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**THE NARRATIVES OF HATE USED BY ROMANIAN PARTIES  
LABELLED AS FAR-RIGHT. A COMPARATIVE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract:** This article presents a qualitative comparative analysis of the primary hate narratives employed by three political parties: the Iron Guard Party propaganda, the Greater Romania Party (PRM), and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). The study focuses on the following variables: ‘foreigners,’ ‘freemasons,’ ‘Jews,’ ‘protection of Faith and Nation,’ and ‘rotten political elites.’

The analysis is based on official propaganda materials of each party, including patriotic songs, leaflets, newspapers, programmatic documents, and speeches of the leader for the Iron Guard. In the case of the PRM, the analysis includes the party’s official program, ideology, poems, and pamphlets by the leader (Corneliu Vadim Tudor), speeches, interviews, press articles, and extracts from party journals Romania Mare (Greater Romania) and Tricolorul. The AUR’s official website, political program and ideology, Facebook posts, pages, press interviews, articles, and speeches of its leaders constitute the object of analysis. The narratives extracted were analyzed using the ATLAS.ti software, revealing striking resemblances among the hate narratives employed by the parties.

**Key words:** propaganda, narratives of hate, far-right, antisemitism, foreigners, values.

## 1. Introduction and literature review

Europe is confronted with a new wave of radicalization as extreme political movements seem to have gained momentum in the aftermath of Covid-19 crisis. If a considerable amount of attention and literature was devoted to populism, when it comes to the narratives of hate contained in the propaganda of the far-right-labelled parties in Romania, the resources are scarce. Thus, this study aims at conducting a comparative qualitative analysis of the narratives of hate used by three political parties, labeled as the far right in different historic periods.

The purpose of this comparative analysis is to identify similarities in the hate narratives employed by three political parties under study: the Iron Guard, also known as the All for Country party and later as the Movement of the Archangel Michael in the 1930s; the Greater Romania Party, active in the late 1990s and after; and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians, the newest parliamentary party in Romania.

With far-right movements gaining momentum across Europe, as demonstrated by surprising results in recent French legislative elections, and with the emergence of a new far-right party in Romania that revives hate narratives from previous far-right parties, special attention to the hate narratives employed by the Alliance for the Union of Romanians is necessary.

This comparative analysis aims to shed light on whether the Alliance for the Union of Romanians can be clearly defined as far-right, as ideologically it has not been clearly established, building on the findings of Gheorghiu and Praisler (2022). Additionally, this study builds on the argument made by Golder (2016) that far-right parties emerge in the context of modernization, culture, and economic grievances that are translated into mythologized narratives that pit one ethnic group's culture and history against targeted groups, as described by Grigorian and Kaufman (2007).

Historian Traian Sandu revealed in an interview that "AUR is a far-right party through the three levels: traditional, reactionary and neo-fascist... and pro-Europe from a financial, transactional point of view" (Clej 2020), however, this study does not conduct a comprehensive analysis of the parties' ideologies; instead, it investigates the common keywords used in their hate narratives.

Before proceeding to the analysis, a delimitation of the terms employed along the study seems appropriate. Taylor considers propaganda "a deliberate attempt to persuade people to think in a desired way... the conscious, methodical and planned decisions to employ techniques of persuasion designed to achieve specific goals that are

intended to benefit those organizing this process” (Taylor 2009, 6). Whilst for Bernays, “modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group” (Bernays 1928, 19).

In the case of the parties studied, hate narratives are employed as part of propaganda techniques known as “simplification (use of the most simple and shocking slogans), the unique enemy, deformation and categorization, the orchestration (the permanence of the theme under different forms) transfer – operates with preexistent layer of phobias, fears, and likes, and unanimity and contagion (us, unity, sympathy, anger)” (Domenach 2004, 35).

The present study has identified several propaganda techniques targeting certain groups such as the Foreigners or the Jews. The techniques are known in the taxonomy as *the pinpointing of the enemy* (using the simplification of a complex situation to a common enemy) and the *obtainment of disapproval* (using hatred or resentment of a group for political gain) through transfer, unanimity, and contagion (Augé 2015, 113-119). These techniques are used in a social context characterized by a deep fear of change.

The broader term *narrative* as defined by Silverman, means a text or image “containing words and/or images that have been recorded without the intervention of the researcher” and is “the organization of stories that make stories meaningful and coherent in a form appropriate to a particular situation” (Silverman and Jakubovska-Branicka 2016, 57). Regarding the hate narratives, this study specifically considers the stories and expressions that aim to incite hatred.

