



## 6 Major Historical Events in Romanian

6 major historical events in Romania. Had it not happened, Romania would have been different today. Such events changed the history of Romania. The region that is now known as Romania has a long history behind it. Its rich cultural tapestry derives from the lineage of Romans and Dacians, and its geographical position has made it the crossroads of major geopolitical events. Over the centuries, the region has been home to several upheavals but has managed to keep its diverse identity intact. While Romania, as a region, has had a long and winding story.

Romania, the country, has been a quite recent formation. However, this short history of Romania as a country is still quite fascinating. It ebbs and flows with bouts of violence, prestige, and revolutions. Here, we will emphasize this latter part of its history, but before we do that, we have to take a minor detour to the origins of Romanians. Here are the six most important events in Romania's History:

**6 MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS IN ROMANIA**

- 01 The Dacian Wars and the Ethnic Makeup
- 02 The Birth of a Nation
- 03 The Great War & the Great Union of 1918
- 04 The Second World War
- 05 The Soviet Occupation and Ceausescu's Demise
- 06 Entry into the European Union

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## 1. The Dacian Wars and the Ethnic Makeup

The Dacian Wars and the Ethnic Makeup. The first written sources about the Kingdom of Dacia mention King Burebista and the bravery of the Dacian people. With the Roman influence spreading eastward, Dacia would eventually fall. It was only a matter of time. And, so it happened during the reign of Emperor Trajan, who warred against the most famous Dacian king, Decebalus.

These conflicts are known as the Dacian Wars and are sometimes also referred to as Trajan's Dacian Wars. The Roman historian, Dio Cassius, described Decebalus in the following words: "This man was shrewd in his understanding of warfare and shrewd also in the waging of war; he judged well when to attack and chose the right moment to retreat.

He was an expert in ambushes and a master in pitched battles, and he knew not only how to follow up a victory well, but also how to manage well a defeat. Hence he showed himself a worthy antagonist of the Romans for a long time." Romans stayed in the territory of Romania until the 3rd century and even gave the name to the future country. Experts believe that Roman settlers mixed with the native Dacians,

bringing about the existence of the Romanian nation. But many years would pass before the people of the region gained a sense of ethnicity and of belonging to the same country. When the [Roman Empire](#) fell, three principalities emerged in the territory of modern-day Romania: Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia. They each had rulers who either hated each other or worked together against a new enemy, the same enemy as Christian [Europe](#) – the [Ottoman Empire](#). Following the siege and fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The three principalities were a thorn in the sultan's eye. They managed to maintain their independence, pay tribute to the Ottomans, and plot against them with the great powers of Europe all at the same time. This period gave Romania a series of national heroes whose deeds against the invading Turks rightfully placed them in the world's history books.



## 2. The Birth of a Nation

The Birth of a Nation Now that we have discussed the foundations of the Romanian people, let us look at the formal beginnings of Romania. In the 19th century, Romania's three principalities – Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania – were ruled by enlightened princes. During this time, a need for reformation and the intellectual revolution started to gain stock. At the same time, Romania was caught between the East and the West, trying to figure out its place in the shifting gears of the European quest for power. After the Russo-Turkish Wars, the Ottoman Empire was waning, and the Habsburgs and Russians had big plans for the region.

The three principalities were right next to the Black Sea, making them strategically important. The Russian empress, Catherine the Great, wanted a resurrection of the [Byzantine Empire](#) and the union of Wallachia and Moldavia to form the historical “Kingdom of Dacia.” This would help her form a buffer zone between her empire and the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. While others were deciding the fate of their soil, as if playing with their food, the educated elite in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania began to find common ground.

They started calling for a new community based on shared history and language. This idea took over the three principalities and quickly became a political tool. Before the revolutionary year of 1848, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia had been culturally and politically influenced by two generations that were driven by similar motives and goals to improve their home country.

The previous generations of the Enlightenment movement and the Romantics of the newly risen epoch led to the revolution in 1848. In 1859, after decades of negotiations with the West, Wallachia and Moldavia formed a union and named it Romania, although it wouldn't be official until 1862. Eventually, Transylvania also joined the union, formally giving birth to the Romanian nation.

## 3. The Great War & the Great Union of 1918



**The Great War** & the Great Union of 1918: During the Second Balkan War, Romania alienated itself from the Triple Alliance – **Germany**, Austro-Hungary, and Italy. But things turned around in 1914 when its relations with **France**, Britain, and **Russia** warmed up. Soon after that, the Great War descended on Europe. In the beginning, Romania decided to stay neutral, but by 1916, the tide was turning. Romania allied with France, Britain, Russia, and Italy and entered the war. Within the first four months of joining the war, Romanian losses, both in terms of personnel and territory, were huge, not to mention that the Germans were knocking on their front door.

