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Introduction

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Introduction

Dan Paracka and Darina Lepadatu

Kennesaw State University’s vision is centered on its commitment to global engagement. It was the recipient of NAFSA: Association of International Educators 2011 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization. In its press release, NAFSA noted that “Kennesaw State University (KSU) in Georgia has built on its numerous internationally-focused centers, along with a focus on outcomes assessment and faculty, to create a globalized campus culture in which KSU’s academic, administrative and support units work collaboratively with each other and with community partners.” Also in 2011, KSU received the Institute for International Education’s 2011 Andrew Heiskell honorable mention award for expanding access and enhancing intercultural learning in study abroad. IIE’s award committee noted that,

although more and more institutions give internationalization space in their mission statements, few aspire, as Kennesaw State University does, to firmly establish global learning as the institution’s top priority and defining characteristic. Kennesaw has put its money where its mouth is: the Global Learning Scholarships, established in fall 2008, awarded students $727,317 last year and anticipates awarding $804,000 in the year to come. Every KSU student participating in education abroad receives the scholarship.¹

And in the fall of 2010, KSU was also selected to participate in the U.S. Summit and Initiative for Global Citizen Diplomacy where the Annual Country Study Program (ACSP) was showcased along with 10 other high profile global engagement programs within the higher education community. Ten programs from the business, arts, and religious communities were also highlighted.

For 27 years, the ACSP has enriched cross-cultural understanding among Kennesaw State University’s students, faculty, staff, and local international communities. The program supports and empowers faculty to integrate intercultural learning experiences into the curriculum through connections with the local international community and partners abroad. The ACSP helps participants break down stereotypes and connect across cultures by providing a rich, complex sense of place and community. The ACSP allows students to expand their cultural knowledge and intercultural skills. With over 30 events annually, students learn about the country’s political, historical, religious, artistic, social, and eco-

nomial contexts. It includes an academic conference and publishes a special journal issue on the country of study involving faculty in planning and implementation results in new courses, new education abroad programs, and new global partners. The ACSP is part of a broad institutional commitment to foster global learning.

Strategically selected and themed, the ACSP heightens faculty interest, provides funding for faculty travel, builds international partnerships, and “brings the country” to the campus through weekly events. Faculty learning communities discuss important concepts and recurring themes through common readings, guest lectures, and their own research. Faculty further strengthen their work by visiting the country, not only to enhance their understanding of the country, but to develop new and deepen existing partnerships for research, exchanges, and teaching abroad. Faculty members receive stipends to develop new courses and education abroad programs that are integrated into the curriculum.

By advancing KSU’s globally focused curriculum, strengthening faculty commitment, and encouraging student engagement through the ACSP, our students have ample opportunities to pursue global learning in a meaningful and in-depth manner. The involvement of local communities has also been critical to our success as these groups provide substantial guidance and support. The networks of connections and trust that develop between KSU and local partners are invaluable and extend well beyond the “year of.” These relationships include working with consular officials, business leaders, community organizations, and local schools.

One of the engaging aspects of the ACSP has been the annual Year of Day, a one-day festival of performances and traditional foods. Attendance at this event is always high and the interactions lively. Enjoying a meal from a different culture always makes for interesting, engaging conversations. What celebration of culture is complete without sharing a meal? All cultures have rich memories and special traditions related to the preparation and serving of their cuisine. The preparation and serving of different foods sets the stage for one of the best intercultural learning environments possible. For example, during the Year of Turkey, the Muslim Student Association prepared and served food to break the fast at weekly events on campus during Ramadan. This was one of the best programs ever organized at KSU to promote intercultural understanding.

