

**The problem of the appurtenance of Dobruja region, 1913-1940:
Bulgarian and Romanian methods of claiming rights over the
territory**

By

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Abstract

The focus of the current thesis is the evaluation of the propaganda strategies employed by the Romanian and the Bulgarian side in justifying their claims over Dobruja region in 1913-1940. The Dobrujan question, first emerging after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, became a vital issue in the Romanian-Bulgarian relations once again after the second Balkan war and the Romanian occupation of the Southern part of the region, Cadrilater. A territorial exchange that followed transformed the province into the playground for the Bulgarian and Romanian nationalistic propaganda, featuring the competing state and nation-building projects, modernization programs and legitimization of the territorial rights.

In the research, the process of claiming the rights is seen through the texts produced by the participants of the territorial debate from both sides. Their views are explored as important evidence reflecting the Bulgarian and Romanian policies in the region and their interactions with Great Powers. The thesis states that the result of the division of the region depended mostly not on the skills of the participants, but on the external influence that brought the end to Greater Romania and reshaped the political map after the Second World War.

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Introduction

"Аз съм готов за целта да употребя всичките страшни средства, освен подлостта и лъжата, защото преди всичко трябва да сме човеци, после вече българи и патриоти."

Христо Ботев

"To reach the aim I am ready to employ all the horrible measures, except for treachery and treason, since we are humans first, and only after that Bulgarians and patriots."

Hristo Botev

A relatively narrow strip of land stretching from the Black Sea to the Lower Danube, Dobruja remains a region with its distinct social, geographical and cultural landscape.¹² Describing the highly individualized character of the province, Constantin Iordachi points out that "from the 15th century, Dobrogea functioned as a borderland of the Ottoman Empire and one of the most advanced Muslim military bastions in Southeastern Europe. Between 1768 and 1878, the province served as a transit corridor and military battlefield in the long series of Russian-Turkish wars".³ The author also admits that, probably, the most distinct characteristic of Dobruja was its Ottoman legacy expressed in its multinational character,⁴ the peculiar feature of the province that would make it an uneasy target for the competing nation-building projects of Romania and Bulgaria from 1878 up to the beginning of the Second World War.

The Ottoman control over Dobruja lasted until 1878, when the Great Powers at the congress of Berlin passed the region with the Danube Delta to Romania, the Southern part of the land remaining with the newly established Bulgaria. In return for the new possession, Romania

¹ G. Danescu, *Dobrogea (La Dobroudja). Étude de Géographie physique et ethnographique*, Bucarest, 1903, p.16

² Even the name of the territory itself is spelled differently in Romanian (Dobrogea), Bulgarian (Добруджа), Turkish (Dobruca), German (Dobrudscha), French (Dobroudja) and English (Dobruja). In order to avoid misinterpretation in this text the English version is used predominantly with the exception of the quoted material.

³ Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania*, Pittsburg, 2002, p. 1.

⁴ Ibidem

had to cede Bessarabia to Russia;⁵ this requirement, however, aroused great controversy in the circles of the Romanian political elite. Frederick Kellogg notes that Romanian Foreign Minister Mihail Kogalniceanu viewed Dobruja as primarily a boundary that could keep Russia away from the Danube, while Ion Bratianu saw it as a vital region for free navigation on the Danube.⁶

Comparing the strategic value of Northern Dobruja to that of Southern Bessarabia, Romanian politicians had to consider the bigger territorial gains as well as the mixed character of the population and social and political tensions in the region. After the Treaty of Berlin, the territory held by Bulgaria was reduced, moving the Romanian-Bulgarian frontier to Silistra. Antonina Kuzmanova briefly describes the political situation in the area before 1913, underlining that Romanian foreign policy strategies regarding the newly received province and its population quickly turned from uncertainty and vague positive and negative reactions towards the aggressive attempts of “Romanization” while Bulgaria, especially during the regime of Stambolov (1886-1894)⁷ tried to reverse the effects of the Berlin treaty, going back to the conditions of the treaty of San-Stefano.⁸ Iordachi while analyzing the policy of integration of Northern Dobruja into Romania, also takes into account those facts, highlighting, however, the principle of the “colonization” of the new lands that dominated Romanian politics towards Dobruja.⁹

Dobruja with its mixed peoples could not be easily incorporated either in Bulgaria or in Romania: around 1880 the majority (although not the dominant part) of the North Dobrujan population consisted of Turks and Tatars¹⁰. Even in 1930 after significant changes that had affected the region in the previous decades, 22,4% of the whole Dobrujan population (that

⁵ Some important details about controversies in the Romanian political life preceding the events of 1878 can be found in Paul E. Michelson, *Conflict and crisis. Romanian political development, 1861-1871*. New York, 1989.

⁶ F. Kellogg, *The road to Romanian independence*, Purdue University, West Lafayette, 1995, pp. 199-201

⁷ For further details about the Romanian-Bulgarian relations during Stambolov’s era see Roumen Daskalov, *Debating the Past, Modern Bulgarian history from Stambolov to Zhivkov*, Budapest, 2011.

⁸ А. Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова: Въпросът за Южна Добруджа в международните отношения, 1919-1940*/A. Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly to Craiova: the question of Southern Dobruja in the international relations, 1919-1940*), Sofia, 1989, pp. 20-21

⁹ Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building*, Pittsburg, 2002, pp. 6-10

¹⁰ Danescu, *Dobrogea (La Dobroudja)*, 1903, pp.15-20, Христо Вакарелски/Khristo Vakarelski, *Добруджа: материали към веществената култура на българите през периода на капитализма kapitalizma (Dobruja: information about the material culture of Bulgarians during the period of capitalism)*, Sofia, 1964. p. 9

already made part of the inhabitants of Greater Romania) considered Turkish its mother tongue.¹¹ The situation had been changing gradually due to the attempts of both Romania and Bulgaria to justify their rights over the territory, and by the middle of the 20th century the region, divided between two neighboring states, became almost purely ethnically Romanian and Bulgarian with several remains of its Muslim population left and some traces of Ottoman culture still visible in the region.¹²

Dobruja had to proceed a long way of nearly a century to turn from a place with a strikingly diverse population and a major Muslim Turkish and Tatar element¹³¹⁴ in 1870s to a highly homogeneous territory shared by two neighboring national states, Romania and Bulgaria, in 1940. In the current thesis, the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute over the land evolving from 1913, when the Romanian state gained full control over the territory to 1940, the year of the signing of the Craiova treaty, which gives the Southern part of Dobruja (Cadrilater) back to Bulgaria is explored and analyzed.

The research focuses on the propagandistic questions in the debate concerning Dobruja region and the attempts of the two states to “nationalize” the area in the period of 1913-1940 when constant territorial exchange between Romania and Bulgaria took place. In the thesis the methods of legitimizing claims over the land are explored through analyzing the texts of Romanian and Bulgarian authors from the period 1913-1940 (historians, diplomats, politicians, writers etc) identifying how they presented and constructed the history of the region, highlighting and omitting certain facts not suitable for the nation-building program of the state, characterized national identity and the concepts of origin of the local population, appealed to religious ties and attempted to justify the policy of linguistic homogenization. The Dobrujan

¹¹ Vintila Mihailescu, *La Dobroudja*, Bucuresti, 1938, p. 620. For further details see the graphs in the supplement.

¹² For further details see Кузманова, *Om Hboÿ ðo KpaÿoBa/Kuzmanova, From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989

¹³ Andrea Schmidt Rossler, *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg : die Grenzziehung in der Dobrudscha und im Banat und die Folgeprobleme*, Frankfurt am Mein, 1994, pp. 17-26

¹⁴ It should be noted that before 1913 there did not exist any precise data (archival evidence or ethnographic researches) on the ethnic structure of the Muslim population, which is viewed mostly as “Turkish” or simply defined by its Muslim faith. The Bulgarian and Romanian (as well as the Greek, Lipovan etc) inhabitants of Dobruja knew that their neighbors did not always belong to the same national group, but they primarily saw the Dobrujan Muslims as members of one religious community.

dispute of 1913-1940 is viewed as part of the continuation of the Romanian and Bulgarian 19th century nation-building programs and put it in a larger context, being classified as original variation of diverse similar cases of claiming rights over the land. Hence, in the thesis appear parallels with the Romanian and Bulgarian nation-building programs and the considerations about the changes in the nationalistic discourses.

The current thesis does not seek to give fully exhaustive answers to the question of who was more successful in claiming rights over the territory and does not tend to grant one unarguable place to the Dobrujan dispute in a larger context; however, its purpose is to offer several solutions to these problematic issues that will be considered logical in terms of their explanatory power. The research, although concentrated on the propagandistic side of the Dobrujan debate, does not regard the province as the only politically, socially and economically important region for both Romania and Bulgaria, but sees it as merely as an example of how the propaganda of both parties tried to increase its significance.

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, Romania and Bulgaria were more concentrated on gaining their full independence from the Ottomans and on their national revival. In her book about forming of the Bulgarian nation, Janette Sampimon notes: “There was no Bulgarian national cultural life in the beginning of the 19th century, no such thing as a Bulgarian public sphere, a virtual meeting space where opinions are formed”.¹⁵ Later the researcher adds that the Bulgarian public sphere developed even later than that of the Serbian, Romanian and Greek communities. This affirmation may be argued as the era of the Bulgarian “national revival” had begun to develop already in the beginning of the 19th century, separating itself from the “Greek cultural yoke”^{16,17}, but one can hardly deny that it was the middle and especially the end of the

¹⁵ Janette Sampimon. *Becoming Bulgarian*, 2006, p. 253

¹⁶ See the example of Vasil Aprilov and Bulgarian school in Gabrovo, John Bell, “*Modernization through secularization in Bulgaria*” in Gerasimos Augustinos, “*Diverse paths to modernity in Southeastern Europe*”, London, 1991, p. 16.

¹⁷ Roumen Daskalov, *Ако се мисли българското враждане*, София, 2002/ Roumen Daskalov, *How the Bulgarian Revival thinks*, Sofia, 2002.

19th century that brought new ideas and national inspiration to stimulate the flourishing Bulgarian (and Romanian as well) literature. The literary bloom¹⁸ led to the further development of historic writing, which later resulted in a great number of highly influential texts by writers, poets and historians used in the scopes of the propaganda in the beginning of the 20th century.

However, the situation was even more complex. Blagovest Njagulov describes the state of affairs very precisely in his article in “Transborder identities”: “Bulgaria, as all nationalizing countries, born after the dissolution of the big empires in Eastern Europe, also leads a policy of national unification of its population with the help of schools, the church, the army...”.¹⁹ Mirela-Luminița Murgescu also explores the impact of school education on state propaganda, pointing out that the territorial and ideological debates were developing among historians, writers and politicians, but that their aim was to reach and influence much wider layers of society.²⁰ The main target of both sides was to restrain and stop the influence of propaganda in order to prevent forming a Romanian or a Bulgarian national identity amongst the Dobrujan population and later to assimilate it. Nevertheless, it should be noted that „Romania’s interests were focused on the Aromanians within the Ottoman empire and not on the Vlachs in Northwest Bulgaria”²¹, and Bulgarian objectives were concentrated on the region just partially, having other important goals in Macedonia as a result of the Second Balkan war (after August 1913).

¹⁸ Kiossev, *Bulgarian textbooks of literary history and the construction of national identity*. 1896, pp. 355-357. The author connects the appearance of the history of Bulgarian literature of Alexander Teodorov-Balan with the bitter reaction of Ivan Vazov, who was warning the public that once “a benefactor” would say that the Bulgarian nation does not exist if there is no memory and consciousness of its literary heritage.

¹⁹ Blagovest Njagulov, “*The Romanian-speaking population of Bulgaria*” in *Transborder identities* (ed. by Stelu Serban), 2008, p.141.

²⁰ Mirela-Luminita Murgescu “*Intre bunul crestin si bravul roman. Rolul scolii primare in construirea identitatii nationale romanesti*”, 1831-1878, Bucuresti, 1999

²¹ Njagulov, op. cit., p. 146.

The considerations outlined in previous paragraphs determine the approach based on comparison of the propagandistic strategies used by both sides involved in the dispute about Dobruja.²² One of the main sources that frames the thesis in terms of its theoretical structure is the book of Anastasia Karakasidou “Fields of wheat, hills of blood. Passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990”, which describes the processes of transforming “history into national history, legitimizing the existence of a nation-state in the present-day by teleologically reconstructing its reputed past”, where “pedigrees of national descent are constructed, refined, and lengthened, and the ancestors of a “nation” become a vehicle for majority-group legitimation”.²³ Appealing to this work primarily as an example of the study of two competing projects of integration of a contested territory into a state, the current thesis, however, regards in detail not the oral memories of the inhabitants of several Dobrujan locations, but the texts of the participants of the debates from both sides that are taken as primary sources.

Structurally the thesis is organized into four sections that include a methodological chapter and three thematic parts. The first, methodological chapter deals with the theoretical issues that determine the arrangement of the work and the approaches applied. Starting with the exploration of the concepts and the use of the terminology that is essential for the further investigation of the topic, this part provides the explanations of the terms of employment of such notions as “nation-building projects”, “state projects”, “modernization projects”, “public sphere”, “public actors”, “national identity debates” and “propaganda”. It also includes the justification of the selection of authors and texts chosen for the thorough analysis in the following parts of the thesis. The literature review, making part of the methodological chapter, is concentrated not merely on the description of already existing works directly related to the theme or connected to it in terms of analysis of the general situation in the region or the reasons and outcomes of cases similar to the one thoroughly studied in the current research, but on the ways of how those

²² Further description and analysis of the research framework is viewed in the first chapter.

²³ Anastasia Karakasidou, “*Fields of wheat, hills of blood. Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990*”, Chicago, 1997, p. 17

sources are being exploited and applied in the frames of the chosen topic. The methodological chapter clarifies the general theoretical framework, partially borrowed from books listed in the literature review and adjusted to the purposes of the current thesis, putting the Dobrujan case in a larger context and attempting to establish its possible place, highlighting the differences and resemblances between the Dobrujan dispute and similar debates. Using the examples of comparable cases proposed by Iordachi²⁴ and Karakasidou's analysis of the passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, the thesis incorporates brief parallels with Banat,²⁵ the later dispute over Macedonia between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia,²⁶ the Yugoslavian-Albanian debate over St. Naum and Vermosh and several others that are investigated thoroughly in the methodological chapter itself.

The first thematic part depicts the Romanian and Bulgarian nation-building strategies and their application in Dobruja in 1913-1940. Relying partially on Hobsbaum's, Bendix's and Weber's concepts of nation and state-building²⁷, it attempts to connect the Bulgarian and Romanian modernization projects^{28,29} to Dobruja. The chapter also describes the general conditions of the Dobrujan disputes and explores how the state-building projects of Bulgaria and Romania confronted each other when the territory came under Romanian control.

As the attempts of creating homogeneous states were not characteristically Bulgarian and Romanian ideas, the hegemonic claims of several of the participants of the debates are regarded in terms of the general "patriotic discourse" of the period, but not as fully trustworthy sources of exact data. The question of Romanian and Bulgarian elites and their origin and role in the

²⁴ The making of the French-Spanish border in the Pyrenees explored by Peter Sahlins. See Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building*, 2002, p.6

²⁵ For further details see Andrea Schmidt Rossler, *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Mein, 1994

²⁶ Tchavdar Marinov, *La question macédonienne de 1944 à nos jours: Communisme et nationalisme dans les Balkans*, Paris, 2010.

²⁷ E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 15-18, for a general view see M. Weber "Politics as a Vocation" in Gerth and Mills. *From Max Weber*. New York, 1946 and Reinhard Bendix, *Nationbuilding and Citizenship*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977

²⁸ For detailed general analysis, see Augusta Dimou, *Entangled paths towards modernity. Contextualizing Socialism and nationalism in the Balkans*, Budapest, 2009, pp. 48-55.

²⁹ For Bulgarian case see Roumen Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans*, Budapest, 2004, pp. 46-57

formation of the public opinion is viewed briefly in this chapter and later attentively explored in the following part that deals with the methods and approaches used by the participants of the debate.

Strategies of assimilations, extracted from the texts of the participants of the debates will be analyzed on the basis of several important factors listed in the second thematic chapter: the arguments used when re-thinking and re-writing the history of the region in order to legitimize the claims, the use of the concepts of national identity and origin, the appeal to common religious ties and the emphasis on the language. After that, the route of proceeding from mutual understanding before 1913 to the creation of caricatures of one another after the Romanian annexation of Southern Dobruja will be viewed.³⁰ In this part, the attempt of defining this process of gradually growing mutual hostility are undertaken.

The last chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the role of the modernization projects in the region and foreign audience in the public sphere. Beginning with the investigation of the international reaction to the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute, and attempts of both sides to gain support from the foreign powers, it then seeks to explain how this situation intended to affect Romanian and Bulgarian states, who were inventing their competing modernization projects of the province. The main question to be put and viewed in this part is the one dealing with the “success” of the Bulgarian and Romanian attempts of claiming rights. Finally, the result of the debates is seen as an outcome partially independent from the propaganda methods of the two states, but more as a consequence of the general political situation in Europe and the decision of Great powers.³¹ In the conclusion of the chapter, the evolution of the whole process of claiming rights over Dobruja will be outlined and seen in terms of its outcomes.

³⁰ For similar case study in Bulgarian literature see R. Stancheva. „Les images de roumaine dans la littérature bulgare”, in *Etudes Balcaniques*, Sofia, 1994, nr. 3

³¹ The international situation from the Bulgarian point of view is described by Antonina Kuzmanova. See A. Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова*/A. Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989

Chapter I. Theory, propaganda and integration: approaching Dobruja.

1. Concepts and terminology.

The issue that binds the chapters of this research together and justifies the variety of aspects analyzed is the concept of propaganda that finds its application in various methods of claiming rights over Dobruja from the Romanian and Bulgarian side. The participants of the territorial debate used propagandistic tools in order to present the province as a significant part of their modern state with its distinct cultural and historical heritage, linguistic and religious peculiarity. Hence, the propaganda is viewed as an instrument of promoting Bulgarian and Romanian nation-building and state projects, formation of separate or common identities, supporting the processes of modernization and establishing control over the public sphere and public actors.

While referring to all the concepts listed above, one should bear in mind the multiple possibilities of their use and in many cases the nuances that the context of the study can cast upon them. In order to clarify the terminology employed in other chapters of the thesis, all the notions and the ideas beyond them should be carefully explained. Propaganda, occupying the central place in the theoretical framework has to be grasped as a uniting element that helps to perceive the reasons and the outcomes of the Bulgarian-Romanian debate over the appurtenance of Dobruja region. However, before, approaching the key-issue of propaganda, other important concepts that build the current research should be explored. Regarding the case of Dobruja as original, but not unique, one has to adapt the terminology to this particular territorial dispute between two neighboring countries, so that its novelty as well as its characteristics common for other borderland debates may be highlighted. One of the first concepts to be examined is that of “nation”, and, following, “nation-building” and “state-projects”.

Eric Hobsbawm in his book “Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality” describes the way of how the mere world “nation” acquired its meaning and place in Europe; the

historian asserts that there cannot be any nation defined by its ethno-linguistic criterion before the 19th century.³² Gellner explains this aspect, reflecting on the process of the making of modern languages, that could not have emerged as such without the wide spread of literacy, printing and the availability of mass education.³³ Hence, one can hardly affirm that there existed the standard national language in its modern sense in the Medieval European world. Neither there existed the “nation” in the contemporary meaning of this world. The “nation” as such was a novelty, as well as the realization of its strong connection with the shared origins and language as important parts of its body.^{34,35} This new notion has later given an impulse to the idea of the “national state” which had neither existed before.³⁶

Hans Kohn precisely develops the idea of “national states” being a 19th century product that came out of the nationalism awakened by the French revolution.³⁷ The author, however, points out that “only in France did the Revolution produce, for a short time at least, a unity of spirit and purpose in the national ranks”.³⁸ Apparently, the Romanian and Bulgarian cases did not construct a similar pattern in the end of the 18th century; nevertheless, one can easily trace the impact of the ideas of the French revolution in the development of the Romanian³⁹ and Bulgarian⁴⁰ political thought. The notion of “national state” emerging out of the revolutionary shock used by Kohn can be applied to Romania in the middle of the 19th century and to Bulgaria in its second half.

³² Hobsbawn, *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 15-18.

³³ Ernst Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 47-50

³⁴ Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?” in *Modern political doctrines* edited by Alfred Zimmern, Oxford, 1939, p. 190-192

³⁵ Stephen Barbour, Cathie Carmichael, *Language and nationalism in Europe*, New York, 2002, pp. 15-17

³⁶ For further details see Hobsbawn, op. cit, pp. 101-130

³⁷ Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-states. The French and German experience, 1789-1715*, Princeton, 1967, pp. 2-4

³⁸ Ibid, p. 18

³⁹ For further details, see Alexandru Zub, *La sfarsit de ciclu. Despre impactul Revolutiei franceze/At the end of the cycle. On the impact of the French Revolution*, Iasi, 1994, p. 23.

⁴⁰ C. E. Black mentions that the ideas of French revolution were spreading in Bulgaria not only through the French schools in Constantinople, but also through the Polish emigrants that had come to Bulgaria after the revolution of 1830 and through American missionaries. For Further details see C. E. Black, *The Influence of Western Political Thought in Bulgaria, 1850-1885* in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Apr., 1943), p. 508.

The first Bulgarian national “awakeners” made their voices heard in the second half of the 18th century when Paisi Hilendarski’s “Slavonic-Bulgarian history” appeared together with Zograf history⁴¹. Nevertheless, the concept of the “nation”, revived and understood in its ethno-linguistic sense was introduced into the Bulgarian public sphere only in the second half of the 19th century during the “National Awakening”. Dimitar Mishev would describe this period as the renewal of the Bulgarian soul.⁴² The definition of the Bulgarian “nation” was framed by the men of the Bulgarian revival, who envisioned it as an “individuality” characterized by “common descent, a single language and a shared religion, a cultural tradition, common material conditions of life and customs, etc”.⁴³

The Romanian pattern demonstrated many similarities with the Bulgarian one. Enjoying a larger degree of autonomy from the Ottomans, Romania established its independent national state before Bulgaria.⁴⁴ However, the word “nation” was a neologism in Romanian before 1821 “when the Romanian institutions became largely separated from Greek national development”.⁴⁵ Drace-Francis refers to the first documented usage of the word “nation” in Ioan Cantacuzino’s translation of the historical novel by the French writer Claris de Florian published in 1796.⁴⁶ This idea of a “nation” in its juridical sense together with the concept of inhabitants of a country as “citizens” refers back to the French revolution that had conferred these two concepts their new meaning, different from the synonyms of “nation” like “narod” used in Bulgarian or “norod” and “neam” employed in Romanian.

⁴¹ M. Macdermott, *A history of Bulgaria, 1393-1885*, London, 1962, pp. 88-95

⁴² Димитър Мишев, *Началото на българската пробуда* quoted in Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans*, Budapest, 2004, p. 28.

⁴³ Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans*, Budapest, 2004, p. 14

⁴⁴ For further details about the status of Romania and Bulgaria before 1829 see Nedeljko Radosavljevic in Plamen Mitev, *Empires and peninsulas: Southeastern Europe between Karlowitz and the peace of Adrianople, 1699-1829*, Berlin, 2010, pp. 177-181

⁴⁵ Alex Drace-Francis, *The making of modern Romanian culture. Literacy and the development of National identity*, New York, 2006, p. 81

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 83

Hans Kohn points out that the French revolution became the guiding model for many other countries in establishing their national states.⁴⁷ As it was mentioned above, his model significantly influenced the process of the formation of Bulgarian and Romanian concepts of “nation” and “national states” as well. However, it should be noted that Kohn discerns three fundamental patterns of the manifestations of nationalism: the establishment of “the regimes of great stability that successfully fuse modernity and tradition” like Holland, Switzerland or Scandinavia, the foundation of the modernity of “a nation based upon individual liberty, equality, and a cosmopolitan outlook” expressing itself in revolutions and counterrevolutions like France, and the German way paved by patriotic thinkers underlining the uniqueness of the German nation.⁴⁸ In his book “The age of nationalism” Kohn underlines that the European idea of a “nation” that should be manifested in a “national state” spread all over the world by the beginning of the 20th century.⁴⁹

The Southeast European paradigm developing from the 19th century into the 20th makes no exception; hence, the approaches applied by Kohn to Western Europe can be to some extent used in exploring the Bulgarian and Romanian cases. Being significantly different from Western patterns, Romanian and Bulgarian nationalisms and national states can be compared to their Western analogues since the observed object, as Maria Todorova puts it referring to Heisenberg effect, “is revealed not as it is itself but as a function of measurement”.⁵⁰ Hence, in many cases the concepts used in the research are to be adjusted to the realities of Romania and Bulgaria in 1913-1940.

Hobsbawm’s supposition that all the nations are invented⁵¹ is used only partially in the current research that argues that propaganda, being the central issue of the thesis, did have a major role in forming the nations, particularly the Romanian and the Bulgarian one. However,

⁴⁷ Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-states. The French and German experience, 1789-1715*, Princeton, 1967

⁴⁸ Ibidem

⁴⁹ Kohn, *The age of nationalism. The first era of global history*, New York, 1962, pp. 75-80

⁵⁰ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford, 1997, p. 10.

⁵¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 76

the nations are viewed not only as the production of the public sphere, but also as a natural result of people's wish to unite themselves in groups according to some common characteristics that can hardly be purely invented. Linguistic unity as well as shared faith and even vague ideas of common historical background can easily be reconstructed and retold, but cannot be exclusively created by propagandistic forces. Writer and monk Dositej Obradovic explains this idea while referring to the Bosnian Muslims:

“A Bosnian or a Herzegovinian Turk is a Turk by law, but as far as language and kinship are concerned, whatever his grandfathers were so will the last of his descendants be: Bosnians and Herzegovinians, until God decrees the end of the world. They are called Turks while the Turks rule the land; and when the real Turks return to their homeland where they came from, the Bosnians will remain Bosnians, and will be like their ancestors were”.⁵²

Anderson's well-known issue of nations as imagined communities⁵³ that interacts with Hobsbawm's assumption that nations are the outcomes of an invention, is grasped as an aspect of the propagandistic methods in the current research that views the nations as “interest clubs”, expanding Abner Cohen's idea of nations as groups of people “defending and advancing their common interests”.⁵⁴ Hence, in order to fully perceive the reasons and outcomes of the debate one should firstly clarify the circumstances and grounds of the formation of the Romanian and Bulgarian national states and nations in particular.