Tontodimamma and others argue that “there is no universally accepted definition of hate speech, mainly because of the vague and subjective determinations as to whether speech is “offensive” or conveys “hate” (Tontodimamma et al 2020). Nevertheless, several attempts to define it have been made depicting hate speech as a conscious and intentional public statement meant to denigrate a group of people (Paz et al. 2020), (Delgado and Stefanici 2006).

However, this academic endeavor would employ the narrative meaning as by Laakosonen and others (2020) referring to the intentional targeting of a specific group as “an various occasions in history, offensive speech has been used to target individuals or groups with the purpose of stigmatization and to incite hatred and violence” (Laakosonen et al. 2020). The Council of Europe reported that “hate speech covers many forms of expressions which advocate, incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons” (Council of Europe). The same institution warned that “hate speech poses grave dangers for the cohesion of a democratic society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. If left unaddressed, it can lead to acts of violence and conflict on a wider scale” (CoE).

Golder (2016) and Piazza (2020) have found that far-right parties tap into popular grievances, and the use of hate narratives by political leaders can lead to political polarization, as well as facilitate internal terrorism. Caiani et al. (2021) also revealed that during the Covid-19 pandemic, far-right leaders brought up exclusionary issues and hate speech to the public agenda, as was the case with AUR in Romania.

## 2. Methodology And Research Design

Scholars such as Riesman (1993) have previously employed qualitative narrative studies in their research. Given this precedent, we believe that a qualitative approach is appropriate for our investigation of hate narratives in the propaganda of the Iron Guard, the Greater Romania Party, and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians. Qualitative analysis allows for a detailed examination of the content and themes within the narratives used by these parties, enabling a nuanced understanding of the ways in which hate speech is employed as a tool for political polarization and mobilization.

This study departs from the hypothesis that the Iron Guard, the Greater Romania Party, and the Alliance for the Union of Romania share common metanarratives (main stories) containing: *the Foreigners, the Jews who colonize Romania*, the need to protect our *faith and nation* from those who tend to pervert it or exploit it, *the Freemasons who control the world*, and *the rotten political elites who need to be removed from power*. Those metanarratives contain hate narratives, used to mobilize support and adhesion around the idea of a “common enemy” using minorities and “othering” qualities meant to polarize and exploit politically.

Our research aims to explore the extent to which the hate narratives employed by the Iron Guard, the Greater Romania Party, and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians share common metanarratives. Specifically, we will analyze the use of keywords related to the study variables of foreigners, Jews, Freemasons, rotten political elites, and the defense of nation and faith. While differences between the parties will also be considered, they are a secondary priority in our investigation.

To verify our hypothesis, we have extracted and sampled 75 documents (25 for each party) containing the keywords of interest. These documents are extracts from articles published in different journals, political programs, discourses of leaders, and propaganda tools such as Facebook posts, leaflets, and programmatic books, songs, or publications.

For Iron Guard we have used the party propaganda narratives contained in propaganda newspapers of the party such as: *Bratul de Fier*, *Buletine Legionare*, *Porunca Vremii*, *Cuvântul Strămoșesc*, leaflets and songs, *The Booklet of the Head of Nest* (Cărticica Șefului de Cuib), Party programs and letters contained in the programmatic book, *(For Legionaries – Pentru Legionari)* and Zelea Codreanu's (the leader of the movement) discourses.

In the case of Greater Romania Party, we used the party website, press interviews, poems, pamphlets, Facebook posts and legendary speeches of its leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor along with extracts from the party journals *Romania Mare* (the issues from 1999 and 2000) and *Tricolorul* (2007 and 2008). The reason for choosing these periods is related to the fact that during 1999 and 2000s the party reached a high popularity caused by the harsh socioeconomic measures taken by the Central Right Coalition (CDR) governing the country, while the 2007-2008 period represented the period when Corneliu Vadim Tudor's party was a member of the European Parliament and joined the group of so-called far-right and patriots, Tradition and Identity (containing other far-right parties such as the National Front from France).

In the case of the Alliance for the Union of Romania, the political program, press interviews, press articles, leader's speeches and Facebook posts, personal websites of party leaders were extracted and analyzed.

The second step consisted in clustering them into five categories containing keywords pertaining to the hate narratives: *the foreigners, the Jews, the old and rotten political elite, The Free-Masons, and the Occult* and finally *the need to protect the Nation and Orthodox faith*. The results were analyzed and interpreted using the qualitative research software, ATLAS.ti.

