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Rhetorical Crossings of 1989: Communist Space, Arguments by Definition, and Discourse of National Identity Twenty-Five Years Later

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The Romanian political scene at the end of 1989 calls for a critical rhetorical perspective to understand how totalitarian politics clash with revolutionary changes and how communist space, so ambiguously crafted to cover an entire country's public sphere, influences, if at all, a free(d) discourse on national unity. Examining official discourse on the cusp of revolutionary changes in Romania, in December 1989, this study argues that the concept of rhetorical space along with the enthymematic argument by definition of "we the nation" capture rhetoric in action, showing complex discursive crossings that legitimize the relationship between rhetoric and history at such times. Thus, the relationship between rhetorical space and the "we the nation" political argument, when applied to Romanian political discourse of 1989, reveals challenges that continue to feature the unsettledness of postcommunist discourse twenty-five years later.

Looking back twenty-five years on the relationship between history and rhetoric(s) of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe, rich political textures stand out, as communist rhetoric has to leave way for new and renewed vocabularies of the citizenry to populate the postcommunist public sphere. Throughout communist Central and Eastern Europe the clash between "official" communist discourse and dissident/democratic voices creates a reversal of political vocabularies, where "we the nation" challenges the nation-state and its (respective) people(s), engaging words in a war that keeps haunting the area, even a quarter of a century later. The year 1989 makes the rhetorical

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turn where communist discourse crumbles to leave space for new political voices that impact the discourse on national identity, freedom, power, citizenry, and/or the nation-state (to name a few) in all those countries that were once behind the Iron Curtain.¹

Extensive scholarship on politics and history in the area unravels discursive strategies used to validate shared metacommentary ideas imposed by the Soviet Union as they become adjusted and transformed into specific political, cultural, and rhetorical practices in each of the countries in the area.² Several studies in this collection argue for distinct approaches on Central and Eastern European rhetorical legacies. Accordingly, the Polish and/or Czechoslovak political contexts in 1989 allow for specific relationships between and among religious and/or dissident discourse to directly influence democratic changes Hungarian and/or Bulgarian events in the fall of the same year introduce new political discourse along Gorbachev's already-in-place terms for political change. Since Mikhail Gorbachev's speeches introduced perestroika and glasnost by 1986 as part of the political changes to follow, as a response, in several Warsaw Pact countries the samizdat discourse of the underground gains momentum to surface and/or clash with official communist rhetoric occupying the public sphere.³ All of a sudden, post-1986, the discourse of democracy and freedom as proposed by Charter 77 signatories, by Konrad's *Anti-Politics*, by Havel's *Power of the Powerless*, or by Adam Michnik's writings for *Gazeta Wyborcza* circulate throughout, breaking the political and public scene and challenging authoritarian discourse.⁴

By contrast, Romania in the year 1989 offers a rigid and irrevocably closed political scene, where Ceausescu's totalitarian practices keep the population under a shield of terror and control in the name of communist promises for a bright future (Tismaneanu 2003). No alternative discourse enters, and/or is to be heard.⁵ By November 1989, Ceausescu stages (yet again) a "unanimous" reelection as general secretary, at the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party, proclaiming his political power to (yet again) internal and external audiences. In a detailed study on Romanian totalitarian discourse, Martin (2011b) describes this political context as follows:

On November 14, Nicolae Ceausescu delivered a five-hour long report at the 14th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, as his official acceptance to become, again, the "unanimously" elected political leader of the Romanian Communist Party, of the Romanian General Assembly, and of the Socialist Republic of Romania. Aired on national television stations and on the radio, Ceausescu's speech offered nothing but an interminable laundry list of achievements and successes of the Romanian people, emphasizing with rhetorical verve his trademark totalitarian slogans as his country fellowmen were marching on the road to a multilaterally developed communist society. Metaphorically, and not really, the country is

under political (and rhetorical) arrest. For over a month, national discourse took the form of celebratory rhetoric focused merely on praising Ceausescu's tireless leadership to socialist victory: a sharp contrast with the events occurring west and south of the Romanian borders. (238–239)

Thus, the contrastive political and rhetorical practices of 1989 Romania call for a critical rhetorical reflection when looking at how totalitarian politics clash with revolutionary changes and how communist space, so ambitiously crafted to cover an entire country's public sphere, influences, if at all, a free(d) discourse on national unity. Unlike any of the other communist leaders at that time in Central and Eastern Europe, Ceausescu creates a crescendo of totalitarian practices covering more and more of the political arena with endless diatribes that occupy (read: usurp) the entire public space with official "wooden" slogans, threatening Romanian citizens with more and more punitive consequences, unless they align with his political agenda.⁶

Even when the entire country is ready for a reversal of political power, with the news of the Timisoara revolution starting to spread throughout the country, Ceausescu's final two speeches, delivered on December 21 and 22, 1989, promise the Romanian population yet again that communist living is the brightest future of any kind.⁷

Our society ensures opportunities for a full participation of each and every citizen of our country, for members of all social categories, to take part in the entire political structure [life], in the leadership of our entire society. There are ample opportunities created in our country so that within our working class—revolutionary democracy the people can debate and solve, as one unified entity, all our problems relating to our life, work, national well being, as well as relating to our country's independence, sovereignty and integrity.⁸

Raising taller walls for a political incarceration of his countrymen, speaking louder and louder into the megaphones of fear, Ceausescu promises his audience a utopian life full of old slogans gone astray.