Although Kemal Karpat asserts that “the national territorial states of the Balkans were created by Britain, France, Russia and Austria through the mechanism of the Berlin Treaty of 1878” with a “purely self-serving purpose”,⁵⁵ the identities of the population as well as the plans of ideological homogenization of the states were not imposed by any of the foreign powers. It is hard to deny the impact of the Great Powers in the process of the formation of the national states

⁵² Dositej Obradovic, “Letter to Haralampije”, in Balazs Trencsényi and Michael Kopecek, *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe: Texts and Commentaries*, Budapest, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 128

⁵³ For further details see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1991

⁵⁴ Abner Cohen, “Variable in ethnicity” in Charles Keyes, *Ethnic change*, Washington, 1981, pp. 306-310

⁵⁵ Karpat, Kemal, “The Balkan national states and nationalism: image and reality” in *Islamic studies*, vol. 36, No. 2/3, 1997: p. 329

in the Balkans, nevertheless, Karpat's affirmation is absolutely unacceptable in any of the cases of the Balkan states. As it was mentioned previously, the concept of nation, in general and in particular, adopted for the current thesis corresponds with Abner Cohen's notion of "nations" presenting groups of people "defending and advancing their common interests".⁵⁶ Hence, neither Romanian, nor Bulgarian nation can be "purely invented" without any originally existing common basis that would naturally bind the peoples together since any formation of the nation requires not only propagandistic mechanisms, but also a very well and long ago prepared soil to be planted into.

The Romanian independent national state was not created exclusively by the Great Powers. It was the product of the application of Western ideas of "nation" and "citizenship", the general political tendencies leading to unification developing on the territory of the Danubian principalities,⁵⁷ the manifestations and wishes of the local elites, willing to enter the world of the European states and the outcomes of the national revival appearing from the beginning of the 19th century.⁵⁸

The Bulgarian national state, officially established later than the Romanian one, had its own national revival, similar to those that served as transitions to Modernity in the West,⁵⁹ and the long period of formation of the "nation" that had already been shaped by the time of the congress of Berlin. Gale Stokes confirms this claim when describing the roots of the Balkan nationalism: "As Balkan peoples became self-conscious, they developed their cultures and languages, in opposition to the great empires in which they lived thus creating the unifying elements around which a state was formed".⁶⁰ Similarly, Robin Okey points out that even a Serbian peasant revolt of 1804 "was supported by numbers of educated Romanians, Greeks and

⁵⁶ Cohen, "Variable in ethnicity", Washington, 1981, pp. 306-310

⁵⁷ For instance, the artificial "creation" of the Romanian nation was hardly profitable for the Austrian Empire that had to cope with the numerous national manifestations gradually flaring up within the borders of the state. For further details on the Romanian national awakening see Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774-1866*, Oxford, 1996

⁵⁸ For further details, see the significant work of Dan Berindei, *Construirea României moderne*, Bucuresti, 2009

⁵⁹ Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans*, Budapest, 2004, p. 40

⁶⁰ Gale Stokes, *Nationalism in the Balkans. An Annotated Bibliography*, New York, 1984, p. 8 See also the introduction.

Habsburg Serbs, who lent a localized peasant revolt something of the allure of a struggle for self-determination of Balkan Christians against Muslim misrule”.⁶¹ Apparently, the Ottomans remained the side that had grasped the idea of a “national state” and “nation” later compared to the Balkan states, the most striking example of which is not Romania and Bulgaria, but Greece.

From the proclamation of the Greek revolt by Alexandros Yipsilanti it becomes clear that the leader was perfectly aware of such notions as “citizens” and “nation” regarding the Greeks, but relating to the ideas of the French revolution.⁶² The Ottomans, however, had to adapt their language when translating the proclamation, introducing such new concepts as “Hellenes”(Greeks) instead of “Rum” (“Roman”), new ideas of “nation” and “liberty”.⁶³ Like the Greeks, the Romanians and the Bulgarians definitely oriented their nation-building programs on the Western patterns, actively borrowing notions and strategies, but the whole process was much more complicated and original than that. Stokes highlights the development of capitalism that not only coexisted, but also gave a push to nationalism in Southeastern Europe; the author writes that “one possible explanation for this paradox, suggested by the case of Southeastern Europe, is that the origins of capitalism and nationalism were distinct, although more or less simultaneous”.⁶⁴

The identity discourses in Bulgaria and Romania explain further the concepts that can clarify the place of the Dobrujan dispute in the area of nation-building and nationalism theories. “With the failure of the revolutionary movements of 1848 and the formation of the modern Romanian state on the basis of piecemeal political deals of the elites” the Romanian “discourse of national specificity developed a markedly anti-liberal tone as early as the last quarter of the

⁶¹ Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe, 1740-1985 feudalism to communism*, London, 2003, p. 61

⁶² For further details on the influence of the Greek revolution on the Ottoman political language see Hakan Erdem, “Do not think of the Greeks as agricultural laborers! Ottoman responses to the Greek war of Independence” in Faruk Birtok and Thalia Dragonas ed. *Citizenship and the nation-state in Greece and Turkey*, London, 2005, pp. 78-83

⁶³ Ibidem

⁶⁴ Gale Stokes, *Nationalism in the Balkans*, New York, 1984, p. 9

nineteenth century”.⁶⁵ The ideas of the “generation of 1848” were still influencing the later discourse, but apparently, they were re-digested and acquired slightly nostalgic forms.

Hiemstra in his book dedicated to the role of the eminent fin-de-siècle historian Alexandru Xenopol in the development of the Romanian historiography, notes that such people as Mihail Kogalniceanu and Vasile Alecsandri⁶⁶ and especially their ideas expressed in “The wishes of the National Party in Moldavia” strongly affected Xenopol. These issues found reflection in his views on the Romanian society and nation.⁶⁷ Their influence later resulted in the collection of essays continuing and trying to find the actuality of the past debates where the definition of the Romanian nation through its historical legacy and language played its significant role.⁶⁸

The idea of the association of the language with the nation and therefore the attempts to introduce the linguistic factor to a political debate, flared up with distinct power in the beginning of the 50th. This matter continued the disputes began by Heliade-Radulescu (the author of the famous Romanian grammar of 1828, who promoted the necessity of the adoption of the phonetical principle of writing and the use of foreign words in order to express new notions)⁶⁹, Balcescu (the “stylistic ideal” of Eminescu),⁷⁰ Asachi (like Heliade-Radulescu, the propagandist of the Romanian language and the founder of the Mihaileana academy)⁷¹, Mihail Kogalniceanu (not only the eminent politician, but also the founder of the journal “Dacia literara”) and others. One should also notice that in the 19th century a revolutionary switch from the Cyrillic to the Latin through the mixed script takes place “modernizing” and “westernizing” the Romanian language, and, hence, the Romanian nation itself.

⁶⁵Balazs Trencsenyi, “Political Romanticism and National Characterology in modern Romanian intellectual history” in Sorin Mitu, *Re-searching the nation: the Romanian file*, Cluj, 2008, pp. 129-130

⁶⁶ In order to perceive the character of Vasile Alecsandri’s political activities one may refer to Dan Berindei, *Construirea Romaniei moderne*, Bucuresti, 2009, p 396-406

⁶⁷ Paul Hiemstra, “*Alexandru D. Xenopol and the development of Romanian Historiography*”, London, 1987, pp. 12-64

⁶⁸ For further details see Alexandru Xenopol, *Natiunea romana*, Bucuresti, 1999 and *Scrieri sociale si filosofice*, Bucuresti, 1967

⁶⁹ For further details, see George Calinescu, *Istoria literaturii române. Compendiu*, București, 1983

⁷⁰ D. Murarasu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu*, Bucuresti, 1999, p. 198

⁷¹ See Gheorghe Gabriel Carabus, “Asachi - un separatist avant la lettre”, in *Codrul Cosminului*, Nr.10, 2004

The change occurs in 1860-1862, adopting the language to the new circumstances. It brings more commodity and regulates the spelling and writing of the words from the purely practical point of view. However, this rapid change also breaks a sort of historical continuation with the past, which was essential both for the most fervent reformers and the most convinced “autochtonists”.⁷²

One can trace the roots of the Romanian nationalistic discourse, looking in the attempts to find the origins of the nation in the works of Dimitrie Cantemir or even in the *brancovenesc* chronicle of Radu Greceanu. However, it was not until the first half of the 19th century when the Herderian idea of the nation inseparable from its language and cultural heritage emerged.⁷³ Victor Neumann points out that “any credible explanation concerning the past is based on the understanding of the written language of an epoch”.⁷⁴ Later he adds that any historical period can be studied as soon as “we have reconstructed the language used by its people in conceptualizing their arrangements, in order to be able to translate these concepts in our own terminology”.⁷⁵ Hence, the Romanian (as well is the Bulgarian) nation as such was grasped through history, which was in its turn perceived through and by the means of language.

Gheorghe Asachi draws attention to the Moldavian chronicles, proposing the use of the Moldavian dialect as a sample for the whole of Romanian language, the tongue that had to reflect the spirit of the nation.⁷⁶ Supporting Westernization of all spheres of the Romanian life on the one hand, Asachi remained attached to the old Church language, which he tried to put into the frames of the Latin alphabet; his numerous unregulated experiments with the Latin script,

⁷² Negruzzi has expressed his personal hard experience when dealing with this rapid change of the script. See According to Costache Neguzzi, “Cum am învățat românește”, first published in *Curier de Ambele Sexe*, I, nr. 22, pp.337–343

⁷³ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, in *Johann Gottfried von Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael N. Forster, Cambridge, 2002, p.65

⁷⁴ Victor Neumann, *Conceptually mystified: East-Central Europe torn between ethnicism and recognition of multiple identities*, Bucharest, 2004, p. 63

⁷⁵ Ibidem

⁷⁶ Garbaret Ibraileanu, *Spiritul critic in cultura romaneasca, Amestec de curente contradictorii: G. Asachi*, Bucuresti-Chisinau, pp. 45-57

however, found firm criticism from the side of Mihail Kogalniceanu.⁷⁷ From the essays of Garbaret Ibraileanu it becomes clear that Asachi with his infatuation with Latin neologisms, later passion for the “purification” of the language (sudden support for Heliade-Radulescu’s ideas to reform it on the basis of modern Italian) and attempts to discover the origins of the nation through its tongue became the predecessor of the Transylvanian school of purists (first the Bukovinan Aron Pumnul and than Maxim, Cipariu and Laurian).⁷⁸ Hence, by the beginning of the 20th century the Romanian ideas of the nation were balancing between the linguistic peculiarity and the attempts to seek for the glorious origin through it.

One should notice that was the notable radicalism⁷⁹⁸⁰ of the Romanian “liberal” thinkers in order to clarify the ideas of nation and origin that are used by the participants of the Dobrujan debates. The result, which could be witnessed by 1913, was the “strengthening of the patterns of conservative characterology based on appeals to ethnic, rather than institutional continuity”⁸¹ that grew out of the gradual “radicalization” of the Romanian liberalism. The political element seeming in many cases conservative or moderate was, however, much more tolerant than the liberal one in the terms of the ethno-linguistic debates.⁸²

Referring to the Romanian nationalistic discourses of the 19th century one may notice that they were also extremely productive, not only proposing experiments, but also putting them into

⁷⁷ Ibidem

⁷⁸ Ibidem

⁷⁹ Timotei Cipariu, one of the most fervent reformers of the language presented his ideas as the liberal project of modernity. For details see Kinga-Koretta Sata “The people incorporated. Constructions of the nation in Transylvanian Romanian Liberalism, 1838-1848” in Diana Mishkova *We, the people. Politics of national peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, Budapest, 2009, p 81

⁸⁰ The neo-romantic poet Mihai Eminescu can be regarded in some aspects as an extreme nationalist who tried to express clearly xenophobic ideas regarding the purity of the Romanian language and nation. This idea is extremely well developed in Murărașu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu*, București, 1995, See *Chapter 5 and 6, „Xenofobul” and „Antisemitul”*, pp. 183-202

⁸¹ Balazs Trencsenyi, “History and character. Visions of national peculiarity in the Romanian Political discourse of the 19th century”, in Mishkova Diana *We, the people. Politics of national peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, Budapest, 2009, p 174

⁸² Alexandru Xenopol although his opinion about the language reforms can be viewed to some extent similar to those of Laurian and Cipariu (the emphasis on the Latin origin and structure of the Romanian language and culture that forms the nation), firmly criticizes their radical projects, attempting to find a sort of a balance between the opposite ideas and hoping for some tolerant way out of the situation. See Alexandru Xenopol, “Unitatea sufletului romanesc” in “*Natiunea romana*”, Bucuresti, 1999, pp. 214-219

practice. Not the exceptionality of these ethno-linguistic debates makes them worthy of thorough research, but the originality of their paths. However, the Romanian ideas of the nation still developed in the accordance with the general Western trends: “The end of the 19th century witnessed are configuration of the identity discourses in Europe, with the emergence of new paradigms (e.g. social Darwinism) which offered to explain the nation as an organic entity”.⁸³ These ideas of organic nation with cultural heritage as its basis were widely applied in the propaganda of the Dobrujan territorial dispute (together with the ethno-linguistic ones) that featured also similar arguments from the Bulgarian side.

Researching the basis of the Bulgarian nation, Stefan Dechev underlines that “the national symbols are the historically constructed products and that they cannot be taken and given as it generally happens”.⁸⁴ It should be highlighted that while defining the Bulgarian, Dechev appeals not to “imaginary symbols” used to unite the community, but to actual real subjects (as folklore, architectural heritage, common language) being reformed and adapted in order to describe the existing nation, which is not just a social idea, but a cultural one.⁸⁵ In the Dobrujan dispute this cultural issue was transformed into the powerful argument of “natural right” over the land proved by the presence of the cultural heritage.

This concept was strengthened by the developing from the times of the Bulgarian Revival idea of the “language”, “blood” and “common descent”. The linguistic factor, regarded earlier, had almost the same role both in Bulgaria and in Romania; as Hristo Botev would put it: “The sacred language of my ancestors, of the sufferings, the moans of centuries etc”.⁸⁶ However, blood and common descent begin to play a more important role in the beginning of the 20th

⁸³ Trencsenyi, *The politics of “National character”. A study in interwar East European political thought*, London, 2012, p. 29

⁸⁴ Стефан Дечев, «В търсене на българското: мрежи на национална интимност 19-21 век»/Stefan Dechev (ed), “In search of the Essentially Bulgarian: Networks of National intimacy 19th-21st century”, Sofia, 2010, p. 13

⁸⁵ Ibidem

⁸⁶ Език свещен на моите деди,
език на мъки, стонове вековни,
език на тази, дето ни роди
за радост не — за ядове отровни – from Hristo Botev’s poem “The Bulgarian language”

century. While romantic Bulgarian nationalism of the 19th century emphasized the “linguistic and cultural differences among all nations and saw the “nation” as having existed since times immemorial”,⁸⁷ later it turned to the issue of descent and ancestry.

In Bulgaria, the idea of Ugro-Finnic origin of Asparukh was coming in conflict with the memories of the old- Slavic Medieval past and discussions about the Greek or Bulgarian origins of Cyril and Methodius.⁸⁸ In the middle of the 19th century “the cause of the Bulgarians is identified with that of humankind, and the demand for Bulgarian autonomy is made in the name of civilizational progress”.⁸⁹ However, after the liberation the idea of the Bulgarian nation being not yet civilized changed and the accent was put on the enlightened Bulgarian revival. As it “presented a source of coveted symbolic capital”⁹⁰ the Bulgarian Revival by the end of the Balkan wars became a “possibility of resurrection”: “In order to return to the healthy condition the Bulgarians should take up the Revival again or work toward a new revival by repudiating the foreign influences and by overcoming the rift between the intelligentsia and the people”.⁹¹ Hence, the tendency of reviving the nation and affirming it became extremely important also in the context of the Dobrujan dispute that symbolically put the Bulgarian nation to compete with the Romanian one.

As it becomes clear from the previous considerations, the process of nation-building is regarded in this study as a propagandistic construct, generated on the basis of already given natural characteristics and attempting to fill the unclear gaps in any arguable case. Monika Baar describes the way these identity-creating propaganda functioned when depicting the newly-founded Hungarian learned societies that “regularly announced competitions which allowed for talented but hitherto unknown historians make their names familiar to the public” by engaging in

⁸⁷ Detchev, *“Who are our ancestors? “Race”, science, and politics in Bulgaria 1879-1912”*, Berlin, 2010, p. 27

⁸⁸ Ibidem, p. 33

⁸⁹ Trencsenyi, *The politics of “National character”. A study in interwar East European political thought*, London, 2012, p. 123

⁹⁰ Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans. Historiography of the Bulgarian revival*, Budapest, 2004, p. 228

⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 229

the process of writing the national history.⁹² Identity as Brubaker and Cooper point it out, has become an “omnipresent concept”, which can be better defined as “identification” or “categorization”.⁹³ At the same time a national identity is always multi-dimensional unable to be reduced to a single element.⁹⁴

Just as “national flags constitute short cuts to nation building being intimately linked to the expression of national history by establishing links to the past, the existence of the nation justifies the state in the present”.⁹⁵ Identity is regarded in this work as an aspect that plays the same role in nation building: it is a banner that binds an individual with the past, a flag that can be changed when the “fortress” of the nation is surrendered to a new conqueror. The linkage between these nation-building projects and the identities is built by propaganda that appeals to all possible human interests in order to create a story that would win the battle for the nation. The Romanian-Bulgarian dispute over Dobruja in 1913-1940 represented one of the examples of such a confrontation.

The Bulgarian and Romanian attempts of claiming rights over Dobruja were undertaken on different levels and by different people, but in the current research only the propagandistic side of the debate is explored. Political and economical propaganda is viewed as a tool used by “public actors” meddling in “public sphere”. In this thesis, the definition of citizens as “set of actors distinguished by their position vis-a-vis some particular state” is borrowed from Charles Tilly’s concept employed by Constantin Iordachi in his work about the integration of the Northern Dobruja in Romania.⁹⁶ The “public sphere”, hence, becomes “a virtual meeting space

⁹² Monika Baar, “The intellectual horizons of liberal nationalism in Hungary” in *Nation-Building and contested identities: Romanian and Hungarian case studies*, Budapest, 2001, p. 22

⁹³For further details see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond identity”, *Theory and Society* 29 (1), 2000.

⁹⁴ Anthony Smith, “Civic and ethnic nationalism” in P. Spencer and H. Wollman, “*Nations and Nationalism*”, Edinburgh, 1995, p. 182

⁹⁵ Gabriella Elgenius, *Symbols of nations and nationalism. Celebrating nationhood*, Oxford, 2011, p. 187

⁹⁶ Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania*, Pittsburg, 2002, p. 4

where opinions are formed”.⁹⁷ These “public opinions” are seen as “a communication from the citizens to their government and only secondarily a communication among the citizens”.⁹⁸

The “public sphere” starting on the “national level” stretches into the international dimension because “any European public sphere development will have to be generated by actors from within national public spheres”.⁹⁹ This space is regarded as an area that “entails conflict-ridden yet open and peaceful interplay between state and civil society covered by the news media”.¹⁰⁰ Applied to the investigation of the Dobruja dispute, the “public sphere” is understood as a target of propaganda, exploited by the “public actors”, individuals engaging in the process of the forming and sharing “public opinions”.

Propaganda, produced by public actors in different spheres, aims at several audiences at the same time. The definition of the propaganda employed in this research comes out of a precise explanation by Harold Lasswell: “Propaganda in the broadest sense is the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations. These representations may take spoken, written, pictorial or musical form”.¹⁰¹ In this research, mostly the spoken or written forms of propaganda relating to the legitimizing one’s rights over the territory are regarded. All other possible ways of justifying the claims are left aside.

As the study is closely connected to the comparison of the Romanian and Bulgarian propagandistic methods, the counter-propaganda is touched upon as the reflection of almost the same phenomenon. Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton explain this idea very clearly in their work, pointing out that “denouncing the other’s devious techniques and lack of credibility, while displaying similar methods, makes this a paradoxical and in some ways a self-undermining

⁹⁷ Janette Sampimon. *Becoming Bulgarian*, 2006, p. 253

⁹⁸ Hans Speier, “The rise of public opinion” in Robert Jackall, *Propaganda*, London, 1995, p. 27

⁹⁹ Ruud Koopmans, Paul Statham, *The making of a European public sphere*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 5

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, p. 15

¹⁰¹ Harold D. Lasswell, “Propaganda”, in Robert Jackall, *Propaganda*, London, 1995, p.13

process”.¹⁰² As “perceptions are shared and cognitions may be manipulated”,¹⁰³ the concept of propaganda employed in this research is in many cases analyzed independently from the real demographic or historical data, that is in many cases unclear or simply inexistent.

The process of claiming rights over the territory resulted in a propagandistic campaign from the Romanian and Bulgarian side was addressing not simply to the public sphere in general, but to its two types – the national and the international one.¹⁰⁴ The international space is, however, regarded as much more important, as both Romania and Bulgaria attempted to gain and keep Dobruja relying not on the local population’s fervent national spirit, but on the decisions and reactions from abroad.¹⁰⁵ The international public sphere could be influenced significantly, drawn from one side to another, however, the national public sphere played a role of a supporting mechanism that did not allow the Dobrujan issue to lose its significance in the eyes of the citizens. Their reaction is extremely hard to trace or to analyze because the outcomes of the dispute in 1940 did not depend almost at all on the reactions of the propaganda auditory inhabiting the province by the time.

The “public actors” executing propaganda were the “local elites”, individuals actively participating in the dispute by producing texts, elaborating strategies and expressing opinions. The definition “elite” in this case refers not to their noble origin or higher social status, but to their “distinguishness” in the terms of the debate. Therefore, the Dobrujan case of claiming rights over the territory is seen as a dispute between two local elites, exchanging arguments between themselves and trying to influence the Great Powers, attracting them to one’s side. This idea determines the themes of the current thesis and the concepts used.

¹⁰² Bertrand Taithe, Tim Thornton, “Propaganda: a misnomer or rhetoric and persuasion?” In B. Taithe and T. Thornton *Propaganda*, 1999, p. 1

¹⁰³ G. Jowett, V. O’Donnell, *Propaganda and persuasion*, London, 2006, p. 13

¹⁰⁴ For further details, see the third chapter, where the wider and narrower types of audience are analyzed.

¹⁰⁵ The importance of the international public sphere and its dominance in the dispute is well analyzed by Antonina Kuzmanova. See A Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова*/A. Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989

2. Literature review.

The literature regarding the specific problem of the Dobrujan dispute between Romania and Bulgaria as well as significant works concentrating on general questions of nation building, territory division and methods of propaganda make only one modest part of the large body of different valuable sources for the current thesis. The works listed and briefly viewed in this section represent some of the publications that proved to be extremely useful for the research of the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute concerning Dobruja (1913-1940).¹⁰⁶ While most of the books investigate the specific Dobrujan case in the terms of European diplomacy and Romanian-Bulgarian policy of integrating it into the state, very little attention is paid to the comparison of Bulgarian and Romanian methods of justifying the rights over the land and to the clash of two propaganda plans regarding nation-building projects in one particular region. For this purpose, several of the following texts will be actively used.

One of the most useful sources, Constantin Iordachi's research regarding the integration of Northern Dobruja in Romania gives an extended perspective on the prelude to the Dobrujan dispute of 1913-1940.¹⁰⁷ The author dedicated the biggest part of the work to the evolution of the perception of Dobruja by the Romanian side, showing and explaining how it gradually changed from the rejection of the land to its acceptance, and then policy of integration of the Northern part of Dobruja into Romania. For the current thesis the most important part will be the analysis of the Romanian debates concerning the region and its appurtenance.

Although the historian focuses his attention on the processes happening in the region and determining its destiny before the period that fits into the timeframes of the thesis, his thorough analysis of propagandistic mechanisms and nation-building strategies is extremely important for the confirmation of the arguments proposed in this research. His book provides an extremely

¹⁰⁶ The primary sources, texts of the participants of the debate, are not listed in the current section and appear in the second and the third chapters, where they are thoroughly analyzed.

¹⁰⁷ Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania*, Pittsburg, 2002

useful material for the analysis of the earlier politic and social situation in the region and reasons that had shaped its later development. The current thesis appeals to Iordachi's analysis of the fusion of the local and global trends in making of citizenship in Romania¹⁰⁸ only in cases when the investigation requires the explanations of processes happening in Romania before 1913 that had framed and influenced the propaganda in 1913-1940.

The work of a Romanian historian George Ungureanu "The question of Cadrilater: Romanian interests and Bulgarian revisionism"¹⁰⁹ deals with the political disputes between Romanians and Bulgarians concerning the appurtenance of Southern Dobruja. The book contains very important archival materials and their analysis. The author describes the Dobrujan problem, viewing it as a major diplomatic issue of the "Great European powers" and their interest, focusing more on the international reaction to the problem. This idea is shared and widely explored in the current thesis when justifying the accent of the propaganda on the international "public sphere", not on the local one.

The source is particularly important because the author successfully manages to demonstrate the perspectives of different sides (not only the Romanian and the Bulgarian one) on the region and finally explains the outcome of the situation from the point of view of international politics – the division of Dobruja and the restitution of its Southern part to Bulgaria. This publication is significant for the thesis mainly because of its focus on the last decisive years before the beginning of the Second World War and on the international context that enables the author to give wider explanations of the Dobrujan case that regards not only the political, but also the social aspects of it.

Antonina Kuzmanova's research¹¹⁰ can be seen as a very thorough investigation of the diplomatic ties surrounding the Dobrujan dispute. The author's view of Southern Dobruja as exclusively Bulgarian territory and her attribution of the Romanian aggressive policy of

¹⁰⁸ Iordachi, op. cit., p. 5

¹⁰⁹ George Ungureanu, *Chestiunea Cadrilaterului: interese romanesti si revizionism bulgar*, București, 2005

¹¹⁰ А Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова*/A. Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989

assimilation to the government of “bourgeoisie and landowners”¹¹¹ is, probably, extremely simplistic and sometimes unreasonable. Nevertheless, the book still provides the reader with the variety of sources used and analysis of opinions (that may be supported or argued by the author) of the participants of the debates. Kuzmanova’s study is primarily useful for the current work because of its focus on the Bulgarian side of the dispute and the international reaction.

The significant work of a major specialist on the Romanian-Bulgarian relations Blagovest Njagulov written together with his colleagues, including Kuzmanova, „The history of Dobruja”¹¹², constructs a very detailed set of events and their evaluation in the terms of the Balkan history. The book, dealing with Northern as well as Southern Dobruja, is probably one of the most important examples of how the Romanian and Bulgarian nation building projects and their overlapping applications can be viewed in one defined region. Njagulov does not argue that Dobruja remained a unique place from the point of view of the bilateral relations of the two neighboring countries; he provides his reader with several interesting parallels such as the Macedonian case for Bulgaria and Romania’s interest in the Vlach population of the Balkans. The book, presumably, gives the most detailed analysis of the attempts of the nationalization of the Dobrujan public space and tries to produce a more „objective” history of the territory.

A German-language research of Schmidt-Rosler¹¹³ can be considered one of the rare examples of works concentrated particularly on the establishment of the Romanian borders with special attention paid to the cases of Dobruja and Banat. The author divides her text in two parts that explore the Romanian strategies first in Dobruja and then in Banat, and compares them with one another. This book serves as an example of an analysis of the national and frontier disputes from different sides: the author not only views the period preceding the First World War, but

¹¹¹ А Кузманова/A. Kuzmanova, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 18

¹¹² *Благовест Нягулов, История на Добруджа*. Велико Търново, 2007/Blagovest Njagulov, *The history of Dobruja*, Veliko Turnovo, 2007.

