

# ETHNO-POLITICAL CONFLICT IN MOLDOVA

As an orphan of the Cold War, impoverished, left in a security vacuum and transformed into an ideological battlefield, Moldova is the first country in Europe after 1989 to elect to power an old-fashioned Communist party, that promises nothing else but restoring the Russian sovereignty in the area. Created by Stalin in 1940, one of many weak states in South-eastern Europe, Moldova lacks ethnic, political or cultural legitimacy as an independent state and is continuously torn between competing political projects: a would-be new civic European nation, a new colony of Russia or integration into the Romanian nation-state.

These broad geopolitical tensions are reflected inside the country as **ethno-political** conflicts that pertain to the rights to representation, territory, self-identification etc. The **Gagauzians** in the South and **Transnistrians** in the East demand a federative arrangement. The Russians in **Chisinau** and **Balti** ask to make their language the second official one in the country. Speaking about culture, the majority group is divided into pro-eastern **Moldovans** and pro-western Romanians. Since its independence in 1991, the country witnessed an armed conflict and is immersed in a continuous political and media war that needs to be addressed urgently in a modern European way.

Responding to this urging need, this paper will attempt to shed more light on the following questions: Who are the main relevant actors of identity politics in Moldova and what are their aspirations? How is the historical trend of post-Soviet decolonisation transforming **Moldovan** society and its various identity groups? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the nation- building programme enacted by the state? Where is the focus of current ethnic competition? And, finally, what recommendations could be made to contribute to fostering ethnic peace and harmony in Moldova?

### **Ethnic, cultural and political identities**

So, who are the main relevant actors of identity politics in Moldova and what are their aspirations?

The Republic of Moldova is a new state in South-eastern Europe that did not have ethnic homogeneity as a base of its foundation. Currently, the country is inhabited by approximately 65% Moldovan Romanians, 13% Ukrainians, 12% Russians, 3% **Gagauzians**, 2% Bulgarians and other smaller communities of Gypsies, Jews etc. While as a whole the country's population is multi-ethnic, the rural population is predominantly Moldovan, with pockets of Gagauzians and Bulgarians in the South and disperse Ukrainian population in the North. If the villages preserved their primordial **ethno-cultural** unitary identification, then the towns, the melting pot of Soviet society, produced a number of hyphenated cultural identities. Nowadays these towns, representing an

ethnic mix, are polarised into two cultural communities based on two major languages: Romanian and Russian.

The above-described cultural division, rather than ethnic competition, is the hotbed of what is called ethnic tension today. The Soviet authorities contributed to a growing division between Russian speaking cities and the Moldovan countryside. The authoritarian rule banned for over 50 years the Romanian language and culture from Moldova, a vacuum that was supposed to be replaced by a newly created "Moldovan culture". Constructed artificially, the latter has never reached the level of a fully-fledged culture, remaining in an inferior position to the "Great Russian" or Romanian cultures. I am ready to discuss if *Moldovan culture* exist as **such**... or if it is rather a sub-culture. This phenomenon produced on one side a cultural inferiority complex of Moldovans, a stultification of their identity, and, on the other side, a "superiority complex" of the Russian-speaking elite. On the eve of independence a new cultural elite that identified with the Romanian language and culture rather than with the stultified Moldovan or an "oppressing" Russian emerged.

Political action in modern Moldova follows cultural rather than ethnic identification, which is not necessarily the same. Thus, about 20% of the population has Russian as a mother tongue and tends to manifest politically as **Russians**.<sup>1</sup> At the other end, some 20% of the population identify with the Romanian ethnicity and culture without denying a

**Moldovan identity.**<sup>2</sup> Though in essence the **Moldovan** culture cannot be separated from the Romanian one nor a clear line can be drawn between ethnic **Moldovans** and ethnic Romanians, this division is often considered for certain political gains.