Engagement through interacting with students and scholars from the country of study is the most important aspect of the program. Through the weekly lectures, art exhibits, musical performances, artists-in-residence, scholars-in-residence, grant funded projects, academic conference, faculty learning community, faculty development seminar, newly developed courses, and new education abroad programs, the opportunities for KSU students and faculty to expand their knowledge and first-hand experience of the country and its people are numerous. The ACSP advances the University’s globally-focused curriculum, expands participants’ cultural knowledge and intercultural skills, prepares students to enter the global society as responsible citizens, and results in new courses, new education abroad programs, and new global partners. It “brings the country” to the campus. Students, faculty, staff, and community members learn about, share their knowledge of, and conduct research related to the country of study. They showcase their native culture, meet and interact across cultures, and reconnect with cultures with which they are familiar. Understanding other cultures requires the ability to appropriately and effectively employ multiple perspectives and interdisciplinary analysis through sustained interactions and partnerships, the ACSP provides a mechanism for the KSU community to do just
that. Intercultural learning is a developmental process that involves multiple encounters with difference sustained over time. More than just working to make intercultural encounters meaningful learning experiences, KSU is working to help create new meaning through intercultural encounters. The partnerships developed through the ACSP especially have the potential to be transformational when those connections grow and extend beyond the year of study. One of the most, if not the most, important goals of the ACSP is to establish partnerships and relationships that allow our faculty and students to continue to benefit for years to come.

Going beyond the negative stereotypes of “Dracula, Orphanages, and Dictatorship” that have tended to dominate popular media, KSU’s Year of Romania examined Romanian life and culture in all its richness and complexity. Interestingly, the focus of many of the lectures emphasized: literary perspectives—the everyday stories of Romanian life and culture; minority and human rights—including the fate of Romanian Jews during the holocaust and the challenges faced by gypsy communities today; the legacy of Communism and the role of the Orthodox Church in Romania—especially the impact of these forces on the transition from communism to capitalism, from authoritarianism to democracy; and Romania’s entry into the European Union.

**Why Study Romania?**

Between the Danube and the Black Sea, and divided by the Carpathian Mountains, Romania has long been a border land on the edge of empires between East and West, from the Dacians’ encounter with the Romans, to Byzantium and the Orthodox Church, to the Ottomans, to its Slavic and Austro-Hungarian influences, to France and the great social change movements of the 19th century, through two world wars, through the Cold War and communism, to its recent accession into the European Union.

Prior to the 19th century, Romania had always been a remote part of larger empires and generally survived by depending mostly upon local abilities to care and protect itself. Romania is really a young idea that gained importance in an era of growing nationalism. According to Lucian Boia, Bucharest is less diverse today than it was at the end of the 19th century. He noted that “at the end of the 19th century Bucharest was a very cosmopolitan city with about a quarter of its population being of non-Romanian origins and borrowing its policy, architecture style, etc. from Europe” (Boia, 2001, pp. 182, 36). It was a civilization undergoing rapid change. He also noted that leading up to World War II, nationalism in Romania became increasingly autochthonist and xenophobic. Groups such as the Iron Guard or Legionnaires, “hated the Romanians educated abroad or of foreign origins,” while other groups seemed to be “unconditional admirers of Western Europe” (Boia, 2001, p. 38). Romanians were both frightened by the prospect of losing local control and enamored with the material and scientific success of a prosperous Western Europe. Looking first to France and Belgium for models of democratic modernization, increasingly, “fear of Russia pushed Romania towards Germany and Austria-Hungary” and “Transylvania was united with Romania in 1918 at the end of WWI” (Boia, 2001, pp. 160-62, 133, 129).

According to Robert Kaplan, “Romanians have been caught in the pincers of three empires: Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Turkey, and Russian-Csarist or communist. The people here have been conditioned to hate” (Kaplan, 1993, p. 132). Kaplan specifically
focuses on ethnic hatred against Jews and Gypsies during World War II and provides the following background:

In Romania, if one excepts the ethnic German community in Transylvania and the adjacent Banat, the Jews were the bourgeoisie. To a greater extent than in any other Eastern European country, they formed the country’s middle class practically by themselves, standing between the land owning aristocracy and the mass of peasants. This made the Jews the object of intense hatred by even the most enlightened, liberal elements of Romanian society. Romania’s greatest poets and intellectuals, such as Mihai Eminescu and Nicholas Iorga, were in Countess Waldeech’s words, “first and last anti-Semites. (Kaplan, 1993, p. 88)

As World War II progressed and with France lost to Germany and the fear of Russia on its border, Romania moved to ally itself with Germany. As Kaplan further explains:

After the Nazi conquest of France, [Romania’s King] Carol formed his own fascist party, which passed a series of anti-Semitic laws, forcing Romania’s 800,000 Jews to live virtually an underground existence [or flee]. When Stalin, in the summer of 1940, demanded that Carol cede him Bessarabia, Carol appealed to Hitler for help. Hitler answered Carol by forcing him to yield the northern part of Transylvania to the pro-Nazi regime in Hungary. (Kaplan, 1993, p. 87)