[In 1989] Altogether, Ceausescu's power—impregnable at first glance—was falling apart. Detested by the population, isolated internationally, and living in fantasies, the aging leader could not understand what was happening to communism. He considered Gorbachev the arch-traitor to Leninist ideals and tried to mobilize an international neo-Stalinist coalition. In August 1989, he was so irritated by the formation of a Solidarity government in Poland that he proposed a Warsaw Pact intervention in that country. Every day the Romanian media highlighted the dangers of reformism and "de-ideologization." . . . An adamant Stalinist, Ceausescu returned to his first ideological love, his master Stalin's theory of socialism *within one country*, and prepared to turn Romania into a *closed*

fortress, immune to the corrupting revisionist ideas that had destroyed the Bolshevik legacy. (Tismaneanu 2003, 229; emphasis added)

It seems that by covering the entire rhetorical space, not place, with totalitarian discourse, Ceausescu's regime obliterates any *other* voice, public or private, to be heard, creating a fortress where no words of change can enter (Tismaneanu 2003, 229). Thus, by the time of the call for a revolutionary change in December 1989, Romanian public space is covered by the monologue of totalitarian discourse. Ceausescu's regime leaves no room for anything or anybody to access the public sphere: all words are taken; the rights to speak/write in public and for the public are under regime censorship; no information appears in the media unless approved by the Romanian Communist Party hard-liners; no place is left uncovered by the tributary language praising the leader. All Ceausescu's programmatic⁹ rhetoric promotes an exacerbated cult of personality discourse.¹⁰

What can happen, then, when totalitarian politics and discourse cover everything in the public and private lives of Romanian citizens? Can such tight political control be broken? And if so, how can such dramatic changes in vocabulary impact the Romanian nation?

This article argues that *rhetorical space* is an important critical dimension that assists understanding the discursive strategies of access and control at work in the Romanian public sphere at a time when revolutionary changes are modifying governance, politics, and civic rights all around.¹¹ As such, looking at 1989 Romania, can *rhetorical space* become an identification discursive strategy that carries consequences for the political and rhetorical changes to follow?

This might be the place and/or the space (to play a pun) in the article to introduce two important caveats when examining rhetorical crossings on the Romanian scene of December 1989. First, communist discourse needs not be categorized as mere propagandistic, not even as Romanian rhetoric, heavily indebted to propagandistic practices.¹² While propagandistic slogans are inherent to all communist discourse, it would be a oversimplification to examine the discourse of 1989 as propaganda-only rhetorical practices. Acknowledging that rhetoric as propagandistic persuasion carries metadiscursive frames utilized throughout Central and Eastern European models of communist communication, it is more useful for rhetorical studies to critically investigate the discursive practices that changed language and, along with language, people's attitudes in totalitarian states such as Romania.¹³

The second caveat involves the distinction between *rhetorical space* in communist discourse and *public sphere*, as defined in Habermasian terms and much acclaimed by critical scholarship throughout contemporary studies.¹⁴ While the scene of all communist discourse invokes the public sphere as the place for rhetorical presence in society, this study utilizes rhetorical space distinctively differently, as a rhetorical strategy of access for

communist rhetoric to control the public sphere in society.¹⁵ In totalitarian regimes such as Romania, rhetorical space underlines all strategic moves of discourse to control access and censor language and information, to monitor private and public life under such regimes. And once such a strategic move becomes a successful practice, as totalitarian space covering totalitarian rhetoric, what happens when a revolutionary discourse breaks into its realm? Can the closing of rhetorical space by Ceausescu's regime become one of the very factors to break with communism's terrorizing canon of language and policy alike?

In the fall of 1989, he [Ceausescu] was universally regarded as one of the world's last Stalinist dictators, totally obsessed with his grandiose industrial and architectural projects and viscerally hostile to Gorbachev's reform. Romanians lived in conditions of immense hardships. . . . Brazen propaganda ceaselessly extolled the valor of the fearless Great Leader and the scientific genius of his wife. Irritated by Gorbachev's reforms, Ceausescu stuck with his Stalinist tenets and intensified the repression. Romania seemed a nightmarish universe totally controlled by the Securitate. (Tismaneanu 2003, 229)

Examining official discourse on the cusp of revolutionary changes in Romania, in December 1989, this study argues that rhetorical space and the enthymematic argument by definition of "we the nation" capture rhetoric in action, showing complex discursive crossings that legitimize the relationship between rhetoric and history at such times. The study examines Ceausescu's last two speeches, delivered on December 20 and 21, 1989, as well as the official communiqué immediately following, issued on December 22, in order to argue that rhetorical space construed as discursive strategy of communist and/or postcommunist access and/or control invites certain enthymematic "we the nation" arguments by definition to enable complex political changes. For it is the relationship between rhetorical space and "we the nation" political arguments that still contribute to the ongoing unsettledness of postcommunist discourse twenty-five years later.¹⁶

Before addressing how rhetorical space and "we the nation" argument by definition shed light into communist and postcommunist discourse, let us provide a brief description of the Romanian political speeches occupying the scene at that time.

ROMANIA IN TWO DAYS: LOSING SPACE, GAINING SPACE IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE

By December 1989, most Central and Eastern European countries had already made history by turning out communist regimes. The nonviolent Velvet

Revolution in Czechoslovakia brings Václav Havel, a well-known dissident, from prison to the presidency; negotiations with Solidarity in Poland lead the country to new and promising governance and life; the East German population breaks down the Berlin wall; and Bulgarians and Hungarians celebrate their newly found discourse of freedom. Romania rests as a defying fortress where the only voice heard via megaphones of terror is the shouting political rant of Ceausescu against change, against *them*, the imperialistic, external forces that threaten his communist country with revolution.

