HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN MOLDOVA

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Report by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following report is a qualitative assessment of recent (i.e., published between 1997 and 2002) history textbooks published in the Republic of Moldova. History teaching is linked to current debates in society and politics in each country. Moldova is currently an extreme case of a country undergoing simultaneous, triple transitions : political transformation, economic transformation as well as transformations with respect to state and nation. With such portentous issues on the agenda of political and public debate, history typically plays a much more prominent role than it does for example in West European countries. As both academic history-writing and didactical textbooks are linked to the current political and societal context, on the one hand, as well as to historiographic traditions and interpretations of the past, the introductory chapter (§1) outlines both the current context and historiography.

The current debate on the reform of the history curriculum and the corresponding textbooks from a History of the Romanians into a History of Moldova has placed history teaching in the centre of the ongoing debate on state, nation and identity. The *de facto* existence of the *Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika* (PMR) on the left bank of the Dniestr adds to the complexity and contentiousness of textbook writing as it adds a third interpretative framework and historical narrative with the history of the left-bank region. Consequently, an external assessment of textbooks should not take a partisan stance in an ongoing debate in Moldova. Rather, it should begin by defining the objectives of history teaching and the criteria for textbooks that derive from these general objectives. Possibly, even readers who do not subscribe in full to the set of objectives may agree to many of the concrete criteria for textbooks. Thus, the next chapter (§2) defines both the general objectives and sets of criteria for the historical, political and didactical dimensions of the textbooks.

The subsequent chapters (§3-5) apply the above criteria to the individual textbooks and use the general objectives as a foil for a principled argument on the preferred orientation and scope of history textbooks. The report argues the case for a history teaching that neither focused exclusively on the Romanian nation, nor on the Moldovan state, nor on the Transdniestr region. Productive history classes for pupils in Moldova could profit from lessons learnt in history teaching in many European countries in recent decades. As history as such is neither self-explanatory nor has a sense of determination, meanings and trends are inscribed by historians. Consequently, exclusivist partisan interpretations with a meta-historical claim to the "historical truth" are not only misleading, but also utterly counterproductive for the education of a new generation.

The final chapter (§6) summarises the report's findings and adds a list of specific and broader recommendations for the historical, political and didactical improvement of history textbooks in Moldova. Hopefully, the report's depoliticised and constructive approach may provide some new impulses and ideas that the participants and stakeholders to the Moldovan debate may find useful.

Moldova[1]

The current state of Moldova with its 33,843 sq km and 4.4 million inhabitants may be considered part of Southeastern Europe and the Newly Independent States with equal justification. It is hard to think of examples where the designations and demarcations of the state and nation have been more in flux and disputed in history and current politics. Paradoxically, although Moldova is the living proof that fixed, meta-historical categories and definitions are untenable on closer scrutiny, such claims tend to be made more intensely and uncompromisingly in these cases. The very fact that so many conflicting versions of Moldovan identity and history exist might be a strong indication that there is no single truth. Paradoxically, for each party involved (with his own truth) the conclusion is just the opposite

The current Republic of Moldova is the result of the 1991 Declaration of Independence of the Moldavian Socialist Soviet Republic. The language of the majority population of Moldova does not differ from the adjacent Romanian language in a linguistically meaningful way and as the Moldovans share most of their history with the Romanians on the other side of the Pruth river. Therefore, most observers expected independence to be short-lived and Moldova to move from declaring Romanian the state language to re-unification with the Romanian state. Once independent statehood had been established, however, political and public opinion swung in the opposite direction and redefined the Stalinist concept of a Moldovan nation, language and history separate from the Romanians. The confrontation between reunificationists and Moldovanists was further complicated from the earliest days of independence by a secessionist movement on the left bank of the Dniestr, combining ideological, regional, economic and ethnic motives to demand a federalisation of Moldova. Since a short outburst of military confrontation, the territories on the left bank with a 40% Moldovan minority rather than a 65% majority (in all of Moldova) have been *de facto* under the control of a separate, non-recognised government in Tiraspol. Each government in Chisinau thus faces a complex dilemma of nation and state building as concessions to the PMR regime would alienate those elites underlining that Moldova is part of the Romanian nation (if not state) and as concessions to a pro-Romanian position would lead to negative reactions from Tiraspol.

Historiographic Traditions

As nation and state have been key categories shaping history since the 19th Century, the history writing accompanying these processes of nation and state building have produced competing historical interpretations along these lines. Even if it is permissible to distinguish three main paradigms - a Romanian, a Moldovan and a Transdniestrian – substantial variations occur within each paradigm. In their retrospection of history, some take the current state as their basis, others the nation. This raises the question of whether the state is defined as an ethnic state (as the possession of the majority nation) or as a civic state (including minorities as equal citizens). It also raises the question about the scope of the nation and/or the state and how strictly they are being defined.

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[1] In discussing history textbooks, the report refers to the majority nation or language of Moldova both as "Moldovan" and "Romanian" - without implying a political stance or preference on the part of the author. Similarly, the PMR or "Transdniestria" is mentioned without repeated notice that this entity is not recognised as a sovereign state by the international community. As far as the Moldovan polemics on nation, state and identity are concerned, the report was written "sine ira ac studio."

The Romanian paradigm, being the oldest interpretation of state and nation for Moldova, included the territory of Moldova (usually without the left bank of the Dniestr) in the Romanian nation-state and its majority population in the Romanian ethnic nation. With the predominance of the ethnic concept of the nation, Moldova is either denied the right to exist as a state or becomes the second nation-state of the Romanians, implicitly including historic parts now belonging to Ukraine. A liberal version may focus more on current Moldova as a second Romanian state and include the minorities in a civic concept of the state.

The Moldovan paradigm is based on the current statehood of Moldova, defined as a community defined by a common destiny and only secondarily by a shared past. In line with the zero-option adopted for post-Soviet citizenship after independence, the civic concept of the nation predominates, although, in some accounts, ethnic connotations of a Moldovan state belonging to the ethnic Moldovans. Similarly, the official concept of the Moldavian SSR was also based on civic nationhood, but also implied some aspects of ethnic nationhood. Conversely, proponents of the Moldovan paradigm may or may not insist on an "essential" distinction between the Romanian and the Moldovan nation. The designation "Moldovan" had a predominantly geographic rather than ethnic connotation until the Comintern and the Soviet regime decided to "create" a Moldovan nation that was originally defined as a class or a multi-ethnic community, but was eventually put forward as an ethnic nation with a history, language, identity and culture distinct from the Romanian nation. The political rational of the concept was to separate the Romanians and Moldovans on both sides of the Soviet outer border. Since 1991 independence, the concept was officially interpreted as a civic nation, but more radical versions with a larger territorial scope including territory of Romania and Ukraine also occurred. Domestically, some interpreters were closer to an ethnic concept, to the detriment of the minorities. Overall, Moldovanists who do not want to be identified with the Soviet Moldovanism of the past can go a long way towards liberal Romanianism in agreeing on the identity of the languages and the nations, defining the two civic states as the result of history. Much of the shared past thus belongs to both national histories.

The Transdniestrian paradigm is the most recent re-definition of nation and state for part of the Moldovan territory. Its rationale is in the consolidation of the state-entity on the left bank proclaimed on 2 September 1990. In view of the multi-ethnic composition of its population and the underlying Soviet concept of multi-ethnic statehood, the paradigm uses mainly a civic concept of the nation, although the Russian and Ukrainian populations predominate in the region, producing imperial and Slavic-national undertones. The definition of the state is mainly based on a community of fate with some historical roots. Close reading of Soviet-Moldovan historiography and politics reveals precursors of a Transdniestrian regional identity. With centuries of "foreign" domination, substantial shifts of borders and with only the Moldovan ASSR (1924-1940) as an arguable historic precursor of Transdniestrian statehood, retro-projection plays a minor role in the legitimisation of the current state. Additionally, some may uphold the old concept of an ethnic Moldovanism, whereas others focus on the regional history of the left bank as a historic community with strong ties to the East.