Later I will show how the Moldovan nation-state appears as a compromise between these two elites, competing for the control of mass culture, none of them being able yet to gain critical support and impose its own political project. At large **ethno-cultural** politics in Moldova have been fluctuating, influenced by the predominant political parties that have not been able to find an acceptable consensus yet.

The pro-Romanian parties have claimed that all people previously defined as belonging to the Moldovan ethnic group should be considered as belonging to the Romanian ethno-cultural group; they form a majority cultural group in Moldova and therefore, the Romanian culture has to become the civic culture of an independent and democratic Moldova. In essence, this is a policy of cultural emancipation of an oppressed group through inclusion into a broader cultural community and cultural import.

The pro-Russian parties argue that Moldova already has a civic culture (based on the Russian language as the "language of **interethnic** communication") - a cultural pattern that has to be preserved. At large they saw the emancipation of Moldovans through association to the Russian-dominated elite. They often spoke against the threat of

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<sup>1</sup> The 1989 census shows some 20% native Russian speakers, a cultural orientation confirmed by **1994** parliamentary elections, where the radical pro-Russian movement **Unitatea-Edinstvo** gained 22% of votes.

*Romanisation*, perceived as a would-be hegemony of an ethnic group. At various times they succeeded in aggregating support from several ethnic minorities as well as ethnic Moldovans against this "threat".

The third political group — **pro-Moldovan** — is made of the new administrative elites. They have not proposed a cultural project of their own but tended to balance the two extremes and work for the consolidation of a **Moldovan** state, also reaching the masses that maintain their Moldovan identity.

The adoption of the official language is a classical example of the political bargaining of the three groups. Romanians convinced Moldovans of the need to give their common language an official status, while Russians convinced Moldovans to call the language Moldovan rather than Romanian.

The pro-Russian groups have succeeded in securing for the Russian language the status of "language of **interethnic** communication" - a quasi official status making it obligatory in schools, services as well as public administration. Pro-Romanians in turn succeeded in introducing specifically *Romanian language* and the *history of Romanians* as obligatory subjects in public schools.

This competition contributes to an on-going tension between the two cultural elites. Russians as a political group have actively interfered into the politics of the **Moldo-Romanian** community. Using their parliamentary mandates they imposed the name of *Moldovan* for the

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<sup>2</sup> Though no census ever distinguished between Moldovans and Romanians, the combined vote for pro-Romanian parties in 1994 and 1998 averages 20%.

official language, though the polls show that the majority of the native speakers prefer to call it *Romanian*. The Russians also opposed the Latinisation of the **Moldovan** alphabet. In **Transnistria**, where the Russian cultural group is the majority, it is continuously imposing the Russian alphabet on **Moldovans** in spite of their numerous claims, and prohibits any manifestation of “**Romanianness**”. It appears that Russians, not necessarily Moldovans are the main promoters of the would-be Moldovan culture.

In this regard the Communists' quest to make the Russian language official represent an attempt to make a deal between the more affluent Russian community and the poorest Moldovans, giving the first cultural rights in exchange for social guarantees for the latter.

In the case of the church, another important cultural institution, the state has refused to register in Moldova the Romanian Orthodox Church (**Mitropolia Basarabiei**), thus favouring the Russian Orthodox Church (Mitropolia Moldovei), which monopolised the Moldovan parish under the Soviet regime.

In general, the Moldovan state exhibited a natural tendency for a unified ideology: one church, one titular nation, one state language. However, being a compromise body, the resulting ideology is a grotesque mosaic of the Russian church using the Romanian language, a multi-ethnic society governed by a Moldovan bureaucracy.

This short analysis reveals several important factors for future research:

The existing concept of ethnicity and the description of ethnic groups in Moldova pertains to a primordial ancestral identification and is not the main source of cultural identification or political action. However, it is often used for political mobilisation.

Cultural identification is marked by an ongoing competition between two elites, - the Romanian and the Russian. It is the main contentious point in society and is used as one of the important sources of political mobilisation.

