The "Parallel State" Metaphor in the Discourse of Romanian Online News and Political Analysis Platforms

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Abstract: *The present paper aims to study and understand how the "parallel state" metaphor has shaped the Romanian press speech in recent years, depending on the way in which certain on-line news and political analysis platforms have positioned themselves in relation to those in power at the time. The study approaches the concept of "parallel state" primarily from a historical point of view, referring to the appearance and, later on, its evolution in several political regimes from other countries than Romania, but also refers to editorial appearances that have this concept at their core. For example, the "parallel state" inspired even photographs in their creation, with British photographer Guy Martin spending five years to take pictures of the street protests and the Turkish coup in the summer of 2016, the result of this monitoring materializing in the volume* The Parallel State*, published by Gost Books. In Romania, the concept of "parallel state" has become the subject of a volume published by Humanitas Publishing House. This is the book of journalist Ramona Ursu, titled* The Parallel State *and published in 2019. Our study starts from the fact that the "parallel state" metaphor is actually not an original one in the Romanian press discourse, as during the last decade it had made a career in the society and the press in Turkey during the presidency of Recep Erdogan. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that in Romanian press, the "parallel state" metaphor is used in opposite ways depending on how the on-line news and political analysis platforms relate to political power (the governing coalition), resulting in two systems of thought: on the one hand the concept is taken seriously by the media favouring the power while, on the other hand, the metaphor is ironized by other platforms.*

Keywords: *parallel state, press, discourse, political power, Romanian media*

The present study looks at how two of the most important, most popular online news and analysis platforms in Romania have treated the concept of "parallel state" in their editorial content. In this regard, we have selected a series of excerpts from informative and opinion materials from the two platforms and we were able to find, following our scrutiny, that, while one of the platforms folds perfectly on the political discourse in Romania and assumes it, even merging with it as regards the concept of "parallel state", the other one, conversely, treats this concept objectively, without rallying to the political discourse, without passion and, more so, treats the existence of the so-called parallel state with derision.

For a correct contextualization, however, it is appropriate to mention that Romania is a former communist state, with a democracy that is not yet consolidated, in which the transition from the totalitarian regime to the democratic one has been difficult. Also, Romania is still, even 12 years after its accession to the European Union, under the scrutiny of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (MCV), which monitors the progress as regards the reform of the judicial system and the fight

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against corruption. The broad framework is that of a country in the former Eastern European Communist bloc that is striving for a redefinition of identity and a correct positioning in the spirit of democracy. Therefore, a concept like the "parallel state" was easy to launch, easy to manipulate in the sense of promoting hatred, given that in the post-December period Romania was fertile ground for a series of conspiracy theories.

The concept of "parallel state"

For a better understanding of the "parallel state" metaphor, it is important to mention that the author who coined this concept is considered to be the American historian Robert Paxton, who has devoted his whole life to studying fascist movements all over the world. "In one of his studies, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2004), Paxton refers for the first time to 'Parallel Organizations'. Elucidating the concept, Paxton gives examples of paramilitary organizations in Fascist Italy (with the "Black Shirts") and Nazi Germany (with the "SA")" (Bayket).

According to the American historian, the "parallel state" phrase has designated a number of similar institutions in organization, management and structure with those of a legitimate state, that are not officially part of the state (Wikipedia). These institutions are, above all, useful in promoting a political ideology. "Later on, American anarchist philosopher Murray Bookchin, whose name is best known by anti-terror forces in Turkey due to its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), elaborated a similar concept to Paxton's but in a quite different fashion. According to Bookchin, municipalities were destined to rule out centralized state power and form autonomous entities – that is to say 'parallel powers' – in order to destroy nation-states" (Bayket).

In the recent and very recent past, one of the countries where there is talk of a parallel state is Pakistan, and this is because after the withdrawal of the British from the colonies, when India and Pakistan regained their independence, there were tensions between the two countries due to border delineation issues, tensions which resulted in two wars (in 1947 and 1971, the latter lasting only 13 days). Pakistan has invested enormously in defence, and in time its military system has become an important political actor, autonomous in relation to other state powers.

