Unveiling the Collective Shadow: A Deep Dive into Romania's 2024 Political Transformation

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Abstract

This paper examines contemporary Romanian politics through the lens of historical factors influencing the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections. The central research question investigates how Romania's collective shadow, rooted in its authoritarian past, affects public perception and behaviour during this electoral period. The analysis posits that the unexpected success of far-right candidate Călin Georgescu reflects unresolved societal issues stemming from Romania's history, particularly its communist regime. The study begins by defining the concept of the collective shadow, drawing on Jungian theories of the shadow archetype and collective unconscious. It then provides a historical overview of Romania's fascist and communist eras, highlighting how authoritarian practices shaped a culture of fear and mistrust among citizens. This context is crucial for understanding the resurgence of nationalist sentiments and the political landscape leading up to the 2024 elections. Subsequent sections explore socio-political factors contributing to the current electoral dynamics, including media narratives and public sentiment. The paper argues that the collective shadow manifests in harmful societal trends and influences voter behaviour, revealing deep-seated fears and desires that have shaped electoral outcomes. Ultimately, this analysis aims to illuminate the complexities of Romanian identity as it grapples with its past while navigating a pivotal moment in its democratic evolution. By integrating historical insights with contemporary political analysis, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the forces at play in Romania's 2024 elections, emphasising the importance of acknowledging and addressing the collective shadow in shaping future political trajectories.

Keywords

Collective shadow, Călin Georgescu, Nationalist sentiments, Democratic evolution

Introduction

Romania's modern political landscape is haunted by shadows cast over decades of authoritarian rule. From the chilling violence of the interwar Iron Guard to the suffocating grip of communist dictatorship, the country's history is a story of survival under regimes that demanded obedience and punished dissent. This legacy is not merely a backdrop: it is a living force, shaping the fears, hopes, and choices of voters today.

One of the most striking examples is the rise of far-right candidate Călin Georgescu, whose popularity has led many to ask whether Romania is still haunted by its history of authoritarianism and political corruption. To understand the present, it is essential to confront Romania's troubled past, marked by cycles of violence, repression, and betrayal. In the twentieth century, Romania endured the brutality of the Iron Guard's fascist terror, with political assassinations and state-sanctioned anti-Semitic violence leaving entire communities in fear. This was followed by decades under a communist regime that institutionalised surveillance, censorship, and the systematic crushing of dissent. Generations grew up learning to distrust their neighbours, fearing that a careless word could lead to arrest or worse. The legacy of these regimes is not just historical; it is woven into the fabric of daily life, shaping how Romanians relate to authority, to each other, and to the idea of democracy itself

This paper looks at whether Georgescu's success is just a reaction to current problems or if it points to something deeper: a "collective shadow" that the country has not fully dealt with. The main question I ask in this paper is: Does the rise of far-right politics in Romania show that the country is still struggling with its past, and how does this hidden history affect today's elections and political culture? Using Jungian theory as a lens, this paper takes a different approach from traditional political science. Instead of just looking at institutions or voting patterns, it tries to understand the deeper feelings and memories that shape how people act and vote. This approach is especially useful for countries like Romania, where the memories of dictatorship and sudden changes in government still affect how people see themselves and their country. Romania stands out as a particularly compelling case study because of its unique trajectory through some of the most repressive authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century. Few European countries have experienced such a rapid succession from fascist dictatorship to communist totalitarianism, followed by a turbulent transition to democracy. This layered history has left deep scars on the national psyche, making Romania a prime case for examining how unresolved collective traumas can resurface and shape contemporary political life. At the same time, the paper recognizes that using psychological ideas to study society has its limits, and it will discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of this method.

In my analysis, I organize the argument in several steps that build on each other to answer the main question. First, I explain what the concept of the collective shadow means when applied to entire societies, and how this idea can help us understand group behaviour. Next, I look back at Romania's twentieth-century history, focusing on how the experiences of fascism and communism have left deep marks on the country's identity and political debates. I then examine how Romania's electoral system and political institutions can either ease or worsen the influence of these old anxieties on voters. After that, I explore some of the main social and political factors—such as economic struggles, unstable alliances, and the role of the media—that have divided today's political scene and made it so tense. Finally, I use the example of Călin Georgescu's rise to show how these historical and psychological forces play out in real life.

By bringing all these pieces together, I aim to give a clearer picture of how Romania's past still shapes its democracy today. It hopes to shed light not only on the current election but also on the bigger question of how countries deal with painful histories and how those histories continue to influence politics. In the end, my argument is that, if we want to understand Romania's political challenges and opportunities, we need to pay attention to the hidden forces of the collective shadow that still shape the country's path forward.

Theoretical Framework

To accurately define the concept of the collective shadow, we must first explore its roots in Jungian psychology, specifically the shadow archetype and the collective unconscious.

Firstly, the shadow archetype represents suppressed impulses, thoughts, or ideals. It can be broadly defined as the dangerous aspect of the unrecognised dark half of one's personality (Jung, 1966). For instance, nightmares can embody unresolved conflicts and suppressed emotions. The ultimate goal here, as explained by Jung himself, is not to suppress this darkness but to embrace it because that is the only path to self-fulfilment (Adelaide Psychology, 2023).

Secondly, the collective unconscious can most simply be considered the 'invisible reality' (Jung et al., 2001). Unlike the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious is an inherited part of the psyche containing universal archetypes that individuals have never consciously experienced (Jung, 1936). For example, mass hysteria or collective emotional responses in social networks are phenomena that support Jung's ideas (Bobrow, 2011).

Building on these foundations, the concept of the collective shadow can be understood as the point where the individual shadow archetype and the collective unconscious intersect. The shadow archetype represents the repressed or denied aspects within each individual, while the collective unconscious contains the shared psychological patterns and archetypes inherited by all members of a society. When many individuals suppress similar qualities, such as prejudice, aggression, or fear, these traits do not simply disappear; they accumulate and become embedded within the collective unconscious. This fusion gives rise to the collective shadow: the repository of traits, impulses, and attitudes that a society as a whole refuses to acknowledge or accept (Gabriel, 2020). The collective shadow often manifests in widespread social phenomena, such as racism, scapegoating, or systemic injustice, where unacceptable qualities are projected onto certain groups or issues (Gabriel, 2020). In this way, the collective shadow is not just a sum of individual denials but a powerful, often hidden force that shapes collective attitudes and behaviours, reflecting the darker undercurrents of a community's psyche.