In 1917, they struck back and were successful on multiple fronts. After the war, the territories of Austro-Hungary dissolved. In Russia, the revolution continued, bringing new worries to Romania. Russian soldiers gave up on fighting because they were persuaded to join the Bolshevik Revolution. They were promised peace and land if they helped bring the tsar down.

In November 1917, the fall of the Russian Empire was imminent, and the Moldavians of Bessarabia took the opportunity to gain independence. On March 27, 1918, the Moldavians of Bessarabia voted to unite with Romania. After the dust settled, the Romanians in Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia declared their wish to join Romania. This is known as the Great Union of 1918. December 1, or the Great Union Day, is still celebrated as a national holiday in Romania.

## 4. The Second World War

**World War II** In the two decades between the two world wars, Romania managed to build an internationally recognized state, which hurled itself forward into modernization. This was an era of enormous vitality and creativity for the Romanian people. The leading classes experimented with new political trends, as well as with philosophy, poetry, business, and economics. At the same time, Romans experienced division and internal conflict, as they had to reorganize all of their institutions, administration, and cultural and religious traditions. Nationalism was not a post-World War I phenomenon in Romania.



It had been mounting since the 19th century, but it exploded during these relatively peaceful years. The notorious Iron Guard, the military wing of the National-Christian Defence League, continued its activities for years. By 1937, they had become a massive movement, and during the elections of that same year, they won 15.58 percent of the popular vote. They owed their success to their tireless work in appealing to all levels of society, including peasants and rural clergy, the working and middle class of the cities, and those on the margins of society.

The most numerous members of the Iron Guard were young intellectuals who regarded the organization as the youthful vitality Romania needed to return to its true values. When the Second World War began, Romania was in a precarious position. Caught between Germany and Russia, the two major forces of the war, their territorial gains of the First World War were quickly undone. They wanted to remain neutral, but under the leadership of Ion Antonescu, they ended up aligning with the Axis powers to regain their lost lands.

The German invasion of the [Soviet Union](#) began on June 22, 1941. Around this time, King Michael and Prime Minister Antonescu declared a “holy war” for the freedom of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina.

The Romanian people supported this cause because they needed to remove Russian influence from their territories. Because of the active propaganda, the people believed in the superiority of the German army, and they trusted the victory would be fast and complete. The offensive on the Romanian front started on July 2, and within a month, Bessarabia and Bukovina were again part of Romania.

The end of 1941 saw Romania entering into conflict with the Western Allies. On December 5, pressured by Russia, Great Britain declared war on Romania, and in turn, Romania declared war on Britain’s ally, [the United States](#), a day after the US had entered the war. It soon became evident that Romania’s leaders and people were reluctant to step into open conflict with the Western powers.



The crucial turning point of the war for Romania was the defeat at Stalingrad. For the first time, Antonescu saw the weakness of the Nazi regime and its inability to protect Romania from the Soviet Union. Soviet-Romanian talks were underway when King Michael I sidelined Antonescu and signed an armistice with the Soviets. The king abdicated in 1947.

## 5. The Soviet Occupation and Ceausescu's Demise

**The Soviet Occupation and Ceausescu's Demise:** The Communist Party stayed in power for the next four decades, from the end of World War II until 1989. Under their regime, Romania became isolated, not only from the Western world but also from the Romania of the past, which had strived to connect with the modern thought of the West. The Communists tried to modernize the country, but their methods were based on the Soviet model.

The leaders of the Romanian Communist Party were unwilling to make any concessions to the people, and they disbanded any consultation with civilians. They believed their authority was ultimate, and they forbade all means of opposition. In the end, their inflexibility and complete ignorance of the population and their demands led to the fall of the communist regime in Romania.

The climax of the communist saga in Romania arrived in 1989, when the Romanians rebelled against their communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, and executed him and his wife. Romania's economy had continued to grow during the first decade of Ceausescu's dictatorship, but by the early 1980s, it had started to crumble. The Romanian Revolution of 1989 brought about the end of communist rule in Romania.

## 6. Entry into the European Union

**Entry into the European Union:** Romania had to make some big steps to be able to reach its full potential. Even today, Romania lags behind the rest of Europe, but it has made significant progress. In the meantime, other political parties started forming and stepping onto the political scene. The Romanian government



officially applied for membership in the European Union in 1995, but Romania still had much to do to adjust its political, economic, and ideological doctrines to be more like other countries in Europe.

Since then, Romania has continuously worked on many issues that were practically nonexistent during the communist days, such as the freedom of religion, civil rights, and the rights of minorities. Romania joined NATO on March 29, 2004, and joined the European Union only three years later, in 2007. But the membership in the EU did not guarantee that Romania would get rid of all of the internal problems caused by communism. To this day, the country struggles with corruption, which often results in an inability to modernize the state.