Moldova's bizarre historiographic complexity produced new centres and "schools" in the early 1990s. Some of the leading historians of the 1980s defending a combination of Russian-national, Soviet-communist and (to a lesser extent) Moldovanist views migrated to the University in Tiraspol or retired. The national mobilisation swept younger historians and scholars with Romanianist views into the highest offices of historical institutes in Chisinau. With the support of the national cultural elite and students, they have managed to uphold their positions, with the unique result that the official government's post-1994 position of

Moldovanism has hardly found an echo in historiography. The then-president, Mihai Snegur, even outlined a History of Moldova himself in a newspaper article. Issues like the name of the language – Romanian or Moldovan – and the approach of history textbook – History of the Romanians or History of Moldova – have led to mass protests and confrontations between government and opposition in the mid-1990s and again in the early 2000s.

The Textbooks

The current assessment is based on a larger number of textbooks from Moldova that, nevertheless, is far from complete, especially for the PMR. Apart from a number of outdated textbooks from the early 1990s, most of the current textbooks were published in the past seven years, with separate volumes for World History and the History of the Romanians.

All the national-history textbooks in the sample used for this report have "History of the Romanians" as a title. So far, no textbook has been published with "History of Moldova" as a title. As the application of the criteria developed below will demonstrate, however, the approaches and quality of the different textbooks on World History and History of the Romanians vary greatly. As a matter of fact, the Moldovan and Romanian paradigms constitute a *continuum* rather than *opposites* in textbook practice: Eventually, a History of the Romanians paying due attention to minorities and focussing on Bessarabia/Moldova might almost converge with a History of Moldova paying due attention to broader regional frameworks. In order to reflect this continuum, one academic synthesis[2] of the "History of Moldova" paradigm has been included in the sample for the historical and political (but evidently not for the didactical) criteria.

PMR textbooks were not available for this report. The "History of Transdniestria" paradigm is not part of the programme at the Moldova seminar in Braunschweig. Therefore, the available academic studies[3] from Tiraspol have not been included as a substitute for textbooks (unlike in the case of the "History of Moldova") in this version of the report.

2. OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA FOR TEXTBOOKS

In most European democracies, over the past decades, history teaching and the corresponding textbooks have moved from parallel systems for world history and national history towards an integrated concept. Half a century without wars and a substantial reduction of historical arguments in domestic debates have certainly contributed to this trend. Many of the objectives below are easier to achieve and many of the criteria easier to fulfil in the framework of an integrated history. Flexible frameworks respond more readily to current public interests and themes without being instrumentalised in political or ideological controversies. National history – be it nation or state-oriented – inherently creates structural problems that can be partly circumvented in good textbooks and drastically exacerbated in bad ones. Regional history may offer an interim solution by embedding national history in a flexible, broader regional context that may vary in direction and scope depending on the theme or period under discussion. Both integrated and regional history are much less prone to the normativism and particularism typical of national histories all over Europe.

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[2] Stati, V. (2002). Istoria Moldovei. Chisinau, Vivar-Editor.
[3] Babilunga, N. V. and S. I.   Beril (2000). Fenomen Pridnestrov'ja. Tiraspol, RIO PGU,   Grosul, V. Y. and N. V. Babilunga (2000). Istoriya Pridnestrovskoj Moldovaskoj Respubliki. Tiraspol, RIO PGU.

Subjective Objectives

If the objective of history teaching is not the indoctrination of a young generation with certain predefined concepts and interpretations of history or to instil patriotic feelings, three other objectives seem paramount for the educational needs of pupils in a modern democratic society increasingly integrated in Europe. The first objective is to enable the pupils to become critical, independent citizens of civil society by training their ability to asses the validity of arguments and the credibility of interpretations by themselves and to get used to a complex past (and present) of multiple perspectives.

Apart form **a critical mind (#1)**, the result of history lessons should also be a solid framework of **historical knowledge (#2)** enabling citizens to understand the origins of current developments and legacies as well as to be familiar with the cultural, architectural and historical heritage in the present. Last, but not least, good historical training would enable citizens to be emphatic to the historic otherness of past periods, to realise that ideas and views are always tied in with a certain historical period and constellation: **historical consciousness (#3)**. From these three objectives, the following specific historical, political and didactical criteria for textbooks derive.

Historical Criteria

As nations and modern states are a recent phenomenon in history, treating either one of them as a meta-historical norm and objective of history seriously hampers an open-minded understanding of the past and perpetuates obsessions with national identity and statehood. As a consequence, other states and nations seem irrelevant for the purposive unfolding of an assumed process towards a unitary nation-state in the course of history. As a consequence, identities and loyalties other than identification with the nation and/or state seem irrelevant. The result of such an approach is a normative, deterministic history narrative with no need to reflect on and weigh the motives of historical actors and structural explanations. Thus, the first negative historical criterion is not to elevate a presumed eternal **national interest (#1)** to the status of meta-historical norm. This criterion is obviously linked to the third criterion of historical consciousness, as this approach is essentially a-historical.

A presupposed teleological process towards national liberation also obligates the "bigger picture" of structural trends and the Europe-wide political constellation that influence and shape developments in and around the specific state or nation. Ignoring the structural trends makes the nation and/or state seem unique. The absolute norm of the nation-state implies that all outside factors are negative, hampering or delaying the culmination of history in the nation-state. In sum, the second positive criterion is to integrate national history in broader **structural and comparative frameworks (#2)** of European and world history. Evidently, it is up to the textbook writer to determine what framework is most relevant for what topic or period.

A view of history that retro-projections the presumed final outcome of history as a meta-historical norm loses sight of the multiperspectivity and complexity of open historical processes. Instead, retro-projections produce national mirrors of pain and pride that are exclusivist and a-historical. In sum, such a view fails on the essential account of **historical consciousness (#3)** - understanding of historical personalities and movements in their *Zeitgeist* and worldviews.

Political Criteria

The interpretation of history is inseparably linked to current political and public debates and even conflicts. Whereas history should not be used and abused to legitimise current politics, history teaching may contribute to tolerance and an open-minded approach to conflicting opinions within a state. Any state and society have obligation not to discriminate against ethnic, linguistic, religious and other minorities and to integrate them actively. Therefore, history textbooks as a first political criterion should give a **fair representation of domestic minorities (#1).** Without neglecting the majority, their presence in different periods and their contributions to politics, the arts and the economy should to be appreciated.

Historians and textbook-writers should refrain from **incendiary and disparaging statements (#2)** directly related to current politics in their historical representations. Rather than discrediting their profession as a pawn of ideology or politics and rather than exacerbate existing conflicts, historians should highlight multiperspectivity and explain the historical roots of current political dilemmas.

What applies to domestic minorities, also applies to neighbouring nations and states: The third political criterion is to give a **fair representation of other states and nations (#3).** Without the meta-historical norm of nation and state building, relations cover the whole range from mutually beneficial trade to warfare. Fair representation implies not ignoring beneficial relations and not whitewashing or excusing the actions of "national" politicians.

Didactical Criteria

The criteria for the didactical presentation of historical knowledge directly relate to the normative objectives above. Thus, the first criterion is to train pupils to become critical citizens: Thus, textbooks should address, in the first place, **the mind, not the memory (#1)** of the pupils. This means not to overburden pupils with large collections of redundant historical facts but to explain connections, causes and consequences instead. Active methods of interaction with history are, therefore, preferable as they improve the capabilities of the pupils and not (only) the knowledge of historical facts.

Along the same lines, **an open, multi-perspective approach (#2)** to history stops normative texts and dogmatic exercises that allow for only one conclusion or one answer. History is an ideal area to train the understanding of complexities of factors and perceptions.

The fact that pupils are not experienced academic historians requires special diligence, in particular in the choice of non-text instruments in history textbooks. Evidently, **a non-academic, student-oriented approach (#3)** is essential. The starting point for textbooks should be didactical insights rather than academic knowledge.

3. HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

3a. Ancient and Medieval History

The National Interest

Unlike in the Moldovan and the Transdniestrian paradigms, ancient and medieval history is a key to the Romanian paradigm as it contains the genesis of the Romanian nation in the "Romanian space" between Carpathians, Danube and Black Sea. The objective and achievement of national *re*-unification in modern and contemporary history requires an initial status quo of national unity in ancient history. Although the 10[4]-grade textbook open with a neutral definition of the scope of its subject, the geographic area above, the authors immediately proceed to highlight the essence and continuity of history; Geto-Dacians, the ethnogenesis of the Romanians from Dacians and Romans (with some Germanic and Slavic influences) and the founding of the Romanian Principalities in the 14th century. Especially the phrase "political conditions favourable for an uninterrupted historical development of Romanian societies" implies a highly normative and one-sided perspective (pp. 3-4). Clearly defined stages of ethnogenesis provide orientation for the pupils: "The formation of the Romanian people was completed in the 8th century" (p. 48).[5]

The Pages from the History of the Romanians[6] is a positive exception in this respect (as well as in some other). Not only is the history of the Romanians and/or the Moldovan state always embedded in a broader framework, but the 4th-grade textbook also carefully refrains from passing moral judgements based on national criteria. With the exception of the 1812 annexation - "no right" (p. 89) - conquests and other events are explained in their historical context rather than judged. The matter-of-fact style of the booklet – "The Geto-Dacians are considered the ancestors of the Romanians" and "From the mixing of Romans and Dacians, the Romanian people emerged" (pp. 40, 44) – leaves room for *explanations* and an understanding of Traian's motives for conquering Dacia.

Stati's study[7] similarly retro-projects the current state (and nation) of Moldova on history, arguing that "each country has a right to its own national history." (p. 9) Although the introduction highlights the concept of fatherland, the ambiguous handling of early history with distinctions between Dacians and Getae as well as the Slavic contribution to the ethnogenesis of the ancestors of the Moldovans gives the narrative an unmistakable ethnic perspective. References to "Moldovans" in medieval sources are explicitly understood as referring to an ethnos rather than to a regional identity. By 1812, the locals have apparent reached the level of a "Moldovan nation" (pp. 52, 229) Having established this approach, Stati's interpretation of the history of the Moldovan Principality from 1359 until 1812 faces no dilemmas and is unsurprising, with the possible exception of reference to an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, Wallachia and the Tatars against Moldova in the 15th century: Conflicts between Romanian principalities are usually downplayed in the History of the Romanians paradigm. (p. 96)

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[4]   Dragnev, E., V. Paslariuc, et al. (2001). <u>Istoria universala. Epoca antica si medievala. Manual pentru clasa a X-a</u>. Chisinau, Civitas.
[5]   Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). <u>File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.
[6]   Ibid.
[7]   Stati, V. (2002). <u>Istoria Moldovei</u>. Chisinau, Vivar-Editor.

Structural and Comparative Frameworks

Historical Consciousness

Avoiding anachronisms requires a critical editing of textbooks. Naming Burebista's successful unification of many Dacian tribes as "a state" will cause anachronistic connotations in the perception of most younger students (p. 40).[8] The history of the Romanians unfolding in the textbook by Dragnev and Postica resembles the traditional view of Romanian historians consolidated in the late 19th century and antedates modern concepts and terminology to ancient history to argue the case of continuity in nation and statehood. Concepts like "unified state", "foreign policy", "separatism" and even the three (legislative, executive and juridical) powers are absurd in the context of a loose gathering of tribes in the first century (pp. 27-33). The same a-historical use of concept linked to modern statehood is repeated in the chapter on the founding of the principalities in the 14th century (pp. 72-163).

Any "History of the Romanians" assumes that the Romanian ethnic nation is at the core of regional history, constitutes the primary identification of the relevant individuals. Thus, one textbook defines the scope of his subject as "the Romanian people both in their unitary nation-state and in other state formations" (p. 4).[9]

Paradoxically, the inclusion of some historical legends - for example Dragos-Voda (p. 58)[10] – sharpens pupils' awareness of historical facts, interpretations and imagination. The textbook by Dragnev and Postica[11] introduces an innovative instrument to raise students' awareness of the fact that interpretations of history are not written in isolation of the contemporary situation of the historian. The textbook contains case studies outlining the main historiographic interpretations of a certain event or person. Quite remarkably, these outlines not only mark different opinions in Romanian history-writing, but also include communist and Soviet-Moldovan views. One of these cases is the weighing of legend and historical fact in the founding of the Moldovan Principality, the *descalecatul* (dismounting) of Dragos Voda. The authors indicate the political implications of specific views (colonisation or settling in uninhabited land). Unfortunately, the authors cannot refrain from indicating which view is correct (pp. 102-103). In a second case, Mihai Viteazul and his unification of the Romanian lands, an honest presentation of the political dimension and the relevant question whether or not the medieval ruler had "national" intentions or only became a precursor of unification in retrospect again contains pejorative suggestions – "Romanian post-war Marxist historiography attempted to present …" - and ends with a conclusive view (pp. 175-177). For advanced students, however, historiographic case studies constitute an attractive tool.

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[8] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). <u>File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

[9] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a</u>. Chisinau, Cartdidact.

[10] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). <u>File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

[11] Dragnev, E., V. Paslariuc, et al. (2001). <u>Istoria universala. Epoca antica si medievala. Manual pentru clasa a X-a</u>. Chisinau, Civitas.

3b. Modern History

The National Interest

Only the assumption of meta-historical "reserved" territories for later nation-states permits normative judgements on the conquest and annexation of territories throughout history. Thus, one textbook explicitly refers to the "Romanian space" (p. 7)[12] at a time when these territories were rules by different empires. In the same textbook, the concept of "the theft of territory" refers to a future nation-state rather than to the actual historical situation at that time – with suzerains and feudal dynasties (p. 5). The national interest is defined as follows: "The Great Unification created for the Romanian nation the framework the optimal framework for its prospering" (p. 7). The weighing of national interest and modernisation because problematic: Habsburg rule in Transylvania, for instance, had clear advantages over Ottoman rule in terms of modernisation, but is nevertheless rated negatively as it restricted national autonomy much more severely (pp. 26-27). The normative approach is particularly apparent in the description of the 1812 annexation of Bessarabia by Russia "that had no claim whatsoever (ethnic, historical, geographical or political) to this territory" (p. 54) as well as in "the struggle for the national rights of the Romanians" (p. 90). Whereas a substantial part of the textbook is devoted to Bessarabia in various historical periods, the left bank of the Dniestr is not mentioned once, not even its Russian conquest in the late 18th century. The meta-historical norm of national reunification is apparent in many phrases: "The Moldovan National Party as exponent of the interests of the Romanian population of Bessarabia" (p. 148) implies that interests are only or firstly national. The statement that 1918 "ended a period of unrest in the history of the Pruth-Dniestr region that had begun with the annexation of 1812" suggests an eternal undercurrent of history directed towards national reunification (p. 155).

The 4th-grade booklet[13] notes that the 1812 annexation was unjustified, but focuses on explaining the historical constellation with the sultan urgently needing a peace treaty and describing the subsequent colonisation in a matter-of-fact style, defining colonists as "persons who move from the native place to settle in a foreign country" (p. 89). Unlike most other textbooks, this one mentions the Russian conquest of the left bank of the Dniestr in 1792, if only to show that the Russians did not come from nowhere two decades later (p. 88). Similarly, the unifications of 1859 and 1918 receive due attention, but do not constitute the logic of the historical process, despite the "centuries-old aspiration of the Romanians for unification" (p. 104). Similarly, the Dragnev textbook[14] introduces the complexity of history by outlining the Russian original plan to unify the Romanian principalities under tsarist suzerainty as a buffer zone against the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. Due to a shifting European balance of power, the war of 1806-1812 ended with the Russian annexation of Bessarabia only (p. 60-75). The colonisation of Bessarabia and Transdniestria is explained in terms of the out-migration of peasants who feared Russian serfdom and the Russian strategic interest to stabilise the border region. Nevertheless, the ethnic dimension of tsarist policies - the Russification of local elites, the colonisation with Russians and Ukrainians as well as the isolation of Bessarabians from Romanian culture - is not concealed from the reader (pp. 83-86; 95).

