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From *swan eaters* to *national heroes*: representation of the Romanian diaspora in public discourse

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The emergence of the Romanian diaspora as an important social actor is closely related to socio-political events that have taken place in the home country. This study attempts to track this process through the means of Van Leeuven's socio-semantic categorization by analysing pieces of political discourse stated around key moments in the recent history of Romania: the process of becoming a full member of the European Union (2013) and two presidential elections (2014, 2019). Drawing on the general perception of diaspora communities across the world as representing a significant social and economic potential for home countries, it is sound to hypothesize a similar Romanian case manifested at the level of political discourse through positive role allocation.

Key-words: *Romanian diaspora, imaginary transnational communities, role allocation in discourse, agency*

1. Introduction

The term 'diaspora' has been used to refer to ethnic minorities living outside Romanian borders, or communities of exiles during the communist regime. Other official alternatives have been the more literal 'Romanians from everywhere' *(Românii de pretutindeni*) and 'Romanians living abroad' (*Românii de peste hotare*, *Românii din străinătate*), both used in names of various institutions.

In the last two decades a significant percent of Romanian nationals have left the country to live in Europe, Canada, or the US. The socio-demographic composition of this population is very diverse: it includes a large number of migrants, who alternate working abroad with staying at home, certain professional categories, like doctors, nurses or IT specialists whose residence in the foreign country is probably not permanent but spans several years, or simply families who

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do have permanent residence in their host country but have not quite given up the idea of returning to their country of origin.

This group is often called 'the new diaspora' for the sake of distinction, but public discourse has adopted the shorter, simpler 'diaspora', despite some occasional objections to its inadequacy[2]. The term has especially gained resonance during the last decade or so, due to the role Romanians from abroad have played in the last two presidential elections in 2014 and 2019.

The story of the Romanian diaspora as a high-profile social actor can be dated to 2007 when Romania joined the EU. Despite various restrictions applied at first, the exodus of Romanian workforce towards Western Europe became inevitable and generated a significant growth of Romanian communities living abroad, first in Italy and Spain, then in Great Britain and Germany. A study on the Romanian diaspora conducted by the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development in 2019 reveals that Romanians represent the fifth largest foreign population living in OECD countries (developed countries from Europe and beyond)[3].

In the home country, Romanians living abroad have been a marginal category. The press was often derogatory of the negative image they spread in the West and politicians discussed it mainly in economic terms, as a source of foreign remittance. In 2009, centre-right president Basescu won his second term of presidency due to a relatively small number of diaspora votes which helped him surpass his center-left social democrat (PSD) rival, Mircea Geoană[4]. This was probably the moment when the voters from abroad were acknowledged as supporters of the centre-right.

The questions of this study refer to the way in which public discourse on the diaspora materializes in various, politically and historically relevant moments. 2013 is the eve of an important step for Romania in European integration: lifting the ban on Romanian workforce mobility. The presidential elections in 2014 and 2019 were marked by controversies and a great amount of frustration because of the failures of the centre-left governing party.

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2 https://www.asiiromani.com/scrisoare-deschisa-renuntarea-la-sintagma-diaspora-prin-denumirea-romanii-din-strainatate/,https://www.dcnews.ro/cristoiu-noi-am-gresit-din-start-folosind-termenul-diaspora_739 981.html,

3 https://www.oecd.org/countries/romania/talent-abroad-a-review-of-romanian-emigrants-bac 53150- en.htm

4 https://romania.europalibera.org/a/rezultate-alegeri-prezidentiale-cine-au-votat-romanii-din-diaspora-si-din-tara-in-ultimii-30-de-ani/30260595.html

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The diaspora whose electoral potential had been proven in 2009 was employed to create a positive image for the nation or for the centre-right. For this reason, it was essential that reference to the diaspora should be made not only as an integral part of the nation itself, but also as one which represents desirable traits in that situation. Given the specific socio-political contexts of each episode, this study attempts to find those discursive elements that mark i) roles and actions (agency) attributed to the diaspora as a social actor, and ii) the strategies that lead to its positive image.

2. Corpus and methodology

The corpus of the study is constituted by some representative pieces of political discourse, extracted from the press, selected from 2013, 2014 and 2019. Labour restrictions on Romanian citizens were lifted on January 1, 2014. Therefore, 2013 represented a crucial year in improving the image of Romanians, quite damaged by the frequent reports in the European press on petty criminality. The first selection is extracted from radio shows featuring the Minister Delegate, commissioned by the Foreign Minister with matters of Romanians living abroad. It must be noted that by 2013 the number of Romanians working abroad had not only increased but a larger number of well-trained and highly educated segment of the population was being employed throughout Europe. The examples of the second episode have been extracted from a televised debate between the two main contenders (left wing and right wing) for the presidency, taking place on November 11, 2014, shortly before the second round of the elections. The third example is an almost complete call for vote from November 2019, by the president in office, Klaus Iohannis, addressed to the diaspora.

