

New Europe College Regional Program Yearbook 2001-2002



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ISBN 973 –85697 – 4 – 5

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NATIONAL IDENTITY: INVENTION OR NECESSITY? CASE STUDY: REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

1. Introduction

Despite that the founding of the Republic of Moldova* was an event largely overlooked by the rest of the world due to the general changes and much bloodier national problems in the other Eastern European and former Soviet countries, the process of nation building that can be seen in this region poses a challenge to recent theories of nation and nationalism.

The transition of the Republic of Moldova from a totalitarian political system to a tempting, but unknown democracy started with the help of national demands. During the “voluntary fall” of the Soviet Union, the ruling discourse was dominated by national ideas – the Romanian language, the Latin alphabet, tricolor, the reinterpretation of history, the elimination of consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, union with

* The main geographical names of the region studied in this paper are spelt in two ways in the English language: “Moldavia” > “Moldavian”, “Bessarabia” > “Bessarabian”, “Dniestr” > “Transdniestr”, and “Moldova” > “Moldovan”, “Basarabia” > “Basarabian”, “Nistru” > “Transnistria”, respectively. The first variant is based on the Russian translation of the names and became the rule in the English language during the Soviet period. The second variant is based on the Romanian version of the names and entered use following the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova. Although both variants are now used, the “Romanian” variant has become the rule; see, for example, the names “Moldova” and “Moldovan” in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2001, *Appendix 2, Geographical names*, p. 1396. For the benefit of coherence of spelling in this paper, all geographical names are spelt as per the “Romanian” variant.

the “mother country”, and so on. To this very day, the events of 1988-1991 are still called the “awakening” of the national consciousness, and the Basarabian intelligentsia, who were influential in the late 1980s, consider this “awakening” to be the main work of their lives. Although in 1989 the Basarabians were “haunted” by the ghost of the Union, the events that followed proved the “materialization” of another state of mind. Transition to democracy replaced the tsarist and Soviet discourse of the Moldovan language and Moldovan nation and citizens identified themselves with this discourse. Researchers and western observers have now begun to wonder why the notion of the Moldovan *ethnos* has outlived its creator, why the concept of the Moldovan nation has taken root, why a national Moldovan consciousness came into being after the fall of the Soviet Empire.¹

Explanations of the worldwide appeal of nationalism are divided into two main categories: the primordialist approach with its variations – the perennialist and the ethno-symbolist perspectives – and the modernist-instrumentalist approach.² Primordialists see nation as natural, part of the human condition, outside time and history.³ For perennialists – Adrian Hastings, John Armstrong, and others – ethnic communities and nations do not constitute a part of the natural order, but they can be found in every continent and every period of history. They are perennial and immemorial, but not primordial and natural.⁴ The ethno-symbolist approach emphasises the cultural antecedents of nation, the significance of cultural nationalism, the forging of a nation out of the memories, myth, symbols and traditions of pre-existing *ethnies*.⁵ An ethno-symbolist like Anthony Smith argues that, even if they are only constructs, national culture and identity remain obstinately “particular, time-bound and expressive”.⁶ National identity is one type of collective identity that, in his opinion, involves a sense of continuity between the experiences of succeeding generations, shared memories of specific events and persons which have been turning points in a collective history, and a sense of common destiny for the part of the collectivity sharing these experiences.⁷

Modernists emphasise the recent character of nations and nationalism. The basic idea behind the modernist approach is that national identity and nationalist ideology are based on mass literacy/education and require a certain type of society characterized by social mobility, relative egalitarianism, anonymity, semantic/communicative rather than physical work, a context-free medium of communication.⁸ In the modernist-instrumentalist approach, nations, as a political principle of government,

were not (God) given, but created and invented by social engineering only in the modern period of Western history. According to Gellner, nationalism is a political principle which transforms the pre-given cultures in nations: “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – however, it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if ...these are purely negative”.⁹

At first sight, it seems that the constructionist perspective – assumed by authors like Ernest Gellner, Elie Kedourie, John Breuilly, Benedict Anderson, Tom Nairn, Eric Hobsbawm, Eugen Weber, Liah Greenfeld and others – explains all confusions concerning Moldova’s national problems because the researcher is mainly dealing with Soviet and tsarist inventions. However, it is not long before the researcher encounters the authentic confrontation of theories – part of the population confirming the primordialist or ethno-symbolist theories by their struggle for the Romanian language, as a proof of the true, original, authentic identity. Yet, another part maintains the confidence in what they consider to be Moldovan values. After understanding this situation, the researcher is not able to operate with polarities and seeks a more complex approach.

In my opinion, a general theory of nationalism, that applies to all types of nationalism and tells us non-trivial things, is an impossibility. In practice, few scholars adhere entirely to either the primordialist or the instrumentalist pole – the question being to what extent is such a synthesis empirically helpful. Despite this, the utility of the modernist approach in clarifying nation formation in the case of Moldova should not be ignored. The modernist-instrumentalist perspective offers a very useful conceptual framework within which to raise interesting questions and investigate the case of Moldova case in historically and culturally specific ways.¹⁰

From the modernist-instrumentalist point of view, approaches to national identity that do not concern political modernization misunderstand the basic mechanisms of national identification. What is considered pre-modern national identity is, in fact, an ethnic identity.¹¹ In this paper, the expressions “the ethnic majority from the Republic of Moldova”, “Moldova’s ethnic majority” will be used to refer analytically to the undifferentiated category which precedes both the Romanian identity discourse and the Moldovan identity discourse, in spite that both discourses use the ethnicity, almost inventing it.

Although in a coherent instrumentalist approach it could be argued that a different *ethnie*¹² has arisen in Moldova's case, the same researcher will encounter the necessity of a theoretical equivalent to the "primal" or "raw" material, which is used both by the Moldovan and the Romanian national discourse. Otherwise, it could be concluded that that ethnicity can not only be manipulated, but also manufactured *ex nihilo*. For the purposes of this paper, it will be maintained that the main difference between ethnic identity and national identity is the non-mobilized political character of ethnic identity.¹³ Ethnic groups are small scale and essentially pre-political, providing the raw material on which nation-builders can draw. Ethnic groups are defined as quasi-kinship groups, regulated by the myth of common descent, a sense of shared history and a distinct culture. Nations are distinguished by a commitment to citizens' rights and the possession of a highly literate culture, a consolidated territory and unified economy.¹⁴

In the case of Moldova, the terms "invention" and "construction" have the strong connotations not only of novelty, but also of intentionality and manipulation because the extreme dimension of Moldova's national predicament is the revival of the tsarist and Soviet myth of the Moldovan nation. However, there are at least three aspects to the question as to whether national identity is invention or necessity. The first of which is theoretical: the confrontation of instrumentalist approaches that consider identity to be something invented in modern times and primordialist approaches which maintain that national identity is a necessity that originates from a unique history and results in a particular destiny. The second aspect concerns the emotive power of national identity: is national identity a vital necessity for the Moldovan people? In Moldova, national identity is regarded as a necessary condition for human survival and there is a lot of "identity talk" – "Moldova has lost its identity", "Moldova is in search of identity", etc. This has led to a proliferation in conflicts and crises of identity. The third aspect, as the first, is theoretical, though it can also be seen as political: is national identity necessary in order that Moldova meet its needs to practice democracy and build civil society?

2. Discourses of national identity in the Republic of Moldova

2.1 Construction of identities

In general, the approaches of identity follow at least two paths:¹⁵ 1) Identity is essential, fundamental, unchanged, like a kernel in a nut – this is the essentialist approach, characteristic of philosophical inquiry which still argues for identity and essence or as essence. 2) Identity is constructed and reconstructed – this is the instrumentalist model, dominant in the contemporary social sciences. When identity became a concept good-for-all in the social sciences, it had already been used with the meaning of construction.¹⁶

There are two aspects of the instrumentalist model, which make it useful and attractive: identity as a function of difference within a system, and identity as discourse and narrative.

“Us”-“them”: Identity as a function of difference is also well known as the “us”-“them” mechanism. Identities are constituted within a system of social relations and require the reciprocal recognition of the other:¹⁷

Identity is not a “thing” but rather a system of social relations and representation. It is a continual process, in re-composition, rather than a given process in which the two constitutive dimensions of self-identification and affirmation of difference are continually linked.¹⁸

It means that the most exact characteristic of an element is that of being what others are not. For example, we identify number 13 as being between 12 and 14. But unlike with numbers, maintaining of a national identity is a continual process of re-compositions. This implies both self-identification and affirmation of difference. A national community uses these patterns to imagine itself as different from others,¹⁹ to imagine a nation among nations.²⁰ Identity is not only constituted in and by its relations with others. To possess an identity, comprehension of what differentiates one from another is necessary. It is not sufficient to send a message of identity in order to have an identity; this message must be accepted by the “significant other”.

Identity as discourse and narrative: The second attractive aspect of the instrumentalist approach is that identity exists and is constituted by narration and discourse. The “us”-“them” mechanism and identity as

narrative are bound. Nationalism and national identity “can be thought of as the specimens of the big families of *we-talks*; that is, of discourses in which identities and counter-identities are conceived and through which they are sustained”.²¹ If it is possible to think of nationalism as a kind of “narcissism of minor differences”, then the logic of manipulating differences implies narrative constructions. National discourse takes neutral differences and essentializes them in a narrative of an “us”-“them” opposition. As Michael Ignatieff argues:

A nationalist takes the neutral facts about people – their language, habitat, culture, tradition and history – and turns these facts into a narrative whose purpose is to illuminate the self-consciousness of a group, to enable them to think of themselves as a nation, with a destiny, a vocation and a claim to self determination. A nationalist, in other words, takes “minor differences” and transforms them into major differences.²²

This process includes a tendency to essentialize national identities, to single out one trait or characteristic in codifying a national or ethnic group.²³ For example, in Moldova, in order to make a distinction between “us” and “them”, the nationalist discourses differentiate between the ethnic majority and the ethnic Russians. Thus, national identity is defined in terms of the opposition “our homeland”, “our language” *versus* Russian colonizing values, or in terms of a different structure of the same experience – colonizer-colonized, immigrants-indigenous, aggressors–victims. This essentialization of traits has become crucial to the way in which identities are represented both in the strategies of the elite and in the minds of the masses.

The nationalist discourses in former Soviet countries reinvent and repackage a supposed pre-Soviet or pre-colonial golden age of the homeland. To say something about a nation, a minimal narrative cannot be avoided – the moment the community came into being and the most important events witnessed.²⁴ The narrative form, with its assumption of a beginning, a middle and an end, is also the single vehicle that gives legitimacy to a national movement, that can organize different events in a story or, in Anderson’s words, write a “biography of a nation”.²⁵ Benedict Anderson’s theory of imagining a collective existence functions implicitly by relying on the theory of narrative and discursive fields. These discursive fields provide individuals with a sense of identity over time.²⁶

2.2 Identity discourses in the Republic of Moldova

The discourses of national identity articulated in Moldova can be classified according to the criteria which result explicitly from the assumption of the construction of identity and the aforementioned mechanisms of identification. The main criteria are the “us”-“them” mechanism and attitudes towards the main aspects of national problem.

1. Attitudes towards (national) community.
2. Attitudes towards language.
3. Uses of history.
4. Attitudes towards state.
5. Integration of minorities.
6. Us-them relations:
 - a) We and Romania;
 - b) We and Russia;
 - c) We and Europe.

For the purposes of explanation, the discourses are classified as two main types: Romanian oriented discourse and Moldovan oriented discourse, respectively. The radicalization of both types of discourse should also be mentioned: Neo-Soviet discourse as radicalization of Moldovan oriented discourse, and European oriented discourse as radicalization of Romanian discourse, respectively. These discourses are not official, nor are they the discourses of political parties or social-cultural movements. Systematized for the purposes of this paper, these are discourses on the basis of the empirical discourses of political leaders, intellectuals, declarations, the mass media, official acts, including all types of written text and so on.²⁷

(i) Romanian discourse:

Attitudes towards (national) community: Romanian nation.

Attitudes towards language: Romanian language.

Uses of history: The main historical event that feeds this discourse is the Union with Romania (1918-1940), which signifies a golden age and a project for the future. Although Basarabia did not witness the events of

the nineteenth century – 1848, 1859, 1877-1879 – that were crucial to the formation of the Romanian nation, there was nonetheless an impact on the national consciousness of certain generations as the result of the cultural politics of Romanian state in the period 1918-1940, as described by Irina Livezeanu:

Cultural politics is the third part of a triptych, preceded by the economic or cultural revolution and bureaucratic-military revolution. Whilst Romania and the other Eastern European states experienced weakened forms of the first two types of revolution, they experienced an all the more vigorous version of cultural revolution.²⁸

Attitudes towards state: Moldova is the second Romanian state or is another Romanian state, and union of the states will come sooner or later.

Integration of minorities: The example of Estonia can be used as a model for this discourse: citizenship should be granted only on ethnic grounds or, in the case of members of ethnic groups, only on proof of knowledge of the official language.

Us - them relations:

- *We and Romania:* This is a case of a permanent inclusion: “We are Romanians”.
- *We and Russia:* “Russians are occupiers”. Russians are identified with Soviets and Communists as the three faces of the same enemy of this Romanian region.
- *We and Europe:* European integration will come, sooner or later, together with Romania.

(ii) Moldovan discourse:

Attitudes towards (national) community: The Moldovan nation is different from the Romanian nation, not from an ethnic point of view, but from a political point of view.

Attitudes towards language: “The national language is the Moldovan language based on the Latin alphabet” (Constitution, Article 13).

