

## DEMOCRACY (DIS)CONNECTED - DISCOURSES OF DEMOCRACY AND OF THE INTER-WAR PERIOD AS (MIS)GUIDING LIGHTS IN THE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND ROMANIA.

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### *Abstract*

*Debates about what societies should remember abound; usually these involve somewhat traumatic histories. However, for the relatively young democracies of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the question of how democracy and societal experience with it are remembered might prove important for the future. This article will analyse the history textbooks of Romania and the Republic Moldova according to their representation of the inter-war period, which amounts, arguably, to the only “tradition” for Romanian and Moldovan democracy. This article will thus attempt to uncover the implicit meaning and historicization of democracy in Romania and the Republic of Moldova.*

### *1. Introduction*

Remembering and forgetting are both vital activities of the individual and, arguably, the societal psyche (if something of the like exists). Usually, they are discussed in relation to highly

traumatic times where questions of victimhood, guilt and suffering are involved. Much of the literature on remembering is connected to WWII and the holocaust or is referring to the broader logic of history politics (*Geschichtspolitik*), propaganda and the nation-state. Now, historians have begun looking at how Communism is remembered in post-socialist societies, but this period of time perhaps still figures within the negative and traumatic paradigm.<sup>1</sup> Yet, what about times and contexts which are neither of these? Time and aspects, which are neither negative or national? What about the tradition, memories and narrative of democracy? How do democratic societies remember their path towards and their experience with democracy?

As a typical case for memory questions in relation to democracy, the Weimar

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Andreas Helmedach (ed.) *Die Zeit des Sozialismus in deutschen und tschechischen Schulgeschichtsbüchern/ The socialist period in German and Czech history textbooks* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung: 2004 [Internationale Schulbuchforschung/International Textbook research 4 (2004)]; Catalina Mihalache. “Communism in post-Communist history textbooks. What to be remembered?” *Xenopoliana* 2-4/XI (2003): 123-142.

Republic assumes a special role in German history. As the German historian Hagen Schulze writes in the introduction to his history of Weimar that the history of the Weimar republic will always to some extent be a political history.<sup>2</sup> The prism is clear: How could German democracy fail? How was National Socialism possible? How was, then, Auschwitz possible? Clearly, Greater Romania is not Weimar Germany. Yet, looking back the history of Romanian democracy might as well offer some insights. But what exactly are we to learn from it? Edward H. Carr writes that: “[t]he function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the interrelation between them.”<sup>3</sup> Although, some historians noted, there has been a tendency to learn the “wrong” lessons from history.<sup>4</sup>

That the inter-war period is something of a critical time in the history of the Romanian and the Moldovan state becomes constantly clear again. It does not need such statements as that of Moldovan Premier Voronin (in 2005) that in fact Basarabia was under “Romanian occupation” when it

belonged to Greater Romania.<sup>5</sup> Regardless how we view this time in history, it is proposed here that it is a crucial time, because it establishes and in fact is *the* “tradition” for present-day Romanian and Moldovan democracy. The inter-war years were, arguably, the first and only experiment in democracy (in the Western style) here before the revolutions of 1989 and 1991. There are some societal actors which suggest a clear continuation of inter-war democracy in the time after 1989/1991; indeed, in the Moldovan context we find actors which set the interwar years in some way parallel to the time after 1991: they use it as a guiding light, describing what is an attainable goal for Moldovan society. While history is much more politicized in the Republic of Moldova than it is in Romania, there are also some aspects connected to inter-war history like the “Antonescu cult” or the discussions surrounding the Romanian holocaust which warrant special attention to the Romanian experiment in democracy just the same.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hagen Schulze, *Weimar. Deutschland 1917-1933* (Berlin et al.: Siedler/BTB 2000), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Edward H. Carr, *What is History? 2nd ed.* (London et al.: Penguin 1990), 68.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the discussion in Evans, Richard J. *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 2000).

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<sup>5</sup> “Ce final va avea epidemia aceasta de revolutii? (Fragmente dintr-un interviu cu Vladimir Voronin)” *Contrafort* 1-2 (ianuarie-februarie 2005). [<http://www.contrafort.md/2005/123-124/795.html>]; cf. “Nu asteptam un raspuns imediat din partea presedintelui Putin (Interviu cu Traian Basescu)” *Revista 22* 781 (februarie-martie 2005). [<http://www.revista22.ro/html/index.php?nr=2005-02-25&art=1540>].