The methodology of the study follows the principles of triangulation, a strategy proposed by Ruth Wodak, which allows the parallel examination of empirical data that includes both discursive and non-discursive elements offering a complete presentation of a phenomenon (Wodak-Riesigl 2001, 35). Starting with the textual level, the analysis will take into consideration situational factors like the nature of the institutional setting the texts are issued in, or the general, social circumstances which have prompted the production of these linguistic manifestations.

The analysis of the textual level will make use of van Leeuwen's socio-semantic categorization, a tool for examining the procedures through which social actors and actions are presented in texts (van Leeuwen, 2008). Given that in public discourse the diaspora is nominated as a homogenous social actor, the main focus

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will be on the strategies through which this particular group is referred to, not only in terms of nomination, but other types of personalization as a distinct group (assimilation) through strategies of aggregation (statistical data and quantifiers) and collectivization (representation as a collective actor).The construction of a positive image in the examples below is also influenced by role attribution, placing the diaspora either as an agent or a victim of various actions.

3. Diasporas and transnational communities

The specific features in the development of the Romanian diaspora stem from the particular geopolitical and historical aspects of their homeland. Nevertheless, characteristic elements like a high degree of mobility and willingness for economic and even political involvement in the public life of the home country integrate it into the global frame of transnationalism. Both diasporas and transnational communities represent demographic, cultural and social features that place them at the crossroads between nationalism and globalisation, two seemingly opposing terms, yet, combined in the two types of phenomena (Cohen 2008; Verhulst 1999).

Etymologically, the Greek origin word means 'dispersion' and in its classical use it referred to a few ethnic groups (Jewish, Armenian, Africans) forced out of their original homeland due to a traumatic and often violent event. As Kevin Kenny (2013) notes, in its original meaning this term carries connotations of *'particular forms of suffering'* (captivity, genocide) but if used as a term to cover various contemporary migratory phenomena it can become an 'empty claim' which says little if anything of the event of displacement itself. Without a well-grounded use, the concept of 'diaspora' "*has a tendency to flatten out differences, to homogenize, to reduce complexity and diversity to a single type*" (Kenny 2013, 109). Calling a population of the same ethnic origin a 'diaspora', simply because they are scattered in various countries pertains to a rather simplistic, essentialist use of the term since it fails to consider any other circumstance of their existence, except ethnic background.

Prototypical *victim diaspora* has been associated with an experience of '*displacement, alienation and exile'* (Cohen, 2008, 9). Besides the fact that they are dispersed in various foreign regions, these groups preserve a nostalgic and idealized image of their homeland and dream of returning to it someday. Moreover, they cultivate an '*ethnocommunal consciousness'* of their belonging and never feel fully accepted by their host countries, even if their residence in the new country spans more than one generation (Cohen 2008, 6).

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It is not a coincidence that the use of the expression '*transnational*' became more extensive starting with the late 60s (Tölölyan 1996, 9). The social realities of a globalised world have started to significantly change the way groups living outside nation states were perceived and how they perceived themselves. The concept of *transnational community* preserves the idea of physical remoteness from the homeland but emphasizes the increased chances for mobility and connectedness for individuals who leave their country behind.

Bruneau contrasts it with the concept of 'diaspora', perceived as the periphery of an imaginary centre, as a community which *"links the global to the whole range of greatly different local, networking places, without hierarchy between these different hubs"* (Bruneau, 2010, 43). Due to the use of technology, remoteness, even if it is a physical reality, it is hardly traumatic. They keep permanent contact with family members, yet, at the same time, they have no trouble adapting to the social realities of their new environment (Bruneau 2010, 44).

Similarly, Diminescu's '*connected migrant*' brings the motto '*circulate and keep in touch*' to a whole new level. Due to technology, a migrant's existence is defined by a "*multiplication of temporary displacements and the participation in a variety of social milieus"* (Diminescu 2008, 571) through which a genuine '*culture of bonds*' is consolidated, which redefines perceptions of space or society. Connectedness involves a functional network of contacts through which the migrant maintains his or her lifestyle of mobility. This '*relational settlement*' practically by-passes institutional channels and establishes a completely different alternative to conventional types of establishing connection regardless of place.