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[12]   Chicus, N., N.   Ciubotaru, et al. (2002).   Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual   pentru clasa a 11-a . Chisinau, Stiinta.
[13]   Cerbusca, P., V.   Haheu, et al. (1999).   File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a . Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.
[14]   Dragnev, D. and E.   Dragnev (2000).   Istoria moderna a Romanilor.- Manual pentru clasa a VII-a . Chisinau, Stiinta.

The Stati study[15] uses a flexible retro-projection of today's Moldovan state. Although his framework of reference originally was the Moldovan principality and although his historical concept of the Moldovan nation is by all means ethnic, the territorial divisions and annexations of 1812, 1856, 1878, 1918 and 1940 never compel the author to address the issue of "Moldovan minorities" in Romania and Ukraine or a "Greater Moldova" including parts of these two states. Implicitly, whereas the Romanian drive for national self-determination often assumes meta-historical qualities, its Moldovan counterpart is obviously restrained by current realities: the point of reference is not Romania Mare, but rather the current territory of the Republic of Moldova.

Structural and Comparative Frameworks

With modern history, the deficits of a national-history approach become all the more apparent. As the region under study in the history of the Moldovan state or Romanian nation was under foreign domination for most of modern history and as developments in politics and society were increasingly determined by structural changes in international relations or economic that had their origin far beyond the borders of national history. In order to understand and explain these local developments better knowledge of the "bigger picture" is indispensable. Structural developments in Transylvania can only be understood in the context of the Habsburg Empire, the delayed modernisation of the two other principalities is directly linked to the Ottoman Empire and Russian policies in Bessarabia have to be seen against the backdrop of overall tsarist imperial strategies. The separation of national and world history as well as the limited space available in a national-history textbook for the broader context creates the impression that national history is essentially unique and unfolded largely in isolation.

Thus, the corresponding textbook from the History of the Romanians series[16] offers the pupils almost no information about the Ottoman, Habsburg and Russian Empires as such, but adds the absolute minimum necessary for the national period under discussion. The Eastern Question, the broader framework of most of modern Romanian history, and the international constellation around the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 are explained only in passing. The epithet "enlightened ruler" for Constantin Mavrocordat is only meaningful if the pupils are aware of absolutism, feudal monarchies and the Enlightenment (pp. 22-23). Similarly, Cantemir is praised as "one of the greatest European scholar of his time" (p. 47), but his portrayal in a local context only is to the detriment of his true magnitude at the crossroads of Enlightenment, Orthodoxy and Orient. Thus, a national focus belittles national personalities of real European calibre!

On the contrary, the 7th-grade textbook by Demir and Emil Dragnev[17] has a much more keen eye for the wider picture and embeds Romanian/Moldovan history in world/European history. Thus, the annexation of the Moldovan villages on the left bank of the Dniestr is explained as part of the wider phenomenon of tsarist expansionism. Typically, they also pay much more attention to the wider picture of modernisation in Europe and in Russia as well as to culture, daily life and the arts. In line with this structural approach of modernisation, a distinction

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[15] Stati, V. (2002). Istoria Moldovei. Chisinau, Vivar-Editor.
[16] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.
[17] Dragnev, D. and E. Dragnev (2000). Istoria moderna a Romanilor.- Manual pentru clasa a VII-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.

between elites and the common people appears - with the uprisings of the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a first appearance of the common people as a political actor (p. 81). Such a distinction is rarely found in a strictly defined ethno-national history, with elites sharing the eternal aspirations of the people and vice versa.

As the title, Pages from the History of the Romanians,[18] indicates, the authors focus on Moldova (i.e. the principality and later the Romanian province, Bessarabia and Transdniestria) and thereby write a kind of state history of Moldova without denying that this is part of the history of the Romanians. Unlike in other Histories of the Romanians, Wallachia and Transylvania are only included when relevant and the Marea Unire of 1918 is not the culmination of all history. The political and cultural figures highlighted are those from Moldova. Evidently, there is no perfect solution to this dilemma: distinguishing between Moldovan and Wallachian poets in the late 19th Century is as artificial as chapters on the political system of post-1989 Romania in a textbook from Chisinau.

Albeit rooted in a different historiographic tradition, the Dragnev textbook[19] also opens with a careful definition of the geographic subject. For the century prior to 1848, the authors include the entire "Romanian space", but concentrate increasingly on the Moldovan Principality, Bessarabia and Transdniestria, while acknowledging the ethno-cultural unity of the Romanians in and beyond the borders of current-day Romania and Moldova (p. 4-5).

Historical Consciousness

The concept of a modern nation-state as a political objective emerged in the late 18th Century and became the driving force of broader political movement 100 years later. Nevertheless, a national-history textbook inevitably creates the impression that all history was a purposive process leading to the eventual creation of this or that nation-state. The Romanian feudal rulers of the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries had no premonition of the 1918 *Marea Unire* and defined their political objectives within a completely different historical setting. This realisation is at the core of historical consciousness. A chapter entitled "Political Trends in the Period between Unification and Independence" (p. 110) leaves no room for the possibility that history might have moved in another direction. The Dragnev textbook[20] defines a similar purposive and normative framework for the "destination of the Romanian nation: national and social liberation as well as unification in a modern nation-state" (p. 4), but the actual narrative is far more critical, open-minded and historical.

Conversely, the textbook on modern Romanian history[21] defines national unity as the "aspiration of the Romanian nation" and "the motive for the necessity to create modern Romania as an independent state of all Romanians". Thus, the Romanians outside the borders waited for "the right opportunity to return to the Romanian Kingdom" (p. 7). Against the axiom of historical consciousness, i.e. the fact that historical figures act without knowing the outcome of their actions, national-history thus becomes one-dimensional, distinguishing between the meta-historical process towards national unification and temporary setbacks

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[18] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a . Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.
[19] Dragnev, D. and E. Dragnev (2000). Istoria moderna a Romanilor.- Manual pentru clasa a VII-a . Chisinau, Stiinta.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a . Chisinau, Stiinta.

digressions. It seems implausible and a-historic to assume that the Horea and his 1784 peasants' rebellion were motivated by national emancipation rather than socio-economic motives (pp 30-31), that Cantemir thought of "his people" in ethnic rather than feudal terms (p. 47) or that Tudor Vladimirescu formulated "a minimum programme", demanding only a legitimate regime approved by the sultan (and not national independence – the "maximum" programme not yet imagined at that time) (p. 65). Numerous academic studies have illustrated the fascinating ambiguities in the process of consolidating political programmes in-between social and national emancipation as well as national identities in Bessarabia in 1917-1918. The textbook forsakes this perfect example for the fluidity of history by making social reform programmes an subsidiary of national liberation and by postulating Romanian-ness, although all political documents quoted in the textbook refer to "Moldovans". This fact does not imply that the elites *were* Moldovans, but at least they did *not yet* consider themselves Romanians (pp. 138-152).

Other textbooks like the 7th-grade textbook[22] follow a completely different approach by explaining the structural causes and historical context of events and processes rather than to judge them by their contribution to future Romanian nation unification. Demir and Emil Dragnev highlight alliances between Romanian rulers and neighbours, including Russia, as well as the current constellation between the European powers determining to a large extent power politics in the Balkans in the framework of the Eastern Question. Typically, an explanatory approach leaves little room for normative statements and requires an integral approach of national and European history. In an interesting contrast to the textbook above, the Horea uprising is defined as motivated by subsistence despair and grief concerning the privileges of the noblemen – not as a national uprising *avant la lettre* (p.61). Tudor Vladimirescu's programme is interpreted as an end to Fanariot rule, although the original phrase "that the state be Romanian" could easily be included in a national argument (p. 80). In the end, the explanation of tsarist rule in Bessarabia is structural and matter-of-fact, neither reducing it to Russification nor concealing the negative trend of economic development (pp. 130-134).