The existence of the "parallel state" was also mentioned in the case of Kosovo, when Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova was declared as the president of a Kosovo "parallel state" in the 1990s, but not recognized by Serbia. Considered one of the main architects of Kosovo's independence, Rugova founded the LDK in 1989, then boycotted all of Belgrade's elections, and set up parallel institutions (schools, sanitation and taxes for the majority of the Albanians in Kosovo). Its primary objective was that Kosovo would gain its independence, which became a reality in 2008, two years after his premature death.

Much closer to the present moment, the concept of the "parallel state" has begun to be used more and more extensively after the failed 15 July 2016 coup in

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Turkey. Since then, Turkish President Recep Erdogan has used the phrase "parallel state" to designate the Gülen movement, the religious community of the cleric Fethullah Gulen, based in the United States. "Although they have shared power for a good period of time, Gülen's associates have become the enemies of Erdogan after the disclosures about corruption committed by his ministers in December 2013, regarding policemen and judges close to this brotherhood. That failed coup allowed the Turkish President to launch a vast operation to eradicate the rival movement, a movement that was declared in Turkey a 'terrorist group'" (Bogdan).

In Romania, the "parallel state" metaphor was imposed on the public agenda by the former PSD[1] leader Liviu Dragnea in 2017, after the mass protests against the controversial EGO 13[2]. However, several politicians in the ruling parties have taken up and used this concept intensively afterwards. The metaphor was also taken over by former President Traian Băsescu, the leader of an opposition party (PMP[3]). The PSD invokes the so-called parallel state even in the party's internal documents. Thus, in November 2017, the Executive Committee of PSD adopted a resolution that mentions the existence of a "parallel and illegitimate state" (Digi24) that "is seeking to take control" (Digi24) and uses public resources. However, EGO 13 was repealed on February 5, 2017, and the emergency ordinance for repeal was published in the Official Gazette.

In Romania, as in Turkey, the concept of "parallel state" is used by those in power and government. Through the voice of its leader, PSD and part of the press made reference, through this metaphor, to the institutional relationship between former Chief Prosecutor of the National Anticorruption Directorate, Laura Codruța Kovesi, and former Operational Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Florian Coldea. The concept is therefore used with reference to official state institutions, but in a way that, as we try to prove, becomes propaganda because this "parallel state," defined by the ruling coalition as an enemy, cannot, however, make any official decision, recognizable in a democratic system, whether or not it is a deficient and unconsolidated one. Although acknowledged in internal documents of the party, this alleged parallel state does not really designate any reality other than strictly at a discursive level.

Brief considerations on propaganda and manipulation

As far as propaganda is concerned, we will refer to this concept as it was defined by Luminița Roșca: "It is constituted as a system of persuasion techniques aimed at changing the behaviour of the public in relation to ideas, social practices,

[1] The Social Democrat Party.
[2] Adopted on the night of January 31, 2017, EGO 13 brought two categories of amendments: to the Criminal Procedure Code, which were technical in nature and aimed at denunciation or judicial control, and to the Criminal Code, which was to take effect ten days after publication in the Official Gazette.
[3] The Popular Movement Party.

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personalities; propaganda is based on a manipulative approach, since the transmitted message is knowingly deformed in order to achieve a precise objective" (Roşca 170). Without intending to give a verdict, but merely to warn and analyse, we will find that some of the journalists faithfully adopt the politicians' conception of the "parallel state", using this metaphor as such. However, the simple use of this concept, if it is not done in an ironic manner or treated as a propaganda sample, represents a position towards official politics.