In the context of the potential influence of transnational communities in society, Verhulst notices a '*bottom-up redefinition of power*' resulting from the '*bonds of cohesiveness*' these dispersed groups produce (Verhulst 1996, 31). This whole new status brings forth a series of questions for debate, related to the political conduct of governments towards these groups (Bauböck 2010).

At the end of the 20th century, as states have recognized the economic or political potential of these groups, various measures have been taken in order to establish a connection with them and harness the power that these groups may generate. These include not only granting voting rights to historical communities living outside national borders (Bauböck 2010, 299), through double citizenship, but also, attempts by homelands to attract diaspora participation in the socio-economic and political endeavors taking place within national borders (Kenny 2013, 103).

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4. The Image of the Romanian migrant before 2013

One of the first 'news' on Romanians living abroad after the fall of the Communist regime was the anecdote of beggars catching and eating swans in Vienna. This, by now urban legend, was reproduced years after in UK tabloids, featuring Eastern European culprits.[5] The swan eater in these articles is merely a representation of the 'other', without more concrete or accurate socio-demographic coordinates. This label has been haunting the Romanian media and the public imaginary through the various articles[6] with a lamenting or an ironic tone, usually dealing with the negative image Romanians abroad create of their country through their behaviour and attitudes.

The late 2000s were marked by frequent reports, by both the foreign and the Romanian press, of Romanians committing petty crimes. Events like the demolition of Romanian migrant camps in Italy[7] or Roma deportation from France made headlines in 2008 and 2009, respectively. By that time, the migration of the workforce had already started, and Romanians were typically recruited for seasonal, low paying jobs, in the field of agriculture in Spain (resulting in the widely used nickname '*căpșunari*' – strawberry pickers) or as care workers in Italy (acquiring the nickname '*baddante*'). A study on newspapers from 2009 (Beciu 2012) finds some of the following topics: violence, preoccupation with the image of the community/country, measures taken by the host country regarding the Romanian community (Beciu 2012, 60). Generally, as Beciu finds, a polarity of good and bad (exemplary citizens versus criminals) is characteristic of these news reports, and the world of the diaspora seems to be presented as an extension of the national public sphere: they feature as representatives of the nation (Beciu 2012, 59).

5 https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1261044/Slaughter-swans-As-carcasses-pile-crude-camps-built-river-banks-residents-frightened-visit-park-Peterborough.html

6 A selection of related articles can be found at the following links: https://www.eva.ro/divertisment/evenimente/5-momente-in-care-ne-am-facut-de-ras-in-toata-lumea-articol-6953.html (5 times we made fools of ourselves in front of the whole world), https://www.click.ro/news/lume/episodul-lebedelor-de-la-viena-se-repeta-doi-romani-acuzati-ca-au-furat-o-oaie-si-o-capra (The Vienna swan episode is repeated: two Romanians accused of stealing a sheep and a goat), https://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/national-extern/ambasadorul-austriei-a-dansat-cu-studentii-tigani-pe-melodia-quot-lacului-lebedelorquot~ni8f4 (The ambassador of Austria dances with Gipsy students on the tune of "Swan Lake")

7 https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-diaspora-3000599-giornale-draga-ministrule-melesanu-sic-terminat-ta ra-fagaduintei.htm

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5. The diaspora in the context of European citizenship

A Department for Romanians Everywhere subordinated to various ministries has existed since 1995 and has been dealing with promoting and maintaining national identity of both historical minorities in neighbouring countries of Romania and, later, with specific issues arisen within the new diaspora. In 2013, the last year of restrictions imposed on the Romanian workforce by the EU, the Romanian government was focusing on a '*national strategy*' regarding '*institutional relations*' of the Romanian state with the diaspora (old and new) with issues on its agenda like "preservation of national identity, advocating for a positive image abroad, facilitating the process of integration for Romanians into the communities and countries they have chosen to live in, contact with kin at home, defending rights and liberties that Romanians have as EU citizens" [8].