¹¹³ Andrea Schmidt-Rösler. *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt a-M., 1994.

also comes from the border formation issues to the nationalistic propaganda in the region, paying special attention to the Muslim population of Dobrudja.

The mixed character of the population of the region is thoroughly explored in several works some of which can be distinguished by their anthropological focuses.¹¹⁴ Mostly those books are used as sources of information on the demographic peculiarity of the region and attempts to alter the official statistics. The bigger part of these works examine the quotidienne life of Dobruja or look upon major cultural issues common for the whole Balkan area.

A work more related to the propagandistic issues than to descriptions of the general situation in the region, Stancheva's text,¹¹⁵ gives a brief idea of the representation of Romanians and formation of the opinion about them in the Bulgarian literature. As the big part of the thesis focuses on the creation of the images of one another by the Romanians and Bulgarians, this article can offer a pattern of approaching the idea of this comparison. Although it does not focus specifically on the historical side of the problem, it provides necessary context that can include also historical writings, articles and periodical literature of the chosen epoch that is actively used as primary source for the thesis.

Another important basis of the current research, Radulescu's and Bitoleanu's work,¹¹⁶ may be considered one-sided: it views only the history of the Romanians in Dobruja, sometimes underestimating the role of Byzantine, Ottoman or Bulgarian elements that had constructed the diverse ethnic landscape of the region. However, the book is extremely useful for the research being one of the few, although non-recent, publications that regard specifically the history of the Romanians living in the region and provide the reader with important data. Mostly this publication is regarded as a source for general data on the region. The approach as well as the

¹¹⁴ Стоян Антонов, *Татарите в България*, Добрич, 2004/Stoian Antonov, *Tatars in Bulgaria*, Dobrich, 2004, H.T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*, Columbia, 1993, C.D. Pariado, *Dobrogea și dobrogenii*, Constanta, 1905, Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din istoria turcilor dobrogeni*, București, 1994, Nuredin Ibram, *Comuniataea musulmană din Dobrogea: repere de viață spirituala, viata religioasa si invatamant in limba materna*, Constanta, 1998

¹¹⁵ R. Stancheva, „Les images de roumaine dans la littérature bulgare”, in *Etudes Balcaniques*, Sofia, 1994, nr3

¹¹⁶ Adrian Rădulescu, Ion Bitoleanu. *Istoria românilor dintre Dunăre și Mare: Dobrogea*. București, 1979

organization of the book is not applied to the current study, however, some of the interpretations of the authors are reviewed and reinterpreted in order to fit into the context of the thesis.

The theme of Roumen Daskalov's research¹¹⁷, which is focused specifically on the case of the Bulgarian national revival and the ways of its historiographical interpretations, uses descriptive methods and approaches that may be applied also to the Romanian case. The author reconstructs the „biography” of the Bulgarian national awakening, looking for analogies with Western Renaissance and Enlightenment. The historian also provides a solution that explains the economic and social meanings that the process had occurred in different epochs. This text is essential for the thesis in terms of explanations it may give about the propagandistic strategies used by both sides. Daskalov's attempts to put the Bulgarian national revival in the changing explanatory frames is partially used in the case of the Romanian-Bulgarian propaganda in Dobruja in the current study.

The volume of collected essays edited by Maria Todorova¹¹⁸ presents the variety of national contexts, taking into account almost all the countries of the region and offering an interdisciplinary approach. The texts are important for the thesis, firstly, in terms of historical data they choose, and questions they attempt to answer. The essays try to clarify how the common historical memories are invented, transmitted and commemorated. The book constructs parallels that will be used in the thesis as similar examples or as other sides of similar discourses.

Much influenced by the sources listed above, the current thesis partly owes its structure, principle of the organization of the analysis and plan to Anastasia Karakasidou's study. The book¹¹⁹ researches the converging of the Greek and Bulgarian nationalisms, taking a Macedonian village of Guvezna as an example. The author explores such important aspects of the overlapping nation-building projects and territorial disputes as religious propaganda,

¹¹⁷ Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans. Historiography of the Bulgarian revival Balkan Identities Nation and memory*. Budapest, 2004.

¹¹⁸ Maria Todorova, editor, *Balkan identities: nation and memory*, New York, 2004

¹¹⁹ Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood. Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990*, Chicago, 1997

educational competition and reconstruction of history. Her work, although dealing with Greek Macedonia and not touching the Dobrujan dispute, gives an excellent pattern of approach.

Its methodology was partially borrowed for the current thesis as a logic analysis of two competing parties claiming social and political control over the territory. Accepting the concepts elaborated or found by Karakasidou the thesis introduces her approach to Guvezna and the Macedonian dispute to the Dobrujan case: competing propagandistic projects are viewed as elements contesting culture and conceptualizing ethnicity, the local elites are seen as national agents and the borders are partly regarded as propagandistic constructs. Although the author refers to oral memory as well as written history, this thesis pushes itself within the limits of the propagandistic aspects of the Dobrujan projects of both sides exploiting and highlighting them in various texts produced by the participant from the Romanian and Bulgarian side.

Except for Karakasidou's book that explores the case of Guvezna, several other publications are actively exploited in the terms of similarities. Macedonian case, investigated by several authors, presents an extremely useful example of propagandistic clashes evolving from 1870s and stretching onwards into the 20th century.¹²⁰ Another case that is briefly touched is the Albanian-Serbian dispute over Saint Naum in the 1920s.¹²¹ The researches dedicated to the Soviet propagandistic strategies in forming a nation also become essential for the current work¹²², as well as several publications dealing with the establishment of the borders like the one proposed in Iordachi's research about the process of creating the French-Spanish border.¹²³

Although the books mentioned above provide a theoretical as well as an informative basis for the thesis, the primary sources used in the work, are the texts of Romanian and Bulgarian participants of the debate. The criterium of the choice is determined by the relations of the

¹²⁰ Tchavdar Marinov, *La question macédonienne de 1944 à nos jours: Communisme et nationalisme dans les Balkans*, Paris, 2010, Victor Roudometof, *The Macedonian question: culture, historiography, politics*, New York, 2000.

¹²¹ Robert Austin, *Founding a Balkan State, Albania's experiment with democracy, 1920-1925*, Toronto 2012.

¹²² Dean Martin Terry, *The affirmative action empire: nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, New York, 2001

¹²³ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, Berkeley, 1991.

individuals to the Dobrujan question. In order to limit the frames and avoid the possible unfocused approach the picked out texts are seen only within the terms of their propagandistic aspect. For instance, Nicolae Iorga's works related to Dobruja are not to be analyzed as sources on the Romanian history, but only as products that were used in order to justify Romanian right over Dobruja. The authors whose works are used in the thesis, are primarily the key-figures of the public sphere who were able to publish the materials expressing the agenda they supported. Among them Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, Milan Markov, Atanas Ischirkov, Romulus Seisanu and several others play a very important role.¹²⁴ The references to the works of those persons bring the attention closer to the theoretical framework itself elaborated for the thesis.

3. General theoretical framework.

The current research deals with various aspects of one propagandistic case – a territorial dispute, and for this reason, one of the main analyzing approaches that is used in the study, is that of exploring the propaganda. In Jowett's and O'Donnell's book dedicated to the investigation of the complicated phenomenon of propaganda, the authors propose a ten-step plan of propaganda analysis. Their elaborated pattern is only partially useful for the current thesis, however, it is taken as basis, on which the assumptions and the conclusions regarding the Dobrujan dispute are built.

¹²⁴ Only a few of the sources used are the following: Anastas Ischirkov. *La Dobroudja et les revendications roumaines*. Lausanne, 1918, Milan Markov. *Bulgaria's historical rights to Dobroudja*. Bern 1918, Milan Markov. *Le sort politique de la Dobroudja apres le Congres de Berlin*. Sofia, 1917, С. Чилингиров, *Добруджа Хауето възраждане*,. София, 1917, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen. *La Dobrogea*. Paris, 1918, Ștefan Zeletin. *Din țara măgarilor*. București, 1998, I. N. Roman. "Proiecte, gesturi, cuvinte bulgărești", în *Analele Dobrogei (A. D.)*, anul I, nr. 1, Cernăuți, 1920.

The 10 divisions for investigation given by Jowett and O'Donnell are the following:¹²⁵

1. The ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign
2. The context in which the propaganda occurs
3. Identification of the propagandist
4. The structure of the propaganda organization
5. The target audience
6. Media utilization techniques
7. Special techniques to maximize effect
8. Audience reaction to various techniques
9. Counterpropaganda, if present
10. Effects and evaluation.

As the focus of the research is limited within the frames of one aspect of claiming rights over the territory, the original plan proposed by the two authors mentioned above, is slightly adjusted to the purposes and objectives of the study. Therefore, the approach is determined by the variations in the expression of propaganda in several spheres and by different authors. The chapters are organized thematically according to the sides of propaganda important for the current thesis. Hence, the propaganda campaign is not seen as one solid object for the analysis, but as compilation of several sides that build it up. These parts are investigated with the use of the approach applied to some extent by Anastasia Karakasidou in her book “Hills of wheat, fields of blood”¹²⁶ that presents nation-building processes within propagandistic strategies used predominantly by competing Greek and Slavic parties.

¹²⁵ Taken from Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and persuasion*, London, 2006, p. 270

¹²⁶ See the introduction in Anastasia N. Karakasidou *Fields of wheat, hills of blood.*, Chicago, 1997

Orienting at Karakasiou's approach, the current thesis concentrates on the element of the comparison of the two propagandas expressed mostly in the writings of the Romanian and Bulgarian authors. Propaganda appearing in architecture or art is left aside in this study. The purposes and the ideology, as well as the structure of the propaganda and the target audience are introduced in the second chapter and later viewed from other sides in the following parts. As the media utilization techniques regarded in the research are limited to the published texts of the Romanian and Bulgarian "public actors", this aspect as well as the use of the special techniques is omitted. The identification of the counterpropaganda is not included in the purposes of the thesis as the analysis of the dispute already presupposes the comparison and the evaluation of the strategies implied by both sides.

Basing partly on the pattern proposed by Jowett and O'Donnell, the thesis also refers to some of the articles in the book edited by Ted Smith¹²⁷ that proposes several views on the propagandistic activities, the most important of which for the current research is the publishing one. Similar cases that are listed by the authors are not important for the thesis as such, however, they help in connecting the Dobrujan dispute with analogous precedents that appear in the thesis. One of them that is mentioned several times is the Yugoslavian-Albanian debate over Saint Naum and Vermosh. "Assuming the most significant for both sides", it became "their most fiercely contested border region".¹²⁸ Just like the Dobrujan case, the Saint Naum and Vermosh issue damaged the relations between two neighboring states significantly, having been ceded to the Albanian state in 1921 and 1922.

Robert Austin briefly describes the dispute, pointing out that the territorial battle quickly became an all-European diplomatic issue that could hardly bring Yugoslavia or Albania to a solution accepted by both of them.¹²⁹ Two states tried to influence the European powers, appealing to various propagandistic methods and, in this case, highlighting the essential role of

¹²⁷ Ted Smith, *Propaganda: A pluralistic Perspective*, New York, 1989

¹²⁸ Austin, *Founding a Balkan State. Albania's experiment with Democracy, 1920-1925*, Toronto, 2012, p. 86

¹²⁹ Ibidem

the monastery situated on the contested land. The Yugoslavian-Albanian debate also represents an interesting example of how Noli tried to appeal to propagandistic powers in order to maintain Albanian territorial integrity, just like the Romanian and Bulgarian sides tried to save or bring back the integrity of their own states.

The Albanian-Yugoslavian example will be important for the thesis in the terms of context, as well as the later Soviet experiments in justifying rights over the territory while reforming the nations.¹³⁰ In this aspect the Soviet cases along with the Macedonian one, described in detail by Karakasidou and the Saint Naum debate make just a narrow selection of similar precedents. Public actors in these cases became as important as in the Romanian-Bulgarian one.

The scope of the research does not simply presuppose the analysis of published works justifying rights over the land in the terms of the real statistics, which in many cases seems to be highly dubious. Following Karakasidou's approach, the census data is regarded as "highly suspect" and "of little use other than to illustrate how they were employed for political purposes as part of a numbers game by national powers in the region".¹³¹ Hence, "public actors" are seen as individuals producing texts influential from the propaganda point of view, implying more or less successful manipulations with the data.

The authors and the texts¹³² used in the current research are chosen on the basis of their references to the Dobrujan topic, their support and expression of the causes of one of the two sides, the time of their appearance that fits into the frames between 1913 and 1940 with several of exceptions regarding the earlier stages of the dispute. The authors are chosen from the selection of the significant "public actors" who were for a number of reasons regarded further in

¹³⁰ For further details see Terry Martins, *The affirmative action Empire: nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, New York, 2001

¹³¹ Karakasidou *Fields of wheat, hills of blood*. Chicago, 1997, p. 16

¹³² Some of them are: Ishirkov. *La Dobroudja et les revendications roumaines*. Lausanne, 1918, Markov. *Bulgaria's historical rights to Dobroudja*. Bern 1918, Petrescu-Comnen. *La Dobrogea*. Paris, 1918, Zeletin. *Din țara măgarilor*, București, 1998.

the chapters, interested in the Dobrujan dispute. Being involved in the arguments, they all presented the same case from different points of view. In the thesis their works are analyzed as propaganda, which is regarded above. Among the highlighted aspects remain the ways of the authors to reconstruct history of the land, their characterization of the national identity of the local inhabitants, references to the religious ties and ideas of linguistic dominance of one group over another.

The case of Dobruja in the period 1913-1940 is one of the examples of the way the two neighboring countries divided the territory over which they both have claims (both well-grounded and unreasonable). However, one should underline that the majority of the population of Dobruja throughout the centuries of the Ottoman legacy was neither Romanian, nor Bulgarian, as well as the religious factor used in many similar situations could not be fully introduced in this territorial debate because of the common historical background. The theoretical framework of the thesis, hence, enables to follow the processes happening in the region through the propagandistic aspects of the territorial battle between Romania and Bulgaria.

Chapter II. Romanian and Bulgarian nationalisms, nation-building strategies and their application in Dobruja, 1913-1940.

The Dobrujan dispute can be viewed as typical among the similar debates regarding the contested territories that were formerly part of the collapsed Empire that defined their status for several centuries. Nevertheless, the case is still specific as both Bulgarians and Romanians were considered part of the same millet despite the differences in language and ethnicity, so that the authority did not discern the two nations for a long period of time.¹³³ Anastasia Karakasidou refers to similar argument when describing the process of the establishment of the identities in the Guvezna community in Greek Macedonia. The historian explains that “issues such as vernacular language and religious affiliation, often cited as key aspects of Greek or Bulgarian national identity, became politicized markers only with the onset of the national competition over the region of Macedonia”.¹³⁴ Similarly, Dobruja and the identities of the local inhabitants began to play an important social and political role only after the congress of Berlin in 1878 when Romania had gained the Northern part of the region, which had to be integrated in the state.

The period preceding the Bulgarian-Romanian clash in 1913 is marked by more and less successful attempts of integration applied by both sides in other regions. Similarly to the Dobrujan question, the Macedonian dispute rose great controversy not only in Bulgaria, but on the international arena as well. The borders of autonomous Bulgaria were first drawn at the Constantinople conference in 1876.¹³⁵ Macedonia with the exception of Thrace and its Southern part was included in Bulgaria as recognition of the Bulgarian character of the province. Two years later the Treaty of San-Stefano granted almost the whole of Macedonia (with the exception of Thessaloniki, Aliakmon valley and the Chalcidice peninsula) to Bulgaria, however, the

¹³³ For further details about the population data in the Ottoman Empire before its collapse see Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman population, 1830-1914: demographic and social characteristics*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1985

¹³⁴ Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood*, Chicago, 1997, p. 54

¹³⁵ For further details, see *Conference de Constantinople. Reunions Préliminaires. Compte rendu No. 8. Scéance du 21 décembre 1876. Annexe III Bulgare. Règlement organique*

congress of Berlin that followed gave the bigger part of these lands back to the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁶

The outcomes of the Treaty of Berlin turned Macedonia into a land contested by Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The later emergence of Macedonian national ideology propagated by philologist and historian Misirkov¹³⁷ and several other activists can be viewed to some extent as a reaction of the local elite to the Greek-Serbian-Bulgarian attempts to justify their rights over the land and an effort to overcome the external pressure by uniting the Slavic elements of the region within the idea of “being a Macedonian”. The Macedonian identity could coexist with the Bulgarian one,¹³⁸ nevertheless, the fails of the Bulgarian attempts to integrate Macedonia in the Bulgarian state can be seen as one of the major reasons of the development of the distinct Macedonian separate identity.

The suppression of the Kresna-Razlog uprising, organized by the Bulgarian revolutionaries in 1878-1879, the development of the active Bulgarian propaganda, the creation of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization,¹³⁹ the failure of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie revolt caused Bulgaria to retreat, losing its position in the region. After the Balkan wars weakened Bulgaria had to redirect its propaganda from the lost Macedonia to the lost Dobruja that had been completely taken from the state by Romania Hence, many of the participants of the Dobrujan dispute, like Anastas Ishirkov,¹⁴⁰ were also actively involved in the Macedonian dispute and transmitted many of their strategies applied in the Macedonian case to the Dobrujan one.

¹³⁶ Misha Glenny *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804–1999*, 2000, pp. 135–37.

¹³⁷ John Shea *Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation*, p. 204

¹³⁸ Brian D. Joseph, *When Languages Collide: Perspectives on Language Conflict, Compe and Coexistence*, Ohio State University Press, p. 264.

¹³⁹ Дмитрий Лабаури *Болгарское национальное движение в Македонии и Фракии в 1894–1908 гг., Идеология, программа, практика политической борьбы*, София, 2008/ Dmitri Labauri, *The Bulgarian national movement in Macedonia and Thrace in 1894-1908. Ideology, program, practice of political struggle*, Sofia, 2008

¹⁴⁰ Ishirkov., *La Macédoine et a constitution de l'Exarchat bulgare (1830-1897) avec une carte hors text*, Lausanne, 1918.

Like Bulgaria, Romania faced similar problems of justifying claims over territories and incorporating them. In exchange for Dobruja in 1878 Romania had to cede Bessarabia, a region with a distinct Romanian identity, to Russia.¹⁴¹ After accepting Northern Dobruja, Romania had to adapt its political strategies to the new situation. Constantin Iordachi point out: “Dobrogea was stigmatized as a backward, uncivilized part of the Orient-and it was Romania's noble "European mission" to introduce high culture in the province, so as to extend the boundaries of the west in the Balkans. This self-legitimizing narrative was used to justify the program of cultural assimilation, economic modernization and administrative colonization implemented in Dobrogea”.¹⁴²

These strategies were partially re-used in the dispute of 1913-1940. However, it should be underlined that the appearance of Greater Romania on the European political map made the Dobrujan dispute part of the Romanian internal debates about creating a highly centralized country or a federative state.¹⁴³ The strategies of assimilation and colonization applied in Dobruja turned out to be not suitable for Banat with its population with strongly defined identities.¹⁴⁴ Hence, while Northern Dobruja adopted Romanian identity by the beginning of the 20th century, other provinces that came under Romanian control had in many cases elites of their own that were not always ready to accept the active methods of their assimilation.¹⁴⁵ The focus of the Romanian politics, more concentrated on Transylvanian and Bessarabian issues before the Balkan wars came back to Dobruja again only after 1913.

The process of the incorporation of Northern Dobruja in Romania proved to be rather successful by the end of the Second Balkan War.¹⁴⁶ However, with the transition of the whole province

¹⁴¹ For further details, see Aleksandr Nikolaevich Krupenskiĭ, and Alexandre Ch. Schmidt. “What is the "Bessarabian question."”. S.I.: s.n., 1919.

¹⁴² Iordachi, *Citizenship, nation- and state-building: the integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878-1913*, Pittsburgh, 2002, p. 15

¹⁴³ More detailed accounts on this question are to be found further in the current chapter.

¹⁴⁴ Andrea, Schmidt-Rosler, *Rumanien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 264-279

¹⁴⁵ The Transylvanian elites, for instance, consisted not only of Romanians, but also included German, Hungarian and other elements.

¹⁴⁶ For further details, see Constantin Iordachi, “The California of the Romanians: the integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878-1913” in *Nation-building and contested identities. Romanian and Hungarian case studies*, Budapest, 2001

under the Romanian control the conflict over Dobruja, not only over its Southern part, Cadrilater, but also over its Northern land, started in the light of the new post-war situation that had brought territorial expansions to Romania and losses to Bulgaria. Dobruja's past and present and the national affiliations of the population of the whole region obtained new meaning with the start of the territorial debate.

The dispute concerned the rights over the province that had to match with the nation- and state-building strategies of the two countries. Therefore, the nation-formation in Bulgaria and Romania and the process of building up the propaganda with the scope of the integration of the lost or acquired territories presents a complicated and elaborated phenomenon. By the beginning of the 20th century it had its own paths of development and its own directions, which, although very influenced by the Great Powers, were still designed by the Romanian and Bulgarian sides according to their previous experiences and approaches.

1. Contesting culture and transforming identities: Bulgarian and Romanian state projects.

On the 5th of November 1913 Simeon Radev, a Bulgarian historian, journalist, diplomat and politician, would write to the Bulgarian foreign minister Nikola Genadiev regarding the opinion of the Austrian-Hungarian diplomacy on the place of Dobruja in the Bulgarian-Romanian relations: "Prince Furstenberg has transmitted me his impressions after having talked with the king in the following form: "All the Romanians, beginning with the king, feel the physical superiority of the Bulgarian race over the Romanian one."¹⁴⁷ They are convinced that even within the limits of today's borders Bulgaria will become the biggest military might among the Balkan

¹⁴⁷ It should be noted that Radev's use of the word "race" is more relevant to the superior cultural and historical heritage of the Bulgarians, rather than exactly the bloodline, which he does not present as an argument later.

states”.¹⁴⁸ This account made in 1913 by Radev still preserves the traces of doubt about the seriousness of the Romanian plans concerning Cadrilater, the Southern part of the region. Radev, being engaged in the diplomatic affairs, which later resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest and himself remaining minister plenipotentiary in the Romanian capital, fully realized that the treaty would lead to miserable consequences and the loss of lands, unless Bulgaria adapted to the situation. Radev’s country had to continue considering itself the greatest power on the Balkans, providing itself with a sort of a self-oriented propaganda that had to influence also its opponents and potential allies.¹⁴⁹

Just like Bulgaria, Romania had to adopt the strategies that could allow the fully incorporation of Dobruja into the country to be presented as a natural outcome of the state-building process that had already put its roots in the “prepared” soil.¹⁵⁰ For the Romanian side the mere idea of the annexation of Cadrilater first appeared to be almost as contradictory as the previous dispute regarding Northern Dobruja.¹⁵¹ In the 40s Mihail Manoilescu, a Romanian journalist, politician and later Foreign Minister, would write about the annexation of Cadrilater: “The research of the documents of the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1913, undertaken by the officials of the Ministry on my orders, did not discover even a trace of justification for the annexation of Cadrilater other than the idiotic argument related to the strategic border, doubled by the shameful argument of the compensation for Bulgarian territorial growth”.¹⁵² Nevertheless,

¹⁴⁸ “Из доклад на пълномощния министър в Букурещ С. Радев до министъра на външните работи Н. Генадиев относно мнението на австро-унгарската дипломация за мястото на Добруджа в българо-румънските отношения”/“From the report of the entrusted minister in Bucharest S. Radev to the foreign minister N. Genadiev regarding the opinion of the Austrian-Hungarian diplomacy on the place of Dobruja in the Bulgarian-Romanian relations”, 1913, published in “Извори за историята на Добруджа”, София, 1992/ “Sources about the history of Dobruja”, Sofia, 1992, p. 237

¹⁴⁹ For further details on Radev’s views and considerations about the period preceding and following the treaty of Berlin see his significant work Симеон Радев, *Строителите на съвременна България*, т. 1,2, София, 1973/, Simeon Radev, *The builders of the modern Bulgaria*, v. 1,2, Sofia, 1973.

¹⁵⁰ The propaganda in art and architecture of Dobruja is left aside in the thesis. The analysis of the international reaction is presented in the third chapter as well as the analysis of the audience and its reactions.

¹⁵¹ For further details on the reactions to the possibilities of acquiring Cadrilater see Keith Hitchins *Romania (1866-1947)*, Bucuresti, 1998, p. 153-157; Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building*, pp. 9-10 and Ungureanu, *Chestiunea Cadrilaterului. Interese romanesti si revizionism bulgar, 1938-1940*, Bucuresti, 2005, pp. 19-25 For further details on the controversies in the Romanian society regarding the Northern Dobruja before and after 1878 see Кузманова. *От Ньой до Крайова: / Kuzmanova, From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989, pp. 18-19

¹⁵² Manoilescu, *Dictatul de la Viena, Memorii: iulie-august 1940*, Bucuresti, 1991, p. 179.

in spite of all possible reactions to the annexation of the territory, its later loss and regain in 1919 and the later establishment of the border between Romania and Bulgaria dividing Dobruja into two parts in 1940, both countries had to develop the strategies of incorporating the whole of the region into their states. Moreover, those methods had to be generated by Romanian and Bulgarian nationalistic propaganda.

Marius Turda points out in his article about public discourse and historical representation in contemporary Romania: “Similar to other East European nationalisms, the Romanian nationalism combines an ethnic essentialist philosophy (as developed in the 19th century) with a suffused authoritarianism (determined by the image of the Nation-State), and a traditionalism that attempts to preserve the Romanian nation from external and internal menaces”.¹⁵³ The question that comes out of this affirmation deals more with the methods serving this nationalism pattern than with the essence of the phenomenon itself. The idea of integrating a highly non-homogeneous part of land taken from Bulgaria, establishing once again the new border seemed to be a highly difficult task for the Romanian state-building project. Bulgarian scope, however, was not to let the region being fully integrated into Romania.

Bulgarian attempts to achieve this aim resulted in the creation of several revolutionary organizations in Dobruja that were struggling against the Romanian authorities and their power in the region. Founded on the basis of the Great convention of Dobruja that was opposing the transition of Southern Dobruja to Romania after 1919 the Internal Dobrujan revolutionary organization requested the autonomy of the region with later possibilities of integrating the land into either the Communist Federation or even in the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴ The Bulgarian Internal Dobrujan revolutionary organization actively gathered armed bands for the scope of attacking the Romanian authorities and Vlach and Romanian colonists brought from other parts of

¹⁵³ Marius Turda, “Transylvania revisited: Public discourse and historical representation in contemporary Romania” published in Trencsenyi, Petrescu D, Petrescu C etc.(ed.) *Nation-building and contested identities: Romanian and Hungarian case studies*, Budapest, 2001, p. 198.