Looking at a concrete example from Romanian history is helpful to illustrate how the collective shadow operates in practice. One of the clearest manifestations of the collective shadow in Romania can be seen in the widespread anti-Semitic attitudes and violence during the interwar period and World War II, particularly under the influence of the Iron Guard and the fascist government. During this time, anti-Semitism was not just a fringe belief but became deeply embedded in public discourse and state policy, leading to the persecution and murder of thousands of Jews and Roma. These actions were often justified by appeals to national purity and traditional values, reflecting repressed fears and insecurities about national identity and sovereignty. Even after the fall of fascism and the subsequent communist regime, these underlying prejudices did not simply disappear. Instead, they were often pushed underground, only to resurface in different forms during moments of social or political crisis. For

example, in the post-communist era, there have been periodic outbursts of nationalist rhetoric and scapegoating of minorities, especially during times of economic hardship or political instability. This pattern shows how the collective shadow, rooted in historical trauma and collective denial, continues to shape Romanian society, influencing attitudes, behaviours, and even electoral outcomes.

By understanding the collective shadow in both theoretical and practical terms, we can better grasp how unresolved historical issues continue to influence contemporary Romanian politics. The Jungian concept of collective shadow thus sets the stage for analysing how these deep-seated patterns play out in the 2024 presidential election context. Keeping this definition in mind, we can now examine Romania's case and its current elections by examining how political trends and societal repressions interact to reflect the nation's collective shadow.

While a range of political science theories could be applied to explain the dynamics of Romanian politics, this study turns to Jung's concept of the collective shadow for several reasons. First, Jungian theory provides a unique lens for understanding how societies process collective trauma and unresolved historical experiences, particularly in contexts characterised by authoritarianism and systemic repression. The collective shadow concept is beneficial for capturing the psychological undercurrents that traditional political theories may overlook, such as the persistence of fear, mistrust, and suppressed desires that continue to shape public attitudes long after regime change. In operationalising this approach, I deliberately selected texts and sources that directly engage with both Romania's authoritarian past and the Jungian framework, prioritising those that illuminate the intersection between historical trauma and contemporary political behaviour. By foregrounding Jung, the analysis aims to reveal the "hidden" forces influencing electoral outcomes—forces that might remain invisible if only classic institutional or sociological models were used. This theoretical choice thus adds value by highlighting how collective psychological patterns, rooted in a society's past, can resurface and influence democratic processes in ways that more conventional political science frameworks might not fully capture.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively examine the influence of Romania's collective shadow on the 2024 elections. Romania was selected as a case study due to its complex history of authoritarian regimes and socio-political transformations, providing a rich context for exploring the manifestations of the collective shadow. The research involves analysing media narratives, historical accounts, and articles focusing on the Romanian political sphere to reveal how societal fears and desires have influenced electoral outcomes. Data sources include news articles, academic papers, political speeches, and social media content. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to select relevant articles and media content. In this context, "relevant" refers to sources that directly address the influence of Romania's authoritarian past on contemporary political attitudes and electoral behaviour, with a particular focus on the 2024 elections and the concept of the collective shadow. I specifically included articles and historical accounts that describe Romania's fascist and communist eras, as well as sources discussing historical trauma, far-right movements, collective memory, and public responses to political candidates like Călin Georgescu. I prioritised sources that offered a range of viewpoints, including mainstream media, independent journalism, and scholarly analysis, to ensure a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the topic. Purposive sampling ensured

the inclusion of diverse perspectives, while snowball sampling facilitated the identification of additional sources through references and citations. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the collective shadow in the collected data.

The methodology for this study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed independently but during the same phase of research. Qualitative data consisted of media narratives, historical accounts, and scholarly articles focusing on the Romanian political sphere, which were thematically analysed to uncover how societal fears and desires have shaped electoral outcomes. Quantitative data, including election results and public opinion polls, were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and correlations in political behaviour. The findings from both strands were then integrated during the interpretation phase: qualitative insights provided context and possible explanations for patterns observed in the quantitative data, while statistical trends helped to validate and generalise themes identified in the qualitative analysis. This integration allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the interplay between historical context, public perception, and political outcomes in Romania, ensuring that the strengths of one method addressed the limitations of the other.

Historical Roots of Romania's Collective Shadow

The Garda de Fier (Iron Guard) movement, or, more simply, Legiunea (the Legion) or Mișcarea Legionară (Legionnaire movement), was established in 1927 by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Initially, its official name was Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail (The Legion of the Archangel Michael), but it later became known as the Legion. Codreanu established the Legion after splitting from the far-right party LANC (Liga Apărării Național-Creștine - National-Christian Defence League) because he claimed to have received a divine vision from the Archangel Michael, which inspired him to create a movement dedicated to Romania's spiritual and national revival. The Legion attracted support primarily from students and peasants, distinguishing itself from other fascist movements of the time that were more aligned with military veterans (Clark, 2012). Codreanu's vision for Romania sharply contrasted with the prevailing elite perspective, which aimed to transform the country into a modernised and Westernised "France of Eastern Europe". Rather than adopting French ideals of universal values and human rights, he championed an ultra-nationalism that was both exclusive and xenophobic. The Legion called for a return to traditional Eastern Orthodox values, emphasising the importance of Romania's peasant culture and folk customs as authentic representations of "Romanian genius."

In March of 1930, leaders of the Legion established a paramilitary branch dubbed The Iron Guard, the movement becoming widely known by this name, while its participants were referred to as Legionari (Legionnaires) by the Romanian population or "Greenshirts" by outsiders, due to their green uniforms (Iordachi, 2023). The movement primarily gained traction because it denounced the corrupt Romanian political elite during the Great Depression (Clendenin, 2023). Especially in the early years, members were often dressed in peasant costumes adorned with crucifixes and carried bags of Romanian soil, symbolising their commitment to the land and its heritage (Iordachi, 2023). The Iron Guard was notorious for its involvement in political violence, including a series of assassinations and attacks targeting perceived enemies of the Romanian people, mainly Jews and political opponents (Iordachi, 2022). After being banned by the Romanian government in 1931 and again in 1933, the Iron Guard retaliated violently. A significant act of vengeance occurred on December 29, 1933, when its members assassinated Prime Minister Ion Duca at the Sinaia railway station. This assassination was a direct

response to Duca's crackdown on their activities, which included arrests and violent repression of Legion members. In addition to high-profile assassinations, the Iron Guard utilised death squads to carry out targeted killings motivated by their fascist ideology and religious nationalist beliefs. This cycle of violence and revenge contributed to an atmosphere of terror in interwar and World War II Romania (Iordachi, 2022).

