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# THE CULTURE OF ROYALTY POLITICAL REINTEGRATION. THE CASE OF ROMANIA AND OTHER EASTERN-EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES IN POST-COMMUNISM AND BEFORE AND AFTER EU ACCESSION

Alexandru MURARU, PhD  
Researcher in Political Science  
Department of Research  
Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences,  
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania  
E-mail: alexandru.muraru@uaic.ro

## Abstract

The paper analyzes, starting from the concept of political reintegration – scarcely theorized in political sciences – the post-Communism experiences of the return of former royal families in Southeastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro). A complex and at the same time non-homogeneous phenomenon (in the region), the political reintegration of royalty challenged the elites and the political system, namely their capacity of accepting the former monarchs (or their heirs) within the frontiers of the new republics, in some cases as an acceptance of historical past, and in others as a fight with legitimacies. In numerous cases, such as Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, the post-Communist elites refused the access of non-ruling royal families. They believed their acceptance would have automatically opened the discussion about the construction of the new state, of the new political systems and on the form of government, implicitly. Moreover, the return of royalty brought difficulties not only in the political life, but also in the discourse on the past and the future (the idea of European integration) and in the topic of retroceding estates. For some Eastern-European democracies, this is still an ongoing process. The regime changes did not allow in all cases and acceptance of royalty, too; hence, this conflict turned inevitably into one with multiple meanings (political, historical, constitutional, legal, related to foreign policy, etc). Conflicts entailed memorial or political battles, with wide implications on the progress of certain nations or on the socio-political climate on the long run. This paper highlights from case to case the political evolutions and final/current outcomes of the political reintegration process of royalty in Southeastern Europe, in some cases involving unique political positions in the world held by a former monarch in a republic (Bulgaria) or republican institutions created in order to give an institutional form to royal houses (Romania, Montenegro).

**Keywords:** royalty, political reintegration, royal families, Eastern Europe, monarchism

## Political reintegration as a concept

*Political reintegration* as a distinct analysis method is used mainly to describe a mitigating restoration formula for political phenomena, policies or systems.<sup>1</sup> Complicated and

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<sup>1</sup> The concept has been scarcely treated in political sciences. It is more of a transient concept, articulated by the social sciences and by the various components of punctual research studies, in either the issue of social sciences or the studies regarding the post-conflict situations. In this case, see, for instance, several interpretations and exemplifications of the concept among studies on social policies or peace-restoring operations: Humphreys, M., & Weinstein, J. M., “Demobilization and Reintegration”, in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51(4), Volume 51, Number 4, August 2007, 531–567; J Gomes Porto, Imogen Parsons, Chris Alden, “Chapter Three: The Economic, Social and Political Dimensions of Reintegration: Findings, Monograph”, No 130, March 2007,

problematic, fairly limited and under-theorized, objectified by empirical experiences and by the significant power of the historical, social and political context, the “culture of political reintegration” aims to “build societal relations” following a major political or social conflict, a totalitarian regime or generally a break of systemic, constitutional norms or historical traditions with far-reaching implications. Such *reintegration* entails a restoration – at community or society level – of common beliefs, norms, social or political options, values or institutions (formal or informal) valid in a consensual climate.

*Political reintegration* is based on a background of the emergence of democratic, peace or dialogue values, where a special role is played by representations about past evolutions, where the values, principles, beliefs to restore/reinstate based on the favourable perception of the society benefits from a lode/current implying a political message. At the same time, a significant degree of trust and solidarity from parts or categories of population should be developed and assumed throughout the process of *political reintegration*. The political dimension of reintegration is thus synonymous with transitory situations, with a wider political phenomenon of reconstructing social webs, of renegotiating the status of a political group or of parties excluded from political decisions. *Political reintegration* needs social acceptance, maybe even *political reinvention* or reconsideration through political implication. *Political reintegration* needs for authorities – and those who have been excluded from their acceptance or from including among (or on behalf of) those for whom the state exercises its protection, civil and/or political rights and functioning – to embrace democratic norms and dialogue. The concept of *political reintegration* and *reintegration culture* has several associated and developed formulas, such as institutionalization or political formalization, etc.

### **Royalty after communism**

There are over 40 royal families waiting to regain their monarchic prerogatives worldwide today<sup>2</sup>, but 21 of them are in Europe<sup>3</sup>, on a territory with the most diverse political palette in the world. Thus, in this vast geographic space, with a complicated history, such as the case of Europe – on a surface accounting for a ninth of China, a seventeenth of Russia or a seventh of Australia –<sup>4</sup>, the diversity of political systems is unique in the world. Currently, out of the 45 European states, 12 are monarchies, which means that almost a third have preserved their royal tradition, while in the European Union, the percentage is the same<sup>5</sup>. Generally, in the world, the history of the royal families individualizes by the political area where such families have acted; it cannot be viewed as a whole. Therefore, when we discuss the monarchy as *political alternative*, we must approach the topic contextually and temporally, in order to see to what extent it really represents an option, a solution. Across the Globe, there are royal families who abandoned their main *raison d'être* – being useful to the