¹⁵⁴ See Володя Милачков/ Volodja Milachkov, in Нягулов *История на Добруджа/ Njagulov The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, pp. 341-407

Romania and the Balkans. The Romanian side called the bands “komitadji”, using the term that originally implied the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, but not the Dobrujan Bulgarian community.¹⁵⁵

Bulgaria’s state-building project regarding Dobruja was mainly concentrated on contesting Romanian identities in the region convincing the local Bulgarians to struggle for their right to be Bulgarian. As Dobruja, Southern and Northern, was not the only territory important for Bulgaria, the strategies applied in the Dobrujan case, were sometimes similar to those used in Macedonia.¹⁵⁶ Andrea Schmidt-Rosler explains the emergence of the anti-Romanian gangs as the reaction not only to the transition of the territory, but also to the Bulgarian propaganda that had to prove that Dobruja was a vitally important part of the Bulgarian state.¹⁵⁷

Schmidt-Rosler notes that while the protest “probably as a kind of self-defense came from the population itself, the political motives derived from Bulgaria being influenced mainly by emigrants from Southern Dobruja. Appearing from Northern Bulgaria the intensive propaganda in Cadrilater operated to mobilize the Bulgarian population to fight against the Romanian rule through the newspapers, leaflets and agents. Behind this propaganda stood the emigrants’ organizations in Northern Bulgaria and Sofia; however, according to the Romanian propaganda statements it came directly from the Bulgarian government”.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Bulgarian government itself did not seem to have strong control over the Dobrujan organizations that acted, in many cases independently and without accordance with the Bulgarian central powers. Yet the Bulgarian government managed to achieve the scope of attracting part of foreign

¹⁵⁵ Schmidt-Rosler, *Rumanien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 101

¹⁵⁶ For further details on the Macedonian question see Georgi Bazhdarov, *La question macédonienne dans le passé et le présent*, 2nd ed, Sofia, 1926 and Victor Roudometof *Collective memory, national identity, and ethnic conflict Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian question* Westport, 2002

¹⁵⁷ Schmidt-Rosler, *Rumanien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, pp. 101-103

¹⁵⁸ Ibidem

attention to the Dobrujan dispute, trying to balance between Germany, France, newly emerged Turkey and several other world and European Powers.¹⁵⁹

Although the United States insisted on the Dobrujan question being solved on the peace conference in Paris in 1919, showing some support for the Bulgarian side,¹⁶⁰ the conference gave no significant result even with the actively used Bulgarian argument of the unification of the nation. Romania no longer could successfully appeal to the idea of “Bulgarian danger” after occupying Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina¹⁶¹ and fulfilling the plan of Greater Romania. Since 1919 until the signing of the Treaty of Craiova Dobruja became a region for Bulgarian rather badly organized attempts to mobilize the local Bulgarian population and prevent the Romanian side to assimilate and colonize the region.

For Romania Dobruja, especially its newly acquired Southern part, turned into a territory open for the active propaganda that had to shape the Romanian identity and culture of the province. For this scope, the propaganda had to come from the state and embrace all the possible sides of life in Dobruja.¹⁶² It had to attract the settlers, Aromanians, or migrants from other parts of the country by offering them place to stay and land to cultivate, creating and building flourishing Romanian culture in the region and justifying territorial claims over the lands. The “blooming Romanian culture”¹⁶³, hardly existent in Northern Dobruja before 1878 and almost inexistent in Cadrilater before 1913, required state investments, but even more than that, it was in need of its representatives, whose roles and methods of “acting” are thoroughly analyzed in the following chapter. In the current part, several of the texts that appear later are briefly seen as contemporary reflections about the processes happening in Romania and Bulgaria that enable the

¹⁵⁹ The involvement of the foreign powers and modernization projects are viewed in the fourth chapter.

¹⁶⁰ Kuzanova/Kuzmanova in Нягулов, *История на Добруджа/ Njagulov The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, p. 275

¹⁶¹ Ibidem

¹⁶² Нягулов, *История на Добруджа/ Njagulov The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, pp. 290-301

¹⁶³ For further details on the general cultural aspects in interwar Romania see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, 1995

observer to facilitate and clarify the understanding of the whole practice of contesting culture and identities in Dobruja in 1913-1940.

The texts of several active participants of the territorial debate from both sides that play the most important analytic role in the current thesis present interesting reflections about the arguments the Romanian and Bulgarian sides commonly used to generate the idea of the truly Romanian or truly Bulgarian region. Although having different backgrounds, the authors usually presented similar patterns of approach to the question. They appealed to natural right and to the pronouncedly Romanian/Bulgarian character of the province.

The mere notion of “pronouncedly Romanian or Bulgarian character” had to find its manifestation in the cultural identity of the province and its population (in many cases unaware of their truly Romanian or Bulgarian identity and affiliation) that had to be described by individuals who willingly or unwillingly entered the territory of the Dobrujan debate. Among those people were not only eminent historians like Iorga or Mutafchiev, diplomats, journalists or philosophers, but, for instance, a painter.¹⁶⁴ Although the texts, from which the information is taken, belong to different genres, presenting memoirs, novels, leaflets, educational pamphlets or material for a speech at the conference, all of them can be united by the idea of their relation to Dobruja and its place as part of the Romanian or Bulgarian state.

Anastas Ishirkov¹⁶⁵ in his work “The Bulgarians in Dobruja” already in the introduction states the argument of Dobruja being the natural continuation of the Bulgarian state; generally, every border shaping following the treaty of San-Stefano is presented by the author as a contradictory act of depriving the Bulgarian nation of a chance to develop within its natural borders.¹⁶⁶ The text begins with the history of the first Bulgarian kingdom (679-1018)¹⁶⁷ and gradually comes to 1919. The author’s ideas of the Bulgarian nation in Dobruja are limited

¹⁶⁴ As an example see Vladescu’s book - Christian M. Vlădescu, *Bulgarii: memorile unui ofițer român fost prizonier în Bulgaria*, București, 1926.

¹⁶⁵ Also transliterated as Ichirkov and Ischircov depending on the source and the language of publication.

¹⁶⁶ Ischirkoff, *Les bulgares en Dobroudja. Aperçu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, pp. 8-10

¹⁶⁷ Ibidem, p.11

within the realization not only of rights over the region, but of the “price” paid for the integration of the region.

Unlike Romanians, Bulgarians, according to Ishirkov, did not need to “colonize” Dobruja they had to mobilize the existing Bulgarian elements in order to regain the territory that was “paid by blood”. Ishirkov writes: “The peace of Bucharest in 1918 provoked the great disillusion among the Dobrujan population, especially among the Bulgarians from Northern Dobruja, who had thought that they were forever delivered to the Romanian yoke. They could not understand how, after all the sacrifices of the Bulgarian people, they could again become the exchange coin for the foreign economical and political interests”.¹⁶⁸ Describing the National congresses of Dobruja, Ishirkov highlights the existence of the “Bulgarian-feeling” and “Bulgarian-thinking” audience, the “affirmed nation” that was already present in the land.¹⁶⁹ The author however, omits any particular Romanian, Tatar, Turkish or any other element of the varied population of the region.

Milan Markov, another Bulgarian voice in the debate, would present very similar arguments stating that the Bulgarian resistance within Dobruja, the Romanian attempts of colonization and the integration of the whole region into Romania “constitutes in itself the most striking demonstration, originating from Romania itself, as to the undisputable Bulgarian character of Dobroudja”.¹⁷⁰ Attacking the Romanian policy of assimilating the region and “changing its (predominantly Bulgarian, according to the author) identity, Markov points out: “And since the real complexion of the country was of just such a nature, since Dobroudja was totally alien to Romania, it was quite natural that the assimilation should also be of a violent nature”.¹⁷¹ Here the polemics acquired new traits, being driven towards the edges of the clashes

¹⁶⁸ Ischirkoff, pp. 126-127

¹⁶⁹ A year before 1919, Ischirkoff published another book regarding the problem of the appurtenance of Dobruja region featuring similar themes, but with a stronger economical and political accent. See Ishirkov, *La Dobroudja; géographie, histoire, ethnographie, importance économique et politique*, Sofia, 1918

¹⁷⁰ Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1919, p. 32

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15

of two cultural programs - the Romanian and the Bulgarian one – both aimed at presenting generally to the foreign and to a much less extent to the local (Romanian and Bulgarian) audience – the centers of the Romanian and Bulgarian culture.

Very similar accounts of the Bulgarian contemporaries, but presented from another point of view, less oriented on the interpretations of the historical events (like in the case of Ischirkoff, for instance), the “Memoir from the Central National Council of Dobroudja to the representatives of the states called together to restore the peace among the nations” generally refers to Bulgarian ideas of constructing Greater Bulgaria with its homogeneous population and fighting against the “unbearable Romanian oppression”.¹⁷² The attacks directed to the Romanian domination in Dobruja, generally refer to the atrocities committed by the local authorities. In some cases they appeal to supporting evidence and in some absolutely neglect these aspects: “In normal times the inhabitants of Dobroudja had even under the Turks all the liberties and almost all the guarantees, which they are having now under the Romanians”....., however, they had “equal rights”, which the Romanians could not secure to them”.¹⁷³

In later texts, the authors viewed the problem similarly; however, knowing better the outcomes of the Treaty of Bucharest, they paid more attention to the social and economic sides of the dispute. Ivan Penakov, for instance, would view Dobruja not simply as an essential center of the Bulgarian culture, but also as a province that could allow the Bulgarian nation to prosper.¹⁷⁴ Hence, the author introduced not only the argument of “natural development of the nation”, but also the “competing state-building projects”, which matters for the current part.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² “Memoir from the Central National Council of Dobroudja to the representatives of the states called together to restore the peace among the nations”, Sofia, 1919, p. 42.

¹⁷³ Ibidem. 25

¹⁷⁴ See Ivan, Penacoff, *Le problem de la Dobroudja de Sud. Un aspect economique et social de ce problem.*, Paris, 1928

¹⁷⁵ The modernization projects connected to the region are viewed in the fourth chapter.

Like the Bulgarian side, the Romanian one had to generate elaborated propagandistic strategies in order to construct an image of the Romanian Dobruja. “The Dobrogea”¹⁷⁶ edited by professor Vasile Stoica, openly referred to “Romania’s civilizing work in the region”¹⁷⁷. Bulgarian activists apparently viewed these “civilizing actions” as the already mentioned “Romanian oppression”. In accordance with Iorga’s “What do we represent in Dobruja?”¹⁷⁸ published almost ten years before the treaty of Bucharest was signed, Stoica’s work preserves familiar intonations appealing to Romania’s Roman heritage in Dobruja that had to be claimed because without this piece of land stretching from the Black sea to the Danube, Romania as a state and Romanians as a nation turned to be incomplete.

The idea of “colonization” for making a nation “complete” was very thoroughly elaborated by another Romanian author, Romulus Seisanu, in his very detailed book that regards all the aspects of the region from its natural resources and ethnical structure in different periods to the political history of the province. The colonization of the region, mainly by migrants from Macedonia, is viewed as a compensation for the human losses in the war of 1877-1878.¹⁷⁹ In the part called “Exceptional regime and the constitution of Dobruja”¹⁸⁰ the author underlines the importance of the Romanian state as well as nation being “indivisible” and regulated according to the “exceptional constitution”¹⁸¹. Generally, the Romanian side was compensating the absence of existing flourishing Romanian culture in Cadrilater before 1913 by the claims of having an “exceptionally” successful regime that assured the prosperity of the region within the borders of Romania.

It should be noted that even in the Romanian case it is impossible to talk about one project of centralization that included Dobruja as just one of the provinces that had to be fully

¹⁷⁶ Vasile Stoica ed. *The Dobrogea*, New York, 1919

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 13-18

¹⁷⁸ Nicolae Iorga, *Ce reprezintă în Dobrogea? ”idei din conferința ținută în ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga*, Valenii de munte, 1910

¹⁷⁹ R Seisanu, *Dobrogea, Țara Dunării și insula Serpilor*, București, 1928, pp. 181-187

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 202

¹⁸¹ Ibidem. Apparently, by “exceptional constitution” Seisanu views the “progressive and innovative Romanian law”.

integrated and assimilated. The Romanian National Party in Transylvania and Banat with Iuliu Maniu and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod even before the union with the Old Kingdom (Wallachia and Moldova) supported the idea of creating a federative state.¹⁸² While one of the main parties in the country that had obtained significant power favored the idea of the making of autonomous provinces, the National Liberal Party had imposed its doctrine oriented on high centralization of the country.

The inevitable clash of two parties resulted in Romania allying with Entente in 1916 and Ion Bratianu's domination in the Romanian politics, which explains active attempts of centralization. However, in 1919 the Peasant Party, opposing Bratianu's Liberal Party, managed to achieve significant influence for a short period of time, failing in 1922.¹⁸³ Consequently, the Dobrujan debate coincided with the dispute concerning the administrative organization of Romania. Arguing with Bratianu's views, Constantin Stere expressed his ideas about the federative state, referring to principles of national sovereignty and local autonomy several of the regions had under foreign rule.¹⁸⁴ According to Stere the attempts of forced unification of already emancipated regions could not achieve any desirable result of "unity".¹⁸⁵

The same opinion, more related to a "wish for more voluntary options" than to actual political autonomy, was expressed by Iuliu Maniu, who wisely noted in 1919: "When I declared the unification, I declared it unconditionally, without reserving special provincial rights, because I have been and I am still faithfully believing that unified Romania should be one within its legislative parts, one within its governance, one within its spirit, thought in all the public institutions of the state".¹⁸⁶ Therefore, the main tendency of the Romanian state-building projects was still that of creating a highly centralized country, and propaganda related to the integration

¹⁸² Ioan Scurtu, *Din viața politică a României (1926-1947) – Studiu critic privind istoria Partidului Național-Tărănesc*, București, 1983, pp. 12-13

¹⁸³ Ibidem

¹⁸⁴ "Anteproiect de Constitutie intocmit de sectia de studii a Partidului Taranesc", with the expression of the motives by Stere published in "Viata Romaneasca", Bucuresti, 1922, pp. 44-45

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem

¹⁸⁶ "Dezbaterile Adunarii deputatilor, sesiunea ordinara 1919-1920, sedinta din 22 decembrie 1919" in Expozeul d-lui Iuliu Maniu la Camera in Patria, Cluj, 1919, p. 219

of the provinces was in the majority of cases regulated and supported by the state,¹⁸⁷ which, however, admitted the existence of other opinions regarding the policies in the regions of the state.

2. Shifting ethnical boundaries: homogenization processes in the region.

Facing the problem of the region's non-homogeneous population, both Romania and Bulgaria had to introduce active cultural propaganda aimed at the foreign powers, who could decide the destiny of the province by supporting one or another party, at colonizers from the Romanian side and emigrants from the Bulgarian side and at the public opinion forming in both countries. However, the propaganda could not have had full influence without the application of its ideas in practice, as it was functioning not only in order to create the image of Romanian or Bulgarian Dobruja, but also in order to facilitate the creation of such reality. One of the most important of the scopes that had appeared before Romania since the inclusion of Northern Dobruja in 1878 and had to emerge once again in 1913 was the need to shift ethnic boundaries in the province. Bulgaria, similarly, had to face the same problem connected with the land's multiethnic character and its numerous Muslim population that could be seen as an obstacle on the way to forming a homogeneous state.

For almost four centuries, Dobruja remained a vilayet (province) under the Ottoman Administration. Nuredin Ibram notes that it was included in the sanjak Silistra that made a part of the vilayet of Rumeli with its center first in Edirne and then in Sofia (in the Tanzimat period sanjak Tulcea was established within the region).¹⁸⁸ The governor, "sanjak-bey" executed the administrative power in the territory and had several assistants from different districts, "kazas".

¹⁸⁷ As it was mentioned previously, the Bulgarian government did not have such a control over pro-Bulgarian propaganda in Dobruja, for instance.

¹⁸⁸ Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmana din Dobrogea. Repere de viata spirituala. Viata religioasa si invatamant in limba maternal*, Constanta, 1998, p. 43

The Christian population of Dobruja until 1878 was exposed to paying the “cizye” (the head-tax) and the “ispence”(a land tax for non-Muslims).¹⁸⁹ After the Russian-Turkish war, however, the roles changed dramatically. From a privileged ethno-religious group of the Muslim Empire the Dobrujan Muslims turned into a minority squeezed between two newly emerged national states – Bulgaria and Romania.

Ali Eminov in his text dedicated to the destinies of Turks and Tatars in the Balkans writes:

Attempts at cultural homogenization can take various forms: a state can try to maintain the illusion of cultural homogeneity by denying the existence of minorities on its territory; it can recognize the existence of minorities, grant them certain rights, and try to integrate them into society; it can try to assimilate minorities into the majority culture; or it can try to get rid of minority populations through population exchanges, expulsion, or, in extreme cases, genocide. One or more of these strategies have been used by all Balkan states in dealing with their minority populations.¹⁹⁰

The case of Dobruja in 1878-1900 was the one of attempting to integrate the minorities into the Romanian-Bulgarian society, the case of the same province in 1913-1940 was the one of trying to get rid of them if they did not wish to make part of the Romanian national state.

In his “Proclamation to the inhabitants of Dobruja” on the 14th of November 1878 in Braila king Carol I of Romania addressed the Muslim “citizens” of the country, saying that “the Romanian law does not recognize national and religious differences. Your faith, your family would be protected just like those of the Christians. Religious and family affairs will be trusted upon the muftis and the judges chosen in accordance with your law”.¹⁹¹ The rights of the Dobrujan Muslims were defined by the Constitution of 1866 in Romania and by the Turnovo Constitution of 1879 in Bulgaria.¹⁹² Both of the constitutions granted to the Tatar-Turkish population the

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem

¹⁹⁰ Ali Eminov, “Turks and Tartars in Bulgaria and the Balkans” *Nationalities Papers*, 28 (March 2000) 1, p. 129

¹⁹¹ G. Ilioniu, *Culte in Dobrogea* quoted in C. Bratescu “Cincizeci de ani de viata romaneasca”, *Analele Dobrogei, Vucuresti*, 1928, p. 608

¹⁹² Йелис Еролова, *Добруджа. Граници и идентичности*/Ielis Erolova, *Dobruja: borders and identities*, Sofia, 2010, p. 36

rights equal with those of the Romanians or Bulgarians. However, in both cases, Islam was no more the official religion of the state, and the Muslims in Dobruja turned into a “minority”.

From 1913, the political situation in the region was changing dramatically after the Balkan wars and the annexation of Dobruja by Romania, the return of Cadrilater to Bulgaria, the rule of the Condominium in Northern Dobruja, the occupation of the whole region by Romania and, finally, its division in 1940. Ielis Ierlova points out that by 1884 100,000 Muslims, including a great number of those from Dobruja, left Bulgaria by 1918.¹⁹³ The reasons for their emigration from the region were more complex than their sudden turn into a religious minority in Romania and Bulgaria. They were connected with the extremely unstable political situation in the province after the Balkan wars, the active homogenization policies introduced by the Romanian government and dramatic changes in their lifestyles that had to be adapted to the new rule.

Dobruja had to proceed a long way of nearly a century to turn from a place with a strikingly diverse population and a major Muslim Turkish and Tatar element^{194, 195} to a highly homogeneous territory shared by two neighboring national states, Romania and Bulgaria in 1940. In addition, the process of homogenization was not fully concentrated only on the Muslim inhabitants (predominantly Turks and Tatars)¹⁹⁶, but also focused on Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews, Lipovans and any other possible minority. The originality of the homogenization campaign held by Romania and actively opposed to by Bulgaria was expressed not in its methods or the essence of the situation itself, but in the extremely mixed character of the province, which made it different from similar cases.

¹⁹³ Ibidem

¹⁹⁴ Schmidt Rossler, *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Mein, 1994, pp. 17-26

¹⁹⁵ It should be noted that before 1913 there did not exist any precise data (archival evidence or ethnographic researches) on the ethnic structure of the Muslim population, which is viewed mostly as “Turkish” or simply defined by its Muslim faith. The Bulgarian and Romanian (as well as the Greek, Lipovan etc) inhabitants of Dobruja knew that their neighbors did not always belong to the same national group, but they primarily saw the Dobrujan Muslims as members of one community.

¹⁹⁶ F. Kellog, *The road to Romanian independence*, Purdue University, West Lafayette, 1995, p. 198

Similarly to Albania in 1912-1913 and then in the 20s, Bulgaria had the borders that “were the product of geopolitical concerns” ensuring that “eager for revision would play an important role in the political struggle”.¹⁹⁷ In the 20s economically weak Albania, being on its way to building a homogeneous state was engaged into the disputes with Yugoslavia and Greece.¹⁹⁸ The territorial debate over the monastery of Saint Naum between Yugoslavia and Albania quickly turned from “the affair little more than a feud over grazing ground with no political overtones”¹⁹⁹ to the most actual problem that made Fan Noli appeal abroad and develop a propaganda campaign very similar to the Dobrujan one from the Bulgarian side.

While Yugoslav foreign minister Nincic would remark on the possibility of ceding Saint Naum that “no Serbian government could survive which consented to surrender territory which was already Serbian”.²⁰⁰ The final result of the dispute was achieved through the negotiations between Pasic and king Zogu, who finally decided to abandon claims to Vermosh and Saint Naum in favor of the dialogue with Yugoslavia. The Romanian-Bulgarian dispute lasted for almost 3 decades and resulted in the division of the territory and producing a much more significant published propaganda material, featuring a larger number of participants. In the Albanian-Yugoslav case the contested land, however, was also subject to homogenization processes, although they can hardly be compared to the ones in Greek Macedonia or Romanian Dobruja. Karakasidou points out that after 1912 the presence of Greece had the official character: the homogenization process, like in Romania was happening under the supervision of the omnipresent authorities, who were pressing out everything that could be grasped as foreign.²⁰¹ Karakasidou also notes one very essential feature that has its importance for Dobruja as well. She affirms that the nation of Hellenes was “largely an abstract entity that was invoked

¹⁹⁷ Austin, *Founding a Balkan state*, Toronto, 2012, p. 14

¹⁹⁸For further details on the Greek-Albanian border conflicts see Basil, Kondis “The Albanian question at the beginning of 1920 and the Greek-Albanian protocol of Kapestitsa, May 28th, 1920”, *Balkan studies* 20, no. 2, 1979

¹⁹⁹ Austin, op. cit, p. 85

²⁰⁰ Nincic cited in Austin, Robert C, op. cit, p. 87

²⁰¹ Karakasidou., *Fields of wheat, hills of blood*, Chicago, 1997, p. 162

and symbolized through flags, schools, holiday celebrations”²⁰², while “the state had a very concrete existence to area residents, embodied in the form of civil administrators, tax collectors, and policemen posted to the village”.²⁰³

Unlike Bulgaria that lost Dobruja once again after the treaty of Bucharest, Romania had an opportunity to establish a state control that allowed the country to put into practice the technologies Bulgaria could only describe and criticize in texts. In addition, the Romanian attempts of homogenization did find a reaction from the Bulgarian side, which was interested in undermining the Romanian program of the integration of the region. The texts generally reflect the criticism expressed by Bulgarians and reports on the successes made by Romanians. It should be noted that while the bigger part of the well-spread pro-Bulgarian texts²⁰⁴ are written in English, French or German and less often in Bulgarian, the Romanian analogues are generally published in Romanian, although many of the texts may have also a French or a German version.

Milan Markov, one of the prominent Bulgarian voices in the territorial dispute primarily referred to the Romanian fails in dealing with Dobruja after 1913, explaining that they were the result of Romania’s inability to be satisfied with the Dobrujan frontier and attempts to integrate the land that had never been Romanian.²⁰⁵ The author also appealed to the opinion of Vasile Kogalniceanu, son of Mihail Kogalniceanu, who, opposite to his father in 1878, did not approve of the idea of Dobruja being part of Romania, viewing the province as an absolutely unnecessary and even politically dangerous piece of land for Romania’s state border.²⁰⁶ Markov explicitly described the Romanian oppressions of Bulgarians in Dobruja, referring again to Vasile Kogalniceanu, who wrote: “Dobroudja was turned into a colony in which the officials who were guilty of misdeeds were being exiled, to whom a free hand to rob the local population was

²⁰² Ibidem, op. cit, p. 163

²⁰³ Ibidem

²⁰⁴ The thorough analysis of the texts and their arguments related concretely to territorial claims is to be found in the next chapter.

²⁰⁵ Milan Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1919, p. 10

²⁰⁶ Vasile Kogalniceanu *Dobrogea 1879-1909, drepturi politice fara libertati*, Bucuresti, 1910

given”.²⁰⁷ Very similar ideas were expressed by Ischirkoff and Penakov, both of whom tried to point out Romania’s inability to hold Dobruja because of the attempts to alter its demographical landscape by force, which apparently did not bring the expected results.²⁰⁸

Romanian authors demonstrated an opposite approach to the problem presenting the successes of Romania’s policy of colonization. Apostol Culea in his book about Dobruja published in 1929 presented the colonization of the province as a benevolent factor that could allow the uncultivated deserted lands to become fertile once again.²⁰⁹ It should be noted that the author did not omit the presence of Bulgarians in the region. He dedicated several parts of the text to the history of Bulgarian settlers, featuring them as “minorities” similarly to the local Turks and Tatars.²¹⁰

Definitely, in the eyes of the Bulgarian authors they were not the “minorities”, but the masters of Dobruja. Generally, in this aspect it seems almost impossible to rely on the demographical data from both sides, as it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that the information could easily be corrupted. Except for the possibilities of altering the results of the census, favoring one side and diminishing the other one, there existed another way of representation of Romanian or Bulgarian presence in the region – the description of the achieved successes and their presentation to the public, mainly to the foreign one in the Romanian case.

It should be noted that the real state of affairs in Dobruja did not play the most crucial role for the propaganda coming from several of the texts mentioned. The two main scopes from both sides were the attraction of the Great Powers in order either to gain the territory back or to hold it and the justification of the reasonability of the policy in the region in the eyes of the local

²⁰⁷ Markov, op. cit, p. 18

²⁰⁸ See Penacoff, *Le problem de la Dobroudja de Sud. Un aspect economique et social de ce problem*, Paris, 1928, Ischirkoff, *Les bulgares en Dobroudja. Apercu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919

²⁰⁹ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 209

²¹⁰ Ibidem, pp.150-163

public. The general successes and possible “expansions for the future”²¹¹ can be viewed as pretexts for occupying and holding Dobruja by the Romanian side, however, the situation turns out to be more complicated than a simple competition for the land on which a nation could be affirmed or a continuation of the debate of 1878. The Dobrujan dispute of 1913-1940 embraces the whole of Dobruja, not only its Northern part and goes beyond the borders of simple regional contest of powers, being transformed into a subject of international relations.²¹²

Dobruja after 1913 became a land where not only Romanian and Bulgarian competing state and nation-building projects clashed and the idea of Greater Romania faced the idea of Greater Bulgaria, but also a place where two competing modernization projects, two arguing elites, two perceiving local audiences and watching and acting foreign powers came along together and collided.²¹³ These factors being driven all together present the complicated picture of the Dobrujan dispute, seen through several texts of the participants of the debate and the reasons and outcomes of their activities. The idea of the clash of propaganda and reality appears to be one of the main motives that describe the general course of the debate that first finds its reflection in the published works of the contemporaries and later continues in the Romanian and Bulgarian historiography.

²¹¹ Iorga, “*Ce represintam in Dobrogea?*” *idei din conferinta tinuta in ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga*, Valenii de munte, 1910, p. 22

²¹² Кузманова *От Ньой до Крайова*/ Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989

²¹³ The two following chapters of the thesis analyze and investigate the mentioned aspects of the dispute not touched in the current part. For the clearer understanding of the concepts and secondary sources used refer to the first chapter.