After importing the 75 documents, 25 for each party, containing the keywords of interest into the software ATLAS.ti, the documents were categorized into three main groups according to their respective parties. The primary codes groups contained five main themes which included the Freemasons, the Rotten and Corrupted Politicians, the Jews, the Foreigners, and the Protection of Faith and Nation. Within these five codes, 29 sub-codes were identified based on the hate-containing adjectives and narratives found in the documents.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are in line with those of Gheorgiu and Praisler (2022), revealing striking similarities between the hate narratives employed by the Romanian parties labelled as far-right, The Iron Guard, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). During our research, in addition to the use of hate narratives, we identified two other similarities between these parties: the context in which they emerged and the confiscation of faith in their public discourse.

### 3.1. The socio-political and economic context in which they emerged

The Iron Guard, PRM, and AUR emerged during periods of political and social turmoil and transformation that were linked to either a political, economic, or health crisis. These parties were able to gain and increase their popularity by tapping into the economic, social, cultural, and modernization-related grievances of certain segments of the population.

This confirms the findings of Golder (2016) who clearly stated that “in times of economic scarcity, social groups with conflicting material interests compete over limited resources. Under these conditions, members of the ingroup are apt to blame the outgroup for economic problems, engendering prejudice and discrimination” (Golder 2003, 2016).

The birth context of the analyzed parties aligns with the claims of De Walt et al. (2022) who argue that sudden crises can disrupt political systems and act as a catalyst for party change, leading to the emergence of new parties on the political stage, as well as the decline of existing ones.

For instance, the Iron Guard Movement arised and grew in a context where a large population was feeling left behind. Zelea Codreanu formed an “exalted youth movement” (Sandu 2019) in the context of the Bolshevik Revolution and of the Agrarian Reform in Romania, and in aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Also, it got stronger as a movement in a moment when the economic cleavages between the bourgeoisie and the peasants got deeper (Veiga 1995, 37).

The leader of the Guard succeeded in charming through his charisma ‘the agrarian masses that suffered from the inequalities of the structures of the agrarian properties’ and faced a mechanization of production from which the rich will still profit (Sandu 2019, 36).

The Greater Romania Party was founded after the communist fall in 1991. Furthermore, the Greater Romania party emerged in a context of deep societal change caused by the transition from a totalitarian state to a democratic state, where tradition, state ownership of economic means and a whole political system had to change. The party’s political apex was achieved when its leader, Corneliu-Vadim Tudor, participated in the second round of the presidential elections in 2000. This occurred in the midst of a profound social crisis resulting from the privatization of industry as part of the transition to a market-oriented economy. The existence of PRM is the confirmation of Golder’s findings that “the typical story is a social psychological one in which individuals who are unable to cope with rapid and fundamental societal change—the modernization losers—turn to the far right.” (Golder, 2016). This offers further support to the claims made by Soare (2006) regarding the impact of transition costs, which fueled the “perverse” potential for criticism among the losers of the transition and mobilized the electoral potential of those who were

nostalgic for the past. This potential was effectively harnessed by the PRM as an anti-establishment party (Soare 2006).

The Alliance AUR was created during the Covid-19 sanitary crisis, as a reaction to the medical restrictions with the purpose to protect the “freedoms of Romanian citizens”. Its “public discourse was dominated by nationalism with an emphasis on anti-Hungarian sentiments, religious discourse directed against the protection measures and attempts to restrict fundamental rights such as the right to information” (Holdis and Rus 2021, 21).

While it is easy to categorize the Iron Guard as a far-right and fascist party, the categorization of the Greater Romania Party (PRM) is more complex. Although the PRM is often labelled as a far-right party due to its ultranationalist, racist, and antidemocratic discourse (Miroiu 2012, 256), it actually has left-wing roots in Ceausescu’s ideology and emphasizes national values and identities (Starajova 2013). The party’s stance on Jews has also been inconsistent, with oscillations between antisemitism and pro-semitism, exemplified by PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor’s decision to erect a statue of former Prime Minister Isaak Rabin in Brasov in 2012. The political organization is identifying itself as “a center left, national oriented and supporting pluralism...pursuing ideals of national unity (with Moldova), territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.” (PRM official website)

However, AUR is a party that calls itself ‘patriotic, Christian, sovereign, and anti-system’. It is labeled as far-right by some journalists and scholars, but it adopts the typical behavior of an anti-system party and a populist discourse.

### 3.2 The “confiscation of religion” and the protection of Faith.

The confiscation of religion was analyzed in depth by scholars such as Cesereanu (2003), who argued that the “confiscation of Christianity was thought to legitimize the new religion, through a subversive mutant maneuver, the Christianity was strictly subsumed to the legion even if it became this way something else than the canonic Christianity.” (Cesereanu 2003, 61).