Use of history: Ernest Renan, in his well-known conference *What is a Nation* (1882),²⁹ said that forgetting history as well as remembering it is an essential factor in forging a nation. But in Moldova, what is forgotten by one discourse is stressed by another, as happened, for example, in the

22 years of the Union with Romania. Romanian oriented discourse forgets the behavior of the Romanian authorities in the region, whereas the Moldovan discourse stresses it, exaggerating it. Speculation is rife as far the question of the Union is concerned:

To what state would the Basarabian population have chosen to belong if the referendum proposed by Russians had been held? But the referendum was rejected by the “Sfatul Țării”³⁰, which considered that the will of the people had already been expressed by the Greater People’s Assembly.³¹

Moldovan oriented discourse displays hostility towards Romanians and a preference for the historical Moldovans of the period before the formation of the Romanian State in 1859. Moldovan ideologists have published maps of Greater Moldova, reaching from the river Nistru to the Carpathians and containing a portrait of Stephen the Great.

Attitudes towards state & integrating minorities: The Citizenship Law adopted in June 1991³² is considered to be among the most inclusive in Eastern Europe: all persons living in Moldova on the date of the declaration of Sovereignty – 23 June 1990 – were automatically taken to be citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, linguistic abilities or any other criteria. The Constitution promulgated in 1994 contains no mention of ethno-national identities as being defining characteristics of the state and continually uses the phrase “people of the Republic of Moldova” in order to avoid any link between statehood and ethnicity.

We and Romania: This Moldovan discourse accords a special status to relations between Romania and Moldova. “Special relations” is an expression used by Moldovan oriented politicians, even though it was never clear.

We and Europe and We and Russia: pragmatism and conciliation

(iii) Neo-Soviet discourse

This discourse could be named “national communism” because it is a mixture of communist and nationalist ideas. This is also a governmental nationalism. According to J. Breuille, governmental nationalism can only be considered as a distinct subject when the links to an earlier phase of nationalist opposition are particularly evident or when the government is confronted with a nationalist opposition claiming to speak for another nation.³³

Attitudes towards (national) community: The Moldovan nation exists independently and is entirely different from the Romanian nation.

Attitudes towards language: prohibition by governmental order of the use of the expressions “Romanian language”, “Romanian literature”, “History of Romanians”.

Uses of history: Soviet and communist history. For example, re-publishing of the Soviet period history books in which the term “annexation by Romania” is used to describe the 1918-1940 period.

Integration of minorities: Neo-Soviet discourse claims to be an active defender of minority rights, but, in fact, all minorities are reduced to Russian. The Russian language is the “language of inter-ethnic communication”. However, Neo-Soviet discourse also requires that the Russian language acquire the status of official language. The argument is quite democratic and is characteristic of the contemporary politics of identity: the example is given of democratic states, such as Belgium or Switzerland, but more often that of Finland where the Swedish make up only 2 percent of the population, but the Swedish language is nonetheless an official language.

Attitudes towards state: Moldova as federation (Moldova, Transnistria, Gagauzia); integration by union with Russia and Belarus.

We and Romania: Romania is a foreign state, which intervenes in the internal affairs of the independent and sovereign state of Moldovan.

We and Europe: Europe is ignored. “Europe is foreign and has no basis for understanding us”.

We and Russia: In this discourse, Russification and the proliferation of the Russian language should not be seen as the propaganda of Kremlin, but as a tool of modernization. From their point of view, modernization was not only the fundamental purpose of the Soviet and communist regime, but it was also a real achievement.

(iv). European oriented discourse:

Attitudes towards (national) community: “We are Romanians, beyond any discussion or doubt, but we are Romanians with a Basarabian ingredient with which we bring diversity and richness to the ways of being Romanian”.

Attitudes towards language: “We should stop discussing what is the real nature of our language and start speaking the Romanian language correctly, which is our ‘given’”.

Use of history: There are some aspects of history, which cannot be ignored when defining who we are. Moldova did not experience the events of the nineteenth century, which proved crucial for Romania – the years 1848, 1859, 1877-1879. Furthermore, all aspects of the Union are accepted, such as the fact that the Union was preceded by a secret convention to annex Basarabia signed by Romania and Germany; that Germany accepted annexation of Basarabia on the condition it be allowed to move its army through Basarabia to conquer the Ukraine; and that the formalities of the local declaration of the Union were made for the benefit of credibility and legitimacy among the population.

Attitudes towards state: Moldovan state should be based on a strong civil society.

Integrating minorities: Cultural rights for ethnic groups without ignoring the rights of the national or ethnic majority;

We and Russia: Dialogue with Russia is accepted only to the extent that Russia affirms her European vocation and Western orientation;

Romania and Europe: “We will find Romania again in Europe”; “Here in Chisinau we are accustomed to say that our path to Europe passes through Romania. Although, in saying this, we have always believed that we are testifying to an original form of patriotism, the statement, in fact, hides an inertia and intellectual sufficiency. Because we are not aware that the situation is exactly the opposite: we will find Romania again in Europe if we adopt the values and the strictness of the democratic world”.³⁴

Questions which may arise at this point are numerous: how it is possible within the same community, with the same “objective” data of language, territory, ethnicity and history, that two radically different discourses of identity have emerged – the Romanian identity discourse and Moldovan identity discourse? Why do some people identify themselves as Romanians and others as Moldovans? Why do these people want to live together and others not? Why do they constitute a community and the others not?

3. The identity confusion as inheritance

3.1 Invention of the Moldovan nation

Moldova has never existed as an independent political state within its present borders. From the mid-fourteenth to the fifteenth century, an independent principality of Moldova emerged in the lands between the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea. In the fifteenth century, Moldova became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. In 1812, the Russian Empire annexed the eastern half of Moldova located between the rivers Prut and Nistru, naming it Basarabia. The western half of Moldova was incorporated into the newly created Romania in 1859. By 1918, Basarabia had become a part of Greater Romania, only for it to be annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and become part of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, formed in that year, together with a small region on the east of the river Nistru called Transnistria.³⁵

Until 1924, Transnistria seems to have been a no-man's-land of Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian villages. In 1923, part of the population of this territory, mainly Bolshevik refugees from Basarabia (at the time was part of "bourgeois and capitalist" Romania), demanded autonomy within the Ukraine. Of a sudden, the Kremlin accepted the demand and the Autonomous Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (AMSSR) was declared official – though not as a part of the Ukraine, but as a part of the Soviet Union. There was an obvious reason to creating this republic: keeping the Romanian government alert and then uniting it with Basarabia.

After the annexation of Basarabia³⁶ in 1812, the tsarist government started to create a Moldovan nation, distinct from the Romanian nation. The Russians and Pan-slavists advanced two hypotheses in order to justify the existence of the Moldovan nation. One tsarist hypothesis claimed that the Moldovans were a Slavic people that had adopted a Roman language in the Middle Ages. A more temperate argument asserted that the Basarabian population had developed as a separate nation in the nineteenth century when they did not share the cultural and historical experiences of the united Romanian nation.³⁷

In 1917, the Bolsheviks addressed their messages to the Basarabian proletariat in terms of the international class struggle. But shortly afterwards, in 1924, by creating the AMSSR, Soviet ideologues revised the historical and ethnic arguments on the existence of Moldovan nation.

When the prospects of re-annexation of Basarabia diminished in the 1930s, Soviet propaganda intensified its focus on the creation of the Moldovan nation. The hypothesis that places the genesis of the Moldovan nation in the convenient darkness of the Middle Ages was easier to maintain and more credible to those who had to adopt it.³⁸

What did the ideologists intend to create – a nation or an *ethnie*? The answer can be ‘both’ or, to be more precise, an ethno-nation,³⁹ as, generally speaking, the Soviet approach to the national problem was that of ethno-nationalism, both on academic⁴⁰ and empirical levels:⁴¹

According to the Soviet nationality theory, each people passed through a number of stages: tribe (*plemea*), nationality (*narodnosti*), bourgeois nation and socialist nation. The Volochi, the ancestors of both Romanians and Moldovans split during either the second or the third stage. The Volochi in the south interacted with the South Slavs and became Romanians. The Volochi in the north interacted with the East Slavs and became Moldovans.⁴²

Some authors argue that the myth of the Moldovan nation was attractive since the name “Moldovan” had actually been used on both sides of the river Prut at one time or another. But, despite the fact that old Romanian chronicles refer to “Moldovans”, it was clearly a reference in a geographic, non-ethnic sense.⁴³

3.2 Invention of the Moldovan language

The problem of the Moldovan language was first raised in 1924 in Transnistria (AMSSR) and continued by Soviet linguists.⁴⁴ The founders of Transnistria claimed they needed an instrument with which to communicate with the rural population and to promote Bolshevik values. They tried to impose a language spoken in some villages but encountered the need for a standard language and, inevitably, had to adopt the existent Romanian. The unique difference was the choice of script – though the Latin script was in fact used in 1932-1938. In order to avoid the creation of obstacles to re-annexation, however, the Soviet authorities recommended use of the Latin script and the Romanian language over that of the newly invented Moldovan.

The Soviet period was one of promotion of intense Russification in order to guarantee the stability of western borders. Russification was effected in two ways: the obligation to speak Russian and the adoption of

Russian words in the national language. Nonetheless, despite Russification, the Soviets found it difficult to argue the difference between the two languages. And despite their relative success in imposing the expression "Moldovan language", on August 31 1989, Moldova adopted the Latin alphabet and in 1991 changed the name of the spoken language from "Moldovan" to "Romanian".⁴⁵

But, five years later, the second parliament elected in 1994 by free democratic elections changed the name of the state language back to "Moldovan". This was the beginning of a linguistic battle. International conferences, symposia, and workshops were organized to demonstrate that the language spoken in Moldova was, in fact, Romanian. Again, it had been demonstrated, linguistically speaking, that the Moldovan language did not exist. There was no more discussion and doubt about the nature of the language spoken in Moldova. This scientific proof, however, did not convince everybody that their language was not Moldovan and was not a different language from Romanian. There is no simple choice when it comes to naming a language. Choosing one name over another leads to different behavior: those who believe their language to be Moldovan would read different newspapers, listen to different radio stations and watch different TV stations than those believing their language to be Romanian. Political behavior will, therefore, be different, with, for example, people voting different political parties accordingly.

3.3 Identification through inventions

Of course, it cannot be said at which point the word "Moldovan", in the ethnic and national sense of the word, started to take on meaning, apart from its use by ideologists. It is difficult to say how peasants identified themselves in the nineteenth century, whether they were able to identify themselves in relation to other ethnic groups. Basarabian intellectuals, students and soldiers in Russia, however, confirm the theories of identity, and even confirm Gellner's story of the Ruritanians of Megalomania.⁴⁶ A powerful mechanism of national identification is exposure to difference or contact with others which shows differences between self and other groups, intensifying ethnic and national feelings, the feeling of belonging to "our group".

In Petrograd in 1917, for example, the Basarabians Ion Inculet and Panteleimon Erhan founded the *Basarabian Society* (Societatea Basarabeană) with the purpose of instructing propagandists in the spread

of Bolshevik ideas in Basarabia. The same year saw the organization in Odessa of the Moldovan Progressist Party.⁴⁷ The fact that these groups were organized in Russia allow us to say that intellectuals, students and soldiers from the Russian Empire discovered their difference and, in order to give a name to it or to differentiate themselves from other contacted ethnic groups, they used the already existing terms “Basarabians” and “Moldovans”. These contacts with tsarist bureaucracies also served as a source of Basarabian nationalism in 1917-1918:

It is this that pushes people into nationalism, into the need for the congruence between their own “culture” (the idiom in which they express themselves and understand others) and that of the interconnected bureaucracies, which constitute their social environment. Non-congruence is not merely an inconvenience or a disadvantage: it means perpetual humiliation.⁴⁸

Perpetual humiliation at the hands of the bureaucracies of the empire explains why, when returning to their country, Basarabians instructed as Bolshevik-propagandists became nationalists, declared autonomy for Basarabia and played a major role in the Unification of Basarabia and Romania.⁴⁹

3.4 Institutionalization of the “mistaken identity”

During the Soviet period, in Moldova there existed deliberate constructions of the nation – the invention of the pseudo-theoretical concept of the “Moldovan people” and “Moldovan nation”. Concomitantly, however, there also existed an institutionalized process of forging a national identity. The resurrection of nationalism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has been explained in terms of the emergence of the ethno-national conflicts “frozen” by communist regimes. Recent interpretation of the Soviet period argues that this is not exactly the case. The Soviet period was characterized by a double strategy or double politics regarding the national problem – the development of nationalities and their simultaneous fusion:

Far from ruthlessly suppressing nationhood, the Soviet regime pervasively institutionalized it. The regime repressed nationalism, of course, but at the same time it went further than any other state before or since in

institutionalizing territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality as fundamental social categories. In doing so, it inadvertently created a political field supremely conducive to nationalism.⁵⁰

The Soviet Union did not suppress nationalism, but re-shaped it. There were two types of republic created – *unional* and *autonomous* – based on local ethnic communities, newly incorporated in the Soviet empire. Ethnicity and nationality of the republics were defined according to Stalin's definition of nation: "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make up manifested in a community of culture"⁵¹. This is obviously an ethno-nationalist position. Thus, the Soviet Union was the only state in the world where the ethnic principle was used as a basis for its administrative structure.⁵² The Soviet republics were defined as quasi-nation states, complete with their own territories, names, constitutions, legislatures, administrative staff, cultural and scientific institutions, etc. At the time of its dissolution, the Soviet Union included 53 nation-state formations, each one based on self-determination of an ethnic group.