Increasingly, anti-Semitic forces in Romania gained power and pursued a violent campaign of pogroms. Again, according to Kaplan’s book Balkan Ghosts, “In 1941 and 1942, Antonescu oversaw the deportation of 185,000 Jews from Bessarabia and the northern top of Moldavia to Transnistria, where forward units of the Romania army were setting up the only non-German-run extermination camps in Europe. The Romanian army murdered every one of these people” (Kaplan, 1993, p. 128). In 1941, the Iron Guard formed a lynch mob of 155,000 people and carried out in Bucharest one of the most brutal pogroms in history (Kaplan, 1993, p. 97).

Following World War II, communism in Romania was primarily a tool of nationalism not internationalism. Romania remained fearful of and relatively aloof from Russia. Ceausescu succeeded in isolating Romania from the rest of the world (Boia, 2001, p. 77). Although, according to Ambassador Rosapepe, “the myth of Ceausescu’s independence from the Soviet Union extended the agony of communism in Romania” (Kast & Rosapepe, 2009, p. 358). Ceausescu’s regime produced a demoralized proletariat, devoid of creativity, unless it had to do with finding a way to survive or escape. Under communism, as Domnica Radulescu has written, the goal seemed to be “to achieve that Socialist utopia where everybody will be equally and inescapably miserable” (Radulescu, 2008, p. 85). And as Huerta Muller has written: “Everyone lived by thinking about flight” (Muller, 1993, p. 47). Or as Rosapepe commented, “they resist by doing nothing” (Kast & Rosapepe, 2009, p. 357).

Communism led to a very dysfunctional society, where everyone was afraid and everyone was in denial. As Domnica Radulescu has observed, “we are all collaborators.
one way or another; just that some are more than others” (Radulescu, 2008, p. 101). Stan and Turcescu add that “the Romanian church had to obey the communist authorities. Because of the large number of Orthodox priests [including Patriarch Teoctist] who supported the Iron Guard [fascist collaborators], the church was vulnerable to blackmail. It further had to repay the favor of not being dismantled and of being allowed to avoid the fate of the Greek Catholic Church, whose property it received in 1948” (Stan & Turcescu, 2007, p. 46).

An important question for Romania, and for any society that has experienced such injustice and violence within its population, is how much of the past is conveniently forgotten lingering on breeding mistrust and how much is genuinely recognized, addressed, healed, and forgiven? Bedeviled by its geopolitical contexts, Romanians are astute survivors. The damage done by Nazi sympathizers and communist rulers is not easily overcome, but the motivation not to return to such an oppressive and repressive state of affairs is powerful and should work to propel Romania along a rejuvenating path of redemption. Given their difficult past, Romanians want change; they are not so much afraid of what the future may bring.

The purpose of the Year of Romania Program was to show how Romania is overcoming its violent and oppressive past. The lecture series expanded the students’ knowledge on Romania by exploring many traditional and surprising aspects of the Romanian culture, civilization, history, and society. The topics ranged from traditional themes, such as the World UNESCO heritage orthodox monasteries, the social protection of orphan children, rural life in Mihail Sadoveanu’s works, the image of Transylvania in Bram Stoker’s gothic novel “Dracula,” or stories of survival under communism, to more contemporary topics such as the status of ethnic minorities in the Romanian society, immigration to the European Union, and cosmopolitan personalities of Romanian culture, such as the Nobel Prize winner Herta Muller, the father of absurd theater Eugene Ionesco, and Christian martyr and writer Richard Wumbrandt.

A Faculty Journey to Contemporary Romania

A faculty learning community on Romania was developed as part of the Year of Romania at Kennesaw State University during the academic year 2010-2011. Faculty selected to participate in the community collaborated to develop a deeper appreciation for and understanding of Romania, its history, politics, economics, arts, ecology, and social and cultural life. The community focused on connecting across disciplines through an exchange of ideas based on discussions of common readings, lectures, events, and activities planned for the academic year. Faculty attended selected guest lectures and group meetings as part of the experience and as preparation for a faculty development seminar trip to Romania in March 2011. In addition, all participants were expected to develop teaching modules about Romania and its changing contexts within the global society for use in future classes and/or with student/community organizations.