Given that propaganda consists, as Luminița Roșca explains, in a system of persuasion techniques, it is appropriate to bring into discussion a definition of the concept of persuasion. Danny Saunders argues that persuasion involves "the intentional influencing of opinions, beliefs, values, or attitudes by an outside agency" (O'Sullivan et al, 248). The same author draws attention to the fact that "a good part of the sociological analyses have focused on the control exercised by the powerful elites of the society over the media; these elites can then construct, manipulate or censor information that will ultimately mystify the true state of affairs and present a favourable image of their own position of control and of their own interests" (O'Sullivan et al, 248). In this case, PSD can be considered, from its ruling party position shared with ALDE[4] at the time, an elite, although a political one, without being associated with other value systems. It is worth noting, however, that from the top position, the ruling party is attempting precisely what Saunders observes by using the "parallel state" metaphor, namely to mystify the true state of affairs, in order to insinuate and subsequently to instil into the collective mind an image favourable to its own interests, namely the image of a victim of an obscure system, which is allegedly attempting to de-legitimate the ruling coalition.

Case-study: the "parallel state" in the Romanian media discourse
The Antena 3 media platform

The case study of this paper is a discourse analysis. We will interpret a series of selected articles from two of the most widely read online news and analysis platforms in Romania: HotNews and Antena3. We have chosen the two online platforms because they are the most representative of the two systems of thinking that emerged in Romania around the idea of a "parallel state". While one of these platforms, HotNews, only cites politicians who appeal to this metaphor or uses the concept in information and opinion texts without assuming party politics, while the other platform, Antena3, assumes political discourse until it seemingly merges with it entirely. The corpus of the present paper consists of examples selected from the two online platforms, from articles published between January 2018 and June 2019. The research method chosen in this scientific approach is discourse analysis. The reason why we chose the analysed examples is that they resulted in the search operation on the two platforms, within the selected time interval mentioned above:

[4] The Alliance of the Liberals and Democrats Party.

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January 2018 - June 2019. We have considered that these examples are the most relevant concerning the manifestation, in the press discourse, of the two systems of thought outlined around the concept of "parallel state".

In this regard, I will exemplify how the two platforms, HotNews and Antena3, are positioned in respect to the concept of "parallel state":

- "Tăriceanu wants to rip the 'ear' of the *parallel state* off" (Antena3)
- "Tăriceanu, surprise move. Panic in the *Parallel State*" (Antena3)
- "A blow against the Parallel State in the CSM" (Antena3)
- "How does the parallel state monitor the Romanians? The first document was made public" (Antena3)
- "Ana Maria Roman presented the first document showing the functioning of the Parallel State on Antena3" (Antena3)
- "Liviu Pleșoianu, new statements in the scandal of the moment: 'The Parallel State is transforming itself these days into the Nazi State'" (Antena3)
- "'Next Level is precisely the slogan that certifies the transition from the stage of the Parallel State to that of the Nazi State,' writes Pleșoianu" (Antena3)
- "Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, furious reaction: 'The parallel state is working'" (Antena3)
- "The President of the Senate, Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, said on Monday that blocking a candidate for the position of prime minister represents 'the most eloquent proof that the parallel state works'" (Antena3)
- "Alessandra Stoicescu presented, during this Friday's *100 minutes* show, the evidence that the parallel state executes people in Romania, who are forced to leave their jobs where they are hindering something or where their disappearance serves political causes" (Antena3)

As mentioned above, the Antena3 website seems to identify to the point where it merges with the official discourse of PSD. The discourse of the online platform is a militant one and, despite the fact that the selected examples come from informative materials, the journalistic style is of an obvious partisan character, in the sense that Antena3 does not anywhere raise the problem of the real existence of this "parallel state".

It is also worth noting that, as can be seen from the example mentioned above, "Next Level is exactly the slogan that certifies the transition from the stage of the Parallel State to that of the Nazi State." Some statements belonging to the politician Liviu Pleșoianu posted by him on a social network are published without applying any critical filter to what he asserts. Pleșoianu's comments can be considered serious, scandalous not only by historians and political scientists, but by any social actor who has some knowledge of the recent history of Europe and Romania. The comparison

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of a so-called parallel state, which would be at work in Romania, with the Nazi state can pass as a petty insult to Jews everywhere, but especially to those in Romania. According to the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, "the number of Romanian Jews and Jews in the territories under Romanian administration murdered during the Holocaust could not be established with absolute precision. The conclusion of the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania in this regard is that, during the Holocaust, in Romania and in the territories under its control between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews were killed or died" (INSHR-EW). Before taking and publishing such allegations, the journalists of Antena3 should have placed the described situation in context and should have attempted to describe the historical, social, political and cultural framework in which the political figure Liviu Pleșoianu makes such statements.

