

**Imagining the nation:  
Mythical structures in representations of national identity of  
the Romanian communities in Serbia and Ukraine. A  
comparative discourse analysis of online news data**

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## Abstract

This thesis looks into how the identities of Romanian speaking minorities in Serbia (Vlachs and Romanians) and Ukraine (Moldovans and Romanians) are constructed in the online media to stimulate the emotions of Romanian nation members. I show how the media disseminate myths embedded in a “homeland nationalism” ideology to appeal for the improvement of minority rights status and a unified collective identification of the Romanian speaking minorities in Serbia and Ukraine. The research draws on the theoretical concepts of homeland nationalism (Brubaker 2009), “macro-strategies” of constructing national identity (Wodak 1999) and nationalist myths (Schöpflin 1997, Smith 2000). The main body of data analyzed in this research is formed of articles that were published in 2010 and 2011 on two on-line platforms, Timoc Press and Romanian Global News, that report about Romanians living abroad. The findings indicate that the media employs mythical structures of decay and regeneration to raise awareness about the status of the Romanian communities in Serbia and Ukraine. The myth of historical decline which affected the communities in the past is present in both categories of articles (on Serbia or Ukraine), but the contemporary decay of the nation is given a different framing depending on the minority on which the media is reporting. When referring to the Romanians living in Serbia, the mythical decline of the nation appears mostly in conjunction with the regeneration theme, whereas for the case of Ukraine it exists as an independent pattern.

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## I. Introduction

In the aftermath of World War I, the change in the international political order brought a completely new situation for ethnic minorities established within the boundaries of multinational empires. The break-up of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Romanov empires allowed for the emergence of newly founded states like Poland or Czechoslovakia, while other countries like Romania and Serbia, managed to expand their borders to the detriment of the defeated; all these newly configured states had a multiethnic population landscape. For example, about 3 million ethnic Germans found themselves displaced within the boundaries of the Czechoslovak state, while Romania increased its population with approximately 1.5 million Hungarians (Panayi 1999). The dispersed distribution of ethnic communities across Eastern Europe and the Balkans contributed to the accumulation of nationalist tensions between political actors from the region: the host states, the kin states, respectively the leaders of the displaced ethnic minorities.

After the conclusion of the Second World War and the fall of the Iron Curtain the political disputes that emerged from the problematic status of dispersed ethnic minorities did come to an end; the disintegration of multinational states like the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia resulted in the displacement of millions of ethnics outside the boundaries of their motherland. The dissolution of the Soviet Union left 11.4 million Russians from Ukraine outside the boundaries of their motherland (Brubaker 1995: 129), while 1.7 million Serbs remained to live in Bosnia-Herzegovina (CIA World Factbook 2012) after the signing of the Dayton Agreement. The situation of these

displaced ethnic minorities captured the attention of the prominent nationalism scholar Rogers Brubaker who defined them under the umbrella term of “accidental diasporas”: “communities crystallized suddenly following a dramatic reconfiguration of political space” (Brubaker 2000: 2). He described them in contrast with the more familiar labor diasporas which are “characterized by the movement of people across borders”, while accidental diasporas draw their fundamentals from the “movement of borders across people” (Brubaker 2000: 2).

The presence of “accidental diasporas” within the reconfigured nation states of Europe was one of the factors that gave rise, according to Brubaker (2000), to a political struggle between three competing forms of nationalism, different from the state seeking movements described in the extensive literature on nationalist politics. The first type, known as the “nationalizing nationalism” emerged from the political elite of the newly independent countries and it contains the following features: the legitimate owner of the state is the core nation; the state is portrayed as weak due to a background of discrimination experienced by core members in the past; the legacy of discrimination justifies potential reparatory measures that might be taken by the legitimate proprietors of the state. The second type is external national homeland ideology: it fights to protect an ethnic minority against the nationalizing policies of another state; the struggle of the homeland elite to monitor and protect the minority is justified by the kinship relations allegedly shared by the displaced community with the citizens of the motherland. The third form of this ideology is the minority nationalism of the “accidental diasporas” themselves; it seeks recognition from the host state of the fact that the group possesses an ethno-cultural identity different from the majority, therefore the members are entitled to

certain political and cultural rights (Brubaker 2000: 4-5). All these competing stances gave rise to “triadic relational nexus” between nationalizing, homeland and minority nationalisms; they interact dynamically with each other and what is important to mention is that they exist in a variety of forms, depending on the polities where they emerge (Brubaker 2005).