On the eve of lifting restrictions on labor force mobility from Romania and Bulgaria, the British media was conducting a whole campaign against migrant workers from these countries (Cheregi 2015). It was of utmost importance for Romanian officialdom to compensate for the negative image, additionally corroded by episodes like the ones mentioned above, amply commented in the media. A rather serious campaign started to promote a positive image of Romanians, and the diaspora was included into the institutional discourse as a national asset. The discursive and situational frame of events like *diaspora Estival* (a summer conference at the seaside), or *Forumul Românilor de Pretutindeni* (the Forum of Romanians Everywhere) was established by Romania's new European membership, and the diaspora as a social group representing Romania abroad was being discussed in the context of European citizenship. As higher numbers of Romanians with a more diverse and better socio-professional background were migrating even to countries which up to that point had not been common destinations (Northern European countries, Great Britain, Germany), the discursive focus shifted towards more prestigious professions and social categories that could become more attractive representatives of Romania.

The following excerpts[9] have been extracted from a series of interviews and declarations from 2013, given by Cristian David, Minister Delegate for Romanians Everywhere. Throughout these interviews, the Minister refers to Romanians working abroad as '*human capital*', an abstraction suitable to the economic context

[8] https://www.rfi.ro/invitatul-dimine-ii-62348-cristian-david-ministru-delegat-pentru-diaspora-despre-imaginea-romaniei

[9] https://www.rfi.ro/invitatul-dimine-ii-61237-cristian-david-ministru-pentru-diaspora-despre-restric-iile-din-marea,

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it is used in. The contexts of discussion are: the image of Romania abroad (1), the UK restrictions on workforce and their lifting in 2014 (2, 3):

(1) *Majoritatea covârșitoare a românilor este foarte bine integrată. Dacă vorbim de Marea Britanie cu sigurantă suntem în această situatie: unde avem foarte mulți medici, profesori, studenți de excepție care sunt în universitățile din Marea Britanie.*
"The vast majority of Romanians is very well integrated. If we are speaking of Great Britain, we are surely in this situation: here we have a lot of doctors, teachers, exceptional students who attend the universities of Great Britain."

(2) [*Venirea românilor] nu poate crea dezechilibre pe piaţa forţei de muncă iar ceea ce am convenit noi la nivelul dialogului politico-diplomatic este să lucrăm cu cifre, cu realităţi şi nu cu percepţii, sau cu sentimente, pentru că daca ar fi să ne uităm la cifre putem uşor constata că în cei şapte ani de când din România au plecat un număr considerabil de cetăţeni pe diferite pieţe ale forţei de muncă in statele membre ale Uniunii Europene, foarte puţini au ales ca destinaţie Marea Britanie. Sunt aproape 100.000 din circa 3 milioane de români care au plecat. Deci iată că nu putem vorbi de o cifră foarte consistentă care ar putea să ridice probleme, cu atât mai mult cu cât această sută de mii este deplin integrată. Sunt oameni care au contracte de munca legale, sunt plătitori de impozite şi taxe.*
[Romanians' arrival] "cannot create imbalance on the labour market and what we agreed on, at a political and diplomatic level, is to work with numbers, with realities, and not perceptions or feelings, because if we look at numbers, we can easily observe that during the seven years since a considerable number of citizens left Romania for the various labour markets through member states of the European Union, very few have chosen Great Britain as their destination. There are almost 100.000 out of 3 million Romanians who have left. So we cannot speak of a very significant number that might create problems, the more so as this one hundred thousand is fully integrated. They are people with legal work contracts and they are taxpayers."

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(3) *Este posibil ca din numărul mare al românilor care au ales să plece și să se stabilească într-un stat membru al Uniunii Europene nu toţi să reușească să găsească un loc de muncă, implicit asta înseamnă că nu toți vor fi complet integrați în comunitățile în care au ales să trăiască (…) din 3 milioane de români care sunt răspândiţi în toată Europa, în mod evident, și, din păcate, nu toți vor avea în același timp de lucru și sunt comunități poate ceva mai numeroase unde lipsa unei calificări pentru muncă poate să însemne o durată mai lungă de ședere fără aportul social normal. Dar până la urmă, românii sunt cetățeni europeni (…) cetățenia europeană nu înseamnă nimic altceva decât dreptul la liberă circulație și la liberă ședere iar acest lucru trebuie înțeles. Chiar dacă în proporție de 99% are efecte benefice, există desigur și consecințe mai puțin plăcute pe planul imaginii. Cred că a insista doar pe această latură nu este relevant și reprezentativ pentru majoritatea covârșitoare a românilor care aleg să muncească în alte state.*

"It is possible that of the large number of Romanians that have chosen to leave and settle in one of the member states of the European Union not all will be able to find a workplace, which implicitly means that not all will be completely integrated into the communities they have chosen to live in (…) out of the 3 million Romanians spread over all of Europe, evidently and unfortunately, not all will have workplaces at the same time, and there are communities, possibly more numerous ones, for which the lack of a job qualification can mean a longer settlement without the normal social contribution. Nevertheless, Romanians are European citizens (…) European citizenship means nothing else but the right to move and reside freely, and this must be understood. Even if it has a 99% beneficial effect, there are, of course, less pleasant consequences at the level of the image. I think that insisting only on this latter aspect is not relevant and representative for the vast majority of Romanians who choose to work in other countries."