The abdication of King Carol II of Romania on September 6, 1940, marked a significant turning point in the country's political landscape, leading to widespread dissatisfaction among the Romanian populace. As a result, he was compelled to transfer power to General Ion Antonescu, who had risen to prominence amid the turmoil and was seen as a strong military leader capable of addressing the pressing challenges facing Romania at that time (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019). Following his appointment as Prime Minister, Antonescu established a military dictatorship and secured an alliance between Romania and Nazi Germany.

His regime initially sought to suppress the Iron Guard, which had been a significant nationalist and fascist movement in Romania, but eventually agreed to work with them to expand and establish his influence across the country. However, internal conflicts soon arose between Antonescu and the Iron Guard, culminating in a violent confrontation in January 1941 when Antonescu ordered a crackdown by the Romanian army on its members after they had attempted a coup against him. This effectively dismantled the Iron Guard (Iordachi, 2023). Antonescu's following regime did not fare much better. Initially, he found some success by fully aligning with Hitler's Nazi Germany, sending troops to support German military operations (such as Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the USSR), and gaining some territory for Romania. But as the tide turned against the Axis powers, the Romanian army suffered more and more defeats, and in 1944, Soviet troops started to enter Romanian territory. All of this, in addition to being responsible for the deportation and murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews and Roma (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019), led to his regime becoming more unstable by the day.

On August 23, 1944, King Mihai I of Romania (the son of former King Carol II, who had been a figurehead monarch until then) executed a coup against Antonescu. King Mihai, supported by opposition parties and military leaders, ordered the arrest of Antonescu and his government, which marked a significant shift in Romania's allegiance as the country transitioned from the Axis to the Allies. Following the coup, King Mihai announced Romania's withdrawal from the war against the Allies, sought to negotiate peace with the Soviet Union, and joined the Allied forces (Sfetcu, 2022). Historians around the world consider the actions of King Mihai to be a pivotal moment in the war and estimate that this coup shortened the war by as little as six months.

These events left a lasting imprint on Romania's national identity and its unresolved collective shadow, particularly in how the country grapples with the legacy of authoritarianism. The Iron Guard and the fascist government not only inflicted political violence and anti-Semitic persecution but also embedded deep societal wounds, fears, divisions, and unresolved guilt that were never fully confronted after their fall. The Iron Guard's orchestrated pogroms, such as the 1941 Bucharest pogrom, which saw public humiliation and the murder of over a hundred Jewish citizens, left a legacy of communal trauma and unresolved moral reckoning. The Legionnaires' systematic targeting of minorities, forced conversions, and the use of public spectacle in violence created a culture of fear and complicity that was rarely confronted in postwar narratives. Rather than being openly addressed, these aspects of Romania's past were suppressed or reframed, contributing to a collective shadow that lingers beneath the surface of national discourse. While such atrocities were tragically widespread across Europe during World War II, Romania's case is marked by the subsequent silence and lack of public accountability regarding these

events. The phenomenon of a collective shadow is not unique to Romania, but its case is particularly illustrative due to the enduring silence and reframing of the Iron Guard's legacy in public discourse. This unresolved past continues to manifest in contemporary political rhetoric, social divisions, and periodic scapegoating of minorities, reflecting the persistence of the collective shadow in Romanian society.

The Communist Regime: Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu

The emergence of communist forces challenged King Mihai's short reign, forcing him to appoint a pro-communist government. On the night of December 30, 1947, having barely returned home from a trip to London, Mihai found himself surrounded by communist-loyal troops. Petru Groza and Communist Party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej demanded that he sign a pre-typed abdication document. Despite his reluctance and a reported threat of violence (as Groza showed him a pistol during the encounter and claimed that, if the King did not sign, he would order the execution of approximately 1,000 pro-monarchy supporters, many of whom were students), Mihai complied (Sfetcu, 2022). Following his abdication, the Romanian Parliament proclaimed the country a People's Republic, abolished the monarchy, forced Mihai into exile, and marked the beginning of the Communist regime.

The first de facto leader of the Romanian People's Republic was Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who rapidly rose to power in the communist party after the 23 August 1944 coup. Initially, he was recognised as a leader closely aligned with Stalinist principles. As the membership of the Communist Party expanded significantly in the aftermath of World War II (from approximately one thousand members in 1944 to nearly a million in 1948), a claim was made that "unsound" elements had infiltrated the party, and verification was required. As a result, around 190.000 members were brutally purged, even those aligned with Stalinist ideals (such as Ana Pauker in 1952, who was accused of "cosmopolitanism" and "rightist deviations"), and new membership applications were restricted. Through these widespread political purges, Dej sought to align the party's vision of Romanian socialism with his own. By the end of 1955, he had become the party's undisputed leader. Other aspects of his Stalinist policies included the elimination of private land ownership, the adoption of socialist industry, the push for rapid industrialisation, party unity, and monolithism (Petrescu & Tismaneanu, 2022).

However, after Nikita Khrushchev took power in the Soviet Union and initiated his de-Stalinization campaign, Romanian communists, including Gheorghiu-Dej, had to adapt their policies, fearing a Soviet-backed coup that would remove them from power. They recognised the importance of preserving national identity and swiftly incorporated nationalist rhetoric and policies that resonated with the Romanian populace in their governance. Over time, they adapted their strategies to utilise national identity to consolidate power and maintain stability. This process, termed 'selective community-building', included the following aspects: the fusion of party and nation by integrating nationalist ideology with socialism, the portrayal of the regime as the protector of Romanian interests to reinforce citizens' loyalty, and the selective revival of local traditions and cultural identity to foster a sense of belonging and community (reference). By 1964, this process evolved into a broader nation-building initiative that reflected a blend of socialist ideology and national pride (Petrescu & Tismaneanu, 2022). Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej died in 1965, leaving behind a legacy of transition from Stalinism to a campaign of national identity promotion, which would ultimately lay the groundwork for his successor, the infamous Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Initially, Ceaușescu's policies appeared promising, as he further highlighted national identity and modernised Romania through investments in agriculture and industrialisation. These policies, combined with reduced censorship, increased his legitimacy among Romanians. He promoted Romania's position on the international stage as a standalone nation, thus breaking Soviet direct control over the country, which resonated with most citizens. The primary focus was on heavy industry (e.g. the production of machinery, vehicles and construction materials), leading to some economic growth, which marked his legitimacy in the eyes of the people (Abraham, 2016, pp. 47-49). He also condemned military repression during the Prague Spring of 1968, refusing to send Romanian troops to Czechoslovakia. These policies and actions, combined with a mild reduction of censorship, portrayed him as a leader who prioritised his people's interests. However, it was clear from the beginning that he aimed to assert control over the country. He reformed the PCR (Partidul Comunist Român - Romanian Communist Party), expanding its membership from approximately 1.5 million in 1965 to 3.8 million by the end of the regime. Moreover, he established additional political socialisation programmes for children (next to the existing Pioneer Organisation, as per the Soviet model), such as *Șoimii Patriei* (Falcons of the Fatherland), for those under seven (Abraham, 2016, p. 51).