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available online at <https://issafrica.org/chapter-three-the-economic-social-and-political-dimensions-of-reintegration-findings> (August 2018);

<sup>2</sup> Tim Hames, Mark Leonard, *Modernising the monarchy*, Demos Publishing House, London, 1998, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> In 2018, in Europe there are twelve (12) sovereign monarchies, but nowadays more than 140 royal and aristocratic houses still exist on the old continent; See an analysis of these situations in Olga S. Opfell, *Royalty Who Wait. The 21 heads of Formerly Regnant Houses of Europe*, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, North Carolina, 2006, *passim*; Charles Fensyvesi, *Splendor In Exile. The Ex-Majesties of Europe*, New Republic Books, Washington D.C., 1979, *passim*; Ana Ilie, “Monarhiile Europei”, in *Ziare.com*, 29 April 2009, available online at <http://www.ziare.com/politica/stiri-politice/monarhiile-europei-incotro-734905> (June 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Radu Principe de Hohenzollern-Veringen, *Europa din noi: Regalitatea și democrația-spectacol*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2005, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> See Alexandru Muraru, *Europa regală. Regimurile politice monarhice – parte a stăruinței europene contemporane*, master thesis defended in June 2007 the Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, supervised by Cătălin Turliuc, PhD, after graduation from the Master program “The Romanians and Europe” (2005-2007), pp. 20, 64.

states where they activate and training professional governors<sup>6</sup> – while others keep on claiming parts of states' sovereignty by appealing to memory, tradition or state identity.

In Europe, after the collapse of the communist regimes, former royal families have tried to make themselves useful for their nations and to take back their historical place and political role. In addition, certain states never had a monarchic tradition, such as Estonia, but they benefited from political claims in this respect. In other cases, for instance, such as Ukraine or Poland, there is no successor to the throne, but seven monarchist organizations activate, even if the last king was taken down in late 18<sup>th</sup> century, upon the second division of Poland.<sup>7</sup> Anyway, even if such movements do not have the power necessary to acquire political capital, because their activism is of a rather nostalgic nature, they represent a “public sensitive to rehabilitating kings”.<sup>8</sup>

The historian Sabina Fati talks, at the same time, about another category, the one of monarchs. In her opinion, they “play an important political role, but they no longer want their crown”<sup>9</sup>. She gives the example of the former Afghani king Mohamed Zahir Shah<sup>10</sup> or of Otto von Habsburg<sup>11</sup>, the grandson of the last German king and a member of the European Parliament, a prominent personality of the European world and of the pan-European organizations. Also in this matter, Fati talks about the quite particular or special situation of the monarchs in the Balkans or Eastern Europe, who saw the collapse of the Communist regimes as a chance to resume the historical path interrupted when the pro-Soviet dictatorships had come to power. The exiled kings or their heirs benefited in their own states from different situations and experiences, from reinventions, from their own reinterpretations of their roles. This is an ample phenomenon of political reintegration worthy of all the attention and observation.

## Romania

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<sup>6</sup> “We will not form a party, we will not candidate, we will not become ministers” (Interview with Prince Radu of Romania, taken by Mihai Gadalean) in *Foaia Transilvană*, Cluj, 21 July 2008, pp. 1; 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Sabina Fati, “Regii dispăruți”, in *Sfera Politicii*, year VIII (2000), issue 81, pp. 6-12.

<sup>8</sup> Andrei Pippidi, “Monarhismul”, in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (ed.), *Doctrine politice: concepte fundamentale și realități românești*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1999, pp. 95-106.

<sup>9</sup> Sabina Fati, art. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Written in 2000, the article of the researcher Sabina Fati is rather anachronistic, because the rhythm of the events surpassed her rankings. Hence, after 2002, namely after the war of the international coalition against terrorism, the return of the former Afghani king reignited among the public opinion and the Afghani media the topic of restoring the monarchy, but Mohamed Zahir Shah stated several times that he would serve the state from any position provided to him. Subsequently seen as an ambassador of Afghanistan, the former monarch received through Constitution the unique title of “Father of the nation”, to symbolize the role he played in the history of the nation, as an apolitical symbol of national unity. This title disappeared when he died, on 23 July 2007. (“Mohamed Zahir Shah”, in *Encyclopaedia Wikipedia*, available online at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed\\_Zahir\\_Shah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed_Zahir_Shah) (July 2018)).