It is interesting to note that the Antena3 platform is open to the politicians who speak of the existence of this alleged "parallel state". "Media products or media considered to be 'products' are carriers (and not mere supports) of social representations, socio-cultural trends, life styles" (Rovența-Frumușani 119). The fact that the media platform borrows political language in its content production is not irrelevant to its readers, as the latter receive political propaganda samples in the form of editorial products. The idea which is promoted is that this parallel state would be officially recognized as a negative political and social actor, by definition, and one capable of generating meaning and making decisions.

Examples of this kind are numerous on the Antena3 site:

- "On Tuesday, Mircea Badea said in a press release that judges have their part of blame for the law abuses committed by the state in recent years" (Antena3)
- "Frauds hushed by the parallel state. What happens in the investigation of the illegal financing of USR and PNL" (Antena3)
- "Gabriela Firea, a tough attack on Liviu Dragnea: 'I do not want Dăncilă Government to be demolished. I did not slaughter pigs with the parallel state'" (Antena3)
- "Liviu Dragnea breaks the silence: "The parallel state used to appoint governments". What did he talk with George Maior" (Antena3)
- "Călin Popescu Tariceanu, stunning revelations: 'Iohannis is the lawyer of the parallel state'" (Antena3)
- "This assault by the parallel state is a prominent one and a veritable siege" (Antena3)
- "The party I lead, as a liberal party, has waged a continuous battle against the parallel state in recent years" (Antena3)

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The "parallel state" metaphor is no longer a stylistic ornament in the Antena3 platform's discourse, being taken over as such and, as I mentioned, assumed by the media outlet. "It has even been said that political language has become an accumulation of automatic phrases, sometimes meaningless, and that happened because of the inappropriate and irresponsible use of the metaphor" (Nica 183). The last three examples above represent statements belonging to Călin Popescu Tariceanu, the leader of ALDE and, on that date (30 January 2018), President of the Senate of Romania. As it appears from his statements, this "parallel state" seems to be personified and portrayed in a gloomy light.

By rendering these political statements verbatim, the journalistic discourse becomes an act dominated by an intention of a political nature, and this is because, as I have pointed out, Antena3 journalists do not pass the information through a critical filter and rarely contextualize it. In the case of these comments of Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, the journalistic discourse could have even denoted an ironic flair, because the "parallel state" is described as an army, as a mythological dragon, as a structure of war.

A title published on the Antena3 platform reads: "Inquiries at MAI following a document presented at Antena3, which shows how the parallel state monitored Romanians" (Antena3). Political discourse overlaps with media discourse, and therefore, the informative capacity of the news platform is diminished in favour of propaganda. This persuasive intentionality has nothing in common with the media's mission to inform the media consumer correctly and impartially. On the contrary, the persuasive intentionality noted in the materials published on the Antena3 platform originates from the political environment, which perverts the press discourse.

The HotNews media platform

Unlike Antena3, the HotNews platform treats the "parallel state" metaphor either neutrally, faithfully rendering statements by various politicians, but without assuming them, or ironically, in opinion texts. Subject to the irony of the metaphor, the reader may perceive the intention of the media platform, namely to diminish the supposed credibility of this "parallel state". Through irony, the editorial product suggests a particular interpretation from the reader. In other words, we can say that here the agenda setting works from a certain point of view. More precisely, as Mihai Coman admits, "together with the information they transmit, journalists also propose meanings, setting up a certain 'image' about the world. From this it can be deduced that the values, hierarchies and norms that the press promotes, the meanings that it suggests could influence the way of thinking and the cognitive "map" of individuals and collectives" (Coman 163-164). In a completely opposite direction to what emerges from the Antenna3 approach (i.e., identifying to the point of placing a sign of equivalence between its journalistic discourse and a political discourse in which the concept of a "parallel state" is personified) HotNews' discourse attempts, through irony, to outline an image of to the world in which the "parallel state" is non-existent

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or, in any case, suggests that it is something laughable, derisory, which is not worth considering.