The Iron movement’s fascism “claims a religious and transcendental dimension” (Sandu 2019, 18). In this regard, “Romanian fascism” has appeared in a traditional agrarian society, and unlike the secular societies of Italy and Germany, the orthodox spirituality is part of the ideological synthesis. (Sandu 2019, 19)

AUR at his turn has proven that it has adopted an ideology and discourse designed to mobilize Christians and their grievances. After the electoral success in 2020, George Simion has recognized in an interview for Romania Libera that they “targeted messages, but we haven’t had

advertising as some say, Cambridge Analytica style, to target directly the church goers” (Andrei, 2020).

As described in the official program of AUR, the party is based on four pillars “family, faith, nation and freedom” where “faith is, theologically speaking, one of the three cardinal Christian virtues, when we say faith, we mean church, tradition, and nation... atheism is a wandering arising from the arrogance of those who imagine that an anthropocentric view of the universe is superior to a theocentric one.” (AUR political program)

AUR portrays itself as the protector of “persecuted Christians”. Moreover, the messianic mission of the party is backed up by the phrase “we do politics out of faith in God and out of devotion to our forerunners” (AUR political program).

In exchange, PRM’s confiscation of religion is more nuanced. Often its leader Vadim Tudor demanded that the “Romanian Christianity is protected from the Muslim migrants” and the “Orthodox Church from the gypsies and Hungarians.” (Vadim Tudor’s Facebook page, 2015).

PRM is also promoting hate narratives regarding the “sectarians” referring to the of neo-protestants, especially based on their tight links to the United States.

These two elements enhance the claims of Golder (2016) and Ingold (1977) about the use of culture and modernization grievances, in a context where “individuals have a natural tendency to associate with similar individuals, and that an inherent desire for self-esteem causes people to perceive their ingroup as superior to outgroups” (Golder 2016). Regarding modernisation, those who fear that the modernisation process is a threat to values and tradition or to identity tend to rally to parties who promise to protect the ‘perceived loss’ and to eliminate any threat (Golder 2016).

### ***3.3. The use of meta-narratives depicting the enemies of the nation and faith***

The first category of ‘enemies’ used in the three-party propaganda materials were found to be “the foreigners”. The term ‘foreigners’ is associated in the extracts studied with attributes such as ‘the Americans’ (in propaganda of PRM) ‘allogenic populations’ (AUR) ‘colonizer’, ‘those sucking our resources’, those ‘who enslave us’, ‘the masters’, those ‘stealing our resources’ or the ‘invaders’.

The second category of enemies are *the Jews* depicted as ‘invaders’, ‘colonizers’, ‘bringing the Communism to Romania’, ‘stealing our resources’, ‘the people of Judah’, ‘morally perverse’, ‘stealing our blood’, ‘controlling the world’ ‘Bolsheviks’ or ‘Marxists’.

The third category is represented by the rotten/ corrupted political elite who is selling the country, is corrupted, morally rotten, the politicians being traitors and servants to the foreigners or Jews, thus needing to be removed from power, and punished.



In the fourth category are included the Freemasons, the Satanic Order or the Occult are those controlling the world and constitute a threat to Christianity, to the nation, and to tradition. They all conspire to impose a New World Order, and they are the 'masters' of globalization.

Related to this fourth category are terms such as Neo-Marxists or Bolsheviks, the EU, Satanists, from whom the faith and nation need to be protected.

These groups demonized and used in propaganda materials as "the enemy" of the nation, faith and morals are backing up the findings of Reece and others according to whom "a major psychological driver of antagonistic intergroup attitudes is the perception that the outgroup threatens the ingroup's status or culture" (Reece et al. 2013)

### 3.3.1. *The Jews and Foreigners*

The metanarratives frequently superpose the Jews and the foreigners. These populations are scapegoated in propaganda narratives, often depicted as "enemies" who are "stealing our resources," or as "masters" who treat us "like slaves," "suck our blood," "pervert our morals," "colonize us," or "control us and the world." The Iron Guard songs call to rather "a brave death than continuing to be a servant to the foreigners" (Cantece Legionare 1999, 46) and its propaganda journals contain stories and narratives depicting how "Bucovina of the Great Stephen became a foreign colony where the locals are servants on their own land." (Glasul Pamantului, June 4, 1935).

The narrative of foreigners or Jews as servants to masters is used equally by all three parties. Vadim Tudor, the leader of the PRM, claimed that Romania is an 'American colony' and Romanians are slaves to the masters who 'are taking our resources' (Tudor, 2012). The documents analyzed indicate that AUR uses the term 'foreigners' as 'grabbers', and Jews are associated with Holocaust denial or minimization. The Iron Guard (All for Country) targets both Jews and foreigners, while the PRM fixates on Americans and Jews.

