
IN SEARCH FOR PROFIT. BANDWAGONING AND THE INTERVENTION OF ROMANIA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Abstract: *THE AIM OF THIS PAPER IS TO ADDRESS THE SUBJECT OF THE ROMANIAN INTERVENTION IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR BY USING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON BANDWAGONING AS DELIVERED BY RANDALL L. SCHWELLER. THE QUESTION THAT THIS PAPER IS TRYING TO ANSWER IS RELATED TO THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE ROMANIAN INTERVENTION IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN 1916, BY SWITCHING SIDES AND ENTERING INTO AN ALLIANCE WITH THE ENTENTE AGAINST THE FORMER ALLIES FROM THE CENTRAL POWERS. STARTING FROM THE MEANING OF BANDWAGONING PROPOSED BY RANDALL SCHWELLER, THIS PAPER ARGUES THAT THE ROMANIAN INTERVENTION FROM 1916 WAS MOTIVATED BY PROFIT, AS AT THE FINAL OF THE WAR THE ENTENTE PROMISED TERRITORIES FOR ROMANIA, AS WELL AS A BETTER PLACE ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA.*

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of the of wartime decisions of Romania of 1916 is not new. The Romanian and foreign historiography, together with the literature on International Relations – foreign or autochthonous - , regards the wartime decisions of Romania in 1916 from various perspectives, from simple mentioning for the sake of the argument to large analyses or devoted monographies¹. This paper represents a study about the behavior of Romania regarding war intervention in 1916, based on the theoretical perspective on bandwagoning provided by Randall Schweller. In 1916, the Romanian political elites had to take an important decision, given the fact that Romania was an integral part of the Triple Alliance (The Central Powers) – since 1883 – with two great powers, the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, together with Italy. In 1916, Romania entered the First World War on the side

¹ I have also offered an insight on this subject in my Ph.D. thesis (Preda, 2021, pp. 90-98).



of the Entente, against the old allies from the Central Powers. The main objective of Romania during the First World War was to fulfill its national ideal, of a Greater Romania, aiming to incorporate – as the war aim from 1916 assumed – the Romanian inhabited territories from Austria-Hungary. Indeed, the main war motivation of Romania was to achieve national unity, by incorporating Transylvania and other Austro-Hungarian territories inhabited by Romanians, such as Banat, Crișana, Maramureș or Bucovina, but, at the micro level, there were other motivations that led to war. The main question that arises in this paper is related to the motivations that determined Romania to enter the First World War on the side of the Entente in 1916. Therefore, why did Romania enter in 1916 in the war on the side of the Entente? What were the sources behind Romania's decision to turn its weapons against former allies in the Central Powers, joining the Entente? The main argument of this paper states that the decision to enter the First World War on the side of the Entente, against the former allies from the Central Powers, was motivated by a behavior characterized by bandwagoning for profit. An addition to the Entente's war effort foreshadowed the obtaining of territories long coveted by Romania, as well as another treatment and another position in international relations. To illustrate this argument, the text is organized in the following manner. The first part is devoted to a discussion regarding the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning, the second part is reserved to a presentation of the debates among the Romanian political elites related to the Romanian intervention in the First World War, the third part represents an analysis of the bandwagoning behavior adopted by Romania in 1916, while the remainder of the paper presents the conclusions.

ALLIANCE THEORY – BALANCING AND BANDWAGONING

This section is reserved for a discussion regarding the balancing and bandwagoning models of behavior, from the perspective of the alliance theory. In the first instance, I will shortly review the theoretical perspectives regarding balancing and bandwagoning, while the second step is devoted to a presentation of the perspective that originates from Randall Schweller. The subject of the reasons and interests that back an intervention in a war is widely debated in the theory of alliances. Alliances are some of the most important institutional arrangements that take place in the realm of international relations. Generally, the main aim of an alliance is to increase the power of their members by combining their resources, while can be a crucial power asset for a small power, usually being a reaction to a threat (Pevehouse & Goldstein, 2017, p. 54). Hans J. Morgenthau regarded the alliance as a “[t]he historically most important manifestation of the balance of power” (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 137). Generally speaking, Morgenthau sees the alliances – be there alliances or counteralliances – as methods devised to maintain the balance of power (Morgenthau, 1948, pp. 137-142). However, as we enter into debate regarding the motivations behind an alliance decision, the discussion about balancing and bandwagoning takes multiple variations. From another point of view, Stephen M. Walt defined an alliance “as a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states” (Walt, 1990, p.1). Therefore, an alliance is regarded as a cooperation device available to states, in order to advance some interests on the international arena. In the following paragraphs, the discussion is devoted to the major debates regarding these two concepts, of balancing and bandwagoning.