- "But who is the enemy of the whole nation? Of course, the 'parallel state' is dominated by the 'evil' Soros and his perverse ideology" (Maci)
- "Răzvan Cuc has an explanation for the lack of highways – the interventions of the parallel state" (HotNews)
- "Transport Minister Răzvan Cuc blames the parallel state for the lack of motorways in Romania" (HotNews)
- "In this sense, the parallel state is entirely the product of such a magical thought. It is a magical construction not because there are no real actors to affect you directly in one way or another..." (Mihailescu)
- "Or they repeated the stupidity of 'the parallel state'" (Dobrincu)
- "Liviu Dragnea, about the accusations against DNA prosecutors: More and more evidence is being revealed regarding this parallel state, this mafia" (HotNews)
- "Tăriceanu, at the electoral rally: What prevents us from progressing is corruption in the parallel state" (HotNews)
- "ALDE President Călin Popescu Tăriceanu on Saturday said in Craiova, where he participated in the presentation of the party's candidates in the elections for the European Parliament, that what prevents Romania from progressing is the corruption in the parallel state and the injustices it generates" (HotNews)
- "Udrea, about Dragnea's file: the parallel state is trying to remove him from the electoral campaign" (HotNews)

In the case of the example in which the former politician Elena Udrea is quoted, the HotNews editorialist who signs the news article makes a statement at the end of the material: "The High Court of Cassation and Justice has set the following term in the file of DGASPC Teleorman, in which Liviu Dragnea was sentenced at first instance to 3 years and six months imprisonment, to take place on May 20" (HotNews). The statements made by the former Minister of Development, Elena Udrea, date from April 23. What we intend to emphasize here is that the HotNews platform describes the context in which the former politician makes these statements about Liviu Dragnea in a precise manner, that is, before a new term in the resounding trial: the DGASPC Teleorman file, known as the fictitious employment file in the institution which deals with social assistance and the protection of the child. On May 27, 2019, Liviu Dragnea, the former president of the Chamber of Deputies during the PSD government, was definitively sentenced to 3 years and 6 months of imprisonment in the file of fictitious employment at DGASPC Teleorman.

We have made this mention to highlight the connection between the "parallel state" metaphor and the phenomenon of corruption, the two concepts being used by

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the leaders of the ruling parties (Liviu Dragnea and Călin Popescu Tăriceanu), but also by other current or former politicians (Liviu Pleșoianu, Elena Udrea) in the following key interpretation: "The sense attributed by the PSD, through the voice of the National Executive Committee, is an intuitive one and refers to the fight against corruption, perceived as "unfair "and "illegitimate". The logical matrix from which this "denunciation" stems is the same: "Whoever is not with us is against us!" Because we are the state, because we are in power, it turns out that another state is against us – because, is it not so, the DNA, prosecutors, judges and so on are all institutions – which sabotage us and endanger our existence" (Bogdan) explains the historian Marius Stan for VICE magazine.

Media discourse, between the Persuasive Effect and the Polemical Character Specific to Political Discourse

Without the intention of making an absolute statement, one can admit that political discourse is, in principle, polemical in nature, because it involves the existence of two or more parties, or of several groups, usually in opposition. By taking over the political discourse of the ruling coalition, the media discourse practiced by the Antena3 platform also became polemical regarding the "parallel state".