The common contextual frame of the excerpts above is the preoccupation with European integration and the emphasis on the positive aspects of workforce migration, reflected at a textual level with a frequent repetition of the verb 'integrate' ('*the majority of Romanians is well integrated*', '*this one hundred thousand is fully integrated*', '*not all of them will be completely integrated*') included in all three cases into a passive verbal pattern suggesting the Romanians' compliance with requirements. In (2) additional explanation is offered to what integration means: '*they have legal work contracts and they are taxpayers*', emphasizing their legal status and their contribution to state efforts, as model citizens.

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The main strategy used throughout the examples is the use of positive and negative quantifiers with the purpose of intensification and mitigation, respectively. In (1) the Minister talks about the '*vast majority*' of Romanians, additionally mentioning, in the case of Britain several prestigious socio-professional categories ('*doctors, teachers, students').* No action is ascribed to them, so we are assuming they are mentioned solely as having high professional status, a guarantee of '*exceptionality*' (as the adjective suggests).

In (2) we have another comparison: '*of a considerable number of citizens very few have chosen Great Britain*', this time, with some figures in order to provide support for his statement: 100,000 as opposed to 3 million, emphasizing the small number of migrants who have this far chosen Britain as their destination: '*we cannot speak of a consistent number*'. This argument follows a statement that '*we must work with figures, realities*' and not '*feelings*', covertly criticizing the attitude of unrest present in the British media and, probably, among some citizens. It must be noted, though, that this number was valid before lifting the ban.

(3) is a response to the reporter's question regarding the negative image of Romanians abroad, this is why it contains negations, still, they are formulated with softer negative markers in such a way as to mitigate their negative message; '*it is possible that of the large number of Romanians (…) not all will be able to find a workplace*' (anticipatory 'it' with affirmative, '*all'* negated implying that a particular amount will succeed), '*not all will be completely integrated*' (similar to the previous example, but with an additional 'completely' as a further mitigating device).

The most conspicuous negative reference to the diaspora in the fragment is *"there are communities, possibly more numerous ones, for which the lack of a job qualification can mean a longer settlement without the normal social contribution".* In his attempt to avoid direct reference, the official uses repeated nominalization of actions potentially perceived as negative. The result is a high degree of abstraction, further emphasized by the vague and generalized reference to the diaspora as *'communities'* used only once in contrast with the repeated *'Romanians'* throughout.

In the sentence: *'Even if it has a 99% beneficial effect, there are, of course, less pleasant consequences at the level of the image.',* the large percentage of 99 (which is used as an exaggeration to emphasize the favourable positive aspects) is contrasted with the euphemistic '*less pleasant*'.

The last aspect related to these examples is the emphasis on the Romanian citizens' rights by using phrases like: *'Communities they have chosen to live in'* (implying free will on the part of Romanian citizens), '*the right to move and reside freely*' (the right of European citizens) indicates a relation of equality between Romanian citizens and other European ones, marked by the common frame offered by the European Union.

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6. The 2014 presidential elections: humiliated diaspora

The 2014 elections were marked by the disastrous organization of the elections in the diaspora. With the governing Social Democrat Party held responsible, Klaus Iohannis, the 'surprise' candidate of the Liberal Party had a relatively easy task. As described in the previous part, official attempts to harness the potential of the diaspora have been underway for some years, but the 2014 presidential elections triggered large scale sympathy for the communities outside national borders and added a very strong emotional thrust to already pre-existing dissatisfaction with the governing party. The images transmitted from many European cities about people standing in line in order to vote touched a soft spot in constituencies back home. The scandal around the insufficient polling places and the numerous citizens who did not succeed to cast their vote generated public outrage. Romanians abroad were regarded as immediate victims of the government's indifference and their insistence on casting their vote was categorized as true patriotism and a gesture of revolt against a cynical governing party. A repetition of the 2009 presidential elections seemed to take place: a relatively small number of citizens living abroad were changing the fate of the elections, this time heavily influencing attitudes in their home country.

