

***SPECIAL ISSUE: BETWEEN EMPIRES
AND VILLAGES: STORIES OF POWER, CULTURE,
AND CHANGE***

Guest Editors' Note

This special issue (vol. LXIV, no. 1–4/2025) of *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire/Romanian Journal of History* contains six studies and six reviews dedicated to some of the most recent works in the field of history. The studies present the contributions of specialists on issues related to personalities, facts and political events in Romanian and European history. These articles are the result of extensive research projects spanning several years, with the authors managing to capture unusual details, and connections.

In his study, Cătălin Botoșineanu highlights lesser-known aspects of Simion Bărnuțiu's life and work at the University of Iași. As a professor of law and philosophy at the Faculty of Law, Bărnuțiu established himself as a prominent figure in Moldovan academia, contributing significantly to the development of the university in Iași. Using arguments from the period, the author highlights the fact that, due to his outstanding merits, Bărnuțiu was nominated for the position of rector, but he declined to run for this position due to health problems. Despite administrative difficulties and the limitations of the academic environment, Bărnuțiu established himself as a central figure in the gallery of 19th-century ideologues, a fact confirmed by the echoes of posterity, which accorded him a place of honour.

Gheorghe Cliveti's article presents the evolution of international relations in the second half of the 19th century, highlighting the fact that the great European powers wanted to avoid the escalation of any generalised conflict and maintain a state of calm. In this context, the new political alliances that emerged in 1868–1869 were viewed with suspicion by the European courts. The latter's stated goal was to maintain peace by preventing any conflicts or revolutionary movements in the eastern part of the European continent. Thus, the "Romanian question" was at the centre of these concerns. The author emphasises that the guarantor powers sought to discourage any ambitious initiative by the government in Bucharest and that, in this context, moderate and conservative ideas favouring diplomatic solutions gained influence on the Romanian political scene. Thus, Prince Carol and the governments of the time understood that Romania had to maintain a position of neutrality towards the Franco–German war for several diplomatic reasons.

Mihail Dobre's analysis reveals that the First World War represented a turning point on the international stage, which was redrawn, generating a change in relations between states. In this context, the author explores the end of the conflict when the major

victorious powers outlined the new international system at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920, concluding five treaties with the defeated countries. The author concludes that Russia's absence from the Peace Conference and the failure to resolve many of the defeated countries' grievances left major security issues unresolved in post-war Europe, which would lead to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Vasile Pușcaș analyses in his article the evolution of the international political system, emphasising how the two world wars reshaped relations between states. Each world war brought about ideological and border changes. Thus, the First World War highlighted the limits of the balance of power, which led to the proposal of a more liberal international order, but the failure to implement it led to the outbreak of the Second World War. In conclusion, the author argues that the international system must be constantly adapted to global realities, and negotiation should be much more valued in stopping any future conflicts.

Authors Vasile Todinca, Delia-Maria Radu and Maria Flavia Pop explore, in a compelling study, the identity landmarks of popular culture in the village of Dumbrăvița de Holod in Bihor County, Romania. The article analyses popular culture through the prism of the existential triad: birth, marriage and death, advocating for the importance of popular creation in today's world. According to the authors, popular culture continues to be a constant source of inspiration for high culture and other value systems.

Mircea Alin Bărbăntan's article analyses the alignment of British and Romanian strategic cultures at the end of the Cold War. Drawing on specialist literature, the author sheds light on three fundamental principles of British strategic culture: the special relationship with the US, nuclear deterrence and naval power status. The author also highlights the ongoing strengthening of relations between Romania and the United Kingdom in the current international context.

Through the diversity of topics covered and its methodological rigour, this special issue of *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* offers a current perspective on political, cultural and international history, as well as on identity phenomena. The studies brought together here not only draw on extensive research and archival sources, but also invite reflection on the continuities and ruptures that have shaped the evolution of Romanian and European society from the 19th century to the present day.

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