

# POLITIK AGENDA

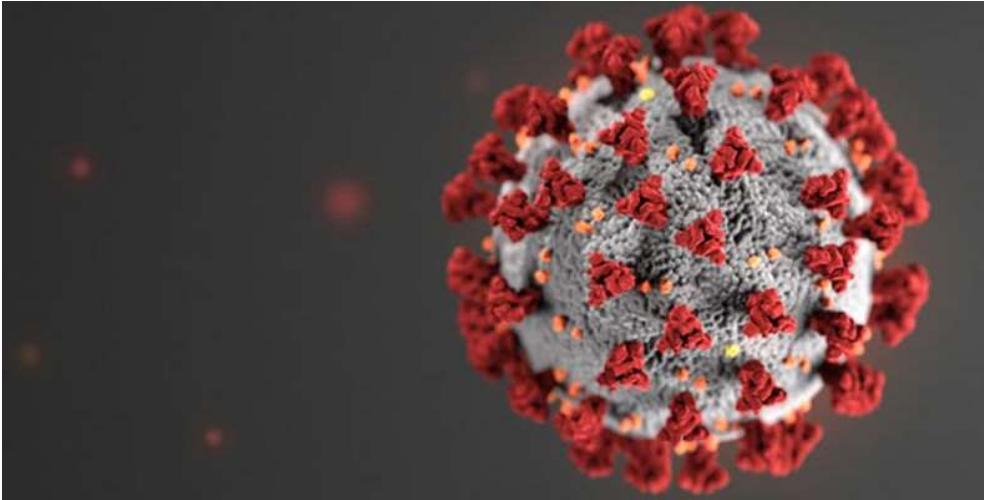
POLITICAL SCANDAL VERSUS THE COVID-19

THE EUROPEAN ARMY

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# 1 | Political scandal versus the COVID-19 crisis

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On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, Romanians all around the world were asked to go to vote for the new parliament. At that time, the country was still suffering the devastating second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic but the country needed a new parliament to serve the people. Unfortunately for many of us, the voting turnout was the lowest since the country established a democratic capitalistic regime after 45 years of communist rule, but the main reason was not political, it was the fact that many people would have gone to cast their ballots and they could have caught COVID-19 from touching surfaces or even interact to the polling officials, even though the politicians of that time, especially the former Prime Minister Ludovic Orban from the National Liberal Party invited all Romanians to do a democratic exercise with safety precautions.

That Sunday a lot of citizens were watching the night time news to see the results for the elections which were quite surprising for many politicians and even some political analysts, the Social Democratic party was leading, but unable to create a majority to create a new government, this led the door for the National Liberal Party with Union for Salvation of Romania and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania to form a coalition government to help the already impacted nation to get out of the pandemic.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, the president of Romania, Klaus Iohannis appointed the new Prime Minister, Florin Citu from National Liberal Party, former Finance Minister of the Orban Government, and the story of the problem begins.

The most important character in this story will be the Health Minister, since the subject is a political scandal happening during one of the worst health crises of the century, Vlad Voiculescu from the USR-PLUS alliance. This politician was the center of the attention all the time since his mandate started along side the vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in Romania.

Although many people embraced his candidacy for the Bucharest general mayor, his health minister mandate was like a hill with bumps, actually a lot of bumps that made him get a lot of hatred from the people who elected him for the high

office. There are numerous examples of decisions that affected Romanians who were receiving care in the public hospitals. A decision that was made in Romania and not overseas was making hospitals only for patients for COVID-19, that left many people with other health problem without the special care that they need.

At the beginning of his mandate, the second wave of the COVID-19 in Romania was done, so cases were less and less, but terrible news from the United Kingdom about a new dangerous and contagious variant that left Britain with no choice other than a full lockdown. At that time, Europeans were feeling great about the decreasing of the COVID-19 cases and deaths, but the Romanian government and other European governments closed their borders with the breakaway region of the European Union.