Political mobilisation targets cultural politics and coagulates around three main vectors: pro **Moldovan**, pro-Romanian, and pro Russian, promoting respectively Romanian, Russian or a Moldovan political culture - all three residing in a state of continuous bargaining.

## **Decolonisation**

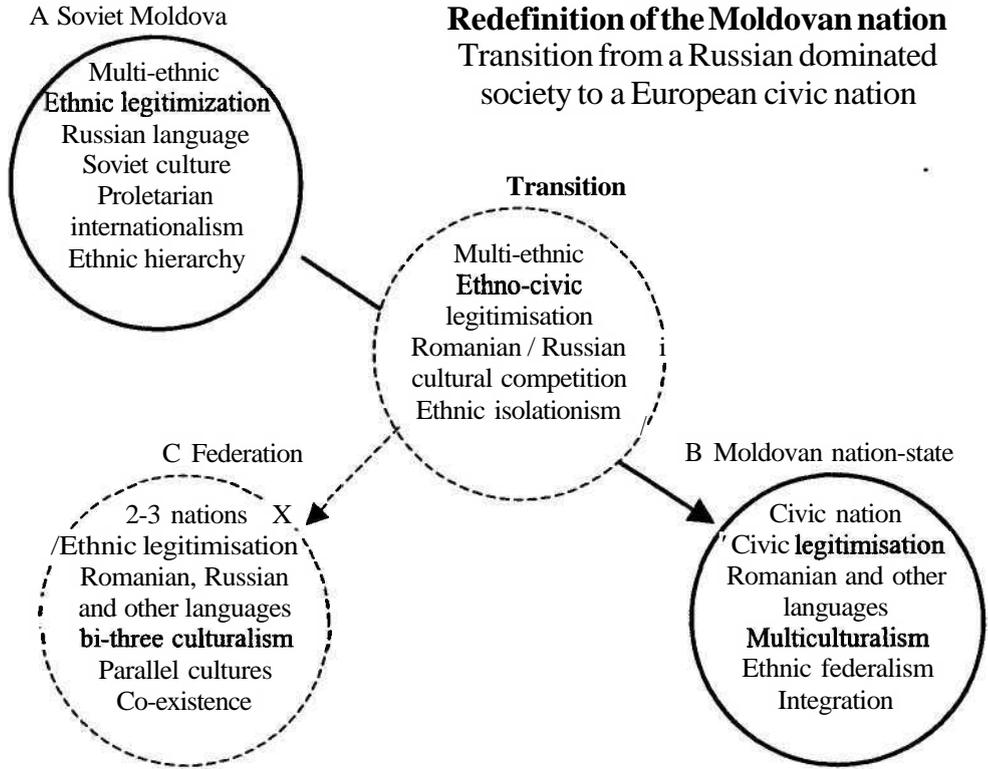
How is the historical trend of post-Soviet decolonisation transforming the Moldovan society and its various identity groups?

There are several parallel processes under way:

- First is the process of *de-colonisation*, known also as *nationalisation*, **Moldovenisation** or *Romanisation*. It has many faces, but the essence is tied to replacing one system of cultural values with another, emancipation of the majority cultural group — the Romanian - from Soviet time **marginalisation** and oppression.

- Second, in relation to the first, is the identity crisis and search for identity redefinition of the previously dominating cultural group, the Russians.
- Third, is a state-building effort, that is, targeting the formation of a new civic and political community - the **Moldovan** - composed of various ethnic groups.
- And fourth, is the emancipation of some **ethno-cultural** communities claiming territorial rights, most noticeable Gagauzians.

Further, I would like to reflect on the first process - decolonisation. Generally speaking, the **ethno-political** conflict in Moldova is not about the emancipation of an ethnic minority; it is not about equal participation or rights to representation. The core of the ethno-political conflict in Moldova is about a paradigm shift, it is about emancipation of the cultural majority in front of the previously dominating minority. The majority are the Romanian-speaking **Moldovans**, and the minority is the Russian-speaking colonial bureaucracy.