The faculty development seminar trip to Romania lead to the development of academic exchanges, joint research, and study abroad programs with partner universities in Romania. The KSU delegation was composed of a group of highly diverse scholars from many disciplines. As the group travelled through Romania, diversity became a constant point of reference and unique resource that the group drew upon throughout the experience. Although our academic interests overlapped considerably, all of the faculty coming
out of the humanities and social sciences, our perspectives and personal backgrounds were quite different. Included in our group was a Peruvian-born immigrant to the United States who had struggled to finance his dream of pursuing an academic career in the United States with numerous menial jobs; a Puerto Rican professor who also was keenly aware of the challenges faced by Hispanics within U.S. culture and very interested in issues related to migration in Europe; a Romanian-born scholar who was returning as the host and leader of our group; an Indian-born scholar who became intrigued by the linguistic similarities of the Roma people with Hindi; a Chinese-born scholar whose interests centered upon comparing the effects of communism on family and social relations; a New York Jewish professor whose family had come from the Ukraine and survived the Holocaust; a mid-westerner of German ancestry who focused on the study of medical mistakes, diet, and nutrition; and a U.S.-born global nomad and international education professional of Czech heritage.

As we travelled around Romania meeting with university scholars, school teachers, government officials, and business professionals visiting historic sites, enjoying musical concerts, and dining in people’s homes, we could see in the faces of our hosts the diversity of cultures that had intermingled over the centuries in this important crossroads of civilizations. The faculty participants read several books in common and attended most of the Year of Romania lectures in preparation for the seminar to Romania. The group attempted to learn about Romania in all its rich complexity.

Through our study and many first-hand experiences with Romanians, we learned that the Romanians are great negotiators who are willing to compromise. They are creative and often use humor to diffuse negative, complex, or ambiguous circumstances. This was particularly true under the strict authoritarianism of communism. We learned to admire Romania and to be optimistic about its future. Despite its difficult past or perhaps because of it, Romania is a place that seems well-suited to succeed in today’s modern, global society. As former U.S. ambassador to Romania Jim Rosapepe has noted: “Romanians know the difference between freedom and communism much better than Americans do” (Kast & Rosapepe, 2009, p. 12). Using the above mentioned tension relieving wit, Domnica Radulescu describes Americans’ serious lack of knowledge of the Romanian experience with communism: “They don’t know that people threw themselves from their apartment windows or hanged themselves in their living rooms when they couldn’t pass the entrance exam for the University...If I told them I’d been in the secret police in Romania, people would say, wow, that’s great. I love your accent” (Radulescu, 2008, pp. 191-93).

One of the experiences that had a very significant impact on all of the learning community participants was the visit of Roma communities in Brasov County. The historic migration of the Roma people traces a path from India to Persia, to Armenia to Syria, to Byzantine Greece, and then to the Balkans. In Romania, as Isabel Fonseca writes, “for more than 400 years, until 1856, Gypsies were slaves in Wallachia and Moldavia....They were sometimes included as part of the aristocracy’s dowry. (Fonseca, 1995, pp. 177, 182). Today, she emphasizes how much the Roma “has suffered a common and slanderous stereotyping,” where they are supposed to be shiftless, work-shy, dirty, unkempt, thieves, and cheats” (Fonseca, 1995, p. 52). The racist discourse of hatred often employed towards the Roma is similar to that which historically has been directed towards African Americans, Native Americans, and most recently Hispanics in the United States. Unfor-
fortunately, as in many other countries around the world, there is little trust between the majority and minority cultures of Romania. The education that needs to occur within Romania is largely among Romanians and is related to understanding the history, values, and culture of the Roma people. Numerous attempts have been made to educate the Roma, to build settlements for them and improve their lives. But as Fonseca also writes: “Gypsies dropped out of school for the same reason that most people drop out of school. They failed at it and they failed because the language used in school was not the language most of them spoke at home. No special language provisions were made for them. So they lost their language, or their chances, or, more usually, they lost both” (Fonseca, 1995, p. 163). The Roma should be able to celebrate their cultural heritage as Romanians having lived there for centuries, but they have generally been shunned and ostracized, always on the move, always yearning for a better life. In this way, a quintessential Romanian notion, Dor, seems like a gypsy notion, a yearning and nostalgia for something never quite attainable or attained, an elusive contentedness, a sentimental song about the peacefulness of the mountains in the moonlight.