A typical litmus test in historical consciousness with respect to national history is Mihai Viteazul and his unification of the three principalities in 1599-1600. There is no denying that his motives were rooted in personal ambition and military strategy rather than nationalism. Nevertheless, his military feat has become a symbol for the unity of the Romanian lands. Whereas the 4th-grade textbook[23] explains both his motives – to safeguard the independence of the principalities against Ottoman hegemony – and a retrospective assessment of Mihai, who "entered history as the first unifier of the Romanians in one state" (p. 68).

3c. Contemporary History

The National Interest

With a meta-historical "national interest" and national rights as a normative guide, *explaining* the motives and visions behind political actions is replaced by *evaluating* the actions themselves retrospectively in terms of national interest – an a-historical approach. Darker sides of national history are "excused", whitewashed or concealed. Thus, in contemporary

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[22] Dragnev, D. and E. Dragnev (2000). <u>Istoria moderna a Romanilor.- Manual pentru clasa a VII-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[23] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). <u>File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

history, Antonescu's military campaign against the USSR is considered legitimate until the Dniestr was reached and Bessarabia had been liberated. The continued participation in Hitler's war had dire consequences, but the question, whether it would have been possible to opt out at that stage, is not raised at all. Such a question would have confronted the students with the complexities, uncertainties and constraints of international politics and warfare (pp. 70-72).[24] Similarly, Nicolae Ceausescu's (and Gheorghiu-Dej's) autonomous foreign policy of the 1960s and 1970s finds approval in terms of the national interest, although their overall regime is characterised as ""totalitarian-communist" (pp. 92-100). Conversely, the 4th-grade booklet[25] *explains* Romania's strategy in the Second World War: Romania sides with Germany to liberate Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and, once it became obvious Germany was losing the war, joined the Allies (p. 108). Even for the youngest pupils, this booklet does not whitewash the dark sides of national history with some candid pictures and phrases on the deportations of 1949 and the famine of 1947: "tragic pages in the history of our people" (p. 108).

Along similar lines, Vizer's textbook[26] defines the "glorious period" of the Marea Unire as the apex of history – the "integration of the nation in a Romanian unitary national state." (p. 5) Thus, the author refers to a "return to normal life after 1989" (p. 3), although the concept of a "return to normalcy" is in more than one respect a-historical. All preceding and later events are matched against that norm. The stated intention to present an "objective" view of history is not understood as at odds with the equally adamant "natural right … of the nation" or "history as the book to learn about national dignity and the most efficient weapon for the defence of national existence of a nation." (p. 4) Conversely, Soviet historians have "focussed on negative aspects of life, while completely ignoring the objective development of the country." (p. 29) Consequently, no aspect of history escapes the national-Romanian perspective – be it culture, science or economics. Despite the fact, however, that the existence of Romanians living beyond the border of even Greater Romania is highlighted in the beginning of the book, the issue of national re-unification is not raised in its concluding chapters. The negative opinion on the advance of Romanian soldiers beyond the Dnestr in 1941 implies that for Boris Vizer this river constitutes the meta-historical delimitation of the Romanian nation and state. On the other hand, he points to fact that the Romanians/Moldovans were the first inhabitants of the left bank of the Dnestr and constituted a majority of the population in the 16th-18th Centuries to explain the mass movement for a Moldovan ASSR in 1924. "Thus, even as an artificial construction with a obvious political motive and an action against Romania, the MASSR at the same time confirmed the Romanian-ness of Bessarabia and Transnistria, guaranteeing the survival of those branches of the nation." (pp. 39-40)

Obviously, the historical narrative in each History of the Romanians is based on the consolidated paradigm of Romanian national history, established in Bucharest since the late 19th Century. Whereas the multi-volume textbook series *Istoria Romanilor* merely adds sections on Bessarabia and the Moldovan ASSR/SSR in the respective chronological chapters, the textbook by Palade and Sarov[27] was obviously written anew from a Chisinau rather than a Bucharest perspective. Whereas it may seem fair to devote a larger part of the textbook to

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[24] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.
[25] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.
[26] Vizer, B. (1997). Istoria contemporana a Romanilor. Materiale pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.
[27] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.

"Moldova", 20th-Century Romanian foreign policy is thus unjustly reduced to Soviet-Romanian relations and the Bessarabian Question.

The national focus also results in a one-dimensional interpretation of complex processes. Thus, the History of the Romanians' reading of communist repression in the Moldovan ASSR is almost exclusively national: a positive effect for the national language is attributed to the ASSR until the Cyrillic script was re-introduced in 1938. By comparison, Stalinist purges almost seem of secondary importance (pp. 53-56).[28] Similarly, the textbook on the contemporary history of the Romanians[29] is mainly preoccupied with statehood-related issues of Romanian domestic politics and foreign policy. Only some 30 (out of 180) pages deal with socio-economic development, culture and science. Even in these chapters and sections, the role of the state predominates with no portrayal of the daily life in the cities and villages. Whereas the 9th grade textbook provides more space for socio-economic and cultural developments, the focus on political decision-making remains the same.[30]

The synthesis on the history of Moldova[31] presents a contrasting version of history, but using the same nation-driven approach. Thus, the emergence of a Moldovan national movement becomes a spontaneous process that merely required some protection and support from the political (Russian and Soviet) authorities. Thus, in Stati's narrative, Moldovanism with the "Moldovaphiles" of the mid 19th Century and the Moldovan Society of Bessarabia of 1905 clearly predates the Soviet or Comintern "invention of the Moldovan nation" (not mentioned in this study). The February Revolution created the favourable circumstances for Moldovan national self-determination. Stati correctly notes that right until the October Revolution it was utterly unclear who held power in Chisinau. Thus, like his opponents arguing the case of a movement towards unification with Romania in 1917-1918 and with so many competing organisations, sources and documents suggesting a Moldovan national movement (on both sides of the Dnestr) are abundant. (pp. 258-312) The Romanian intervention is highlighted ("occupation," "act of aggression," "against the will of the people" (pp. 298, 300)), whereas the chaos produced by warfare and the dissolution of political authority is played down. Even the paltry "spontaneous" local movements for the creation of the Moldovan ASSR in 1924 and the Moldovan SSR 1940 are accepted at face value and without reference to any overriding strategic interests. Forced collectivisation, the Gulag, deportations and the famine of 1946-1947 are marginalised as a "tragic interlude" (p. 364) by the assumed socio-economic progress under Soviet rule. (pp. 325-331; 343-348) Soviet nationalities and language policy as well as an explanation for the partitioning of Bessarabia and Transdniestria between Ukraine and Moldovan SSR in 1940 are conspicuously missing. In sum, Stati's partisan views on Moldovan nationhood, Romanian policies and his marginalisation of Stalinist terror make his synthesis largely congruent with traditional Soviet histories of Moldova: Only the myth of the communist take-over in Chisinau on New Year's day 1918 is missing. The existence of a secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is no longer denied, but any causal connection between the pact and the re-annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina one year later remains a taboo. Stati also argues that since 1951 no one has seriously argued that Moldovan and Romanian are two distinct languages. (p. 365)

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Scurtu, I., I. Siscanu, et al. (2001). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Perioda contemporana. manual pentru clasa a XII-a</u>. Chisinau, Prut International.
[30] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a</u>. Chisinau, Cartdidact.
[31] Stati, V. (2002). <u>Istoria Moldovei</u>. Chisinau, Vivar-Editor.