There are numerous examples in this regard:

- "We all found out that the Parallel State has infiltrated not only the political class, but also the media, civil society, and the business environment, so today it is difficult to understand which of the voices shouting in public are sincere and which are false" (Antena3)

In this case, the Antena3 platform fully delivers the speech given by Liviu Dragnea in March 2018 at a PSD congress. The Antena3 website posted the speech of the former leader of the PSD without any contextualization, without any description of the socio-political reality of Romania. On the website of the press institution Liviu Dragnea's speech appears as a stand-alone material, without being accompanied by an introduction. From this point of view, strictly referring to this speech, the Antena3 site resembles the website of a political formation.

Other examples that have come to our attention are:

- "Deadly blow to the parallel state! The magistrates of the Court of Appeal ordered the reopening of the file in which Traian Băsescu spoke about the Mafia state" (Antena3)
- "A group of parties which supports the parallel state agrees that abuses will continue and that the world of darkness endures" (Antena3)
- "If this man understands that he is a prisoner of the parallel state, it's his problem..." (Antena3)

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- "There are some who are trying to get away from this poisoned area, there are others who do not want to participate in these executions and abuses, and there are others who, either in fear or by being inclined this way, hold their ground like the Amazons until the last one in the parallel state will die" (Antena3).

The last three statements belong to the PSD leader at that moment, Liviu Dragnea. We note that the manipulative argumentation of the former president of the largest ruling party, broadcast by the Antena3 website aims to convince the public, the citizens, about the existence and functioning of this structure called a "parallel state", but more importantly, it aims to provoke a resentment, to provoke the hatred of the citizens towards this so-called enemy that the PSD leader wishes to publicly denounce. As we have stated in the beginning of the present paper, two systems of thought have been formed and manifested in the Romanian press surrounding the concept of a "parallel state": one in which the concept is looked upon seriously and even assumed by the pro-power press, without being the subject of a critical analysis, at least apparently, and another in which the metaphor is loaded with irony or used impartially in various informative materials, without any connotation. The two systems of thought that revolve around the concept of "parallel state" have, most likely, their supporters and contestants.

The so-called parallel state was meant to be – in the sense that it was launched by the PSD leader – a "unique enemy", responsible for all the criminal problems of the politicians in the ruling coalition, and rarely, one has to admit, an enemy of politicians from the opposition. In addition, this "parallel state" has become, through the speech of the leaders of the PSD and ALDE, but not only, responsible for the social, economic, but also other problems of the Romanians. The following examples are pertinent in this sense:

- "Dragnea also argued that while the PSD is fighting for justice and democracy, the parallel state is fighting for positions and survival" (Antena3)
- "I also pitiably welcome all those sent to the square by the parallel state. (...) I was also asked what the parallel state we are protesting against today means. It is a system that uses the state institutions in an illegitimate way, outside and parallel to the will expressed in the vote. (...) Nobody is off the radar for the parallel state, we will all become targets. (...) The parallel state and its people fear truth as the devil fears incense" (Antena3)
- "Tăriceanu attacks PNL: 'It is a party that supports the parallel state'" (Antena3)
- "Frauds masked by the parallel state. What is happening in the investigation into the illegal financing of USR and PNL" (Antena3).

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In one of the examples above, selected from the Antena3 platform, Liviu Dragnea, the former president of the PSD, tries to legitimize the theory that since the PSD has come to exercise the executive power following elections in which valid votes were cast by citizens, then, what some state institutions do regarding PSD leaders, but not only, would be an abuse: "[The parallel state] Is a system that uses state institutions illegitimately, outside and parallel to the will expressed in the vote" (Antena3). As Luminița Roșca admits, "It is difficult to imagine that the mass media exist independently of the socio-human universe, of the value system and the representations of the world it supports" (Roşca 113). In this case, the Antena3 platform assumes the value system of the PSD leader and of PSD as an editorial line, as it appears from the treatment of the concept of "parallel state". Its view of the world is in accordance with the PSD's image of the world.