Below are quotes from each of the participants’ reports related to the Roma and that demonstrate how learning about others causes us to reflect upon ourselves:

Ernesto Silva: “I tried to learn as much as possible about the experiences relative to immigration issues and the intercultural ramifications thereof. By and large, the Roma people have been a neglected segment of the population in Romania, though the government has tried to integrate them through the years. They are deplored by many surrounding cultures as well, which contributes to the stereotypical assumption that the Roma people are different and reluctant to assimilate. They have kept their own language and ancient traditions; as such, they have been viewed as being stubborn, unwilling to modernize, and living outside the law of the land. They will remain an underprivileged minority for as long as there is strong animosity towards them. The influx of Romanians into Italy, to be sure, has regretfully created a second-class citizenry in many localities, whereby Romanians, particularly those of darker complexion, are marginally employed as seasonal workers and in the service industry. In a way, one can draw the ironical conclusion that Romanians are treated overseas the way they treat the Roma people.”

Neysa Figueroa: “Many Roma are ambivalent about the concept of assimilation, preferring to maintain their own culture. Included in that feeling of ambivalence is education, which presents both opportunities for advancement and threats to their cultural identity. During our FLC Seminar in Romania, we explored Roma topics. We visited a Roma village, a preschool and elementary school in Sibiu, and attended a lecture about Roma issues at the Sociology Department at the University of Bucharest. The issues faced by the Roma seem almost insurmountable, but one of the keys to improve their place in Romanian society is education. Ovidiu Rom is a foundation that has programs to improve preschool enrollment by Roma children. In the school we visited, mothers attended school with their children to ease the transition and, in many cases, to become literate themselves. Societal attitudes toward the Roma were quite negative and very similar to the U.S. attitudes toward Latino immigrants.”

Ginny Zhan: “I also encountered young people who just wanted to leave Romania and move to Spain or Italy, who expressed disappointment in their educational system and lack of employment. This was somewhat similar to the situation in China a decade or
two ago. The young generation in Romania is trying to redefine their identity amidst the social and political transformation of the nation. The most striking experience of the whole trip was the visit to the Roma communities, where the living condition was terrible. On the other hand, the Roma School we visited gave me hope that through education, the younger Roma population will be more successful in integrating into the mainstream society and improve the community’s living standard.”

Linda Treiber: “One of the most surprising learning opportunities took place in a Roma village outside of Brasov. Activist Leslie Hawke, founder of Ovidiu Rom, introduced us to children whose parents cannot read and write and because they are Roma have been excluded and shunned for centuries. The NGO’s intervention program includes a school and programs for parents. After reading Balkan Ghosts by Robert Kaplan, I learned about the extreme prejudice that exists against them. I was surprised to learn that the Roma had actually been slaves. The poverty in which they live today is shocking and heartbreaking. I am working to develop a module on the Roma for my Race and Ethnicity course, SOCI 3314.”

Darina Lepadatu: “I have returned to Romania after ten years as a U.S.-trained sociologist. One of the most shocking social realities for anyone returning from countries that praise themselves for the promotion of human rights and equal opportunities is the situation of Roma in Romania. It is safe to say that the Roma are one of the most discriminated against and misunderstood ethnic minorities in European Union. It is disheartening to see how centuries old stereotypes against the Roma are still berated from the young children on the street to respectable academics in the university. More progress needs to be done in order to move from a blaming the victim approach to constructive programs and policies that help the Roma alleviate their social status and educate the mainstream Romanian population about the social inclusion of their ethnic neighbors.”

Melvin Fein: “The number of Jews executed by Romanians during World War II was second only to the number murdered by Germans. Approximately a quarter of a million were expelled into what is today Moldova and Ukraine, where they were summarily dispatched. This is history. It is well established. Located in the heart of the Balkans, the country has been the scene of many incidents of inter-ethnic violence, even before the villainous exploits of Vlad the Impaler. Romanians have often been described as a warm-hearted people, and on an individual basis, they surely are. Nonetheless, millennia of repression have left a mark. Many of the nation’s inhabitants harbor a repressed rage that occasionally breaks forth, as it did when the Nazi boot strolled across the continent. Many contemporary Romanians are ashamed of what occurred more than a half century ago, but they must now deal with how to explain it to future generations. Their record in doing so is imperfect at best.”