While the general features of the interactions contained within this triadic nexus have been discussed by Brubaker (2000; 2005; 2009) the research of the homeland nationalist ideology and of the rhetoric tools employed in its construction has been rather scarce. The aim of this study is to develop an understanding of Romanian homeland nationalism oriented towards protecting “accidental diasporas” dispersed in Ukraine and Serbia. To my knowledge, the discursive construction of Romanian homeland nationalism has not been explored yet, although Brubaker (2000, 2005) makes a few remarks in his writings about the nationalizing practices of interwar Romania. As a matter of fact, Rogers Brubaker appears to be the only scholar who researched homeland nationalism, but he put too much emphasis on the institutional aspects of the phenomenon (borders, policies, organizational networking), while the discussion of the rhetoric was of secondary importance in his comparative analysis of Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia homeland nationalisms (2000). He also discussed the dynamic interplay between Serbian homeland nationalism and Croat nationalizing nationalism that led to the break up of Yugoslavia, but he barely covered the construction of homeland nationalism in the media; he focused more on the historical coordinates of the Croat fight for independence (Brubaker 2005).

It is important to point out that for the purpose of this paper I expanded Brubaker's (2005) understanding of homeland nationalism. Although, at first sight, it might seem obvious for minority nationalisms and homeland nationalisms to share the same messages (since the external homeland elite claims to defend the interests of the displaced national minority), according to Brubaker (2005: 5), this is not always the case, since ethnic leaders and politicians from the motherland can frequently disagree about the measures that can improve the status of the ethnic community. According to the initial stage of my data analysis there seem to be no contradictions between Romanian homeland nationalism and the nationalisms of the displaced minorities in Serbia and Ukraine; this is why I decided to merge both ideological stances into a single one, more generally called Romanian homeland nationalism. Contradictions between ethnic leaders and the homeland elite of Romania can rarely be found in media discourses, all nationalistic actors quoted in the analyzed online platforms (Romanian Global News and Timoc press) agree on basic issues: more rights should be awarded to Romanian ethnics residing in the two countries, all ethnic groups speaking a language related to Romanian (Vlachs and Romanians in Serbia, Moldovans and Romanians in Ukraine) should be identified by the authorities of the host states as ethnically Romanian. Another reason why I decided to employ this umbrella term called "homeland nationalism" is because the discourse of the journalists is not captured in Brubaker's (2005) theorization of the triadic nexus, they are neither representatives of the national minority nor they belong to the political elite of the motherland but, they nevertheless disseminate nationalistic ideology favorable towards the alienated communities. The discourses of the journalists, national minority leaders and of the Romanian politicians are structured according to common

nationalistic themes and I argue that they contribute to the discursive construction of the homeland ideology. I have to mention that the purpose of this paper will not be to unravel the differences between the discourses of these nationalistic actors (journalists, ethnic leaders, Romanian politicians), but to see in what way they are aggregated in a unitary motherland ideology.

The disputed identity affiliation (in the case of this study: Vlach vs. Romanian; Moldovan vs. Romanian) is a fundamental feature of the national minority actor of the triadic nexus; Brubaker (2005: 113) wrote that a national minority is not a “fixed entity”, several members can fight to speak on its behalf, while holding opposing views about the identity of the group. In such cases, some community members might see the minority as being related by kinship ties to the external homeland, whereas others might frame group as belonging to the core nation of the adoptive country. This is particularly the case for the Vlachs, about which some minority organizations claim they are Romanianized Serbs whose native language is Serbian (Dancu 9.03.2011; Ghica 19.02.2012), while other representative associations argue that they are Romanian ethnics who speak the Banat or Oltenian subdialect specific to the Romanian language (Păiușan & Cionchin 2005). With regard to the distinction between Moldovans and Romanians, the competing identity claims are the following: 1) the Moldovanists: their motherland is Moldova, a country where the spoken language is different from Romanian; 2) the Romanianists: their motherland is Romanian, and Moldovan is simply a dialect of Romanian spoken in the Eastern part of the country, all Moldovans are Romanians (King 2000).

The same ambiguous understanding applies to the “homeland” concept; when referring to it, Brubaker (2005: 110) does not define it as the “actual” homeland where

the ancestors of the ethnics came; “homeland is a political not an ethnographic category; homelands are constructed, not given”. The members of a minority group might not even see the external state as their homeland or feel any sort of attachment to the territory of that country. What really matters in the definition of the concept is that certain members of the external national elite see the ethnic minority as part of national collective, pretend that their situation should be monitored and their interests should be defended by the state, but more importantly the homeland (Romania for this case) does take some actions to monitor, promote and protect the interests of the interest of the ethnically related group (Brubaker 2005: 110).