Chapter III. The Dobrujan dispute 1913-1940: claiming rights over the territory and creating propaganda.

In 1914, after Romania had established control over Dobruja, the so-called “Dobruja brotherhood” was created as one of the reactions from the Bulgarian side to the annexation of the Southern part of the territory. The aims of the society were simple: the cultural support of the Bulgarians in “enslaved Dobruja” and their unification with the Bulgarians from “free Bulgaria”, moral and material help to the Dobrujans and actions following the way of political intervention for the improvement of the situation in “enslaved Dobruja”, the preservation of Bulgarian schools, political and religious freedoms.²¹⁴ The “Dobruja brotherhood”, unlike the Bulgarian revolutionary organizations active in the region since its complete transition to Romania,²¹⁵ was generally a propaganda-oriented society that attempted to weaken the Romanian position in the province and strengthen the Bulgarian one within the limits of possibilities.

The Bulgarian propaganda campaign can hardly be seen as a complete state project. As it was mentioned in the previous part, the state did sustain the Bulgarian revolutionary organizations and did encourage the creation and distribution of the materials supporting the Bulgarian cause, however, in many cases the organizations were not directly dependent on the Bulgarian government and acted according to their own interests.²¹⁶ The members of the revolutionary organizations, as well as the individuals associated with the “Dobrujan brotherhood” quickly became the people engaged in the process of generating texts that had to help in accomplishing several important goals Bulgaria had in Dobruja in order to justify its rights over the land. Among these objectives were the resistance to the Romanian propagandistic

²¹⁴ «Устав на братство Добруджа»/“The regulations of the Dobruja brotherhood”, 1914, published in *Извори за историята на Добруджа*, София, 1992/ *Sources about the history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 1992, pp. 242-243

²¹⁵ See Милачков/Milachkov in Нягулов, *История на Добруджа*/Njagulov *The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, pp. 341-407

²¹⁶ For further details see Л. Златев, L Zlatev, *Вътрешната добруджанска революционна организация (ВДРО) 1923 - 1940 г*/The Internal Dobrujan revolutionary organization (VDRO) 1923-1940, Русе, 2009/ Ruse, 2009.

machine, the stimulation of the solidarity and pro-Bulgarian feelings among the non-Romanian oriented inhabitants of the region and the attraction of foreign attention to the Bulgarian side.

The Romanian party by 1913 found itself in different conditions. Although losing the territory in 1916 and getting it back in 1919 according to the treaty of Neuilly, Romania still had more time and possibilities to “assimilate” and “colonize” the region than its neighbor, therefore the Romanian propaganda was mainly aimed at keeping the region under control and preserving the territory within the borders of a “unified and homogeneous” country. The idea of the perfectly unified Romania with Dobruja presenting an ultimate success of the policy of the Romanian government was not shared by all the Romanian public actors.²¹⁷ The majority of them were actively expressing opinions supporting the Romanian cause, trying to not only prove the legitimacy of the Romanian legacy in the region, but also to convince the internal as well as the foreign audience in the extreme importance of possessing Dobruja that in 1878 was regarded more as an unfair exchange for much more Romanian Bessarabia.²¹⁸ By 1913, the Romanian propaganda reached its peak, continuing to grow into the territorial dispute.

The current chapter deals closely with the analysis of the texts produced by the participants of the debate, their methods of interpreting history of the region, referring to the linguistic factor, national identity, concepts of origin and presentation of the religious legacies in Dobruja. The role of the participants of the dispute is seen only in relation to the texts they had produced; hence, for the perception of the Dobrujan case of claiming rights over the territory one would rather address the written works of several selected authors than undertake a thorough

²¹⁷ In the previous chapter, the opinion of Vasile Kogalniceanu regarding Dobruja and its Romanian administration was presented. For further details see Vasile Kogalniceanu, *Dobrogea 1879-1909, drepturi politice fara libertati*, Bucuresti, 1910. Except for Vasile Kogalniceanu, another critic of the Romanian policies in general, Stefan Zeletin, did not approve of the Romanian attitudes towards the newly acquired province. For further details, see Stefan Zeletin, *Din tara magarilor. Insemnari*, Bucuresti, 1998, p. 54. Publicist Foru would also express opinions against Romania’s annexation of Southern Dobruja, writing in 1914 in *Universul*: “Sooner or later, according to ethnic principles, we’ll have to give Cadri later that we have taken after the Bucharest peace treaty, back to Bulgaria so that we will be honest towards the Bulgarians and will do for them something we want to be done for us” – from M Мавродиєвъ, *Доброджа: критически етюдъ*, София, 1917/ M, Mavrodiev, *Dobrodzha; critical etude*, 2. dopul. izd. ed. Sofia, 1917.

²¹⁸ Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова/ Kuzmanova, From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989, pp. 18-19

analysis of the personalities of the public actors, who created them. Therefore, the current part is focused mostly on the selection of texts that reflect the Romanian and Bulgarian propaganda in the case of the appurtenance of Dobruja.

1. Exploring the roles of the participants: the voices of individuals in the making of the dispute

The Dobrujan dispute between Romania and Bulgaria lasted for almost three decades, featuring a number of voices presenting one of the causes from the point of view of both sides. The division of the duration of the dispute in periods seems to be unnecessary, as the arguments used by the authors of the texts do not change significantly with time. Their rhetoric remains unaltered, following the same patterns of claiming and justifying rights over the land and creating images of one another. The only important progress that can be witnessed with years passing is the successes or fails of the Romanian administration of the region that become more evident and easy to interpret for both sides as time offers the participants of the debates possibilities to witness and evaluate the happening changes.

Exploring the roles of the public actors, whose texts are used in the current thesis, one should underline the diversity of their backgrounds. The voices of the Dobrujan dispute very often were not the politicians, but the diplomats, writers, journalists, historians and sometimes even poets, philosophers or painters as in the case of Vlădescu.²¹⁹ The main bounding link between all these individuals of very different origins and destinies was their direct interest in bringing back Dobruja to Bulgaria, proving the illegitimacy of the Romanian annexation or justifying the Romanian legacy in the region. The authors generally targeted several types of

²¹⁹ See, Christian M Vlădescu.. *Bulgarii: memoriile unui ofițer român fost prizonier in Bulgaria*. București, 1926.

audiences and presented their views from rather different angles that were determined by their past experiences and current positions.

The first and the most important audience, as it was mentioned previously, was the international one.²²⁰ The possibilities of attracting the foreign public opinion to the Romanian or Bulgarian side could grant support to one of the parties as neither Romania, nor Bulgaria could gain and preserve the whole region without Great Powers maintaining a sort of balance in the region supporting one of the parties.²²¹ This fact can explain the choice of the language by some of the authors. While it seems to be a logical decision to write in Romanian or in Bulgarian in the local periodical editions, the texts published by historians like Iorga and Mutafchiev have in the majority of the cases two versions – the Bulgarian/Romanian one and the French one.²²² The works published by the Dobruja organization in Bulgaria or, for instance, the Romanian national league of America, are written in English and, evidently, oriented to the foreign audience and the narrow layer of educated local public.²²³

However, the local audience had to play its own role in the eyes of the authors, who had to create a public opinion. This “public” definitely consisted of people who could or would want to read the texts the historians, diplomats or journalists had generated. Hence, the “local audience” as seen by the participants of the debate was the very narrow strata of educated people that would be interested in reading the historical propagandistic works of Iorga, often written in French,²²⁴ or Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen’s political essays.²²⁵ The second type of the audience is the less intellectual and the more numerous one that could be more entertained by stories and a

²²⁰ The process of the foreign powers taking sides in the debate is regarded in the fourth chapter.

²²¹ Schmidt-Rösler, *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, pp. 40-69

²²² For instance, see Mutafchiev. *Bulgare set roumaines dans le histoire du pays danubiennes*. Sofia, 1932 and “Добруджа в миналото: Българи и Румуни в историята на дунавските земи, София, 1999 – the original text is in Bulgarian, see p.7 of the introduction. For details on Iorga’s case, see Gelu Culicea, *Dobrogea în lucrările lui Nicolae Iorga: bibliografie adnotată și comentată*, Constanța, 1998.

²²³ See Stoica (ed.), *The Dobrogea*, New York, 1919 and Milan Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1919.

²²⁴ See Iorga. *Droits nationaux et politiques des Roumains dans la Dobroudja*. Bucharest 1918

²²⁵ Petrescu-Comnen, *La Dobrogea (Dobroudja): essai historique, économique, ethnographique et politique*, Lausanne-Paris, 1918

simplistic vision of the region's history and the Romanian or Bulgarian rights over it. This much wider circle (and, apparently, much less interested in the political debates between Romania and Bulgaria) had to be attracted by articles published in local newspapers or books written in a more simple story-telling manner.²²⁶

The texts that are presented in the current chapter mainly address to the international or the educated local audience. It is almost impossible to find out if the peasantry had any attitude to them, as the wide public of Dobrujan peasants, fishermen or Aromanian settlers did not express their opinions by writing historical researches or pamphlets. Methods of influencing this audience were generally economic. One should still admit the possibility of the authors appealing to the law-educated people; however, it becomes clear that this audience was not the main target. Vlădescu and Culea, for example, clearly attempted to write for very different readers,²²⁷ however, it is hard to affirm that they were read by those, whom they had expected to grasp their works.

It should be noted that the participant of the debates also seem to address each other, although not directly, avoiding personal confrontations. This aspect becomes evident in several works supporting the Bulgarian cause when authors present contra-arguments arguing against the affirmations expressed by the Romanian participants. For instance, Milan Markov would openly criticize Mihail Kogalniceanu's views of the Romanian administration of Dobruja, depicting it as criminal and outrageous.²²⁸ The Romanian side, however, seems to be less interested in the Bulgarian propagandistic texts, as the remarks related to them are more rare. Nevertheless, one may claim that the dialogue between the participants did exist, as many of the works were published in French or in English allowing the opponents, who did not know Bulgarian or Romanian, to read them.

²²⁶ See Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928 or Vlădescu, *Bulgarii: memoriile unui ofițer român fost prizonier in Bulgaria*. București, 1926

²²⁷ Vlădescu, *Bulgarii: memoriile unui ofițer român fost prizonier in Bulgaria*. București, 1926.

²²⁸ Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1917, pp. 20-23, also published in French as Marcoff, Milan, *Le sort politique de la Dobroudja apres le Congres de Berlin*, Sofia, 1917

The majority of authors from both sides seem to be rather educated individuals having access to the audience through the mechanism of publishing their texts. It should be underlined that the background as well as the level of influence of the participants differed significantly; however, all of them, independently from their occupation or past activities, had enough weight or authority for their texts to appear. Although occasionally they could use the memoirs, diaries or oral tales retold by the local peasant population, the authors themselves were far from being peasants. However, it should be underlined that the representatives of the Bulgarian elite were of peasant origins, while in Romania the boyar element was much stronger in the formation of the elite.

The authors, whose texts are used in the current thesis, are active public actors, engaged in the creation of the opinion of the audiences while supporting the Romanian or Bulgarian propaganda regarding the question of Dobruja. Although the level of their national or international influence differed, they were all following the same propagandistic scope with several exceptions mentioned previously, who, like Vasile Kogalniceanu, Stefan Zeletin or Take Ionescu possessed definite authority, but did not support the official Romanian line. As not all of the participants of the debate were eminent individuals, the information about them and their destinies is often limited or practically inexistent. However, personalities like Iorga, Ishirkov or Mutafchiev were well-known and important not only in relation to the case of Dobruja, hence significant facts about the authors of the texts have to be mentioned before the propaganda techniques of the texts are to be investigated.

Nicolae Iorga being one of the most famous and internationally acknowledged Romanian historians had a number of works dedicated to Dobruja.²²⁹ In the current thesis, two of his works are used: “What do we represent in Dobruja?” and “National and political rights of the

²²⁹ For further details see Culicea. *Dobrogea în lucrările lui Nicolae Iorga: bibliografie adnotată și comentată*, Constanța, 1998

Romanians in Dobruja”.²³⁰ Iorga’s focus becomes extremely important for this chapter not only because of the general weight of the author’s words, but because he, unlike many other Romanian authors attempts to include Dobruja into the general context of Romanian history that he as a historian, interprets and re-creates. Similar acknowledgements can be made about Petar Mutafchiev, famous Bulgarian colleague of Iorga, who openly opposed to the arguments of the Romanian historian.²³¹ In his “Bulgarians and Romanians in the history of the Danubian lands” he almost demolishes Iorga’s ideas of Romanian rights over Dobruja on the basis of the Roman origin of the Romanian people.²³²

Anastas Ishirkov, another eminent representative of the Bulgarian side, refers not only to the historical side of the dispute, but also to the ethnographic and political one. Being an important Bulgarian geographer and ethnographer and also an academic and a professor,²³³ Ishirkov spoke more than six foreign languages, was a member of the Bulgarian delegation in Bucharest during the signing of the Peace Treaty of 1913 and wrote a memorandum for the Paris Peace Conference.²³⁴

However, the person most closely and personally connected to the Dobrujan case was Ivan Penakov, a lawyer and a historian, born in Constanta (or Kostence), who received his higher education in Bucharest, where he became a member of the socialist circle “Romania muncitoare”/”Working Romania”.²³⁵ Penakov expressed permanent concern and scientific interest regarding the destinies of the Bulgarians in Dobruja and Bessarabia. It should be noted

²³⁰ See Iorga. *Droits nationaux et politiques des Roumains dans la Dobroudja*. Bucharest 1918, Iorga, “*Ce represintam in Dobrogea?*” *idei din conferinta tinuta in ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga*, Valenii de munte, 1910

²³¹ For further details see Тодор, *Попнеделев Професор Петър Мутафчиев, познат и непознат*, София, 1997/ Todor Popnedelelev, *Professor Petar Mutafchiev, known and unknown*, Sofia, 1997

²³² Mutafchiev, *Добруджа в миналото:Българи и Румуни в историята на дунавските земи*, София, 1999/*Dobruja in the past: Bulgarians and Romanians in the history of the Danubian lands*, Sofia, 1999.

²³³ For further details about Ishirkov’s biography and professional capabilities see Игнат Пенков, *Анастас Иширков*, София, 1987/ Ignat Penkov, *Anastas Ishirkov*, Sofia, 1987

²³⁴ Ibidem. See the introduction.

²³⁵ Сп. „Исторически преглед“, 1971 г., кн. 3, с. 150-151

that Penakov was a member of the scientific expedition in Dobruja in 1917.²³⁶ Together with Penakov, other personalities, whose texts are important for the current thesis, took part in the expedition. Among them were already mentioned Ishirkov, famous writer historian and ethnographer Stilijan Chilingirov,²³⁷ historian Vasil Zlatarski, publicist and father of the famous Bulgarian poetess Dora Gabe, Petar Gabe, jurist and professor of social science in the Military Academy of Sofia Milan Markov²³⁸ and a number of other important personalities, whose texts are analyzed in the chapter.

The participants of the debate from the Romanian side, similarly to their Bulgarian opponents, were rather different, but mainly highly educated people. Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen was a jurist, politician and later minister of foreign affairs of Romania. His text that is used in the thesis generally summarizes Romania's views on the administration of Dobruja.²³⁹ Similarly to him, Vasile Stoica, a renowned publicist and diplomat also became part of the Dobrujan dispute while editing "The Dobrogea" publication justifying Romania's rights over the land.²⁴⁰

Apostol D. Culea was a writer and his propagandistic book is important from the point of view of his manner of retelling history as a story, referring, however, to the ideas used by his compatriots with historical, publicist and diplomatic background.²⁴¹ Unlike Culea, another eminent Romanian voice, Romulus Seisanu was a sociologist, historian and ethnographer. Although his work seems to be much more elaborated and filled with data, it still demonstrates the same point of view and uses similar rhetoric.²⁴² Taking into account Seisanu's occupation, one may find a comparison of his book with similar works of his Bulgarian colleagues very

²³⁶ See Научна експедиция в Добруджа, 1917 г. Доклади на университетски и други учени. Съставител и редактор проф. Петър Петров, II. изд., София. 1994/Scientific expedition in Dobruja, 1917. Reports of the university and other scholars. Compiler and editor prof. Petar Petrov, IInd edition, Sofia, 1994

²³⁷ See his major work Стилиянъ Чилингиоровъ, *Добруджа и нашето възраждане* (културно-исторически издирвания) София, 1917/ Stilijan Chilingirov, *Dobruja and our revival*, Sofia, 1917

²³⁸ See the cover of Milan Markov's work: Marcoff, *Bulgaria's historical rights over Dobrudja*, Bern, 1918

²³⁹ Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, *La Dobrogea*, Paris, 1918

²⁴⁰ Stoica (ed.), *The Dobrogea*, New York, 1919

²⁴¹ See Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928

²⁴² Romulus Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928

useful in order to proof the insignificance of differences between the methods applied by the Romanian and Bulgarian side.

It should be noted that among the Romanian intellectuals engaged in the debate, there can be found such personalities as painter Vladescu, who was imprisoned by Bulgarians in 1916 and after his return to Romania wrote memoirs featuring all the possible negative traits of Bulgarians.²⁴³ The personality of the painter himself does not present a special importance for the analysis of propaganda; however, the knowledge of professions and backgrounds of the participants of the debate gives an impression of their possible objectives and reasons for being involved in the dispute. Therefore, one can divide the creators of the texts in three relative categories.

The scholars, like Iorga, Ishirkov and Mutafchiev claimed to have generated a well-grounded historical basis that supported the Romanian and Bulgarian rights over the territory. The advocates, like Markov and Stoica, wrote mainly influential and very concessive pamphlets, picking out the “brightest” facts in order to prove their version of events. The last group, the “storytellers” consists of personalities like Vladescu, Gabe and Culea, who attempted to create a tale, out of which the reader would have got the idea of the region’s appurtenance. Although these arrangements of the authors in groups are very fluid, as not all the texts can be defined within these categories, they make the dispute easier to be perceived.

Some of the texts used do not even have a name of the author on them. However, they still make part of the same propagandistic chain of works, not becoming exceptions.²⁴⁴ Hence, although the name and the occupation of the author may be very useful also for targeting the possible audience, for the analysis of the texts the approaches of the authors to the Dobrujan question matter much more.

²⁴³ Vlădescu, Christian M.. *Bulgarii: memorile unui ofițer român fost prizonier in Bulgaria*. București, 1926, p. 5

²⁴⁴ See “*La Dobroudja meridionale. Le Quadrilatere*”, Paris, 1919

2. Conceptualizing the borders of Bulgarian and Romanian nationalism: re-constructing history, national identity, religious boundaries and linguistic ties.

In order to perceive the mechanisms the authors were using to support the Romanian or Bulgarian cause one should point out and investigate the four elements that make the basis of the arguments applied by both sides. While proving Romania's or Bulgaria's claims legitimate and well-grounded the participants of the debate had to generate the idea of solidarity between Dobruja with its population and the rest of Bulgaria or Romania manifesting in historical legacy, common national identity, religious and linguistic markers in the region that confirm its Romanian or Bulgarian status. Hence, the texts have to be read primarily to discover and analyze these aspects that build up the whole of the propaganda reflected in the works of the participants of the territorial dispute.

The first and one of the most influential arguments used in the text is the one referring to the historical right over Dobruja. Having several interpretations, it always preserved the same pattern having the same basis. The Romanian side's claims were mainly focused on the "Roman heritage" of Dobruja that binds it together with the Romanian nation of the beginning of the 20th century, however, Iorga's view is more complicated. In his "What do we represent in Dobruja?" already in 1910 Iorga wrote, addressing to the idea of the "civilization" the Romanians make part of: "From the Thracians we have not only most of our blood, but also almost everything from our pastoral culture"... "as the representatives of the oldest nation that was living in all those parts (meaning also the Balkan), granting them the first elements of civilization, we similarly manifest ourselves in Dobruja".²⁴⁵

Iorga's argument reaches further when the historian addresses the less distant periods of Dobrujan history. The author notes: "But Rome represents the most perfect political conception

²⁴⁵ Iorga, "Ce represintam in Dobrogea?" *idei din conferinta tinuta in ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga*, Valenii de munte, 1910, pp. 5-6

of Antiquity. It imposed itself through weapons and organizational power of Trajan on the land of the collapsed Dacia. The Latin culture as well as the Roman form of state had created in the East a Romania, which the Byzantines, Hellenized at once, could inherit only in the way it was. Nevertheless, Byzantium does not exist any longer and it will never be what it once was: we are the successors of the Roman land among others and by right”.²⁴⁶

Iorga's issues regarding the Dobrujan history are connected mainly with Romania's spiritual and cultural presence in the region during all the periods of its' history and resistance to the Bulgarian barbarians.²⁴⁷ However, the claims of the Romanian historian are still rather careful and coming out mainly of interpretations. The idea of all other nations of Dobruja being latecomers coincides with similar views expressed later by other supporters of the Romanian cause.

The author of “La Dobroudja meridionale” points out at once: “All the time Dobruja made part of Wallachia until the 15th century, the époque of the Turkish invasion, and the congress of Berlin wished to fully recognize the legitimacy of the Romanian rights over this ancestral land, which they have also earned during the war of 1877-1878”.²⁴⁸ The Southern Dobruja, according to the author, was not only “the strategic border”, but also the land of “Macedono-Romanians”.²⁴⁹ While the Bulgarians are “the recent population”,²⁵⁰ the Romanian legacy is depicted not only as ancient, but also as the one “deserved in war”.

Apostol Culea presents the same issue, referring also to archeology: “The researches of our archeologists beginning from professor Tolescu and improving with the most learned among the learned foreigners, professor Vasile Parvan, have proved that Dobruja is the oldest Roman land”.²⁵¹ Culea claims that before even coming to Dacia, the Romans, who seem to be direct

²⁴⁶ Ibidem, pp. 6-7

²⁴⁷ Ibidem, pp. 10

²⁴⁸ “*La Dobroudja meridionale. Le Quadrilatere*”, Paris, 1919, p. 4

²⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 5

²⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 12

²⁵¹ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, p.19

ancestors of the modern Romanians according to him, conquered Dobruja.²⁵² Culea continues pointing out that the Romanians from Dobruja in the medieval times were founding small states just like “other Romanians”.²⁵³ The first and second Bulgarian kingdoms as well as the Byzantine legacy do not seem to play a significant role in Dobruja’s history according to Culea, although he underlines the importance of the Romanian element within them. Dobruja is called “Vlahia alba” and the Asen (or Assan) family is considered purely Romanian by the author.²⁵⁴ Like the majority of the Romanian authors, Culea goes back to the short period of Mircea the Elder’s reign over Dobruja, describing it as the time that had shaped completely the Romanian image of the region.²⁵⁵

It should be highlighted that Culea, unlike many of Bulgarian historians, politicians or ethnographers, is a writer, and his methods of justifying Romanian historical legacy over the province, surpass the elaborated interpretations of events and happenings, referring to the voices of the locals. Describing the pastoral idealistic character of Romanian Dobruja, he reproduces his oral conversations with a local old man, Tudose Macarie by name. The “authentic local” Tudose Macarie, was born in Bessarabia,²⁵⁶ however, his considerations are presented by the author as reliable evidence. During his talks with the local Bulgarians in the cafés, Tudose Macarie, was constantly hearing the stories of the Bulgarian past of the region and Bulgarian voievods ruling it before the Romanian occupation happened. Nevertheless, the old man, knew “how to shut their mouths”,²⁵⁷ asking the Bulgarians if they have found something left from their voievod. After that Tudose Macarie added: “Haven’t found anything?! And from our Trajan – as much as you wish, just in furrows left by the ploughs! When I hear them talking about those of their own, my

²⁵² *ibidem*

²⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 31

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 32

²⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 35

²⁵⁶ *Ibide*, pp. 4-5

²⁵⁷ *Ibidem*

heart pains: my blood does not leave me in peace!”²⁵⁸ In this way, Emperor Trajan is suddenly viewed as “ours”, belonging to the Romanian nation.

Romulus Seisanu, when explaining the history of Dobruja, repeats that “this land was inhabited and ruled in Antiquity by our ancestors, Geto-Dacians and Romans”.²⁵⁹ After this affirmation, appear even more interesting details about the Vlach origins of prince Balica of Dobruja²⁶⁰ that are almost impossible to prove. Referring to the considerations of Mutafchiev (a remarkable fact that proves the existence of rather limited communication between the Bulgarian and the Romanian side),²⁶¹ Seisanu does not deny or try to hide the Bulgarian presence in the region, highlighting, nevertheless, the Vlach/Romanian elements. However, he does not attempt to diminish the achievements of Dobrujan medieval “voievods” – of any possible origin.

Unlike Seisanu’s book, the work, edited by Vasile Stoica contains already in the beginning several negative remarks about the Slavs, mentioning that they devastated the region after the “just rule of Romans”.²⁶² About Dobrotich, who maintained control over Dobruja remaining its most famous lord, he acknowledges that he was “an adventurer and held it by right of conquest as he might have held any land, Greek, Romanian or Hungarian”.²⁶³ Later he adds that “his nationality implies nothing as to the nationality of his subjects”,²⁶⁴ not explaining, however, what he means by “nationality” in the terms of medieval Dobruja.

As it becomes clear from the previously cited works, the Romanian side had a more or less common idea of Dobruja’s history connected to that of Romania. Similar conclusions can be made also about the Bulgarian party. Milan Markov in his “Bulgaria’s historical rights to Dobruja writes that it is the land where Asparukh in the 7th century founded the Bulgarian Cis-

²⁵⁸ Ibidem

²⁵⁹ Romulus, Seisanu *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 14

²⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 147

²⁶¹ Ibidem

²⁶² Stoica (ed.), *The Dobrogea*, New York, 1919, p. 18

²⁶³ Stoica, p. 19

²⁶⁴ Ibidem.

Danubian kingdom.²⁶⁵ He denies the fact that in 1372 Dobruja was conquered by the Wallachian voievods, giving a long, elaborated explanation:

This historical theory appears to be an invention, and is based on the false titles of some Wallachian voyvodes and on the keen imagination of the Roumanian chauvinistic writers. Thus is explained the fact that subsequently the Roumanian historian Yorga, himself a noisy Roumanian patriot, saw himself constrained to reduce somewhat these historical fictions to a claim of possible rule over Dobrudja by the voyvode Mircho. Speaking on this disputed point and accepting the thesis of Yorga, a third Roumanian historian and geographer — captain Jonescu, comes to this conclusion: In spite of all personal antipathy which a historian might naturally have against the Bulgarians, the documents and sources of the time prove to us that Muntenia (Wallachia) under Vladimir and Radu-Negru Bassarab never ruled Dobrudja, and that such a rule took place only after the year 1386 under the voyvode Mircho.

Unlike Markov, who highlights the medieval Bulgarian legacy in the region, Ivan Penakov is more interested in proving the economical insignificance of Dobruja for Romania. However, when referring to Bulgaria's historical rights, he points out that Dobruja had only strategic importance for Romania, as historically it was a region, connected to Bulgaria from medieval times.²⁶⁶ It should be noted that for Penakov Cadrilater matters more to Bulgaria than Northern Dobruja, which became Romania's main target for Romanization since 1878.

