

RUXANDRA TIMOFEYCHEV  
Graduate School for Social Research

## **Romanian Orthodox Church and the State Testing Pedro Ramet's Model**

*Abstract:* This paper analyzes the types of relationships which have been established between the Orthodox Romanian Church and the state starting with the 1866 Constitution. It critically assesses the theoretical model proposed by Pedro Ramet (1987) and reorganizes it applying its basic principles and its structure to the Romanian case study. Taking into consideration the various elements of the model, the study concludes that currently in spite of a delimitation of the religious sphere from the political one, in practice in post-communist Romania the connection between Church and state is much more blurred.

*Keywords:* religion, nationalism, the Romanian Orthodox Church, Church–state relationships.

### **Introduction**

The events which occurred in 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe triggered numerous debates as to the ways in which the countries of this region could further develop. From this point of view, regaining access to the past, reinterpreting it and positioning oneself critically towards historical events became an essential part of the process of post-communist transformation. The implications of this mechanism were numerous and its results impacted on the social and political spheres ascribing them new meanings and providing societal institutions with new roles.

In recent years, a central place within these debates has been occupied by religion and in particular the role of the church. This is mainly the result of the fact that, following the fall of communism, a surge in religious feelings could be observed in the Central and Eastern European countries. To some extent, this phenomenon opposes the secularization mechanisms of the Western European societies and raises questions related to the functions of this institution in the post-communist transformations.

The part that the church plays in the post-1989 phenomena cannot be fully understood unless one takes into consideration its position within the framework of the communist states. From this perspective, the research which has so far been undertaken presents a variety of ways in which the church interacted with the institutions of the former political regime. From the multitude of cases, one in particular draws attention, namely the Romanian Orthodox Church. Its study proves to be important for the problematic presented above first and foremost because of the particular way in which during the communist years this institution related to the state.

As a result the purpose of the present article is that of analyzing the role which the Orthodox Church plays in contemporary Romania. From this point of view, general theoretical considerations, referring to the possible connections which appear between churches and governing institutions, are going to be presented. These models will be applied to the analysis of the Romanian Orthodox Church and in particular, to the ways in which, from a legal point of view, this institution constructed its relation with the state throughout history<sup>1</sup>.

### **Theoretical Considerations: the Connections Between Religion and the State**

In order to find an answer to the question what is the role of the Orthodox Church in contemporary Romania? one should pay attention to several theoretical as well as practical aspects. First, this issue falls into the category of the analyses of the relations between religion and the state. Secondly, the problems which result from the way in which the church in the Orthodox world is organized are interesting since according to its laws this denomination does not have a strict, hierarchical structure as in the case of the Catholic Church. This could imply the fact that fragmentation between the local Orthodox Churches could lead to a less powerful voice on the international arena when it comes to representing the interests of their believers. At the same time, if conflict arises it could prove to be difficult to solve.

As a result of this organizational principle, in practice each Orthodox Church is autocephalous meaning that it has the administrative capacity of organizing itself. Dialog between the local churches is constantly taking place without them actually forming an institutional structure.

The third important element which should be taken into consideration is related to the Orthodox Diasporas present on the European territory. Their status and relation to the National Churches with which they are affiliated constitutes still a significant problem for the Orthodox Church in general<sup>2</sup>.

From this point of view, developing an exhaustive discussion about the present role of Orthodoxy should take into consideration all the three elements mentioned above as they constitute those lines of research which should guide the analysis of this topic. However, due to the limited length of this paper, this theoretical part will deal mainly with the first dimension.

In what regards the theoretical aspects of the church–state relations their analysis will consist of two dimensions. The first will deal with the presentation of general models specific for this relationship whilst the second will focus on the particular case of the functioning of the church in the communist state.

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<sup>1</sup> One important element which should be taken into consideration when analyzing the relations between church and state is the past historical context. This proves to provide the key for the understanding of the ways in which the church as an institution acts and formulates its discourse.

<sup>2</sup> A solution to this issue has been found in the form of a Pan-Orthodox Council. This was supposed to be an institution comprising members of all the local Orthodox Churches and which was aimed at solving the problem of the “pastoral care of the diaspora” (Bishop Hilarion [Alfayev], 2004: 21). Unfortunately, this council still does not exist.