On December 20, Ceausescu addresses the nation in a televised speech intended to explain the necessary military retaliations against the people of Timisoara.¹⁷ Threatening while calling for unity, the Romanian president utilizes his arsenal of totalitarian slogans and empty emphatic patriotic appeals:

It is necessary, dear comrades and friends, citizens of the Socialist Republic of Romania, to demonstrate the high responsibility and wisdom our people are capable of, and who, under the most difficult circumstances, offered major sacrifices throughout history. [...] Dear comrades and friends, dear compatriots, I call you to strengthen your collaboration and unity, to do everything in our power to preserve our freedom, to build socialism and to continue and create well-being for our people, and to preserve Romania's integrity and independence! (Martin 2011a)¹⁸

Repeating yet again his relentless pledge to a Stalinist ideology of control, Ceausescu rejects any possible dialogue:

My appeal is to 'all citizens of our country, without any difference of nationality, to come together and prove they fully understand the critical situation which had been created by the terrorist actions in Timisoara and to act in full unity and solidarity, defending socialism, doing everything in their power to never allow such states of affairs to ever occur again! ... It is necessary that we all reject with vehemence any action designed to act against our country, against our people—this peaceful nation building socialism—against any action designed to destroy our independence, our construction of a new socialist order in Romania! (Martin 2011a, 256)

The next day, December 21, 1989, Ceausescu attempts to address the nation at a mass rally in Bucharest at the Palace Square in front of the Central Committee Building. Once again, rhetorical space is heavily controlled, leaving only vehement appeals against anticommunist forces to be heard. History, however, has a different plan. Eight minutes into the speech,¹⁹ "Romanians refused to follow their leader's behest. ... For once, people abandoned their fear and interrupted the dictator's oratory" (Tismaneanu 2003, 231). Tismaneanu continues the account:

Television revealed his stupefaction and confusion. ... Intended to support Ceausescu's rule, the meeting turned into an anti-Ceausescu demonstration. Gathered in University Square in Bucharest, some demonstrators erected a barricade and continued their protest during the night of December 21. The same night, protesting students were massacred in the University Square. In spite of bloody repressing, the next day, December 22, 1989, large crowds blocked the streets of Bucharest and assaulted the Central Committee Building. ... The same day, December 22, the Ceausescus were arrested. They were quickly tried, and on December 25, their execution was announced. (231)

As the events unfold, on December 22, 1989, ad hoc representatives of the National Salvation Front issue a communiqué to the country, presented by Ion Iliescu, a former member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party.²⁰ The communiqué appears in print and is broadcast on national television, delivered by Iliescu. All of a sudden, the rhetorical space is freed of Ceausescu's control. Iliescu, a recognized political figure, becomes one of the most well-known representatives of the Council of the National Salvation Front. By December 27, 1989, Ion Iliescu is named president of this group and will soon to become ad interim president of Romania (1990–1992).²¹

The communiqué functions as a proclamation that nullifies the previous regime, reorganizes political structures under the newly formed National Salvation Front, and calls for the population to cooperate during this transfer of power. And for the first time in several decades the rhetorical space breaks up: Iliescu's anticommunist language calls for civic participation and national unity:

We live a historical moment. Ceausescu's clique, who destroyed our country, was eliminated from power. Now we all know and recognize the victory all our country is celebrating, for it is the result of the sacrificing spirit of the Romanian masses of all nationalities. Primarily, the victory is the result of the spirit of sacrifice of our admirable youth, who restored, for all of us, our sentiments of national dignity as they paid this victory with the price of their own blood. Special merit in this endeavor is due to the people who, for years on end, had placed their lives in danger in order to protest against the tyranny.²²

In the years to follow, Iliescu becomes the president of Romania in free elections (1992–1996; reelected 2000–2004) as Romanians join the rest of the Central and Eastern European countries to enter postcommunist political transition.²³

Looking at these speeches presented to the Romanian nation over two days, this article explores whether the appeal for national unity and identity, set by Ceausescu's speeches, differs radically from Ion Iliescu's (new) appeal to the nation, the very next day. I argue that precisely the

relationship between rhetorical space and the enthymematic use of the "we the nation" argument by definition carries effectively the political transition of 1989 Romania, assisting audiences to engage in political dialogue and prepare for new participation in the public sphere.²⁴

RHETORICAL SPACE AND TOTALITARIAN WORDS

Why is rhetorical space important when examining totalitarian discourse? Taking into account the Romanian case, rhetorical space signifies the strategic access and control over discourse, whether by occupation of physical and political locations for rhetorical action or by covering official and/or public enactment of discourse. As briefly indicated, I argue that rhetorical space as a rhetorical dimension represents more than a mere place and/or rhetorical context onto which to locate discourse in the public sphere.²⁵

As history tells the story, by the time of Reagan's famous appeal to Gorbachev in 1987 to tear down the Berlin Wall, Romanian official rhetoric had already turned totalitarian. Ceausescu's rhetorical reign dictated public language and public address, covering the entire spectrum of political life in the country. In the twenty-five years since Ceausescu's demise, comprehensive historical, political, and sociocultural analyses of that time assume that rhetorical and political addresses performed and legitimated by the Romanian Communist Party leader took place inside a totalitarian space, behind yet another Iron Curtain, this time much more literal and with less figurative power.²⁶ Rather, by 1989 the space in which official discourse is performed is an intransigent platform in which none of the other alternative discourses can even begin to infer presence. Thus, for Ceausescu's regime, rhetorical space is a coercive strategy of discourse, intended to allow access only to Romanian Communist Party approved rhetoric to occupy the public sphere in its entirety.²⁷ Following the Stalinist model of coercive access to communist discourse, Ceausescu's regime brings spatiality as a rhetorical dimension ruled by censorship and biased media to control every single domain of communication in the country. By occupying the public sphere of Romania in its entirety, Ceausescu and his regime control population participation, leaving no space for otherness and/or oppositional voices of citizenry.