<sup>11</sup> Otto von Habsburg (also known as *archduke Otto of Austria*, *Prince Otto of Austria*, and in Hungary simply as *Habsburg Otto*) was the head of the Habsburg House and the last Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary, a realm which comprised modern-day Austria, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia. Furthermore, Otto von Habsburg was considered a legitimate candidate to the Polish throne and of the “defunct” throne of the Kingdom of Germans. With German, Austrian, Croatian and Hungarian citizenship, von Habsburg is the son of the last Austrian emperor and the king of Hungary. He became a member of the Christian Social Union of Bavaria and the honorary president of the Pan-European International Union. Though in 1961 he stated that he waived all his claims to the throne of Austria, self-proclaiming “a loyal citizen of the republic”, in a 2007 interview, he said he had made that statement more than 50 years prior for purely practical and political reasons. He said that he had never actually signed any official papers confirming that he had waived his dynastic prerogatives. In January 2007, he gave up his status of Head of his House for his eldest son. (“Otto von Habsburg”, in *Encyclopaedia Wikipedia*, available online at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto\\_von\\_Habsburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_von_Habsburg) (August 2018)).

This is by far the most prominent example of the phenomenon from the perspective of political reintegration. A marginal state at the border of the Tsarist, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Kingdoms in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, it acquired international recognition, independence, national unity, it recorded the most flourishing period and the most numerous reforms within its first modernization under the sceptre of the constitutional monarchy. Pursuant to the Europe of constitutions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the model of Romanian royalty was the solution for a national consensus and an alternative for ending the succession of autochthonous aristocratic families, who failed to overcome the stage of internal fights and personal interests. The Romanian monarchy had a powerful local background, as the national elites impregnated the need for systemic reform and symbolical hierarchization of the state. Thus, constitutional monarchy – despite the catastrophes that hit the country and that relate directly to the name of Carol II (significant decay of democracy, systematic destruction of parties, encouragement of violent atmosphere and state crime, territorial losses, dissolution of the Parliament, suspension of the Constitution) – was a successful story overall. Even in the difficult years of the Second World War, the monarchy did not take part in the horrors of the Holocaust or of the war in the East: it became a symbol of the resistance to both Nazism and Communism. The monarchy, in various moments – resistance during the First World War, the Paris peace negotiations, the genocide government of Marshal Antonescu, the removal of the country from the alliance with Nazi Germany and joining the allied nations on 23 August 1944, the retrieval of northern Transylvania, the fight against Sovietization, etc – preserved only the idea of state symbolically. It also preserved the royalty ultimately, by adding successes and national rescues. This is the great asset of Romanian royalty in the post-December imaginary.

However, the Romanian monarchy has been, among all post-Communist states, the most subjected to the waves of falsifications, mystifications and omissions in the Communist period. This has affected, no doubt, its political power when Communism fell. Michael I had remained the only monarch of a Balkan state who had actually participated in the Second World War, the author of the fearless act of 23 August 1944, recognised at European and international level, a prominent figure of political emigration and of the free Western world. Romania was, in its turn, the only Balkan nation that had not benefited from a referendum regarding its form of government when Communism rose to power or when it fell. Michael I was also the last head of state in Eastern Europe before the instauration of totalitarianism and he had fought both diseases of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Nazism and Communism. All of these added to the visceral hatred of the post-Communist power – represented by Ion Iliescu, former close collaborator of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the brain and direct beneficiary of the setups within the 1989 Revolution (currently prosecuted for crimes against humanity for the crimes committed during the 1989 Revolution and for the “miners’ riots”) towards the King. This situation led to none less than 10 official denials of allowing the monarch to come to Romania. This was a topic per se, debated even in the European Council<sup>12</sup>. It was deemed a serious issue, affecting human rights and the person’s dignity<sup>13</sup> and a political issue that actually helped increase the popularity of Michael I and improve the image of royalty.

The dispute on restoration was the key of conflicts regarding the presence of Michael I in Romania until 1997. The recognition of King Michael as a “hero” would have entailed the reconsideration of the role played by royalty in the history of the country. This process

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<sup>12</sup> Dan Spanily, “Neacordarea vizei MS Regelui – în atenția Consiliului Europei“, *Cotidianul*, year V, issue 149 (1 194), 29 July 1995, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Adrian Cioroianu, “Dezbateri de formă, indiferență de fond“, *Sfera Politicii*, year VIII (2000), issue 81, p. 3.

would have meant that Romanians could have the chance of actually assessing the alternative republic/monarchy.<sup>14</sup>

The political reintegration of royalty implied consistent diplomatic actions in 1997 and 2002, to support the candidacy of Romania for accessing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. The last king became an extraordinary ambassador par excellence. Thus, royalty was even more associated with the idea of Europe and royal diplomacy, with the democratic values and with the fight against Communism, thus benefiting from an important political continuity. Hence, Michael I continued to participate actively to the state objectives of the nation. Through his actions, he remained a former monarch claiming his throne using far-reaching methods; however, his methods always remained decent and never contested the constitutional order. These tours also helped create the idea of the only institution<sup>15</sup> in the world – a republican state applying for NATO and the EU – where a member of the non-ruling royal family held a position in the executive branch. The project of the *Special Representative of the Romanian Government*<sup>16</sup> – emerging as an adaptation<sup>17</sup> of the ruling British, Spanish, Dutch, Belgian, Danish monarchic systems – was the first exercise of reinstitutionalizing royalty in post-Communist Romania.