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mariana Hausleitner, „Das Ende des Antonescu-Kultes? Zum Verhältnis von

Romanian and Moldovan history textbooks are analysed in relation to their representation of inter-war history as well as the interpretations and connections they offer. The role of history textbooks and history teaching in general as a transmitter and identifier of tradition, morality and identity is beyond question. A specific focus will be given to the narrative setting as well as the narrative role the inter-war period assumes; it will not focus on factual errors or “misrepresentations”. The article will introduce the textbook situation with some general background remarks on their role in the two societies. The analysis itself will start with the discourse of the Romanian textbooks and then proceed to the periphery: the Republic of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova is a special case in many regards; here two discourses will be discussed: the Romanianist and the Moldovanist one.<sup>7</sup>

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Geschichte und Politik in Rumänien nach 1990,“ *Südosteuropa* 7-9/51 (2002), 412-430; Vladimir Solonari, „Review of Achim and Iordache’s *România si Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului*,” *East European Politics and Societies* 2/20 (2006), 373-377.

<sup>7</sup> On the general developments in the Republic of Moldova and the identity conflict cf. Wim P. van Meurs. “Carving a Moldavian identity out of history”, *Nationalities Papers* 1 (1998): 39-56; Wim P. van Meurs. “Moldova – nationale Identität als politisches Programm”, *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 4-5 (2003): 31-43; Stefan Ihrig, *Wer sind die Moldawier? Rumänismus und Moldowanismus in Historiographie* und

It will be analysed, if the inter-war period is really a guiding light, i.e. if this period of time is contextualised as the only previous time of democracy and thus its shortcoming, faults and successes are appreciated. Accordingly, it will also be analysed, what the guiding qualities are, i.e. what the content of “Romanian democracy” is in this context - what does democracy as a *telos* mean? The deficiencies and shortcomings of Romanian inter-war democracy have been analysed elsewhere and are well documented;<sup>8</sup> it is not the aim of this analysis to measure discourse against some “historical reality”. Instead, an analytical re-construction of the time and the connected concepts is attempted - in its own right and with its internal implications.

## *2. History, historiography and the significance of the past in the Republic of Moldova and Romania*

If we analytically group Romania and the Republic of Moldova together, the inter-war period enters quite different historiographical and political contexts. In Romania, questions about national

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Geschichtsschulbüchern der Republik Moldova, 1991-2006. (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag: in print) [Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society].

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the literature cited elsewhere in this article cf.: Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismus in Rumänien (1930 - 1940): Demokratie im autoritären Umfeld*, (München: Oldenbourg, 1997).

dignity, perhaps of resistance to a deconstruction of national historical truths became obvious in the so-called Mitu-controversy evolving around the experimentally textbook authored by Sorin Mitu.<sup>9</sup> Here the influence of nationalism theory was harshly rejected by the critics, who defended an essentialist reading of the nation's history. While this conflict can be labelled "progressive vs. conservative", the historical background is somewhat different in Moldova. Here, we are faced with at least two opposing identity-political movements - Romanianism vs. Moldovanism - trying to shape the destiny of the state through their reading of history. Moldovanism proclaims the separateness of Moldova's ethnic Romanians as a Moldovan nation; and Romanianism claims that the ethnic Romanians are part of the wider Romanian nation, making national unification the logical consequence of their discourse.<sup>10</sup>

Although political Moldovanism has been in power since 1994, historiographical Romanianism was able to leave its imprint in the textbooks, which appeared in the time from 1996 until 2003. Hence these textbooks will be referred to as "Romanianist textbooks". Moldovanism has been remarkably unable to imprint its own historiographical world view on history teaching as well as textbooks and thus to disseminate its views through a school system. According to traditional nationalism theory, however, we would expect the political hegemonist to wield an absolute power over the education system. This cannot be explained here in detail,<sup>11</sup> but suffice it to say, that history has become one of the prime goals as well as arenas of conflict in the Republic of Moldova. Only slowly and most poignantly in 2006 has ruling Moldovanism been able

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Dan Pavel, "The textbooks scandal and rewriting history in Romania - Letter from Bucharest," *East European Politics and Societies* 14/2 (2000), 179-189; Razvan Raraianu, "National prejudices, mass media and history textbooks: The Mitu controversy" in *Nation-Building and Contested Identities - Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* ed. Balázs Trencsényi, Dragos Petrescu; Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi and Zoltán Kántor (Budapest: Regio Books; Iasi: Polirom, 2001), 93-117.