Historically, this should be regarded as a process of transforming one type of community (A) into a different type of community (B). Soviet Moldova was a multi-ethnic state pretending "ethnic" legitimisation and was governed by a community of people, using the Russian language, Soviet culture and a "proletarian internationalism" as main cultural values. This multi-ethnic community however had a rigidly established ethnic hierarchy, with Russians at the top, **Moldovans** at the middle and **Gagauzians** and others at the bottom.

The democratisation of the '90es overthrew the imposed hierarchy and values and set Moldovan society on a path of transformation from an authoritarian colonial regime to a European democratic state. The target society of this transformation process is a civic nation grounded in civic legitimisation. In time, it is the Romanian language, the language of the majority population, which is said to become the main tool of communication, with other languages enlarging their vital space as well. European **multiculturalism** will replace the Soviet-time hierarchy of ethnic relations marked by a process of civic integration.

This paradigm shift is going to change the language of the civil society from Russian to Romanian, but also to emancipate silenced cultural communities and establish a principle of equality among various ethnic groups. The transformation is going to change Moldova from a multi-ethnic society, where ethnicity used to be a major identifier, into a civic nation where the citizenship will be the main identifier. The state is going to evolve from a **pseudo-ethnic**<sup>3</sup> legitimisation to a civic one. The most important feature of the target society will be its **integrative** character based on the new nationality.

This scenario depicts an end of a long transition path towards a new Moldovan civic nation, from a society based on the minority speaking the Russian language to a society based mainly on Romanian.

This is certainly not the only possible scenario. Leaving aside the possibilities of joining other nations and acquiring their national

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<sup>3</sup> A call Soviet Moldova e pseudo-ethnic rather than ethnic state, because Moldovan "ethnicity" is contested.

identities, the other scenario is a multiplication of nations, or federalisation, promoted by many in Tiraspol and Comrat. If Moldova enters a federation with, e.g. **Transnistria** and Gagausia, will it be a federation of lands, as Germany and USA, or a federation of nations such as Belgium and Switzerland ? The federalists see Moldova evolving towards a type C-society of two to three nations, two to three main languages and cultures.

Can the principle of **territoriality** function in the long run in Moldova? Can Gagausia or Transnistria be a territorial base for another nation?

Gagausia (3% of population) is obviously too small to significantly influence cultural politics on the whole of Moldova. There are small pockets of cultural diversity across Europe that enjoy local cultural autonomy, being loyal also to the nation-state. Nor can multi-ethnic Transnistria become a territorial base for a new **ethno-cultural** group, except if the current authoritarian rule continues infinitely. The three main ethnic groups both in Moldova and Transnistria are the same: **Moldo-Romanian**, Russian and Ukrainian. Any political liberalisation in Transnistria would entrench trans-river kinship solidarity of these ethnic groups.

What is, in fact, the **Transnistrian** nation? Nor the word "**Pridnestrovye**"<sup>4</sup> neither the nation itself existed before the 1990 rebellion. This political project from the very beginning was an attempt to save territorially, what could not be imposed on the changing Moldova, specifically a type A society characteristic of Soviet Moldova

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<sup>4</sup> *Transnistria* in Russian

- a multi-ethnic society dominated by the Russian **culture**. In principle, the more **Transnistria** stays apart from Moldova, the more the distance between the two societies grows, the more they have chances to become separate nations. However, the sooner they become one political nation, the sooner they produce one, rather than several, civic nations. When they unite at any point in time, the resulting society will be most probably moving towards the model **B**.

What can be claimed instead by the Russian cultural community seeking the preservation of its particular culture, is a special status of some urban communities, e.g. Tiraspol or Rabnita, as free cities etc. If Gagausia could claim an ethnic territory, than Transnistria cannot, at least not on the whole of its territory.