An episode pertaining to the image of both the two main contenders and the diaspora occurred during a televised confrontation[10] between the two main opponents, Klaus Iohannis and Victor Ponta (who ran for the election after leaving the prime-minister office). They manifested hostility toward each other by various attacks, like Ponta accusing Iohannis for not knowing relevant figures about various issues, or Iohannis sarcastically commenting on Ponta's cheat sheets he was reading his data from.

During the confrontation various instances of assimilation can be traced, both collectivization for diaspora as a group and aggregation as numbers and figures in statistics. Both candidates as well as the moderator use the – by now – collective term for the Romanians living in European countries, 'diaspora'. The many faceted socio-demographic nature of this constituency is irrelevant, as the context of voting allows their assimilation into one single group: their functionalization as 'voters' and classification as 'citizens'. There is, however, a significant difference in the way the two contenders speak about the category in question.

[10] https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/prima-confruntare-iohannis-ponta-ponta-domnule-iohannis-fiti-cuminte-ca-la-mine-in-birou-iohannis-unde-va-credeti-la-dumneavoastra-in-birou-biroul-e-tara-declaratiile-candidatilor-13534405

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The following excerpts have been selected from the responses of the two candidates during the above-mentioned televised confrontation. (4) and (5) belong to Victor Ponta, while (6) and (7) are Klaus Iohannis' contributions:

(4) *În 2009 au votat 146.000 de români in diaspora, acum 160.000. Domnul Iohannis nu știe. (…)*
"146,000 Romanians voted in 2009 in the diaspora. Now there were 160,000. Mr. Iohannis doesn't know."

(5) *În diaspora sunt 3.5 milioane de români din care au votat 160.000, deci pe restul nu i-am convins nici eu, nici alți candidați*.
"There are 3.5 million Romanians in the diaspora of which 160,000 voted, so the rest was not convinced by either me or other candidates."

(6) *Duminică în jurul orei 12 m-a sunat un prieten care s-a dus să voteze la Munchen. și mi-a spus că sunt aproximativ o mie de persoane care așteaptă să voteze la consulat și m-a întrebat ce să facă. L-am rugat să aibă răbdare și până la urmă va vota. După amiază m-a sunat și mi-a spus că sunt 1500 de persoane care așteaptă să voteze și i-am spus că mi se pare că aici este o problemă. Seara la ora nouă m-a sunat și mi-a spus că s-au închis porțile și o mie de persoane au rămas afară și nu au putut să-și exprime votul. (…) Același lucru mi s-a comunicat din Paris, de la Londra, am teancuri de e-mailuri și scrisori primite de la cetățeni absolut revoltați că nu au putut să voteze.*
"On Sunday around 12 I received a phone call from a friend who went to vote in Munchen, he told me that there were approximately a thousand people waiting at the consulate and asked me what to do. In the afternoon he called and told me there were 1500 people waiting to cast their vote and I told him it seemed to me there was a problem. At nine in the evening, he called me and told me that the gates closed and that one thousand people were left outside and couldn't cast their vote. (…) I received the same information from Paris, from London, I have stacks of e-mails and letters from citizens outraged because they couldn't vote."

(7) *Dumneavoastră ați ignorat cu rea credință și ați ignorat în așa fel încât mii de oameni au rămas în afară seara. Au fost bruscați cetățenii români (…) de polițiile altor state fiindcă și-au cerut dreptul la vot.*
"You ignored the information in bad faith, and you ignored it deliberately, so that in the evening thousands of people were left on the outside. Romanian citizens have been strong-armed (…) by police forces from other states because they asked for their right to vote."

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Even if the figures and numbers in examples (4) and (5) are relevant for the subject of the discussion - as a former prime-minister, Victor Ponta had probably been working with them during his governance - their assimilative function in this context, especially juxtaposed with Iohannis' more familiar approach, backfires. The number of those who voted (160,000) as opposed to the 3.5 million who live abroad is irrelevant, since an additional number was prevented from casting their vote. The figures in example (4) are used in order to demonstrate the accuracy of calculating the expected number of would-be voters, but the incidents seemed to reveal that these calculations could not have been correct. These figures, suggesting accuracy, in fact, seem to divert attention from the real question: why were citizens unable to cast their vote? With the situational context of an indignant audience and a quite emotional general mood due to the voting scandal, the tool of aggregation by using figures sent an inappropriate message to citizens who were angry for being disregarded to start with.

Klaus Iohannis was probably at an advantage for being the representative of the opposition party since he did not have to withstand the pressure of organizing the elections. In addition, as opposed to Victor Ponta who had accumulated some notoriety as prime-minister, Klaus Iohannis was relatively unknown.