<sup>10</sup> Although some historians from Moldova have argued that espousing Romanianist discourse does not necessarily imply the

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need for unification, like Igor Casu, the logic of unification is very much inherent in their discourse as my broader analysis has shown. Igor Casu, "Some Considerations on Ethnic Identity and Nationalism in Bessarabia in the 19th – 20th Centuries" in *In memoriam professoris Mihail Muntean - Studii de istorie moderna*, ed. Valentin Tomulets (Chisinau: CE USM 2003), 253-259, here: 257; Ihrig, *Wer sind die Moldawier*.

<sup>11</sup> Stefan Ihrig, "Attainment nationalism vs. maintenance nationalism – The case of Moldova and nationalism theory", In *In Search of a Common Regional History - The Balkans and East Asia in History Textbooks* ed. Nobuhiro Shiba (Tokyo: University of Tokyo: 2006): 173-209.

to assert its power and has introduced the so-called integrated history textbooks. Although again not all of the authors or views expressed within these books are necessarily “Moldovanist”, the representation of the inter-war period follows closely the Moldovanist discourse presented in other publications, some of which were also distributed in schools for use.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever the differences might be - history seems to be important in both societies and in fact Peter Niedermüller’s analytical reading of the historians in post-Socialist countries comes to mind. He described the role of a historian in such societies as that of an archaeologist, who has to renovate, reconstruct and (re-) nationalise history from the rubbles of the communist past.<sup>13</sup> Such are the heightened responsibilities conferred upon the historian by and assumed by him in such societies; Moldova and Romania hardly seem to differ in this respect. All the more the essence of what is “restored” and what it may mean to contemporary Romanian and Moldovan societies is important. In the last resort, the inter-war period is, chronologically,

the first period of time, when pupils studying history will have the chance to see what democracy in their own society has meant in the past; where they study the history of Romanian democracy. In order to illustrate the role the interwar period plays in the various discourses, I will re-construct the presentation of it according to each of the three main discourses:

1. Romanian textbook historiography;
2. Romanianist textbook historiography
3. Moldovanist textbook historiography.<sup>14</sup>

While they have to be somewhat typologized for such a representation, attention to the details of discourse will be paid. The Romanian textbooks used are those published after 1991; in all three samples I am offering a sample analysis, paying special attention to the newest available ones.

### 3.1 Romanian textbook historiography

The Romanian textbooks reconstruct a biography of the nation that stretches back to the ethnogenesis of the Romanians. The modern nation is bound to the nation-state and thus the modern narrative begins with the foundation of the Romanian nation-state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The narrative

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<sup>12</sup> So for example Stati’s monograph: Vasile Stati, *Istoria Moldovei* (Chisinau: Vivar - Editor 2002); although government officials claim this never happened. Anton Moraru, *Stiinta istorica în contextul intereselor politice* (Chisinau: Pontos 2003), 52-53.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Niedermüller, “Zeit, Geschichte, Vergangenheit – Zur kulturellen Logik des Nationalismus im Postsozialismus,” *Historische Anthropologie* 5 (1997): 245-267, here: 253-254.

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<sup>14</sup> Only exemplary reference to textbooks will be made. For broader referencing cf. Ihrig, *Wer sind die Moldawier*.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Mihaela Selevet, Ecaterina Stanescu, Marilena Bercea, *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a X-a* (Bucuresti: Corint 2005), 36; Giurescu, Dinu C., Anisoara Budici, Mircea Stanescu, Dragos Tigau: *Istorie. Manual*

then rises to the union of 1918, which is the natural conclusion of a process which began with the union of Walachia and (Western) Moldova; while some narratives stress that union was the prime goal of the Romanians since 1848,<sup>16</sup> it is narrated with remarkably little euphoria.<sup>17</sup> Implicitly, it becomes clear that the union of 1918 was a liberation of the other Romanians as the previous times within the Hungarian and Tsarist Empires are described as “foreign occupations”.<sup>18</sup> The usual narrative further pays particular attention to how the union is presented from a legal perspective. First, it is stressed that the provinces declared independence. Only in a second step they decided in favour of union. The plebiscitary character of the decision is stressed in each case.<sup>19</sup> This micro-narrative is repeated for each case: Transylvania, the Banat, the Bukovina and Bessarabia. What goal the narratives have here, however, is

not entirely clear. We can only speculate that this is also levelled against Hungarian claims to Transylvania and possible claim to the invalidity of the declarations of union. The textbooks narrative claims that these followed closely the principle of “self-determination”. This is then, later in the narrative, used to justify why local autonomy was destroyed and a “unitary Romanian state” was created.<sup>20</sup>