AUR uses foreigners as scapegoats, depicting them as 'the ones who take our country's resources', 'our masters', and us as 'slaves on our land'. They suggest that 'Romania is a colony' of the EU or of 'foreigners' in general (George Simion - Facebook page).

The Iron Guard's propaganda materials portrays the Jews with hateful adjectives, inciting hatred related to their greed or moral perversion. Jews are described as 'sucking the marrow of Romanians', 'drinking the blood of Romanians - the parasites', 'usurpators', 'perverts', 'invaders', 'tools of the Devil', 'the people of Judah', and 'perverters'. They are accused of promoting 'Satanic teachings' that not only plunder our riches, but also corrupt our nation through alcohol, pornographic literature, and other works or writings (Bratul de Fier, 1936 June -July no.

13-14), or depicted as those “yearning just to dominate the whole world” and making Christians their ‘slaves.’ (Totul pentru Tara, Buletin Legionar, February 2, 1937).

In the propagandistic party songs of the Iron Guard, the Jews are depicted as the enemy, the invader, and the pagans: “Look how Juda’s claws pierce deep into my body/ Look how my blood drips/Look how the Jews are drinking it. /And my sons dying of hunger became servant to the Jew. / Because those of a mother and of a nation have sold our nation for money” (Cantece Legionare, 1999, 29).

Francesco Veiga shows that “the Jew was in the conception of the Iron Guard, the modern invader, as it were before the Turks or the Phanariot Oligarchy” (Veiga 1995, 84).

The use of antisemitic hate narratives in the case of the Greater Romania party is more complex. The hate narratives regard the disproportionate “economic power”, “political control” “world domination” and depict the Jews as the “ones that brought the communism in Romania” and focuses more on the “Holocaust denial”.

Those findings are in line with Cimpoes’s claims that the “favorite culprits of the PRM’s rampant antisemitism are the ‘Jewish Mafia’, ‘Zionism’, the US (controlled by Israel), Judeo-Freemason groups, but also Western actors more generally who it alleges are trying to impose their control through a ‘New World Order’” (Cimpoes 2012, 5).

The demonization of the Jews went hand in hand with the demonization of gypsies and Jews was often a meta-narrative in the pamphlets of Vadim Tudor, blaming too many ethnic mixes:

“Prea multe migrații, amestec de rase  
Byzanț, și Fanar, și Țigani, și Evrei  
Ne fierbe o drojdie-n sânge și-n oase  
Iar asta o știu și stăpînii yankei.”

Too many migrations, mixes of races  
Byzantz, and Fanar and Gypsies and Jews  
A yeast boils in our blood and bones  
And this is known to our masters the Yankees.”

Corneliu Vadim Tudor, *What’s to be done?* (Poetii Nostri 2013)

The poem continues with the claim that the Americans want “our riches, of gold, uranium, gas and oil” (Poetii Nostri 2013).

In total, there is a proven similarity between the narratives of the Iron Guard and the PRM and the programmatic reference of AUR to the rejection of ‘colonisation with ‘allogenic populations’ and the imperious need “to protect the identity of the EU and its traditional values and Judeo-Christian heritage” (AUR party program).

Traian Sandu argues that while the anti-Semitic discourse of AUR is secondary and isolated to some leaders such as Sorin Lavric or anti-Soros narratives, the party’s anti-Hungarian hate narratives have replaced anti-Semitism as its main form of hate speech. (Clej 2022).

AUR’s hate narratives have been revived by party leaders such as Sorin Lavric, who has referred to the Roma minority as a “social plague”

and labeled them as “prone to certain robberies”. Lavric has also employed anti-Semitic narratives, claiming that the Jews brought communism to Romania, echoing Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Ioan Mota, a prominent leader of the Iron Guard Movement, who asserted that “the Jews brought the Bolshevization of Russia and its communist settlement”. (Buletin Legionar, Totul pentru Tara, 25 July 1937; Nahoi 2020).

Jewish hate narratives have also reemerged in AUR’s public discourse, as seen in Claudiu Tarziu’s comment referring to the Holocaust as a “minor theme” (Andrei, 2022).

### ***3.3.2 The Freemasons, the Satanic Order, or the Occult***

The mysticism and messianic mission of the Iron Guard are underlined in the propaganda of the movement as “fighting Satan”, the Freemasons, and the Jews. As “the masonic democracy through perfidy transforms itself as an apostle on Earth, but meanwhile proclaims the war between man and God” (Codreanu 1990, 423).

During their time, PRM has denounced the Freemasons, often associating them with the Jewish community as “controlling the world”. However, the attitude of Vadim Tudor towards the Masons was milder. On the other hand, some representatives of AUR depict globalists and the occult as the enemy that controls the world, trying to impose a “medical dictatorship” during the Covid-19 pandemic, which they believe must be resisted.

