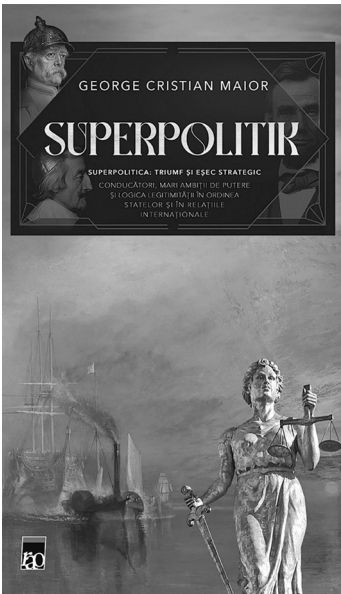

EDITORIAL EVENTS

A New Concept in the Study of International Relations: Superpolitics

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GEORGE CRISTIAN MAIOR, Superpolitik: Triumf și eșec strategic: Conducători, mari ambiții de putere și logica legitimității în ordinea statelor și în relațiile internaționale
Foreword by Academician IOAN-AUREL POP
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THE NAME of Professor George Cristian Maior, Ph.D., is familiar not only to specialists, but also to the general public, as the current ambassador of Romania to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (previously a successful ambassador of Romania to Washington, between 2015 and 2021) is an outstanding personality of our public life. He is a tenured professor at the National School of Political and Administrative Studies, the Department of International Relations and European Integration. Over the course of the past few decades, George Cristian Maior completed thorough theoretical studies at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and at George Washington University in the United States, also acquiring a comprehensive practical experience in the field of international law and international relations in the performance of his duties (chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Romanian Embassy in Dublin, Ireland, secretary of state and head of the

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Department for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Defense Policy of the Ministry of National Defense, where he competently conducted the negotiations for Romania's accession to NATO, between 2001 and 2004). Last but not least, he was also one of the longest-serving directors of the Romanian Intelligence Service. Beyond the responsibilities and the duties fulfilled in the framework of governmental institutions, Professor George Cristian Maior, Ph.D., has also carried out a significant didactic and scholarly activity. His CV lists a large number of books that he authored or co-authored, collective volumes that he coordinated, as well as dozens of studies published in collective volumes or in prestigious magazines from all over the world, without forgetting the dozens of conferences held at universities and distinguished institutions in both Europe and the USA.

In this context, we should mention here the fact that the present book did not appear out of the blue, coming instead in the wake of some older reflections on the evolution of international relations over the past few centuries, formulated by a theorist who is also a practitioner with remarkable achievements in the field. A previous book, *Noul Aliat: Regândirea politicii de apărare a României la începutul secolului XXI* (The new ally: Rethinking the Romanian defense policy at the beginning of the 21st century)(2nd edition, rev. and enl., 2012), brings together studies, articles and presentations drawn up or made at the time of Romania's accession negotiations to the EU and NATO, focusing on a number of aspects pertaining to the new strategic identity of Romania after the year 2000 and to the geopolitical developments in the region of the Black Sea and Southeast Europe. The area in question and the problematic thereof have always occupied a privileged position among the scholarly concerns of George Cristian Maior. He has investigated the changes experienced by the field of national security, by defense policies and strategies, drawing on the work of reputed authors such as Robert Cooper and Robert Kaplan, whose assessment of the international challenges of the 21st century is still highly relevant. In a later book, titled *Incertitudine: Gândire strategică și relații internaționale în secolul XXI* (Uncertainty: Strategic thinking and international relations in the 21st century)(3rd edition, 2015), George Cristian Maior objectively and rationally reassesses the doctrines and the concepts underpinning international relations, in light of the security challenges posed at the dawn of the third millennium by terrorist groups or by rogue states that generate local tensions and clashes which could potentially spread over larger geographic areas.