To begin with, Quincy Wright gave the balance of power a dynamic significance, with multiple options available for the balancing behavior, such as “rearmament and disarmament, annexation and cession of territory, alliance and counter-alliance, intervention and nonintervention”, as means to maintain the balance of power (Wright, 1942, p. 748). Since the great powers can wage war when they perceive balance of power disturbance, the small states can adopt a more prudent stance, favorable to preserving their survival, the bandwagoning with the probable winning side (Wright, 1942, p. 784). Continuing on the same path with the balance of power theory, but from a structural realist perspective,



Kenneth N. Waltz regarded balancing and bandwagoning as two opposite models: balancing behavior represents a pattern where a state chooses to ally with the weaker side against a rising power, while bandwagoning is characterized by an alliance with the stronger power (Waltz, 1979, p. 126). Furthermore, a successor of Kenneth Waltz, Stephen M. Walt, refined the balance of power theory, by arguing that the alliances are reactions to perceived threats by the states (Walt, 1990, p. 17), thus devising the balance of threats theory. According to Walt, when states face a major threat, they choose between balancing or bandwagoning (Walt, 1990, p. 17). According to Walt, “[b]alancing is defined as allying with others against a prevailing threat; bandwagoning refers to alignment with the source of danger” (Walt, 1990, p. 17). From another critical side do Waltz, Glenn H. Snyder affirms that alliances are not the sole method of balancing, while there can be mentioned other patterns, such as military action or armament, while neutrality, improving relations, conciliation or compromise with the source of threat (Snyder, 1991, p. 128). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that for Snyder, while “[b]alancing alliances are clearly defensive, [...] some bandwagoning alliances are offensive” (Snyder, 1991, p. 129).

While Stephen Walt refined the balance of power theory to a more elaborate perspective, the balance of threat theory, another successor, Randall L. Schweller advanced a more revised theory, the balance of interests. Discussing both balancing and bandwagoning, Schweller does not find these two concepts in opposition, arguing that the second concept was defined too narrowly, in opposition with the former (Schweller, 1994, p. 74). For Schweller, balancing aims for “self-preservation and the protection of values already possessed, while the goal of bandwagoning is usually self-extension: to obtain values coveted” (Schweller, 1994, p. 74). In short, “balancing is driven by the desire to avoid losses; bandwagoning by the opportunity for gain” (Schweller, 1994, p. 74). Elaborating on the concept of bandwagoning, Schweller offered a classification of this type of behavior. First, *jackal bandwagoning* refers to the situation in which a powerful revisionist state attracts some other smaller states hoping for profit and “to share in the spoils of victory” (Schweller, 1994, p. 93). Second, follows the *piling-on bandwagoning*, which “occurs when the outcome of a war has already been determined”, to claim an undeserved prey from the war (Schweller, 1994, p. 95). As a matter of fact, this type of behavior “is simply jackal bandwagoning that takes place at the end of wars” (Schweller, 1994, 95). Third, *wave-of-the-future* bandwagoning represents an alliance “with the stronger side”, which is regarded representing the future alternative (Schweller, 1994, p. 96). Moreover, wave-of-the-future bandwagoning is often promoted by charismatic leaders, energetic ideologies, while is enhanced by heavy propaganda and battlefield pre-eminence (Schweller, 1994, pp. 96-97). The fourth type of bandwagoning is *the contagion or domino effect*. It represents a chain reaction, which is triggered by war or revolution in highly interconnected regions (Schweller, 1994, pp. 98-99).