### Typology of Relations between State and Church

From an analytical point of view, when trying to explain the specific mechanisms which constitute the connection between church and state one should first tackle the issue of the role which the former fulfills in a given society.

Following this logical argumentation, Pedro Ramet (1987) distinguished between four main categories characterizing the church–state relation. The first is the structural area in which both the state as well as the church are perceived as institutions and as a result questions regarding the ways in which their various components interact and the conditions under which this connection is established are raised.

The second category is interested in the procedural aspect of the problem and it is thus concerned with the way in which policies are formulated by a particular political regime, how these affect the status and functioning of the church as well as how they are perceived by its believers.

Another important element, and one which has been researched at large, is represented by the legal environment which governs the church–state relationship. The analysis of the legislative acts as well as that of the historical context in which they have been enacted and the traditions which underlie them, constitute the main point of research for this dimension.

The last category is represented by the cultural implications of this relation and more precisely the importance which religion has played in the development of nationalism. This particular analytical element is of importance especially for understanding the role of the church under the communist regime.

Starting from these four dimensions, Pedro Ramet (1987) subsequently develops a model of church–state interactions under communism. Its structure refers to seven different elements: modernization, nationalism, geneticism-monism, political culture, factionalism, organization theory and institutional needs. All these parts are interrelated and play an important role in determining the way in which the relationship under study is structured and evolves. In addition each one of these aspects is connected with one of the four categories presented above. Thus, in the case of modernization the association is with the structural category and more precisely with the fact that given particular social, economic, political and cultural conditions,<sup>3</sup> the religious discourse of the church and subsequently its position, change.

The second element, namely nationalism belongs to the cultural dimension and represents an important factor within the structure of this explanatory model. As Pedro Ramet (1987) points out the connections which have been established between the church and the state depended to a high degree on the former's national character.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In general, Pedro Ramet (1987) underlies here a series of factors which under the sign of modernization influence the way in which religious institutions present their doctrine. His argument is that this particular process of adaptation to the specificities of a certain period of time is necessary for the survival of these organizations. If they do not adapt their discourse, they risk alienating part of their religious community.

<sup>4</sup> "It follows that whether a religious organization is suppressed, tolerated, or co-opted depends in part on its nationalist demeanor and the significance of this demeanor in the context of the country (specifically, is the country ethnically homogenous or multiethnic?)" (Pedro Ramet, 1987: 187).

Geneticism-monism refers to the past historical context and the influence which it has over the course of present events. This is better expressed by the relation which has been established over the years between nationalism and religion. As such this theoretical aspect can be associated with the structural dimension, but it has also consequences in the cultural sphere. Remaining in the same area, another element of the model is political culture. A specific set of political values and norms which are adopted and/or imposed on the society at large can either overlap or come into conflict with other sets of values, for instance religious ones.

If the political and religious institutions find themselves in conflict, as a result of the incompatibility of their discourses, this will ultimately lead to the creation of a feeling of insecurity within the community and the need, on the part of the social actors, for the creation of "reintegrative groups capable of restoring cognitive consistency in cultural norms" (Ramet 1987: 189).

The relations between church and state are also shaped by the existence of different, often competing groups (or "factions" in P. Ramet's language) within both these institutions. As a result of the interactions between these elements specific types of policies appear.

Organizational theory is linked with factionalism as it takes into account both the formal as well as the informal rules which guide an organization. At the same time, it is also connected with the last element of the explanatory model, namely institutional needs. All these aspects refer to the ways in which on both sides, the church as well as the state apparatus, attempt to adapt to the surrounding social reality. They are both motivated by internal rules of functioning (which may or may not be the result of the presence of various factions within) which determine the strategies that they are going to adopt in order to survive and achieve their purposes.

The strength of the above theoretical design is represented by its attempt to incorporate within one model all the possible factors which could influence the relation under study. In addition, its structure resulted from a close analysis of the way in which the church and the communist state interacted within the Central and Eastern European region. This makes the arguments set forth valid as they are tested and take into account the particular social, political, historical and cultural conditions in which this relationship developed.

