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Romania's Alliances: the Treaties with Poland, France and Italy.

After signing the Paris Peace Treaties (1919–20), the main objective of Romanian foreign policy was to consolidate national unity and territorial integrity. The main tool for insuring this objective was building bilateral and multilateral alliances which would counteract actions of revisionist states, as well as consolidate relations with France, Great Britain and Italy.

One of Romania's main allies in the region was Poland, a country interested in its turn in preserving the Versailles status quo and caught between two revisionist powers: Soviet Russia and Germany. The first alliance agreement concluded by Romania after the war was with this country. Thus on 3 March 1921 the Romanian and Polish governments signed an alliance in Bucharest consisting of a political convention and a military convention, by which the two countries committed their support in the case of Soviet aggression across their eastern borders. The military convention was renewed in September 1922 on the occasion of the visit to Romania of General Piłsudski, the head of the Polish state. On 26 March 1926 the two countries signed a new alliance convention which acquired broader content by providing for mutual assistance against any foreign aggression.



Romanian-Polish relations witnessed an obvious cooling at the beginning of the fourth decade. While Poland got closer to Germany, Romania and the USSR negotiated the signing of a mutual assistance treaty. Thus, between 1932 and 1936, Romanian-Polish military cooperation was practically discontinued. The change of international context and the increasing danger of aggression led to the reactivation of the alliance in 1937.

One of the fundamental directions of Romanian foreign policy was its orientation towards France and Great Britain. Although the two great powers had displayed quite an unfriendly attitude towards Romania during the Paris Peace Conference, they still remained significant supporters of the Versailles system which had confirmed the acts of Union from 1918. On the other hand, France and especially Great Britain avoided assuming any commitments concerning the defence of Romania's territorial integrity. Instead, they stimulated the authorities in Bucharest to lead a rigid and hostile policy towards Germany.

On 10 June 1926 a treaty of friendship was signed between Romania and France in Paris with a time span of ten years. Perceived by the Romanian side as a big diplomatic victory, the treaty did not offer the desired territorial integrity guarantees but only provided that in the case of an unprovoked attack the two

countries would consult regarding measures to be taken in the spirit of peace treaties concluded at the end of the First World War. The military Franco-Romanian convention that accompanied the treaty similarly only provided for an exchange of views among the general staffs of the two armies. The two diplomatic documents were in fact meant to preserve France's influence in Central and Eastern Europe but without making big promises. The government in London did not express any interest in concluding a treaty of alliance with Romania.

Within the same policy of ensuring its territorial integrity, Romania began negotiations with Italy in order to gain ratification of the Paris Treaty of October 1920 which recognised Bessarabia as belonging to Romania. As Italy was interested in extending its own influence in the Balkans it was ultimately agreed to sign a treaty of friendship and cordial collaboration between the two countries. The treaty was signed in Rome on 16 September 1926 with a time span of five years and provided for mutual assistance in case of unprovoked aggression from a third party. During the next year the Italian state ratified the Treaty of Paris of 1920 concerning Bessarabia.

In April 1927 the efficiency of the Romanian-Italian Treaty of 1926 was weakened by the conclusion of a treaty of alliance between Italy and Hungary in which the issue of border revision was explicitly mentioned as well as the support offered by Mussolini to Horthy's government in Budapest. The Romanian-Italian alliance treaty was renewed until 1934 when it was denounced by the Mussolini government.

At the end of the 1920s and during the first part of the 1930s, Romania- especially through its foreign affairs minister, Nicolae Titulescu - pursued a broad range of diplomatic activity for supporting peace and building a collective security system in Europe. As a sign of recognition for these contributions Titulescu was elected President of annual sessions of the League of Nations in Geneva twice in succession (1930-31).

Italy's aggression against Abyssinia (1935), its remilitarisation of the Rhineland (1936) and the conciliatory policy led by France and Great Britain emphasised the failure of the collective security policy for which Titulescu militated. On 29 August 1936 he was replaced from office as Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Titulescu's departure did not change the traditional orientation of Romanian foreign policy towards France and Great Britain. In parallel, though, normalisation of relations with Germany was initialised, while the great democratic powers in the West proved incapable of stopping Nazi aggression in Central Europe. For Romania this normalisation came late and could not stop the imposition by Berlin on 23 March 1939 of a bilateral treaty which was totally unfavourable to Bucharest.

France and Great Britain tried to help Romania and during the following period signed economic agreements with it. Moreover on 13 April 1939 the two European powers offered political guarantees concerning any potential aggression against Romania and Greece. Having a reduced practical value these guarantees were nonetheless a show of support for Romania's international position at that moment.

It became, however, increasingly clear that the likelihood of Anglo-French intervention to assist countries in Eastern Europe was reducing day by day. The conclusion of the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact

on 23 August 1939 and especially the provisions of its secret protocol would clearly demonstrate this.

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