Ceaușescu's government also implemented some horrific measures during this period. Because he believed that a strong nation needed to be a populous one, he banned abortion in 1966. Many women, unable to access legal abortion or contraception, resorted to clandestine and unsafe procedures, such as using unsterilized instruments, seeking help from untrained individuals, or attempting self-induced abortions, which frequently resulted in severe infections, infertility, or even death. As part of his abortion ban decree (Decree 770), he also set population goals for the future, which were not achieved.

It is widely argued that official visits to North Korea and China in 1971 marked a turning point in his regime. In the aftermath of these visits, Ceaușescu began regularly employing methods characteristic of a strict authoritarian regime in Romania, including ideological manipulation and heavy censorship. Communist propaganda depicted him as an ideal leader, a model statesman, and a global peacemaker, while his wife, Elena, was awarded numerous academic titles to reinforce her image as a renowned scientist (Abraham, 2016, p. 55). During the late 1970s, the regime implemented stringent austerity measures to address growing foreign debt to facilitate loan repayments. These measures consisted of the rationing of food, heating and electricity, leading to a significant decline in the standard of living (e.g. some foods were only given out through stamp cards, and heating was mostly turned off, even in the winters, forcing many to endure freezing cold temperatures); export-oriented policies, despite the economic hardship at home; and cuts in social spending (e.g. healthcare spending was cut by 17%, and education funding was cut by 53%).

These policies were rigorously enforced by the *Securitate* (Security), the Romanian equivalent of the KGB. Although established in 1949, it saw a meteoric rise during Ceaușescu's regime, as the leader brought it under his control, using it to control the population and promote his personality cult. Some analysts argue that, by the end of Ceaușescu's regime, the Securitate contained around 144,300 members (which, based on the population at the time, meant there was one Securitate member for every 150 Romanians), not to mention the countless whistleblowers it employed alongside those members. As a result, widespread paranoia took hold, with Romanians fearing constant surveillance and refraining from speaking openly (Abraham, 2016, pp. 65-66). This pervasive atmosphere of fear and self-censorship became a defining feature of Romanian society, driving painful experiences

and forbidden thoughts into the collective shadow, where they remained unprocessed but continued to exert influence on the national psyche. The inability to openly acknowledge or process these traumas created a reservoir of repressed emotions that would later resurface in unexpected ways throughout Romania's political development.

Unsurprisingly, all these strict policies and firm control of the regime made him increasingly unpopular with the population, and it would all reach a boiling point in December of 1989. Ceaușescu remained an outlier among other Communist leaders as he attempted to tighten his grip on power by repressing any attempts to protest and jamming foreign radio stations so the Romanian population would not hear about the reforms being made in other Eastern Bloc countries.

On 15 December 1989, a protest erupted in Timișoara in response to attempts to extradite a reformed pastor who had criticised the regime. More and more people started gathering over the coming hours and days, protesting against the government and its oppression. The Securitate failed to suppress the movement forcefully, and protests ignited nationwide. Ceaușescu was still trying to censor any news of protests breaking out and held a massive rally in Bucharest on the 21st of December to attempt to consolidate his power, but he was met with hostility and gunshots. Following this display, Ceaușescu ordered the military and Securitate to suppress dissent, and on December 21 and 22, violent confrontations occurred between security forces and demonstrators. The government's use of live ammunition resulted in numerous casualties among protesters, leading to a total of 1290 deaths during the revolution. Despite the violence, the demonstrators' resolve only intensified, leading to larger gatherings demanding an end to Ceaușescu's rule. As the army slowly started to defect to the side of the protestors, the Securitate lost control of key areas of the capital, and the Ceaușescu couple fled Bucharest, but they were captured shortly after. Their trial and subsequent execution on the 25th of December 1989 marked the end of Communist rule in Romania (Abraham, 2016, pp. 111-115).

Overall, the Communist regime left lasting marks on Romania’s collective shadow. Firstly, by making the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) the only legitimate government and establishing the Securitate, Gheorghiu Dej's regime set the stage for a Soviet-style political system. This repression grew worse under Ceaușescu as the Securitate penetrated every sphere of society and successfully silenced any possible protests. Secondly, both regimes manipulated Romanian national identity. This narrative frequently involved suppressing or altering historical facts perceived as contradicting the party's assertion that it was the legitimate head of state. Thirdly, Ceaușescu’s strict economic austerity measures and enforcement by the Securitate left a climate of fear and mistrust among Romanian citizens that is still traceable today. Ultimately, today’s Romanian identity is influenced by a collective shadow created by the widespread culture of fear formed during communism. Many citizens who lived during those times still display mistrust in institutions and a careful approach to social relationships.

The fall of communism in 1989 marked Romania's official transition to democracy, though the shadow of its authoritarian past continued to linger. As the country established its new democratic institutions, the electoral system became the formal mechanism through which Romanians could express their political will. However, this system would also become the arena where the collective shadow would repeatedly manifest itself.

The Collective Shadow in post-Communist Romania

Romania's post-communist electoral framework, established in the early 1990s, created the institutional structure through which the nation's unresolved collective shadow would find expression. The country adopted a semi-presidential republic, initially granting the president a four-year term. However, in 2004, this was extended to five years in an effort to stabilise the political system and better align presidential and parliamentary cycles. The president is directly elected, while the bicameral parliament is chosen through a system of proportional representation. This electoral architecture, while designed to foster democratic representation and stability, has also inadvertently provided channels through which historical anxieties and repressed societal tensions can resurface. For example, the proportional representation system has a 5% threshold for parties to enter parliament, which has contributed to a fragmented political landscape, making it easier for nationalist and populist voices to gain a foothold during periods of social unrest or disillusionment with mainstream parties. In this way, the very institutions meant to embody Romania's democratic aspirations have also become arenas where the country's collective shadow continues to shape political outcomes.

After the Communist regime, the FSN (Frontul Salvării Naționale - Front of National Salvation) established itself as the leading authority in the initial post-communist period. The first round of free elections was held in May 1990, in which Ion Iliescu, a founder of the FSN, won the presidency by a landslide, securing 85.07% of the votes, as shown in Table 1. The FSN also secured a parliamentary majority in both Chambers with over 80% of the votes. Notably, Iliescu, like many members of FSN, was a former Communist and part of the established elite of the PCR. However, Romanians saw this as an asset, as Iliescu positioned himself as a reformist who opposed Ceaușescu's policies and was perceived as a stable leader due to his political experience (Abraham, 2016, p. 145). He was also likely propelled to the presidency because his two opposing candidates had just returned to Romania after living abroad during the communist regime: Ion Rațiu had been living in England since 1940, while Radu Câmpeanu had served time in a communist jail during the 1950s but had fled to France in 1973. Both of them returned to Romania after the Communist regime was toppled, and Romanians conversely saw them as outsiders, as people who had not suffered with them, and had watched from abroad. This view reinforced Iliescu's image as a man of the people.