It is also important to point out that the criticized nationalizing state does not necessarily have to pursue actual policies of denationalization which affect the allegedly impoverished ethnic community, according to Brubaker (2005). What is important with regard to the discourse of the media is that the activities of the host states, Serbia and Ukraine, are perceived as nationalizing and the fact that actors quoted by the media ask for actions in order to counteract them. Therefore, the reader has to keep in mind that when I speak of Serbia and Ukraine as “nationalizing states” I use this label only for analytical purposes, to disentangle the discursive features of the Romanian homeland nationalist ideology. I do not employ it to criticize the neighboring states or to make policy proposals, the aspects I unravel should be seen as representative at discursive level.

A reason why the study of Romanian homeland ideology is important for political science is because nationalism targeting Romanians who live abroad was mostly analyzed in writings that refer to the ethnics living in Moldova, whereas the literature on

nationalistic discourses targeting Romanian communities from Serbia and Ukraine is virtually non-existent. The pan-Romanianist nationalism oriented towards Moldovans was more prominently researched by King (1994), but his analysis focused on the historical development of the movement, while the discursive tools employed in the construction of this rhetoric in the media were only superficially covered.

Two research questions will guide me through my analysis: how is homeland nationalism referring to Romanians living in Serbia and Ukraine constructed in the online media? What are the differences and similarities in the national identity representations by the homeland media of the Romanian minorities in Serbia versus the Romanian communities in Ukraine? The concepts that I will employ to research the topic are nationalistic myths (Schöpflin 1997; Smith 1999, 2000) and discursive macro-strategies for the construction of national identity (Wodak 1999). The methodology that I will use for the study of Romanian homeland nationalism is discourse analysis, in its understanding given by Gill (2000).

The reason I chose myths to structure my analysis is because they stand at the core of the nationalism concept; according to Smith (1991: 14) a collectivity cannot claim to hold a unique national identity, if individual members of the community do not share these common cultural elements. For the analysis of homeland nationalism I will refer to the definition of myths given by Schöpflin (1997: 19): ways of understanding the world for an ethnic community.

Following the categorizations of myths by Smith (1999; 2000) and Schöpflin (1997) I aim to develop an understanding of how mythical discursive patterns are employed on online platforms to raise awareness among the ethnics (be they in Romania

or abroad) of their unitary national identification as Romanians and to draw attention on the endangered national identity of the ethnic communities in Serbia and Ukraine. Considering the limited space available for this paper, in my analysis of nationalistic myths embedded in the homeland ideology I will refer only to the decline and regeneration typologies, although Smith (1999; 2000) and Schöpflin (1997) came up with a larger set of such discursive structures: myths of territory, golden age, shared ancestry etc. Macro-strategies (Wodak 1999) will serve as a secondary conceptual tool in my analysis of Romanian homeland nationalism; they are employed for refining the content of the research that was structured according to the presence of mythical typologies of decline and regeneration.

The database for my study consists in news items published on online news agencies that report about Romanians living abroad: Romanian Global News ([www.rgnpress.ro](http://www.rgnpress.ro)) and Timoc Press ([www.timocpress.info](http://www.timocpress.info)). The two media outlets are representative from a sociological standpoint because they function as an aggregator of news dealing with Romanian minorities living abroad. Nevertheless, an important part of the articles by Timoc Press and Romanian Global News are news stories created by their own collaborators. One of the features that make articles published on these websites comparable is the underlying nationalist ideology that I discovered after doing a preliminary analysis. Elements of nationalistic doctrine present both outlets are that Romanians, Vlachs and Moldovans are part of the same nation, the depiction of their minority rights status as impoverished and the generally engaged tone of the articles: journalists appear to hold an emotional perspective on the situations they are reporting about.