One of the most striking similarities of the Romanian textbooks in relation to the inter-war period is the presentation of the minority-majority relations. Many of the textbooks feature a chapter entitled “Unity and diversity in Greater Romania” (*Unitate si diversitate în România Mare*).<sup>21</sup> Yet, both aspects - unity as well as diversity - receive almost no further qualification. Diversity is, when at all, clumsily described by such sentences relating, that there were other ethnic groups, “yet the majority of the population were ethnic Romanians.”<sup>22</sup> It seems as if “diversity” is seen as a threat and a problem that the political system somehow had to deal with. While it is probably true that ethnic and religious diversity will need different actions by a political system than a relatively homogenous society would call for,

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*pentru clasa a X-a* (Bucuresti: Editura Sigma 2005), 46.

<sup>16</sup> Selevet et al., *Istorie*, 37; Such narratives are backed up and completed with chapters on the Romanians outside the borders. Cf. Nicoleta Dumitrescu, Mihai Manea, Cristian Nita, Adrian Pascu, Aurel Trandafir, Madalina Trandafir, *Istoria Românilor. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* (Bucuresti: Humanitas 2005), 90-92.

<sup>17</sup> Giurescu et al., *Istorie*, 86; Ovidiu Bozgan, *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a 12-a* (Bucuresti: 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Dumitrescu, *Istoria. 2005*, 134.

<sup>19</sup> An explicit assumption of this: *ibid.*, 131; Bozgan, *Istorie*, 89.

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<sup>20</sup> Dumitrescu, *Istoria. 2005*, 134.

<sup>21</sup> So for example in: Dumitrescu, *Istoria. 2005*; Bozgan, *Istorie*.

<sup>22</sup> „Totusi, majoritatea populatiei era reprezentata de români: 71,9%”, Dumitrescu, *Istoria. 2005*, 134.

what “diversity” might imply and what the benefits of it may be, are not explained, not even hinted at. That in fact diversity is a “normal” aspect of every society, and that diversity exists not only in relation to ethnicity and religion but also in relation to political and moral beliefs, values, sexual orientation, economic interests etc. escapes the textbooks totally. It is all narrowed down to a clear assumption: we will need to “solve ethnic diversity” (i.e. the problems arising from it). An exemplary chapter heading for this kind of approach would be that of Bozgan’s textbook “Ethnic diversity, religious diversity and political solutions”.<sup>23</sup>

When taking a closer look of how the problems of the inter-war period are described, it becomes clear that the primary lens of the narrative is the nation. Its secondary lens is that of “minority problems”. For example when the urban-rural relationship is discussed, it is mentioned that the ethnic population ratio was “unfavourable to the Romanians”.<sup>24</sup> In the context of economic and urban life, it is remarkable, that in the Romanian textbooks we sometimes find the term “Romanianization”.<sup>25</sup> The wider implications for democracy and civic rights posed by Romanianization, which have already received the attention of a

series of publications,<sup>26</sup> and what it actually meant for the minority populations it was targeted against, are not discussed at all<sup>27</sup> - as if “Romanianization” logically derives from the “problems” posed by “diversity”.

The period in which a democracy existed is limited by most Romanian textbooks to the time up to 1938.<sup>28</sup> Afterwards a dictatorial monarchy was introduced - one textbook explains: the internal and external circumstances were difficult.<sup>29</sup> Other textbooks acknowledge that democracy in Romania was on a downhill slope in the

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<sup>23</sup> Bozgan, *Istorie*, 97.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 140, 164.