Nevertheless, the fact that a former Communist Party member became Romania's first democratically elected president after the fall of communism heavily reflects the collective shadow that formed in the 20th century. It can be argued that people relied on familiar figures from the past to overcome present challenges. Iliescu, as a former communist member, embodies the legacy of deep scars left by the regime on the Romanian people, which has influenced how people currently perceive political authority. This legacy was also reflected during the 1990-1991 Mineriads, when the new government mobilised miners from the Jiu Valley to violently suppress anti-government demonstrations.

Table 1

Results of the 1990 Romanian Presidential Election

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Ion Iliescu (FSN)	12.232.498	85.07%
Radu Câmpeanu (PNL)	1.529.188	10.64%
Ion Rațiu (PNȚCD)	617.007	4.29%

After the elections, the FSN split into two sovereign parties. The first new party that emerged was the FDSN (Frontul Democratic al Salvării Naționale - Democratic Front of National Salvation), created by Iliescu, which later merged with other parties to create PSDR (Partidul Social Democrat Român - Party of Social Democracy in Romania), which eventually became the current PSD (Partidul Social Democrat - Social Democratic Party). The second party that emerged from the FSN was the PD (Partidul Democrat - Democratic Party), which became PDL (Partidul Democrat Liberal - Democratic Liberal Party) in 2007 and later merged with the current PNL (Partidul Național Liberal - National Liberal Party) in 2015. This evolution of the parties is the direct result of the collective shadow. The fact that major contemporary parties, such as PSD and PNL, have roots in the FSN reflects a continuity of political elites associated with the communist regime, leading to ideological confusion among voters and scepticism among citizens regarding their intentions and motivations.

A new roundof elections was held in 1992, following the adoption of a new Constitution in late 1991. Iliescu, campaigning on behalf of the FDSN, led the first round with 47.53 % of votes, as seen in Table 2. He ultimately won re-election with 61.43 % of the votes in the second round of elections, as shown in Table 3. Additionally, the FDSN also got a majority in both parliamentary Chambers. This again reflects the lingering authority of former Communist leaders in the country. A clear example of this lingering authoritarian legacy in the initial post-Communist period was the long- awaited return of King Mihai I to Romania. Having lived in exile in Switzerland, the king made several attempts to return home after the revolution but was repeatedly blocked by Iliescu's administration, which feared that the people would rally behind the monarch and return him to power. Iliescu permitted him to visit in 1992 for a couple of days, but it was the only time the king was let into the country. Eventually, Mihai I regained Romanian citizenship in 1996 and was fully welcomed back to Romania after Emil Constantinescu electoral victory.

Table 2

Results of the 1992 Presidential Elections (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Ion Iliescu (FDSN)	5.628.855	47.34%
Emil Constantinescu (CDR)	3.714.955	31.25%
Gheorghe Funar (PUNR)	1.293.568	10.88%
Caius Traian Dragomir (Independent)	563.687	4.74%
Ioan Manzatu (PR)	362.111	3.05%
Mircea Druc (MER)	326.521	2.75%

Table 3

Results of the 1992 Presidential Elections (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Ion Iliescu (FDSN)	7.393.429	61.43%
Emil Constantinescu (CDR)	4.641.207	38.57%

The next round of elections was held in 1996, where Emil Constantinescu, a member of the CDR alliance (Convenția Democrată Română - Romanian Democratic Convention), surprisingly defeated Iliescu, despite the incumbent president leading in the first round with 32.2 % of votes, as seen in Table 4. Constantinescu won with 54.4 % of votes in the second round, as seen in Table 5. The parties that made up the CDR also obtained a majority in the Parliament. As an active anti-communist alliance, the CDR aimed to distance Romania from its authoritarian past. This election was emblematic of the country's collective shadow, as the CDR victory represented public discontent with the previous Iliescu administration and reflected the population's desire to move past the legacy of communism.

Table 4

Result of the 1996 Presidential Elections (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Ion Iliescu (PDSR)	4.081.093	32.25%
Emil Constantinescu (CDR)	3.569.941	28.21%
Petre Roman (USD)	2.598.545	20.54%
Gyorgy Frunda (UDMR)	761.411	6.02%
Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	597.508	4.72%

However, economic struggles persisted, and Constantinescu's administration struggled to implement necessary reforms, primarily due to internal conflicts among alliance members. Notably, their attempt to introduce privatisation in the country was bogged down by bureaucratic complexities, and their failure to remove obsolete industries hampered economic growth, leading to public discontent. These challenges indicated that, although there was an apparent demand for reform, deeper systemic issues remained unaddressed, or at least addressed incoherently, thus allowing many remnants of the old regime to persist in modern Romanian society.

Table 5

Results of the 1996 Presidential Elections (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Emil Constantinescu (CDR)	7.057.906	54.41%
Ion Iliescu (PDSR)	5.914.579	45.59%

The inefficiency of Constantinescu's administration and the CDR contributed to a radical ideological shift in the 2000 elections. Iliescu campaigned again as part of the PSDR, but his main rival this time was a right-wing extremist: Corneliu Vadim Tudor, campaigning on behalf of PRM (Partidul România Mare - Great Romania

Party). Tudor employed an aggressive, nationalistic, and xenophobic rhetoric, targeting ethnic minorities and exploiting public discontent to gather support. He even argued that Romania could only be governed "cu mitraliera" (with a machine gun) (Ziarul de Iași, 2000). He gathered massive support in the first round of elections, securing 28.34 % of the vote, while Iliescu led with 36.35 %, as shown in Table 5.

This enabled Iliescu to position himself as a 'saviour of democracy', a position from which he would eventually secure the second round with 66.83 % of the votes, as seen in Table 7, while the PSDR secured a parliamentary majority. This election marked a pivotal moment in Romania's collective shadow, as the fear of a return to authoritarian policies became evident among the population, and it illustrated past traumas by serving as the foundation of 'voting the lesser evil' in Romanian elections, a rhetoric used by the population to this day as a response to perceived extremist threats.