Interpretation of the former Soviet empire distinguishes between the degree of institutionalization of ethnic identities and their psychological depth: "it is important to distinguish between *the degree of institutionalization* of ethnic and national categories and *the psychological depth, substantiality* and *practical potency* of such categorical identities".⁵³ The populations incorporated in the Soviet empire were required to have a national consciousness at local level and express their patriotism at the unional level. At the same time, however, Soviet patriotism was supposed to replace national local identities – patriotism being a moral quality, the patriot being a person who acts voluntarily and rationally in the interest of his country.⁵⁴ This double national strategy has similarities with the agrarian reform of the Bolsheviks: to gain the support of the enormous mass of peasants incorporated in the empire, land was allotted to the peasants for a short period of time, only for it to be were collectivized 10-12 years later – a strategy more successful than the "patriotization" of ethno-nationalism. Although ethno-nationalism was something created, it was nonetheless stronger than Soviet patriotism. This is why Walker Connor considers the case of the Soviet Union to be the most instructive example for the force of ethno-nationalism "wherein a most comprehensive, intensive and multigenerational program to

exorcise nationalism and exalt Soviet patriotism has proven remarkably ineffective".⁵⁵

3.5 "Mistaken identity" at work

Beside the institutionalization of the nationalism in the unional republic, some important conditions for the creation of a national identity were fulfilled:

Standard education of the masses: Ernest Gellner argued that the development of national awareness was possible only after the elimination of illiteracy, when a common written standard culture (in the sociological, not the elitist sense of the word) was shared by the masses. According to Gellner, nationalism is

The general impositions of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases the totality, of the population. It means the general diffusion of a school-mediated, academic supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of a reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is establishment of an anonymous impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of the previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves.⁵⁶

During the Soviet period, Moldova's population received a standard education, which was the main condition for a common Moldovan identity. Moreover, there are many accounts which maintain that the illiteracy was eliminated for the first time in the Soviet period.⁵⁷

Industrialisation: Nationalism was explained as the transition from *Agraria* to *Industria* and Soviet efforts were considerable in this respect. Soviet strategy of state building and mobilization "could not be implemented without more effective control of the rural majority of the population and the transfer of resources from the agricultural sector was seen as essential to rapid industrialization".⁵⁸ Although Moldova was and still is an agricultural country, a form of industrialization was nonetheless developed: a food processing industry, textile and wine industries, and even heavy industry for different kinds of agricultural

machines. Today, the workers have returned to their villages, however the shared values of Soviet workers remain strong.

Common action: According to exegetes, the term “industrialization” can be replaced by “modernization”:

If modernity is taken to mean the kind of social arrangements that there were institutionalized after the English industrial and French political revolutions, that is, if the term describes the destruction of localism and creation via unprecedented social mobilization, of broad social areas in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres, then we can argue that the elective affinity that Gellner tries to establish is not between nationalism and industrialization, but between nationalism and modernity.⁵⁹

Industrialization could mean the whole idea of modernization as both suppose literacy, urbanization, the school system, symbols and complex cultural artifacts. Some Soviet regions saw all these elements for the first time during the Soviet period. Revisionist interpretations of totalitarianism regard the Soviet period as one of modernization of most of the regions within the Soviet empire.⁶⁰ This is not an acceptable argument because any account of Soviet phenomena must be located within a global framework, part of global modernization. Nonetheless, even though the revisionist modernization argument does not hold up entirely, the population of Moldova did carry out construction works in the Soviet period, such as roads, factories, schools, institutions and kolkhozes, etc.⁶¹ – all new to the population and signs of a “better life”. It is difficult to call these were good things, but it was, nonetheless, collective action. Identity was also defined as a “dynamic emergent aspect of collective action”⁶² or, more exactly,

as the reflexive capacity for producing consciousness of action (that is the symbolic representation of it) beyond any specific contents. Identity becomes formal reflexivity, pre-symbolic capacity, the recognition of a sense of action within the limits posed at any moment by the environment and the biological structure.⁶³

In Moldova, the identity created as an emergent aspect of common action was, of course, the Moldovan identity. Even if a part of these people understand that these actions and institutions would have been

more feasible in a democratic, non-communist, non-Soviet regime, it would be very painful for them to give up all their beliefs and accept that their lives had been totally wrong.

Imagined community: As Benedict Anderson argued, mass communication plays a fundamental role in the forging of a common identity. One of the first tools in the creating of a nation is the newspaper – it is no accident that they appear at the same time. If the newspaper forms the basis of nation building, then the broadcasting media are the main tool in its consolidation. Radio is employed “to forge a link between the dispersed listeners and the symbolic heartland of national life”. Broadcasting media allows a space of identification based not only on a common history, but also on common daily experience. Mass media is a linking mechanism between the rituals of every day life and the “imagined community” of the nation:

Nations are held together by beliefs, but these beliefs cannot be transmitted except through cultural artifacts which are available to everyone – books, newspapers, electronic media. This is the basis of Benedict Anderson’s claim that nations are not wholly spurious inventions, but imagined communities, because their existence depends on collective acts of imagining which find their expression mainly in the media.⁶⁴

During the Soviet period in Moldova, a strong imagined community was forged by the mass media that had appeared predominantly in the Soviet period; it was a single state mass media system and it forged, for the first time, an imagined community and a common identity.

Creations of institutions and Moldovan culture: Throughout the history of the Soviet Union, a cultural elite would emerge among most ethnic groups as “national” poets, writers, artists, filmmakers, and academics. Also, “the cultural mosaic” would be “thoroughly documented, academically described and staged in the repertoires of numerous national theaters, operas, museums, and folk music and dance groups”.⁶⁵ Moldova, for example, saw the imposition of a kind of “academic-popular” folk music and dance, stylized folk clothes and food – all things that are now taken as ethnically specific to Moldovan culture.⁶⁶

Thus, in the Soviet period in Moldova, a strong system of institutionalized identities was created, with the help of which, the

population represented reality, channeled their political action and organized their social and cultural life.

4. Between “national awakening” and “social engineering”

4.1. “National revival” and “national backlash”

In spite of the institutionalization of a “mistaken” identity, for many western observers, the events of 1988-1991 seemed to serve the purpose of denying the difference between Moldovans and Romanians and describing the idea of the Moldovan language and Moldovan nation as linguistic and ethnic farces, invented in order to justify an annexation of territory. In the summer of 1988, Basarabian intellectuals and a part of the political elite (members of the Communist party) created the unofficial movement *The Democratic Movement for Supporting Perestroika*. Again in 1988, *The Literary and Musical Club “Alexe Mateevici”* was set up to formulate the national and cultural claims of the ethnic majority. In 1989, these two movements merged to become the *Popular Front*. In the period 1988-1991, most of their requirements were realized.

Identity claims satisfied in the period 1988-1991:

- Introduction of the Latin alphabet and declaration of the Moldovan language as state language – August 31, 1989;
- Strengthening of the “Romanian-Moldovan linguistic identity” – September 1, 1989;
- Adoption of Tricolor - 27 April 1990;
- Introduction of “History of Romanians” and “Romanian literature” courses in the curricula – September 1990;
- Adoption of the national anthem: “Deșteaptă-te române” – May 23, 1990;
- Renaming of the country – May 23, 1991;
- Declaration of Sovereignty – June 23, 1991;
- Declaration of Independence – August 27, 1991;
- Declaration of the Romanian language as state language – August 27, 1997;

- Others: de-Russification of geographical names, Romanization of names, changing of street names, etc.

Identity claims satisfied in 1994-1995:

- In 1994, a new democratically elected Parliament changed the “acquisitions” of the national movement:
- Ratification of the fundamental act of Community of Independent States – April 1994;
- Declaration of the Moldovan language as state language – July 27, 1994, Constitution, Article 13, 1;
- Adoption of a new national anthem: “Limba noastră” – 1995;
- Attempt to introduce Moldovan history in the curricula – 1995.

Since 1995, there has been a change from the dominant Romanian oriented discourse to the discourse of neo-Soviet identity, via the phase dominated by the Moldovan discourse. In 2001, the former communist party, without changing its name, won the general elections in a most democratic way by taking 70 percent of the vote.

How can such a radical succession of identity discourses be explained? Why was a strong national movement followed by a backlash and a return to the “mistaken identity”? Normally these questions can be formulated from primordialist and culturalist perspectives of nations and nationalism, which name a particular movement as a “national-awakening”. It might be useful to start the explanation from within instrumentalist theory and then to deal with the unexplainable side of the national movement.

4.2 National revival: cause or consequence of disintegration of empire?

The traditional interpretative approach of post-soviet nationalism maintains that the national revivals in most Soviet republics led to the break up of the Soviet empire. But these two phenomena – the “national revival” and “falling empire” – are, in fact, simultaneous and are even logically opposed. The break up of empire leads to the national movement: “nationalism is a dialectical affair, with movements among Ruritians often resulting from the action of those in the Megalomanian metropolis”.⁶⁷

According to Miroslav Hroch,⁶⁸ the social conditions of national revival pass through three phases. In phase A – cultural, literary, and folkloric – a group of intellectuals share a “new spirituality” emerging from a collective history and destiny. In phase B, a *minorité agassante* finds (or invents) the political implication of these ideas and starts a political campaign for its implementation. In the final phase, phase C, national feelings and the inevitable political demands are shared by the masses.⁶⁹

The initial period, phase A, when activists devote themselves to scholarly inquiry into the linguistic, historical and cultural attributes of their ethnic group, something which is a long way from having political goals, is not easy to establish in Moldova – it may possibly lie in the activity of intellectuals from the Soviet period, the intellectuals opposed to the Russification in the time after 1956, which was witness to a period of post-Stalinization ‘liberalization’. It is an amazing fact that, during the cultural and literary phase, there was no significant difference between the Moldovan and Romanian oriented intellectuals. Both were fighting together against Russification and their differences were negligible. After 1989-1991, when the divergences among intellectuals started to become obvious, tension and reciprocal blame grew rapidly and strengthened.⁷⁰

The role of the *minorité agassante*, which discovered the political implication of cultural and linguistic ideas and started a political campaign for its implementation, was played both by the political elite – members of the Communist party who created the unofficial movement *The Democratic Movement for Supporting Perestroika* – and by intellectuals – those from the *Literary and Musical Club “Alexe Mateevici”*. Political demands emerged in phase C, when the Soviet Empire had collapsed.

The transition to the decisive phase of national agitation occurred almost at the same time as the old regimes and social system were in crisis. As old ties disappeared or weakened, the need for a new group identity brought together, under the auspices of the national movement, people belonging to different classes and groups. Similarly, following the breakdown of the system of planned economy and communist control, old ties disappeared. Under conditions of general uncertainty and a lack of confidence, the national idea assumed an integrating role. These were stressful circumstances and people usually overestimated the protective effects of their national group.⁷¹

There are some elements that allow the national movement of 1988-1991 to be seen as a consequence of the disintegration of the Soviet empire, rather than an awakening of the old force:

a) The movement appeared within the Communist system in order to protect the system and improve it – as already said, it was *The Democratic Movement for Supporting Perestroika*, which appeared first. There is clear similarity with the Basarabian national movement from 1917-1918. Both movements were organized by groups of Basarabians during obvious collapses of empire – the disintegration of the tsarist empire in 1917, following the Bolshevik revolution, and the end of empire in 1989, due to perestroika. These movements were also set up in order to sustain the official system – in 1917, for the promotion of the Bolshevik values, and in 1989, in order to sustain perestroika. In 1917 in Petrograd, the Basarabians founded the *Basarabian Society*, which the Russian provisional government recognized as pro-Bolshevik, but, when they came to Moldova to represent the newly created Soviet power, they actually made union with Romania. Some Moldovan soldiers in the Russian army also started to spread revolutionary propaganda, but this soon turned into a nationalist movement,⁷² confirming Lord Acton's prophecy that "*Exile feeds the nursery of the nationalism*".⁷³ But, the final stages of national movements are quite different. At the beginning of the century the nationalist movement had led to Union with Romania, whereas, by the end of the century it led to Independence and the creation of a new state.⁷⁴

b) Another argument for the supposition that national movements are mainly a consequence, rather than a cause of the disintegration of empire, is the fact that national movements were common among the Soviet unional republics and lasted until Independence was gained.

c) Most national movements quickly achieved their principal goal: political independence. Fifteen new nation-states emerged from the former Soviet Union without facing any serious danger from abroad. After achieving their main goals, national movements disappeared in most countries. Thus, the national movement emerged as a result of, and as an answer to the crisis and disintegration of the communist regime and its system of values.

4.3 Elite manipulation

In order to understand a national movement and its consequences, it is very important to analyze the behavior of the elite during the stages of national agitation. The perspective of elite manipulation is regarded with suspicion by some theoreticians, but in the case of Moldova it provides a very powerful explanation.⁷⁵

During the Soviet period, the Moldovan political elite was made up of members of the Communist Party from Transnistria.⁷⁶ Until 1989, no leader from Basarabia held the position of first secretary of the Communist Party as the Kremlin supposed personnel from Transnistria to be more reliable than their counterparts from Basarabia, part of “bourgeois Romania”. In this case, it can be said that this is a classic example of “blocked elite”.⁷⁷

In 1989, a new local elite that had been educated in the same communist regime emerged as champions of a cultural renaissance. They intended to take the place of the transnistrean elite. For the Moldovan elite, acceptance of a cultural nationalist was permissible for a short period in order that they acquire the vacant places in the state administration. This elite manipulation explains why the Union with Romania did not come about, despite the strong claims of the unionists. As it is known, this perspective was used by Ernest Gellner in order to explain the case of “one nation – two states”.