The search of Gagausia and Transnistria for territorial autonomy cannot be regarded as a simple quest for self-governance, but rather as an attempt of gaming influence on all-Moldova politics through federalisation. In both Gagausia and Transnistria the only working language remains Russian, and they have actively lobbied to make it official in the rest of Moldova.

It seems that today Moldova stays at half way of the announced transformation. A multi-ethnic society struggling between ethnic and civic **legitimisation**, marked by a harsh cultural competition and ethnic isolationism. The impressive vote for communists in the 2001 parliamentary elections shows a desperate attempt of **nostalgics** to return to a type A society, but the **hesitance** of the victors in fulfilling their electoral promises denotes their uncertainty about the reversibility of this

process. From the prospective of the described paradigm shift, giving today to Russian the status of an official language will not greatly increase its use, but will certainly slow down the transformation of pace. There are signs that many groups studying Romanian have lost their audience after the Communist victory.

The Russian cultural group that lost its Soviet civic identity is now looking for a new political identity in an independent Moldova. I just want to remind you of the fact that the Russian cultural group consists not only of ethnic Russians but also of representatives of other ethnic groups that adopted the Russian culture under the Soviet regime and it amounts approximately to 20% of population. Initially, its elite launched the denomination of *Russian speakers* that targeted political mobilisation of all ethnic minorities (one third of the population) as a quest of the Russian cultural community to gain more political weight. Lately, the idea of a *Slavonic nation* is taking shape through the establishment of a Slavonic University in **Chisinau**. Hypothetic *Transnistrians* can be regarded as another face of the pro Russian political community. This identity search should be regarded as an open-ended long-term process. Its political accommodation, however, is strained because of lack of a clear identity.

With or without **Transnistria**, Moldova remains a multi-ethnic society. It has to learn to contain and transform potential conflicts between various ethnic groups. It has to accommodate the various interests and claims creating a culture of tolerance and cooperation.

## **The Nation-building process**

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the nation-building programme enacted by the **Moldovan** state since acquiring independence a decade ago?

At large, the state nation-building activity was devoted to establishing functioning institutions able to contain and transform the ethnic conflict through the inclusion of various ethnic groups into a participatory democratic society.

The first important act of this process granted universal citizenship for all residents of Moldova as of **1991**. This generous inclusive act, however, was rejected by many residents of **Transnistria**, whose "secession" was mainly motivated by an anti-independence drive.

Second was the institution of the state language and its gradual implementation. Challenged from the very beginning, this act is contested until today. Although it has its merits in starting and forwarding the decolonisation process, cultural education in conditions of lack of civic education has proven much less efficient than expected.

Third was granting territorial rights to ethnic and cultural groups. The Moldovan constitution adopted in 1994 granted territorial autonomy to **Gagauzians** and specified a special status for Transnistria.

In the first case, that of **Gagausia**, the new Constitution helped downplaying the separatist tendencies and institute a new format of relations with the political centre. These relations, however, are far from harmonious. **Comrat** administration on various occasions showed

solidarity with Tiraspol separatists, claiming federative powers etc. In the second case, Transnistria "seceded" from Moldova in 1990, opposing the independence of Moldova, claiming the "danger" of "Romanisation" and joining Romania, claims it maintains until today.

The 1999 territorial administrative reform was an attempt to balance the two special territorial units, Transnistria and Gagausia, by nine newly created *judet* comparable in size and population. This reform **disadvantaged** Bulgarians that lost their ethnically homogeneous rayon. Upon multiple requests it was restored and up-graded to *ajudet* in 2000. This reform aiming at a decentralisation of power is again contested by the ruling Communist party that sees the restoration of a Soviet-time administrative division.

The **Moldovan** constitution was less successful in providing guarantees for the representation of ethnic groups in elected bodies. The Moldovan constitution does not provide ethnic quotas for parliament nor uninominal electoral circumscriptions. The election laws specify a unitary electoral circumscription as for parliament so for the regional and local councils based on party lists. It seems that this provisions have favoured the majority groups: the **Moldo-Romanian** at a national level and the **Gagauzian** and other at regional levels.

