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SEMIOTIC OF POWER IN THE ROMANIAN-AMERICAN
DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE
- *ABSTRACT* -

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CONTENTS

Justifications

Part I - Reverberations of power in diplomatic dialogue. Conceptual and methodological considerations

Chapter 1

THE SEMIOTIC UNIVERSE OF THE RESEARCH:
THE CONJUNCTION BETWEEN OBJECT-LANGUAGE AND META-LANGUAGE

- 1.1. Object-language: faces of power in diplomatic dialogue
 - 1.1.1. From the diplomacy of power to power diplomacy
 - 1.1.2. Power concept: a multi- and interdisciplinary approach
- 1.2. Semiotic theory and methodology
 - 1.2.1. Sign and Macro-sign, instruments of political and diplomatic dialogue
 - 1.2.2. Semiosis and the context of interaction
 - 1.2.3. Semiotic and socio-linguistic methods

Chapter 2

FACES OF POWER IN INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE: A COMPLEX SITUATION

- 2.1. Protagonists of international dialogue: individuals, states, organizations
- 2.2. Paradigms of power in International relations theory
- 2.3. Security management - tools and mechanisms
 - 2.3.1. Threats to individuals and states
 - 2.3.2. Balance of power: a desirable situation
- 2.4. Power manifestation context, expression of an institutional security
 - 2.4.1. Collective security or "all for one": UN
 - 2.4.2. Security communities: O.S.C.E.
 - 2.4.3. Security regimes: N.A.T.O and U.E.
- 2.5. Finalities of diplomatic action: from war to power in international relations

Chapter 3

DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE IN TERMS OF SEMIOTIC GRAPH: CONSIDERATIONS ON THE
ROMANIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

- 3.1. Structural analysis of situational parameters
 - 3.1.1. International context of the Romanian-American diplomatic relations
 - 3.1.2. Institutional instances of diplomatic communication situation: state and government
 - 3.1.3. Political actors, transmitters and receivers of the diplomatic message:
from heads of state to professional diplomats
 - 3.1.4. Nature and content of political and diplomatic messages
 - 3.1.5. Speech and language of diplomatic dialogue: Coding strategies
 - 3.1.6. Channels of diplomatic communication
 - 3.1.7. Barriers in the political and diplomatic communication
 - 3.1.8. Another category of beneficiaries: political and diplomatic observers
 - 3.1.9. Aims and finalities of the diplomatic dialogue: alliance or disjunction
- 3.2. Functional analysis of the diplomatic communication situation

Part II - THE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ROMANIA AND U.S.A. SEMIOTIC ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES

Chapter 4

DIRECTIONS OF POWER IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: Semiotic convergences

- 4.1. Content analysis of the concept of power in diplomatic documents
 - 4.1.1. Customizations on methodology
 - 4.1.2. Interpretation of statistic results
- 4.2. Presidential meetings – a triadic analysis (syntactic, semantic, pragmatic)
 - 4.2.1. Analysis of Constantinescu – Clinton dialogue
 - 4.2.2. Analysis of Iliescu – Bush dialogue
 - 4.2.3. Analysis of Băsescu – Bush dialogue
 - 4.2.4. Analysis of Băsescu's press statements
- 4.3. Structural analysis of photographic images of the presidential meetings

Chapter 5

A DIFFERENT FORMULATION OF CONCLUSIONS:

EMBLEMATIC DIRECTIONS OF POWER IN THE ROMANIAN-AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

- 5.1. Flags and state symbols: expressions of symbolic intentionality
 - 5.1.1. Romanian symbolism
 - 5.1.2. American symbolism
- 5.2. From a symbolic virtual dimension to reality of facts:
Final thoughts on the current state of the Romanian-American power relations

Open conclusions:

TOWARDS AN OPTIMIZED MODEL OF DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE

ABSTRACT

“Semiotics of Power in the Romanian-American Diplomatic Dialogue” aims to assume a semiotic perspective on political and diplomatic communication through presidential instances of the two states. By this project the author thinks that he would accomplish an efficient decryption on the relations between the Romanian and American states, respectively between the presidents of the two states and that he would identify specificities in constructions and codifications, mechanisms and significations, reflexes and attitudes that would describe the process of diplomatic communications on the presidential level. The semiotic analysis has obtained progressively the competence of explaining the political and diplomatic communication during the 20th century, developing itself inside the postmodern paradigm and growing interdisciplinary towards the stylistic, rhetoric and photographic analysis, generating a consistent influence in literature, linguistics, anthropology, culture.

The manifestation of power is a complex phenomenon of semiosis, an exercise of knowledge projected and performed verbally and non-verbally in the social specter, as well as in the political and diplomatic one. We consider this approach of actions` decryption an object of research which fits as cultural fact in a possible semiotic interpretation.