As opposed to Victor Ponta, who relies on accurate figures and documents under the form of notes, Iohannis uses no backup. In the case of the Liberal representative, aggregation is used while speaking about the voters who have been wronged by the refusal of their right to vote: '*the one thousand people who were left outside'* (6) or the 1500 that '*were waiting in line'.* Additionally, Iohannis uses indefinite quantifiers '*thousands of people'* (7) to generalize on the concrete situation in example (6) and prepare the accusation he is, in fact, making: '*Romanian citizens'* being strong-armed by '*police forces from other states*' which harks back to the disgraceful times of Romanians being regarded as criminals in European countries, yet, this time these '*citizens*' were just guilty of wanting to vote.

The indefinite quantifier '*stacks of (e-mails and letters)'* (7) functions in accordance with the attitude of familiarity suggested by Iohannis' arguments. While Ponta is using statistics, Iohannis narrates a witness account of a '*friend from Munchen'* who has not been able to vote. He seems to collect his data from private telephone conversations, correspondence with '*outraged citizens*', all in all, suggesting the practice of informal networking as an alternative to Ponta's official approach. The suggestion that he has received letters from people abroad, who communicated to him their complaints, implies a high degree of trust from voters, suggesting a kind of connection that may go beyond the official dimension of data and statistics, implying that he indeed stands beside the 'citizen' (which was his campaign slogan).

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7. The 2019 Presidential elections: the consolidation of a partnership

The last episode is the 2019 presidential elections, which took place after some years full of controversy. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) gained the majority at the 2016 parliamentary elections and its governance has been characterized by its attempts to soften anti-corruption laws[11] despite EU warnings and large-scale protests from Romanians themselves[12]. In 2018, organizations from the diaspora announced a protest for August 10. Law enforcement used excessive force on protesters and generated even more discontent against the governing party. In May 2019, President Klaus Iohannis sought the people's counsel in a referendum organized at the same time with the elections for the European Parliament and received the agreement to adopt further anti-corruption measures. In November 2019 he was running for a second presidential mandate, against the main contender, the Social Democrat Viorica Dăncilă. The examples below constitute an almost complete call[13] for participating in the elections, addressed specifically to Romanian voters abroad:

(8) *Dragi români din diaspora, deși sunteți departe de țară, cu sufletul ați fost tot timpul în țară. Și voi decideți drumul pe care țara noastră va merge mai departe!*
"Dear Romanians of the diaspora, even though you are far from the country, in your soul you have always been in the country. You too are deciding which road our country will take further!"

(9) *Am reușit modificarea legislației, avem acum un număr dublu de secții de votare, pentru ca niciunul dintre voi să nu mai suporte umilințele la care ați fost supuși de PSD, să nu mai stați ore întregi la cozi interminabile.(…)*
"We have succeeded in modifying the law; we now have a double number of polling stations so that none of you will withstand the humiliations you were subjected to by PSD and stand in endless lines for hours (…)"

(10) *În 2016, absenteismul a adus la putere PSD, cea mai nocivă guvernare din istoria post decembristă, o guvernare împotriva românilor.*
"In 2016 absenteeism brought to power PSD, the most toxic governance after 1989, governance against Romanians."

11 https://www.dw.com/en/romania-parliament-approves-laws-to-hamper-anti-corruption-efforts/a-44285222

12 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-romania-protests-idUSKBN1KW0LI

13 https://www.g4media.ro/video-iohannis-apel-catre-diaspora-dragi-romani-veniti-la-vot-pentru-ca-tara-noastra-are-mare-nevoie-de-fiecare-dintre-voi-oriunde-v-ati-afla.html

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(11) *2019 este anul în care voi românii, prin votul la referendum, ați blocat PSD să distruga România și drumul său european și democratic.*
"2019 is the year in which you Romanians, through your vote at the referendum, blocked PSD from destroying Romania and its European and democratic journey."

(12) *Lupta însă continuă și trebuie să rămânem mobilizați pentru că doar printr-un vot categoric vom scăpa definitiv de pesedism, acest fenomen nociv care nu a permis României să se dezvolte mai mult și mai bine în ultimii 30 de ani.*
"The fight continues and we must stay mobilized because only through an unequivocal vote we shall escape pesedism, this toxic phenomenon that didn't allow Romania to develop further and better in the last 30 years."