Essential for the critical examination of Romanian political rhetoric appears to be, in December 1989, how space for rhetorical action, rather than place or time, takes priority in dismantling communist rhetoric; thus, motivating and encouraging Romanians to decolonize themselves and the Romanian language from its totalitarian yoke.

It is always a challenge to explain an aberration of discourse such as totalitarian rhetoric, in communist forms and otherwise. By 1989, Romanian rhetorical space takes on strategic life where communist vocabulary enters deeper and deeper into the fabric of public life, where rules for public speech

policies codify and ratify only one legal way to speak, write, and think—in accordance with the regime's codex for Romanians as communist citizens.²⁸

Knowing how rhetorical space was strategically utilized throughout the regime as a tool for rhetorical and political control, one can understand why the Romanian dictator could not accept dissent, even if imminent throughout Central and Eastern European political arenas.²⁹ Long before 1989, under Ceausescu's orders, rhetorical space in Romania meant control over media, over information resources, and over public and private venues for communication, leaving the stage only for the discourse of the leader to be enacted, as absolutist promises of pure Stalinist-style demagoguery delivered from the tribune (yet another space).³⁰ After all, for the entirety of his ruling, Ceausescu speaks from a tribune of total control. Rhetorical space in December 1989 carries only the purpose to ensure that totalitarian rhetoric permeates all aspects of Romanian life; such space becomes *the* way for Romanians to demonstrate their civic and political existence as citizens.

In his televised speech describing that the revolutionary events in Timisoara³¹ clearly infringe on public space for political and discursive action, the Communist leader justifies military force as a measure to bring order back to communist space for a communist life.³²

On December 16 and 17, under the pretext of impeding the application of a legal judicial sentence, several groups of hooligan elements organized a series of manifestations and incidents, attacking some state institutions, destroying and looting a number of buildings, stores, and public buildings. And on Dec 17, they (these hooligan elements) intensified their activity against state and [Communist] Party institutions, including attacks against some military bases. On the basis of how these events developed and from the declarations of some of the participants in these events, these (hooligan) groups intended to create chaos and civil disorder and to destroy city institutions and the general welfare of the city, as well as to signal to other centers and towns to take similar action of opposition.³³

He continues, emphasizing that if communist rhetorical space gets disrupted, then the entire country becomes destabilized, creating conditions to destroy the independence and sovereignty of our socialist country,³⁴ stop the progress of socialism in Romania, and "place Romania back under foreign domination, to terminate the socialist development of our country."³⁵ Offended by the violation of space, Ceausescu legitimizes the use of military power to restore its control:

As the activities of antinational, terrorist groups continued, the military units—in conformity with the Romanian Constitution and Romanian legislation—were forced to defend themselves, to defend civic order and the safety of the entire city, in fact, to defend civil order on behalf of the entire country.³⁶

Ironically, what the leader fears is that rhetorical space becomes the dissident element that allows other-ness and/or oppositional views to shake the fortress called Romania.³⁶

On December 21, 1989, totalitarian discourse is literally and politically taken offstage by the Romanian people, as they seize the opportunity to bring into rhetorical space a new discourse of freedom and civic participation.

For having faith in the solid control over the events taking place in the country, Ceausescu starts his speech from the tribune at the Palace Square in front of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party.³⁷ At first glance, communist rhetorical space is set: the Palace Square is heavily packed with military and Securitate forces, pictures of the leader (and his wife) together with slogans praising him are carried everywhere, people attending know they have to applaud and demonstrate allegiance to him and to the regime. From his secured place, Ceausescu is ready to occupy, yet again, his rhetorical space and the country.

And yet. Within eight minutes, the speech gets literally and physically broken by waves of people uttering words of opposition, words of rebellion, words of change. More and more words disrupt the wooden language set in place for so long by the leader, and these words literally break communist rhetorical space. The Romanian dictator has no (more) words to say, abandoning place, space, and appeals to the nation.³⁸ For one unique, historical, political, and rhetorical moment, the call to "we the Romanian people" becomes suspended between the silence created by the void of Communist Party discourse and the grouping of civic space and appeals to be presented on the public scene, in a televised revolution.³⁹

TRADING RHETORICAL SPACE FOR "WE THE PEOPLE" ARGUMENTS BY DEFINITION: A STRATEGY OF TRANSITION

Not even twenty-four hours later, Ion Iliescu, the emerging president of the National Salvation Front, presents a proclamation that dismantles Ceausescu's regime, calling on the citizens of Romania to assist with political changes in the country.⁴⁰ Iliescu's speech on December 22, 1989, is not a samizdat speech. It is, rather, a call for the nation to support the National Salvation Front and the anti-Ceausescu political leaders in their efforts to secure the well-being of the country while legitimizing the political transition sweeping Romania.⁴¹

Citizens,

We live a historical moment. Ceausescu's clique, who destroyed our country, was eliminated from power. Now we all know and recognize the victory all our country is celebrating, for it is the result of the sacrificing spirit of the Romanian masses of all nationalities. Primarily, the

victory is the result of the spirit of sacrifice of our admirable youth, who restored, for all of us, our sentiments of national dignity as they paid this victory with the price of their own blood. Special merit in this endeavor is due to the people who, for years on end, had placed their lives in danger in order to protest against the tyranny. (Marin 2005a, 296)

Aiming "to establish democracy, liberty, and dignity for the Romanian people," Ion Iliescu dismantles the strategies of control held by the former rhetorical space of communism to make room for new political discourse to occur in the country.