Lamentably, a ghastly history of violence lies behind the lauded achievements of most, if not all, civilizations. Understanding the violent past of nationalism might make room for a more forgiving and collaborative future. Every culture has its good and bad attributes. Romania does not need to condemn itself to history; it can choose to change. Romanians can choose to value their humanity, to learn about tolerance and inclusion as a means for nurturing democracy, and creative energy. They can choose to focus on what is good, to identify with the values that attest to the strength of the human spirit. They can do this without blaming others for their troubles.
It would be easy and predictable for an American to cast the United States as a model democracy where different people contribute as part of the salad bowl or melting pot to the betterment of society and to characterize Romania as a place of intolerant conformity. But this visit to Romania called into question for our group the meaning of American-ness and global citizenship. It placed American-ness in a more global context and it was easier to see that the challenges of participatory democracy and cultural sensitivity are global issues that the whole world is struggling with.

Thus, The Year of Romania provided a platform to learn from others in a way that does not discredit or discount what seems foreign or alien but instead embraces the unknown as a source of creativity and vitality that enriches our understanding of a complex and fragile world, a world that desperately needs all people to exercise both the freedom and the responsibility necessary to nurture and care for one another and the lands we inhabit. The best way to "cope" with the challenges of globalization is to work effectively at the "local" level, not in a manner that ignores globalization but also not in a manner that blames it.

The Special Issue on Romania

This volume dedicated to Romania tries to reveal a fresh perspective on contemporary Romanian society. The authors from both sides of the Atlantic reflect on issues related to national identity, state institutions, political and historical elites, resistance against communism, religion and politics, overcoming communism's dysfunctional legacy, attitudes toward ethnic minorities, and recovery from the current economic recession.

In "National Identity Through Prototypes and Metaphors," Razvan Sibii conceptualizes Romanian identity as comprised of primarily Byzantine, Orthodox, and Balkan influences. On the one hand, the work attempts to dig deeply into the Romanian psyche to determine what it is that brings Romanians together and creates a sense of "Romanian-ness." On the other hand, these influences are criticized as character flaws that may inhibit Romania's success. For example, the author asserts that great efforts have been taken to assert Romania's Dacian or Roman origins in order to separate it from its Byzantine roots. He critiques the tendency in Romania to negatively interpret Eastern influences, characterized as fatalistic, lazy, and untrustworthy. He then describes the influence of the Orthodox Church and its tendency to merge church and state, defer to secular powers, to tolerate sinners, and lack concern for earthly actions by guaranteeing salvation. Finally, the author describes the Balkan influence as "the most powerful element of the Romanian self-stereotype," characterized by aggressiveness, skepticism, and fondness for irony and satire. Nonetheless, one comes away from this discussion appreciating the positive elements of these seeming negative self-stereotypes, and a more complex sense of Romanian identity.

The topics of survival and national identity are covered also in Caius Dobrescu and Sorin Adam Matei's essay entitled "Last Crusaders: Narrative Strategies of Survival in The Early Modern Danubian Principalities, 1550-1750." This paper asserts how early modern Romanian political and intellectual elites rationalized their subjugation to foreign powers through religious notions whereby their suffering became a source of strength. Under such adverse circumstances they learned the art of survival, of humility, and of self-preservation. They preserved a sense of virtue, of being better than their oppressors. Their outward obedience hid an inner dream of eventual rebirth. Their faith would outlast
any such foreign rule. For the authors, such strategies may have been effective under certain historical circumstances, but they may also be confusing and ambiguous, contributing, today, to the blurring of political and religious life.

From resilience under the early Romanian principalities, the discourse is moving to the role of political elites in the anti-communism resistance. Irina Popescu’s essay on “The Radio, the Exiled Voice, and the Mute Poet in Communist Romania” describes how the exiled voices of Romanians abroad on Radio Free Europe crossed the borders and acted to propel the democratic revolution of 1989. People such as Monica Lovinescu, Virgil Ierunca, and Noel Bernard not only voiced the thoughts and concerns of Romanians who could not do so themselves under Ceausescu’s oppressive regime and own incessant voice but these disembodied voices were also therapeutic and empowering.