Ishirkov widens the ideas of Bulgarian medieval legacy, underlining that the name Dobruja comes from the Bulgarian ruler's name Dobrotich.²⁶⁷ Later he mentions that Constantine Porphyrogenete in the 10th century and the Russian chronicler Nestor in the 12th century called Dobruja "Bulgaria" or "Black Bulgaria".²⁶⁸ In "The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress" the argument is supported by another affirmation: "Even during the first years of the Turkish domination over Bulgaria, the Bavarian traveler, who has traversed the Danubian lands and has taken part in the battle of Nikoppolis during the year 1396, tells us:....The third Bulgaria

²⁶⁵ Marcoff, *Bulgaria's historical rights over Dobrudja*, Bern, 1918, p. 3

²⁶⁶ Penacoff, *Le problem de la Dobroudja de Sud. Un aspect economique et social de ce problem*, Paris, 1928, p. 46

²⁶⁷ Ischirkoff, *Les Bulgares en Dobroudja. Apercu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, p. 5

²⁶⁸ Ibidem

lies at the mouth of the Danube: its capital is Kaliakra”.²⁶⁹ Contesting Romanian claims of them being the descendants of Rome, Ishirkov dedicates special attention to the Greek past of the province, pointing out that the Romanians, Thracians or Romans by origin, blood or culture, were not the most ancient civilized peoples inhabiting Dobruja.²⁷⁰

All these aspects find their reflection in the works of Mutafchiev, Iorga’s most fervent opponent. Arguing with his Romanian colleague, the Bulgarian historian first underlines the Slavic origin of the word “Dobruja”.²⁷¹ He adds that “after the Romans had left Dacia, everything that could have remained there, fell under the sword of the barbarians”²⁷² and explains that Romanian settlers that were not numerous came to Dobruja later, already when the Bulgarian kingdom was ruling over the land.²⁷³ Mutafchiev sums up Bulgarian arguments about the historical legacy over the region, appealing also to the Romanian ones that are to be contested.

Although ideologically different, both Romanian and Bulgarian sides seem to present similar patterns that vary in their degree of negation of the presence of the neighbor in the region. Sharing Mutafchiev’s views, Ljubomir Miletich notes that “the Romanians appear in history as a separate nation with its own state organization only in the 13th century, when the Bulgarian nation had already passed six centuries of history with cultural and military deeds of the international significance”.²⁷⁴

The concept of origin of the population regarded in the works of the participants of the debate, is very connected to the historical argumentation they use, but more related to the

²⁶⁹ Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1919, p.3

²⁷⁰ Ischirkoff, *Les Bulgares en Dobroudja. Apercu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, p. 13

²⁷¹ Мутафчиев, *Добруджа в миналото: Българи и Румуни в историята на дунавските земи*, София, 1999/Mutafchiev, *Dobruja in the past: Bulgarians and Romanians in the history of the Danubian lands*, Sofia, 1999, p. 147

²⁷² Ibidem, p. 68

²⁷³ Ibidem, p. 83

²⁷⁴ Любомир Милетич, “Българи и румъни в техните културно-исторически отношения” в сборник *Добруджа*, София 1918/ Ljubomir Miletich, “Bulgarians and Romanians in their cultural and historical relations” published in the volume *Dobruja*, Sofia, 1918, p. 107

explanation of the role of the Romanian or Bulgarian elements in the mixed province. Seisanu, when explaining the ethnical presence of Romanians in the regions, not denying its multiethnic character, however, appeals to folklore, popular poems and ethnographic sources featuring the presence of the Romanians and the character of their activities.²⁷⁵ In “la Dobroudja meridionale” it is underlined that: “The Romanians from Cadrilater live predominantly in Turtukaia and neighboring villages”.²⁷⁶ The Northern Dobruja, according to the author, was almost purely Romanian with several Turkish elements in it,²⁷⁷ Cadrilater, however, had a very distinct Bulgarian presence.²⁷⁸

Iorga, unlike several other authors, does not present accurate data (which can hardly be trusted from the point of view of both sides), but attempts to create a strong feeling of solidarity between the Romanian or pro-Romanian population in Dobruja and other Romanians. This feeling had to familiarize the foreign audience with the situation in Dobruja. The Romanian historian writes: “We do not want to steal the anybody’s language, we do not want to conquer anybody’s spirit, we do not want to abolish anybody’s ideal. We are enough numerous and enough proud of ourselves so that we wouldn’t plead before somebody for the political causes concerning us”.²⁷⁹ His view is shared by Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, who in his work tries to justify Romania’s rights presenting the Romanians as “proud masters” of the region.²⁸⁰ Petrescu-Comnen generally supported the idea of Romanian element being dominant, pointing out that the Romanian rule in the region would have been impossible without the existence of the Romanian presence in Dobruja.

Unlike Petrescu-Comnen, Seisanu or other authors, writer Apostol Culea presents stories from the Romanian inhabitants of Dobruja that had told him how “their ancestors had been living

²⁷⁵ Romulus, Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 15-23

²⁷⁶ “*La Dobroudja meridionale. Le Quadrilater*”, Paris, 1919, p. 13

²⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3-7

²⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 16

²⁷⁹ Iorga, “*Ce represintam in Dobrogea?*” *idei din conferinta tinuta in ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga, Valenii de munte*, 1910, p.9

²⁸⁰ Petrescu-Comnen, „*La Dobrogea (Dobroudja): essai historique, économique, ethnographique et politique*”, Lausanne-Paris, 1918, pp. 4-10

for centuries on those territories”. Culea mentions several names, appeals to interviews and personal narratives of people, who, according to him, represent the Romanian nation and the Romanian spirit in the land between the sea and the Danube.²⁸¹

The Bulgarian side, compared to the Romanian one, seems to be more ethnographically elaborated, as many of the proofs of the Bulgarian presence come from the expedition of 1917.²⁸² Petar Gabe points out that many Romanians lived in Dobruja, some of them being the descendants of refugees from Transylvania (not yet under the Romanian control) or non-orthodox Hungary.²⁸³ Gabe also notes that the Bulgarians in 1917 were very tolerant to the Romanian inhabitants of Dobruja, however, the same could not be said about the Bulgarian population and Romanian cruelties.²⁸⁴ It should be noted that Gabe views the Bulgarian character of the province in the just character of the Bulgarian rule that had centuries of legacy.

Chilingirov attracts the attention of the reader to the destinies of many of Bulgarians coming back to Dobruja, where the first Bulgarian kingdom had originated, after the devastations of the province in 18th and 19h century.²⁸⁵ Later, drawn away from their land again, the Bulgarians, according to Chilingirov, came back in the end of the 19th century.²⁸⁶ They first made up the bigger part of the peasant inhabitants (it should be noted that Chilingirov mentions colonies of Romanian fishermen along the banks of Danube). Later they also became the important part of the urban population.²⁸⁷ These considerations bring Chilingirov to the conclusion that the Bulgarian element, active and present in the region and relying on the centuries of historical legacy, had its rights to rule the province.

²⁸¹ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, pp. 3-17

²⁸² See Научна експедиция в Добруджа, 1917 г. Доклади на университетски и други учени. Съставител и редактор проф. Петър Петров, II. изд., София. 1994/Scientific expedition in Dobruja, 1917. Reports of the university and other scholars. Compiler and editor prof. Petar Petrov, IInd edition, Sofia, 1994

²⁸³ Петър Габе, *Жестокости*, 1917/ Petar Gabe, *Atrocities*, 1917 (published in Reports of the university and other scholars. Compiler and editor prof. Petar Petrov, IInd edition, Sofia, 1994), p. 347

²⁸⁴ Ibidem

²⁸⁵ Стилиян Чилингинов, *Възраждане*, сборник “Добруджа”, 1918/ Stilijan Chilingirov, *Revival*, volume *Dobruja* (part of the reports of the scientific expedition in Dobruja in 1917), p. 161

²⁸⁶ Ibidem

²⁸⁷ Ibidem

Similarly, Vasil Zlatarski admits that “the Bulgarian population began to move from the villages to cities rather early and before our liberation the Bulgarians were more numerous in the cities of Dobruja than all other nationalities”.²⁸⁸ Milan Markov expresses similar ideas, but in a more efficient manner: “The presence of the Bulgarians as a dominant element was sufficient in itself to pursue as an apparition the Romanian nationalists and governments”.²⁸⁹ Criticizing the forced Romanization of Dobruja, Markov adds “all that was done in the name of nationalism, the magic word, which had and still is having its high course in Bucharest” dramatically failed. In this way, the Romanian element is presented as alien and imposed, while the Bulgarian one turns out to be natural and original.

The idea of national identities in Dobruja was related not only to the issues of historical legacy, but also to one more important aspect, depicted by the authors, the concept of religion. In “La Dobroudja meridionale” Christianity of the Romanians is viewed as an opposition to the Turkish oppressions,²⁹⁰ however, the Bulgarians, sharing the same Orthodox faith, were a hard target for any Romanian religious propaganda. The ideas that were expressed by both sides regarding the questions of faith in Dobruja, generally were related to the appurtenance of the churches and to proving one’s nation to be “more Christian”.

Iorga when highlighting the unity of the Romanians within the boundaries of Orthodoxy, writes: “There’re many churches on this land, and among them, those that are Orthodox and belong to the Eastern Christian faith, are the most numerous...But above the golden crosses of the Romanian orthodox churches, although small and poor compared to others that are richer and bigger, the rays of the sun come down more gently. Why? The Orthodox Christianity of others does not have martyrs, it is not the Christianity taken with the victim of blood in the great hour

²⁸⁸ Васил Златарски, *Добруджа. Историко-политическа съдба*, София, 1918/ Vasil Zlatarski, *Dobruja. Historical and political destiny*, Sofia, 1918, p. 105

²⁸⁹ Milan Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1917, p. 20

²⁹⁰ *La Dobroudja meridionale. Le Quadrilatere*, Paris, 1919, pp. 3-8

of decisions”.²⁹¹ This affirmation seemed to be rather convincing to Iorga, however, it can hardly be called well-grounded from the point of view of the Bulgarian side.

For Apostol Culea the idea of Romanian orthodoxy had a similar meaning of an anti-Turkish boundary that brings together the Romanians.²⁹² The Bulgarians, however, in this way became much less Christian than the Romanians. Their “inferior” status is also mentioned in the book edited by Vasile Stoica: “Moreover, since the fall of the Byzantine Empire the Greek orthodox faithful were in the dependence of the Romanian bishop of Braila, another sign of the close ties existing between the Dobrogea and the Romanian principalities”.²⁹³ Similarly, Iorga mentions several Romanian episcopates in Dobruja,²⁹⁴ not referring to any Bulgarian. Seisanu, most probably basing his assumptions on Iorga’s works, writes that even “before Dobruja came under the Ottoman rule there existed a Romanian episcopate in Vicina, in the 14th century, whose legacy stretched over the Danube, to oriental Wallachia”.²⁹⁵,²⁹⁶

The Bulgarians applied similar strategies when referring to the religious aspect. Ishirkov when depicting the history of Dobruja, point out that Bulgarians, unlike Romanians, converted to Christianity first and directly from Byzantium.²⁹⁷ Taking into account Ishirkov’s attention paid to the Ancient Greek past of the region,²⁹⁸ one may suppose that his attempts to diminish the mere Romanian presence in the region are also connected to the Greek heritage that cannot be considered either Romanian or Bulgarian. Mutafchiev opposing to Iorga’s opinion points out that the conversion to orthodoxy helped the Bulgarians to get territories on the borderlands of the

²⁹¹ Iorga, “*Ce represintam in Dobrogea?*” *idei din conferinta tinuta in ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga,*, Valenii de munte, 1910, p.9

²⁹² Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, pp. 5-16

²⁹³ Stoica, (ed.), “*The Dobrogea*”, New York, 1919, p.17

²⁹⁴ Iorga. *Droits nationaux et politiques des Roumains dans la Dobroudja*. Bucharest 1918, p. 75

²⁹⁵ Romulus Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 165

²⁹⁶ The Bulgarian exarchate was founded only after the Bulgarian Patriarchate that was united with the Greek Church until 1862, was founded.

²⁹⁷ Ischirkoff, *Les Bulgares en Dobroudja. Apercu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, pp. 26-32

²⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 13

Empire, meaning Dobruja.²⁹⁹ Arguing against Seisanu's claims that there existed only the Romanian Church in Dobruja, Chilingirov stresses that in the official Turkish documents it is not stated that the Church was maintained or belonged to the Romanian community, as both Romanians and Bulgarians were considered parts of "Rum millet".³⁰⁰ Hence, before 1878, according to the author, it is almost impossible to find out which community "owned" the church.

It should be noted that one of the most important questions was the one connected to the language of the liturgy in churches that could be either under Bulgarian or Romanian control. This issue brought the participants of the debate to an idea of linguistic unity that was not less important than the ethnic one.

Common faith, unlike in the case of Romanians and Bulgarians, could not be introduced in all the cultural spheres because of the religious dissociation of many of the European nations in the 18-19th centuries: those non-homogenous states could be equated with nations only with the help of the language, an important power bringing them together. The Germans,³⁰¹ the Hungarians and the Slovaks could become only the few of the numerous examples of nations not united in religious matters. Although the question of faith did not lose its actuality,³⁰² it was overshadowed by the linguistic feature that turned out to be much more powerful in making a nation. The participants of the Dobrujan debate, although not specially highlighting the linguistic aspect, were very much aware of its power in creating solidarity among the inhabitants of Dobruja.

²⁹⁹ Мутафчиев, *Добруджа в миналото: Българи и Румуни в историята на дунавските земи*, София, 1999/ Mutafchiev, *Dobruja in the past: Bulgarians and Romanians in the history of the Danubian lands*, Sofia, 1999, p. 8.

³⁰⁰ Стилиян Чилингиров, "Възраждане", сборник *Добруджа*, 1918/ Stilian Chilingirov, "Revival", volume *Dobruja* (part of the reports of the scientific expedition in Dobruja in 1917), p. 171

³⁰¹ For further details see Richard Böckh *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der amtlichen Statistik des Preussischen Staates*. Berlin, 1863. The Prussian linguist and statistician proposes an effective way to unite the Germans scattered all over Central and Eastern Europe and divided by religious differences with the help of the language inserted into the questions of the state censuses. Bockh's contribution to the German national cause is also mentioned by Hobsbawm. See Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 21-22

³⁰² Peter Brock, *The Slovak National awakening: an essay in the intellectual history of East Central Europe*, Toronto, 1976. In his work the author thoroughly describes how finally the common Slovak language wins over Catholic and Lutheran distinctions of the Slovaks.

For the Romanian authors the issue of the Romanian language was primarily connected to the education. It can be considered that the language played a double role for the Romanian side. As it was mentioned above, the Roman past occupied a significant place in the propagandistic ideology of the Romanian party. Moreover, the language, although having very pronounced Slavic, Turkish and other influences, had still preserved its Romance structure, which connected it to the Romania's "Roman heritage". Except for this, the language also had a function of an instrument of education. Romulus Seisanu, developing this idea, reminds his readers that "according to Teodorescu the Romanian schools that existed in Turtucaia, Tulcea...were maintained by the Romanians that formed the majority of the population".³⁰³

Seisanu underlines that in these schools religion and Slavonic alphabet were taught, however, not the Bulgarian alphabet.³⁰⁴ This fact, introduced by Seisanu, makes the schools not only linguistic, but also ethnic markers of the population. Referring to Romanian presence in the region, Apostol Culea points out that the "Romanian names of locations" are much more numerous than any possible Turkish or Bulgarian ones,³⁰⁵ without explaining the criterion of the purely "Romanian", not "Latin" or "Slavic" origin of the names. In "The Dobrogea" the same idea of the Romanian language dominating with the Romanian ethnic element is expressed.³⁰⁶

Unlike the Romanians, the Bulgarians turn out to be more persistent in highlighting the linguistic argument. Ljubomir Miletich writes in his "Bulgarians and Romanians in their cultural and historical relations": "They (the Romanians) do not have their national writing and in all their relations in the national, social and private sphere they appeal to the Bulgarian literary language from the dialect of the middle-Bulgarian period".³⁰⁷ Miletich, however, highlights the centuries of almost common Romanian-Bulgarian history, affirming that even the contemporary

³⁰³ Romulus Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, p.168

³⁰⁴ Ibidem

³⁰⁵ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, pp.39-40

³⁰⁶ Stoica (ed.), *The Dobrogea*, New York, 1919, pp. 10-18

³⁰⁷ Любомир Милетич, "Българи и румъни в техните културно-исторически отношения" в сборник *Добруджа*, София 1918/ Ljubomir Miletich, "Bulgarians and Romanians in their cultural and historical relations" published in the volume *Dobruja*, Sofia, 1918, p.107

Romanian language had so many traces of Bulgarian in it that the denial of the Bulgarian influence would have been absurd.³⁰⁸

Chilingirov, like Miletich, highly appreciated the role of the Bulgarian language. However, his ideas, like Seisanu's, were more connected to the education and religious part of the life of the Bulgarian community. He states that "before the Romanian occupation in Babadag", for example, "all the priests were Russians",³⁰⁹ thus they were using the Russian language. Stressing the importance of the Bulgarian schools, Chilingirov views the language as one of the keys to the Bulgarian revival in Dobruja.³¹⁰ Mutafchiev, when addressing to the linguistic factor, points out one interesting detail that could diminish the Romanian propaganda: unlike Romanian, Bulgarian has almost no Vlach or Romanian borrowings in its vocabulary.³¹¹ For the Bulgarian historian this aspect proves the superiority of the Bulgarian language over the Romanian, and, hence, underlines the rightfulness of the Bulgarian legacy in the region.

The texts of the authors from both sides present examples of how the opponents were trying to justify territorial claims. It should be noted that both parties hardly intended to copy or imitate each other's arguments. More likely, they simply reflected their ideas connected with the history of the region, often engaging into an open argument. The participants of the debate were mainly aware of the works published by their opponents. Nevertheless, they did not always enter into a dialogue. Generally, the similarity of the rhetoric can be explained by the attempts to re-interpret the same events and occurrences in different ways, but trying to reach the same scope of the legitimization of the territorial rights.

³⁰⁸ Ibidem

³⁰⁹ Стилиян Чилингиров, "Възраждане", сборник *Добруджа*, 1918/Stilijan, Chilingirov "Revival", volume *Dobruja* (part of the reports of the scientific expedition in Dobruja in 1917), p. 171

³¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 172-173

³¹¹ Мутафчиев, *Добруджа в миналото: Българи и Румуни в историята на дунавските земи*, София, 1999/Mutafchiev, *Dobruja in the past: Bulgarians and Romanians in the history of the Danubian lands*, Sofia, 1999, p. 133

3. Creating images of one another: “The war of caricatures”

Rumiana Stancheva, when referring to the complexity of the images of the Romanians in the Bulgarian literature, points out that, although the events of 1913 had badly affected the relations between two countries, the figures of Romanians did not immediately turn into those of villains and criminals.³¹² The process of producing caricatures of one another was complicated and solicited several decades to pass for the stereotypes to be imprinted in the consciousness of different groups of the audience. Blagovest Njagulov underlines that the Bulgarian stereotypes of the neighbors were almost completely products of the wars of the second half of the 19th century.³¹³ The Bulgarian historian also highlights one extremely important fact – the diversity of the images, being produced by different social and cultural communities. He states that the perceptions of the other from the side of the common folk came from folklore, while the intellectuals grasped it through written texts, and on the governmental level it was connected with official documents.³¹⁴ The current part, hence, is concentrated on the examination of the images generated in the texts of the several most representative participants of the territorial debate.

I.N. Roman in “Analele Dobrogei”, referring to Bulgarians in general, summed up all the negative traits they had been supposed to possess: absolutely barbarian, uncivilized character, ferocity, cruelty, brutality.³¹⁵ Bulgarians were generally presented as something opposite to Romanians: the degree of radicalism of this “description” varied due to the manner of the author’s writing. However, even the authors less willing to appeal to the Bulgarian nation as such, supported the same ideas, but in a less pronounced tone. Bulgarians adopted similar strategy of portraying Romanians and, conversely, they had to face the same dilemma of destroying the remains of positive images of the preceding period.

³¹² Stancheva, *Les images de roumaine dans la littérature bulgare*, Sofia, 1994, nr. 3, pp. 6-7

³¹³ Njagulov, *Les images de l’autre chez les bulgares et les roumaines (1878-1944)*, Sofia, nr. 2/1995, p. 6

³¹⁴ Ibidem

³¹⁵ I. N. Roman, “Proiecte, gesturi, cuvinte bulgărești”, în *Analele Dobrogei*, anul I, nr. 1, 1920, Cernăuți, p. 126

The destruction of the positive image from both sides began with the notion of “backstabbing”. Seisanu, when writing about Bulgarians in his books, notes: “Bulgarians have quickly forgotten the sacrifices made by Romania in the war of 1877-1878 for their liberation from the Ottoman yoke just like they have forgotten the hospitality offered by Romanians to the refugees from the other side of the Danube that were fighting for the realization of their national ideal”.³¹⁶ Later he adds that Dobruja was never part of Medieval Bulgaria, but the Bulgarians were still trying to stir the foreign and local public opinion, practically inventing the “Dobrujan question”.³¹⁷ Culea, even referring to the works of Miletich from the Bulgarian part, claims that, especially in Northern Dobruja, the existent Bulgarian population consists purely of emigrants. He further adds that many of the tried to escape from the fury of the Ottomans and found shelter in Dobruja after the series of the Russian-Turkish wars, especially after the signing of the Treaty of Adrianople.³¹⁸

The author’s attitude to Bulgarians, “the emigrants and escapers” seems to be full of neglect: “When the Turks were getting rid of the Russians, they gave the rebelled Bulgarians hard times! That is why the Bulgarian population rose up to flee from the carnage and took off to Russia or the South of Bessarabia, where there remained empty places after the Tatars had left them. The way of those unfortunate escapers was through Dobruja. Even the Turkish authorities were helping the Bulgarian population to leave in the middle of the night so that they could get rid of spies and guides of the Russian armies”.³¹⁹

Therefore, Culea constantly stresses the fact that even the Turks wanted to get rid of the Bulgarians, who were good at nothing except for backstabbing. These ideas, developed in the texts of the participants of debates, are viewed also by George Ungureanu, who carefully

³¹⁶ Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 253

³¹⁷ Ibidem

³¹⁸ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, pp. 160-161

³¹⁹ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 159

examines the impact of the question of Cadrilater on the Romanian-Bulgarian relations.³²⁰ Ungureanu, Stancheva and Njagulov provide the reader with very useful remarks about the troublesome Bulgarian-Romanian process of “creating caricatures of one another”. However, they do not particularly focus on the texts of the 1913-1940 debate, appealing to the Romanian and Bulgarian literature of previous epochs and observing its dynamics.

The “treacherous Bulgarians” compete with “untrustworthy Romanians” in the Bulgarian works as well. Romanian troops attack Cadrilater in the moment when Bulgarian forces were fighting against Serbia and Greece, hence, the Bulgarians felt themselves stabbed in the back by the Romanians, whom they previously considered allies. Ishirkov points out the fact of “jealousy” from the Romanian side that might have pushed it to annex Cadrilater, admitting that several Romanian intellectuals, like Take Ionescu, Vasile Kogalniceanu and others could foresee the unfavorable outcomes of such actions.³²¹

Making considerations about the events of 1913 and following years, Ishirkov stresses that “the Romanians, who consider themselves the successors of the Romans, are deprived of glorious history”.³²² They attempted to present themselves as the most splendid winners in the war of 1877-1878 and accentuated the short rule of Mircea the Elder in Dobruja.³²³ According to Ishirkov, who expresses himself in rather evasive terms, Romanians are unable to wage wars honorably and, hence, treachery is all that can be expected from them.³²⁴ The same idea is expressed also by Djakovich, who admits the existence of Romanians in Dobruja and then adds: “But those were the deserters who had fled from their country so that they could hide along the banks of the Danube under the protection of the Turkish authorities, who out of political

³²⁰ Ungureanu, *Chestiunea Cadrilaterului. Interese romanesti si revizionism bulgar, 1938-1940*, Bucuresti, 2005

³²¹ Ischirkoff, *Les Bulgares en Dobroudja. Apercu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, p. 103

³²² Ibidem, 102

³²³ Ibidem

³²⁴ Ibidem

considerations, aimed at making the Bulgarian element less powerful and compactly settled”.³²⁵ Thus, the idea of “treachery” was only part of the general antiparticle images of one another.

In 1921 Stilijan Chilingirov wrote about his impressions of Romania and the Romanians: “Romania is the less cultivated country in the whole of the Balkan peninsula. She seems to be a vulgar and dressed-up prostitute, who eats *mamaliga* while she does not even bother to put on a blouse under the fallals of the dress”.³²⁶ Blagovest Njagulov, discovering the similar opinions about the vulgarity and “lack of civilization” among the Romanians cited Jordan Jovkov’s novel “The crossroad”. The author explains that primitive and barbaric Romanian souls have their ferocity hidden inside them and later refers to the bloody peasant revolt of 1907, viewing it as an example of the typical Romanian behavior.³²⁷ Both Njagulov and Stancheva³²⁸ underline that the image of the Romanians after 1913 in the Bulgarian sources (the affirmation is adequate for Romanian sources as well) resembled a caricature of a barbarian.

Mutafchiev, being a historian and referring to Romanians with a degree of neglect, however, had ideological arguments against Iorga and other creators of the Romanian propaganda and avoided the excess of insulting remarks in the address of the Romanian nation in general. Miletich viewed the neighbors as a less developed nation that had been culturally dependent on Bulgaria, but still admitted the existence of common past and common traits, binding together the countries.

Just like the Bulgarian caricatures of “fierce barbarians”, the Romanian images of their neighbors did not differ much. Even Iorga, when referring to Asparukh, describes him and his warriors as “absolute barbarians” unlike the noble Romans and their descendants. He also adds

³²⁵ Александър Дякович, “Добруджа под гнета на румънците”/Alexandar Djakovich, “Dobruja under the yoke of the Romanians”, published in the volume *Dobruja*, Sofia, 1918, p. 369

³²⁶ Alberto Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico. La contesa fra Romania e Bulgaria in Dobrovia del sud (1918-1940)*, Cosenza, 2001, p. 123.

³²⁷ Blagovest Njagulov, “Les images de l’autre chez les bulgares et les roumaines (1878-1944)”, în *Études Balkaniques*, Sofia, nr. 2/1995, p. 11

³²⁸ Stancheva, “Les images de roumaine dans la littérature bulgare”, Sofia, 1994, nr. 3, p. 6

dramatic expressions, depicting Asparukh's "clothes covered with blood".³²⁹ However, the most interesting portrayal of the Bulgarians is to be found in the memoirs of Christian Vladescu, who got into the Bulgarian captivity after the fall of Turtukaia in 1916, the event glorious for the Bulgarian side and shameful for the Romanian one.³³⁰

Vladescu writes in great detail about all the atrocities of the Bulgarian soldiers, underlining their absolute lack of knowledge about such simple objects as pocket watch. Bulgarians, according to Vladescu, are fierce wildlings who fight only for the possibilities of robbing the Romanian soldiers. The author notes: "I have preserved the impression that the bravery of the Bulgarian warriors would have been much more encouraged if before the battle they have been told :”Do not forget that every Romanian had a pocket full of watches!””³³¹ Later he compares Bulgarian soldiers with monkeys, who were given a mirror as a toy.³³² In this way, the image of a primitive and aggressive creature is successfully created.