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People and the governments were starting to realize that this variant was spreading in their communities much like wildfire and things needed to happen as soon as possible. The already degrading popularity of Vlad Voiculescu and bad decision like making sick patients to change hospitals to let COVID-19 patients to take their place because Romania was suffocating with so many people infected that the health system almost hit a collapse, and on top of that, people started to protest the new partial lockdown, implement on 28<sup>th</sup> of March, that was even harsher than people that made people in big cities like Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca to go home after 20.00 and people in the Western city of Timisoara to stay at home for a period of 3 weeks

.As you can see, everything went wrong, businesses lost a lot of money, people were dying, and others were protesting to restrictions that lead to more infected patients. This was a never-ending cycle, but the crucial point of the story was the night of 11<sup>th</sup> of April when Vlad Voiculescu made the decision to make the Foisor Hospital, a famous hospital for bone therapy in Bucharest that had patients who needed the help of medical professionals, a COVID-19 intensive care, forcing people to leave their beds in the middle of the night.

The response from the people was clear, they wanted Vlad Voiculescu to be removed from his office, and this is actually from where the political scandal begins. As you can see, the image of his party was very affected and by default the image of the whole coalition, including the National Liberal Party. This was a very tough choice for the members of the National Liberal Party what should they do as not to damage the image of their party.

On 14<sup>th</sup> of April, the Prime Minister, Florin Citu kicked out Vlad Voiculescu without consulting with coalition, and replacing him with Dan Barna, the coleader of USR-PLUS alliance as an interim replacement for Voiculescu. The response for the other member of the party was clear, we need to kick Florin Citu in retaliation of what he did to our party and our negotiated portfolios.

The political scandal was outrageous, the Opposition of the Social Democratic Party, a left-wing party, they supported for the decision of the removal of Vlad Voiculescu, seen as unable to handle a delicate situation like the times that we are living in, political analysts predicted that the coalition government will not end and will find a solution to get back to work to serve Romanians that needed a stable government in the moments that they were facing.

After the day with the most deaths associated with COVID-19, 273 to be exact on 20<sup>th</sup> of April, the discussions in the coalition

ended and an agreement was established, the Prime Minister needed to consult the coalition first when changing the ministers, and the USR-PLUS alliance to come with a new health minister as soon as possible.

On 21<sup>st</sup> of April, which by a strange coincidence it is my birthday, Klaus Iohannis named Ioana Mihaila, the second woman in this government, the new health minister.

This story says a lot more than many people think, as a 17-year-old, this story taught me a lot of things that I did not comprehend before, this was a story of political games when the country needed their politicians to support them in any way possible, at least we got through it together.





Fighter jet „Tornado“ as a product from Italy, France and Germany. Picture: unsplash.com

## 2 | An European army as the next step on the path of the European integration?

Jannis Krüßmann

On the other hand, a European army might also decrease the individual security for single nations within the EU, in the sense that all nations would lose parts of their sovereignty and their abilities to defend their own territory. This loss of national decision-making could also lead to even more nationalist and anti-European movements resulting in more countries that want to leave the EU. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether an European army would actually be necessary since there is already the NATO as a transnational defensive alliance. Until now, single cooperations like the fighter jet “Tornado” (produced by France, Italy and Germany) have worked out relatively well so these single projects could pose an alternative to a “real” European army.

In recent years, discussions on the necessity for an European army are on the rise. While there are still some questions that remain open, this article is going to discuss some of the problems and advantages linked to this idea. The article is followed by a short statement of the author and the attempt to foresee future developments in this area.

For the past decades, the European integration has moved on covering today not only economic issues, but also political matters. It would make sense, that parallel to the political harmonization within the EU its military means should also be provided to enforce the European values. At the same time, this could also bring a possible financial benefit for the EU-countries with it: Currently, the EU members spend roughly 200 billion Euro per year on military expenses, this is about 125% of the annual budget of the European Union (EU). By joining national forces into a shared army, the EU might be able to find a more efficient way of ensuring Europe’s security at smaller costs. Since different national armies already take part in manoeuvres of either the NATO or single country-coalitions, it seems logical to go one step further and simply join the forces. Moreover, people argue that the EU has to gain more military power in order to hold its position on the world stage next to the US, Russia and China.





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In conclusion, I personally believe that a European army is the right answer in terms of saving (taxpayers) money and harmonizing the European military action. It also is another step towards European integration and therefore keep peace on the European continent. At the same time, it would not make sense to copy the structures and systems of NATO, because this would naturally be less efficient and just lead to chaos. Having a European army could also result in the military playing a bigger role within European discussions and decision-making, which I personally dislike very much. Before unifying Europe's armies, we should first agree whether we actually want to have an army (and of which size) – or not at all.