### ***3.3.3 Protecting Faith and Nation from the communism, Neo-Marxism, the West.***

At first glance, we have observed that all our three parties have a Messianic purpose, but more obvious, the Iron Guard and AUR, they claim to be the ‘protectors of faith’ to some degree.

While PRM is more moderate when it comes to the protection of faith, whilst Iron Guard and AUR mention in their program the fight against “the Jews, the sects, and the communism” threatening the “purity of the Orthodox faith”, as for AUR, the threat is represented by the Neo-Marxists and the Globalists, and the “allogenic populations”.

The decadence is brought by the Jews who allegedly unleashed the sins. “In the factories of the Jews, they abuse the women and make orgies until morning... moral diseases...”. (Bratul de Fier, Mai 1937) Still on the same line of a high moral standard among Romanians, Nechifor Crainic enounces the “Ethnocratic state as a moral state. As there are no other criteria for good unless the Christian good, the ethnocratic state is a Christian state.” (Ornea 1996, 27). Zelea Codreanu calls for the reverence towards the ancient church, and the chase of Juda who wants to destroy

our holy faith and the casing of ‘bankers and Jews’ who suck from us for such a long time’ (Totul pentru Tara, Buletin Legionar, 28 September 1937).

The Legion fights against Communism, which is meant to destroy all the Christian Churches – and “the enthronement of the Jews Religion as a world religion, or the passage to humans without God, the destruction of private property, the children will be taken to sanatoriums without knowing their parents anymore, the destruction of marriage and the introduction of the universal partnership, the Jewish dictatorship” (Bratul de Fier, June and July 1936)

**3.3.4 The corrupt political elites** are portrayed as “the traitors”, “country traitors”, “servants” and “thieves” in a common metanarrative used by the three parties.

For illustration in the 1930s the old political parties were depicted as “compromised by the demagogy, frauds, squanders and incapacity to govern” (Bratul de Fier, Aprilie 1936). Codreanu depicted the “venal and rotten politicians, a rot infecting our lives ... they have a spirit of servitude, and they work to dismantle our mother, they are servants to the Jews or “the politicianism is killing us”. (Codreanu 1990, 453)

Similarly enough, Vadim Tudor called mainstream politicians ‘servants of the Americans’ and political elites ‘servants craving for power and riches’ (Vadim Tudor 2012), are ‘ciocoi’ ‘bandits’, ‘country sellers’, ‘traitors’, ‘servants’ (Simion’s Facebook page) or ‘small and traitors’. (Simion’ speech March 2022)



Fig.1. Word cloud of keywords used in the hate narratives and adjectives (codes) – cross party analysis by ATLAS.ti.

The word cloud above reveals the violent depiction of minorities such as Jews or foreigners in general. Negative and hate-stirring attributes are attributed to these categories with the intention of provoking strong reactions among the victims of party propaganda.

		AUR 22 41	Iron Guard 22 72	PRM 21 42	Totals
Foreigners	6 71	12	31	20	63
Freemasons / Oc...	5 64	9	29	21	59
Rotten and corru...	7 42	16	15	7	38
The Jews	19 112	17	51	31	99
The protection of...	5 88	16	43	22	81
Totals		70	169	101	340

Fig. 2 –Variable keywords associated with hate narratives and their (codes) by occurrence

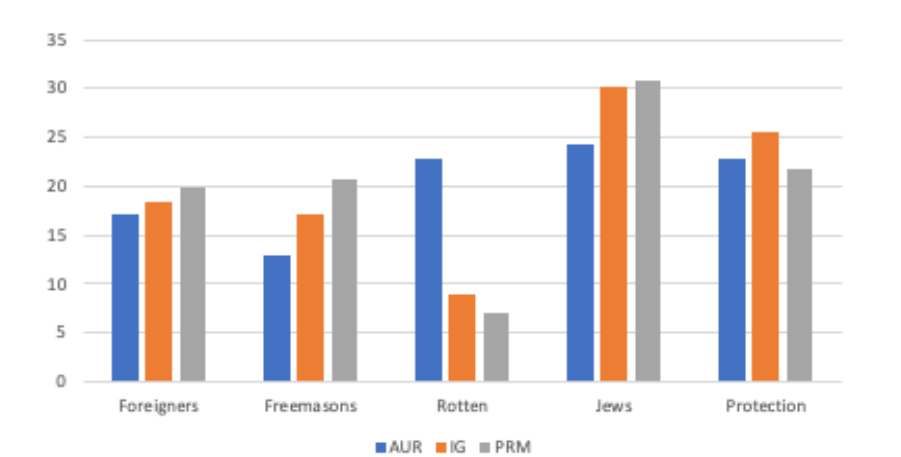


Fig 3. Variables occurrence in the documents studied

The most common narratives containing the words ‘Jews’ (evrei, jidani, or jidovi) often overlap with both the Freemasons and foreigners, particularly in the cases of the Iron Guard and Greater Romania Party, and to a lesser extent in the case of AUR. Nevertheless, AUR mentions Jews less frequently in a negative context, except in relation to the ‘minimization of the Holocaust’ and the ‘bringing of communism into Romania’, which are shared themes with PRM.