As a note of extravagance, but at the same time as a faithful complement to the social and political context in Romania, we think it is appropriate to mention that the "parallel state" has a website, statulparalel.ro, where there is a somewhat childish definition of this "enemy": "The parallel state are the ones who make fun of you. Of your life, your work, your money. Every day you work half the time to pay for your food, home, go on vacation, take your kids to school. Maybe you can put something aside for yourself. The rest of the time you work for paying taxes and tariffs. If you are dissatisfied with what you get instead, you will find out that the fault is the parallel state. The parallel state is mocking you. It is mocking all of us" (StatulParalel.ro). We mentioned the existence of this site, which is otherwise obscure and lacking in information consistency (it has no headings, it does not nominally identify any member of this so-called parallel state, it is not assumed by any organization, any natural or legal person, no political formation) precisely to complement the social, political, cultural framework in which the propaganda of the ruling coalition parties is manifested through the media.

What Antena3 is doing in fact, is legitimizing the alleged struggle of the governing parties with an enemy who is outlined especially at the level of language as it is identifiable through the "parallel state" metaphor and less through formal rulings. It is not unimportant that through the excessive use of the "parallel state" metaphor, the Antena3 platform relies on the persuasive effect of the media discourse overlapping the persuasive effect of political discourse with the intention of exploiting the emotional side of the readers. An undocumented public, uninitiated in political intrigues, can easily be seduced by the image of an absolute enemy, obsessively reiterated in various journalistic materials.

HotNews, on the other hand, uses the concept of "parallel state" in opinion texts, and when it does, it incorporates a metaphor of ironic intent. This news and analyses platform does not legitimize this alleged "parallel state," throwing the very idea of its existence into derision.

We have selected a few examples in this respect:

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- "The priority of the government, which, absurdly, holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, is an unfortunate combination of the efforts to block the candidacy of a Romanian prosecutor, who is internally and internationally appreciated, for the position of Head of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the modification of the justice laws in favour of the defendants and the criminals, and the coverage of the budget deficits by overtaxing the profitable private sector. Finally, those in government are speaking of 'change', referring to their struggle with the 'parallel state', and to "abuses of the justice system against citizens'" (Naumescu)
- "By contrast, from the perspective of the supremacists, who are by definition more attentive to the conflicts between Dragnea and his opponents, the dictionaries were manipulated by the parallel state and by #rezist in the seconds that followed the declaration of the president of the party" (Mateescu)
- "In the first phase, the prime minister tried an evasive response, but at the insistence of the moderator she admitted she could not say 'whether or not there is a parallel state,' even if the PSD campaign insisted on this topic" (HotNews)
- "Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă, acting president of the PSD, said on Friday evening in an intervention at Antena3, that she has no reason to convince anyone in the party that she is not "remote-controlled by the parallel state", specifying that if she did that it would imply disculpating herself from something that does not exist" (HotNews)

The last example folds perfectly, albeit involuntarily, on the thinking system shared by the news and analyses platform HotNews: the so-called parallel system represents no public institution in Romania and no obscure structure that can take official decisions, but it is, rather, an ideological construct, a negative fictional character described in dark colours. It is worth mentioning, however, that the former Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă made this statement in June 2019, after the definitive condemnation of Liviu Dragnea and at the end of two years of intense propaganda for the existence of this so-called parallel state.

Conclusions

The use of the "parallel state" metaphor has generated two systems of thought in the Romanian press. One of them faithfully took over the political discourse of the governing coalition, assuming, at the level of editorial content and language, its propaganda, and began to "fight" against the so-called enemy of the people. The other system of thought treated this concept with irony, holding its functioning into derision especially through opinion texts and raising repeated question marks about its existence. When it did not illustrate the concept with irony, the notion of "parallel

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state" was mentioned impartially by rendering politicians' statements verbatim but contextualizing them. It should be noted, however, that by merging with political discourse and by assuming it, media discourse has lost its ability to inform properly, in the spirit of truth. In other words, by acting in this manner the media has actually given up its mission in exchange for conducting propaganda.

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