countries in the region, found itself at the disposal of the two great totalitarian powers.

a failure. If, in terms of relations with the eastern neighbour, there were enough similarities, in the relations with the other great powers there were some differences between Helsinki and Bucharest. Romania remained faithful to the Franco-British tandem, the belief of the Romanian ruling circles being that France and Great Britain would not abandon Eastern Europe. The Munich Agreement (29 September 1938) struck a blow to that conviction, but it was preserved until the end of May 1940.

At the same time, King Carol II and the governments of that period (Tătărescu, Octavian Goga, A.C. Cuza, Miron Cristea, Armand Călinescu) rejected Germany's advances. As the influence of Great Britain and France in South-Eastern Europe had steadily diminished since the middle of the fourth decade, Romania, together with other countries in the region, found itself at the disposal of the two great totalitarian powers.

Finland, according to the policy of neutrality, remained outside France's European projects ("Oriental Locarno", the pact of mutual assistance with the Soviets etc.) and looked with some sympathy at Germany, without reaching under its tow. The result was the same as in the case of Romania, in August-September 1939, Finland being at the discretion of the political game between Stalin and Hitler.

There were significant differences between Bucharest and Helsinki in terms of regional cooperation. Romania appreciated it as an important way to promote its interests, as a credible and effective security instrument. In the interwar period, the Romanian authorities renewed the alliance with Poland, contributed to the reorganization of the Little Entente and to the creation of the Balkan Entente. But those regional organizations did not withstand the strong crises of the years 1938-1940 and succumbed, without achieving the goals for which they were created.

Finland, on the other hand, had been very reluctant about regional cooperation. It refused to join the Baltic Entente, fearing that the organization would be used by Poland to accede to the status of hegemon in the Baltic Sea. It turned to the Scandinavian group, developing a wide network of links with the states of the region, especially with Sweden.

In the moments of crisis in the autumn of 1939, however, the Nordic group was not of much use to Finland, which faced the aggression of the Soviet colossus alone. As in the case of Romania, regional security arrangements were ultimately ineffective.

That series of failures, regarding the security arrangements of Finland and Romania, which represented, on a broader level, an expression of the "drift of Europe", was a confirmation of the lack of geopolitical opportunity of the small states, most often forced to bear the history made by the big ones.

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