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<sup>26</sup> Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung der Bukowina – Die Durchsetzung des nationalstaatlichen Anspruchs Großrumäniens 1918-1944* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2001); Mariana Hausleitner, *Deutsche und Juden in Bessarabien 1814-1941. Zur Minderheitenpolitik Russlands und Großrumäniens* (München: IKGS, 2005); Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania - Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle 1918-1930* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> One textbook describes at lengths what the „integration“ of the provinces meant in an administrative way; yet remains very technical. Stelian Brezeanu, Adrian Cioroianu, Florin Müller, Mihai Sorin Radulescu, Mihai Retegan: *Istoria Românilor. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a. Editia a II-a* (Bucuresti: Editura Rao, 2000), 162-3; cf. Bozgan, *Istorie*, 93.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

whole Thirties.<sup>30</sup> The time from 1940 to 1944 is described in one textbook as a “war regime” (*regim de razboi*).<sup>31</sup> While there is room for disagreement when democracy ended, Romanian textbooks most agree that what existed before was a democracy proper.<sup>32</sup> Some mention that the relationship between legislative and executive was reversed in the constitutional system following the constitution of 1923, but that still qualifies as a normal “democracy” for them; the problems flowing from such a relationship is not discussed. Some textbooks admit that the functioning of democratic mechanisms was complex and difficult.<sup>33</sup> The only instances, when it is discussed what democracy might have meant to the ordinary citizen, is when the books refer to their newly granted rights. However, here a mere reference to the text of the constitution seems to suffice, the reality of the law and the rights in the time escapes the books.<sup>34</sup> It is only stressed that the Romanian state after 1918 set out to achieve the total political equality in all spheres of society.<sup>35</sup> In other respects as well, the narrative of Greater Romania is one of success. Especially the progress in the social and economic sphere is mentioned; some textbooks

present how urban life improved in this time.<sup>36</sup>

The compartmentalisation of narrative and discourse<sup>37</sup> in these textbooks achieves the feat that “democratic regimes” and “totalitarian regimes” in the inter-war time are described totally apart; the one has nothing to do with the other.<sup>38</sup> The textbooks paint a wholly positive picture of the time between 1918 and 1938. Their main lens is the nation. Yet, they remain somewhat superficial on the meaning of the inter-war years. Unification, they stress, concluded the Romanian struggle for emancipation.<sup>39</sup> That emancipation can mean more than just to live together in one state does not become clear. They narrate national emancipation, not political emancipation.

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<sup>30</sup> Dumitrescu, *Istoria*. 2005, 151.

<sup>31</sup> Brezeanu, *Istoria*, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Dumitrescu, *Istoria*. 2005, 137.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 156.

<sup>34</sup> Bozgan, *Istorie*, 97.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

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<sup>36</sup> Burlec, Liviu, Liviu Lazar, Bogdan Teodorescu: *Istoria Românilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a* (Bucuresti: All, 1997), 94.

<sup>37</sup> Compartmentalisation of historical periods rendering them isolated and disconnected times has already been uncovered in relation to Communism, cf. Mihalache, *Communism*, 140.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Valentin Balutoiu, *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a XI-a* (Bucuresti: : Editura Didactica si Pedagogica 2000). Just some stress that the battle between democracy and authoritarianism was the main theme of the inter-war period; without explaining what this meant. Dumitrescu, *Istoria*. 2005, 135.

<sup>39</sup> Bozgan, *Istorie*, 97.



### 3.2 *Romanianist textbook historiography in Moldova*

The Romanianist narratives of the textbooks of the Republic of Moldova published between 1996 and 2003 offer, broadly speaking, a similar narrative as the textbooks of Romania.<sup>40</sup> Yet, in comparison to Romanian textbooks, the Romanianist textbooks of Moldova pinpoint the beginning of the modern history of the Romanians almost exclusively to the union of 1918. When the developments in the Romanian principalities up to the union is described, Romanianist texts offer solely a very dry and factually oriented account. More attention is given to the struggle of the Romanians outside both Walachia and Western Moldova; especially those in Transylvania, the Bukovina and Bessarabia. If pre-WWI-Romania is described at all, then the

Romanianist textbooks of the Republic of Moldova stress that there was progress and positive development in all parts of Romanian society - which is contrasted against the backwards and retarding Tsarist regime in Bessarabia. Here, and in the following, it becomes clear that the prime lens is the nation as well.