In the analysis of power, the literature ignores the semiotic argument, this being one of the reasons for which this analysis wants to bring together the polytologic and psycho-sociological approaches. We consider that an assumption of this perspective through the philosophic-semiotic discourse can achieve a higher level of relevance and is able to open an heuristic path towards an exploration of apparently invisible dimensions of meanings, all this being possible because of the interdisciplinary character of the semiotic discipline. A politic and diplomatic communication is configured as a conventional space of discourse between international actors which are competitors in the generation of global political reality (national and above). This type of communication can be achieved at state level, being composed by a variety of discourses having as ingredients the language, the culture and the historical reflexes encrypted in the nation`s experience. This discourse at presidential level presumes a formulation and an utilization of messages that posses a substrate of power, using linguistic codes based on conventions. Presidential instance communicate through specific speeches (statements, speeches, messages, press releases, conferences, interviews) having as a permanent landmark the principle of *raison d`Etat*.

The validation of transmitters takes place by virtue of national electoral messages containing socio-political and economic configuration confirmed by voting. The communication involves a hierarchy of actions through operationalization of selection, allocation of values based on associative interests. These actors are protagonists of the national scene, issuers and receivers in an international game of power (power semiosis), described by a particular socio-political identity (territory, language, culture, institutions) and a particular potential in realization of their interests. Interstate interactions use the ingredient of power as an instrument of knowledge and as a vehicle for the propagation of a deliberate vision that can be understood as an ability of

actions to manifest authority and influence in order to control the process of governance and the global conditions of socio-political and economic activities.

The process of building a diplomatic discourse encodes attitudes, reflexes, values and experience, competence of the issuer (president, minister, diplomat or specialists in the communication and political marketing). The political and diplomatic communication is, at the same time, a physical and mental act that subsumes cost-benefit calculations, analysis of the partners in the dialogue, having as a purpose the controlled emission of information on direct channels (official visits, international conferences) or mediated (dialogues with others, televised speeches, radio or newspaper) in order to convince the international partners to contribute to a project able to provide relative or absolute gains.

The negotiations between states are obtained through the dialogues generated by officials (heads of state, ministers and diplomats). The importance of a semiotic analysis resides in the fact that international political activity can offer a biunique knowledge between communication partners, namely between Romania and United States of America, and also a process of self-knowledge through the reflexes and attitudes that are reactivated, based on self-identity.

The political diplomatic interaction takes places through discourses (macro-signs) based on social codes, symbols, signs that reflect internal political situations and also radiograms of the international society. Along this thesis we will approach semiotic discourses of Romanian and American presidents offered by official institutions. We will identify a chronological evolution of the political and diplomatic activity and, at the same time, a variation in identity, culture and auto-perception, the mode in which the modification conditions (micro-context) is influencing positively or not the relation between state speakers and the morphology of power in the international society. These discourses claim social-historical experiences of the participants that are active in a game of competition or cooperation, partners or competitors, going for relative or absolute gains. In the matrix of communication we can detect infinity of real and potential semiosis that could generate real or potential situations of communication. The process of real semiosis happens between two human instances that communicate consciously. In the absence of significations, we cannot speak about communication, but we could speak about a situation of reflection.

In the beginning of the thesis we expose methodological and theoretical instruments of analysis which will be used along this research in the heuristic path of a comprehensive assumption of the political and diplomatic dialogue between Romania and U.S.A. The analytical approach of the text is an activity established in time, which started in the antique period by the Greek orators and continued with the hermeneutical analysis of significations and with the intellectual systematization of socio-linguistic and semiotic methodologies as content analysis, enunciation analysis, critical analysis of the discourse, protocols` analysis, triadic analysis (syntactic, semantic, pragmatic), visual analysis of photographs and movies. Between these instruments, we will prefer the utilization of content analysis, triadic analysis and visual analysis of images. At macro-level, content analysis can be assumed as a decrypting method of texts through messages decoding and extraction of essences. At micro-level, this analysis can offer the opportunity of analyzing the frequencies of subjects appeared in discourses, the positive or negative tendencies and thematic associations that can offer the privilege of evaluating

documents on statistic arguments. In this analysis, we will quantify the presence of some concepts, fragments or themes. We use an intersection of methodologies on the corpus of documents because the object of this analysis (the bilateral official communication) responds to analysis criteria of content analysis, semiotic analysis and visual analysis.