Table 6

Results of the 2007 Presidential Elections (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total Votes	%age
Ion Iliescu (PDSR)	4.076.273	36.35%
Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	3.178.293	28.34%
Theodor Dumitru Stoloian (PNL)	1.321.420	11.78%
Constantin Mugurel Isărescu (CDR)	1.069.463	9.54%
Gyorgy Frunda (UDMR)	696.989	6.22%

Table 7

Results of the 2007 Presidential Elections (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Ion Iliescu (PDSR)	6.696.623	66.83%
Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	3.324.247	33.17%

The 2004 election was a showdown between Traian Băsescu, campaigning on behalf of the DA alliance (Alianța Dreptate și Adevăr – Justice and Truth Alliance), formed by PNL and PD, and Adrian Năstase, campaigning on behalf of the Uniunea Națională PSD + PUR (National Union of PSD and PUR), Partidul Umanist Român - Humanist Romanian Party. During the final presidential debate, Băsescu highlighted a common sentiment, stating: "Măi, ce blestem o fi pe poporul ăsta de a ajuns până la urmă să aleagă între doi foști comuniști? Între Adrian Năstase și Traian Băsescu. În 15 ani, nu a apărut unul să vină din lumea asta, să nu fi fost târât de năravurile comunismului." (Well, what kind of curse do these people have to choose between two former communists? Between Adrian Năstase and Traian Băsescu. In 15 years, not a single candidate has emerged who has not been tainted by the vices of communism) (Leca, 2010). This statement underscores the enduring influence of communism in Romanian politics, which, even 15 years after the Revolution, had not been entirely eradicated. The failure to adequately address this legacy cast a long shadow over the country.

Adrian Năstase led the polls in the first round, with 40.94 % of the vote, as shown in Table 8. In the end, Băsescu won the election with 51.23 % of votes in the second round, as seen below in Table 9, while the PSD and PUR alliance won the most votes in Parliament. However, PUR later left the coalition and joined DA and UDMR (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania) to form a majority. This political manoeuvring is an example of the unresolved collective shadow, as it reflects Romanians' scepticism and mistrust in politicians due to acts such as this backstabbing between political parties and coalition members. This ties into the unresolved collective shadow. Generations grew up learning to distrust their neighbours, fearing that a careless word could lead to arrest or worse. The legacy of these regimes is not just historical; it is woven into the fabric of daily life, shaping how Romanians relate to authority, to each other, and to the idea of democracy itself.

Table 8

Results of the 2004 Presidential Election (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Adrian Năstase (PSD + PUR Alliance)	4.278.864	40.94%
Traian Băsescu (D.A. Alliance)	3.545.236	33.92%
Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	1.313.714	12.57%
Marko Bela (UDMR)	533.446	5.1%
Gheorghe Coriolan Ciuhandu (PNȚCD)	198.394	1.9%

Table 9

Results of the 2004 Presidential Election (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent candidate	Total votes	%age
Traian Băsescu (D.A. Alliance)	5.126.794	51.23%
Adrian Năstase (PSD + PUR Alliance)	4.881.520	48.77%

The 2009 Presidential election was the tightest one in Romanian history. Băsescu was up for re-election on behalf of PDL, and his primary opponent was Mircea Geoană on behalf of PSD. After the first round of elections, Băsescu narrowly led with 32.45 % of the votes, as seen in Figure 10. However, in a surprising shift, PNL staggeringly announced they would not support Băsescu's candidacy (as they had done in 2004 with the DA coalition), and they would instead support the candidacy of Geoană, whom they considered the "lesser evil". UDMR also supported Geoană in the second round. Here, we again see that the ideological lines of Romanian political parties are highly blurred, thus developing mistrust as a significant part of the unresolved collective shadow.

Table 10

Results of the 2009 Presidential Elections (First Round)

Party/Alliance/Independent candidate	Total votes	%age
Traian Băsescu (PDL)	3.153.640	32,45%
Mircea Geoană (PSD)	3.027.838	31.15%
Crin Antonescu (PNL)	1.945.831	20.02%
Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	540.380	5.56%
Kelemen Hunor (UDMR)	372.764	3.84%

Băsescu's turning point came during the final presidential debate, where he employed a highly confrontational approach against Geoană, catching him off guard and calling him out for spreading false information. Eventually, getting him to admit a recent midnight visit to controversial media mogul Sorin Ovidiu Vântu, linked to accusations of financial misconduct and corruption. This revelation during the debate led to a negative backlash against Geoană and was a key factor in the failure of his candidacy. Băsescu won the 2009 elections in the second round with 50.33 % of the votes, as shown below in Table 11.

Table 11

Results of the 2009 Presidential Election (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Traian Băsescu (PDL)	5.275.808	50.33%
Mircea Geoană (PSD)	5.205.760	49.67%

The 2014 Presidential elections were marked by controversy. The two leading candidates were Klaus Iohannis, who was on behalf of the ACL (Alianța Creștin Liberală - Christian Liberal Alliance), formed by PNL and PDL, and Victor Ponta, the then Prime Minister, who represented the PSD. Ponta led the polls in the first round, gaining 40.44% of votes, as seen in Table 12.

Table 12

Results of the 2014 Presidential Elections (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent candidate	Total votes	%age
Victor Ponta (PSD)	3.836.093	40.44%
Klaus-Werner Iohannis (ACL)	2.881.406	30.38%
Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu (Independent)	508.572	5.36%
Elena-Gabriela Udrea (PMP)	493.376	5.2%
Monica-Luisa Macovei (Independent)	421.648	4.45%

However, the electoral process was highly controversial, as many Romanians living abroad faced long queues and difficulties casting their votes. Some claimed their respective voting stations were closed early, leading to widespread protests and accusations against Ponta's government for failing to ensure free and fair access to the electoral process. Additionally, Ponta was under investigation on multiple corruption charges, including document forgery, tax evasion, and money laundering. These scandals fuelled growing support for Iohannis, who positioned himself as a champion of democracy and transparency. He ultimately won in the second round with 54.43 % of votes, as seen below in Table 13. His victory symbolised a desire for change, and the controversies surrounding the election reflected the broader societal discontent regarding the political elite's failure to address systemic issues.

Table 13

Results of the 2014 Presidential Elections (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Klaus-Werner Iohannis (ACL)	6.288.769	54.43%
Victor Ponta (PSD)	5.264.383	45.57%

In 2019, Iohannis ran for re-election, with his main opponent being then-Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă, representing the PSD. Due to her unpopularity and perceived incompetence in the public eye, Iohannis led the first round of elections with 37.82 % of the vote, as seen in Table 14.