According to the information provided by their websites the aim of the Timoc Press and Romanian Global News agencies is to raise awareness about the situation of the Romanian ethnics living abroad among two categories of public. The principal one is comprised of policy makers, journalists and the public opinion in Romania while the secondary one consists in the members of Romanian minority groups in Serbia and Ukraine. There are three reasons why I think the ethnics living in Serbia and Ukraine are only a secondary public: 1) they represent only a small percentage of the overall populations of the host states (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2001 Ukraine; Statistical office of Serbia 2002); 2) numerous ethnics are poorly literate in Romanian and live in rural areas where access to internet is difficult<sup>1</sup>; 3) readership of Romanian press is relatively low in both countries, even among outlets with a long history (Center of Studies for Romanian resources 2009). As I observed in the initial stage of my analysis, the main objective of the news agencies is to influence the public opinion and consequently the Romanian political class into pressuring the Serbian and Ukrainian authorities to award more rights to the Romanian minorities.

After familiarizing the reader with the historical and the theoretical background of homeland nationalism in this introductory chapter, in the second chapter I will discuss the understanding to the concept of nation that I will refer to within the content of this paper, seen as an “imagined community” (Anderson 2006) and what are the key themes present in nationalist rhetoric in general. The discussion of these theoretical elements is important

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<sup>1</sup> In Serbia, internet connectivity in 2010 was reported within low levels: 39 % of the households have access to internet, while the average for rural areas is considerably smaller, only 24.1 % of residences situated in villages benefit from access to a computer connected to the World Wide Web (RATEL report 2010). In Ukraine the situation is even worse: only 14.6 % of the citizens had access to internet in 2008 and according to a 2010 report published by OpenNet Initiative, internet penetration in rural areas is very small (OpenNet report 2010). Therefore, one can assume that few Romanian ethnics residing in Serbia or Ukraine have the possibility to access the nationalistic platforms Romanian Global News and Timoc Press.

because it uncovers general patterns present in most nationalistic ideologies, therefore it will explain how the homeland ideology can be structured. Another point that I will discuss in the second chapter is the theorization of the “macro-strategies” for the discursive construction of national identity (Wodak 1999) employed for refining my analysis of mythical structures. The last section of the chapter will contain a description of the nationalistic myths typology set forth by Schöpflin (1997) and Smith (1999, 2000), from which I drew a unitary framework to be employed in the analytical section of the paper. In the third chapter I will provide the reader with information concerning the socio-political background of the Romanian communities in Serbia and Ukraine, and describe their evolution within the course of history. This chapter is important for the research of my topic, considering the fact that my understanding of discourse analysis is of a “careful reading between text and context” (Gill 2000: 188), one has to understand the social background in order to conduct a proper discourse analysis. The approach that I adopted with regard to data selection, methods, and analysis are explained in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter is an analysis of the decline and regeneration mythical structures present in the nationalistic media, while in the sixth chapter dedicated to conclusions I unravel the mythical structures present in the Romanian homeland ideology.

## **II. The construction of nationalist rhetoric. A theoretical framework**

In this chapter I will make the presentation of the theoretical framework that will guide me through my analysis. The first section explains the understanding that I give to the concept of nation within this paper, as an “imagined community” (Anderson 2006). The second part continues with the description of discursive tools that are employed by nationalistic actors to promote the national identity rhetoric: narratives of national culture and discursive macro-strategies (Wodak 1999). The third and last section contains the theorization of the “myths” concepts utilized in the construction of nationalist rhetoric, in their understanding given by Smith (1999; 2000) and Schöpflin (1997). The latter are important because they were the reference units on which I based my empirical analysis, that was structured according to the presence of the decline and regeneration myths present in the data.

### ***2.1. The nations as “imagined communities”***

This paper starts from the assumption that all nations are “invented” (Hobsbawm 1994: 76) and that nationalistic discourse promoted in the media is socially constructed. Anderson (2006) was among the first authors to acknowledge the role of the media in the spread of nationalism as a modern political phenomenon, while his definition of the nation as an “imagined community” suits a discourse analytic approach in the study of nationalism. Most contemporary researchers in discourse analysis consider that language

is not a transparent resource to find out more about empirical realities (Gill 2000: 175); meanings are negotiated through the process of social construction. The latter theoretical argument affects the understanding of the nation concept which is now seen as a “socially constructed pattern of interpretation” that defines the community in terms of us vs. we differentiations (Richter cited in Wodak 1999: 20). It contrasts with explanations of national identity that come from primordialists, who claim that nations exist from immemorial times and are based on language, religion, customs or kinship ties. Assumptions coming from the latter, although adopted by nationalists themselves and frequently disseminated in the media (Madianou 2005: 9) are of little help for deconstructivist analytic approaches, as it is the case of the present paper, because they fail to see the ideological backgrounds of nationalist rhetoric.