In the content analysis of political and diplomatic discourse, the ingredient of power is susceptible of being explained once each act of communication is a cognitive approach which contains on the level of intention, the will of guiding the means and of controlling the reality. The measurement of frequencies is useful because the power theme presumes a lot of understandings and hierarchical correlations that can support identifications and delimitations of tendencies, positions and attitudes in bilateral communication. The texts and discourses, assumed as communication phenomena possess significations that, at first view, can be accessible, but because they are suffering contextual influences, their interpretations claim a more profound semiotic approach. In the semiotic discipline, a lot of instruments have been developed in order to sustain a research in the field of discourses. These instruments are: structural analysis, situational analysis and triadic analysis (syntactic, semantic and pragmatic). In the research, we will offer considerations regarding the use of this instruments, emphasizing synthetically the mode in which the utilization of these can bring useful explanations for the research. We will use the model proposed by PhD. Traian D. Stanculescu in the work named "*Homo homini lupus*", to a generic political communication.

For a particularization of the bilateral case, it is necessary to redefine the parameters of the political and diplomatic communication on presidential level. We will also use the model of semiotic graph that contains twelve parameters. The semiotic graph is a flexible instrument of analysis that allows an open interpretation of the discourses, offering advantages of synchronic-diachronic representation of structural elements, correlation of the "power" concept with the parameters, resulting complex structural and functional relations. The parameters of the semiotic graph contain functions that will be extended in the situational analysis segment of the thesis, functions that are associative or mutually exclusive, being present in all types of communication. The semiotic graph analysis presumes the following of four major steps from the informational decoding, message signification, message transmission the decoding of the receiver, and the redefinition of the message followed by reposition between sender and receiver.

Situational semiotic analysis will describe the methodological frame in which we will operate the explanation of the Romanian diplomatic discourse on president level. By maintaining the key parameter (power) in correspondence with the parameters of the communication situation, we will obtain interpretations regarding the process of negotiation assumed by the actors involved.

As we have already mentioned, we also use the triadic semiotic analysis that will help us to generate nuances base on the relations between signs on syntactic, semantic and pragmatic coordinates (a tripartite proposed and developed by Charles Morris).

Semiotic applications that follow the methodological principles aim to elaborate an optimized scenario of the bilateral political and diplomatic dialogue between Romania and U.S.A., these instruments proving their versatility in the comprehensive approach of the subject. Complementary to the other analysis, we will also choose a visual analysis that starts from the premise that any manifestation in the visual specter can be interpreted with semiotic analysis,

once the object of the analysis contains intended and unintended signs. Any comprehensive approaches on images aim to decrypt on affective and logic-rational grounds, following cognitive line forces. In this sense, we can affirm the fact that the major tendency in observing and explaining the details will consist in a project guided by reason.

A visual analysis claims that the view, as a way of expressing, correlated with mental impulses and cultural experiences can make hermeneutical orientations. We can retrieve a body language, respectively a face language, a gesture, positions that offer interpretations on temperament and intentions. In interpersonal relations, the power is manifesting through non-verbal subtle signs like changing posture, the expansion of personal space, tones lifting or the increase of the voice. These movements are influencing the interactions between the actors (mirroring or complementing). Such details bring a coherent explanation using semiotic analysis because of the integrating character of this discipline that is able to offer explanations on a politic dialogue.

The diplomatic dialogue has common features with the spiritual evolution of a nation, a social group or on a individual, following a cyclicity between a period of closeness, contemplation, knowledge and a period of understanding, action and domination. For instance, in knowing the nature, the human being tried at first to contemplate it, to assume it in the presumed final approach, continuing to reconsider it from a dynamic perspective, gradually uncovering the possibility of human intervention in changing the nature. In this sense, the diplomacy appears as an intrinsic attribute of human beings, each informational approach following the sequence "incertitude-information-domination". In the vision of Michel Foucault, the exercise of power on the nature and individuals appears as an instrument of knowledge. Once the human being is pushed by "*animus dominandi*", being susceptible of power abuse, the diplomacy becomes an information and communication modality with therapeutic valences in the exercise of power.

The diplomacy presumes and equilibrium between reason and emotions, a signification of the affects through an adequate language, a project of representation and promotion of values, an examination of continuous approach between nations in the exercise of negotiation for power. In the relation between diplomacy and power we must take into consideration the both means that derive from this association: the diplomacy of power and the power of diplomacy. On one side, a diplomacy of power appears as an exterior expression of a discourse of power crystallized in the cultural and institutional intimacy of a state, on the other side a power of diplomacy, a compensation phenomenon of domination tendencies, a frame of discourse able to provide norms, constrains and obligations that can subdue the states to a consent on the non-violent character of the finality in the diplomatic communication.

The universe of discourse emerges from the polysemantic term of power on which exegesis develops multiple understandings. The power can be understood as an ability, competence, quality of an agent that allows the possibility of an action or as a particular capacity that attracts legitimacy. Multiple understandings of power and diplomacy develop diversified semiotic experiences, once the distance between values is generating specific reflexes and attitudes in this field of manifestation.