Nevertheless, it should be underlined that those supporting the Romanian cause were in many cases more demonizing Bulgarians than those supporting the Bulgarian one. However, the Romanian propagandists had strong opponents in their homeland who, like Take Ionescu,³³³ Stefan Zeletin³³⁴ or Vasile Kogalniceanu, constantly criticized the Romanian attitudes to Dobruja and expressed their absolutely opposite point of view.

Among the Bulgarian participants of the debate there existed those, who, as it was mentioned previously, expressed very strong anti-Romanian attitudes and also those, who like Markov and Penakov, fiercely supporting the Bulgarian cause, did not attempt to demonize the Romanian nation. Markov referred to Vasile Kogalniceanu as to a sane and "good Romanian".³³⁵

³²⁹ Iorga. *Droits nationaux et politiques des Roumains dans la Dobroudja*. Bucharest 1918, p. 10

³³⁰ Vlădescu, *Bulgarii: memorile unui ofițer român fost prizonier in Bulgaria*. București, 1926.

³³¹ Ibidem, p.7

³³² Ibidem

³³³ Ischirkoff, *Les Bulgares en Dobroudja. Aperçu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, p. 103

³³⁴ Zeletin, *Din țara măgarilor*, 1998, pp. 49-50. See Zeletin's poem "Noi vrem bacsis"/"We want a bribe", mocking the absurdity of the Romanian policy of the annexation of Cadrilater.

³³⁵ Markov, "The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress", Sofia, 1917, p. 20

Penakov, who lived among Romanians for many years mostly blamed the Romanian officials who had created “absurd legends” than the Romanian nation as such. Penakov wrote in his “The shelter of Kostence” (Constanta) that the Romanians loved to believe in those tales that were covering the not honorable deeds and highlighting the noble activities of the builders of the Romanian past.³³⁶ Penakov blamed the Romanian politicians for being unable to preserve Romanian Bessarabia and occupying Bulgarian Dobruja instead.

The texts of all the participants of the debate prove that the dispute had a powerful resonance in the cultured and educated circles of both societies. Although counting on the local audience, the authors produced their works mainly for the influential international public and their colleagues. The polemic between the sides found its reflection not only in the historical, ethnographic or political texts, but also, as it is thoroughly analyzed and explained by Stancheva and Njagulov, in the novels and other literature works. The territorial dispute over Dobruja seen through the eyes of the authors, does not present an absolutely original pattern of propaganda. However, it gives an astonishing example of how many of the authors rapidly changed their opinions of the neighbor, which had been previously considered a reliable ally, and of how many of them tried to avoid the idea of Bulgaria and Romania having centuries of common history and sharing common experiences. The debates of 1913-1940 were aimed at destroying those ties between two countries, and their focuses exceeded the simple limits of the texts of the participants of the debates.

³³⁶ Иван Пенаков, “Кюстенджанското пристанище”/ Ivan Penakov “The shelter of Kostence”, Sofia, 1918, p. 9

Chapter IV. Foreign audience and paths to modernization in the public sphere. Conductors or observers?

The Romanian-Bulgarian dispute about the appurtenance of Dobruja flared up with distinct power in 1878 after the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano, but it was only in 1913 when one of the countries acquired full control over the whole province, occupying the Southern part of the region (Cadrilater). Bulgaria regained the territory five years later adding the Southern part of the Northern Dobruja to it and lost it in 1919. In the period of 1913-1940 territory exchange between Romania and Bulgaria took part.³³⁷ And each of the countries willing to legitimize its right over the land used different methods, such as attempts to associate the province with the most important key moments of the nation's past, creation of historical myths, wide propaganda of national ideas and, definitely, political and economic pressure.

Dobruja's transition from the "fatal gift"³³⁸ to the developing Romanian state into one of the most significant Romanian regions, the loss of which would turn to be mortal for the country³³⁹ was neither linear, nor simple. Bulgarian aspirations towards the whole of Dobruja, deriving from 1878,³⁴⁰ the year of the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano, were less pronounced in the time of Stambolov's regime³⁴¹, when the relations between two neighboring states still preserved a degree of mutual reciprocity and disposition. After the fall of Stambolov and the approaching border-changes, the liaisons between Bulgaria and Romania and the views over

³³⁷ Н. Генчев, "Възвръщане на Южна Добруджа към България през 1940 г", сп. *Исторически преглед*, 1969, бр. 6/ N, Genchev "The restitution of Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria in 1940", in *Historical review*, 1969, n. 6

³³⁸ Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building*, Pittsburg, 2002, p. 9

³³⁹ In order to create a general opinion on the transition of the attitude towards Dobruja – Northern and Southern, see, Adrian Rădulescu; Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, Constanța, 1998, especially the parts dedicated to the history of the province after the Treaty of Berlin.

³⁴⁰ Кузманова, От Ньой до Крайова/Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989, pp. 17-20

³⁴¹ For further details about Stambolov's policy of establishing relations with the neighboring states see Beaman A. Hulme, "*Stambuloff*", New York, 1979

Dobruja altered, not only from the point of view of the territorial dispute in the public spheres³⁴² of both countries. They also changed from the point of view of the modernization agendas and propagandistic methods of supporting them in the eyes of the local and, particularly, the foreign audience.

The current chapter primarily concentrates on the propagandistic side of the Romanian and Bulgarian strategies of modernizing the region. The mere idea of modernization is perceived as a process that “affects not only the domestic development of societies but also the relations among them”.³⁴³ Modernization of social relations, education, or industry, applied to one particular territory, squeezed between the borders of two national states, presupposes primarily a path, a corridor leading to the anticipated “modernity”.³⁴⁴ The notion of “modernity” itself turns out to be more the scope of the development and the aim of modernization than a simple attempt to imitate and repeat the existent or inexistent patterns of progress.

This issue would lead to the idea, expressed by Eisenstadt: “The preceding considerations of different aspects of the dynamics and construction of traditions, the continuity of cultural models and codes, and some of the ways in which they develop in traditional societies provide the background for a reappraisal of the nature of modernity, of the diversity of modern social and cultural orders, and of the various factors that influence the development of such diversity”.³⁴⁵ In the case of Dobruja the mere territory is viewed as a confrontation zone of different and often even vague projects of modernization³⁴⁶ leading to diverse modernities or proposing

³⁴² In the current thesis, the notion of “public sphere”, the way it is grasped as well as the concept of “public opinion” is explained in the first chapter. The use of these concepts in the chapter presupposes the reference to the same meanings but from the point of view of “administrating” and “modernizing” the region.

³⁴³ Myron Weiner, *Modernization. The dynamics of growth*, New York, 1966, p. 23

³⁴⁴ The mere idea of the “path leading to modernity” is borrowed from the approaches and work titles used by several authors, whose studies proved to be extremely important for the perception of the processes happening in Dobruja, in particular, and in the whole of the region of South Eastern Europe in general. Some of the works used are: Augusta Dimou, *Entangled paths*, Budapest, 2009, Gerasimos Augustinos (ed.), *Diverse paths to modernity in Southeastern Europe. Essays in national development*, Westport, 1991,

³⁴⁵ S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, change and modernity*, Toronto, 1973, p. 203

³⁴⁶ For further details on the Romanian frustration about the programs of modernization and methods of promoting them see, Florin Grancea, *Inside the mechanisms of the Romanian modernization. The transformation of public sphere between media and political system*, 2006, pp. 39-45. For the general overview on the paradigms of the development of modernization in the Balkans see Michael Palaret. *The Balkan Economies c. 1800-1914*,

contradictory ways of reaching them. The transition of Dobruja region does not simply represent an effort made by Romania and Bulgaria to claim, occupy and develop the province, but also a clash of two propagandistic programs generated and adapted specially for the modernization of the region. The chapter primarily regards the competing modernization projects of Dobruja from the point of view of its representation by the local elites.³⁴⁷

However, although relying on the texts of the participants of the Dobrujan debate, the analysis of the administering projects of the region is mainly seen as part of the bigger propagandistic campaign, constructed and brought to life by not only both Romanian and Bulgarian governments involved in the dispute, but also by Great European powers. This chapter is formed on the basis of the comparison of the original materials written by the already mentioned individuals, and the works of the authors dealing with the subject of Romanian and Bulgarian modernization plans in particular. It examines the attempts of modernizing the states in general and the explanations of those efforts regarding the whole region of the South-East of Europe.³⁴⁸ The Dobrujan modernization projects are presented primarily, in the light of events and reactions, happening in connection with them. For this reason, the external view on the debate and international influence on the projects plays one of the most significant roles in the process of perceiving the complicated positions of both countries on the international arena.

Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 357-370. The description of the Bulgarian successful and unsuccessful attempts of modernizing the country see, Gerasimos Augustinos (ed.), *Diverse paths to modernity in Southeastern Europe. Essays in national development*, Westport, 1991, p. 15-57

³⁴⁷ Referring to the concept of the “local elites” one does not grant it the meaning of aristocracy, bourgeoisie or any other specific group of the population of the country, but generally appeals to individuals actively participating in the Dobrujan debate and leaving published texts, openly expressing the opinion on the subject. The main objective of this chapter is not the analysis of the justification of the rights over the territory, but the investigation of the views on the plans of administering the province and the use of propagandistic methods previously discussed.

³⁴⁸ Four of the general main sources used in the current part in particular and in the thesis in general, published by the historians keen not only on the subject of the Romanian or Bulgarian modernization, but also on the history of the region are: Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова/ Kuzmanova, From Neuilly to Craiova: the question of Southern Dobruja in the international relations, 1919-1940*, Sofia, 1989, Нягулов, *История на Добруджа/ Njagulov, Blagovest, The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, Gerasimos Augustinos (ed.), *Diverse paths to modernity in Southeastern Europe. Essays in national development*, Westport, 1991, Румен Даскалов, “Българското общество, 1878-1939, том 2, София, 2005/ Roumen Daskalov, *The Bulgarian society, 1878-1939*, 2 vols., Sofia, 2005

As the current part deals only with a period of time stretching from 1913 to the outbreak of the Second World War, it only touches upon the events preceding the selected timeframes in order to explain several important factors that had led to the development of the conflict over Dobruja.³⁴⁹ The main scope of this part is to present the clash of the two modernization projects of one region reflected by the participants of the territorial debate, and to analyze the general propagandistic mechanisms of modernization with not only their methods, but also with the aims they were trying to reach. The main attention in the chapter is paid to the international reaction to the propaganda of the modernization projects, Bulgarian and Romanian plans of administering Dobruja in the terms of their national modernization strategies, and the attempts of both countries to shape a nation through the economy on the example of one piece of land, stretching along the Black sea coast.

1. Taking sides: the international reaction and its outcomes.

One of the most important characteristics of the province that would later determine its economical and political development was, primarily, its Ottoman legacy. Still preserving the economic and cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire, Dobruja, divided into two parts, came under the control of Romania and Bulgaria as the result of the congress of Berlin in 1878. It should be noted that after the devastating war of 1828-1829 the population of the whole region reduced dramatically, Dobruja remaining almost deserted before the Tatar population of Crimea migrated to the Ottoman Empire by 1861.³⁵⁰ The biggest part of those emigrants settled in Dobruja,³⁵¹³⁵² serving as the foundation for the large Muslim community of the region.

³⁴⁹ For further details see Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania*, Pittsburg, 2002 and Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, Constanța, 1998

³⁵⁰ Brian G. Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: the diaspora experience and the forging of a nation*, Leiden, 2001, p. 174

³⁵¹ Ibidem 196

³⁵² It should be noted that the Ottoman Empire, however, was not able to cope with the sudden influx of the refugees, and in many cases the Christian population was obliged to host the new comers. The discontent of the

The division of the province with its mixed population turned out to be the outcome of the decision of the Great powers that not only established the border between Romania and Bulgaria, but also created remises for the future problem concerning Cadrilater, the Southern part of the region. George Ungureanu in his book dedicated to the issue of Cadrilater cites the publication of a Romanian historian, Radu Vulpe in the “Annals of Dobruja” in 1938. Vulpe underlines the idea of the inexistence of the “artificial” Dobrujan border, drawn by the Great powers and imposed on Romania and Bulgaria.³⁵³ Two decades after the end of the second Balkan war Vulpe wrote: “The territory fixed to Romania in 1913 as an addition of the Southern border does not represent any complete unit with its specific characteristics. Its ephemeral name of Cadrilater used on the occasions of diplomatic negotiations during the Balkan Wars, would have never existed if in 1878 it had not been attributed to the newly independent Romanian state...with its absurd zig-zag border...”³⁵⁴

The important role of Romania’s and Bulgaria’s neighbors as well as that of the Great Powers in the question of the establishment of the frontiers in the region, was definitely clear for both competing countries that actively began to attract allies to one’s side in order to achieve its own political and economical aims. By 1913, the aims of both countries were opposite: Romania was acquiring and trying to integrate and administer the lands, while Bulgaria was losing and attempting to regain and preserve them. The controversies arising between two states would continue into the First World War, putting Romania and Bulgaria with their economic and territorial problems on opposite sides once again.

Antonina Kuzmanova points out that already in October 1912 the Romanian diplomacy had formulated its demands to Bulgaria, hoping to re-establish the border on the line stretching

Dobrujan Christian inhabitants can even be seen as one, although not the most important, of the factors of the 1876 uprising. For further details see Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 213 and William Murray, *The making of the Balkan states*, New York, 1967, pp. 129-134

³⁵³ See Vulpe, “Dobrogea meridionala in antichitate” in *Analele Dobrogei*, anul XIX, vol. I, 1938, p. 1, cited in Ungureanu, *Chestiunea Cadrilaterului. Interese romanesti si revizionism bulgar, 1938-1940*, Bucuresti, 2005, p. 15

³⁵⁴ Ibidem

from Tutrakan to the Black sea, including Silistra.³⁵⁵ Moreover, with the diplomatic attempts to justify the rights over the land from both sides and the polemics, developing around them, the Romanian and Bulgarian party initiated, primarily, to attract the Great Powers to one's side.³⁵⁶ The modernization projects in this particular chapter are viewed as extremely important materials of propaganda enabling the Bulgarian and the Romanian sides to focus not only on the interpretations of the historical past, cultural heritage or religious factors, negatively depicting the rival party. They also allowed the parties to apply the modernizing principles in order to integrate the territory in the country as successfully as possible, to guarantee its status within the new borders, to practically prove the legitimacy of the borders to Great Powers by presenting a perfect model of administering the land.

Therefore, the “modernization” argument became one of the most important.³⁵⁷ It granted not only the “evidence” of the serious plans of developing the region, but also could present Bulgaria or Romania as trustworthy allies for the countries whose side they would support. From this point of view both Romania and Bulgaria had primarily to overcome their “periphery status” as Palairot explains it on the example of Bulgaria that “in 1910 was little or no more urban than it had been under the Ottoman rule”.³⁵⁸ Romania, although taking part only in the Second Balkan war and unlike Bulgaria achieving territorial gains, was not in a much better economic position than its neighbor.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ Кузманова, А, *Op. cit*, pp. 22-23

³⁵⁶ About the decisive role of the “Great Powers” and Romania’s attempts to balance between France, Austria-Hungary, Russia and its ambitions regarding Dobruja see Стефан Анчев, *Политиката на кралска Румъния и междусъюзническата война 1913*, Велико Търново, 1985/ Stefan Anchev, *The policy of royal Romania and the war between the allies 1913*, Veliko Turnovo, 1985

³⁵⁷ The importance of the “modernization” argument appears in several publications authored especially by Romanian participants of the debates in the 20s, who try to legitimize Dobruja’s integration in their country. Bulgarian work of similar type would rather be published in 1913-1920, and then before the Second World War. Some of them are: Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, *Dobrogea: economica, politica, sociala*, prelucre de Octavian Valeanu, Ioan N Ionescu, Constanta, 1925, Чингиров, *Добруджа Нашето възраждане*, София. 1917/Chingirov, *Dobruja. Our revival*, Sofia, 1917.

³⁵⁸ Palairot, *The Balkan Economies*, Cambridge, 1977, p. 367

³⁵⁹ H. Eric Aldcroft, *Europe’s third world. The European periphery in the interwar years*, Aldershot, 2006, pp. 39-94

This aspect of “underdevelopment”³⁶⁰ forced both countries to attempt to overcome their “backwardness” while putting significant efforts in the modernization programs. Being connected to the modernization of education and culture, as it becomes clear from the roots of the Bulgarian and Romanian revival,³⁶¹ modernization was accompanied by nationalism,³⁶² which was a motivating issue for Bulgaria, as well as for Romania. Before thoroughly describing the competing modernization projects of the two countries, the general economic situation in both countries with their aspirations expressed by the participants of the territorial debate and the reaction of Great Powers should be examined.

John Bell explains that generally the Bulgarian “modernization tradition” owes its roots to the Greek national Awakening and later to the influence from Russia.³⁶³ By 1913, the problems Bulgaria was facing were very much connected to its disability to reach the undoubted progress and fulfill the territorial aspiration remaining from the treaty of San Stefano. John Bell gives a quotation from the writer and political activist Mikhalaki Georgiev, who would express his disappointment almost two decades after the liberation of his country: “We stained like eagles high above the clouds, and now we roll in the dust in the swamp...! If this is the life a free people leads, then such freedom is in vain. We sowed roses, but only thorns have come forth.”³⁶⁴

Bulgaria failed to achieve industrialization, its agricultural reforms turned out to be rather unsuccessful³⁶⁵ and did not solve the major problems of the agriculture like low state support and land being cultivated mostly by smallholders. However, Bulgaria managed to build up a better

³⁶⁰ The terms of “underdevelopment” and “backwardness” used in this chapter when referring to Romania and Bulgaria between 1913 and 1940 primarily characterize the economical situation in the countries compared to their Western neighbors. The notions are mainly borrowed from Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, Stanford, 2000 and Ivan Berend, and György Ranki, *The European Periphery and Industrialization 1780-1914*, Cambridge, 1982

³⁶¹ For further details on the view of the nationalism in Romania and Bulgaria see Roumen Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans: historiography of the Bulgarian revival*, Budapest, 2004, for some information on the Romanian case see Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774-1866*, Oxford, 1996

³⁶² Roumen Daskalov, “Development in the Balkan Periphery Prior to World War II: Some Reflections” in *Südost-Forschungen*, 57, 1998., p. 208

³⁶³ John Bell in Gerasimos Augustinos (ed.), *Diverse paths to modernity in Southeastern Europe. Essays in national development*, Westport, 1991, pp. 16-17

³⁶⁴ Ibidem

³⁶⁵ For further details on the transition of the Bulgarian agricultural reforms see Robert F. Lyons, and Gordon C Rausser, *Disruption and continuity in Bulgaria's agrarian reform*, Berkley, 1994.

educational system following the reform of 1891, failing at the same time to achieve social and economic transformations.³⁶⁶ The successes as well as the fails of Bulgarian modernization after the Second Balkan war can be to some extent clarified by the country's defeat and little support from Great Powers. Nevertheless, there existed simpler reasons for Great Powers not to have trust in Bulgaria.

Bulgarian newly established banking system was not able to sponsor the development of the industrial or agricultural sector, while no influential foreign bank wished to invest into the unsecure and unpredictable Bulgarian project dealing with the improvement of the state's infrastructure.³⁶⁷ The successful educational program by 1920 clearly produced more trained specialists than the state could afford, leaving the majority of the trained individuals unemployed.³⁶⁸ The militarist tendencies and the great amount of money spent on the military purposes even after the treaty of Neuilly made Bulgaria "the Prussia of the Balkans", almost destroying the country's economic stability. Except for the Dobrujan question, which can hardly be called the most economically and politically significant for the country, the Macedonian dilemma was still actual for Bulgaria after 1913.³⁶⁹

The Macedonian issue, as well as the Dobrujan dispute only highlighted what Bell called "the persistence of the old regime", political and cultural life dominated by premodern "nobilitarian forces".³⁷⁰ In the meantime, Bulgaria had to cope with the migrants from the lost territories, including Dobruja.³⁷¹ Their influx also damaged the unstable economic balance of the

³⁶⁶ John Bell, in Gerasimos Augustinos (ed.), *Diverse paths to modernity in Southeastern Europe. Essays in national development*, Westport, 1991, p. 19

³⁶⁷ John R. Lampe, *The Bulgarian economy in the twentieth century*. New York, 1986, pp. 28-36

³⁶⁸ Bell, *Diverse paths*, pp. 19-20

³⁶⁹ For further details on the Macedonian question in the Bulgarian politics and its general significance, see the publication from the 20s, Georgi Bazhdarov. *La question macédonienne dans le passé et le présent*, 2. ed. Sofia, 1926.

³⁷⁰ Bell, *Diverse paths*, Westport, 1991, p. 19

³⁷¹ Даскалов, *Българското общество, 1878-1939*, том 2, София, 2005/Daskalov, *The Bulgarian society, 1878-1939*, 2 vol., Sofia, 2005), pp. 28-29

country. After the ascend to power of the Agrarian Union in 1919³⁷² Bulgaria, after series of reforms gradually turned into royal-military dictatorship after the end of the interwar period.

Romania's path to "progress" was slightly different from the Bulgarian one. Experiencing a bloody peasant revolt in 1907 and inability to carry out a proper agricultural reform as well as its neighbor,³⁷³ Romania was not in a much better position compared to Bulgaria, however, its problems were partially connected to an absolutely opposite event – the growth of its territory in 1918. A small state with a large number of Romanian-speaking populations living not within its borders, Romania in 1930 had already become one of the biggest states in the region. With new territories, the country inherited also the ethnic minorities that would turn into a challenge for its modernization program.³⁷⁴ Regaining Bessarabia, Bucovina and several other provinces, Romania found its internal political and economical mechanisms under threat.

Like Bulgaria, Romania was not able to achieve industrialization as well, facing a severe lack of the middle class that could promote it.³⁷⁵ The upper-class landowners held the land, while the peasantry remained extremely poor, and the "local" entrepreneurs were almost nonexistent.³⁷⁶ The country that needed extremely fast reforms was left in a situation of frustration and crisis.

Like Bulgaria, Romania had its rather successful educational reform that transformed it from a country with a very low level of literacy in the 1870s to a comparatively literate state with a significant increase in the percentage of the urban population in the beginning of the 20th century.³⁷⁷ By 1940 after several events that had influenced the country like Prime Minister Bratianu's death and the ascent to power of the Peasant Party lead by Iuliu Maniu, Romania as

³⁷² For further details see Daskalov, *Debating the past. Modern Bulgarian history: from Stambolov to Zhivkov*, Budapest, 2011, pp. 88-120

³⁷³ For further details see David Mitrany. *The land & the peasant in Rumania; the war and agrarian reform (1917-21)*, London, 1930

³⁷⁴ Maria Bucur. *Eugenics and modernization in interwar Romania*, Pittsburgh, 2002.

³⁷⁵ Mary Ellen Fischer, in *Diverse paths*, Westport, 1991, p. 140-145.

³⁷⁶ Ibidem

³⁷⁷ Ibidem.

well as Bulgaria faced the stagnation of its industrialization program and later entered the war also as a royal-military dictatorship.

Both Bulgaria and Romania, unable to handle the whole of Dobruja by purely individual supremacy would look for allies among Great Powers, trying to attract them on their side. The process of justifying claims was, as it becomes clear from the context itself, very dependent on and partially created by the international reaction. Texts, written in French or German by Bulgarian and Romanian participants of the debates definitely referred to foreign audience in the first place. However, even the works published in Romanian or Bulgarian for the local public, at the same time were aiming much higher. This strategy can be seen as double, which presupposes, on the one hand, references to the local audience, but also the message to the foreign communities transmitted by the local audience itself that had already received it from several published texts.

The difference between the Romanian and Bulgarian texts was mainly defined by Romania acquiring and Bulgaria losing territories in the period between 1913 and 1940. Romanian main argument was the “evident success” of the Romanian administrative policy. In a book published in 1928 Romulus Seisanu, basing his opinions only on Romanian, French or German-language sources, came with the direct opinion: “...this territory would have never achieved progress in the last 50 years without being united to Romania”.³⁷⁸ The author supports his argument by appealing to the active modernization of the region. He lists the new bridges being built, the new port, Constanta, being established, the navigation flourishing in the whole of the region.³⁷⁹

Everything that is mentioned by Seisanu does not seem to contradict the reality. However, the efforts to “civilize” and “build” Dobruja cost Romania much more than the author would have ever revealed. The period of the blooming Greater Romania came to an end in 1940,

³⁷⁸ Seisanu, *Dobrogea, gurile Dunarii si insula Serpilor*, Bucuresti, 1928, p. 210

³⁷⁹ Ibidem.

when the economical and political situation in the country finally had to face its growing problems. Irina Livezeanu explains this wish to look as united and developed as possible, by referring to the inscription on the Romanian pavilion of the New York International exhibition that presents the citizens of the country as completely “united” in faith, language, history and everything else.³⁸⁰

Seisanu clearly attempts to present the same picture of Romania bringing Dobruja to modernity. He does not mention Bulgarian modernization projects in general, pointing out that “a proof that Dobruja cannot be a Balkan dominion (Romania is clearly viewed as non-Balkan unlike Bulgaria) comes from its non-distant future, when Turks ruled over it. Under the Turkish rule the commerce in the Danube Delta and on the Black sea was almost inexistent...because for the Ottomans the province remained out of the zone of its economic interests”.³⁸¹ The affirmation can be supported or argued for, however, one of its aspect seems to be extremely important for the scope of the current paper: the Romanians are viewed by the authors as “successful modernizers” who have come to save the province.

It should be noticed that almost the same view on the role of the Romanian government is shared by the author of “Dobroudja meridionale. Le Quadrilatere” in his French-language work published in 1919. Pointing out how “deserted” was the infertile steppe region before the Romanians first started developing its agriculture and made it a blossoming province.³⁸² The Ottoman legacy is seen as backward, and Bulgarians are generally seen as a danger to the stabile development of the region on its path to modernity.³⁸³

Nicolae Iorga in his “What do we represent in Dobruja?” attracts the audience attention to the same idea of “civilizing Romanians”. This time the issue is expressed by an influential

³⁸⁰ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, 1995, p. 1

³⁸¹ Seisanu, *Dobrogea*, pp. 210-211

³⁸² “*La Dobroudja meridionale. Le Quadrilatere*”, Paris, 1919, pp. 4-5

³⁸³ *Ibidem*, pp. 6-7.

historian, who compares the Romanians of his time developing the region with the Romans, “the most Ancient nation that had ever lived in the region”, “the modernizing nation”, the people, who had once brought Dobruja to “modernity” and whose descendants were to civilize the whole region once again.³⁸⁴ Apparently, Romanians, according to Iorga, had to repeat the successes of their ancestors.