To conclude, balancing and bandwagoning represent two main and viable alternatives available for states on the international arena. The debate on the subject of balancing-bandwagoning was very intense over the decades, since the 1940s. If some authors, such as Waltz and Walt, see balancing and bandwagoning as two opposite, sharply contrasting alternatives, where the first behavior means to confront the source of threat, while the second represents a giving up to the threatening power or coalition, Schweller offered a more elaborate perspective. Schweller argued that bandwagoning does not represent only a capitulation to threats, but also a behavior driven by the desire of profit, especially adopted by small powers, with the aim of profit, such as territorial expansion. The next section is reserved for a presentation of the debates between the Romanian political elites regarding the intervention in the First World War, either on the side of the traditional allies from the Central Powers, or on the side of the Entente, which appeared to be more promising in terms of prospective post-war gains.



THE DEBATES AMONG THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL ELITES REGARDING THE INTERVENTION IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In 1914, the First World War started, with the Central Powers and the Entente on the opposing sides. Among the greater allies of Romania from the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary entered the war immediately, while Italy opted for neutrality. In 1914, the debates are centered around the immediate enter into the war on the side of the Central Powers, performing the duties as an ally since 1883, and neutrality. On 21st of July 1914, King Charles I called for a Crown Council, hoping to decide Romania's entering into the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Crown Council, as a consultative body, reunited the most important political leaders of the moment, such as the prime minister, the leaders of the two chambers of the parliament, leaders of the main political parties and army important figures (Mamina, 1997, p. 9). Regarding the debates during the Council, Ion Gheorghe Duca, then a member of the National Liberal Party, offered in his memoirs an extensive account of the debates regarding intervention on the side of the Central Powers and neutrality. According to Duca, except the king and a few political figures, the majority of the participants were favorable to a neutral position, given the fact that Austria-Hungary had not informed Romania prior to attack Serbia. Therefore, there was no *cassus foederis* (Duca, 1981, pp. 51-62). Petre P. Carp, a conservative leader, was one of the few supporters of an intervention on the side of the Central Powers. His arguments were drawn upon the question of honor, treaty obligations and confidence in the victory of the Central Powers. Moreover, manifesting a Russophobic attitude, Carp compared the war as a struggle between Germans and Slavs and a Slavic victory would have resulted in the dissolution of Romania (Duca, 1981, p. 54).

From the neutralist position, the prime minister, Ion I. C. Brătianu represented the main voice. His main arguments were drawn upon the fact that the alliance partners have not announced Romania regarding their war preparations, the voice of the public opinion which was against joining Austria-Hungary in war, given its policy towards Transylvania, an integral part of the Empire and the prediction that the war would be long and there would be other occasions for Romania to affirm itself (Duca, 1981, pp. 57-58). Even though Romania declared neutrality, immediately after, Brătianu started to prepare for war against the Central Powers, but was willing to enter the war after the preparation of the army and the chances to win the war would have been very high. Moreover, during the negotiations with the Entente, Russia recognized Romania's right to Romanian territories within Austria-Hungary, (Torrey, 2011, p. 8)). Until 1916, the ties between Romania and the Entente became closer and closer, until the Allies acknowledged the Romanian claims, while Brătianu aimed to gain time to better prepare the army (Mamina, 1997, pp. 53-54). On 4/17 August 1916, Romania and the Entente signed a political convention that mentioned the right to annex a large part of the Austro-Hungarian territories, up to the Tisa river, together with the whole Banat (4/17 august 1916, București, Convenția politică..., 2017, pp. 116-117).

At the Crown Council from 14/27 August 1916, King Ferdinand announced that Romania will join the side of the Entente in the war, invoking argument such as the situation favorable to the Allies and the national unity as a national ideal (Duca, 1981, p. 273). Again, the prime minister Brătianu had his own arguments regarding the intervention on the side of the Entente, emphasizing the favorable moment for the national unity, and, moreover, the fact that Romania should not stay on the sidelines in a time of profound geopolitical changes (Duca, 1981, p. 274). In 1919, during a discourse held in the parliament, Brătianu reinforced his arguments from 1916. According to Brătianu, the Entente promoted the right to self-determination of the small nations and the principle of nationalities, therefore, Romania had to join the alliance (Brătianu, 2020, pp. 40-41). Moreover, the decision to join the Entente – as Brătianu argued – was taken from the beginning of the war, while the question was about the moment of intervention (Brătianu, 2020, p. 41). In his memoirs, the son of Brătianu,