Just like the previous works, the present book authored by Professor George Cristian Maior, *Superpolitik: Superpolitics: Triumph and Strategic Failure: Leaders, Vaulting Ambitions and the Logic of Legitimacy in State Order and International Relations*, draws on a large number of historical sources, on an updated specialist bibliography, featuring interpretations that are always supported by

scholarly and/or logical arguments. In a combination between a wealth of information on world and Romanian history and the good theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields of diplomacy and strategy, the present volume comes as a certain and valuable contribution to the unbiased and accurate investigation of the history of international relations. The new concept advanced by the author, *superpolitics*, is an innovation when it comes to the analysis and interpretation of the dynamics of the international system. With the help of case studies, George Cristian Maior explains the emergence of a particular great state/power/leader, what the states or leaders in question actually were, and what their supporters created around them. Individual character as well as specific circumstances/opportunities led to the emergence of leaders in crisis moments, who exercised their charisma and personal power over the communities that engendered them, within various political regimes and ideologies. The author manages to identify the mechanisms behind the power wielded by several leaders who influenced the lives of their fellow citizens, placing these more or less positive figures in the context of the crises, upheavals, and wars that not only caused tremendous human or material losses but also eroded the international system.

The first chapter outlines the new concept of *superpolitik*, bringing it into the specialist world literature. George Cristian Maior defines *superpolitik* as a special exercise in the application of power, distancing himself from the two opposing paradigms employed over the past decades by the specialists in international policy: *realpolitik* and *idealpolitik*. Thus, the author explains the differences between *realpolitik* and *superpolitik* as having to do with the fact that

realpolitik entails a method or a philosophy of effecting a policy or a strategy based on a careful assessment of the balance of power, of the possibilities for action, in keeping with the resources and the objectives provided by the immediate reality. On the other hand, superpolitik often comes to include imbalances and fractures (deliberate or incidental) which can dramatically transcend the context of the current realities—political, strategic, or economic—and is aimed at the creation of a new order, of other types and models of balance. At the same time, as we are about to see, superpolitik is not just about power and the calculations thereof, about pure strategy, as it also includes concepts and ideas of legitimacy, justice, ethical models, ideologies, likely to bestow another qualitative dimension upon political order. (p. 8)

The experience acquired in his various positions at national and international level, combined with the in-depth study of the specialist literature, have allowed the diplomat and scholar George Cristian Maior to conceptually distance himself from both *realpolitik* and *idealpolitik*, which are nevertheless melded into an integrative approach.

The research skills and abilities displayed by Professor George Cristian Maior prove that he is one of the leading experts in the history of international relations, especially when it comes to the Euro-Atlantic space. His many books, studies and communications indicate that we are dealing with a scholar whose work is known and appreciated not just among Romanian specialists, but also abroad. The considerations of the illustrious political scientist George Friedman or of historian Edward N. Luttwak come to confirm the intellectual and managerial qualities, as well as the innovative approach of Professor George Cristian Maior, whose latest book shows that new paradigms can be formulated when approaching the history of international relations, and that new interpretative and methodological approaches are likely to shed new light on the historical evolution of states. Relevant in this regard is the testimony of Edward N. Luttwak:

George Maior's book questions a number of concepts widely accepted in political science (international relations included), proving that the concrete developments around the world are also the outcome of the objectives, fears, knowledge, ignorance and delusions of individual leaders, and not only of systemic or local tendencies.

Starting from the undeniable historical reality of an international system that has been extremely dynamic and complicated, especially in recent decades, Professor George Cristian Maior contends that, for obvious reasons, the current historians of international relations are no longer capable of describing this increasingly complex reality in the conventional terms of the specialist literature. Therefore, the author draws on nearly all the recent developments in political science, in the anthropology and the sociology of international relations, and even in the history of collective mentalities, his book presenting us with a new theoretical and methodological construct surrounding the notion proposed by him, that of *superpolitik*. The author has never intended to write a fact-based, positivist history of international relations and of the power structures around the world, favoring instead a conceptual and structural approach centered on the feelings and attitudes displayed by political leaders (without overlooking Nicolae Ceaușescu), on the events and phenomena that influenced the behavior of both politicians and the masses. Thus, Professor George Cristian Maior challenges us to an unconventional but highly captivating and fruitful interpretation of many pages of world history, from Antiquity to the contemporary reality. □