Table 14

Results of the 2019 Presidential Elections (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent candidate	Total votes	%age
Klaus-Werner Iohannis (PNL)	3.485.292	37.82%
Viorica Dăncilă (PSD)	2.051.725	22.26%
Dan Barna (USR-PLUS)	1.384.450	15.02%
Mircea Diaconu (PRO-ALDE)	815.201	8.85%
Theodor Paleologu (PMP)	527.098	5.72%

The incumbent president eventually won by a landslide in the second round, gaining 66.09 % of votes, as shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Results of the 2019 Presidential Elections (Second round)

Party/Alliance/Independent candidate	Total votes	%age
Klaus-Werner Iohannis (PNL)	6.509.135	66.09%
Viorica Dăncilă (PSD)	3.339.922	33.91%

The 10 years of Iohannis's presidency, despite initial hopefulness in 2014, have been marked by widespread corruption accusations, a lack of transparency, and the further erosion of party ideological lines (Simina, 2024).

Under his administration, there has been a perceived expansion of the role of intelligence agencies in governance, with reports indicating that the number of areas classified under "national security" jurisdiction has increased significantly. This expansion has raised alarms regarding the potential for overreach and undermining democratic processes (Simina, 2024). Moreover, these developments have fostered a sense of betrayal among voters, as citizens who once placed their hopes in Iohannis's leadership now feel that their expectations have not been met. His presidency, particularly in its later years, and especially after his party, PNL, formed a governing coalition with its long-time rival, PSD, became the final straw in deepening political mistrust in Romanian society. This disillusionment has fueled the rise of multiple populist and extremist parties and figures, such as Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor (AUR), also known as the Alliance for the Union of Romanians, and S.O.S. România, both of which have gained increasing support since Iohannis's re-election.

The rise of Călin Georgescu as the Resurgence of the Collective Shadow

The 2024 elections faced complications due to the cancellation of the first round by the CCR (Curtea Constituțională a României - Romanian Constitutional Court). This, however, cannot deny the monumental rise of Călin Georgescu's candidacy, having led in the first round of the elections with 22.94% of the vote, as seen in Table 16. His campaign was primarily conducted through Romanian influencers who were paid by an external company. As a result, he gained a massive following that went largely unnoticed until the preliminary election results were made public. Georgescu portrayed himself as a saviour of Romania and neutral in the political sphere.

Despite this, he was the pupil of Mircea Malița, a former member of the communist elite, whom Georgescu publicly acknowledged as his mentor. This link highlights the continuity of certain communist ideologies within contemporary Romanian politics. Additionally, he was also a leading figure in the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), though the party later distanced itself from him after a criminal investigation was opened against him. The investigation stemmed from his promotion of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Ion Antonescu, whom he referred to as "eroi naționali" (national heroes), despite their historical roles in crimes against humanity (Recorder, 2024). His association with these controversial figures signifies a resurgence of authoritarian sentiments that resonate with specific population segments, thereby embodying the collective shadow of Romania by acknowledging the darker aspects of its history that remain unaddressed. Additionally, the appeal of strongman figures and nostalgia for authoritarian order can be seen as another expression of the collective shadow. These sentiments reveal a longing for the certainty and stability associated with past regimes, even as they mask unresolved trauma and an inability to fully embrace democratic uncertainty.

Table 16

Results of the Cancelled 2024 presidential election (First round)

Party/Alliance/Independent Candidate	Total votes	%age
Călin Georgescu (Independent)	2.120.401	22.94%
Elena Lasconi (USR)	1.772.500	19.18%
Marcel Ciolacu (PSD)	1.769.760	19.15%
George Simion (AUR)	1.281.325	13.86%
Nicolae Ciucă (PNL)	811.952	8.79%

So, what can we make of all of this? Based on the historical analysis presented above, on the formation and development of the collective shadow, the rise of extremist candidate Călin Georgescu is the result of years of mismanagement in the political sphere, growing mistrust in political leaders, numerous corruption scandals involving mainstream political parties, and countless economic hardships, especially during the Iohannis presidency. Extremist candidates have received a record-high tally of votes, both in the Presidential elections, where these candidates received a combined 36.8 % of votes in the first round (between Georgescu and George Simion, the leader of AUR) and in the Parliamentary elections, where extremist parties received a combined 34.73 % of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies and 35.06 % in the Senate, between AUR, S.O.S. Romania and POT (Partidul Oamenilor Tineri - Party of Young People). Voter behaviour shaped by fear, anxiety, or resentment illustrates how the collective shadow influences political choices. Rather than being solely the product of rational calculation or short-term interests, these responses are deeply entwined with the country's historical experience of collective trauma and repression.

The resurgence of nationalist rhetoric can be interpreted as a direct manifestation of Romania's collective shadow. The unresolved fears and anxieties rooted in the country's authoritarian past, such as concerns about national identity, sovereignty, and external threats, are projected onto minority groups and political outsiders, fueling exclusionary and reactionary politics. This increased support for extremist parties suggests a shift in public sentiment, possibly influenced by disenfranchisement, disillusionment with traditional political structures, corruption allegations, and perceptions of leadership. The historical context highlights how Romania's unresolved collective shadow, rooted in its authoritarian past, has resurfaced in contemporary politics. This resurgence is not merely a reaction to current events but a culmination of longstanding societal issues festering beneath the surface.

Conclusion

In conclusion, examining Călin Georgescu's rise in the cancelled 2024 presidential election highlights the profound impact of Romania's collective shadow on contemporary political dynamics. This collective shadow, rooted in a history marked by authoritarianism, political violence, and socio-economic friction, has resurfaced as a significant force shaping public sentiment and electoral outcomes. This historical overview reveals how the traumas of the past, exemplified by the Iron Guard's fascism and the oppressive communist regime, have left deep scars on national identity and societal cohesion. Georgescu's unexpected support, evidenced by extremist candidates garnering a combined 36.8% of votes in the presidential elections, reflects pervasive disenchantment with traditional political structures and a yearning for representation among disillusioned citizens.

This unprecedented backing signals not only a reaction to current political mismanagement and corruption but also the awakening of long-suppressed fears and desires characterising Romania's collective psyche. As Romania grapples with these dynamics, it is crucial to confront its collective shadow head-on.

Acknowledging and addressing the historical grievances that have fueled the rise of extremism is essential for fostering a more inclusive and stable political environment. Only by engaging with these underlying issues can Romania hope to rebuild trust in its democratic institutions and navigate a path toward healing and unity. The challenge lies in transforming the collective shadow from a source of division into an opportunity for growth, ensuring that the lessons of history inform a more hopeful future for all Romanians.

Conflict of Interests

This analysis is written from the perspective of a concerned Romanian citizen. While I have a personal interest in the country’s future direction, I have made every effort to maintain objectivity, relying on verified data and academic sources to inform my perspective. I have consciously excluded personal anecdotes and subjective interpretations to present a balanced and fact-based analysis, an approach I consider particularly important in a politically sensitive context.