Other evolutions worth mentioning are the partial restoration of royal estates held before 1948, the statutory, administrative and logistical refounding of the royal house, as well as the candidacy attempt to the republic's presidency of a member of the royal family. I am talking here about the monarch's son-in-law; Michael I himself legitimized his candidacy in 2009. For the royal house, pursuant to the statements issued by its members two decades from the fall of Communism and six decades from the abolition of monarchy, "the position of head of state was not a political one. The capacity of head of state was the public function closest to the historical profile of the royal house, which was created to deliver heads of state for the country"<sup>18</sup>. By activating and separating this position from any political party, the royal family saw the president position as a "non-political dignitary", and if a member of the royal house could occupy it, the purpose was to "safeguard the respectability, values and principles of state institutions"<sup>19</sup>. Unlike the Bulgarian model, the royal house of Romania and Michael I never accepted to abandon the mission of taking back the throne. They continued to deny the abdication of 1947 and they always saw it as "null and void", obtained through blackmail and threats. The current Crown custodian, Margareta, the oldest daughter of King Michael and the Crown Princess, with degrees in public international law, international relations and sociology at the University of Edinburgh (UK) – actively involved in the field of civilian society and social protection – often states that she is ready to take over the throne whenever Romanians decide it.

An ongoing process after the death of King Michael in December 2016 is today in Romania still at the level of public debate. The "reinvention" of royalty – through the "reinstitutionalization" of the royal house, by acquiring an institutional-bureaucratic form, – debuted in June 2016, when the technocratic government at that time launched a law project to create this body, under the guardianship of the Romanian Parliament. The royal house has no legal personality currently. It is not part of the Romanian institutional area per se, as it

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<sup>14</sup> See Alexandru Muraru, *Cum supraviețuiește monarhia într-o republică? Regele Mihai, românii și regalitatea după 1989*, preface by Emil Hurezeanu, Curtea Veche Publishing, București, 2015, p. 23 and *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Crețulescu, Corina Murafa, *Principele Radu: un destin*, Editura Litera Internațional, București, 2009, pp. 108-112.

<sup>16</sup> For details, see Alexandru Muraru, *Republica monarhică. Aportul Familiei Regale la integrarea euro-atlantică a României*, Editura Junimea, Iași, 2009, pp. 70-94.

<sup>17</sup> Radu de Hohenzollern-Veringen, Principe consort, *Altfel: legământul noii generații regale. Principele Radu al României în dialog cu Nicolae Drăgușin*, foreword by Andrei Brezianu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2009. P. 173.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

occurs with the other non-ruling royal families in the region, except for Montenegro. According to the American economist Douglass North, it is an informal institution. The law debated for a few months in the Parliament does not limit in any way the prerogatives of the head of the Romanian royal house, but it creates the legal framework through which the head of the royal house can relate officially to other institutions, thus benefiting from legal personality. This includes a specific body with 20 collaborators, a budget, headquarters, etc.<sup>20</sup>

Concerning favourability, ample sociological research studies conducted in the last decade have highlighted that royalty is highly popular in Romania. Namely, 45% of the Romanians had, two years ago, a good and very good opinion about the royal house, while about 25% of them opted for constitutional monarchy to the detriment of the republic in a future referendum.<sup>21</sup>

## Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, monarchy was abolished in 1946 after a referendum organized under the auspices of the Soviet occupation armies and of the local Communists. The young child-king, Simeon II of Saxe Coburg-Gotha, regent, was forced to go into exile, first in Egypt, then in Spain, where he became a prosperous businessperson. Simeon II of Saxe Coburg-Gotha returned in early 90s. Initially, the governmental authorities in Sofia denied his role<sup>22</sup>, but then the population and the political class south of the Danube welcomed him warmly<sup>23</sup>. The conflict between the king and the authorities did not take the form of the one beyond the Danube, but the monarch often publicly doubted the good intentions of the new Bulgarian politicians.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Alexandru Muraru, "Casa Regală a României, în drum spre instituționalizare", in Daniel Șandru, Alexandru Muraru (Editors), in *Anul Regal: jurnalul Jubileului de 150 de ani de la fondarea Casei Regale a României*, Editura Adenium, Iași, 2016, pp. 299-320.

<sup>21</sup> INCSOP Research, "Barometrul Adevărul despre România", March 2016, available online at [http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/INSCOP-raport-martie-2016\\_-CASA-REGALA.pdf](http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/INSCOP-raport-martie-2016_-CASA-REGALA.pdf) (August 2018).