If a nation has 2 states, it follows that their glorious unification will reduce the number of prime-ministers, presidents, directors of academies, managers of football teams, etc., by a factor of n . For every person in such a position, $n-1$ people will lose the position. All these $n-1$ will be the losers in unification, even if, as a whole, the nation makes gains. And, while there is no doubt that it is better to be a big boss than a small boss, the difference between these positions is not as important as that of between being a boss, no matter how big or small, and not being a boss at all.⁷⁸

4.4 Mass support in national revival

Researchers of nationalism and national movements agree that, regardless of the nature of the social group in which so called “national consciousness” may first appear, the masses are the last to be affected by it.⁷⁹ The main interest of the researcher is to analyze the ways in which the political and intellectual elite, the *minorité agassante*, gains mass

support. How can the mass support which Moldova's national "awakeners" claimed to enjoy be explained?

a) Unification of the social, economic, political, and cultural requirements: In Moldova, ethnic sentiments were first used to mobilize divergent groups in a coalition against the Communist regime. However, antipathy between these groups emerged, and, as a result, the movement was seceded. By way of example, in 1989, the main Gagauz organization, *Gagauz Halki*, even became involved with the *Popular Front* in order to support Perestroika and to press for increased cultural provisions for the ethnic Gagauz. Thus, both organizations saw their goals as essentially compatible. However, in 1990, when the *Popular Front* moved in an increasingly Romanian direction, the Gagauz feared it would press for the forced Romanization of the ethnic minorities inside a reconstituted Greater Romania and consequently separated, not only from the *Popular Front*, but also from the Moldovan state.⁸⁰ In June 1989, other local non-formal organizations also joined the *Popular Front*, unifying their cultural, political, economic and social claims, as the *Popular Front* was the only independently recognized organization which had the right to propose candidates for election from the USSR in 1989 and from Moldova in 1990. After the election, the movements separated as their short-term pragmatic interests had been satisfied.

b) Support of different social strata: Max Weber, in his definition of a nation, emphasized the fact that not all social strata enjoy the same degree of solidarity in national movements.⁸¹ In classic national movements, peasants are active according to the amount of land possession. In 1917, the Basarabian peasants were very active. They demanded land, but also political and social rights. In 1988-1989, there was no active participation by the peasants because they had no economic demands. Normally, officials, office workers, civil servants, etc. show reluctance towards national movements out of fear for their positions. The common support of all social strata is a logical condition for a successful national movement: "Self-determination was stronger and more successful in national movements based on a complete social structure from their non-dominant ethnic group and which could utilize some state institutions or traditions from the past".⁸²

c) Religious authority: In Moldova, the religious authorities played an important role in spreading the ideas of the *minorité agassante* among the masses. Under Communism, only a small number of churches were allowed to function, and attendance was strongly discouraged and met

with moral reprimand. For the ethnic majority, cultural nationalism was a religious renaissance – their national meetings had a strong religious flavor and even religious décor. The religious authorities were very active and, to the extent in which they acted to bolster their own influence, they were rationalist and pragmatic, as is characteristic of the political elite.

5. From “primordial remains” to “civic act”.

5.1 Whose emotions? Whose rationality?

As explained by instrumentalist approach, there is no doubt what it was that enabled the invented, or “mistaken” identity to survive: the pragmatic interests of the elite to obtain an independent state. The instrumentalists attribute rationality to the national movement because it concerns autonomy, independence, and secession, which are pragmatic aims in themselves. Thus, a rational explanation for the national movement would be relative economic deprivation, elite ambitions, rational choice theory, and internal colonialism.

On the other hand, it is generally accepted that if nationalism existed only in the third world, it could be explained entirely by the instrumentalist approach.⁸³ Similarly, if the Moldovan discourse had been the only discourse in the Republic of Moldova, it could then have been explained entirely by instrumentalist theories. However, this explanation brings with it the risk that an excessive and even impossible rationality is attributed to the elite and that nationalism is transformed into a rationalistic strategy to be employed by leaders in mobilizing the masses for their own, opportunistic ends.

There was a powerful emotive dimension to the national movement of 1988-1991. The dominant narrative during those years was the narrative of national prison and liberation; the intellectual elites described their actions in the emotional registers of dignity or, to be more precise, of the humiliation to which they were exposed, and that of current dignity. How can this emotional power be explained?

The ethno-symbolist and primordialist approaches consider the emotional power of nationalism to be precisely the most important element that the instrumentalist perspective fails to explain. By way of example, Anthony Smith blames the limitation of the instrumentalist approach for,

firstly, failing to distinguish between genuine constructs and long-term processes and structures in which successive generations have been socialized; secondly, concentrating on the actions of the elite at the expense of popular beliefs and actions; and thirdly, neglecting the powerful affective dimensions of nations and nationalism.⁸⁴

It can be presumed that there is an unexplainable remainder from Moldova's national predicament, which the instrumentalist-modernist approach cannot explain. This can be called "the primordialist remainder" due to its reference to what are considered "primordial" givens, that is, language and special bonds with the "mother-country". In point of fact, the language of primordialism and ethno-nationalism – "Romanian brothers", "mother country Romania", "the mutilated body of the country", etc. – and the images and phrases in which their unconscious convictions are expressed – blood, family, brother, sister, mother, forefathers, ancestors and home – were used by the national awakeners in 1988-89.⁸⁵

As argued in the previous chapter, the nationalist claims of Romanian oriented and Moldovan oriented discourses were not separate during the 1988-1991 agitation. In fact, they were unified in their struggle against Soviet rule and Russification. Both orientations considered their "national awakening" to be a part of the primordial rhythms of a nation and saw it as the passage from ineffable origins to efflorescence, then to decay due to foreign power which is followed by the current glorious rebirth. Both discourses considered their primordial attachments to be overriding and ineffable.⁸⁶

After the discourses separated, it became clear that the primordialist language belonged mainly to the Romanian oriented discourse. So, does this mean that the Moldovan oriented discourse can be explained by the pragmatism of political leaders and that Romanian oriented discourse is responsible for the emotional aspects of nationalism? This is not entirely the case since the Moldovan oriented discourse is not lacking in emotional power.

So, if the "true primordial givens" are the same – language, blood, ancestry, community, customs – how is it that these can engender different attachments or, in any case, different emotions? As Clifford Geertz argues, this ineffability results from the importance which human beings attribute to the cultural givens, rather than from any intrinsic properties of the ties themselves "for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural – some would say spiritual – affinity than from social interaction".⁸⁷

If the primordiality is attached, then the direct implication is that Moldovan oriented discourse also attributes ineffability to some givens. If the same primordial givens generate different primordial attachments, then the primordialist approach fails to distinguish pure constructs – Moldovan identity – from long-term processes – “true” Romanian identity.

Despite the “*blut und boden*”⁸⁸ language, the Moldovan nationalist movement cannot be understood as an atavistic reaction; it is a quintessentially modern sentiment and phenomenon. “Nationalism, as a sentiment, could arise only in modernity” and, as Isaiah Berlin noted, mainly as a “result of humiliation” perceived acutely by “the most conscious members of a society”.⁸⁹

As many authors have underlined,⁹⁰ unlike western political nationalism, based on the civic participation of citizens, nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe is the creation of intellectuals whose social mobility was restricted. For these reasons, Eastern nationalism is considered to be a “cultural nationalism” which appeared as an answer by intellectuals to western modernity. For Charles Taylor, the modernity

can be felt as a threat to a traditional culture. It will remain an external threat to those strongly opposed to change. But there is another reaction among those who want to take on some version of the institutional changes... What they are looking for is a creative adaptation, drawing on the cultural resources of their tradition that would enable them to take on the new practices successfully. In short, they want to do what has already been done in the West. But they see, or sense, that it cannot be done by simply copying the West.⁹¹

Gellner, the author who has most convincingly argued for the link between modernity and nationalism, also denies that his theory is reductive in the sense that it neglects the psychological authenticity and depth of the emotional power of nationalism. In his later works,⁹² Gellner emphasizes that his theory seeks to explain why these emotions exist, why they are invested in nations, why they are felt authentically and powerfully in the hearts of nationals.⁹³ Thus, while feelings of humiliation might be socio-economic or the result of ethnic/linguistic difference, they might also be the result of political arbitrariness. And all these become sources of nationalism only in modernity:

Oppression is not some kind of independent and additional factor: cultural differentiation, inoffensive under the old intimate social order, is automatically experienced as oppression in the age of anonymity, mobility and pervasive bureaucratization with a standardized idiom.⁹⁴

The general conditions of modernization explain the humiliation of the community as a whole in terms of economic deprivation, lack of political participation and restricted social mobility of non-dominant ethnic groups:

members of the intelligentsia that experience restricted social mobility, and who share cultural traits with the proletariat that experiences multiple humiliation in urban environments and discrimination in labor markets, provide the personnel for nationalist movements.⁹⁵

To the extent that intellectuals perceive this humiliation more acutely and act to eliminate it, the ineffable emotive power becomes explainable from the perspective of the ambitions of the elite and rational choice theory.

5.2 The call to difference

Humiliation not only provides the personnel for nationalist movements, it is also an existential challenge for the most conscious members of a society:

The refusal – at among the elite – of incorporation by the metropolitan culture, as a recognition of the need for difference but felt existentially as a challenge, not as a matter of valuable common good to be created, and viscerally as a matter of dignity, in which one's self-worth is engaged. This is what gives nationalism its emotive power. This is what places it so frequently in the register of pride and humiliation.⁹⁶

The “call to difference” felt by “modernizing” elites is a background to nationalism.

The call to difference could be felt by anyone concerned for the well-being of the people involved. But the challenge is experienced by the elite concerned overwhelmingly with a certain register – that of dignity.⁹⁷

What is dignity? In Taylor's opinion, the notion of dignity was developed in modern, equal direct-access societies. Although Kant supposes that dignity is the *appanage* of all rational beings, "philosophically we can attribute this status to all, but politically, the sense of equal dignity is really shared by people who belong to a functioning direct-access society".⁹⁸

Recognition by the metropolitan culture did not count for Moldova's intellectuals. On the contrary, the Soviet Empire was perceived as an impediment that blocked entry to the "civilized world". Perception of the West did not immediately lead to a feeling of superiority and inferiority. The West was perceived through the "mother-country" which the intellectuals had rediscovered. Nonetheless, the need for dignity and "call for difference" soon appeared and followed a strange trajectory. Once the difficulties of communication with the Romanians "from beyond" had been overcome, along with the matters of approaching, which had been forbidden for decades, and knowing each other mutually, there followed "the sharpening of the difference that had not been clearly seen till then, because real contacts had not existed".⁹⁹ In the late 1980s, identification with Romanians "from beyond" was effected by means of borrowed representations acquired illegally, albeit indirectly.¹⁰⁰ The cultural discrepancy, clear and difficult to surpass, then brought on a rudimentary complex among the Basarabian intellectuals. Their works belonged to trends that had disappeared from Romanian culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. The time of a contemporary cultural processes is beginning only now with the works of the new generation. Admission of this discrepancy by the intellectuals educated in the old system seems impossible because it makes them feel psychologically uncomfortable; it gives them a feeling of failure.

The acceptance of cultural discrepancy gave birth to two or even three different attitudes. The first is identical to that of the Ruritanian intellectuals from the imaginary experiment invented by Gellner in *Nation and Nationalism*, who discover that in Ruritania they could have roles which they would not have if they had been citizens of Megalomania, roles that allow the Basarabian intellectuals to compensate for their inferiority: do they not share the same social positions as the intellectuals of the "mother-country"?¹⁰¹ Another attitude attempts to hide the difference in perspective and acceptance of the perspective of the other over their own identity, an acceptance that leads to shame, humility, and self-hate. Michael Ignatieff calls these feelings "the Cain and Abel syndrome"

– “the ironic fact is that intolerance between brothers is often stronger than between strangers”¹⁰² and this paradox is based on a “narcissism of minor differences”, “it is not the common elements humans share with each other that inform their sense of identity, but the marginal ‘minor’ elements separating them”.¹⁰³ The third attitude is that of intellectuals who still maintain their Romanian dignity and claim to authenticity. And this is the most important aspect of the intellectual life of Moldova.

5.3 The need for authenticity in the Romanian oriented discourse

If it is supposed that claims of the Romanian “true” identity discourse still remain unexplainable because its attachment is more primordial than that of the Moldovan discourse, then it would follow that Romanian discourse does not make a rational connection between the culture and the political concept of the nation. This Romanian ideology has the appearance of being made up of descriptive statements, but it also contains some arbitrary assumptions that are immune to refutation – for example, “the need for authenticity”.¹⁰⁴

The concept of authenticity appears in modernity and supposes that differences among human beings have moral signification. This ideal of authenticity is applied both to individuals and to cultures. How can the claim to authenticity of the Romanian discourse be explained? It can accept the “natural” propulsion to state and state power in the case of manipulative pragmatic elite as parallel. Firstly, Romanian intellectuals require recognition of personal authenticity. Normally, their professions imply the use of the standard and literary Romanian language. For personal recognition, they also need recognition in the whole space that uses this language. They need recognition in Romanian culture, recognition by and through Romanian culture, recognition by the institutions of Romanian culture. Here lie the roots of the obsession with integration, which can be seen among Moldovan intellectuals.

The excessive value given to language by the intellectuals has spread to other social strata. Studies of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, carried out in Moldova by the Romanist departments of some German universities, show that the Romanian language creates a “feeling of glottal inferiority”¹⁰⁵ among Moldova’s population because their spoken language is an archaic language that, simultaneously, is their mother tongue, the only language spoken. Even though they study modern standard and literary

Romanian, on a day-to-day basis, they continue to speak in what is for them a natural way – a rudimentary language.¹⁰⁶

It seems the “glottal inferiority” is produced naturally. Moldovans compare themselves with Romanian speakers from Romania. It seems that speaking a correct native language has in itself some aesthetic value; however, it also has a political value. Speaking the standard literary Romanian brings with it the values of the culture to which the language belongs, values normally explained in a socio-political context. Choosing a language as a value option is not unique. Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century opted for Hebrew, considered a language of culture and civilization, over the proletarian Yiddish; and today Norwegians are faced with the choice of Norwegian *Boksmal*, also a language of culture, over Norwegian *Nynorsk*, the language preferred by Norwegians hostile to European integration – amazingly both of these Norwegian languages are invented.¹⁰⁷

There is no simple choice when naming a language. Choosing one name or another leads to different behavior: those who believe their language to be Moldovan would read different newspapers, listen to different radio stations and watch different TV stations than those believing their language to be Romanian. Political behavior will, therefore, be different, with, for example, people voting for different political parties accordingly.