The three works represent an inverse transition of one idea of Romanians having the civilized mission. Generally, this message was oriented not only to the local audience, but also to the international one. Independently from the personality of the author – a non-famous journalist or a recognized historian – the main scope of justifying the rights was more adequate from the point of view of the foreign audience, than from that of the local one that simply had to accept the facts if it wasn't able to influence them. The Bulgarian picture, however, logically shows the tactics of defense and diminishment of the “Romanian modernizing role” in the eyes of Great powers.

Penakov, one of the active participants of the debate, in “Le probleme de la Dobroudja de Sud” supported Bratianu’s opinion of the extreme risk of occupying first the Northern Dobruja, and then pointed out that Romania generally had very slight notion of how to deal with the whole of Dobruja in general.³⁸⁵ Bulgarian perspective, however, did not only offer the whole program. It was also much more prepared for handling the Southern part of Dobruja. Calling Romanian policy “imperialistic”,³⁸⁶ Penakov would occasionally refer to Bulgaria’s recent successes in overcoming the devastations of the Second Balkan war. His defensive tactics mainly appealed to the West, having a much more pronounced idea of being written specially for the Western public.

³⁸⁴ Iorga, “*Ce represintam in Dobrogea?*” *idei din conferinta tinuta in ziua de 11 ianuar 1910 de Nicolae Iorga,, Valenii de munte*, 1910, pp. 6-7

³⁸⁵ Penacoff, *Le problem de la Dobroudja de Sud. Un aspect economique et social dec e problem*, Paris, 1928, pp. 6-10.

³⁸⁶ Penacoff, *Le problem*, p. 13

Ishirkov in his “Les bulgares en Dobroudja” would share similar concepts, referring more to historical rights and experience than to concrete modernization projects of the Bulgarian side. Ishirkov pointed out the importance of Dobruja for the Bulgarian social, cultural and economic life already from the time of prince Asparukh,³⁸⁷ and stated that the region had to remain Bulgarian for the sake of its own gradual development. Throughout his work the author highlighted that Dobruja’s natural development and its own path to modernity were broken artificially after its cede to Romania, making Bulgaria in 1913 a country deprived of its lands, necessary for the pass of progress. Ishirkov generally used Romanian and French sources, trying to present an extremely balanced concept of Bulgaria being more successful and “natural” possible modernizer of the Southern part of the region, at least.³⁸⁸

In 1919, the Dobruja organization in Sofia published Markov’s “The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress”.³⁸⁹ Beginning with the emphasis on the historical rights of Bulgaria over the region, the work focuses later on the question, touched upon by Ishirkov and Penakov, the fate not only of the region itself, but also, of its modernization. Mostly the work deals with the description of Romanian drastic measures of assimilation and the idea of Bessarabia being of more value to the Romanian state than Dobruja³⁹⁰. Romanian rule over the region is viewed as the “rule” of “the degraded”,³⁹¹ while Bulgarians are presented as much better modernizers with much better-grounded claims. It should be noted that although the loss of the Northern part of the region is definitely considered unjust in all the regarded sources, it still could be accepted, while the necessity to cede Cadrilater is viewed as an intolerable mistake. This attitude explains the stronger orientation of the significant part of the Bulgarian texts related to the question of Dobruja to the foreign audience.

³⁸⁷ Ischirkoff, *Les bulgares en Dobroudja. Aperçu historique et ethnographique*, Berne, 1919, p. 180

³⁸⁸ Ischirkoff, pp. 134-170

³⁸⁹ Markov, *The political fate of Dobroudja after the Berlin congress*, Sofia, 1919.

³⁹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 2-24

³⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 31, See the whole of chapter 4.

The foreign audience, however, facing the task of taking sides, predominantly based its opinion on the strategic value of Dobruja and the possibilities to play on the dispute, balancing between Romania and Bulgaria. In this way, Germany, first siding with Bulgaria, gained Southern Dobruja in 1916, and hoping to get the Northern part as well, failed.³⁹² By 1918, Northern Dobruja came under the control of the Condominium. Turkey as well as Germany in 1918 turned against Bulgaria's idea of having the whole of the region, Turkey still hoping for territorial gains from Bulgaria, and Germany not expecting the state to increase its borders.

During the First World War, both Romania and Bulgaria, initially trying to avoid being involved, finally took the sides of two different blocks, Bulgaria siding with Austria-Hungary and Germany. Later this decision led to Bulgaria declaring war on Romania and the German troops occupying Dobruja.³⁹³ Germany, apparently, was interested in Bulgaria as an ally, because of its strategic position in the middle of the Balkans and easy access to the sea. In 1916 Romania lost Turtucaia and then Silistra, suffering heavy defeats. Austrian and German forces, however, did not approve of Bulgaria's ideas of taking the whole of Dobruja, leaving the state with Cadrilater, lost and regained several years later.³⁹⁴

Romania, supported mainly by France, established full control over the province in 1919. Antonina Kuzmanova mentions that general Berthelot, the commander of the troops of the allies in Romania, would say before the Bulgarian general that "he is not a commander of one occupational army, but a Romanian citizen Berthelot".³⁹⁵ She later adds that Britain as well as Italy would take the side of Romania, although being much less pro-Romanian than France.

However, each of the countries had a series of conditions to offer to Romania. While Russia was more concerned by the events happening within its borders by the beginning of the 20s,

³⁹² Кузманова, *От Ньой до Крайова/ Kuzmanova, From Neuilly to Craiova*, Sofia, 1989, p.25

³⁹³ See Димитров, *Австро-унгарската дипломация и българо-германският спор за северна Добруджа през 1917 година*, Варна, 1984/Dimitrov, *Austro-Hungarian diplomacy and the Bulgarian-German dispute about Northern Dobruja in 1917*, Varna, 1984

³⁹⁴ Ungureanu, *Chestiunea Cadrilaterului. Interese romanesti si revizionism bulgar, 1938-1940*, Bucuresti, 2005, pp. 24-25

³⁹⁵ Kuzmanova, *From Neuilly*, p. 30

France was the only country with pronounced anti-Bulgarian orientation of the foreign policy, counting on Romania as its main and most trustworthy ally in South Eastern Europe. After 1919 Romania officially remained with the whole of Dobruja,³⁹⁶ it was still having its main ally, France, on its side, while Bulgaria was more concerned in getting allies.³⁹⁷ Before 1940, the country hardly had any chance to influence significantly Great Powers so that they could reshape the borders.

It is hard to assert that the international attitude towards the Dobrujan dispute was influenced by the texts published by both sides as well as by their modernization projects. The possible achievements of Romanians or Bulgarians in the region were primarily regarded by the Great Powers as proof of the state of affairs in two debating countries. Foreign audience had to grasp them not in order to get acquainted with Bulgarian or Romanian territorial claims or projects of regional development, but with the idea of the capabilities of these two states to fulfill their expectations. Hence, Bulgarian or Romanian projects and disputes could primarily demonstrate how powerful and trustworthy both of the countries were.

2. Administering Dobruja: foreign policy goals and propagandistic methods applied.

Both Romania and Bulgaria attempted to integrate the whole of the region into the borders of the state as successfully as they possibly could. Generally, the projects of administering Dobruja from both parties combined the idea of attracting the foreign audience and achieving foreign policy goals on the one hand and using already known and trustworthy propagandistic methods

³⁹⁶ For further details on Romanian attempts to handle Dobruja until 1940 see Florica Dobre, Vasilica Manea, Lenuta Nicolescu, *Armata romana de la ultimatum la dictat – anul 1940. Documente*, Bucuresti, 2002, vol. II-III.

³⁹⁷ For further details see Ungureanu, *Chestiunea Cadrilaterului. Interese romanesti si revizionism bulgar, 1938-1940*, Bucuresti, 2005, pp. 23-30

like referring to historical legacy, natural rights etc. From the point of view of the region's modernization this strategy had to be altered, adopting the notion of "success". Both Bulgaria and Romania had to modernize Dobruja or at least show their readiness to do so by modernizing the country in general, as quickly as possible.

Apostol D. Culea in his book about Dobruja published in 1928, dedicated some pages to describing the backwardness of the region before its capture by the Romanians.³⁹⁸ "Under the Turkish rule", according to the author, Dobruja was an extremely backward province³⁹⁹, while the Romans and "their descendants, the Romanians" had come to care for the fate of the region. The author primarily underlines the role of the newly opened Romanian schools in Dobruja, appealing to rather successful Romanian educational reforms.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, the colonization of the "deserted fields of the province"⁴⁰¹ by the Romanians is seen as the greatest success first in the Northern and later in the Southern part. He admits that the idea of bringing to the region the veterans of the war of 1877-1878 was not as brilliant as it had seemed to be, recognizing the high costs of the process of the rather victorious Dobrujan colonization starting with the annexation of its Northern part several decades before Romania gained full control over the whole territory.⁴⁰²

Although the majority of the Romanian contemporaries of the Dobrujan dispute expressed their opinion, highlighting Romania's involvement in the building of the region's infrastructure and investing money in the development of Dobruja, it should be noted that the general situation with the country's modernizing policy was far from being bright. Mary Ellen Fischer point out in her article that "the country consisted of two separate worlds differing in political, economic, social, educational, and cultural experiences and values: the rural Romanian peasantry, most of whom eked out a living on below-subsistence holdings, and an urbanized

³⁹⁸ Culea, *Cat trebuie sa stie oricine despre Dobrogea*, Bucuresti, 1928.

³⁹⁹ Culea, pp. 13-18

⁴⁰⁰ Culea, pp. 148-160

⁴⁰¹ Culea, pp. 240

⁴⁰² For further details on the integration of Northern Dobruja's incorporation in Romania see Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building*, Pittsburg, 2002

aristocracy that was probably the most cosmopolitan in Eastern Europe”.⁴⁰³ Regarding the whole of Dobruja, Romania primarily wished to achieve its “national integrity”, which was put at stake by the numerous ethnic minorities living in the country.

However, one should notice that the “unification” was one of the programs that had to be carried out by in order to achieve modernization. Without one official language, nobody could ever modernize any state. This fact explains to some extent the reason for the establishment of a strategy that later became rather oppressive.⁴⁰⁴ Romania’s as well as Bulgaria’s modernity was connected with the ethnically united status of the country. From the Romanian side this aim could be achieved by the continuation of the policy of Romanization and colonization, which was rather well described by its contemporaries.⁴⁰⁵

The Romanian strategies were working rather well in Dobruja, while the state was trying to establish administrative control over the territory. Blagovest Njaguov, while describing the Romanian policy in Dobruja in 1919-1940, points out that the life was far from being safe for the local population.⁴⁰⁶ The illegal Bulgarian organizations struggling against the Romanian government coexisted with the oppressions of the non-Romanian population by the authorities.⁴⁰⁷ Active in Southern Dobruja until 1940 the Internal Dobrujan revolutionary organization promoted Bulgarian nationalistic ideas and fought for the inclusion of the land in the Bulgarian state. Regarded as terrorists by the Romanian authorities and as liberators by the

⁴⁰³ Fischer, in Augustinos, Gerasimos (ed.), *Diverse paths*, Westport, 1991, p. 142

⁴⁰⁴ As a proof of the conflicts between the Bulgarian population of the Southern Dobruja and the Romanian authorities, see “Бюлетин № 1 на Софийското представителство на ЦДНС за съпротиватана населението в Добруджа срещу настаняването на румънската администрация, 1919” published in *Извори за историята на Добруджа*, София, 1992, p. 433/Bulletin n. 1 of the Sofia’s representative seat of the CDNS about the resistance of the population in Dobruja against the establishment of the Romanian administration, 1919”, published in *Sources about the history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 1992

⁴⁰⁵ See M, Roman “Iredntismul bulgar in Dobrogea”, *Analele Dobrogei*, 1935, pp. 20-23 The author generally expresses complaints about the “behavior” of the Bulgarian population in Dobrogea, while the opposite point of view about the “horrors” of the Romanian colonization policy in the 20s is presented by several Bulgarian authors, one of whom is Zahariev. For further details see Zaharieff, M, “Les minorities bulgares en Roumanie”, Paris, 1940

⁴⁰⁶ Нягулов, *История на Добруджа/Njaguov The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, p. 293

⁴⁰⁷ Ibidem

Bulgarian side, they later fell under the influence of the Bulgarian communist party.⁴⁰⁸ Part of the Bulgarian revolution committees established also the Dobrujan Revolutionary organization in 1925 that was supporting the idea of Dobrujan independence and its integration into the projected federative republic of the Balkans.⁴⁰⁹ The movement later sided with the Communist party of Romania.

The power, in general, had become extremely centralized in Romania and for this reason the state became fully ruled from Bucharest.⁴¹⁰ According to the Romanian constitution of 1923, the territorial-administrative organization of the state changed, dividing the country in districts (judet) that consisted of communes (comuna). The Peasant party insisted on further centralization of the country, which coincided with the decentralization when offering a larger autonomy and possibilities of self-governing to the subjects.⁴¹¹

The Romanian attempts of modernizing Dobruja had several parallel sides one of them being the successful plan of centralization, colonization and investment in infrastructure, the other one being the partially achieved results of that plan that required enormous efforts from Romania that could hardly cope with the quick modernization of its territory. It should be noted that the texts of the Romanian participants of the debates did not alter the information about the course of the Dobrujan modernization, they simply exaggerated the size of its triumphant accomplishments.

Bulgaria's modernizing projects, unlike the Romanian ones, had little chance of being applied in the period between 1913 and 1940. Dobrujan dispute generally brought to Bulgaria the

⁴⁰⁸ For further details see П. Т о д о р о в, “Идейни течения и борби в добруджанското национално-освободително движение до 1919 г” in *Изследвания по българската история (Българският национален въпрос след Берлинския конгрес до социалистическата революция)*. С., 1986, pp. 111 – 165/ P, Todorov, “The ideological trends and conflicts in the Dobrujan national liberation movement before 1919” in *Investigation in the Bulgarian history*, Sofia, 1986, pp. 111-165

⁴⁰⁹ For further details on the Balkan federalism and its projects see Leften Stavros Stavrianos, “*Balkan federation: a history of the movement toward Balkan unity in modern time*”s, 1964

⁴¹⁰ Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania*, 1995, p.53-57

⁴¹¹ Нягулов, *Njagulov*, The history of Dobruja, p. 291

wave of migrants that had to be adapted in the Bulgarian society.⁴¹² The Bulgarians remaining in the Southern Dobruja began to conduct their own fight against the Romanian oppression of their national rights.⁴¹³ Generally, Bulgarian texts from the period of 1913-1940 reflect the ideas of the Bulgarian side to get at least the Southern part of the province back, however, some of them propose ideas of modernizing the region. Penakov would point out the balancing factor: in case Bulgaria could regain Cadrilater, it could primarily occupy the position of a stabilizing factor, guaranteeing the prosperous future for the region.⁴¹⁴

It becomes clear not so much from the texts of the Bulgarian participants of the debate, but more from the analysis of the Bulgaria's attempts to modernize the country that the loss of the territories affected the local public sphere so that it began producing propagandistic texts, primarily, relating them to a much more vital Macedonian issue.⁴¹⁵ Dobruja, although extremely important for Bulgaria, could not fully compete with the importance of the Macedonian dispute. It should be noted that the value of Dobruja was not being diminished by the importance of the Macedonian question; however, the mere idea of constant territory losses and inability of regaining the lands back was influencing Bulgaria in a rather negative way.

Having several revolutionary organizations on the territory of Dobruja, Bulgarian government did not fully manage all of them, as they were following different scopes without being controlled from one center. The IDRO was fighting for the region to be united with Bulgaria, while DRO supported the idea of the independent Dobruja being included in the Federative Republic of the Balkans. The organizations were in many cases not directly connected with one another and did not share the common projects of administering and

⁴¹² Даскалов, *Българското общество, 1878-1939*, том 2, София, 2005/Daskalov, *The Bulgarian society, 1878-1939*, 2 vol., Sofia, 2005, pp. 27-36

⁴¹³ For further details see Milachkov in Нягулов *История на Добруджа*/ Njagulov *The history of Dobruja*, Sofia, 2007, p. 341-417

⁴¹⁴ Penacoff *Le problem de la Dobroudja de Sud. Un aspect economique et social dec e problem*, Paris, 1928, pp. 11-12

⁴¹⁵ As an example see Georgi Bazhdarov, *La question macédonienne dans le passé et le présent*, 2. ed. Sofia, 1926.

modernizing the region. Neither Bulgaria had one concretely defined program for Dobruja, trying to cope with the backwardness of the territories of the country.

Just like in Romania, in Bulgaria the attempts to finally solve the agricultural problem, pushing the country's agriculture on the way of progress turned out to be ineffective. The major problems remained unsolved, although Stambolijski tried to cope with the backwardness of the area. Generally, in Bulgaria, not the question of whether or not to industrialize the country, but the question of how to do it, had to be asked and answered. Stambolijski's idea was that "modernization did not occur by itself; rather it had to be nurtured by the state".⁴¹⁶ Stambolijski, although not always with great success, promoted modernization in the limits of its own possibilities, including compulsory labor services. His projects were stopped in 1923 when the government was overthrown, leaving the bigger part of the reforms unfinished. The later attempts of Bulgaria to modernize itself were slowly leading to an authoritarian regime. Wishing to achieve centralization, Bulgaria began with experiments with modernization and ended up with stagnation by 1938.⁴¹⁷

Bulgaria attempted to achieve its foreign policy goals of gaining the territories, while Romania's policy was more oriented on preserving the lands. The clash of two projects of Greater Romania and Greater Bulgaria forced both countries to attempt the consolidation of their land aspirations with the actual modernization of the states. Generally, the final results of the division of Dobruja in 1940 were defined not so much by the propagandistic strategies or applied activities of both sides, but more by the dramatic changes preceding 1940 and signing of the Craiova Treaty.

⁴¹⁶ Bell, in Augustinos, *Diverse paths to modernity*, Westport, 1991, p. 22

⁴¹⁷ Ibidem

3. Shaping modernity: the results of Romanian and Bulgarian justification of the claims over Dobruja.

Neither Romania, nor Bulgaria presented a successful pattern of quickly integrating Southern Dobruja in the state. While Romania established an oppressive nationalistic regime on the newly acquired land, Bulgaria was trying to attract the foreign attention to the problems of the local Bulgarians creating several administrative projects that could get the lost territory back. While the propagandistic side of claiming rights over the territory becomes generally clear, the economic side of the question remains a vague area.

Both Bulgaria and Romania were trying not only to physically integrate Dobruja into the states, but to make it a part of the nation, connected with the body of the nation-state. However, neither of the Balkan states was fully independent from Great powers in the question of modernization. Although the “building up of the infrastructure of railways and roads, telegraph and telephone networks”⁴¹⁸ enabled Bulgaria to achieve success, the results could be named only partially victorious. The absence of considerable traffic⁴¹⁹ diminished the significance of the railway in general and in particular. The afflux of the Western goods ruined the local artisans, the already mentioned agrarian problems, typical for both Romania and Bulgaria in the beginning of the 20th century, were being solved only partially. Romanian as well as Bulgarian peasants “were still backward in terms of adaptiveness and flexibility, empathy, capacity to manage activities in the wider world outside the village community”⁴²⁰.

Both Romania and Bulgaria adopted educational reforms, both attempted to use the state propaganda machine in order to achieve its national integrity. However, Bulgaria’s first “unsuccess” and Romanian success can be explained not by the influence of the diplomatic propaganda, but generally by the persistence of both parties and their involvement in the political

⁴¹⁸ Daskalov, “Development in the Balkan Periphery Prior to World War II: Some Reflections” in *Südost-Forschungen*, 57, 1998, p. 212

⁴¹⁹ Ibidem

⁴²⁰ Daskalov, Op. cit, p. 213

alliances. Dobruja itself, from this point of view, can be regarded more as a strategic territory than as a place where Bulgarian or Romanian nation had originated. From the economic point of view, Dobruja together with its Southern and Northern part possessed several features that made it extremely important for both parties. One of the most significant political and economical goals connected with the region was the idea of making it part of Greater Romania or Greater Bulgaria. The clash of those two state projects resulted in a dispute that uncovered the reasons beyond the simple territorial division.

Dobruja, viewed by Romania as an access point to the sea and the Danube delta, had a significance of establishing a longer border line for Bulgaria that could even side with Russia in case of taking the Northern part. By 1913, the natural resources and agricultural fertility of the region do not seem to be significant for several of the reasons connected with the undeveloped agriculture that were mentioned several times before. However, with the proper investment Dobruja could turn into an economically profitable region for both Romania and Bulgaria.

The ethnical landscape of the region, being extremely uneven, could be seen by both sides as a negative trait, but could still offer several positive aspects like possibilities to assimilate the locals who did not have in many cases defined and strong national identity. The policy of unification of the region applied by Romanians met resistance from the Bulgarian part, however, this resistance could be suppressed with the policy of active Romanization and resettlement of the population from different parts of the country.

Bulgaria regained Southern Dobruja in 1940 despite the Romanian attempts to preserve Balchik and neighboring towns. After the restitution of Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria, the population exchange took place,⁴²¹ balancing the ethnic picture of two Dobrujas. Reaffirmed in 1947, the border remained untouched. Putting an end to the project of Greater Romania the

⁴²¹ See Панайотов, “Размяна на малцинствено население между България и Румъния 1940-1944” In Сб. Добруджа, N 6, 1989/ Панайотов, “The exchange of the minority population between Bulgaria and Romania 1940-1944, 1989.

beginning of the war reshaped the situation in Dobruja significantly making the region not suddenly less important, but one of the troublesome lands from the point of view of both states involving already in the war.

Conclusions. Dobruja reshaped.

The focus of the current thesis is framed and defined by the concept of propaganda, as reflected and applied in the works of several eminent individuals supporting the Bulgarian or the Romanian cause in the territorial dispute between the countries in 1913-1940. The text introduces, arranges and sets the discussion about the appurtenance of Dobruja into an international context that positions the region next to the numerous similar cases of borderland debates, highlighting, however, its peculiarity of a multiethnic and non-homogeneous area between the Danube and the Black sea. The clash between the idea of “Greater Bulgaria” and “Greater Romania” is shown through the competition of two nation-building programs, two modernization projects and two elites competing for the recognition of them and their states by the Great Powers.

The propagandistic strategies of both Romania and Bulgaria are analyzed through the texts of the participants of the debate chosen on the basis of their political influence (eminent diplomats or politicians), intellectual authority (historians, ethnographers), or direct involvement in the dispute as attentive witnesses or storytellers (writers, jurists, etc). Taking into account a rather large number of people involved in the Dobrujan dispute, the focus of the current research had to be limited to several individuals, whose texts can be viewed as either very typical, representing the general pattern, or extremely unusual, but still appealing to the same propagandistic methods. Through the eyes of the participants of the debates, the Dobrujan question is seen as not merely a continuation or a replica of previous Romanian and Bulgarian attempts to integrate and assimilate provinces establishing a firm borderline of the state. It is regarded as a remarkable case describing how two historically very closely connected neighboring nations sought to create differences between themselves and their nationhood and generate a set of multiple arguments helping to prove Bulgaria’s or Romania’s right over the territory.

The thesis demonstrates that the percentage of the Romanian/Bulgarian inhabitants was not stable and could not be counted easily. Instead, it could be effortlessly shaped in one's favor by population exchange or enforcement of one's nation to leave. This fact diminished the role the actual number of people of any nationality played in the process of dividing the territory. The current thesis does not regard the "actual data" as reliable for the reasons of easy ways of corrupting it. As it is shown, the population censuses in the majority of the cases did not reflect the real ethnic landscape.

The success of gaining the land depended mostly on the ways (referring to "historical rights", the superiority of one's nation, the religious or linguistic factor) one side used to prove its claims legitimate as well as on the elaborate tactics in political strategy and economics. The current research shows that both parties were persistent in justifying their rights over the territory. However, their actions can hardly be described as successful, relating them to the outcomes of the dispute and the solution of the Dobrujan problem in 1940 with the signing of the treaty of Craiova.

The result of the division of the region depended mostly not on the value and propagandistic strength of the texts the participants of the debate had produced, but on external influence that brought the end to Greater Romania and reshaped the political map once again after the Second World War. The works of the contemporaries give an insight on the dispute that allows to perceive the roles of Great Powers deciding the fate of the province, dividing and re-dividing it. The explanations of how and why Dobruja became extremely important for both Bulgaria and Romania in 1913-1940 lies partially in the methods of propaganda of the sides, that inserted the ideas of their nationalistic historical discourses into it. Dobruja's significance was defined mainly by its strategically important position that was making the province a precious land with possibilities of controlling the Danube navigation, establishing ports and profiting from the access to the Black sea.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Northern Dobruja was integrated into Romania, while Cadrilater, previously a Bulgarian territory, came under the Romanian rule in 1913. The Balkan wars and the First World War reshaped the borders of the whole region, causing the Dobrujan dispute to re-emerge once again since the Berlin Treaty. However, the research clarifies that the importance of the region for two competing parties was far from being as vital as the authors of the texts had imagined it. The integration of Dobruja into Romania or Bulgaria did not present the greatest task for both countries, whose propaganda depicted the region as vital for the social, economical and political life of both countries. While Romania was seeking to preserve all of its newly acquired territories, among which Dobruja could hardly be seen as the most significant one, Bulgaria was concentrated on the vital Macedonian problem and relations with its other neighbors. However, the internal and external difficulties both states faced had also marked their active propagandistic strategies in the contested region often independent of its actual value for two countries.

The research explains that even in 1913 neither Romanians, nor Bulgarians were the influential, dominant and politically active majority with its firm nationalistic position in the region. Although both sides attempted to prove historical significance of the region for their nations, it becomes obvious that its importance was far from being that great. Romanian and Bulgarian patriotic feelings in very rare cases originated in Dobruja and more often were exported there from Bucharest, Sofia, Plovdiv and other much more essential cultural centers that were involved in nation and state-building debates on their level. Hence, in the research, the Dobrujan question is seen in the context of Romanian and Bulgarian nation-building programs and competing modernization projects that surpass the borders of one particular region and touch upon the general nationalistic discourses in Bulgaria and Romania.

Seen as a part of these discourses, the Dobrujan dispute becomes in some measure a playground for Romanian experiments of assimilation and Bulgarian attempts to undermine

them. The task of proving territorial claims turns out to be more complicated than the creation of various reinterpretations of the region's history. As it is demonstrated in the thesis, the rights over the land had to be legitimized in the terms of local state-building discourse, which opens a wide topic of defining Bulgarian and Romanian identities in the interwar period. The Dobrujan dispute presents a very interesting example of how skillful historians, journalists, writers, diplomats and other active participants in the debate turned a region of little importance (compared to other territories with Romanian and Bulgarian population) into one of the most crucial places that had played a great role in nation building of both Romanians and Bulgarians.

Reappearing in 1913, the problem of the appurtenance of Dobruja was to be solved with the intervention of Great Powers and the beginning of the Second World War. Cadrilater, the Southern part of the province, was returned to Bulgaria, while Romania preserved the Northern part, granted to the country after the congress of Berlin in 1878. The population exchange, the dissolution of Greater Romania and the war that followed, radically changed the situation in the region, establishing borders that are still holding an almost purely Romanian and Bulgarian region with non-numerous minorities, a reshaped Dobruja.

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