<sup>22</sup> On 11 February 1990, Simeon II of Bulgaria was broadcasted for the first time on national television in Bulgaria, within an autobiographic interview. After declaring his intention of returning to his own country to help restore it, the monarch immediately stirred a virulent reaction of post-Communist authorities. Hence, the Council of Ministers of the Popular Republic of Bulgaria issued a statement two days later. "The issue of the Establishment and the governing form of Bulgaria as republic was decided by the Bulgarian people with a wide majority, one and for all, through a free referendum. At that point, the Bulgarian people decided on the role and responsibility of the Saxe-Coburg dynasty in a series of national catastrophes and calamities that hit the Bulgarian people during its rule. Pursuant to the Constitution and to the unfortunate historical experience, to the democratic efforts and hopes of the Bulgarian people, the social life of Bulgaria has no place for the rebirth of monarchic ideas.

The ambitions regarding the so-called role in the Bulgarian politics are bizarre and totally groundless, as well as the attempts to advise on how the Bulgarian people should solve issues or the comments on the relations between Bulgaria and other friend states, using arguments eluding the historical truth and contradicting the current national interests of Bulgaria" ("Bulgaria și Monarhia" in *România Liberă*, year XLVIII, Nr. 14079, New series, issue 45, 14 February 1990, p. 4.).

<sup>23</sup> The return to Sofia of King Simeon II stirred great enthusiasm: the crowds shouted the name of the monarch. The national movement Simeon II was a successful political project. In only three months, he managed to conquer the political scene and to win in July 2001, prevailing over right-wing political opponents (the Union of Democratic Forces) and left-wingers (the Bulgarian Socialist Party). ("Simeon de Saxa Coburg-Gotha in *Setimes.com*, available online at [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/ro/infoBios/setimes/resource\\_centre/bio-archive/saxe-coburg-gotha\\_simeon](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/ro/infoBios/setimes/resource_centre/bio-archive/saxe-coburg-gotha_simeon) (July 2018).

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, "I question the democratic beliefs of those who defend the legitimacy of violence occurred 50 years ago" (Interview conducted by Andrei Bădin and Adrian Bărbulescu with His Majesty King Simeon II of Bulgaria), in *România Liberă*, New series – issue 1324, 4 August 1994, p. 16, where the monarch states, "(...) a republic or another form of government proclaimed under the occupation of foreign troops, is a null act,

Simeon, the last king of the Bulgarians (1943-1946), represented hope through the power of his personal example, but also an end of the road for the political and institutional experiences of royalty. After returning in his country in 1996, acclaimed by thousands of Bulgarians on the streets of Sofia – who shouted “We want the king!” – on 6 April 2001, Simeon II announced his decision to return for good and to contribute actively to the revival of the country. He founded the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII) – “dedicated to morals and political integrity”, and after the 2001 elections he obtained a remarkable victory with the promise of making Bulgaria economically prosperous in 800 days. He took over – leading a coalition of pro-European parties and pro-Atlantist parties – the high dignity of head of the Bulgarian government. He put together a cabinet comprised for the most part technocrats and economic specialists with western degrees. This was the first post-December government in Bulgaria that ended the four-year mandate after scoring the most important successes in the recent history of the nation – the country’s accession to NATO and the European Union. Throughout his political career and his Prime-Minister mandate, he kept the “Tsar” title (the equivalent of *King* in Slavic states and traditions). He did however declare in 2001, “I would want to highlight that my position is Prime-Minister of Bulgaria”, thus trying to temper speculations regarding possible claims to the throne. He led the government for four years, until 2005. In 2008, the Bulgarian press argued that the former Prime Minister would have intended to candidate to the EU presidency. Subsequently, Simeon withdrew from the political life and never got involved in political decisions, and in 2016, he denied wanting to return to politics, thus stating that he could serve the country outside the political life.<sup>25</sup>

Most probably due to electoral calculations, but also to avoid turmoil in the geopolitical realities concerning his own nation, Simeon II did not mention during his Prime Minister mandate (2001-2006) the desire to change the government form. He let the issue oscillate between occasional assumptions and political action. Simeon, who never abdicated, benefited – according to the historian and political scientist Marcus Wien with the American University of Sofia – during his governing in the 90s from a favourable attitude of the population. Such attitude may be best explained by its historical legitimacy, related to the monarch as an individual, and less to the monarchic institution per se, namely constitutionally relevant. The reason for it is that, until the death of Boris III (1943), the contemporary reflection on the monarchy was related to the period of his reign, on how he ruled the country in an autocratic manner, thus being held accountable for the political decisions deemed “fascist”. The “reinvention of royalty” in Bulgaria must be connected to memorial recuperation – after the Communist falsifications – of the monarchic period during the reign of Boris III and to its great successes: the annexation of the Quadrilateral in 1940; the refusal to exterminate the 48,000 Jews and to get the country involved in the German campaign in the East. Hence, the historical image of the Bulgarian monarchy changed after 1989 and the success of Simeon in Bulgaria were determined by the quasi-religious component connecting the monarchy to the tradition of the Orthodox Church and by the reassessment of past royalty