E.g. The Parliament elected in 1998 consisted of:

<b>Moldovans</b>	Romanians	Ukrainians	Russians	Gagauzia ns	<b>Bulgarians</b>
47	37	8	3	4	2

This mixture shows a severe under-representation of ethnic Russians, while all the minorities (**Moldo-Romanians** excluded) have a twice less representation than their percentage in population.

The only organ of "ethnic" representation in the **Moldovan** political system is the Department of **Interethnic** Relations and the affiliated "House of Nationalities". Besides their necessary representative function, these institutions perform a **duplicitary** function, that of "**solidarisation**" of minorities against the majority. Why not the "House of all Nationalities" but the "house of all nationalities except **Moldovans** and Romanians"?

The chart above also shows Romanians as the second biggest ethnic group or an ethnic minority. Regarded by the state as a political rather than ethnic group it has also been denied institutional recognition. There is no legislation in Moldova mentioning Romanian culture, language or ethnicity. This ignorance has a high caloric potential as well.

The Moldovan ethnicity as a modern political project was proposed to legitimise a Moldovan state, however, it contradicts the civic essence of present-day **Moldova**, and is not as relevant as before. At the same time, a Romanian ethnicity, in the sense of belonging to a certain cultural group, has become a reality in Moldova. As there are Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, there are also ethnic *Romanians* in Moldova and their existence sooner or later will have to be acknowledged by the state.

In conclusion, I would like to cite a politician who is well-known in Moldova, Vladimir Solonari, who has recently written an article where

he claims that in Moldova, the civic model of a nation has prevailed in comparison with the Baltic states where an ethnic model was implemented.

I disagree in two points with this affirmation. I disagree that the Latvian society, with almost a half of ethnic Russians, is an ethnic state. Indeed, they took the Latvian culture as a base of the new civic identity but enacted efficient programmes of integration of other ethnic groups into the Latvian nation: language tests, citizenship examinations etc. The Latvian nation-state became a functioning multi-ethnic state.

Second, I disagree that Moldova has become a civic nation. What we have achieved in Moldova through rejecting a cultural ground for a new nation so far is that of an institutionalisation of the conflict. Instead of education of a new citizenry we opted for cultural isolationism and territorial separatism, feeding together a geo-political competition.

### **Cultural competition today**

Where is the focus of current ethnic competition?

The main claims of the **ethno-cultural** groups, Russians and Romanian, as reflected by the media, could be reduced to several objectives.

Pro Russian political groups have demanded on various occasions:

- To make Russian the second official language;
- To promote Russians in order to include them into state administration;

- To introduce the principle of a "national school", meaning the elimination of the teaching of "Romanian language and history" and replacing it by "Moldovan".

They have raised complaints such as:

- The law on audiovisual media specifies 65% of programming in Romanian except in areas with a compact distinct population, allowing arbitrary interventions by the Audiovisual Committee;
- The requirement of advertisements in Romanian when, some Russian businesses claim, among potential customers Russian speakers predominate
- The forceful implementation of Romanian in order to quickly establish its dominant role in public life;
- A test of Romanian for joining public service, especially justice.

The pro Romanian political groups have lobbied for a promotion of the *Romanian* language and *Romanian* ethnic identity in Moldova specifically through:

- An acceptance of the name *Romanian* for the official language;
- A recognition of the **Basarabian Mitropolitan** church;
- An efficient legislation to protect the media market from a monopolisation by Russian language businesses (see the CAIRO case).

Several of these claims pertain to "bilingualism". Further, I would like to reflect on the question itself: "Is bilingualism possible?"

As an example, I would like to cite a recent declaration of a Gagaus official requesting that official documents sent to **Gagausian** local authorities be accompanied by a Russian translation. There are several objections to this request. First, **Moldovan** along with Gagausian and Russian are official languages of the autonomy, thus any document in Moldovan has to be accepted by the authorities.