The union of 1918, however, is represented with enormous joy and euphoria. Almost all of the textbooks feature illustrations of “unification *horas*” (meaning “unification dances”). While arguably for all the textbooks of Romania and of Moldova the inter-war years are of a high importance, in the Romanianist case it is the single most important time in the whole narrative of the nation and of the books from its beginnings until today. In other places I have argued that the inter-war years assume the function of *the* “golden age” for the Romanianist textbooks and indeed for the Romanianist discourse in Moldova.<sup>41</sup> While chronologically distant times are important as well, for example the time of Stefan cel Mare or Mihai Viteazu, the inter-war time is the only time which is constantly re-referenced to across time; it is *the* “functional golden age” of the discourse. Stefan cel Mare’s time is described in much glorifying detail as well, but it does not play a referential role again in most discourses; the inter-war period, however, does. When the time after 1989/91 is narrated, we find

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed after 1991 for a time textbooks from Romania were also used in the Republic of Moldova. There is also some overlapping in authorship between the two states: Ion Scurtu for example is author of textbooks in both Romania and Moldova. Ioan Scurtu, Gherghe Dondorici, Vasile Ionescu, *Istorie*, (Târgoviste: Editura Gimnasium, 2000); Ioan Scurtu, Marian Curculescu, Constantin Dinca, Aurel Constantin Soare, *Istoria Românilor. Din cele mai vechi timpuri pâna astazi. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* (Bucuresti: Editura Petron, 1999); Ioan Scurtu, Ion Siscanu, Marian Curculescu, Constantin Dinca, Aurel Constantin Soare, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* (Chisinau: Prut International, 2001).

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ihrig, *Wer sind die Moldawier?*

constant back-referencing and even the attempt to set both times parallel (cf. below). This is achieved by the ascription to the Romanians of their main national characteristic: The textbook claim that the main characteristic of the Romanians throughout history has been to strive towards the unity of all Romanians. The union of 1918 is the most natural and successful conclusion of the history of the Romanians - only to be spoiled by the Soviet Union and WWII. Accordingly the story of the inter-war years is presented as a unique story of success; even more than in the textbooks of Romania.<sup>42</sup> Above all the economic and cultural progress of Bessarabia within Greater Romania is stressed time and again in the narratives.<sup>43</sup> Problems are almost completely absent in the narratives; that in fact there was growing resentment among some of the Bessarabian elites with the treatment by Bucharest is not a topic at all.<sup>44</sup> In fact the narratives

imply that all problems were solved with Union, which was administratively completed by 1922; problems resulting from the union are non-existent here.<sup>45</sup> The Romanianist textbooks of Moldova convey the impression that progress and liberty can only be found in the union with all co-nationals; further political questions and improvements are not a topic: democracy, liberty and progress are embodied and fulfilled within the united nation in its nation-state.<sup>46</sup> The inter-war period, it follows logically, is the only period in Moldovan history that is singularly - encompassing all aspects of societal life - portrayed as a positive time.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.3 *Moldovanist (textbook) historiography in Moldova*

This high value of the time within the Romanianist narrative is mirrored in the historiographic Moldovanist discourse<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Scurtu, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca contemporana*, especially page 14; Nicolae Enciu, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a de liceu* (Chisinau: Civitas, 2003), 34.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 62; Boris Vizer, Tatiana Nagnibeda-Twerdohleb, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a IX-a* (Chisinau: Stiinta, 2003), 18, 28; Gheorghe Palade, Igor Sarov, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca contemporana. Manual pentru clasa a IX-a* (Chisinau: Cartdidact-Reclama, 2002), 3, 16, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the famous exclamation of Bessarabian deputies in the Bucharest

Parliament, that Bessarabia shall not be treated like an „African colony“. Hausleitner, *Deutsche und Juden*, 103.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Enciu, *Istoria*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ion Varta, Igor Sarov, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca moderna 1850-1918. Manual pentru clasa a VIII-a* (Chisinau: Cartdidact-Reclama, 2003), 61.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. especially Scurtu, *Istoria Românilor – Epoca contemporana*, 33.