Gheorghe, related that, a week before the intervention from 1916, his father was sure about the victory of the Entente, while the moment was of maximum importance, with the fate of Romania at play (Brătianu, 2018, p. 19). The most important arguments of the pro-german side during the 1916 Crown Council were represented by some figures of the Conservative Party. Alexandru Marghiloman mentioned a future access of Russia to the Bosfor and Dardanele straights, meaning the end of Romania (Duca, 1981, pp. 274-275). Petre P. Carp came in front with the argument of honor to join the Central Powers and continued to maintain that the end of war would bring German or Russian domination. German domination would have meant salvation, while a Russian one the end of Romania (Duca, 1981, p. 276). Titu Maiorescu maintained that Romania had to wait for another favorable moment, since the denouement of the war was not clear at that moment (Duca, 1981, p. 278).

As the debates around the Romanian intervention in the First World War reveal, there were several issues at stake. In 1914, the decision was favorable to a neutral stance, in order to gain time and prepare the army to enter the war with great chances on the side of the Entente. In 1916, the main arguments favorable to the intervention on the Entente side were drawn upon the fulfillment of the national unity to the detriment of Austria-Hungary, the favorable moment and a future denouement after the post-war peace, which had to include Romania on the right side. Therefore, the next section is reserved to an analysis of the Romanian reasons for intervention in the First World War, based on the theory of Randall Schweller and taking into account the arguments around the issue in question.

ANALYSIS – ROMANIA AS A BANDWAGON IN 1916

The issue regarding Romania's intervention in the First World War was taken into account in the International Relations literature, either in a restrictive or in an exhaustive manner. Stephen Walt mentioned that Romania joined the Entente in 1916 because it regarded as having the upper hand during the conflict, the future victorious coalition, hoping to occupy some territories at the end of the war (Walt, 1990, p. 21). A similar argument was brought into question by Schweller who affirmed that the Romanian intervention from 1916 was based on the argument that the Entente was to be the victorious coalition (Schweller, 1994, p. 95). However, these mentions were restrictive, for the sake of illustrating a larger argument. Other mentions, in an extensive manner, come from Romanian sources. Andrei Miroiu argued that in 1916 Romania adopted a revisionist policy against Austria-Hungary, while was trying to maintain a status quo in the Balkans (Miroiu, 2005, p. 127). Miroiu argued that in 1916 Romania played the role of the holder of the balance, whose intervention was aimed to determine the outcome of the war, given the fact that the denouement was uncertain (Miroiu, 2005, p. 132). Another Romanian author, Șerban Cioculescu, by also adopting a schwellerian perspective as Miroiu, argued that in 1916 Romania underbalanced by joining the Entente against the Central Powers, for the reason that the entrance in the war was overshadowed by internal vulnerabilities (Cioculescu, 2016, p. 44). The main point of Cioculescu was that Romania balanced against Austria-Hungary aiming to change the status quo, while the bandwagoning behavior is unclear in the case of alliance with Russia (Cioculescu, 2016, p. 49). In a similar manner with Miroiu, Cioculescu argued that in 1916 Romania balanced against the Central Powers, especially that the denouement of the war was not clear (Cioculescu, 2016, p. 48). From the Romanian side, Hadrian Gorun also argues that Romania played the role of the holder of the balance in the Balkans (Gorun, 2021, pp. 58-60), while Brătianu was regarded as a representative of the bandwagoning behavior, as he postponed the decision to enter the war with the stronger side until a favorable situation (Gorun, 2021, p. 54).

From my point of view, I argue that in the First World War, Romania adopted a bandwagoning behavior, motivated by profit, in the sense of gaining new territories and *status quo* change, a wave-of-the-future attitude, in the sense that an alliance with the Entente was very promising. Taking into



account the theoretical perspective regarding the classification of different types of bandwagoning offered by Schweller (jackal, piling-on, wave-of-the-future and the contagion or domino effect), I argue that the case of Romania has elements from the first three classes of this kind of international behavior, however, not in a full instance. According to Schweller, jackal bandwagoning appears when a small power as Romania joins a powerful revisionist coalition for unearned gains after victory. In this instance, indeed Romania entered the First World War with the aim of gaining territories from the Dualist Monarchy, as this right was recognized by the Entente in exchange of intervention on its side. On the other side, the Entente represented the *status quo* side in the First World War, while the Central Powers represented the revisionist coalition. Therefore, it can be argued that a small power as Romania can resort to jackal bandwagoning, at the regional level, with a *status quo* coalition. In fact, at a sub-systemic, regional level, the situation can be different from the systemic, global level. I argue that jackal bandwagoning should not be reserved to explain alliances between revisionist small powers, with local aims, that join revisionist great powers.