Nevertheless, Pedro Ramet's (1987) theoretical explanation presents also several fallacies. Of these the most important one comes from the fact that the author does not clearly focus on the kind of relations which appear between the church and the state. He is more interested in describing the specific sets of mechanisms through which these relations come into being, but does not specify exactly which types of rapports result. At the same time, the scheme proposed by Ramet proves to be rather difficult to use from a methodological point of view. The connections between the different kinds of factors are not always clear and the end result of these influences is not always specified. Consequently, in trying to adapt the structure of this theoretical explanation to the purposes of the present paper a clear distinction should be made between two categories of factors: contextual (environmental or external to the two institutional bodies: the church and the state) and structural or internal. In

the first category, the already described elements of modernity, nationalism, political culture and geneticism-monism can be found; whilst, in the second, factionalism, organizational theory and institutional needs belong. It is through the understanding of the interactions which appear between these two sets of elements that one can analyze the legal context in which the connections between the church and the state develop.

George W. Forell's (in J. S. Nielsen 1992) and Eugene Smith's (1970) models are complementary to Pedro Ramet's (1987) view. The first argues that three kinds of relations can be established between the church and the state. These are separation, domination and integration. The first refers to the reduced involvement of the Christian community into the non-Christian world and is mainly related to the Byzantine tradition. The second is linked with the Roman Catholic Church especially in its medieval period. The author notes, that this particular pattern "shaped the Christian monoculture in Europe, the Christian worldview influencing politics as well as economics, literature and architecture" (Nielsen 1992: 12). The last model, the integration one, is associated with the Lutheran theology and presupposes a specific vision of religion and the state. As "religion and church are integral parts of the society [...]" (Nielsen 1992: 13) their involvement in the social sphere should be active.

Encompassing a larger analytical area, the explanations offered by Eugene Smith (1970) also make reference to George W. Forell's categories. However, the main difference consists in the fact that E. Smith analyses the church-state relations within the specific framework of religio-political systems. In his opinion, these are composed of three elements: "an integralist religious ideology; a relatively developed ecclesiastical structure which exercises extensive control over society; and a political authority" (Smith, 1970: 68). Between the structure of the church and the political system three types of interactions appear: the first when the political sphere is superior to the religious institutions, the second when both are equal and the third when the political actor is subordinate to the religious organizations. All these elements form three kinds of church religio-political systems. For the first category there is a government over church system, for the second a bipolar balance of power and in the last the church is ruling the government. These systems are considered by the author to be traditionalist and their validation comes from the presentation of the empirical situations of the Spanish Catholic Empire in America and the Lamaist Theocracy of Tibet (Smith 1970: 68-70). In what regards Christianity the author refers only to the construction of the relations under study in the Catholic world. Thus the model is limited from this point of view to only one religion whilst its application to other Christian denominations may not hold true.

The models proposed by Forell (in Nielsen 1992) and Smith (1970) although not as methodologically clear as Ramet's (1987) approach have the advantage of synthesizing all the explanations into an operational typology. Nevertheless, Ramet's (1987) system proves to be important especially in what regards the analysis of the church-state relations under communism. As the second part of this article will show it is through the interaction of the factors present in his model that the three kinds of church-state relationships mentioned above appear.

### **The Functioning of the Church in the Communist System**

The institutional connection between church and state which characterized the communist period was one of either domination of political over the religious or integration of the former into the sphere of control of the latter. As Pedro Ramet (1987) observes religious organizations were perceived by the state as their political rival and as a result the attitude of the ruling elites was one of control and manipulation so as to be able “to erode the bases of [the church’s] grass-roots loyalty” (Ramet, 1987: 4). However, this was not the only point which characterized this relation. The communist system aimed at much more than attempting to destroy the faith in the religious institutions. Its goal was that of completely eradicating the role which the church played in the past and establishing a new type of relation with this organization. Thus, religion was pushed into the private sphere of society and it became a personal problem of the individual. Consequently, the church was no longer able to sustain its social activities in the spheres of education and philanthropy. At the same time, according to its legal status it was separated from the state, but practically it lived from its funding. In addition, the governing institutions were exercising the right of controlling “church publications, church construction and renovation by requiring building permits and by providing subsidies...” (Ramet 1987: 6).

Another external element which determined the way in which the state behaved towards the church was nationalism. As historically a strong connection has been established between religion and national values, the task of the communist regime of destroying religious institutions became much harder. As Pedro Ramet (1989) writes since these organizations were perceived by the population as having a national character the justifications of their removal from the societal sphere were much more difficult to motivate. Apart from this, the communist political actors realized that a “tamed” clergy could serve their purposes much better<sup>5</sup> than if the priests would initiate and maintain a movement of social resistance.