Structural and Comparative Frameworks

Thus, separate textbooks on national history (be it state or nation-based) tend to obscure wider, structural developments and contemporary frameworks and tend to draw an imaginary line between the *own* nation and/or state, on the one hand, and external (usually negative) influences and powers, on the other hand. Correspondingly, the congruent textbooks on world history tend to leave out Moldova and/or Romania in a highly artificial manner. Nazaria's textbook[32] prefers a positive account of national history. The author describes the phenomena of totalitarianism of the right and the left in Europe in great detail. He excluded Romania (and partly Hungary) by not mentioning Romanian authoritarianism, Antonescu and the Iron Guard (whereas Horthy is listed) and by claiming that in Romania and Hungary "the democratic parties were not discredited by co-operation with fascism", but excelled "in passive resistance during World War II" (p. 38).

Similarly, the section on "totalitarian-communist" regimes in Eastern Europe highlights Tito and Jaruzelski, but bypasses Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceausescu, who is later mentioned as a "totalitarian regime distorting the Romanian economy" (pp. 38, 57). In line with the standard view on Romanian national history in the past, Romania's participation in Hitler's war against the USSR is not mentioned with a single word, but the toppling of the Antonescu regime and the declaration of war against Germany on 23 August 1944 are highlighted with the positive consequences of saving the lives of many soldiers and civilians (p. 67). The meta-historical "mission" of own nation also allows for a moral distinction between Hungary's 1940 "participation in the dismemberment of Romania" and Romania's 1914 "liberation of national territory under foreign dominance (pp. 57, 61).

The exclusive focus on one nation and/or state obscures much of the Europe-wide structural trends in which the Romanian and/or Moldovan case is embedded: This is particularly obvious in contemporary history. Consequently, outside the European context, the Romanian dilemma of defending the post-Versailles territorial acquisitions in an international system, characterised by the rise of communism on the one hand and fascism on the other hand, seems to be a singular case rather than a dilemma shared by most East European states. The same applies to the decision by the Kotovsky group to push for a Moldovan Soviet Republic in 1924 – part of a much wider trend to create ASSR's all over the Soviet Union (pp. 29-36; 47-51). Outside this context, the no-doubt controversial thesis of Antonescu's "*moderately* authoritarian regime" becomes an arbitrary statement (p. 68).[33]

Historical Consciousness

Palade and Sarov note that after, 1918, "the Church contributed to the return of the population of the province (of Bessarabia) to Romanian spiritual life and national cultural values" (p. 45).[34] Statements of this kind assume the existence of a meta-historically defined set of national values. Identification *of* the nation and *with* the nation, however, is a deeply historical process. Considerable evidence suggests that, for most of the Bessarabian population prior to 1918, nationality may not have been a relevant or visible identity in daily life or consciousness. For pupils to learn to think of nationality as a historical category rather than an

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[32] Nazaria, S. (2001). Istoria universala. Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a. Chisinau, Civitas.
[33] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.
[34] Ibid.

eternal identity or to imagine village life prior to the nation-state may truly stimulate their historical consciousness.

4. POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

Fair Representation of Domestic Minorities

The larger, but pre-defined territory of the Romanian nation-state in its 1918, post-*Marea Unire* borders, leaves virtually no role for ethnic minorities. In the History of the Romanians, the entire modern period passes without any mention at religious, ethnic or other minorities in the Old Kingdom or the new provinces of 1918, as if to prove the pamphlet by Nicolae Iorga: "There is no field, no monument, no village in Bessarabia that is not ours – Romanian by blood, by pride, by intention" (p. 134).[35] In the volume on contemporary history, [36] the introduction refers to the objective of non-discriminatory view of history, but also goes on record the "guest status" of national minorities in the Romanian state (p. 4). Although Romania faced major challenges integrating new regions and substantial minorities in the interwar period, the relevant chapters on post-1918 integration fails to mention any minorities or minority policies apart from "constitutionally guaranteed citizens' rights for all inhabitants irrespective of ethnic origin". (p. 7)

Some statements on Romanian, regional elites are very condescending: "As the political elite of that province (Bessarabia) had been trained in Russian schools and was not acquainted with modern Romanian legislation, officials from the Old Kingdom were sent in to assure the functioning of the administrative apparatus" (p. 6). An experimental textbook on the same period[37] completely ignores the issue of ethnic minorities in interwar Romania. The integration of the new territories and populations (with 28% minorities overall and 44% in Bessarabia) is considered done with 1925 administrative unification. The fact that the strong presence of other nationalities in Bessarabia was – as the textbook underlines – (partly) to be blamed on "tsarist policies of colonisation and alienation" does not make the integration problem less real or valid (p. 19). Along the same lines, the "royal dictatorship" as well as the regime of Marshall Antonescu and the Iron Guard are seen as a setback for Romanian democracy, but the consequences for the Jews and other minority groups are omitted, including WWII deportations to Transdniestria (pp. 67-73). (In another textbook, Vizer[38] even praises Romanian economic and administrative policies in Transnistria (pp. 69-70)) The chapter on culture, arts and sciences mentions dozens of remarkable personalities, but none of them a non-Romanian, which gives students the impression that no minority scholar or artist contributed substantially to cultural life in interwar Romania (pp. 37-46). Even the booklet for the 4th grade, usually very sensitive on this issue, summarises the subjects of the wandering of peoples in the early Middle Ages as "barbarians" (p.51).[39] Typically, in a textbook on

[35] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a . Chisinau, Stiinta.
[36] Scurtu, I., I. Siscanu, et al. (2001). Istoria Romanilor. Perioda contemporana. manual pentru clasa a XII-a . Chisinau, Prut International.
[37] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.
[38] Vizer, B. (1997). Istoria contemporana a Romanilor. Materiale pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.
[39] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a . Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

medieval history,[40] the listing of "wandering peoples" passing through "Romanian territory" in the Dark Ages appears under the heading "Medieval migrations and their impact on the Romanians" (p. 76-77.) Evidently, the impact was never positive and these peoples are granted not relevance except for their impact on the on-going process of Romanian nation and state building.

With obvious awareness of the relevancy of history for societal consolidation and political stabilisation, the authors of the 7th-grade textbook[41] open their text with a principled statement underlining that the other nationalities that came to Moldova in the 19th century are part of national history and contributed their share to the prosperity of the common territory (p. 5). In the actual text, however, minorities are extremely thin on the ground.

Conversely, in the 1997 textbook on the History of the Romanians,[42] the role of the minorities is always negative in political matters and virtually non-existent in culture, science and arts. Thus, the rural-urban divide in post-1918 Romania and its ethnic dimension are not analysed as a structural issue and a policy agenda, but scorned for their "negative consequences for societal life" (p. 8), while "Romanian-ness" was preserved in the villages. The non-indigenous population groups were those who participated in "subversive movements," fell for left-extremist influences from Russia in 1917. The overall impression is not one of multi-culturality. The consistent message is that minorities are problematic.

Vasile Stati's study[43] - despite the fact that it is a history of Moldova, not of the Moldovans - focuses the ethnic Moldovans and fails to give due attention (or even instrumentalise) the multiethnic character of the Moldovan Republic. The respective chapters on Moldovan culture refer exclusively to Moldovan language and culture – not only in contrast to Romanian, but also without attention for the cultural contributions of minorities. (pp. 194-208; 250-257)

Incendiary and Disparaging Statements

The Nazaria textbook on contemporary history excels in strongly partisan and suggestive questions on his obviously disliked Moldovan fatherland. Whereas the textbook on world history hardly refers to Moldova and/or Romania in the general text, framed texts on Moldova raise questions such as: "Suggest a way out of the economic crisis for the Republic of Moldova based on the Japanese experience". "What functions of the Moldovan political system are weakly developed and generate tensions in society?" Do you advocate further participation of Moldova in the framework of the CIS?" "What are Moldova's perspectives for co-operation with the Council of Europe?" (pp. 9, 20, 88, 94).[44]

Within the same History of the Romanians paradigm, another textbook carefully avoids direct political statements concerning post-1989 developments in Moldova, describing independence and subsequent politics in a matter-of-fact style, yet from a distinct national perspective. Thus, the "national awakening" of the Moldovans and the efforts to have

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[40]   Dragnev, E., V. Paslariuc, et al. (2001). Istoria universala. Epoca antica si medievala. Manual pentru clasa a X-a. Chisinau, Civitas.
[41]   Dragnev, D. and E. Dragnev (2000). Istoria moderna a Romanilor.- Manual pentru clasa a VII-a . Chisinau, Stiinta.
[42]   Vizer, B. (1997). Istoria contemporana a Romanilor. Materiale pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.
[43]   Stati, V. (2002). Istoria Moldovei. Chisinau, Vivar-Editor.
[44]   Nazaria, S. (2001). Istoria universala. Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a. Chisinau, Civitas.