I take as reference point for the theoretical background of my analysis the definition of the concept of nation provided by Anderson (2006: 6) who conceived it as an “imagined political community”, whose basic features are limitation and a claim towards sovereignty. The nation is imagined simply because most of its members will never get to know each other, but they will nevertheless live with the impression that there is some of sort of affiliation between them. A similar point was made by Eric Hobsbawm (quoted in Smith 1998: 118) who defined the nation as an “invented tradition”: a set of common socio-symbolic practices promoted repeatedly by the state so that citizens internalize specific values which establish a linkage with the historical past.

Anderson (2006: 7) argued that all nations are limited; they exist within a world of nations, where their boundaries are roughly defined. This means that no nation-building project aim for encompassing all the citizens of the world; it is generally

confined to specified human population. A nation also claims sovereignty, which means that living in freedom is framed as a guarantee of the mother state. Last but not least, Anderson (2006) contends that all nation-members, by virtue of their imagined communion, are depicted in nationalistic messages as being bounded by fraternity linkages, in spite of the inequalities that might exist within the community. These assumptions might seem very general at first sight, but I will show that they function as organizing principles for a large variety of nationalisms; therefore they can help a scholar to understand the structural features of a nationalistic ideology. In fact, this is the main purpose of the present paper: to unravel constructs upon which Romanian homeland nationalism (defined as the ideology which promotes protection of Romanian ethnics living abroad) is built.

This research cannot be understood without providing with an explanation of what I understand by nationalism. Anthony D. Smith (2009: 61) came up with a definition of the term that is sufficiently general to be representative of the phenomenon that I analyze: “as an ideological movement to attain and maintain autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members believe it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’”. The author rejects the claim that nationalism is the putting together of communal feelings of belonging by the members of a human population, being in fact “an active movement inspired by an ideology and symbolism of the nation.” (Smith 2009: 61). It is important to mention that by movement I do not refer to a social movement, but to a concerted effort of a group of individuals that disseminate the nationalistic ideology through online platforms, the websites of the news agencies Romanian Global News and Timoc press. The social relevance of this “movement” is

given by several factors: the first one is that members of the Romanian speaking communities in Serbia and Ukraine and leaders of their organizations contributed to news-making (they sent their own news, press-releases or give interviews to the outlets); the second one entails that political actors who have knowledge of the minority situations in the two countries were interviewed by journalists working for Timoc press and Romanian Global News; the third factor refers to the fact that both platforms function as news aggregators of articles from the Romanian media that raise awareness about the minority statuses of Romanians in Serbia and Ukraine. The referencing to safeguarding autonomy, unity and identity is embedded in the news stories; while claims of belonging to the Romanian nation are generally made by ethnic leaders of the communities in Serbia and Ukraine (but also by simple members of those communities). Therefore all conditions are satisfied to include Smith's understanding of nationalism among the analytical tools that I will use in my research.

## ***2.2. Nations as narrations and discourses***

Referring back to Anderson's (2006) description of nation as an imagined community, the fundamental question that one should pose is how does the nation get into the minds of the members of the collective, in other words how is subjective attachment inculcated? Wodak (1999: 22) suggests the means for attaining this objective are discourses, more prominently "narratives of national culture".

A national culture can be defined as a discourse: the practical modality which contributes through the construction of meanings to the shaping of actions and selfhood

perceptions specific to the individuals. National cultures provide human beings with points of identification with “the nation”; they stem from the narratives, images and historical memories told about it, contributing to identity-building (Hall quoted in Wodak 1999: 23).

In an extensive study on Austrian national identity, Ruth Wodak (1999) described several “macro-strategies” that are utilized for the discursive construction of national identity and I contend that these concepts can be useful for many scholars applying discourse analysis to the research of nationalistic outlets, including the case of the present study. Wodak (1999: 33) argues that these macro-strategies refer to 5 “main social macro-functions” pursued by discourse disseminators: construction, perpetuation, justification, transformation and dismantling, which might be interrelated in the structure of discourses. *Constructive strategies* are an umbrella term for discursive attempts to create a national identity by referring to the issues of unification, identification and solidarity but also differentiation. *Strategies of perpetuation* aim to protect an endangered national identity, to reproduce and preserve it. *Strategies of justification* are employed to legitimize or relativise controversial actions that were taken by nation members in the past; to reinforce, conserve and protect a collective perception of selfhood that was subject to criticism or blame. *Strategies of transformation* aim to transfigure a conventionally well-constructed national identity into another form of national allegiance, which has already been defined in the discourse by the message disseminator. Closely related to them are *dismantling strategies*, the only difference being the fact that they fail to provide a viable alternative for a new identity to the receiver of the messages (Wodak 1999: 33). Wodak theorized two subcategories that are specific to the transformation and