The ideas presented above constitute general guidelines which characterized the relation between church and state in all the nations of the communist bloc. However, as Ramet (1989) emphasizes differentiations existed depending on a series of specific factors. These refer to the size of the religious institution in question, the disposition of this organization to “subordinate itself to political authority [as well as] its amenability to infiltration and control by the secret police” (ibid. 1989: 9). To these, elements such as the connections of a given country with a foreign authority, “the loyalty [of the church to its believers] during the Second World War” (ibid. 1989: 9) as well as the ethnic structure of that nation and its political culture, are added. All these aspects will be taken into consideration during the analysis present in the second part of

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<sup>5</sup> Pedro Ramet (1989) mentions that “religion has always played a powerful role in cementing the loyalty of citizens towards their national collectivities” (Ramet 1989: 4). Precisely because of this social phenomenon, the communist regime at time opted for a policy of co-optation which “meant that Orthodox church leaders serve as surrogate spokesmen for the regime’s foreign policy and as defenders of its internal policies” (ibid. 1989: 21). This particular type of measure resulted to some extent also in benefits for the church as an institution, which was thus able to survive despite the fact that it lost part of its establishments and clergy.

this article. They also constitute composing elements of the dimensions presented in Pedro Ramet's (1987) model.

Summing up the ideas debated in the first part of this article, one should focus on two aspects. The first is the proposed theoretical framework which takes into consideration the types of relations which are established between the church and the state as well as the factors which determine their development. The second is connected with the importance of the historical past in shaping this connection. Here several factors of the communist period, common for the Central and Eastern European region, have been discussed.

### **Legal Connections between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the State**

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the analysis will focus on the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the ways in which it relates with the state by taking into account the Constitutions which have been adopted since 1858.

Following the theoretical model proposed, the study will present the legal context through the prism of the two sets of factors: contextual or external (the historical past which reveals the social and political situations) as well as the internal organization of both the Romanian state as well as the Orthodox Church.

According to Jose Luis Santos (2007) one can distinguish four important moments in the development of the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the state. First, there is the period until the end of the nineteenth century when the establishment of the religious institution took place. Secondly there is the period of the Constitutions passed in the years 1866, 1923 and 1938. The third interval refers to the communist period when three Constitutions were adopted in 1948, 1952 and 1965. Finally, the last historical interval is the post-communist one with the Constitution adopted in 1991 and modified in 2003.

These differentiations will be kept throughout this part of the paper since they create a clear-cut division between several important moments in the history of Romania. Out of these, the one which has the highest degree of influence on the present situation of the church and state is the communist period. This is the reason why the study will focus more on this historical interval of time rather than on the ones before.

In what regards the first periodical division, this was one of configuration of the Orthodox Church as an institution and its establishment within society. Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu (2000) note that until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this church was not independent. It was subordinated from a financial as well as an institutional point of view to the Constantinople patriarchate. This situation changed under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza who was the first to unite the two Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Walachia in 1859. It was during his time that the church acquired a new, independent status from foreign authority, but at the same time became more connected and as a result subordinated to the Romanian political structures<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> "Cuza nationalized the land controlled by foreign monasteries and stopped the transfer of funds abroad, improved the educational standards of the clergy, made Romanian the liturgical language, and

In 1866, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was forced to abdicate and he was replaced at the leadership of the country by the foreign prince Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen.<sup>7</sup> It was under his rule that the 1866 Romanian Constitution was adopted. The Christian elements present in the text make direct reference to God. The document opens with the following line “Carol I Through the Grace of God and According to the National Will, Ruler of Romania ...” (1866 Constitution: 1). In several articles throughout the Constitution it is mentioned Romanians’ right to the manifestation of the liberty of conscience<sup>8</sup> which is associated with the free proclamation of religious beliefs. At the same time, it is specified the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church is independent<sup>9</sup> and that its administration depends on one religious entity. Despite this particular administrative separation Article 76 specifies that together with descendants of the throne rightful members of the senate are also the bishops. This means that according to the Constitution they are to be directly assigned to the senate without being elected. It also implies a certain degree of political involvement on the part of the Romanian Orthodox Church in political affairs.