From this moment on, all political power structures established by the Ceausescu clan are dissolved. The Romanian Government is dissolved. The Romanian State Council and all its institutions cease their activity. The entire political power in our state is transferred to the Council of National Salvation Front. This political organ will have under its command the Superior Military Council, which coordinates the entire activity of the Romanian Army as well as the units of the Minister of Internal Affairs. All Ministers and central organizations within the current infrastructure will continue their activity as normal, becoming subordinated to the National Salvation Front in order to ensure the normal development of the entire economic and social life in our country. (Marin 2005a, 298; my translation)

Can such reversal of political power be done only with one political appeal, in a rhetorical space not yet void of its strategic powers? To legitimize political change and locate the National Salvation Front as the new political actor/leader in a newly opened rhetorical space, "we the nation" as argument by definition needs to be introduced.⁴²

Examined in recent argumentation theory scholarship, argument by definition is delineated most specifically by McGee (1999) as an argument "advanced in support of a claim for purposes of framing that claim to the advantage of the rhetor." As indicated by Walton and Macagno (2009), an argument by definition, unlike an argument from definition, shifts the primary locus of definition from a fragment of reality to the definition's user/rhetor. Subsequently, the user advances an argument based on his or her definition or redefinition of a situation. McGee (1999) sums up in his research that "the argument by definition is employed when a controversial definition is advanced in support of a claim for purposes of framing that claim to the advantage of the rhetor."

For it is the call for national unity by defining Romanians as non- or anticommunist/Ceausescu's regime that legitimates the new leaders to access rhetorical space that validates effective political action.⁴³ A brief, controlled, and solemn proclamation to the Romanian citizens, the communiqué calls

for unity around the defining "we who/what we are *not* (any more)" as Romanians/nation" rather than "we who/what we are as Romanians/nation," a necessary rhetorical move in order to fill the vacuum left by such dramatic events with and for the citizens of a future to be determined, not yet out of Communist regime country. While both political and rhetorical spaces are still somewhat unoccupied, such speech has to provide legitimacy in reconfiguring both the public sphere and the definition of the nation, a hopeful and dignified anti-Ceausescu people of Romania. As such, Ilescu's use of the "we (anticommunist/anti-Ceausescu) the nation" as an argument by definition becomes *the* rhetorical action, calling Romanian people a noncommunist people ready to reform and renew the rhetorical space that legitimizes their public and civic life.

It is worth noting that such a rhetorical move to populate newly freed rhetorical space with a cogent and coherent argument by definition of the nation is not necessarily new: or distinctly Romanian in the 1989-1990 political discourse of Central and Eastern Europe (and elsewhere).⁴⁴ As for the "we the nation" argument by definition in the negative, and for arguments from definition and/or negation, the U.S. political scene is the best rhetorical space for such strategies that populate the vast majority of presidential and electoral campaigns in current times.⁴⁵

Ilescu's argument by definition stands as an effective strategy to unite the people in a crucial moment of political turmoil. Yet along with it there is a cultural/political enthymematic qualifier introduced that is a successful rhetorical move that remains a staple strategy for all postcommunist times to come.

The discursive structure "we the (. . .) nation" becomes the framework for all arguments defining national identity utilized by all political leaders in post-1989 Romania.⁴⁶ While such a move is not unique to Romanian transition from totalitarianism, utilizing a qualifier as a political/cultural enthymeme for national identity arguments is inherent to all Romanian public interactions for the past twenty-five years.⁴⁷ As a characteristic of rhetorical style for totalitarian/communist and/or Stalinist political language,⁴⁸ descriptive language consisting of long series of epithets and sentences full of qualifiers is extensively used.⁴⁹ Ilescu's communiqué introduces the anti-Ceausescu unifying appeal to the nation, legitimizing unity against the political regime, assuming that by definition, all Romanians are against the previous regime and as such qualified to be reintroduced as Romanian people. After all, how can such appeals redefine the nation in the middle of a revolution other than by reinforcing the unity *against*, rather than the unity *for*?

Because this study focuses on the appeals on and for the argument by definition of "we the (anticommunist) nation/people," it is imperative to recognize the construction of the enemy as an essential characteristic emblematic for both communist and postcommunist rhetoric.⁵⁰ In the past

twenty-five years of research on Central and Eastern European transition, there have been extensive studies on the "we-they" dyad, emphasizing that the rhetorical construction of the enemy constitutes *the* canonic strategy for all communist discourse and, in global times, a most effective political strategy of dissociation.⁵¹ It is evident that both the rhetorical space utilized in Ceausescu's regime to colonize the public sphere as well as the strategic use of national identity arguments by definition in post-1989 speeches are largely constructed on basis of the well-established communist legacy of "we-they" (Marin 2006, 214). Marin describes this dyad inherent to totalitarian discourse as follows:

Personified either in the Romanian people or in the (imperialist) villains of an international conspiracy, "we" and "they" created normative and perfunctory duos for the epideictic discourse. The "we" of totalitarian political discourse functions fundamentally as a homogenous rhetorical group, never living without "them," always referring to a plural of "otherness," thus standing enthymematically and filling all political identities of villains and foes: enemies of the country, of the state, of the region, of motherland, etc.—a long list in the Romanian paradigm of 1989. Such a perfunctory difference imposed and re-enacted for over 45 years might explain some of the difficult challenges of the rhetoric of transformation in post-communist Romania. (Marin 2012, 456)

However, looking at the Romanian postcommunist scene, two rhetorical implications on the effects of strategic use of "we the (anti-)Ceausescu/anticommunist) nation" in political speeches call our attention. From December 22, 1989, on, the "we the nation that is not communist" argument by definition introduced in the communiqué constitutes a unifying appeal in the aftermath of the revolution. And yet at the official condemnation of communism declared by Traian Basescu, the current president of Romania, in 2006, such argument by definition remains contested in the public sphere.⁵² The other implication refers to the proliferation of the "we the (communist/true Romanian) nation" argument by definition, which was exhaustively used by Ceausescu's rhetoric and which gains more and more support in nationalist discourse—an important contender in most postcommunist countries.