(13) *Dragii mei, alegeți, așadar, cu înțelepciune, cu gândul la viitorul vostru și al României! Împreuna vom construi România normală, pe care ne-o dorim cu toții! Vă aștept la vot!*
"Therefore, my Dears, choose wisely, thinking about your future and Romania's! Together we will build a normal Romania, which we all want! I look forward to seeing you at the poll!"

Ideologically speaking, the short motivational speech is a genuine gesture of interpellation through which the President directly addresses ('*Dear Romanians of the Diaspora*' (8)) his overseas constituency and urges them to vote, through linguistic elements like: the plural '*you*' in the conjugated form of verbs (8, 9, 11, 13), the corresponding possessive pronoun ('*your future*') or as a straightforward hailing (8). The endearing form of address '*my Dears*' (13) displays the same familiarity that he was using when talking about diaspora voters in 2014. The suggestion that the President and his overseas constituency communicate in an unrestrained manner acquires the connotation of belonging to the same side, especially since the choice of words throughout the speech is evocative of the metaphoric domain of war.

Constructed on a combative scenario, the speech displays two antagonizing sides: that of the 'Romanians' and the President, and that of the 'PSD' as the enemy. The narrative recounts, or much rather hints at, some victories that have been achieved against the '*toxic governance*' of the PSD: the multiplied number of polling stations for Romanians abroad and the successful referendum (9, 11). One defeat is mentioned, due to '*absenteeism*', endowed with an action verb ('*brought to power')* which voters are warned not to repeat. In the first case (9), Romanians

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abroad are presented as victims of PSD (‘you *were subjected to by the PSD*’), who had to ‘*withstand*’ the *‘humiliation’* of standing in line for hours. In (11), the ‘*Romanians*’ become agents in the action of *‘blocking’* PSD from *‘destroying Romania’* and its *‘European and democratic journey’,* which implies that the opposition party does not a have a pro-European attitude. This position is emphasized by the President recalling ‘*the last 30 years*’ (12), ‘*1989*’ (10) that may remind of background knowledge related to recent history, and, implicitly, the communist ties of the social democrats.

The enemy is nominated and personified through the party initials. Then, the coined word ‘*pesedism*’ (12) is used, suggesting that the left-wing party, more than an element of the Romanian political system, represents an ideology which ‘*didn’t allow Romania to develop further*’. The time references open a historical perspective for this event: by discarding the past of the ‘*toxic*’ PSD Romanians will choose the future of a ‘*normal*’ Romania (a generalizing adjective, open to personal interpretation).

Throughout the speech there is no differentiation between Romanians at home and those abroad. Except for the first sentence (8) where the addressee is specifically named, ‘*Romanians*’ are taken into account as one single category without the acknowledgement of borders. The main element of the introductory hailing is ‘*Romanians*’. ‘*Diaspora*’ is not used as nomination but as a spatial marker. Further elements that mark inclusion into a common category are pronouns. The second person pronoun ‘*you*’, through which credit is given to the diaspora, is alternated with the first-person plural, when reference is made to ‘*our country*’ and the actions ‘*together we will build*’, ‘*we need to remain mobilized*’, constituting a common course of action and suggesting partnership in it against a common enemy.

8. Conclusion

The three episodes presented above illustrate the emergence of the Diaspora as a social actor in recent Romanian socio-political life. The analysis of the roles and actions attributed to this group, reveals the Diaspora as an active participant in the process of adhering to European values, either as model citizens of the Union, well-integrated in its way of life, or as exercising their right to vote, and hence, consciously acting as responsible citizens.

A series of discursive strategies are employed in order to obtain this effect. The texts selected for the first episode foreground actions and traits (integrated, tax-paying, working and studying) which describe Romanians abroad as providing a positive image for their home country, intensified by aggregation through positive

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quantifiers. Simultaneously, a series of mitigating devices are applied, with more or less success, in order to divert attention from the negative issues that have been in the public eye.

Elections, the topic of the second and third episodes, allocate the citizens of the diaspora the role of voters. The discussed fragments alternate in presenting them as possible agents of a desired political change (by casting their vote) or victims of a cynical governing party, only to emphasize their desirable patriotic conduct.

The second episode illustrates how aggregation (statistical figures and quantifiers) results in very different effects. Statistical data seems impersonal and unsuitable to the situation in the case of one speaker, while definite and indefinite quantifiers combined with some informal reference produce the effect of familiarity.

The discourse quoted in the third episode nominates the collective actor 'Diaspora', as part of the nation by creating a common addressee (Romanians). First person singular verbs establish a common agenda for the candidate and his allies.

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