Thus, an element that had been considered primordial¹⁰⁸ and natural acquires non-natural values, that is, political values that suppose assumption and awareness.

Due to the role of language as an assumed political value, Romanian oriented discourse also becomes a rational discourse. If, for example, unification with Romania was considered as a choice of blood, then intellectuals have now re-thought the idea of unification:

Unification as a political act is not possible today, cannot be conceived today as we have been accustomed to conceive it since 1918. The union cannot be realized only through integration. We cannot “unify” in a simplistic way, we must integrate according to reciprocally accepted political principles and cultural norms. This is the only way to construct something durable.¹⁰⁹

Thus, what was seen as a primordial given has now become a rational political act. The reinterpretation of the idea of unification can be seen as an emancipation of national feeling, as rational and moral thinking.

6. Politics of identity *versus* politics of rights

6.1 *From invention to ethnic neutrality*

Generally, it is not possible to consider the modernizing nationalists as being outside their society, mobilizing it from above. But, this does seem to be the case for Moldova. Here the terms “invention” and “construction” have strong connotations, not only of novelty, but also of intentionality and manipulation, the myth of the Moldovan ethno-nation being a creation of tsarist and Soviet ideologues in an attempt to legitimize the annexation of territory.

The independent Republic of Moldova proves the relative success of the tsarist myth and of Soviet efforts to create a Moldovan nation. Was real independence more necessary than the pseudo-autonomy of Soviet federalism in making this happen? Are national inventions necessary? Are nationalism and national identity vital components of social life and of the Republic of Moldova’s need to practice democracy and build civil society?

The previous chapter contained analysis of the emergence in the region of different discourses of national identity and the most useful approach for that purpose was the modernist-instrumentalist approach. In order to analyze national identity as a political necessity, however, a completion of the modernist-instrumentalist approach is inevitable, even though this completion can be seen as a shift of perspective. Although both Gellner, in *Nations and nationalism*, and Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, see the connection between nationalism and egalitarianism in modern societies, they do not see the mutually reinforcing relationships between nationalism, egalitarianism, and democratization.¹¹⁰

[Gellner] leaves little for the creative possibilities of political design and architecture. Constitutional and political engineers do not figure in this sociologically reductionist conception of modernity, in which all nationalisms must eventually be cultural nationalisms.¹¹¹

Gellner's theory assumes too readily that the political and cultural nation are one – an example such as Switzerland would be “a real anomaly”.¹¹² However, he did later try to take account of politics.¹¹³

As John Breuilly has argued, in studying national identities, the major focus should be on the relationship between nationalism and political modernization. Liah Greenfeld has also demonstrated that, initially, nationalism developed as democracy: “the location of sovereignty within the people and the recognition of the fundamental equality among its various strata, which constitute the essence of the modern national idea, are at the same time the basic tenets of democracy”.¹¹⁴ As Greenfeld argued, in the sixteenth century England the Latin words *republica* and *patria* were used as equivalents of “nation” and, at the same time, those who committed themselves to the ideal of nation called themselves patriots, not nationalists. Lately, however, nationalism has spread in different conditions, and the idea of the *natio* has moved from the idea of sovereignty to the uniqueness of a people. The original equivalence between nationalism and democratic principles was lost, the process called the *nationalization of patriotism*.¹¹⁵

The discussion of necessity/inutility of national identity for political practice already has an impressive tradition as in the debate between communitarians, who maintain that national identities continue to matter for political purposes, and liberals who argue that, in a neutral liberal state, the political participation of citizens should be based on the respect of fundamental rights.

The communitarian conception is logically bound to the primordialist and ethno-symbolist approach. For Anthony Smith, national identity has a particular power vis-à-vis other forms of identity because

it provides the sole vision and rationality of political solidarity, one command, popular assents and elicitation of popular enthusiasm. All other visions, all other rationales appear vain and shallow by comparison. They offer no sense of election, no unique history, no special destiny.¹¹⁶

Communitarians advocate that politics of civic virtue can only be sustained by a “vision of the common good” that must be rooted in a love of the country, a love of what makes each country unique: its language, ethnic backgrounds, its history.¹¹⁷

Clearly, in the national confusion of Moldova, where uniqueness and special destiny is not given by language, but by the confusion regarding

the language, one command, popular assents and elicitation of popular enthusiasm are impossible. Being aware of this fact, the official framework does not include reference to the ethno-national identity.

In Moldova's fundamental act – the Constitution – national identity was not considered an essential component for the practice of democracy. The only identity required by the formal framework of the Moldovan state is political identity. The political community supposes equal rights for all, regardless of ethnicity. The final expression of this community is common tradition, values, ideas, and feelings that bind the people together in a historical territory. The most well known examples of this form of national identity are the United States of America – although Walker Connor considers this an improper analogy¹¹⁸ – and Switzerland, where national identity was built on constitutional principles, irrespective of ethnic identity.

The political and juridical characteristics of the Moldovan state suppose a pure political identity, with no ethno-cultural ingredients.¹¹⁹ According to the liberal perspective, states should be neutral with respect to the ethno-cultural identities of their citizens and indifferent to the ability of ethno-cultural groups to reproduce over time. The state should guarantee fundamental individual rights irrespective of ethnicity because these rights are universal. Ethnic identity can be expressed only in private life.¹²⁰ The Constitution contains no mention of a ethno-national identity of the state and uses the phrase “the people of the Republic of Moldova” in order to avoid any link between statehood and ethnicity: “the state recognizes that this territory is populated by a single people, the people of the Republic of Moldova” (Constitution, Article 10, 1.2). “The Republic of Moldova is the common and indivisible *patria* of their citizens” (Constitution, Article 10.1).

In the constitutional acts of Moldova, “people” is defined in an intricate manner:

People – as a high form of human community, unconfoundable with other collectivities – is not exclusively an ethnic or biological phenomenon. It is a complex reality and, at the same time, a result of a long historical process, based on a community of ethnic origin, culture, religion, psychic factors, community of life, traditions and ideals, but especially on the common past and the will to be together of those who live on a given territory”.¹²¹

This definition is a mixture of the anthropological, ethno-national, and political perspectives, which is also reminiscent of Stalin's definition of nation.¹²² This conception of the people is also similar to that of the Constitution of 1978, in which it was specified that the Moldovan Unional Republic is "the Republic of the Moldovan people", strongly suggesting that minorities also belong to the Moldovan people, the ethnic connotation being superseded by a territorial connotation, as observed by experts.¹²³ Etymologically, the term "people", as it is used in Moldova, is closer to *narod* than to *demos*. The Soviets employed the term *narod* with a double meaning. The first is an ethno-national meaning, which reflects the development of a community from tribal stage (*plemea*) to the stage of nation. Another use of the word "people" was "proletariat", this meaning being part of the expression "Soviet people", along with the associated patriotic connotations. The concept of "Soviet people" was manipulated by the implicit redefinition of the Moldovan people in territorial terms.

Much discussion concerning the unity of the Moldovan people was provoked by the use of expression the "Gagauz people" in some official laws: "The inclusion in the preamble to the *Law concerning the special juridical status of Gagauz-Yeri* of the notion of the 'Gagauz people' and its subsequent development in article 4... introduces prejudices in the unity of Moldovan state and is non-constitutional"; "The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova recognizes the unity of the people living on this territory and they cannot be divided ; the use of the expression 'Gagauz people', therefore, is already a privilege".¹²⁴

The *Law of Citizenship* adopted in June 1991 also presupposed ethnic neutrality. This Citizenship Law is among the most democratic in Eastern Europe: all persons who were living in Moldova on the date of the declaration of Sovereignty – 23 June 1990 – became citizens irrespective of their ethnicity, linguistic abilities or other criteria.

According to the political and juridical framework made up by the legislation of the Moldovan state and by ratification of international treaties, the Republic of Moldova is a state of law, that is, an instrument that must assure, through a system of rules and fair procedures, accommodation of different private and particular interests without establishing a consensus of a common good. As a complementary aspect of the state of law in the Republic of Moldova, there is also a regulative framework for civil society, which allows citizens to pursue their aims in a manner advantageous to them, whereby the state only intervenes when the procedural rules are not adhered to.

6.2 Nation-building and/or nation-destroying

The political framework of Moldovan state does not require a pre-political national identity. However, identity does appear, undermining the neutrality. As with other identities, the invented Moldovan identity intervenes in political practice, but it intervenes in a more decisive way – as a strategy of state building. As with other newly democratizing countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Moldova is following the model of the “nation-building” state in that it is engaged in nation-building and nation consolidation projects by its diffusion of a common societal culture throughout the territory of the state.¹²⁵ The building tools of post-soviet countries are: official language policy, attempts to create a uniform national education system, migration and naturalization policies requiring migrants to adopt a common national identity, the redrawing of administrative districts to spread the concentration of minorities, the centralization of power so that all decisions are made in a context where the dominant groups form a clear majority.¹²⁶ In the Republic of Moldova, these strategies are weaker than in other countries and, as a result, Moldova has often been considered a model for democracy for other post-Soviet states. For example, Moldova did not redraw its administrative districts in order to spread the concentration of its minorities and did not centralize power. On the contrary, the construction of the Moldovan State is in keeping with ethno-cultural justice, as described by Kymlicka,¹²⁷ that is, the accommodation of minority rights as fundamental human rights. For example, the declaration of the official state language took place concomitantly with the declaration of the bilingual language system; the Constitution already contains provisions for the special status of Gagauz-Yeri and for the districts on the left bank of the river Nistru (Transnistria) and also for poly-ethnic rights, such as representational and cultural rights. Gagauz-Yeri was considered a model for minority integration and ethno-cultural justice.¹²⁸ The 1994 Constitution provided special status for the currently unrecognized Gagauz Republic. This was followed by approval from the Moldovan parliament for a more special law concerning the matter of local autonomy for the region. According to this law, “Gagauz Yeri is an autonomous administrative unit (UTA) which, with a special status in the form of self determination for Gagauz, is a part of the Republic of Moldova”.¹²⁹ The unit *Gagauz Yeri* – the Gagauz land – enjoys wide-ranging autonomy. It has its own president, executive committee, locally elected legislative assembly. It also controls its local resources, economy and justice system.

Only foreign policy, the granting of citizenship, currency issues, and national security remain in the hand of central government. Further to this, three languages – Gagauz, the state language and the Russian – enjoy equal status.

In Moldova, one of the most obvious tools of nation building is the official language. The 13th article of the Constitution – “the state language is the Moldovan language based on the Latin alphabet” – is a controversial article, both from a scientific and political point of view, as the article undermines the ethno-cultural neutrality of the state. The existence of a state language is sufficient reason for the claims of the collective rights of minorities: self-determination, poly-ethnic rights, etc.

The existence of the state language is almost unavoidable because the analogy between church and ethnicity, proposed by theoreticians, does not work:

As the state should not recognize, endorse or support any particular church, so it should not recognize endorse or support any particular group or identity. But the analogy does not work. It is quite possible for a state not to have an established church. But the state cannot help but give at least partial establishment to a culture when it decides which language is to be used in public schooling, or in the provision of state services. The state can (and should) replace religious oaths in courts with secular oaths, but it cannot replace the use of English in courts with no language.¹³⁰

In Moldova, the official framework tries to compensate for the lack of “linguistic” neutrality by means of “real bilingualism” – “Russian language is used on Moldovan territory as a language of inter-ethnic communication, a fact which assures a real bilingualism, national-Russian and Russian-national”.¹³¹

The solution arrived at thirteen years ago concerning spoken languages was considered correct and democratic.¹³² For all intents and purposes, the Romanian and Russian languages are equal. It is compulsory to publish official documents in both languages, public officers are obliged to speak both languages, whereas choosing a language for communication is at the discretion of citizens. “In relation to the state administration, institutions and organizations of Moldova, the language of communication, be it written or oral, is to be chosen by the citizens. In the areas where the majority is constituted by Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians or other ethnic groups respectively, the native language or another acceptable

language is used" (article 6). However, 30 percent of the population still does not know both Romanian and Russian, so these languages cannot be equal. This asymmetric situation, therefore, is perpetuated and sustained on a legal basis. Of course, Russian-speaking citizens not intending to become officials do not need to learn Romanian, and, for the sake of symmetry, the Romanian-speaking people should be allowed to "forget" the Russian language.¹³³

6.3 "Mistaken identity" versus "true identity"

National identities in Moldova are constantly at war and when one identity discourse becomes dominant, supporters of another discourse will always react painfully. For example, the controversial 13th article of the Constitution – "the state language is the Moldovan language based on the Latin alphabet" – does not satisfy the needs of those who consider themselves Romanian. On the contrary, it insults them.