dismantling macro-strategies: *strategies of assimilation* and *strategies of dissimulation*. The former are designed to promote an idea of “similarity and homogeneity” among nation members with regard to issues of temporality, spatiality or human relations. The latter convey a message of “heterogeneity” in relation with the same dimensions. The macro-strategies that I described in this chapter will serve for refining my analysis of the mythical structures present in the data, they can reveal whether the identity of the ethnic communities publicized by the media is protected, dismantled or reconstructed.

### **2.3. Myths of nationalism**

Myths lie at the core of the nation concept, since without the possession of such common cultural elements, a human population cannot label itself as a unique nation among other such entities, as implied by Smith (1991: 14) in his definition of the term “nation”. Schöpflin (1997: 19) reconfirmed this assumption by asserting that communities can only preserve their existence by imposing an “intellectual and cognitive monopoly” of myths (ways of understanding the world) that are generally accepted by individual members. Myths generally exist in conjunction with historical memories when they contribute to the formation of solidarity bonds within a nation (Smith 2000: 1394), but according to Schöpflin (1997: 19) myths should not be confused with true facts coming from history, being in reality, ways in which a community perceives world order, through its own understanding of morality and other values. Myths are means through which the culture of a community is stored, standardized and reproduced. Although they

might not be historically accurate, for community members, what matters most is their general content not historical precision (Schöpflin 1997: 19-20).

Myths share several functions that make them important for communitarian cohesion. They establish boundaries between the community and the rest of the world; facilitate communication between political rulers and society (by promoting solidarity among nation members), respectively they strengthen a community by accounting for its failures (Schöpflin 1997: 20-25). In the latter case, the misfortunes through which the nation passed are frequently attributed to evil outsiders, this discursive strategy being a first stage in the construction of conspiracy theories (Schöpflin 1997: 25).

Myths are sets of ideas which comprise symbols as integral part of their content, while the tangible expressions of such cultural elements are rituals in which nation members participate. Rituals are crucial for community maintenance because they create links between participants at ceremonies, who do not necessarily have to share uniform beliefs. Rituals make it possible for community members to act together without necessarily reaching consensus of opinions, by creating a sense of consistency in communication and action among participants to ceremonies. In the world of politics, the unifying power of myths make them an extremely valuable resource for governors, since they can create attachments based on ethnicity and nationhood among a divided public (Schöpflin 1997: 20-21).

Politicians and intellectuals are the segments of the population who command the propagation of myths, which are suitable to be promoted and which are not, simply because these elites are the ones that “control the language of public communication” (Schöpflin 1997: 25). Politicians use myths in their discourses to obtain an emotional

response from the population, their underlying aim being to block the possibility for rational comprehension and make sure that citizens do not challenge the correctness of their actions. Therefore, myths can also be understood as means through which political leaders impose their authority and claim legitimacy (Schöpflin 1997: 26-27).

Myths are relevant for the purpose of my analysis because they are employed to “serve and legitimate the needs and special interests of ethnic groups” (Smith 2000: 1398), for my case Romanian speaking minorities in Serbia and Ukraine who ask for the improvement of their minority rights statuses. The theoretical framework set forth by me takes as reference point the ideas of Smith (2000: 1398) who argues that myths arrange the foundation for solidarity and hope for solving a critical situation which affects nation members, by providing them with a sense of communal identity. The media that I analyze appeal for the solidarity of the ethnics living in Serbia and Ukraine by promoting through myths the idea that Vlachs and Romanians, respectively Moldovans and Romanians, share the same national identity and they can overcome the problems posed by the “bureaucratic states” (Smith 2000: 1398) only through unity and collective action. Romanians from the motherland are also targeted by the content producers, who should be empathetic with the ethnics living in the neighboring countries on a kinship basis, the fact that they speak Romanian making them virtually sons of Romania.