Second, two official languages should mean the right of the citizen and customer to choose the language in its relation with the public officials or services. To which extent would public servants have the right to choose the language of communication among them? Are not the specified public servants looking for securing the right not to know the official language? And why should the central authorities pay for the ignorance of local authorities by hiring translators?

Under current legislation, the Moldovan bureaucracy should by definition be bilingual, but the secretariat will be predominantly monolingual. Inside the autonomy, it can be in Gagausian, but in its relation with the centre it has to be in an official language.

In principle, are there any bilingual nations? No, except when territorially defined like Flanders and **Vallonia** in Belgium or inside the Swiss confederation. Every community evolves towards one language of communication. There are no bilingual capitals in Europe, are they? They can have many confessions, many ethnic communities but, in the end, one language becomes the community language. The Russian language performed this function throughout the Soviet period. The 1991 language law, granting Moldovan the status of Official language,

also granted Russian the status of language of **interethnic** communication, reflecting a historic duality. What is going to occur in the future is that the Russian language, after loosing its predominance in public administration, will lose its monopoly in inter-ethnic communication, remaining a language of a cultural community that still can be defined wider as the one of ethnic Russians.

Another group of claims cited above pertains to the political dispute between the partisans of the **Moldovan** ethnicity and separate language and those who speak in favour of a Romanian ethnic and linguistic unity. In the long run this dispute is futile. Why? First, currently this is effectively the same language and the main source of development of the Moldovan language is cultural import from Romania. With a global growing of communication technologies it is hard to imagine the emergence of a different language here in **Moldova**, except under an authoritarian rule that would make a new attempt to create an artificial language. Thus, the core concern is if this language, called Moldovan or Romanian, will be allowed to freely thrive here in its natural habitat, a habitat endangered by aggressive media marketing.

Last year I was asked to comment on the report on human rights abuses in Moldova prepared by **Álvaro GIL-ROBLES**, Human Rights Commissioner for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:

*The report suggests a «forced» implementation of an official language through education, media and public use. I suggest: Moldova to be seen as a FAILING STATE unable to insure the implementation of a liberal*

minority legislation, rather than as an **AUTHORITARIAN STATE** imposing an abusive legislation. **Moldovan** legislators, in fact granted all minorities the right to use their languages, and granted the Russian language the status of "language of inter-ethnic communication", provisions that are by far more "generous" than in the Baltic states or even the Ukraine. The policy of Moldovan authorities is that of promoting the use of an Official language rather than imposing it. These efforts have not been entirely successful, partially because of a strong psychological resistance on the part of the population that does not speak the official language. In 1994, they blocked the adoption of a law that would test public officials on their knowledge of the Official language, thus passively resisting the rehabilitation of the Romanian language after 50 years of discrimination. After **TEN YEARS** of new linguistic legislation enacted in 1989, many public officials still do not speak the official language. The Moldovan State has not succeeded in convincing its citizens of the need to know the Official language. Today, Official language became a **SKILL** required for public service, not a meter of privilege, a fact ignored by many.

In fact, Moldova is a **battlefield** between Russian and Romanian cultural and political influences. Romanian is more prominent in the public service (with regional exceptions) and education while Russian is dominant in the economy. The media market is heavily dominated by the Russian language. 60% of all newspapers sold in Moldova are in Russian, half of them imported from the Russian Federation. 100% of advertising newspapers are in Russian. 70-80% of short wave Radio