The present Moldovan government also considers Moldovan citizens who declare themselves Romanian to be members of a national minority in Moldova. According to the *Law of National Minorities*, the only criterion when it comes to belonging to a national minority is individual choice: "affiliation to a national minority is a question of individual choice and no disadvantage should result from this choice".¹³⁴

To consider Romanians from Moldova as a national minority is a paradoxical consequence of applying formal logic to national claims. After the unionist movement of 1988-1991, relations with Romania became entirely vague for the period 1993-1996. Speeches, of an equal unionist and anti-unionist nature, were delivered to great effect. The relationship between the "mother-country" and the Republic of Moldova was made reasonable with the help of the study "The relationship of Romania and the Republic of Moldova", drawn up according to formal logic and international rights.¹³⁵ The study intended to eliminate the "clichés" through which relationship between the two countries had been expressed and to surpass the emotional level of the discourse.¹³⁶ Among other clichés, the study requested that only international rights should guide the relationship between the two states. It also accepted the responsibility of the Romanian State for the Romanians of Moldova, not a fraternal responsibility, but one in accordance with the international rights of minorities.¹³⁷ *"The citizens of Moldova who have declared themselves Romanians are automatically passed over to the regime of internal and*

external protection of minorities".¹³⁸ The logic of the study validates Moldovan nationality alongside Romanian nationality within the same territory or even as part of the same family, so as long as nationality depends on individual declaration. There is no criterion which can validate the choice of the individual except their wish.

The Romanian oriented political parties declared that the study could only be elaborated in the offices of the governing party in Chisinau. At the same time, officials of the Moldovan state discussed the study at their meetings, published it in governmental publications and put it into political practice. There was one particular question, which could not be avoided: why was a neutral point of view, according to international rights, so convenient for a non-neutral nationalism that had particular interests?

Although individuals in Moldova can choose a national identity – and this is another unique feature of Moldova's national predicament – they cannot choose other desirable identities. They make their choices, not from the point of view of nowhere, but from the point of view of having attachments, background, and commitments. In other words, this is not a choice in the wider sense of the word; it is mainly an assumed identity.¹³⁹ The supporters of Romanian oriented discourse assume their identity, maintaining that their choice is correct and authentic. Nationalist intellectuals often make the strong claim that their culture, morality and politics is real, historical, organic, faithful, uncorrupted, pure, authentic and superior to synthetic, unnatural and hybrid Moldovan creations.

Yael Tamir considers that "there is a dangerous dimension to claims about authenticity".¹⁴⁰ "The right to culture is interpreted as the right to preserve the culture in its "authentic" form, but does this represent fairly the interests of all members?"¹⁴¹ If respect for individuals and their autonomy, that is, for their capacity to make their own decisions and determine their lives for themselves, is taken as a prime concern, then promotion of the authenticity of Romanian oriented discourse cannot be considered fairly. Everyone, of whatever nation, culture, or language, is formed to be, whatever they may be, by the internalization of the assumptions and thought-structures of the society in which they are born and brought up.¹⁴² Individuals are not themselves guilty that they were socialized in a particular way. It is not their fault that they were taught that being Moldovan is meaningful. When Romanian oriented discourse attempts to show that Moldovans have a "mistaken identity", they feel their values are devalued, feel lost or even betrayed. Individuals in their

autonomy are free from coercion and from the vision of a common good. However, the same argument is valid of the Romanian claims. Those who considered themselves Romanians are not guilty that they were socialized, in their families or schools, to consider being Romanian meaningful.¹⁴³

6.4 “The need of belonging” and the ideal of “the good citizen”

In Moldova, the gap between the ethno-national identity and political identity is bigger and more difficult to surpass than in other post-soviet countries. On one hand, there are some ethno-national communities with their affective affinity and ties, while, on the other, there is the neutral political framework.

This fact is also confirmed by the plurality of citizenship among part of the Moldovan population. Moldovan citizenship presupposes civic and political participation based on the rationality of the law and human rights alone, regardless of the ethno-cultural origins of the individual. “The citizenship of the Republic of Moldova establishes a permanent juridical and political link which generates reciprocal rights and duties between state and person”, (The Citizenship Law, No. 1024/XVI, 02.06.2000, Article 3.1). In theoretical and normative discussions, this type of citizenship is considered the most democratic and correct. But, at the same time, citizens of Moldova are and can become citizens of Romania, Ukraine, Russia and any other state, which awards citizenship according to ethnic criteria, that is, a citizenship based on affectivity and ethno-cultural identity. The fact that double and even triple citizenship is asserted in affective and emotional ways is usually shown during elections.¹⁴⁴ For Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian communities, the ethno-cultural identity remains the place of affectivity where a common language, culture and tradition are shared.¹⁴⁵ This “ethnic” citizenship is easier to understand than the abstract and rational citizenship required of them in their own states. The weakness of national identity based on rational political citizenship, as it is present in Moldova, is an aspect of the general difficulty experienced in setting up post-national citizenship, in the sense used by Habermas. For example,¹⁴⁶ Habermas’s constitutional patriotism separates the notion of citizenship from the concept of a people as a pre-political community of language and culture. The case of Moldova allows a question to be posed that is valid for contemporary discussion on citizenship: to what extent can the acceptance of abstract and rational

principles – respect for human rights and state of law – replace the effective political mobilization based on interiorization of political and ethno-cultural tradition?

Empirical behavior of national minorities in Moldova and in general in Central and Eastern Europe also confirms that the need to belong to an ethno-national community is sufficiently strong. In Moldova, as in the whole of post-soviet space, minorities are disloyal in the sense that they were collaborators with the former oppressors and continue to collaborate with current or potential enemies.¹⁴⁷ Ethnic relations are seen as a zero-sum game: anything that benefits the minority is seen as a threat to the majority¹⁴⁸ and the treatment of minorities is above all a question of national security.¹⁴⁹

In Moldova, the need to be included in a community exists alongside the framework of laws and rights. Individuals seek to unify them, look to exercise their rights whilst, at the same time, manifesting the affectivity towards a community of language and culture. Moldova reflects a current and acute political quarrel: does a community of diverse cultures and identities need a unifying idea parallel to the political framework?¹⁵⁰

There is no need to encourage longing for ethno-cultural oneness, particularly in the case of Moldovan ethno-cultural identity, which is an invention. A link between ethno-cultural identity and political identity would be dangerous, a “surplus of affect” being “more libidinal than procedural”.¹⁵¹ Constitutional citizenship in Moldova might flourish separately from ethnic and cultural elements. There can be no political culture that is sustained by motivation for the “common good” and is rooted in national tradition and identity because tradition and identity are weak, false, controversial, conflicting and open to continuous interpretation and politically oriented revision. Moldova, as a democratic state, cannot be made up of ethno-cultural roots, cannot be both *demos* and *ethnos*. If democracy needs the civic virtues of citizens, and even more so that of the political elite,¹⁵² then these civic virtues cannot be based on ethno-national values.

Moldova does not have to pass a theoretical test of nationhood to prove that it possesses some of the national criteria of national unity, be they of ethnicity, language, or culture. The test is concrete, based upon the ability of the Moldovan state to impose order and monopolize violence in an established territory. Citizens “cannot love a state that treats them unjustly”,¹⁵³ but citizens are capable of committing themselves to the idea of liberty and fundamental rights.

NOTES

- 1 "Western observers have now begun to wonder why the notion of a Moldovan *ethnos* seems to have outlived its creator. To a certain extent, asking why Moldovans have not embraced their ostensible Romanian identity is like asking why Macedonians do not think of themselves as Bulgarians. It is true that the language spoken in Bucharest and Chișinău differ only slightly and that in its written form there is virtually nothing to distinguish Romanian from what is once again termed Moldovan. But it is equally true that linguistic and cultural similarities can push nation apart as much as bring them together." Charles King, *Post-Soviet Moldova: A borderland in Transition*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, p. 30.
- 2 John Hutchinson, Anthony Smith, "Introduction", to John Hutchinson, Anthony Smith, (eds.) *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, 5 volumes, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, vol. I, p. XXVI.
- 3 The "founders" of primordialist approach, Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz, distinguish between primordial and civil ties. For Shils primordial ties have the ineffability attributed to ties of blood. Clifford Geertz describes "primordial bonds" as being attributed by individuals to the religion, blood, race, language. In "The Integrative Revolution: primordial sentiments and civil politics in the new states", in John Hutchinson, Anthony Smith, (eds.) *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, op. cit., pp. 117-161.
- 4 John Hutchinson, Anthony Smith, op. cit., p. xxvii.
- 5 "Ethno-symbolists agree with modernists that nations are recent in their territorial consolidation, their mass literate public culture and their drive for self-determination, but the primary concern of the nation is not with modernity. Central to nations is a concern with identity and history", John Hutchinson, "Nations and Culture" in *Understanding Nationalism*, (eds.) Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, Polity Press, 2001, p. 76.
- 6 Anthony Smith, "Towards a Global Culture" in Mike Featherstone, (ed.), *Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity: A Theory, Culture and Society Special Issue*, London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi, SAGE Publications, 1999, pp. 171-193, p. 179.
- 7 Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, London, Penguin, 1991, p. 179.
- 8 Gellner rejected four erroneous theories of nationalism: i. The theory that nation is natural, self evident and self-generating; ii. Kedourie's theory that the contingent consequence of "ideas which did not ever need to be formulated and appeared by regrettable accident"; iii. Marxism's Wrong Address Theory": the liberationist message intended for classes were "by some terrible postal error" delivered instead to nations; iv. "Dark Gods Theory", Brendan O'Leary, "Ernest Gellner's diagnoses of nationalism: a critical overview, or, what is living and what is dead in Ernest Gellner's philosophy of nationalism?", in John Hall, (ed.) *The state of Nation, Ernest*

Gellner and the Theory of nationalism, Cambridge University Press, 199, pp. 40-88, p. 46.

⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, 1965, p. 168.

¹⁰ Gellner's theory was considered an "ideal-type" theory, a conceptual tool for investigating problems and for preparing the ground for the construction of more substantive, more context-sensitive theories, see Nicos Mouzelis, "Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism: some definitional and methodological issues", in John Hall, (ed.) *The State of Nation, Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 163-164.

¹¹ Van der Berghe distinguishes between three types of ethnic markers: 1. Genetically transmitted phenotype: skin pigmentation, hair texture, etc. 2. Man made ethnic uniform – body mutilations, clothing, tattoo, circumcision, etc., 3. Behavioral: speech, manners and, of course, language. Van der Berghe Pierre, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, Elsevier, New York, Oxford, 1979, p. 29.

¹² Barth stresses that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves. "Some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied" Frederik Barth, "Introduction", in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 1969; Bergen, Oslo, and London, Univ. Vorlaget G.Allen&Unwin, pp. 9-38, p. 14. Thus, the continuity of the ethnic entities is given by a persistent dichotomization between members and outsiders, which uses cultural traits, whose relevance is contextual. "The cultural features that signal the boundary may change and the cultural characteristics of members may likewise be transformed, indeed, even the organizational form of the group may change – yet the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity and investigate the changing cultural form and content" (*ibid*, p. 14). Therefore, an investigation of ethnic phenomena in case of Moldova should focus on the ethnic boundaries that define the groups, boundaries that are socially constructed. Without doubt, this investigation implies many risks.

¹³ Walker Connor blames that theories of nation-building with tending to ignore the question of ethnic diversity or treat it superficial in "Nation building or nation destroying", in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 29-67.

¹⁴ It seems that for the ethno-symbolist approaches of ethnicity, these two oppositions are not so drastically emphasized, as is, for example, the definition of *ethnie*, given by John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith. According to these authors an *ethnie* has six main features: 1. A common proper name with which to identify and "express' the essence of the community. 2. A myth of common ancestry, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and that gives an *ethnie* a sense of fictive

- kinship. 3. Shared historical memories, or better shared memories of a common past, including heroes, events and their commemoration 4. One or more elements of common culture, which need not be specified but normally, include religion, customs, or language 5. A link with a homeland, not necessarily its physical occupation by the *ethnie*, only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with Diaspora peoples. 6. A sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie*'s population", in John Hutchinson, Anthony Smith, "Introduction", in John Hutchinson, Anthony Smith, (eds.), *Ethnicity, A Reader*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 7.
- 15 Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 11.
- 16 It is generally accepted that the concept of identity was made popular by Erik Erikson in his book *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1968.
- 17 Ferdinand de Saussure, in *Course of General Linguistic* (1915) established a pattern of conceiving identity through difference, by the definition of sign as a result of differences in a system.
- 18 David Morley & Kevin Robins, *Mass media, Electronic landscape and Identities*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 46.
- 19 The mechanisms exhaustively explained by Michael Billig, in *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage, 1995.
- 20 This is the intern/extern dialectic of identity, Richard Jenkins, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4, "Theorizing social identity".
- 21 Zygmund Bauman, "Soil, blood and belonging", in *The Sociological Review*, 1992, p. 678.
- 22 Michael Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Toleration", in *Europe's New Nationalism, State and Minorities in Conflict*, (ed.) Richrad Caplan & John Feffer, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 212-231; p. 215.
- 23 Graham Smith, *The Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition*, Arnold [London, Sidney, Auckland], 1999, pp. 77-85.
- 24 In "Virtues, uniqueness of human life and the concept of a tradition" Alasdair MacIntyre emphasizes the narrative model of identity and tradition, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue, A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame University Press, 1985, second edition, Chapter 15.
- 25 Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London; New York, Verso, 1991, pp. 204-206.
- 26 The identity is itself a consequence of modernity, a point of view exhaustively explained by Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; Anthony Giddens in *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, 1991; "Lifting identity to the level of awareness, making it into task – an objective of self-reflexive activity, and object of