Adrian Popan uses content analysis to look at the pro-government mass media’s role in promoting unfavorable views of the anti-communist protest movement in Romania between December 1989 and June 1990. His paper examines how former communist leaders moved to quickly fill the vacuum of power following Ceausescu’s reign. It tells the story of how factory workers brought to Bucharest armed with clubs and chanting “death to intellectuals” attacked opposition parties. He meticulously shows how the media portrayed the events of this period asserting that the former communist leaders used the media to maintain power, isolate the opposition movement, and discredit them.

Marian Negoita’s paper on “State Weakness in Post-communist Romania” is about the legacy of the communist regime, about how Ceausescu hollowed out the state filling it with loyalists, and politicizing the civil service. With the fall of communism, there was an authority crisis as coercion was no longer an available tool and all the skilled politicians and civil servants were used to operating in a command economy. This resulted in a system of patronage that plundered any remaining state assets. At this stage, Romania needed a stronger system of checks and balances, professional standards, and protections for the rule of law.

In “Religion and Politics in Romania: From Public Affairs to Church-State Relations,” Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu examine the impact of the Orthodox Church on democratization within Romania during the last 20 years. While the Orthodox Church became morally compromised by its willingness to collaborate with and failure to actively denounce the communist regime, it still managed to emerge as a popular institution able to assert its nationalistic role in a favorable light following communism’s downfall. The Orthodox Church has consistently emphasized the importance of good church-state relations as it has tried to gain privileges for the Church through such relations. It has certainly won some privileges and has actively asserted its voice into public affairs. Some of the issues that the Church has gotten involved in since the fall of communism include religious education in public schools, the ability of clergyman to run for elected office, and anti-homosexuality campaigns. The author describes these issues in detail and provides a thorough analysis of the evolving relationship between church and state.

“Overcoming Communism’s Dysfunctional Legacy,” the paper by Paul Michelson presents an important warning of how history unaddressed can repeat itself. Michelson describes the effects of communism by comparing it to the medical model of a dysfunctional alcoholic and how the children of alcoholics often develop coping mechanisms that are self-destructive. It calls for Romania to become more democratic, open, transparent,
and inclusive. It assesses the country’s progress on these fronts and makes some recommendations about how the country can continue to improve.

Since Romania is the home of one of the largest Roma minorities in the world, Eliza Markley and Darina Lepadatu examined the sources of negative attitudes toward the Roma in Romania. This paper shows that the type of relationships and contact that Romanians develop with the Roma largely drive the negative attitudes against the Roma. Having Roma in the family or as friends or colleagues at work decreases Romanians’ negative attitudes against the Roma. On the contrary, as the contact theory states, being in limited contact with them, without engaging in personal relationships is conducive of suspicion, hostility, and negative attitudes. Second, the interpersonal level of individuals’ trust contributes significantly to building positive attitudes toward the Roma. Consequently, the authors recommend that future global initiatives and strategies on Roma inclusion should be centered on increasing the level of interpersonal trust and contact between Roma and non-Roma.

Last, but not least, the literary, historical, sociological, political, and religious perspectives on contemporary Romania benefit from an economic look on Romania’s recovery from the economic crisis. Claudiu Doltu and Marcel Duhaneanu assess the ability of Romania to weather the global economic downturn. Their paper reviews Romania’s recent economic performance since it joined the European Union and experienced sustained growth. It compares Romania’s success with other Eastern European countries and makes recommendations concerning the need to control for inflation and reduce budget deficits. It notes that a lot will depend upon growing local markets and demand and on improving rules and regulations for investors.

This interdisciplinary collection of articles on Romania portrays an eclectic and fragmented picture of the recent struggles and challenges of contemporary Romanian society. After a painful transition from totalitarianism to democracy, Romania is still trying to recover from its dysfunctional communist legacy. This special volume on Romania brings its own contribution to include the Romanian discourse in the global and multicultural dialogue of democratic values and principles. Finally, the editors wish to especially thank Elena Gheorghiu, a doctoral student in KSU’s conflict management program, for her dedicated support to the editorial process of this volume.

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