The 1923 Constitution brings several important changes. These are associated with the fact that previously in 1918 Transylvania joined independent Romania and formed what is currently known as the modern Romanian state. Due to the multiethnic character of the newly added territory several articles in the Constitution make reference to differences in terms of ethnicity, religion or even language. Article 22 (formerly Article 21 in the 1866 Constitution) suffers modifications as well. Thus, apart from the Orthodox Church also the Greco-Catholic Church is mentioned as being a Romanian Church. At the same time, Orthodoxy is now considered to be “the religion of a big majority of Romanians and the dominant Church in the Romanian State” (1923 Constitution). Nevertheless, the rights of the Greco-Catholic Church are mentioned as well and this is recognized as having priority over any other Church present on the Romanian territory.

As Janice Broun (1988) mentions the Church kept its influence even during this period of time. The bishops still had a lot of power and they were still granted the right of having seats in the senate according to the 1923 Constitution. In addition, it should be mentioned that this right extended also to the Greco-Catholic bishops as well as to the heads of other denominations including the representatives of the Muslim religion. It was probably due to these particular legal rights that no significant conflicts appeared between the Church and the state administration.

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pledged state financial support for church activities and clergy salaries. At the same time, the Orthodox Church was brought under regular government control, thus succumbing to the politics of the day and losing any autonomous decision-making power in areas ranging from control over the monastic revenues to the nomination of its head” (Stan and Turcescu, 2000: 1467–1468).

<sup>7</sup> Prince Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was proclaimed Carol I Ruler of Romania.

<sup>8</sup> “Article 21: The liberty of conscience is absolute. The liberty of all denominations is guaranteed so far as their manifestations are not contradicting public or moral order. The Orthodox Religion of the East is the dominant religion of the Romanian State” (1866 Constitution).

<sup>9</sup> “Article 21: The Romanian Orthodox Church remains independent from any interference, but in permanent contact with the ecumenical Church of the East in what regards the sphere of the dogmas. The spiritual, canonic and disciplinary businesses of the Romanian Orthodox Church are going to be regulated by one central ecumenical authority to a special law” (1866 Constitution).

The 1938 Constitution introduces for the first time a clear reference to the separation of the Church from the state. Thus, Article 8 specifies that priests are prohibited to mention any political preferences or to influence and advise their believers in terms of political matters.<sup>10</sup> However despite these clear specifications as to the political involvement of the clergy Article 19 (formerly Article 22 in the 1923 Constitution) remains unchanged. The same is valid for the positions held by the bishops within the senate, the provision of the 1923 Constitution Article 72 not being modified.

The Constitution after the Second World War adopted in 1948 is the first of its kind adopted during the communist times. Formally at least this Constitution still guarantees the freedom of manifesting one's religious beliefs<sup>11</sup> within the new Popular Romanian Republic. Despite this particular element, it is mentioned in Article 27 that the state will supervise all educational activities connected with the clergy. At the same time, the only church mentioned is the Orthodox one. No reference is made to the Greco-Catholic church.<sup>12</sup>

The 1948 Constitution represents an important moment from the point of view of the relations between church and state since starting with that period of time no member of the clergy was allowed to participate in the political process. Priests held no seats in the Big National Assembly<sup>13</sup> (*Marea Adunare Nationala*).

As Janice Broun (1988) notes the relations between the Orthodox Church and the communist state were far from being perfect. In spite of the legal implications of the Constitution there were several denominations which failed to be recognized by the state because they did not support its political orientation. These were the Catholic Church, the Lord's Army and small groups of Protestants and Orthodox (J. Broun, 1988: 204). Thus, one can easily conclude that as long as the church moved within the confinements of the law religious manifestations were allowed.<sup>14</sup> If however, their actions were against the interests of the communist state the existence of these religious denominations would cease.

The Romanian anti-religious policy passed through several different phases. Initially, as Pedro Ramet (1989) writes, the Stalinist model was applied and "mass purges

<sup>10</sup> "Article 8: it is forbidden that priests of any denomination or religious belief should dedicate their spiritual authority to political propaganda, both in the places destined for religious and administrative matters as well as outside these. Political propaganda taking place within the area of religious manifestation or during religious procedures is not allowed. Any political association based on religious grounds or motivation is prohibited from existing" (1938 Constitution).