The case for piling on bandwagoning in the Romanian context of intervention is also subject to debate. As Schweller argued, piling on occurs in chase that the victory of one side is determined. In August 1916, the outcome of the First World War was not already determined, but the pro-Entente elite, especially Brătianu, was very confident about the victory of the Entente. In can be argued that the confidence expressed by Brătianu could be only discourse, but there can be taken into account the perceptions of those who decide to enter in the war. For the case of Romania, even though the victory of any side was not clear in sight, it can be argued that what mattered was the perception of a part of the elite that the victorious coalition would be the Entente. On the other side, the pro-German Romanian political elite also shared the perception that the future victorious coalition was represented by the Central Powers. Therefore, for the case of piling on, it can be argued that, when the denouement of a war is not clear, what matter are the perceptions of the elites regarding the chances of victory of a coalition.

Wave-of-the-future bandwagoning can be taken into account for the Romanian case in the First World War as well. Both the pro-Ententist and pro-German elites tried to foresee a future after the end of the fighting. The pro-Ententist elites such as Brătianu or King Ferdinand believed that the victory would be of the Entente, which would bring new territories, based on new principles, of self-determination of the nations and the principle of nationalities, meaning the fulfillment of the Romanian national ideal, the unification with the territories inhabited by Romanians that were under Austro-Hungarian domination. On the other side, the pro-German elites, such as Marghiloman or Carp believed that the Central Powers would represent the victorious coalition and a Russian victory and presence in the region would mean the destruction of Romania. In this case, the role of the charismatic leader who decided the intervention on the side of the Entente was played by prime minister Brătianu, who overshadowed King Ferdinand by exerting a large control on the foreign affairs, overshadowing also the minister of foreign affairs, and on the internal political life (Torrey, 2011, pp. 5-7), while the role of energetic ideology was reserved to nationalism, as Romania aimed to fulfill its ideal of national unity. Regarding the argument related to the aspect of battlefield superiority, in July 1916, Brătianu expressed his reserves about the Russian offensive that aimed to knock out of the war Austria-Hungary (Torrey, 1999, pp.100-101). After the announcement about the entrance in the war of Romania on the side of the Entente, throughout the country were held patriotic demonstrations, where people expressed their support regarding the decision to take Transylvania, by demonstrating and singing patriotic songs (Torrey, 2011, pp. 40-41).



CONCLUSION

Based on the schwellerian understanding on bandwagoning, the intervention of Romania in the First World War from 1916 was motivated by profit, materialized in the great aim of annexing the Romanian inhabited territories from Austria Hungary, thus fulfilling the national ideal of a Greater Romania. Romania instrumentalized the alliance with the Entente to fulfill its objective and bandwagoned with this coalition, that promised a resettlement of the world on new principles, of nationalities and self-determination, together with a large part of Romanian inhabited territories from the Dual Monarchy. Since Schweller offered examples of different types of bandwagoning behavior, jackal, piling-on, wave-of-the-future and the contagion or domino effect, for Romania the first three, with some reserves, are applicable. It can be argued for jackal bandwagoning because Romania entered the war with the aim to gain some territories based on the greater effort of the Entente. Even though, according to Schweller, jackal bandwagoning occurs when the interests of a small state and a great revisionist power are connected, I argue that it can be applicable also for the case of common interests between a small power and a status quo great power or coalition, as it was the case with Romania and the Entente. For the case of piling on, there is questionable if Briătianu, who expressed his confidence in the final victory of the Entente, took the decision to enter the war in August 1916 based on the assumption that the confrontations were on the end. In fact, Brătianu expressed his reserves regarding the Russian capacity to knock out the war Austria-Hungary in July 1916. On the other hand, I can argue that in this case what mattered was the perception of the Romanian pro-Ententist political elites in the superiority of the Entente. Wave-of-the-future bandwagoning can be taken into account because the elites who decided the entrance of Romania in the war on the side of the Entente expected a promising future after the war, with territorial gains and new principles of conducting the international relations, such as self-determination and the principle of nationalities.

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