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without international legal value”, thus exposing his view regarding the legitimacy of the Communist regime and, consequently, its constitutional outcomes.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance a short description of the biography of Simeon II, Bulgarian King, at <http://www.kingsimeon.bg/en/semjestvo-i-misiya/n-v-tsar-simeon-ii/> (August 2018); Ella Moroiu, “Sângele albastru in politica sud-est europeana. Simeon de Saxa Coburg Gotha si Principele Radu”, in *Hotnews*, 9 April 2009, available online at <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-5567053-sangele-albastru-politica-sud-est-europeana-simeon-saxa-coburg-gotha-principele-radu.htm> (August 2016).

representatives, by transferring the hopes and qualities and successes of King Boris to the association with his son, Simeon.<sup>26</sup>

### Serbia

The Serbian case is all the more complicated as the creation of the Yugoslavian Kingdom in 1929 – to the detriment of the former “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” by the grandfather of Alexander Karađorđević (married to Princess Mary of Romania, daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Mary) – generated significant tension. This tension culminated with his assassination by the terrorist movement of Ustashi Croats, in 1934.<sup>27</sup> This political transformation at national scale modified completely the feelings of his subjects. Croats and Slovenes detested the monarchy, as they saw this new political orientation as a Serbian attempt to control a federal state at ethnic and decisional level. Suppressed by Hitler’s Germany in 1941, royalty was completely disregarded since 1945, when the Communist dictator Josip Broz Tito abolished the monarchy and expelled the royal family from the country<sup>28</sup>.

Alexander Karađorđević<sup>29</sup> was born in a room of the Claridge hotel in London, which was immediately declared a Yugoslavian territory, to prevent the new heir from losing his dynastic rights. After 56 years of exile, during which he studied in Switzerland and in military academies in the USA and in the UK – the heir of the only Balkan monarchy returned to Serbia as late as 2001 (after having publicly disapproved from London the regime of Slobodan Milosevic) and he managed to regain his nationality right and to retrieve his former estates, though he did not win them all back in justice.

Currently, the heir and his family live in the White Palace of the Serbian capital and they carry out an intense activity of representation in the spirit of the political “credo” of royalty. A survey conducted in Belgrade by the Institute for Social Studies in 2000 placed the popularity of the monarchic idea at around 8% among the Serbs.<sup>30</sup> Alexander Karađorđević adopted a poignant attitude – among the most direct in the Balkans – concerning his option for the modification of the government form in Serbia. He stated, “the restoration of the monarchy (...) «would bring stability and unity» and would make Serbia «be respected abroad»”.<sup>31</sup>

### Albania

A particular case in this political epopee or comebacks – or, better said, of the attempts to find again the state coordinates for recalibrating the monarchic idea under various forms or formulas, as shown above – is the Albanian case. It is even more interesting that the founder and the only proclaimed king was Ahmet Zogu, a young politician who – after holding several positions – became a parliament member, minister of Internal Affairs, Prime-Minister, Commander-in-Chief, President of the Republic, and on 31 January 1926, he

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<sup>26</sup> Markus Wien, “The Bulgarian monarchy: a politically motivated revision of a historical image in a post-socialist transitional society”, in Brett, D. and Jarvis, C. and Marin, I., (eds.), *Four empires and an enlargement: States, Societies and individuals: transfiguring perspectives and images of Central and Eastern Europe. Studies in Russia and Eastern Europe (4)*, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, London, UK, pp. 79-85.

<sup>27</sup> Sabina Fati, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> “Foștii monarhi din Balcani visează la tronurile lor” in *Business24*, available online at <http://www.business24.ro/imobiliare/terenuri-agricole/fostii-monarhi-din-balcani-viseaza-la-tronurile-lor-673767> (august 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Walter J.O. Curley, *Monarchs in Waiting*, Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) LTD, London, 1975, pp. 85-88.

<sup>30</sup> Aisha Labi, “New Hope for the Old Regime” in the journal *Time Europe*, Vol 156, issue 22, 22 November 2000, available online at <http://www.time.com/time/europe/magazine/2000/1127/balkankings.html> (august 2018).

<sup>31</sup> “Foștii monarhi din Balcani visează la tronurile lor”, art. cit.

became the first president of the Albanian republic. On 1 September 1928, the Parliament declared Albania a kingdom and Ahmet Zogu, the king of the Albanians.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas the nation had a complicated path after 1990, the path of the Crown Prince was not far from it. The story of the Albanian crown ended dramatically in 1939, when Benito Mussolini, the prime-minister and political and military leader of Italy, decided to occupy the small Balkan state, and Victor Emmanuel III, the Italian monarch, became the Albanian king, which had thus become a protectorate. Only a couple of days after the birth of the heir to King Ahmet Zog, the royal family was exiled, and in 1961 Ahmet Leka I became the official heir of the Albanian throne. His political path began in 1993 when, upon his first visit to the country, Leka showed a passport issued by his own royal house, which allowed the authorities in Tirana to denounce the nullity of the document and to determine his expulsion.

