Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Political Sciences and European Studies
ISSN: 2284-5968 | e-ISSN: 2501-0417
Covered in: ERIH PLUS, CEEOL, HeinOnline, Index Copernicus, CrossRef, CrossCheck, J-Gate, Google Scholar, Ideas RePeC, Econpapers, Socionet, KVK, WorldCat.

2020, Volume 6, Issue 1, pages: 72-75 | doi: 10.18662/lumenpses/6.1/18

Considerations on the Doctoral Thesis „Mitul Salvatorului în Strategiile de Comunicare în Campaniile pentru Alegeri Prezidențiale în România Postdecembristă" [The Myth of the Savior in Communication Strategies in the Campaigns for Presidential Elections in Post-December Romania], Author: Ariana-Loreta Guga

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Abstract: We draw attention on the enrichment of the Romanian research literature with the doctoral thesis entitled "The Myth of the Savior in the communication strategies in the presidential election campaigns in post-December Romania", elaborated by Ariana-Loreta Guga under the coordination of Prof. PhD. Sandu Frunză and defended in 2020 in order to obtain the title of PhD in Political Sciences at "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The author pursues a transdisciplinary approach, that has, as a central point, the field of political communication, which is approached by referencing theories and tools in the area of political and administrative sciences, sociology, management but also in the field of applied ethics.

Keywords: *The myth of the Savior; communication strategies; political campaigns; presidential elections.*

How to cite: Sandu, A. (2020). Considerations on the Doctoral Thesis „Mitul Salvatorului în Strategiile de Comunicare în Campaniile pentru Alegeri Prezidențiale în România Postdecembristă" [The Myth of the Savior in Communication Strategies in the Campaigns for Presidential Elections in Post-December Romania], Author: Ariana-Loreta Guga. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Political Sciences and European Studies, 5*(1), 72-75. doi: 10.18662/lumenpses/6.1/18

The purpose of the doctoral thesis "The Myth of the Savior in communication strategies in the campaigns for presidential elections in post-December Romania" is to prove that "after 1989, the presidents of Romania are representative for the myth of the Savior "(Guga, 2020). Practically, the thesis is organized around this research hypothesis, which it pursues with tenacity, both from a theoretical perspective and from the perspective of the political discourse analysis, made with the help of data mining software, which not only collects and effectively quantifies elements specific to the mythological discourse embedded in the political discourse, but also makes true maps of the public discourse accompanying presidential campaigns, proving that the myth of the Savior was, in one form or another, the dominant symbolic element of all election campaigns in Romania since 1989.

Based on the fact that politicians - in this case presidential candidates and presidents - have self-portrayed themselves as saviors of the nation, we find that the collective subconscious has been saturated with messianic promises, always delayed and invigorated by a new "Messiah" once every 4 or 5 years, in the person of the same or a new political leader. The charismatic leader, the Savior of the Nation, makes the political reality show a reverse of symbolic messianism, and a nation that chooses a messiah every 4 years sinks into the snares of history, always asking for mercy from the almighty of time, thus ignoring that the political game should not create Saviors, but leaders.

The stated objectives of the paper are: analyzing political communication in relation to the rhetoric and influence of political myths, defining the myth and analyzing its structure, presenting how myths are perceived today, analyzing the ramifications of myths, determining the impact of populism on the myth of the Savior, the analysis of the presidents of post-December Romania from the perspective of the myth of the Savior.

In our opinion, these objectives are more than generous, allowing the author to achieve a true exegesis on Romanian politics, with wide possibilities of transposition into the political universe of other "professional presidential saviors" who are now or who have been at the forefront of politics, portrayed as milestones for the very idea of democracy, the rule of law and political pluralism.

The fact that the myth of the Savior has been draining political energies for 30 years and not only in the Romanian cultural space justifies us to believe that politics in the secular society - but especially in the post-secular society - is a surrogate for religion, where " the good, the just, the great, the brave "- a nickname given at one point to Nicolae Ceausescu - actually typify a divine order, foreshadowed by the "beloved Leader "or at

least the one who shows the way to "live well" or "be in peace" and, more recently, to "stay at home ".

We often wonder if these "political-categorical" imperatives from our country and from other countries - true industries of democracy - such as the slogans "Let's make America great again" or "Yes, we can!", represent the inventions of some political demigods or they are quoted from a secret gospel of the "Savior" who must himself be saved every four years.

Regarding the concrete fulfillment of these objectives by the author of the thesis, we consider that the research far exceeds them in terms of mapping the political universe and the courage to deconstruct the myth of the charismatic politician in order to clarify his eschatological function, sometimes demonizing the authentic messianism currently portrayed by mioritic avatars willing to save the world through discourse and less through political strategy, consistency, clarity of the political message, strategic positioning of Romania in an European and international context.

This does not mean that Romania has not made political progress in the last 30 years, but, despite this progress, it still remains a country and a people to be saved by a future president. The research questions are interesting and also, it is especially interesting the original synthesis of the Romanian politics that helps the author answer them: "Why is the myth of the Savior the most representative?" among political myths; "Is there a president who has assumed this image?"; "What was the evolution of the Savior myth in the 30 years since the fall of communism?"; "What are the recurring themes in the political inauguration speech of the presidents of Romania?". A number of other operational questions are added in order to highlight the specifics of the qualitative and quantitative analysis underwent through the data mining software.

In our opinion, the author shows a risky courage to assume in a single research the task of answering 6 research objectives and 5 research questions, even if the data mining technique, with the help of new software that can make causal connections between seemingly disparate data within discourses, would encourage researchers to expand the research universe to explore it but also to exploit it in a way that is as exhaustive as possible. Regarding research methodology, the author confesses that her research "started from the critical analysis of the speech, used with the help of QDA Miner, applied to the inauguration speeches of the four post-December presidents" of Romania.

To methodologically use critical discourse analysis and comparative discourse analysis is not in itself a methodological or epistemological novelty, but the originality of the paper lies in its ability to extract from the

empiricism of political discourse irrefutable evidence of the messianism of Romanian politics, which we all suspect, but which, with few exceptions - quoted by the author - has not been a research theme for many works in the specialized literature. The rise from the empirical to the theoretical was a subsequent step to the establishment of an interpretive grid on the empirical, which was elaborated starting from the specialized literature.

What the author achieves in an absolutely original way is the return to theory resulting from the analysis of the discursive categories identified in the speeches of the presidents, thus drawing up a model of the Romanian presidential messianism. The fact that the various discursive categories are analyzed both qualitatively - regarding their internal meaning and coherence - and quantitatively - with reference to their discursive frequency and centrality - allows the author to infer from these discursive categories in order to establish her own explanatory model, not just on the discourse about the president as a savior or the self-perceived role of presidents as being saviors, but also on the social-political and ethical context that made these speeches considered necessary not only during the election campaigns, but also in the inaugural speeches in which the President reveals his political agenda for the next term of office, his priorities and, in particular, the values on which he bases his political action and which he will defend during his term of office.

The references list of the thesis is impressive, referring to current works - along with fundamental works in the science of politics - both works published in our country, and especially references to works from the international literature in the field.

Starting from the arguments expressed above and in general from the many strengths of the paper "The Myth of the Savior in communication strategies in the campaigns for presidential elections in post-December Romania", we believe that the PhD thesis entitled is a most interesting analysis of the Romanian political space and we welcome this research in the Romanian scientific space.

References

Guga, A. L. (2020). *Mitul Salvatorului în strategiile de comunicare în campaniile pentru alegeri prezidențiale în România postdecembristă* [The myth of the Savior in communication strategies in the campaigns for presidential elections in post-December Romania]. PhD Thesis. Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.