AUR focuses more on criticizing ‘rotten and corrupt political elites’, which are mentioned more frequently than in the case of the Iron Guard and PRM. However, little variation in language was observed in cross-party narratives, where politicians are often depicted as corrupt, traitorous, and selling out the country to foreigners, compared to the Greater Romania Party.

AUR demonizes and targets ‘globalists’ and the occult, using the voice of some of its elected members, including George Soros (who is Jewish). In

contrast, PRM’s hate narratives often mix Freemasons and Jews into a single narrative.”

The sacrificial need to protect and sacrifice oneself for the salvation of nation and faith is more present in the case of the Iron Guard, however AUR also follows this tendency, as revealed in its political programme.

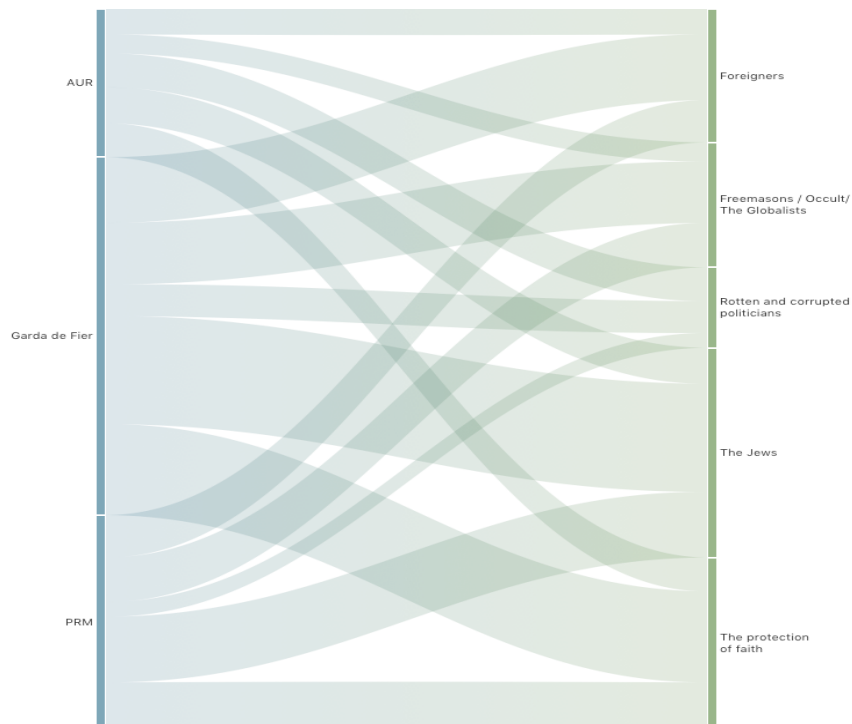


Figure. 4 Sankey Diagram – mentions of the metanarratives by party

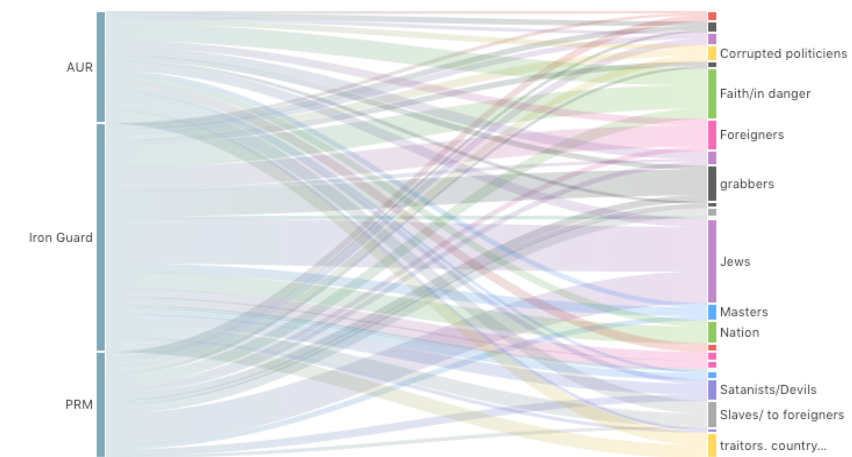


Fig. 5. The most widespread hate narratives – Sankey Diagram

In terms of the association between keywords used in hate narratives

containing Jews and Foreigners, the most widespread ones are related to them being our “masters” and us Romanians being “their slaves”. The second most common narratives depict them as “grabbers”, “colonizers”, “invaders”, “enemies”, parasites, “predators”, and “pagans”. The adjective “Satanists” refers to both Freemasons and Jews and is mostly used in the Iron Guard’s narratives but also in AUR’s narratives. In the case of the newest party labeled as far-right, the Satanists are correlated with the Occult and the Globalists.