RHETORICAL CROSSINGS: POST-1989 SPACE, AUTHORITARIANISM, AND NATIONALISM

Returning to how rhetorical space is construed to serve totalitarian discourse in pre-1989 Romania and to the complex function of argument by definition for "we the (anticommunist) nation" imperative for post-1989 discourse,

several considerations on postcommunist transition need to be addressed. In the twenty-five years since, the Romanian public sphere witnessed the eruption of national narratives and a proliferation of political parties; a never-ending flurry of arguments by and from definition on democratic action; and the unsettled political space for what is called political transition from Ceausescu's regime. And yet looking back at the December 1989 moment defining a fundamental change of political regime and discursive action, one can clearly state that the relationship between rhetorical space and the argument by definition of "we the nation" continue to carry high rhetorical importance.

Rhetorical space in totalitarian discourse offers a unique opportunity to examine how such a monolithic platform of political dominance, in this case, Ceausescu-style communist rhetoric, translates legitimacy for postcommunist political action. How does the relationship between rhetorical space and political persuasion change when plural parties and candidates enter the arena of public discourse, if at all?⁵³ Is the imminent resurgence of authoritarian discourse, twenty-five years later, directly connected to the unsettled control over space in the political spheres of these countries? Does the contextualist approach rapidly affecting political life in the area impact in any way the arguments by definition when addressing the nation? Recently, Michael Ignatieff (2014) contributed a series on authoritarian rhetoric in *The New York Review of Books*, returning it to center stage as a strategic approach to access and control political life in many postcommunist countries.⁵⁴ Putin's current ruling as an authoritarian leader over a reconstructed Soviet-turned-Russian public sphere raises the question of the function of postcommunist rhetorical space in all countries formerly behind the Iron Curtain.⁵⁵

Post-1989, the enthymematic "we the (Romanian and/or anticomunist/postcommunist/democratic/socialist/capitalist/European/nationalist) nation/people" remains a unifying strategy when it comes to political argument and national discourse on identity. The fluidity and unsettledness of such rhetorical, cultural, and political enthymeme are used more and more to strategically cover political platforms (pun intended), unsettling yet once more the discursive spaces freed twenty-five years ago for public debate on democratic and civic participation.

The fight for rhetorical legitimacy in the public spheres of post-1989 continues to exhibit characteristics of transitional rhetoric, along with and aside from rich and novel approaches to past and present strategies for emergent political discourse aligned with democratic and global demands of political life in a global community. Twenty-five years later, Romanian political discourse, similar to all countries within the Central and Eastern European arena, offers vibrant rhetorical actions in the public sphere, calling for scholars to develop even more critical inquiries on postcommunist unsettled rhetorics of national identity, ethnic conflict, and conceptualizations of the nation-state. Twenty-five years later, such postcommunist rhetoric articulates beautiful shades of gray.⁵⁶

NOTES

1. This entire collection strives to make this point, intending also to explain the distinct ways in which different national and international discourse carries such changes and their respective dramatic consequences.
2. Two caveats are in place: Caveat (a) is that each of the Central/Eastern European countries changes its vocabulary within specific historical and political conditions, as for instance Poland's case is fundamentally distinct from Romania's case. See Marin and Ornatowski (2011), in which such cases are studied from both a rhetorical and a historical perspective. Caveat (b) refers to the levels of communist/anticommunist discourse already part of each distinct public sphere for each of the mentioned countries, namely Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and even Yugoslavia and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). As explained in a multitude of scholarly studies in the past quarter-century, this particular issue has been amply discussed either in case-by-case studies or in regional and geopolitical research on the area. Since this falls out of the purpose of this article, the author focuses on selected works on Romanian communist rhetoric highlighted by such scholars as Vladimir Tismăneanu, Noemi Marin, and Lavinia Stan, to name a few, who in their research address mainly the Romanian case.
3. See Gorbachev (1987), Havel (1990), or Goetz-Szankiewicz (1992). There is such an extensive body of literature on both *amizdat* and *perestroika* that the mentioned concepts (*amizdat*, *perestroika*, *glasnost*) are assumed to be well known to readers.
4. It is an important point to make when comparing rhetorical contexts and even 1989 communist and anticomunist speeches from these countries. The long-standing history of Havel's case (Czechoslovakia) or George Konrad's well-established presence (Hungary) among international communist elites as well as the political writings produced for several years during the Solidarity antigovernmental and anticommunist struggles were not part of Romanian dissent scene; see Marin (2007). The lack of grassroots voices might explain some of the violent reaction to such dissent language, in particular in the year 1990, in the Mineriade street fights that created a civil conflict immediately after the fall of communism. For a description of the Mineriade and their activities immediately after 1990, see Delatant (2004).
5. See Tismăneanu, Dobrină, and Vasile (2007).
6. Detailed descriptions of Ceausescu's speeches in 1989 are included in the following studies: Marin (2006, 2010, 2011b, 2012).
7. Timișara events are explained in detail in Marin (2010, 2012).
8. Ceausescu's speech delivered on December 22 is available, translated by Marin (2011b); Ceausescu's official speech delivered on December 22 is also included in the study and translated by Noemi Marin.
9. *Programmatic* is a communist term, used by Communist Parties throughout to ensure a scientific-socialist approach to social, political, cultural, and economic actions set each five years and approved by the respective Communist Party Congress.
10. In the past decade, multiple exhibits and public presentations on Ceausescu's era, on communist history, and on communist propaganda have been hosted by the Museum of National History and the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, to name just two. Two major exhibits in 2007 were extremely well received, organized by the mentioned museums: one, titled "The Golden Era: Between Reality and Propaganda," and the other, "Communism in Romania: 1945-1989," both presented documents and artifacts attesting to Ceausescu's dictatorial rule and the cult of personality. See <http://www.mnir.ro/index.php/comunismul-in-romania-1945-1989/>.
11. The author's conceptual distinction between *space* and *place* is presented in some detail in the following section of the article.
12. Bogdan Stefanescu, in his recent research, proposes a rapprochement between colonizing practices and colonization of discourse in communist Romania. See Stefanescu (2013).
13. The author makes the distinction pointing to communist Romania in 1989, where the examination of Ceausescu's rigid rhetoric reveals "the dissonance between political regime and its public, precipitating the moment of crisis and accelerating the pace of revolutionary change" (Marin 2011b, 235).
14. The discussion of public sphere from a Habermasian perspective is not part of this article. The definition of *public sphere*, however, is based on Habermas' concept. See Habermas (1990a, 1990b).