- simultaneous, individual concern and specialized institutional services – is one of the most prominent characteristics of modern times”, Zygmund Bauman, *op. cit.*, p. 680.
- 27 David Miller, in his book *On Nationality*, Oxford, Calderon Press, 1995, presents five elements of national identity: 1. A community constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment, 2. extended in history, 3. active in characters, 4. connected to a particular territory, 5. marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture; pp. 21-25.
- 28 Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania – Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle 1918-1930*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996, Romanian translation, Humanitas 1998, p. 20.
- 29 Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?”, in Homi K. Bhabha, (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990.
- 30 “Sfatul Țării” was the Basarabian legislative body in 1918, which was made up of representatives of all co-inhabiting nationalities.
- 31 Hannes Hobsbauer, *A country forgotten between Europe and Russia*, Wien, 1993, Romanian translation, Bucharest, Editura Tehnică, 1995, p. 81.
- 32 In 2000, Moldovan Parliament adopted a new Citizenship Law that requires knowledge of the Romanian language.
- 33 John Breuilly, *Nationalism and State*, Manchester University Press, II edition, 1992, p. 9.
- 34 Vitalie Ciobanu, *Frica de diferență*, Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1999, p. 206.
- 35 Main historical data are taken from the Willhem Petrus Meurs, *The Basarabian Question in Soviet Historiography*, East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1994; Romanian translation, *Chestiunea Basarabiei în istoriografia sovietică*, Chișinău, Arc, 1997.
- 36 The word “Basarabia” has a rather strange history. In the 13th and 14th centuries, there existed the principality of Walachia to the south of Moldova. The prince of Walachia arrived first on the side of Danube which included two important commercial cities for Genova: Moncastro and Licostomo. This territory was named “Basarabia” because the prince’s name was “Basarab”. In 1475, the Turks occupied Basarabia – and those two cities became Turkish *raya*. In 1811-1812, during the Russian-Turkish war, the Russians forced the Turks to negotiate. The Russian commander, Kutuzov, demanded Basarabia from Turks. He used the word “Basarabia” for the entire land between the rivers Nistru and Prut, however the Turks uses of the word referred only to those two cities. In 1812, the treaty was signed and the word “Basarabia” was extended by Russians to mean the entire territory. Ironically, “Basarabia” and “Basarabians” are now used to refer to Romanians and to the land as Romanian land. Ion Nistor, *Istoria Basarabiei*, Chișinău Cartea Moldovenească, 1991, p. 25.
- 37 Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

- 38 See, for instance, *Kurs Istorii Moldavii*, I, 40-43, Eds. A. Udalkov, L. Cerepin, Chișinău, Scoala Sovietică, 1949, A. Lazarev. *Vosdoedienenie moldavskogo naroda v edinoe sovetskoe gosudarstvo*, Chișinău, Cartea Moldovenească, 1965.
- 39 See Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994.
- 40 Academic nationalism is a specific Soviet phenomenon. After the formation of the Soviet Union, scholars – linguists, historians, ethnographers and so on – started to “clarify” the ethnic and national problem for ideological reasons. Stalin’s definition of a nation – “a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make up manifested in a community of culture” – is also “academic nationalism” because the definition was used by scholars as a basis in their endeavors, for instance, to create the Moldovan nation and Moldovan language. Later Soviet scholarship added an important element to Stalin’s definition of nation: a feeling of common identity or national self-consciousness, see for instance, the *Soviet Encyclopedia’s* definition of nation: “an historic entity of people with its territory, economic ties, literary language and specific culture and character comprising the whole of a nation’s features”. According to Valery Tishcov, this is obviously an ethno-national meaning of nation; Valery Tishcov “Post-Soviet Nationalism”, in *Europe’s New Nationalism, State and Minorities in Conflict*, (ed.) Richard Caplan&John Feffer, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 23-41; p. 28.
- 41 According to the Soviet census of 1926, there were approx. 200 different nationalities in the Soviet Union. Scholars labeled all Soviet nations as *narodnosti* (people) and created a hierarchy of ethnic groups, for example Turks and Tatars in Transcaucasia were listed officially as “Azerbaijanis”, Pomors and Cossacks as “Russians”, and so on. Tishcov, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- 42 Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
- 43 In particular in Miron Costin’s, *De neamul moldovenilor*, a work preferred by the propagandists of the Moldovan nation in the past as well at present.
- 44 In 1926, Soviet linguist, M. Serghievski, wrote about the existence of Moldovan language and tried to construct a basis for the Moldovan ethnogenesis. Moldovan ideologists were also influenced by the class character of languages and by the theory of N. Marr, although this author sanctioned the interpretation of the Moldovan language as a non-Romanian amalgamation. Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
- 45 Five days after declaration of Moldovan language as state language (August 27, 1989), “Romanian-Moldovan linguistic identity” was specified in an additional act.
- 46 “The Ruritanians were a peasant population speaking a group of related and more or less mutually intelligible dialects and inhabiting a series of discontinuous but not very much separated pockets within the lands of the

Empire of Megalomania. The Ruritanian language, or rather the dialects of which it was considered to be composed, was not really spoken by anyone other than peasants. The aristocracy and officialdom spoke the language of the Megalomanian court, which happened to belong to a language group different from that from the Ruritanian dialects were an offshoot. Most, but not all, Ruritanian peasants belonged to a church whose liturgy was taken from yet another linguistic group.... The petty traders of the small towns serving the Ruritanian countryside were drawn from yet another ethnic group and were of yet another religion, that was vehemently detested by the Ruritanian peasantry" Gellner Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 58.

47 Meurs, *op. cit.* pp. 55-71.

48 Gellner, *Reply to critics*, quoted by John Hall, "Introduction", in *The State of Nation*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

49 Among them were Ion Inculeț, Panteleimon Erhan in Petrograd, and Anton Crihan in Odessa, where he organized the *First Congress of Basarabian peasants*, (May, 1917), Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

50 Rogers Brubaker, "Myth and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism", in Moore, Margaret, (ed.) *National Self-determination and Secession*, Oxford University Press, 1998; p. 233-266, p. 286.

51 Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

52 Tishcov, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

53 Brubaker, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

54 Maurizio Viroli in *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism*, Oxford Calderon Press, 1997, maintains that, properly understood, the language of republican patriotism could serve as a powerful antidote to nationalism "to survive and flourish, political liberties needs civic virtue, that is citizens capable of committing themselves to the common good, to stand up for the defense of the common liberty and rights"; p. 10.

55 Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

56 Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*, p. 57.

57 Owing to the rural nature of the region, illiteracy among the population was the rule at the beginning of the 20th century: 94,2% in 1900. Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania – Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996, Chapter "Basarabia – Nationalism in an Archaic Province", pp. 111-157; Common opinion holds that illiteracy in this region was eliminated only after 1945 by the soviet politics of *likbez*.

58 Graham Smith, *The Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition*, Arnold, [London, Sidney, Auckland], 1999, p. 16.

59 Nicos Muozelis, "Ernest Gellner's Theory of Nationalism: Some Definitions and Methodological Issues", in *The State of Nation*, p. 158 –165, p. 160.

60 Graham Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

- 61 Eugen Weber in his famous *From Peasants to Frenchmen, The Modernization of Rural France*, Chatto & Windus, 1977, part II “Agencies of Changes”, proved the importance of common action in constructing “civilized” life in rural regions, for example, “there could be no national unity before there was national circulation” p. 218; “a number of Frenchmen have spoken on roads as having cemented national unity” p. 220.
- 62 Philip Schlesinger, “On National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticized”, in *Nationalism, Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. by J. Hutchinson and A. Smith, Routledge, 2000, vol. I, p. 86.
- 63 *Op. cit.*, p. 86.
- 64 David Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- 65 Valery Tishcov, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 66 For example, the folk dance group “Joc”, as well as the folk music stylized and transmitted by national radio during the Soviet period, are now considered to be Moldova’s authentic ethnic and folk culture.
- 67 John Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- 68 Miroslav Hroch is a well known theoretician of national movements, particularly since the publishing of *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- 69 Miroslav Hroch, “National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective”, in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed. by Skumar Periwal, CEU Press, 1995, p. 67.
- 70 For example, the case of Ion Druță, a Moldovan writer who promoted national values during the Soviet period. In particular, he wrote against the Russification of the Romanian language, and later became an ideologist of the “Moldovan nation”.
- 71 Miroslav Hroch, “Nationalism and National Movement: Comparing the Past and the Present of Central and Eastern Europe”, in *Nationalism, Critical Concepts in Political Science*, vol. II, p. 610.
- 72 In 1917, in the first stage, the Moldovan intellectuals created their own political party – The National Moldovan Party. Their political objectives were the autonomy of Basarabia in Russian Federation, the opening of Moldovan schools, the creation of the Moldovan army. In this context, in 1917-1918, the Romanian language and Latin script was introduced into the academic year in Basarabian schools.
- 73 Quoted by Benedict Anderson in “*Nationalism at a Great Distance: International Capitalism and Ascension of the Identitary Politics*” 1992, republished in POLIS, 1994, N2.
- 74 The way in which Moldova became independent seems very similar to that of Ruritania – when the international situation was favorable! As western observers state, “Political figures admit in private discussions that the actual creation of an independent Moldova was more a by-product of the Moscow coup than the culmination of any centuries-long struggle for statehood”,

- Charles King, *Post Soviet Moldova*, Iasi, Center for Romanian Studies, 1996, p. 13.
- 75 Charles Taylor considers that “elite manipulation” is a cynical explanation: “the cynical view (exposed, for instance, by Pierre Trudeau in relation to Quebec nationalism) that the whole thing is powered by the ambition of social elites to establish a monopoly of prestigious and remunerative jobs. The refusal of bilingualism is then easily explained: under this regime, members of our gang get 50 percent of the jobs, under unilingualism, we get 100 percent”. Charles Taylor, “Nationalism and Modernity”, in Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan, *The Morality of Nationalism*, New York; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 35.
- 76 See the chapter *Leftbankers versus Basarabians*, in Meurs, *op. cit.* pp. 131-133.
- 77 “Blocked elite” is an expression used by John Hutchinson in analyzing the national movements from Ireland, in “Cultural nationalism, elite mobility and nation building: communitarian politics in modern Ireland”; in *Nationalism, Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. by J. Hutchinson and A. Smith, Routledge, 2000, p. 587-606.
- 78 Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*, 1983, (re-translation from Romanian), p. 174.
- 79 Eric Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1790*, Chişinău, ARC, p.14.
- 80 In 1990, the Gagauzi separated from Moldova, and their separatist republic was rejected by an order from Moscow signed by Mihail Gorbachov.
- 81 Max Weber, “The Nation”, in *Nationalism*, vol. I., *op. cit.*, pp. 5-12.
- 82 According to Miroslav Hroch, if these two conditions coincide, the call for self-determination and statehood can even be developed and accepted during Phase B, as it was for Poles, Magyars and Norwegians”, Miroslav Hroch, “National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective”, in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed., by Skumar Periwal, CEU Press, 1995, p. 79. National movements based upon almost complete social structure – usually members of the ruling classes – as were landlords and nobility in the Polish or Magyar national movements, entrepreneurs and members of the high bureaucracy in the Greek and Norwegian national movements, leaders of local administration and merchants in the Serbian national movement are also more successful. Hroch, *op. cit.* p. 77
- 83 Some authors observed that African students at the London School of Economics applied the theories of Ernest Gellner, Elie Kedourie and others in construction of new nation-states on returning to their countries, see Sukumar Periwal, *Notions of Nationalism*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 1995.
- 84 Anthony Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 9.

- 85 “Full attachment, rather than coming from an authentic prior sense of shared community (whether based on language, history, soil or some other primordium), might actually be produced by various forms of violence instigated, perhaps even required, by the modern nation/state”, Arjun Appadurai, “The Grounds of the Nation States: Identity, Violence and Territory”, in Kjel Goldman, Ulf Hannerz, Charles Westin, (eds.), *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post Cold War Era*, London and New York, Routledge 2000, pp. 129-143, p. 132.
- 86 Walker Connor, in *Ethno-nationalism*, found an example of ineffability in Freud’s observation that he was “irresistibly” bound to Jews and Jewishness by “many obscure and emotional forces, *which were the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words* as well as by a clear consciousness of inner identity, a deep realization of sharing the same psychic structure”, Standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 20, 1925-1926, London 1959, quote by Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
- 87 Clifford Geertz, “Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa”, New York, Free Press, 1963, p. 105-157, in John Hutchinson John, Anthony Smith, (eds.) *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, volume I, p. 120.
- 88 Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
- 89 Isaiah Berlin, “Nationalism”, in *Adevăratul studiu al omenirii*, Meridiane, 2001, pp. 557-579, “nationalism is firstly a counter-reaction to the attitude of and the result of humiliation of the most conscious member of a society, which produces hunger and self affirmation” (p. 569). Like Gellner and Taylor, Berlin considers the hurt of pride of the spiritual leaders to be a condition for the appearance of nationalism, but not a sufficient condition in itself – there is a need for a new vision of life by which the hurt society or the group, which was excluded from political power, would unify. He gives the example of Slavophile movement in Russia as a reaction to the modernizing effect of the West.
- 90 Distinction inaugurated by Hans Kohn in *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York, Macmillan, Intro, 1946 and retaken by most of authors.
- 91 Charles Taylor, “Nationalism and Modernity”, in Robert McKim Robert, Jeff McMahan, *The Morality of Nationalism*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 44.
- 92 *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994; *Nationalism*, London 1997; “Reply to Critics”, in J. A. Hall and I.C. Jarvie, (eds.) *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, Amsterdam, 1996.
- 93 Brendan O’Leary, “Ernest Gellner’s Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview, or, What is Living and What is Dead in Ernest Gellner’s Philosophy of Nationalism?”, in John Hall, (ed.) *The State of Nation, Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 40-88; p. 72.