<sup>11</sup> "Article 27: the freedom of conscience and religion are guaranteed by the State. The religious denominations are free to organize and can function freely as long as their activities do not come against the Constitution, moral order and public safety. No confession, congregation or religious community can open or maintain educational institutions, but only special schools aimed at preparing the clerical personnel under the supervision of the State. The Romanian Orthodox Church is autocephalous and unitary in its organization" (1948 Constitution).

<sup>12</sup> According to Timothy Ware (1963, 1997) the Greco-Catholic believers were forced to join the Orthodox Church.

<sup>13</sup> This was the name of the Parliament after 1948 for the whole period of the communist ruling.

<sup>14</sup> Of relevance for this particular social aspect is a quote from N. Ceausescu's speech delivered in 1979 and present in Janice Broun's (1988) book. "Religious freedom is for those cults recognized by the law, but the cults have to respect the laws of the country and help build a socialist state. Romanians cannot close their eyes to any infringement of the law under the pretext of Christianity" (Broun 1988: 205).

decimated the Orthodox hierarchy” (Ramet 1989: 19). These types of campaigns took place in two waves the first between 1947 and 1948 and the second between 1958 and 1962. At the beginning, the Church found itself in a difficult situation. Its internal structure in terms of human resources and possessions was affected by the regime’s desire to remove it from the social sphere. In addition, the Church’s functions were also diminished and it was no longer able to hold charitable and educational activities (Stan and Turcescu 2000: 1468).

As Stan and Turcescu (2000) note the policy of the Orthodox Church was also influenced by the appointment of a new patriarch, Justinian Marina, whose vision came very close to the socialist ideals of the communist party. Nevertheless, his political efforts had results only from the beginning of the 1960s. It was then when, due to a combination of factors, namely the skillful policy of the patriarch as well as the internal and external political situation and the election of a new president Nicolae Ceausescu, that the Orthodox Church regained part of its privileges. Stimulating patriotic feelings and increasing the degree of internal social cohesion fitted Ceausescu’s regime which at that time was attempting to distance itself from the Soviet Union’s power.<sup>15</sup> This particular period lasted from 1965 until 1968.<sup>16</sup>

The emphasis on nationalism became stronger in the following period 1968 until 1969, but it only culminated with a new type of policy in 1971, a strategy which was considered to be “a new ideological offensive” (Gilberg 1989: 340). Consequently, the interference of the party in all societal spheres increased and the campaigns against religion re-appeared. A new image of a “rational and scientific world” (ibid, 1989) started to be propagated. Nevertheless, due to the important role which the Orthodox Church played in connection with the maintenance of strong Romanian identity feelings, the communist party kept a dual relationship with this institution.

In a brief comparative analysis, Timothy Ware (1963, 1997) observes that out of all the Orthodox Churches in the region the Romanian one managed to escape communism with its structure intact. This was due to the fact that immediately after the Second World War and almost until the middle of Ceausescu’s presidency the relations between the Patriarch and the new government were not under extreme pressure. Nevertheless, this does not imply the fact that the clergy did not suffer from being under constant supervision on the part of the secret police, surveillance which led to a series of arrests in 1958 (Ware 1963, 1997).

The 1952 and the 1965 Constitutions bring no new elements in the relation between the Orthodox Church and the communist state.

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<sup>15</sup> In order to be able to achieve the cooperation of the clergy, the regime applied a new type of policy namely one which focused on co-optation. This meant that “...Orthodox church leaders serve as surrogate spokesmen for the regime’s foreign policy and as defenders of its internal policies. Co-optation has meant, that in contrast to other Churches, the Orthodox churches have enjoyed a certain sufficiency of institutions and publications in Romania [and not only]” (Ramet 1989: 21–22).

<sup>16</sup> From a historical point of view these were the first years after Ceausescu took hold of the power and, as Trond Gilberg (1989) emphasizes it was a period of consolidation in which he was mainly concerned with his political position. His aim was to fend off “challenges from various rivals, and [expand] the hold of the PCR (Romanian Communist Party) over the societal elites and the population in general” (Gilberg 1989: 338).