From the point of view of diplomatic practice, we can assume politic and diplomatic experience of bilateral dialogue in two ways: 1. a synthetic semiosis, if we consider the transmitter

a head of state that covers all the aspirations in matter of foreign politics; 2. a more extensive semiosis if we consider the transmitter as being a specialized institution. In this doctoral research, we choose the former, once we consider that the discourse enounced by a head of state assumes the whole politic and diplomatic activity subsumed.

Along two centuries, Romania guided its efforts in maintaining a foreign politic discourse in which objectives were included in obtaining and keeping the national state identity, the territorial integrity and untouched sovereignty. Internal micro-context presented flaws in the formulation sustained by discourse influenced dramatically by regional and global politics that altered ideologically its accuracy (regime changes, ideological influences, territorial losses, economic compromises).

In the comprehensive approach of the politic and diplomatic communication of power, we start naturally from the philosophic dimensions of power, continuing with the polytological and psycho-sociological perspectives. We have chosen this analytic path because philosophy remains the intellectual base of science that offers consistence in the research. The intersection of perspectives allows a declining of the subject of power in its dimension of political manifestation, but not having an exhaustive claim on it. The discourse appears as a vector of power and in its analysis we can retrieve expressions, instances or hypostasis of the power that can be approached semiotically and can support considerations regarding the bilateral relations between Romania and U.S.A.

Semiotics, as a science of decoding of signs, is able to explain any kind of communication (verbal or non-verbal), socio-politic or diplomatic. Signs are micro-units that, through association, allow and determine human communication.

The considerations made in the first part of the research represent multiple approaches on the subject of power, necessary in the Romanian-American relations understanding. The concept and theories exposed are aiming attitudes and reflexes that, in correlation with the subject of power, can become resources on the base of power declining at individual, institutional, state and systemic levels. These perspectives can be unified through unique philosophical and semiotic discourse centered on the concept of power, useful in the research of the communication situation, respectively the content analysis, the triadic analysis and visual analysis of elements which, reunited, describe the bilateral relation.

In the content analysis, we will test the validity of ten concepts-landmarks of power in describing the variation of the political and diplomatic relation, starting from an occurrence analysis of the concept of power, and the co-occurrence of the concepts-landmarks in 674 documents that represent communication on presidential level direct and indirect, including conferences and public debates on the subject of romanian and american relations, documents offered by Presidential Administration and U.S.A. Embassy.

The triadic analysis of the official discourses between presidential instances is offering details regarding particular aspects on the presidents of Romania and United States of America. Visual analysis is a complement that offers an analytical perspective on starting with the images privileged by the official visits of the two delegations and ends with a non-formal conclusion based on ideal discourse that emerges from official flags and symbols.

The analysis of the interaction is interpreted often in terms of power, trying to identify nuances that derived from political and diplomatic communication that assumes the whole political mechanism.

The process of bilateral communication has been developed progressively during two centuries, enriched at official relations level in the second part of 19th century (1880), crossed the 20th century through a succession of variations, culminating after 1989 with a stable partnership.

In the last decade of 20th century, because of the regime changing in Romanian space, the international communication has been gradually improved. In 1993 Romania achieved "Most favored nation" status in the relation with the United States of American and has been engaged the Strategic Partnership between two states (1997).

The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by a process of consolidation of relations between the two countries, process described by an alliance building supported also by the Romanian adherence to NATO (2004) , by the military contribution in Afghanistan and Iraq, and by a series of documents regarding the security collaboration (2011).

The presidential discourse engages the states resources at multiple levels, promoting interests, showing attitudes and activating reflexes that are based on a social, cultural, economic and ideological puzzle that is assumed in discourse and can generate resistance or vulnerability.

Regarding the position of Romania in this dialogue, the objectives has been partially accomplished but through a continuously conditionality on internal plan (democratic reforms) and also on external plan (the participation on Afghanistan and Iraq conflict). In this logic, we can assist to a guaranty of fidelity crystallized progressively through an ample openness to cooperation.

The objectives of this thesis appear through some answers offered in its content regarding the relevant official speeches, the identification of signs of power in discourse, research of the convergence and divergence points in the negotiations and particularities of the presidents involved, sensibilities and potential optimizations.

From the horizon of novelties offered by this thesis we can point the semiotic approach on a diplomatic object-language, the assuming and unification of perspectives in a discourse centered on the notion of power, the development of semiotic graph applied to the diplomatic semiosis and the final considerations regarding a potential optimized scenario of the politic and diplomatic discourse from Romanian presidential perspective.

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