Glossary

ACL (Alianța Creștin Liberală - Christian Liberal Alliance): A political alliance in Romania formed by PNL and PDL.

Adrian Năstase: A Romanian politician who campaigned on behalf of the Uniunea Națională PSD + PUR in the 2004 presidential election. He led the polls in the first round but was ultimately defeated by Traian Băsescu.

Ana Pauker: A Romanian communist leader who was purged from the party in 1952 for "cosmopolitanism" and "rightist deviations".

AUR (Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor - Alliance for the Union of Romanians): A populist political party in Romania that has recently gained electoral support.

Camera Deputaților (Chamber of Deputies): One of the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament, with 330 members elected through party lists based on local constituents.

Călin Georgescu: A far-right candidate in the cancelled 2024 Romanian presidential election.

CDR (Convenția Democrată Română - Romanian Democratic Convention): An active anti-communist alliance that won the 1996 elections, representing public discontent with the previous Iliescu administration.

Collective Shadow: A component of the collective unconscious that includes aspects deemed unacceptable, immoral, or taboo by societies. It manifests as harmful societal trends and reflects shared repressions.

Collective Unconscious: An inherited part of the psyche containing universal archetypes that individuals have never consciously experienced.

Corneliu Vadim Tudor: A right-wing extremist who campaigned on behalf of PRM in the 2000 presidential elections, employing nationalistic and xenophobic rhetoric.

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu: The founder of the Iron Guard movement in 1927.

DA (Alianța Dreptate și Adevăr – Justice and Truth Alliance): A political alliance formed by PNL and PD that Traian Băsescu campaigned on behalf of in 2004.

Decree 770: A decree issued in 1966 by Nicolae Ceaușescu banning abortion in Romania, leading to many women resorting to illegal and unsanitary procedures.

Elena Ceaușescu: The wife of Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was granted several academic titles to consolidate her image as a world-famous scientist.

Emil Constantinescu: A member of the CDR alliance who won the 1996 presidential election over Iliescu.

FSN (Frontul Salvării Naționale - Front of National Salvation): The leading authority in the initial post- communist period in Romania.

FDSN (Frontul Democratic al Salvării Naționale - Democratic Front of National Salvation): A party created by Iliescu after the FSN split, which later merged with other parties to become PSDR.

Garda de Fier (The Iron Guard): A Romanian fascist movement established in 1927, known for its political violence and assassinations. Also known as Legiunea or Mișcarea Legionară.

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej: The first de facto leader of the Romanian People's Republic, who rose to power in the communist party after the 23 August 1944 coup.

Ion Antonescu: Romanian general who established a military dictatorship and aligned Romania with Nazi Germany.

Ion Duca: Former Prime Minister of Romania, who was assassinated by members of the Iron Guard in 1933. Ion Iliescu: The first president of post-Communist Romania, a former Communist who won the 1990 election by a landslide.

King Carol II: The King of Romania was forced to abdicate in 1940, and General Ion Antonescu took power.

King Mihai I: The King of Romania who executed a coup against Antonescu in 1944, switching Romania's allegiance from the Axis to the Allies.

Klaus Iohannis: The President of Romania, first elected in 2014, whose presidency has been marked by corruption accusations and a lack of transparency.

LANC (Liga Apărării Național Creștine - National-Christian Defense League): A far-right party from which Corneliu Zelea Codreanu split to form the Iron Guard.

Legionari (Legionaries): Participants in the Iron Guard movement.

Legiunea (the Legion): A common name for the Iron Guard movement. Also known as Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail (the Legion of the Archangel Michael).

Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail (the Legion of the Archangel Michael): The official name of the Iron Guard movement when it was established in 1927.

Mircea Geoană: The primary opponent of Traian Băsescu in the 2009 presidential election, running on behalf of PSD.

Nicolae Ceaușescu: The communist dictator of Romania whose regime was marked by ideological manipulation, heavy censorship, and strict austerity measures.

PCR (Partidul Comunist Român - Romanian Communist Party): The Romanian Communist Party, which became the only legitimate government under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's regime.

PD (Partidul Democrat - Democratic Party): A party that emerged from the FSN split, which became PDL in 2007 and merged into PNL in 2015.

PDL (Partidul Democrat Liberal - Democratic Liberal Party): The Democratic Liberal Party, which was formed from the PD and later merged into PNL.

Pioneer Organisation: A political socialisation programme for children in communist Romania, based on the Soviet model.

POT (Partidul Oamenilor Tineri - Party of Young People): An extremist party in Romania that entered Parliament following the 2024 elections.

Prague Spring: A period of political **liberalisation** in Czechoslovakia in 1968, during which Nicolae Ceaușescu

famously condemned military repression.

PRM (Partidul România Mare - Great Romania Party): The party that Corneliu Vadim Tudor campaigned on behalf of in the 2000 presidential elections.

PSD (Partidul Social Democrat - Social Democratic Party): A major political party in Romania with roots in the FSN, reflecting a continuity of political elites associated with the communist regime.

PSDR (Partidul Social Democrat Român - Party of Social Democracy in Romania): A party created after the FSN split, which eventually became the current PSD.

PUR (Partidul Umanist Român - Humanist Romanian Party): A party that was part of the Uniunea Națională PSD + PUR in 2004 and later joined DA and UDMR to form a majority.

Securitate (the Security): The Romanian equivalent of the KGB, which saw a meteoric rise during Ceaușescu's regime and was used to control the population and promote his personality cult.

Selective Community-Building: A governance process used by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej combining nationalist rhetoric with communist policies.

Senat (Senate): One of the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament, with 136 members. Shadow Archetype: Represents suppressed impulses, thoughts or ideals, and is a dangerous aspect of the unrecognised dark half of one's personality.

Sorin Ovidiu Vântu: A controversial media mogul known for accusations of financial misconduct and corruption, **whom** Mircea Geoană visited before the final presidential debate in 2009.

Șoimii Patriei (Falcons of the Motherland): A political socialisation programme for children under seven in communist Romania.

Traian Băsescu: A Romanian politician who won the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections.

UDMR (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania): A political party representing the Hungarian minority in Romania.

Uniunea Națională PSD + PUR (National Union of PSD + PUR): A political alliance between PSD and PUR in the 2004 elections.

Victor Ponta: The former Prime Minister of Romania and candidate for the 2014 presidential election, whom Klaus Iohannis defeated.

Viorica Dăncilă: The former Prime Minister of Romania and candidate for the 2019 presidential election, whom Klaus Iohannis defeated.

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