<sup>48</sup> Historiographic exponents of post-Soviet Moldovanism are: Stati, *Istorie*; Moldovan, Petre P. (=Vasile Stati), *Moldovenii în istorie* (Chisinau: Poligraf-Service, 1993), Andrusceac, V.E. et al., *Istoria Republicii Moldova din cele mai vechi timpuri pîna în zilele noastre* (Chisinau: Elan Poligraf, 2003

and in the so-called integrated history textbooks by a portrayal of a dark time; the inter-war period as the *negative* defining time of the Moldovan nation. The Moldovanist narratives start by highlighting the fact that the union with Romania was an unjust act of aggression and manipulation. The evolution from the initial *Sfatul Tarii* in 1917 to union is re-narrated with a stress that when it had declared independence, this was the re-birth of Moldovan statehood.<sup>49</sup> It stresses the negative aspects of the time within Greater Romania, frequently calling it occupation.<sup>50</sup> In general, the social and economic stagnation of the province under Romanian rule is stressed.<sup>51</sup> While the textbooks differ from the general Moldovanist discourse in as far as they stress that the Moldovans were spared the horrors of Stalinism - being under Romanian occupation at the time -, the general outlook of the period is still bleak: the Moldovans were “degraded in the social and economic

sphere”.<sup>52</sup> The Moldovanist discourses stress the problems of Greater Romania. This culminates in the judgement that the Greater Romanian state was hated by the Moldovans.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. *New old-regimes? - The revolutions of 1989/1991 and the connections back in time*

The revolutions<sup>54</sup> of 1989 and 1991 were changes in political regime and system. Notwithstanding a variety of critical evaluations by political scientists and historians, these events ushered in a new political system in both countries. The history textbooks of both Romania and the Republic of Moldova include these times in their narratives and convey their own sense of the post-1989 period. These evaluations could not be more different: In the Romanian textbooks the time after 1989 is a continuation of pre-war times; it is a return to democracy and to normality. The Romanianist of the textbooks of Moldova present a time which is parallel to that immediately following the founding of the *Sfatul Tarii* - it is now the second historical chance to re-unite with the motherland

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[1997]); Victor Stepaniuc, *Statalitatea poporului moldovenesc. Aspecte istorice, politico-juridice* (Chisinau: Tipografia Centrala, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the state-centred Moldovanist histories by Andrusceac et al. (*Istoria*) and Stepaniuc (*Statalitatea*).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. “Noile manuale moldovenesti de istorie sustin ca romanii ocupau abuziv Basarabia”, *Curentul* (25. Sept. 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Stati, *Istoria*, 309 -311; Andrusceac, *Istoria*, 225-229.

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<sup>52</sup> Nazaria, Sergiu, Alexandru Roman, Mihai Sprințeanu, Sergiu Albu-Machedon, Anton Dumbrava, Ludmila Barbus: *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a IX-a*, (Chisinau: Cartea Moldovei: 2006), 47.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>54</sup> Both perhaps not revolutions in the fullest sense of the word.

Romania. Finally, the Moldovanist discourse presents the time after 1989/91 as that of freedom and progress; the re-affirmation of ancient Moldovan statehood.

In the Moldovanist discourse, the inter-war period receives its meaning by the times framing it historically: that of the region under Tsarist and Soviet rule. The periods are described more positively: The inherent national characteristic of the Moldovan nation (i.e. the ethnic Romanians of Moldova) is the struggle for independence; the main aggressor is Romania and the only friend is Russia. Accordingly an “Eastern road to development” is proclaimed. In the Moldovanist discourse no re-connecting to inter-war experience is possible in a positive way. The “development towards democratization” the integrated textbooks speak of is, within its narrative logic, the first and the original such development in Moldova.<sup>55</sup>

While each discourse can be explained in its own context, democracy remains an empty capsule in all of them. Romanian textbooks stress that what happened after 1989 is a “re-birth of plural party politics”,<sup>56</sup> a “return to

political pluralism”<sup>57</sup> or a “re-activation of old parties”.<sup>58</sup> Sometimes it is also described as a re-introduction of democracy.<sup>59</sup> Democracy is thus bound backwards in time to the inter-war times. What is re-turned to and re-introduced is not even stated, other than by the term “democracy” itself.

### 5. Conclusion:

#### *Democracy (dis)connected*

It became clear that the textbooks build up their description of democracy; this is at times explicit, but mostly implicit. The Romanian textbooks do not hesitate to put clear labels on the different periods of Romanian statehood, thus for example describing the early Romanian state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an authoritarian state,<sup>60</sup> the regime between 1940 and 1944 as a war-regime and that of the inter-war years as well as post-1989 as democracy. While some give extended definitions of democracy and stress that post-1989 is a “return to democracy”, in fact a “return to normality”, what inter-war democracy and “inter-war normality” meant is not elaborated upon except for two aspects: inter-war democracy is primarily defined through its national

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<sup>55</sup> Nazaria et al., *Istorie*, 66-67.