The image and fame of the heir to the Albanian throne was far from sparkling clean. His exile to Spain ended with a request from the Iberian government to leave the country following an investigation that revealed a true arsenal of weapons at his residence, which created diverse speculations at international level, which shed a negative light on Leka. His image at the door of a plane to Africa, armed, became instant news worldwide and it generated even more suspicions<sup>33</sup> regarding his real intentions and means of regaining the trust of his fellow citizens and of the political power. His return to his native country in April 1997 – during tensions that threw Albania in a deep crisis during the electoral campaign – as head of the Freedom Party did lead to the organization of a referendum to solve the restoration issue. Whereas an encouraging percentage for Leka I, the 35% of the population who expressed their desire to have the government form changed was not enough to make a miracle happen in the Balkans. Right after the referendum, the accusations regarding the manipulation and falsification of the plebiscite by the authorities in Tirana – formulated by the Crown Prince – generated a spontaneous riot ending in people getting wounded and even killed.<sup>34</sup>

The pretendent to the Albanian throne was prosecuted and sentenced in absentia, which stirred the discontent of the public opinion, of parts of the power and of the media. Eventually, upon the request of 72 members of the Albanian Parliament in 2002, he was pardoned. Leka's last return also entailed his involvement in the political life, using the Movement for National Development. With his party, he obtained low scores and results within a wider political coalition. In February 2006, Leka Zoghu I withdrew officially from the political and the social life.<sup>35</sup>

## Montenegro<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Marius Dobrescu, "Monarhia albaneză: de la Ahmet Zogu la Leka Zogu. Biografia zbuciumata a unei dinastii controversate", available online at [http://www.alar.ro/n23/istorie-c102/monarhia\\_albaneza\\_de\\_la\\_ahmet\\_zogu\\_la\\_leka\\_zogu\\_biografia\\_zbuciumata\\_a\\_unei\\_dinastii\\_controversate-s205.html](http://www.alar.ro/n23/istorie-c102/monarhia_albaneza_de_la_ahmet_zogu_la_leka_zogu_biografia_zbuciumata_a_unei_dinastii_controversate-s205.html) (16 June 2010); see also Bernd J. Fischer, *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania*, published by East European Monographs, 1984, *passim*; Owen Pearson, *Albania in the Twentieth Century, A History: Volume I: Albania and King Zog, 1908-39 (Albania in the Twentieth Century: a History)*, I.B.Tauris in association with the Centre for Albanian Studies, 2006 *passim*.

<sup>33</sup> Alex Altman, "Leka Zoh, Pretendent King of Albania" in the journal *Time*, 5 June 2008, available online at [http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1810834\\_1810842\\_1810766,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1810834_1810842_1810766,00.html) (16 June 2010).

<sup>34</sup> "Leka, Crown Prince of Albania", in the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*, available online at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leka,\\_Crown\\_Prince\\_of\\_Albania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leka,_Crown_Prince_of_Albania) (16 June 2010).

<sup>35</sup> "Leka, Crown Prince of Albania", in *Academic dictionaries and encyclopedias*, available online at <http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/337540> (16 June 2010).

<sup>36</sup> The Montenegro case was explored in Alexandru Muraru, "Casa Regală a României, în drum spre instituționalizare", art. cit.

Montenegro is – from the perspective of political reintegration – after Romania, the state with the most advanced development and reinvention of royalty in the region. It is probably the state to access the EU in a few years, the nation with the greatest democratic, economic and political progress among the non-EU members in western Balkans (Montenegro has the Euro as official currency, whereas it is not a member of the EU or of the Euro area). The country decided, in 2011, that the royal family should be part of the state institutions. The *Law on the Status of the Descendants of the Petrovic-Njegos Dynasty*, adopted by the Parliament in 2011, institutionalized de facto the royal house of Montenegro and regulated the status of the Dynasty in the former Yugoslavian Republic. The legislative document created the state mechanisms and instruments for the representation of Montenegro through protocol and non-political actions. In addition, the law actually instituted the historical and moral rehabilitation of the Dynasty, thus admitting formally and explicitly that the illegitimate, illegal 1918 dethroning contrary to the Constitution of the kingdom was a violent act. The law also implied the recognition of the successor line, thus conferring upon the descendants the status of Dynasty Crown successors. The law also confirmed the Standards of the royal house and other legal matters, meant to facilitate deep institutionalization. The Crown Prince Nikolai II of Montenegro was recognised as head of the royal family, with an official status in the social and cultural field. He was allowed to use the royal symbols and to build a foundation (“Petrovic-Njegos Foundation” – the name of the Dynasty) under the leadership of the Crown. The Law also gave three more estates to the royal house for carrying out their engagements, as well as a budget of around 4.5 million Euros, necessary for activities conducted for seven years.