Romanian declared the state language are highlighted without incendiary statements on Moldovan statehood, CIS membership or the Dniestr conflict (pp. 120-127). The separate chapter on Romanians living beyond the borders of Romania and Moldova – in line with the concept of the textbook – may be less welcome in Kyiv (pp. 128-129).[45]

The 1997 textbook[46] reserves some non-academic epithets for the actions of neighbouring states, for example the "perfidious attitude of the Soviet Union versus Romania" or "resistance under diabolic conditions" (pp. 66-68, 77) rather than to analyse and explain historical constellations and choices, and leaving moral judgements to the readers. The same, however, applies to the lengthy presentation of clearly partisan and condemning views by Stati[47] on the Romanian incorporation of   Bessarabia in 1918 and his condemnation of "arrogant, frontist-authoritarian" policies of the ruling Popular front in the Gagaus crisis of 1990. (pp. 259-331; 378).

Fair Representation of other States and Nations

"Our people" explicitly refers to an ethnic concept of the nation. The ethnic concept of the nation implies that minorities are treated in a separate chapter, strongly indicating to the pupils that they were not an integral part of society. Similarly, the separate chapters on the history of Moldova (i.e. Bessarabia, excluding Transdniestria) also imply segregation between the Old Kingdom (Regat) and the periphery. Conversely, an ethnic concept of national history also implies that a textbook should encompass all Romanians, not only those in Romania and Moldova, but also those living beyond the borders, for example in the Balkans or Ukraine. The consequence is a strange imbalance, excluding the minority community living right in the centre from national history butincluding diaspora communities of the nation with only minimal links and relevance for national history. The nation or the state as a meta-historical norm that is essentially "good" implies that all negative phenomena throughout history have to be ascribed to external, "foreign" influences.

The Vizer textbook[48] is clearly based on an ethnic concept of the nation – with a strong preference for Romania over the "second Romanian nation-state" of Moldova. Thus, a number of critical questions and issues of analysis are raised for Moldova, but not for Romania, even though both states are discussed in parallel (sub)chapters. The Moldovan state "failed to live up to the expectations of the populace" (p. 3) Like in some other textbooks, the issue of national minorities appears to end in Romanian history with the successful completion of territorial administrative reform in 1925. In an interesting contrast to the meta-historical concept of national rights, the Romanian Communist Party's 1924 championing of national self-determination for national minorities in Romania is condemned as "unconstitutional." (p. 15) Eventually, "patriotic rightist extremism" was merely a reaction to leftist extremism striving to dismember the state. Meanwhile, resistance movements against totalitarian regimes seem to have consisted of Romanians only. Additionally, the relations with the Tsarist and later Soviet empire are in one sweeping judgement in the introduction disqualified as "a negative side to the contemporary and, for that matter, modern history of the Romanians." (p. 3)

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[45]   Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.
[46]   Vizer, B. (1997). Istoria contemporana a Romanilor. Materiale pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.
[47]   Stati, V. (2002). Istoria Moldovei. Chisinau, Vivar-Editor.
[48]   Vizer, B. (1997). Istoria contemporana a Romanilor. Materiale pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.

The strict focus on the retro-projected territory of the current state or nation is demonstrated most vividly by the maps used in the textbooks: neighbouring territories and states beyond the virtual borders of "Romanian space" have at best some rivers, but rarely any cities or whatever the maps display (economic activities, archaeological sites, etc.).

In a conscious effort to counter these tendencies, the 4th-grade textbook[49] opens with a *tour d'horizon* illustrating that theirs are nations, cultures and states among many others. The booklet ends with a concretisation of national culture and customs with Romanian and Japanese examples (pp. 30-34; 130-134).

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5. DIDACTICAL ASSESSMENT

The Mind, Not the Memory

The 12th class textbook by Sergiu Nazaria[51] constitutes a positive exception to the usual text-oriented chronological presentation of history. In order to offer students' broader insights rather than chronological lists of facts, contemporary world history is offered in 10 varied thematic chapters (for example on warfare, international relations, economic development, de-colonisation). Despite the use of text frames, questions as well as excellent condensed chronologies and glossaries, the layout is dominated by black-and-white text. Although the book sets itself apart from traditional eulogies on technological, scientific and economic progress with a chapter on global problems (overpopulation, the exploitation of nature, etc.), the whole issue of European integration is strangely missing, even in the chapter on post-WWII international organisations (pp. 93-96). The welcome chapter on daily life remains, alas, strongly marked by state policies and (not unlike the rest of the book) highlights the East-West divide of the Cold War, for example by contrasting a picture of a prosperous German village on the left page to a ominous representation of the Gulag on the right page (pp. 54-55).

The experimental 1998 textbook on the contemporary period[52] introduces excerpts from original historical documents to stimulate pupils to develop an opinion of their own and to "debate controversial themes from Romanian history" (pp. 3-4). Eventually, however, the highly selective excerpts underpin the Romanian position in issues where competing political views existed or still exist. In the interwar Soviet-Romanian dispute, the diplomat Nicolae

[49] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.
[50] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.
[51] Nazaria, S. (2001). Istoria universala. Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a. Chisinau, Civitas.
[52] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.

Titulescu collected all treaties that could be read as an explicit or an implicit Soviet recognition of Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia. A short excerpt from this political pamphlet called "Bessarabia – Romanian land" cannot be an open, neutral approach to a controversial issue, allowing the student a critical assessment of a historical situation (p. 35). Similarly, a collection of quotes from Scarlat Callimachi, Friedrich Engels and others concerning the 1812 annexation is not an invitation to a historical reflection (p. 55).[53]

Training critical minds implies not to imbue pupils with dogmatic statements implying that history allows only one perspective, one interpretation and one truth. Multi-perspectivity means that for example every well-argued periodisation is permissible as long as it serves the perspective of the historian. Thus, author's decision to take 1914 as the beginning of contemporary history does not invalidate another historian's preference for 1848 or, for that matter, 1917 (p. 3): In retrospect, for the current Moldova, 1917 in retrospect constitutes a more obvious caesura than 1918 or 1848.[54]

An Open, Multi-Perspective Approach

Indignation concerning past ideology-driven distortions of history should not be understood as an excuse to claim objectivity. Diverging perspectives are at the heart of academic research and professionalisation of the debate is the key. Conversely, Palade and Sarov inform their students of "controversial discussions caused especially by falsifications, erroneous views, a ban on the study of archival documents and communist ideologisation typical of historical research and publications in the 1950s -1980s. Therefore, the study of documents and literature will lead us to some objective concepts for the contemporary period" (p. 4).

A Non-Academic, Student-Oriented Approach

Despite substantial differences in the quality and variety of didactical instruments used in the textbooks in this assessment, essentially each textbook is based on a standard *academic* representation of history with some *didactical* concessions for pupils. Only the thematic textbook for the 12th grade[55] breaks with this dominant tradition. Nevertheless, a comparison in terms of didactical tools used between the oldest 1997 textbook in the sample and more recent textbooks (published with more financial resources) reveals a positive trend. The 1997 textbook[56] in black-and-white had a minimal number of illustrations and includes only some excerpts from historical documents and questions that require for a repetition of (subjective) statements from the previous text.