In addition, *place* is used in this article to signify location, and therefore it is not considered conceptual for the arguments advanced in this study.

15. Gerold Hauser examines the public sphere at length in his work. See Hauser (1999).

16. The author's numerous works on Ceausescu and Romanian totalitarian discursive practices listed in the study include also arguments about the continuation of a "gray" rhetoric, still unsettled in post-communism. Agreeing with Adam Michnik's famous position (regarding Poland) on the solution for post-communist politics, Martin conceptualizes "gray" rhetoric as an unsettled yet forgiving public discourse that engages negotiation and tolerance for political post in the public sphere.

17. Detailed description of the historical context for the Romanian revolution of 1989 is presented in Martin (2011b).

18. See the original text in Ceausescu (1999a).

19. See the video posted on Ceausescu's last discourse in December 1989: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa8VHx8SU>.

20. For Iliescu's communiqué, addressing the Romanian people on December 22, 1989, see Martin (2004).

21. Important accounts of these days are to be found in an extensive number of publications recording the series of events. However, an interesting document is Iliescu's own rendition of the events, as recorded in a dialogue with Vladimir Tismăneanu. See Tismăneanu (2004).

22. See Iliescu's *Communique*, translated by Martin (2005), 2nd; see also Martin (2004).

23. See Iliescu's own memoirs presented in Tismăneanu (2004), as well as Paul Dobrescu's (1997) book on Iliescu's 1996 political campaign for presidency.

24. This is true for most Central/Eastern European countries, as the resurgence of nationalistic vocabulary is on the rise and some of the countries continue to experience communist political views as a majority.

25. While Georges Bachelard (1944) posits "space" as a poetic dimension, I treat space here as the public (official-governing) platform that allows access to participants in order to perform a speech act and to engage an audience for a persuasive appeal. Hauser (1999) uses the notion of "public sphere" in a somewhat similar way. However, in a totalitarian regime like Ceausescu's, the political occupation of rhetorical space is in my view an overlooked critical angle necessary to explain the unique totalitarian features of Romanian rhetoric of 1989.

26. Many scholars of Romanian 1989 and postcommunism bring up similar points about Ceausescu's discourse.

27. As indicated previously, the author makes a distinction between *space* and *place*, as *place* appears to indicate only location, rather than an entire construction of where/when/how to occupy the public sphere, as *space* does in totalitarian discourse.

28. While this is not specific only for Romania, the level of political control provided under Ceausescu's dictatorship in 1989 is the most dramatic and traumatic for its citizens. See Tismăneanu, Dobrină, and Vasile (2007).

29. This refers mainly to Ceausescu's speech delivered on December 21. However, all speeches delivered in the final three days of his regime indicate an almost identical attitude.

30. While the author's listed studies since 2010 on Romanian dictatorship address some similar points, this article focuses most explicitly on the discussion of Romanian communist space as a rhetorical perspective.

31. See the description of the events that took place in Timisoara in 1989 (Tismăneanu, Dobrină, and Vasile 2007).

32. The difference in capitalization between "Communist" versus "communist" is due to the fact that the former refers to the Romanian Communist Party, while the latter refers to the political regime per se.

33. See the translation of Ceausescu's speech (Martin 2011a, 250).

34. See Ceausescu's speech (Martin 2011a, 251).

35. *Ibid.*, 252.

36. No one questions Ceausescu's megalomania or his completely abnormal behavior as a tyrannical leader. Most historical and political studies illustrate in detail Ceausescu's obsession with safety and with secure places for his speeches, public appearances, etc. The militarized approach to public communication becomes a major concern for him in the final years of his regime. This translates also into an occupied political space completely void of any opposition or alternative opinions. For more, see Martin (2011c).

37. This is not to say that he was not aware of the dissident rhetoric, on the contrary. But the Romanian public sphere is closely watched and no dissident discourse enters it, as the *Final Report on the Crimes of Communism* attests through official documents. Romanian dissent comes mostly from the outside of the country, rather than from organized anticommunist discourse inside it.

38. Ceausescu is used to interruptions, but not like the one occurring on that day. His speech in November is interrupted sixty-seven times by long moments of applause and ovations from more than 3,000 Communist Party representatives, willing to demonstrate their pledge to the authoritarian leader. See Tismăneanu, Dobrină, and Vasile (2007, 452).