Another similarity between the parties is their depiction of the political elites of the time as “corrupt and traitors - country sellers, servants to foreigners” or belonging to the “mafia”. The attribute “Satanists/Devils” is associated with Freemasons, Globalists, and Jews and is used more by the Iron Guard but also by AUR. Narratives containing the protection of faith from the attack of Communists, Jews, Freemasons, or Neo-Marxists are more widespread in AUR’s and the Iron Guard’s narratives. In contrast, PRM spreads more hate narratives referring to “sects,” meaning neo-protestant cults linked to the United States.

Metanarratives such as Romania being colonized by foreigners seem to be the subject of far-right party propaganda over the years, and its revival can stir anti-EU, anti-American, and anti-globalization sentiments among Romanians. In the long term, if anti-EU and anti-Western (implicitly anti-American) attitudes spread more widely, they could pose a threat to our membership in international organizations such as the EU and NATO.

The messianic purpose of these parties is more prominent in the case of AUR and the Iron Guard and less so in the case of PRM. Romanians are called to defend themselves from those who are a “threat to identity, nation, and faith,” with these enemies being Jews, Freemasons, the Occult, Globalists, or Neo-Marxists.

Scapegoating gypsies, Hungarians, or other vulnerable social categories or minorities go along with other hate narratives used by the three parties but are less widespread in the documents studied. Although the similarities are clear, several differences are noticeable. If the Iron Guard’s propaganda employed the term “Bolshevization of Romania” by the Jews, the same rhetoric was taken up by PRM, while AUR has replaced it with the term “Neo-Marxism” represented by George Soros, and the Globalization is imposed by the Occult.

The main findings of this study reinforce those of Georghiu and Preisler (2022), furthering the debate on the matter of hate narratives in the contemporary Romanian public space and confirming once more ‘the existence of complementarity and an area of intersection between the values and ideas’ of AUR and the Romanian fascist ideology from the interwar period.

## 4. Conclusions

This study has revealed striking similarities in the usage of the five hate narratives studied by the three far-right labeled parties. The analysis of cross-party hate narratives revealed minor differences and major similarities. The differences consist of a milder antisemitic hate narrative in the case of AUR and a shifting narrative in the case of PRM regarding the Jewish people.

Our comparative analysis showed that the metanarratives containing hate when referring to the “Jews,” “the foreigners,” “the piercing need to protect the faith and nation,” “the Freemasons and Occult,” and the “rotten and corrupted politicians” transcend time and mobilize the same anxieties and social fears of “identity loss.” They also exploit the social grievances of modernization, culture, and economy (Golder 2016) created by economic or social crises or by adjustment to a new political system such as the transition from Communism to democracy in the case of PRM or the pandemic crisis concerning the birth of AUR party.

These hate narratives are used in propaganda techniques such as “pinpointing the enemy” and the “creation of disapproval” of the new or current political system, inciting change, mobilization, or riots to radically change the society. The same myths, using the same social and value-related sensitivities for the majority of Romanians, are being employed for political gain, creating polarization by targeting outer groups.

The limitations of the study consist in the fact that the materials gathered for the Iron Guard and PRM were limited to a period of 10 and 12 years, respectively. A more exhaustive study could be carried out in the future, including a wider timeframe, especially since the AUR party emerged on the Romanian political stage only in December 2020, during the last parliamentary elections.

The reemergence of hate narratives used during the fascist period in Romania by the Iron Guard, first by PRM during the ‘90s, and more recently by AUR, is worrisome. Romania’s history is forever stained by the execution of around 400,000 Jews in Romanian-controlled territories during the Second World War by the fascist regime of Marshal Antonescu. Hence, any recycling of antisemitic or anti-foreigner hate narratives and the demonization of “enemies” threatening the nation or the (mainly Orthodox) faith needs to be strongly condemned by Romanian society. In a context where Romania is a multi-ethnic country, with a mix of religious communities, pinpointing those who do not belong to the majority group could bring catastrophic consequences for the stability and peaceful cohabitation of our country.



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