Textbooks may be excessively (and unnecessarily) demanding for students in more than one respect.

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[53] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[54] Nazaria, S. (2001). Istoria universala. Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a. Chisinau, Civitas.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Vizer

Terminology: As textbooks are often written by academics, the text tends to refer to terms and terminology that is not self-evident for students in primary and secondary school, for example describing depicted pottery as "zoo-morphous" and "antropo-morphous" (p. 7) is just one example of many.[57]

Timelines dividing history into abstract categories rather than locating concrete events within longer periods require a high level of historical awareness and the capability to think in abstract terms. Many timelines add little to the students' understanding of historical periods or connections, for example a timeline with the terms of office for various Bessarabian governors (p. 56).[58] Conversely, the simple timelines in the 4th-grade textbook[59] help pupils to locate specific events in the broader historical framework.

Illustrations are a useful tool to appeal to the imagination and historical consciousness of pupils and to prevent a textbook from becoming to text-oriented. Unfortunately, the author of a text-oriented book explicitly decided to select almost exclusively "remarkable personalities, who played a key role in history" (p. 4).[60] Although some of the faces are worth remembering, they are seldom explicitly linked to the text. In most textbooks, the pictures are too small and of to poor quality to allow the student to get empathy for a historical situation, all the more so as most pictures are of famous personalities rather than events or daily life. A 2002 textbook[61] uses illustrations much more productively: larger pictures of historical events and scenes as well as daily life in different periods are explained and annotated in more detail. One of the chapters for synthesis and evaluation offers an excellent guide on how to interpret a map with concrete examples (p. 119). Similarly, the Dragnev textbook[62] uses drawings of village life and noble mansions to give an impression of social relations in the 18th Century. Unfortunately, large numbers of uninteresting small black-and-white picture are more common. It is quite obvious that the illustrations are chosen by academics and thus reflect their preferences rather than the educational needs of the pupils. The result is a multitude of complex illustrations: for example a table with production figures for oil, coal, steel and iron in the interwar period (p. 25)[63] or detailed graphs with the layout of major battles - quite superfluous and out of place in a 4th-grade textbook (p. 71).[64]

Not surprisingly, the first history textbook for 4th-grade pupils[65] introduces the concept of history with great care, addresses issue such as historical sources, archaeological findings and historical symbols. By moving from personal history to family history to the history of one's native city, the textbook involves the pupils and makes them aware of the presence of history today (pp. 10-33). The actual historical narrative in the book also makes excellent use of old photographs, monuments and architecture to involve the pupils – an example worth imitating

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[57] Parasca, P., I. Negrei, et al. (2002). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Epoca antica si cea medievala. Manual pentru clasa a 10-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[58] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[59] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). <u>File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

[60] Nazaria, S. (2001). <u>Istoria universala. Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a</u>. Chisinau, Civitas.

[61] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[62] Dragnev, D. and E. Dragnev (2000). <u>Istoria moderna a Romanilor.- Manual pentru clasa a VII-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[63] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). <u>Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a</u>. Chisinau, Cartdidact.

[64] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). <u>File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a</u>. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

[65] Ibid.

on a more advanced level for the higher grades. A handful of historical personalities (Cantemir, Cuza, etc.) are used to make a certain period tangible and understandable.

Questions: In order really to appeal to the mind rather than to the memory of the student, questions have to be open questions referring to concrete issues related to the text. Although most textbooks use questions for "self-evaluation", they often refer to rather abstract structural developments beyond the intellectual grasp of the average student, who is thus forced to repeat from the text: "Evaluate the foreign policy of Matei Basarab" or "Characterise the relations between Moldavia and Wallachia in the 1730s-1750s" (pp. 10, 13).[66] Most questions refer to memorised historical facts of sometimes doubtful relevance for historical insight.

Other questions aim at the repetition of a subjective moral judgement: "Characterise the Soviet regime in Bessarabia, 1940-1941?" or "What caused the change in Romanian foreign policy, 1939-1941?" (p. 66).[67] Evidently, the objective of such questions certainly is not the training of critical minds. Rather than asking students to formulate explanations and historical connections, most questions aim at value judgements: "List negative and positive effects of Habsburg dominion in Transylvania (p. 27) or "Prove the expansionist character of the policies of tsarist Russia (p. 55) or "Consider whether the choice for Carol I on the Romanian throne produced progress and stability for the country" (p. 109).[68] Althrough written for much younger pupils, the Cerbusca textbook[69] offers open questions and tasks appealing to the mind rather than the memory of the pupils – comparing maps from different periods or assigning persons and events to periods (pp. 84-87).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The three sets of recommendations below relate to the three dimensions of textbooks:

Historical recommendations: The essential stumbling block for a qualitative improvement in the historical dimension of history teaching is the meta-historical predefined dominance of a nation or state, superimposed on history. In view of the current political situation and the traditions in academic and didactical history writing, a European-style integrated history (i.e. integration of national and world history) is a long-term objective. Regional history might be an appropriate intermediate step and a qualitative shift away from a strictly national (state or nation oriented) concept of history with all its diachronical and synchronic deficits. Depending on the period and topic under discussion, experts who do not agree on interpretations might agree on the necessary regional framework for the pupils' understanding. The flexibility of such a regional framework (that may be as large as Europe in some cases) annuls the inherent rigidity of national history. Reserving space for the "bigger picture" also implies being more selective in the number of topics to include in a textbook. Most likely, once the subjective retro-projection of nation and state is alleviated, a number of

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[66] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[67] Palade, G. and I. Sarov (1998). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca contemporana. Manual experimental pentru clasa a IX-a. Chisinau, Cartdidact.. See also the examples from Nazaria, S. (2001). Istoria universala. Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a. Chisinau, Civitas.

[68] Chicus, N., N. Ciubotaru, et al. (2002). Istoria Romanilor. Epoca moderna. Manual pentru clasa a 11-a. Chisinau, Stiinta.

[69] Cerbusca, P., V. Haheu, et al. (1999). File din Istoria Romanilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a. Chisinau, Stiinta-Cartier.

topics will lose their relevancy in a historical narrative. Overall, explaining historical constellations should replace a predefined description of historical processes and collective categories like nation or class should be scrutinised and placed in the appropriate historical context.

In order to make students aware of the links between views of history and the historian's political and societal context, historical legends or contrasting interpretations could be inserted in textbooks. In both cases a multi-perspective framework is desirable. Selective original sources, biased historians' quotes without context and subjective questions pointing all in one direction should be eliminated. The stimulate empathy with history, the highlighting of specific persons and ideas or portrayals in daily-life may be much more productive than a consolidated political history.

Political recommendations: In view of the long tradition to the contrary, textbook authors should make a conscious effort to demonstrate that both neighbouring countries and domestic minorities hold an equal share to history. The positive sides of co-operation and interaction should be included in each textbook. Therefore, structural political and economic trends merit more attention in contrast to confrontational international politics. Textbook authors should refrain from incendiary statements related to current conflicts, both in the historical sections and in the contemporary sections of the text. In might, therefore, be worth considering to avoid the *current* controversial issues of statehood and nationhood in the final chapters of a history book.

Didactical recommendations: The key recommendation that history teaching should appeal to the intellect and not to the memory of the pupils requires a revision of the production process for a textbook: Teachers should to be involved from the beginning, and for all grades, didactical consideration should be the basis for the textbook, not academic desiderata in terms of argumentation and content. Correspondingly, the balance between basic text for passive reading and active educational tools should be changed to enhance the involvement of the pupils with historical subjects. An explanatory approach (instead of a subjective approach) opens a much wider scope for open, exploratory questions and tasks. Likewise, tools such as timelines, glossaries and illustrations should aim at empathy and active learning instead of a maximised transfer of historical information.

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