The institutionalization of the royal house in Montenegro explicitly mentioned the use of state and government resources and facilities and of other categories of benefits that the royal family may request from the authorities. To carry out their engagements, the status of the royal house members is equal to the one of their high dignitaries in Montenegro. Including in what regards the salary of the head of the royal house, he is paid as the sitting President, which formalizes a as the sitting President, which formalizes a representation degree similar to the one of the president. For official visits and public engagements, the members of the royal family benefit from the entire protocol for high state dignitaries.

It must also be added that in the small Adriatic republic, people are very much in favour of restoring the monarchy: the royal family and the Crown Prince are seen as a real alternative to the political elite. Furthermore, throughout the entire process of gaining independence and separating from Serbia, the royal family actively supported, fully and on various levels, the efforts of the new state. This attitude was seen as an avant-garde legitimization in the perspective of assuming an institutional role. Although many voices talked in 2011 about a “partial restoration” or “limited restoration” of the Montenegrin monarchy, this model actually functions in the small republic. Moreover, it has significant benefits for the diplomatic area and for the foreign political representation. Today, Montenegro is regarded as a model of successful and efficient public diplomacy in its relations with the EU and with the other international actors. The young state is the newest member of NATO.

## Conclusions

The political reintegration of royalty, along with the political culture, develops a topic with multiple sides: historical, constitutional, political, memorial, diplomatic, etc. Thus, in Eastern Europe, the political transition generated significant interrogations, debates and contestations, because the new democracies had as starting point an institutional structure with no legitimacy concerning the republic and its institutions. The communist regimes seized power in mid 40s using force, stolen elections and having no consensus necessary to

acquire political legitimacy. Actually, the pro-Soviet republics never benefited from an authentic popular vote. Thus, the republican institutional path had a major flaw, not only regarding historical traditions, but also due to a contestation from the royal families, who lost their throne when Europe was divided. These non-ruling institutions saw the fall of the regimes as a chance to resume the historical path interrupted over half a century before. The post-Communist history shows at first glance that everywhere in the Balkans, the disturbance of a process of confronting the new realities with the past had multiple causes: fear of political diversity, lack of legalist culture, but also major difficulties in accepting scenarios involving the restoration of constitutional monarchy. In Eastern Europe, the pressure of the populations on the new republics from the perspective of political values and governing models, along with the numerous problems caused by the transition from Communism to democracy, by the need to reconnect these nations to Europe and to the international organizations has also inspired the existence of a claim specific to post-Communist transition. Diverse models of subsequent cohabitation have shown new paradigms where the royal families in these states tried to make themselves useful and to give a new meaning to their vocation. In retrospect, outcomes are mixed, but the European royal families still have an important source of historical legitimacy, of state and cultural identity attachment, of embodiment of continuity, pride, loyalty and tradition.<sup>37</sup>

Even today – more than three decades after the fall of the Communism in Eastern Europe, more than two decades after the return of the non-ruling royal families and more than seven decades after the abolition of monarchies in the region – the relations between the *Crown* and the political power are an open matter. Actually, there are three cohabitation models of royalty in Eastern Europe republics. In *the first model*, due to the inhibiting of democracy and to violent political experiences – where apparently the return of royalty was more possible initially – royalty practically disappeared. Thus, *the case of Albania* tells the story of a failure, highly unlikely to rise from its ashes given the current conditions, but mostly given the weakened historical thread between the population, the new generations and the royal heirs. The second model – where the political component was strong and shredded off its royal attire, though accompanied by notable successes and important evolutions – either does not progress or has ended its historical evolution. Serbia and Bulgaria have followed this pattern.

By far though, the third model takes the form of the evolutions recorded in Romania and Montenegro. Here, the royal families consolidated their political power and their profile; they collaborated with the numerous governments and they accepted to take on various roles and positions. They accepted to be temporary representatives; they found a common denominator to survive, to assist the state institutions and to set the bases of a new model, to reconsider the formula of royalty. The purpose was twofold: their survival and their political reintegration.

This dilemma of readjustment, or reinvention, of political reintegration is a political phenomenon new and spectacular, but at the same time unpredictable, not only because global politics is very fluctuating nowadays, but also because the internal, historical, identity, statutory constraints of the royal families are both an inhibition and an obstacle for political development. Even the political power of the ruling monarchies has suffered a dramatic fall after the Second World War. For some monarchies, this was the compromise made for their survival. Today, they play a merely ceremonial and symbolical role, but they still represent an important pillar of the state, of tradition and legitimacy, of the power given by respect for identity (Great Britain) or consensus (Belgium). For the non-ruling houses, the great dilemma of the historical future, according to one of its Eastern Europe members, “is to determine how

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<sup>37</sup> Radu de Hohenzollern-Veringen, Principe consort, *Altfel: legământul noii generații regale*, ed. cit., p. 178.

an institution where state prerogatives are inherited by birth can situate and justify itself in a future that becomes more free and more democratic. It is also to be discovered how democracy and freedom – which produce prosperity – may safeguard the tradition, identity, continuity and national pride by using non-democratic perennial institutions, for complementariness reasons.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.