Following the typologies set up by Smith (1999; 2000) and Schöpflin (1997) I established an initial list of common myths present in the articles, for which I aimed to analyze the framing they are given to mobilize the nation and whether they correspond to the descriptions given by the two authors:

1. Myths of temporal origin or ethnogenesis;

2. Myths of ancestry and shared descent;
3. Myths of location and territory;
4. Myths of a golden age;
5. Myths of decline;
6. Myths of regeneration;
7. Myths of ethnic election

As I progressed with the analysis I realized that the most frequent mythical structures present in the articles are those that refer to the decline and the regeneration of the nation, depicted as struggling to fight the effects of assimilation policies. The initial mapping of the data revealed that myths of regeneration and renewal are structured into subcategories (e.g: historical myth decline, regeneration through mobilization myth), which require separate analyses in themselves; therefore the limited space forced me to restrict my research to the researching the myths decline and the myths of regeneration.

*Myths of decline* serve to show the extent to which a nation passed through a process of internal decay and how it can be restored. This is mainly attributed to the abandonment of the old moral values, to the fact that decadence replaced the stoic, sacrificial spirit of traditional nation members or because the sound ancient societal hierarchies disappeared. This type of moral decay is generally accompanied in the mythical narrative by the crumbling of the community's unitary structure, caused by the increasing individualism and dividing partisanship among nation members (Smith 2000: 1403). Smith (2000: 1403-1404) considers that myths of decline pertain not only to

situations present in historical records, but also to the contemporary downfalls of the community, who lost its point of reference established in the past and got alienated by forgetting its “collective identity” formed long time ago. The result is that nation members became self-exiled and abandoned communal aims, the responsible agents being evil external actors or “lack of self-rule” (Smith 2000: 1403-1404).

For Schöpflin (1997: 29) myths of decline have a rather religious understanding, labeling them as “myths of redemption and or suffering” or “myths of unjust treatment”. The first category implies that the hardship through which a community passed was in fact a process of moral purification for the nation or for the world. According to the author, this set of myths serves to justify the lack of power experienced by nation members, to account for their passiveness, which is backed by moral claims. He argues that this discursive tool disregards the idea that, sometimes, individual nation members are actually the ones who are guilty for experiencing these hardships; in this case, the causes for suffering are attributed to evil external agents, to history or God (Schöpflin 1997: 29-30). In the case of the second category (“myths of unjust treatment”), the cultural vehicles are emptied of religious significance, implying that the group suffered a negative experience caused by a “malign actor”, who persecuted the ethnics for being what they are. Therefore, the community was helpless, but it was the result of destiny, not of a divine force (Schöpflin 1997: 30). The underlying implication of both myths is that a community suffered for the whole world, which should recognize their superior moral qualities (Schöpflin 1997: 31).

*Myths of regeneration* mainly serve to mobilize the nation to exit from a state of decay. Schöpflin (1997: 32) considers that myths of “rebirth and renewal” promote the idea that the present state of the nation is impure, it must be sanitized, to create a better universe. Memories of the past are demonized, while the future should bring nothing but hope. When it is employed for political reasons, this discursive tool purports to erase negative records from older times, induce a sense of refreshment, respectively to install order in a chaotic moment of major political changes. To legitimize important shifts in the realm of politics, the closely related myth of “foundation” is released, promoting an idea of “novation” but in a special note, to assure that the audience is aware that a new era starts, bringing hope for a brighter future (Schöpflin 1997: 32-33).

For Smith (2000: 1404) the myth of regeneration lies at the core of nationalism, in conjunction with the concepts of authenticity and autonomy. Its aim is to mobilize nation members and to promote what actions should be taken by them. Regeneration is an element of nationalist mythology to which Smith (2000: 1404) gave a historico-religious understanding: the nation seeks to purify itself, to obtain communal redemption, being concomitantly liberated after heroic efforts. In his view, this nationalistic tool is just a reiteration of the golden age myth: the community emerged from humble origins, underwent a glorious period; it declined and then regeneration/ the golden times reappeared.

### **III. Socio-historical background of the Romanian communities in Serbia and Ukraine**

In this chapter I will provide detailed information about the socio-political background specific to the Romanians in Serbia and Ukraine, discuss the origins of the Vlach and Moldovan understanding of national identity and refer to the historical evolution of the Romanian communities in Serbia and Ukraine. The first subsection of this chapter describes the social and political situation specific to the Romanian minorities in Serbia. It is followed by a section which discusses the origins of the Romanian Timokans and their evolution throughout history. The third part of this chapter provides information on the socio-political status of the Romanians and Moldovans in Ukraine, while the last section discusses the main historical events that shaped the destiny of the Romanian speaking ethnics in Ukraine and the origins of the Moldovan understanding of national identity.