<sup>56</sup> Maria Petrescu, Nicolae Petrescu, *Istoria Românilor din cele mai timpuri până astăzi. Compendiu pentru clasele a VI-a a VIII-a* (Bucuresti: Editura Fiat Lux, 1996), 216.

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<sup>57</sup> Iulian Cârțâna, Gheorghe Dondorici, Elena Emilia Lica, Octavian Osanu, Emil Poana, Rela Stoica, *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* (Pitesti: Carminis, 2000), 176.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.; Scurtu, *Istoria Românilor. Din cele mai vechi timpuri*, 154.

<sup>59</sup> Petrescu, *Istoria*, 216.

<sup>60</sup> Selevet, *Istorie*, 36.

characteristic, its problems by reference to the minorities. Why it failed, except for references to external influences and international situations, and what its institutional and societal deficiencies were, remains unclear. Most of the problems of inter-war democracy are not mentioned; if they are indeed mentioned, they remain largely unexplained and un-contextualized. If inter-war democracy was a “democracy” in the fullest sense of word at all and what a definition of democracy could encompass, is not debated here. In this case, the difference between historiographic developments and textbook discourse is immense.<sup>61</sup>

Inter-war democracy takes up a different role in each narrative: In the Romanian narrative, it is part of a broader evolutionary continuity; it establishes the background notion of “normality”. In the Romanianist narrative, it is the golden age, which sets the standard and goals of what has to (or shall be) reached again today or in the future. And finally, in the Moldovanist narrative, it is a negative defining time, which yields value to other times and is the negative example of what shall never happen again. Interestingly enough, the term democracy remains remarkably empty in all three discourses. Perhaps, the biggest void is that left by the Moldovanist discourse, because it

cannot even use the inter-war period as reference. Where it is used - in the Romanian and the Romanianist discourses - it is mostly filled with a national(ist) reading; alleviated at best by a legalistic reading of rights and procedures.

The repeated reference to minorities also sheds light on another aspect of the discourse of democracy: neither in Romania nor in Moldova are the minorities perceived as part of a civic nation; they are national minorities, belonging to some other nation beyond the state’s frontiers and accordingly are all their interests vis-a-vis the Romanian state described as arising out of their connection to another nation.

Democracy is described in all discourses as a system which has no historical bearing or tradition. It is indeed a rather monolithic system as well, as there are no specificities highlighted; especially not in reference to Romanian experiences. This Analysis has proceeded in a re-constructive fashion; the implications of its findings may be assessed differently. For example, could we conclude that the variance of interpretation of their common past will have repercussions on the relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova? Let us, however, focus on the internal consequences. One such consequence is the fact that the narratives spoil their audience (the pupils) of the merit of learning from past problems and solutions of their own democratic precursors. The deficiencies of inter-war democracy as well as the large

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. for example Lucian Boia, *Romania - Borderland of Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 102-107.

constitutional differences between the systems of post-1918 and post-1989/91 are largely ignored in the textbooks. While it may be perhaps debatable whether democracy is bound to be a different “system” in each state it is at work, some authors, like Ivan Katchanovski for example, advance the argument that the main defining aspect of how societies cope with problems, transition and conflict is their political culture.<sup>62</sup> This political culture, however, is historically grounded; it evolves and is contingent upon the experiences of these societies. There exists a strong internal discrepancy in all three discourses: On the one hand, the inter-war period serves as the background definition of normality and what is to be attained as well as maintained (and inversely so for the Moldovanist discourse); on the other the period as well as the connected concept of democracy remain largely empty capsules. The implications of these discrepancies, again, may be manifold. A cautious interpretation suggests that the founding myth of indigenous Romanian and Moldovan democracy rests upon an insecure footing in the Romanian and Romanianist history textbook narrative. The attempted confidence trick of an obvious self-referentiality regarding

“democracy” and “normality” merely exposes a high level of uncertainty about what democracy and normality in their own country actually meant, means and could mean- for the past, the presence and the future.

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<sup>62</sup> Ivan Katchanovski, *Cleft Countries. Regional Political Divisions and Cultures in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Moldova. With a Foreword by Francis Fukuyama* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2006) [Soviet and Post-Soviet Society and Politics; 33].

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