*broadcast is in Russian, since the respective radio stations have been bought by media groups of Russian federation. The only cable provider in Chisinau shows half of the channels in Russian and only one quarter in Romanian. The only two cinemas in Chisinau show movies exclusively in Russian. Thus, in many segments of the media market, like advertising a cable TV, there are monopolies that simply resist any use of Romanian under the protection of the right of private initiative. Since the bunch of private capital in Moldova is controlled by one linguistic community, the Russian, it is often trying to impose this language on all other linguistic communities, including the majority one. During the controversy about Russian radio stations last fall, Russian president Vladimir Putin stated: "If you **want** Russian gas you have to learn the Russian language! ". This proves that the language controversy in Moldova specifically is, to a large extent, artificially inspired from Russia as a tool of maintaining its grip in the "near abroad". In fact, no other minority except the Russian (13% of the population) has expressed serious complaints on their cultural rights, and precisely the Russian minority has disproportionately much more rights than any other minority. In spite of learning the Romanian language in schools for **10** years 90% of the minority's graduates still ignore it, some because of poor teaching but the majority because of a psychological resistance inherited from the Soviet Union era, an official Romanophobia.*

*There are numerous facts of discrimination of non-Russian speakers by the business community concerning employment. There is a wide-spread discrimination of non-Russian speakers as consumers, where businesses*

*fail to hire staff competent also in Romanian, in breach of the legislation. There are wide-spread discrimination of non-Russian speakers as consumers of media products and advertising by not providing products and services also in Romanian, the Russian using their monopoly position on the market.*

*Believe it or not, it is the Russian language that is continuously imposed on all another ethnic groups, since it is still an obligatory subject in all schools. A public debate on making Russian an optional foreign language in non-Russian schools was counter argued by the need to somehow employ abundant Russian teachers and by the force of tradition.*

*A rare positive example is higher education where, because of better persuasion and teaching, the minorities' students have been able to acquire **proficiency** in the Official language.*

***Suggestions:***

*“Moldovan specifics” have to be taken into consideration by the author of the report,*

- 1. Precisely that the Russian Federation is doing an aggressive cultural and political marketing in Moldova, the country facing the danger of literally being bought by Russian businesses. The Russian Federation also supports a pro-Russian separatist government in **Transnistria**.*
- 2. The efforts of promoting the Official language should not be mistakenly taken as an abusive imposition of it. Facts of discrimination*

*or abuse have to be examined on a case-by-case basis rather than as consequence of a state policy.*

## **Solutions**

Finally, what recommendations could be made to contribute to an improvement of inter-ethnic relations in Moldova, leading towards a more peaceful and harmonic society?

As a result of the **ethno-political** relations in Moldova, I would emphasise two focal conflict bearing points:

- **Romanophobia**, as ethnic hatred, the building of an image of an enemy.
- Alienation of the Russian cultural community.

In Soviet **Moldova**, the Russians often had a superiority complex that in time developed into a feeling of **frustration** from independent Moldova and hate towards "nationalists". This psychological handicap has to be transformed into respect and cooperation through targeted education programmes.

It is necessary to target the political inclusion of cultural Russians. As I said, this is the most affluent part of the **Moldovan** society. They simply do not pay taxes if the state does not provide the cultural services they expect.

There is a need for a better representation of ethnic minorities in public administration as well as in elected bodies. The introduction of a

quota system in the Academy of Public Administration could help educating bilingual public servants from ethnic minorities. The electoral law could be revised to provide for a better representation of ethnic groups.

Cultural education has to be supplemented by civic education. Minorities have to learn both *rights* and *duties* of an ethnic group in a democratic society. Rather than isolation (the case of Transnistria and Gagausia) they have to be persuaded to opt for participation.

The state has to promote the **intercultural** dialogue. Nation building has to be rather a shared long-term policy than a momentary compromise. It is difficult to impose certain cultural patterns very quickly, however, a fair play framework has to be created.

The state needs to implement laws for the protection of consumers from aggressive takeovers and monopolies especially in the media market and the service sector. On the other hand, the state needs a *liberalisation* in religious politics.

A certain modern history of Moldova has to be developed where the political project of the Republic of Moldova is given shape together with an appropriate definition and a role for ethnic and cultural groups. This is the path towards a modern civic nation; this is the way towards European integration.

**Octavian Sofransky**  
Chairman  
European Centre in Moldova