39. The speech is televised by Ceausescu's orders. When it gets interrupted, the cameras continue to record and the television stations continue to broadcast, creating as such a unique moments in revolutionary history—a live documentary of the changes taking place. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa8VHx8SU>.

40. An important account of these days is recorded in the memoirs offered during the dialogue Vladimir Tismăneanu has with Ion Iliescu. See Tismăneanu (2004, 183–200).

41. As events unfold on December 22, 1989, Ion Iliescu, former member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, opponent to Ceausescu's dictatorial practices, appears on national television, delivering the communiqué translated here. Iliescu is not the only person appearing on national television that day; however, he is one of the most recognized political figures, and from that day on he becomes one of the most well-known representatives of the Council of the National Salvation Front. By December 27, 1989, Iliescu is already the president of the above-mentioned council. These roles lead to his position as the ad interim president of Romania from 1990–1992.

42. The study utilizes argument by definition, but there is yet another important dimension to be visited for scholars examining arguments by and from definition when dealing with national appeals in communist and postcommunist discourse. See McGee (1999); Walton and Macagno (2009); Minielli (2010); Williams and Young (2005); and Zarefsky (2004).

43. Of note, Ceausescu was in hiding but still alive at the time the Communiqué was presented to the nation.

44. Throughout contemporary history, most postrevolutionary and postwar discourse carries such rhetorical redefinitions for national appeals when addressing political, economic, social, cultural, or national change.

45. See studies on argument by definition and the American presidency by Minielli (2010) and Zarefsky (2004).

46. Again, this is not specific to Romanian transition, but it is important for its context.

47. The emblems filling up the rhetorical context for the "we the — nation/people" argument can be translated as "we the (anticommunist/post-socialist/democratic) nation/people" for Ion Iliescu's presidency; "we the (anticommunist and European) nation/people" for Emil Constantinescu during his presidency (1996–2000); and for Traian Băsescu, Romanian president since 2004, the emblem remains "we the (European/democratic/capitalist/anticommunist) nation/people."

48. I use *totalitarian* as a rhetorical stylistic term that fits mostly Ceausescu's discursive style, specific to this study. Stalinist rhetoric carries also additional characteristics specific to both history and country that are not intended to be examined here.

49. One can easily identify a communist address by the lengthy list of epithets adding more and more descriptive insight intended to justify for its audience the benefits of living a communist life in a communist society.

50. For the past twenty-five years, most scholarship on Central/Eastern Europe and communist history invokes the construction of the enemy. It is hoped that more and more rhetorical studies will focus on this communist construction in order to create more theoretical perspectives on the specific versus general rhetorical arguments constructed in political spheres on the enemy.

51. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the dyad "we-they" in political campaigns is used ad infinitum around the globe. In postcommunist times, in particular in Russian and Eurasian political discourse, this dyad reveal nationalist connotations that rhetorically can add novel nuances to postcommunist rhetorical discourse and political sphere.

52. "The condemnation of the communist regime as 'illegitimate and criminal' in a speech by the Romanian president in December 2006, one of the most dramatic and traumatic public actions, framed an important rhetorical attitude toward communist history, as it logically and legally proclaimed the termination of a historical era. In doing so, all participants in this historical process have to address purging questions of legitimacy along with attitudes toward a Romanian history of the future. Following in

the footcrops of Czech and East German lustration laws, the monumental Final Report of the Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania put forth the political response of Romania as a nation dedicated to rebuilding public trust, and with it, a new history (Marin 2012, 457).

53. Romanian post-1989 witnessed the proliferation of an extraordinary number of political parties. The regulations on political party creation came only later, with constitutional changes in Romania.

54. Michael Ignatieff (2014), in his extensive review of most current scholarship on postcommunist and post-1989 changes in most countries from the area, highlights the recurrence of authoritarianism as a political choice for these governments and the peoples of these countries. The prime minister of Hungary in recent times has claimed the need for an "illiberal" state, which also involves a distinct function for rhetorical space, if one is to follow his lead (Orbán, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktior/>).

55. See Jerzy Aser's (2003) volume on transitional rhetoric, published in Poland, pointing to some of the mentioned unsettled political and rhetorical concepts that continue to haunt postcommunist countries.

56. See Michnik (2003).

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Bringing in Earthly Redemption: Slobodan Milosevic and the National Myth of Kosovo

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Slobodan Milosevic's rise from a minor Communist Party figure to the eventual Serbian president was bound up in rhetoric. Specifically, I examine how Milosevic rhetorically recast and modified the myth of Kosovo. The myth of Kosovo is one of the fundamental pillars of Serbian identity. I argue Milosevic modified the fundamental themes of the myth—disunity and unity—to bring an earthly redemption to Serbs in the late 1980s. Milosevic's use of the Kosovo myth cemented his hold on presidential leadership in 1989 and is an important example of how past events are fruitful topics for political leaders trying to build nationalist movements.

The end of the Cold War marked a difficult transition period for many Central and Eastern European nations. These states struggled to create or maintain governments, economies, and political cultures. Nowhere was this truer than in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s. By mid-1989, there were significant changes occurring in the Balkan nation, including the Communist leadership losing power, fissures in the ethnic union of Yugoslavia, and daily street riots throughout the countryside, as Slobodan Milosevic was about to complete his rise to power in Yugoslav Republic of Serbia. To cement his leadership, Milosevic orchestrated a huge public relations campaign that included mass rallies of supporters, a constant barrage of messages from the Milosevic-controlled media, and numerous speeches by Milosevic himself. This article accounts for one aspect of this campaign, specifically: how Milosevic wielded the national myth of Kosovo in his bid for presidential power.

National myths are a potent form of discourse defining a nation's place within the cosmic order of the world (see Abizadeh 2004; Adak 2003). All

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