- 94 As Gellner argued in his replies to critics, the passion of nationalism is very present in his theory: “the passion is not a means to a particular end, it is a reaction to an intolerable situation, to a constant jarring in the activity which is by far the most important thing in life – contact and communication with fellow human beings”, Gellner, *Reply to Critics*, quoted in John Hall, (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- 95 Brendan O’Leary, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 96 Taylor, *Nationalism and Modernity*, p. 45.
- 97 *Op. cit.*, p. 44.
- 98 *Op. cit.*, p. 45.
- 99 Different national identities can become a “tribal stigma”. Sorin Antohi describes the devastating consequences of becoming aware of the stigma in Romanian space in the chapter “Cioran and the Romanian Stigma. Identity Mechanism and Radical Definitions of Identity”, in *Civitas Imaginalis*, p. 208.
- 100 Communication between Basarabian intellectuals and their Romanian “brothers” was possible in an indirect way: through the libraries and bookshops of Moscow and St. Petersburg.
- 101 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 92-98.
- 102 Michael Ignatieff, “Nationalism and Toleration”, in *Europe’s New Nationalism, State and Minorities in Conflict*, (eds.) Richard Caplan & John Feffer, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 212-231, p. 225.
- 103 Ignatieff, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
- 104 Charles Taylor, in *The Ethnics of Authenticity*, Harvard University Press, 1991, analyses the need for authenticity in nationalist struggle, as well as in multicultural movements of the contemporary world.
- 105 Klaus Heitmann, *Limbă și politică în Republica Moldova*, Chișinău, ARC, 1998, p. 141.
- 106 Due to the linguistic inferiority, being Moldovan became a kind of stigma. According to psychological approaches stated by the book of Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, stigma is produced when somebody accepts the perspective of the other over his own identity and this leads to shame, humility, self-hate. Of course, one condition for the appearance of tribal stigma was the meeting of Moldovans with Romanians. Usually, being in Romania, Moldovans try to hide the linguistic difference, particularly the phonetic differences that are considered ridiculous. But now there is stigma even among Moldovans. Moldovans, who speak their native language “correctly”, fluently, without stuttering, consider ridiculous those who still speak the archaic dialect.
- 107 For an explanation of the case of Hebrew and Norwegian languages see *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, (ed.) Stephen Barbour & Cathie Carmichael, Oxford University Press, 2000, and Thiesse Anne-Marrie, *Crearea identităților naționale în Europa, secolele XVIII-XX*, traducere A.

Paul Corescu, C. Capverde, G. Sfichi, Polirom 2000, chapter “Language of the Right, Language of the Left”.

108 For example, Joshua A. Fishman maintains that community of language is perceived as the main marker of primordial ties, or like “bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh and blood of their blood”, Joshua A. Fishman, “Social Theory and Ethnography: Language and Ethnicity in Eastern Europe”, in *Nationalism, Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. by J. Hutchinson and A. Smith, Routledge, 2000, vol. I., pp. 200-215. p. 208.

109 Vitalie Ciobanu, *op. cit.*

110 According to Brendan O’Leary, the apolitical character of Gellner’s theory can be substantiated in several ways: i. His typology is geared towards explaining the development in the thwarting of nationalist secessionism, but does not provide a politically sensitive account of what may dampen nationalist secessionism. ii. The theory appears to rely on culturally or materially reductionist accounts of political motivation. iii. Gellner neglects the role of power politics in explaining which cultures become nations and the possibility that nation-builders explicitly see the functional relationship between nationalism and modernity which he posits. iv. Although Gellner sees the connections between nationalism and egalitarianism in modern societies, curiously he does not see the mutually reinforcing relationship between nationalism, egalitarianism and democratization; v. he displays contempt for nationalist doctrines; Brendan O’Leary, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

111 *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

112 *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

113 In *Nationalism* (1997), Gellner takes account of politics and makes political prescriptions. Brendan O’Leary considers that Gellner “describes this prescription as banal, perhaps because he may have been conscious of how far they support the conventional wisdom of Euro-liberals”, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

114 Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge. Mass.; Harvard University Press, p. 565.

115 Maurizio Viroli, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-161.

116 *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

117 Communitarians like Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Alesair MacIntire.

118 Walker Connor considers the main result of the improper analogizing from experience of the United States to be the presupposition that the history of acculturation and assimilation within an immigrant society would be suitable for repetition in multinational states, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

119 “Many post-war liberals thought that religious tolerance, based on the separation of church and state, provides a model for dealing with ethno-cultural difference as well. In this view, ethnic identity, like religion, is something which people should be free to express in their private lives, and

is not the concern of the state.”, Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 3.

120

Will Kymlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

121

The decision of the Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality of article 1.4 of Law No.344-XII / December 1994, concerning the special juridical status of the Gagauz Yeri, No. 35 / 21.12.1995.

122

See Stalin’s definition of nation, note 39 above.

123

Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

124

The decision of the Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality of article 1.4 of Law No.344-XII / December 1994, concerning the special juridical status of the Gagauz Yeri, No. 35 / 21.12.1995.

125

The case of the Baltic states shows that construction of nation states is compatible with the practice of democracy. The Baltic political elite constructed and strengthened the nation state, ignoring the need for ethno-cultural justice and they succeeded: “Their nationalist sentiment might be even more intense than elsewhere. But it was also more political in its mode of expression. This political element contained ethnic hostility (for both the majority and minority)... The political elite succeeded in making the term “citizen” the cornerstone of state and nation building. Certain legal norms for the political actions of the Baltic countries, especially independence, can be criticized as being unreasonable and discriminating against Russian minorities. However, compared with the experience of the more southern regions of the post-Soviet world, the Baltic nationalist movements can serve as a model for the use of nationalist sentiment in building reasonably strong and fairly liberal state structures.”; “It is no coincidence that the first ethnic massacres in the last years of the Soviet Union happened not in the Baltic countries, where political nationalist movements were strongest, but in regions such as Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgystan that had no traditions of political nationalism to speak of. If it is not channeled through political action, ethnic nationalism is an amorphous destructive force that not only targets ‘suspicious’ minorities but ultimately undermines the chances of building a viable state in the name of the majority ethnic group.”, Ghia Nodia, “Nationalism and the Crisis of Liberalism”, in *Europe’s New Nationalism, State and Minorities in Conflict*, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-119, p. 117.

126

Will Kymlicka, Magda Opalski, (eds). *Can Liberal Pluralism be exported?*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 53.

127

As Kymlicka argues, there are three stages to the debate on minority rights. In the first stage, the pre-1989 debate, the issue was equivalent to the debate between “liberals” and “communitarians”. In its second stage, minority rights were discussed within a liberal framework. In its third stage, minority rights are viewed as a reaction to the nation building where ethno-cultural neutrality is replaced by ethno-cultural justice. Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular*,

Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 17-39.

- 128 The Gagauz language is akin to Anatolian Turkish. The ethnic origins of this group are very unclear. Some scholars have counted as many as 19 separate theories on Gagauz ethno-origins. In terms of second language ability, the Gagauzi are linguistically the most Russified. The biggest Gagauz community in the world is in Moldova, the number of Gagauzi being very small in southern Ukraine and Romania. For a long time, the Gagauzi were also one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in Moldova, with an attendance rate in 1990 at institutes of higher education, for example, of only 1.4 percent of the total number of students. Some western commentators have suggested that the Gagauz Yeri might provide a model for the granting of local autonomy to minority populations in the other parts of Eastern Europe. See Charles King, *Post Soviet Moldova: A Borderland in Transition*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995; King Charles, *Moldovenii, România, Rusia și politica culturală*, Chisinău, ARC, 2002.
- 129 *The Law the of Republic of Moldova regarding the special juridical status of Gagauz Yeri*, No. 344-XII / 23. 12. 1994.
- 130 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 111.
- 131 *The Law regarding the spoken languages in the territory of the Republic of Moldova*, No.3465/XI / 01. 09.1989, Article 3.
- 132 The Republic of Moldova is now preparing to adhere to *European Charter for Regional or Minority Language* (adopted on 5.IX.1992). At this language level, there are two unusual cases. The first paradox is that the bilingual system in Moldova was introduced simultaneously with the state language, which had been neglected during the Soviet period. The second paradox is that Russian, having been the dominant language in the Soviet period, became a “language of interethnic communication”. Even officials of European institutions, such as the *European Charter for Regional and Minorities Languages*, have declared this situation to be quite unusual and that the case is unique. In Moldova, the *Charter* first and foremost protects the minority languages of Ukrainian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian, but not the languages of inter-ethnic communication and the official language.
- 133 An example of “real bilingual harmony” is given by the state company (MOLDTELECOM) employee who offered information to a client in the state language (Romanian) only, despite the fact that the client had made his request entirely in Russian. The client demanded his rights under law. There followed a legal case, after which the employee was dismissed. What shocked public opinion was not the force of the law, but the fact the Russian language citizen insisted on demanding his rights, while completely forgetting the duties.

- 134 *The Law of Republic of Moldova regarding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and juridical status of their organizations*, No. 382-XV / 19.07.2001, Article 2.
- 135 The study *The Relationship between Romania and the Republic of Moldova*, 22 Plus, January 25, 1995.
- 136 The first “cliché” deconstructed by authors was the manner in which the political leaders conceived the current territorial borders as the negative consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. The authors demonstrated that the current frontiers were not consequences of the pact, but of the Peace Treaty (Paris, 1927), which established the territorial reality based on the relation between the conqueror and the defeated. Another cliché rejected in the study was the expression “mother country”, which in the authors’ opinion no longer expressed the historical necessities. The study criticized the leaders of Romania who, from the position of *Mutterland*, protested against the decision of Parliament in Chişinău in April 1994, to adhere to the Community of Independent States and against the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (29th of July 1994), which declared the Moldovan language the official language of the state. *Op. cit.*
- 137 *Op. cit.*
- 138 *Op. cit.*
- 139 Yael Tamir draws the distinction between choice of identity and assumption of identity, assumption being more moral than simple choice. Assumption is also the only possible “choice” of identity. *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 50.
- 140 *Op. cit.*, p. 50.
- 141 *Op. cit.*, p. 48.
- 142 This is reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu’s term ‘habitus’ conceived as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the products of obedience to rules “produced by” the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g., the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition). Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 72.
- 143 The questions “Who are the Romanians in Moldova?” and “Who are the Moldovans in Moldova?” are still waiting for an explanation, based on empirical data, collected by sociological inquires, interviews in focus group and another empirical studies.
- 144 Those in Moldova who have the right to vote in elections in Romania, Russia, and Ukraine and give vote for the most nationalistic parties.
- 145 Common citizenship provide a political framework for the representatives of all ethnic groups, however, despite their ethnic origins, members of other

- groups, for example Ukrainians and Bulgarians, identify themselves as “Russian” or “Rosiiskii”. For them this Russian identity comes first, only after that comes the Moldovan political identity. In this case, “Russian” means “Rosiiskii” (not “Russkii”), a term used in tsarist and Soviet empires by ideologists to emphasize the multiethnic character of Russia. “Rossiiski”, meaning belonging to Russia without being Russian, is a term identical to “Sovietskii” (Soviet).
- ¹⁴⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe”, (1992) in *Citizenship. Critical Concepts*, (ed.), Bryan Turner, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 341-358.
- ¹⁴⁷ After the annexation of 1812, Russia accorded privilege to this region for some years in order to make it more attractive. The Russians and the Ukrainians established in the region received land and privileges. Out of fear of Turkish repression, the Gagauzi also settled in the region, in south of Basarabia. In half a century, the population tripled. But still, on average, the ratio of different groups is the same today as it was 150 years ago: 65 percent Romanians/Moldovans, 35 percent minorities – Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Turks, Bulgarians, Germans, Gypsies. Traditionally, the majority was predominantly to be found in rural areas, while ethnic groups, particularly Slavs and Jews populated the towns and cities. Industrialization and urbanization during the Soviet period did not close this ethnic gap between town and village because the movement of ethnic Moldovans to the expanding urban centres was, to some extent, offset by the migration of Russian and Ukrainian workers from other parts of Soviet Union to those same centers. During the Soviet period, Transnistria was particularly attractive to ethnic Russians from Siberia because it was already a Slavic region.
- ¹⁴⁸ Will Kymlicka, *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported*, p. 67. The Advertising Law provides an example of this situation. The Advertising Law and the Law of Language in the territory of the Republic of Moldova requires bilingualism – Romanian and Russian – in all public spheres. The language of advertising had been 90 percent Russian until then. In the first week of August, the Moldovan government proposed the completion to Law of Advertising, requiring that all advertising have its main message in Romanian and, if the producer wished, accompanied by a translated text in another language, requiring additional costs. On August 18, 1999, the Russian newspaper “Komsomoliskaia pravda” (with the highest circulation of some post-Soviet countries) printed the article “Moldovan politicians on the tracks of Hitler” which accused the Moldovan government of fascist actions. The article tried to argue the case that the completion of the Advertising Law was akin to the Nazi action which forbade the use of the language of the Slav minority in the German territory. The Moldovan government sued the Russian publication for libel. The different communities of ethnic groups discussed this article at the meeting of the House of Nationalities and addressed their

protest letters to the international committee of Human Rights. The Law remained unchanged.

149 When ethnic Russians came to Moldova, as well as to the other parts of the Soviet Union, they did not think of themselves as immigrants or a minority. They were moving around within a single country – their homeland. “Their migration was legal not only under the laws of the Soviet Union, but also under international law, which affirms the basic human right to move freely throughout one’s own country – it is important to remember, in this respect, that most countries recognized the boundaries of the Soviet Union”, Will Kymlicka, *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?*, p. 77.

150 This predicament seems to be an unsolved puzzle: “The question of why large groups of individuals united by some sort of republican commitment to a modern legal political order should experience a level of attachment to each other and to the state defined territory with which they identify and which permits them to kill and die in its name, is an unsolved puzzle”, Arjun Appadurai, “The Foundations of Nation States: Identity, Violence and Territory”, in Kjel Goldman, Ulf Hannerz, Charles Westin, *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post Cold War Era*, (eds.) Routledge 2000, pp. 129-143, p. 131.

151 *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

152 Viroli, *For Love of Country*, p. 174.

153 *Op. cit.*, 184.