When applying the typology presented in the theoretical part to the relations between church and state during communism in Romania it can be inferred that despite the efforts of maintaining a certain degree of collaboration with the political system, the Church was its subordinate. However, there are other views of this systemic relationship. For instance, Pedro Ramet (1989) considers that at least all through the second phase of Romanian communism, the political elites tried to elaborate a policy of co-optation. This implied that certain compromises would be reached on both sides. The Romanian Orthodox Church would support the policies of the political regime whilst the elites would allow this institution to maintain some of its normal functions associated with its internal functioning and the connection with the believers. Stan and Turcescu (2000) write that due to its loyalty the Orthodox Church was given the right to “take possession of Greek Catholic property” (Stan and Turcescu 2000: 1471). At the same time, it kept some of its seminars opened which meant that its educational activity did not completely cease. Also the party allowed the publication of several religious journals (Stan and Turcescu 2000).

Another view of the relation between the church and the communist structures comes from the Orthodox Church as such. Its representatives consider that the collaboration of their institution with the political sphere was done according to the Byzantine concept of *symphonia* (Stan and Turcescu 2000: 1471). This entails that the state and the Church are closely connected, so closely in fact that “the latter becomes a state Church, while other Christian denominations and non-Christian religions enjoy considerable fewer rights” (ibid, 2000: 1471).

The first post-communist Constitution adopted in 1991 brings with it important changes. Contrary to the Constitutions of other former communist states it does not have a Preamble and thus no *invocation Dei* exists. Instead the language appears to be that of the human rights. What this Constitution has as a new element is the enlargement of the rights associated with the church and the manifestation of religious beliefs. No particular denomination is mentioned and in the Article 29 it is stipulated the fact that the state will support all religious services in the army, hospitals, prisons, asylums and orphanages. The same legal status is specified in the modified version of the Constitution approved in 2003.

Despite these legal transformations which offered the Church a new status, the institution managed to consolidate its position also due to a series of other factors. The first one was the official apology which was offered to the Romanian believers for the past collaboration with the communist regime. To this Stan and Turcescu (2000) add the fact that due to its non-political character and consequently its non-implication in economic decisions, the Orthodox Church was able to gather a high amount of trust from the population. This element was associated also with the presentation of a new discourse on the part of this institution, rhetoric which was connected with nationalism and nationalist values (Stan and Turcescu 2000).

In what regards the actual involvement of the church in the sphere of the social it should be mentioned that this increased considerably when compared with the communist historical past. Thus according to the most recent *News Bulletin* of the Romanian Patriarchy from January–April 2006 the activities of the church touch

the following spheres: monastic life, theological education (pre-university as well as university), religious education in public schools,<sup>17</sup> missionary, social and charitable activities, places of worship, educational activities as well as the maintenance of museum collections and the religious cultural patrimony.

What the post-communist legislative system brought was a separation between the church and the state and their positioning on an equal level. However, in practice the relations which are established are more complex. The state continues to finance the Orthodox Church whilst at the same time calling on it "...for the purpose of gaining additional legitimacy" (Stan and Turcescu 2000: 1472).

### In Place of a Conclusion

When applying the theoretical model presented in the first part of this article, one can easily infer that factors such as the historical past, the political culture of the ruling elites, nationalism as well as institutional norms play an important role in structuring the relationship between church and state. At the same time, the existence of groups with different political orientations (as in the case of the communist time in Romania when at the beginning a Stalinist model of relations within society was applied, followed after that by Ceausescu who initially changed his attitude towards the church) determine the way in which a specific political regime formulates its policies in relation to the sphere of religion.

As it could also be seen, part of the factors which were present during communism where also used as legitimizing elements, on the part of the Church, after 1989. Here the development of a nationalist discourse played an important role.

Nevertheless, in order for both the state as well as the church to be able to set the basis for a new type of institutional relationship based most importantly on a clear separation of these two spheres, the Orthodox clergy must, first of all, initiate an internal process of reformation.

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<sup>17</sup> The religious education is probably one of the most important types of involvement of the church in societal activities. According to the statistics presented in the News Bulletin from January–April 2006 "10,185 religion teachers teach in the public schools."

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*Biographical Note:* Ruxandra Timofeychev in Doctoral Candidate at the Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology Polish Academy of Sciences.

*Address:* e-mail: ruxaya@gmail.com