#### **3.1. Serbia**

##### **3.1.1. The socio-political background of the Romanian speaking communities in Serbia**

###### **3.1.1.1. The Timok Valley region**

The Romanian speaking ethnics in Serbia are divided in 2 branches: the Vlachs in the Timok Valley region (the districts of Branicevo, Bor, Zaječar and Pomoravlje) and the declared Romanians living in the autonomous province of Vojvodina.

With regard to the demographic situation, according to the Statistical office of Serbia 2002, Vlachs (or Valachians as mentioned in the document) form a relatively compact community of about 40.000 ethnics, who live in regions close to the Romanian border. This figure was frequently contested by Romanian activists and scholars who argued that their real number is somewhere between 200.000 and 300.000 inhabitants. They bring arguments based on the abrupt decreases of the declared Romanians throughout history in Serbian censuses (Fira & Pârvu 2010: 84-86) or the political oppression which discouraged Vlachs to declare their real ethnicity. The Statistical office of Serbia 2002 of Serbia reveals that Vlachs are mostly concentrated in neighboring districts from the East-Central Serbia: Branicevo (14000), Bor (16000), Zaječar (7200), Pomoravlje (2000) the majority of them being rural dwellers. These administrative subdivisions taken together roughly correspond to what Romanian journalists and minority rights activists call the Timok Valley region or more simply “Timok” (Romanian: Timoc), the latter being also the name of the river around which most Vlach communities are concentrated. To make it clear when I speak of Vlachs in the content of this paper I am mostly referring to ethnics living in Eastern Serbia, for which attempts are made by local organizations and Romanian policy makers to introduce the use of the Romanian language into public life (schooling, media, cultural activities, local administration and religious service).

### **3.1.1.2. The ambiguous understanding of the word Vlach**

It is important to draw the attention to the vagueness entailed by the term Vlach. In the Balkans this label is also employed to refer to various ethnic groups that speak a

language related to Romanian: Istro-Romanians, Megleno-Romanians, Aromanians. However these minorities communicate in idioms relatively independent from Romanian, while the Vlachs in the Timok Valley are virtually understandable to every native Romanian, since they use the Oltenian and Banat subdialects specific to the South Western parts of the country, as Romanian authors put it (Păiușan & Cionchin 2005).

Vlach is in fact a demonym dating back from the Middle Ages employed throughout the Balkans to designate speakers of Romance languages, non-Slavs. Although Romanian, Aromanian, Istro-Romanian and Megleno-Romanian are practically independent languages, quite frequently ethnics belonging to these groups were classified under the umbrella term of Vlachs (Zbucea 2008).

The book by Tanașoca & Tanașoca (2004) confirmed that these various ethnic groups were frequently labeled as “Vlachs” by Balkan historical sources from the Middle Ages. They pointed out that the general categorization as “Vlach” is employed in specific contexts, not only for the labeling of Romance populations residing in the Balkans but also as a socio-professional attribute, to refer to nomadic shepherds. Last but not least, medieval historical documents sometimes gave a derogatory understanding to this term, referring to a rude, misbehaved person (Tanașoca & Tanașoca 2004: 67-69).

### **3.1.1.3. The disputed classification of the Vlach language**

The language of the Vlachs is a point of contention between Bucharest officials and the Serbian authorities; while the former consider that Vlach is a variety of Romanian (Senator Viorel Badea website 17.04.2012), the latter argued in a response report issued for the Council of Europe that Vlach is an independent language, which does not have a

standardized written form yet (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia 6.05.2009; Periodical report Council of Europe 10.3.2011). Recently, one of the leaders of the Vlach National Minority Council (VNMC), Sinisa Celojevic, developed an alphabet for the transcription of the “Vlach”, which is practically a version of the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet to which 5 characters were added, to allegedly represent more accurately the phonemes of this language. The minority group representative declared to the Serbian press that the alphabet was created so that publications in Vlach can be printed, to show the richness of the language, which is different from Romanian (Ghica 19.02.2012). The initiative outraged Romanian politicians, journalists and local activists for Vlach minority rights; the latter maintained that the VNMC lost its legitimacy, since its Serbian leaders represent the interest of the Governing Party of Serbia, not of the endangered ethnic group (Ghica 29.02. 2012; Romanian Global News 1.03.2012).

For Romanian scholars the Vlachs of Serbia are undoubtedly speakers of regional versions of Romanian (Zbucnea & Buchet 2008; Fira & Pârvu 2010), which were documented by linguistics as the Banat and the Oltenian subdialects (Păiușan & Cionchin 2005: 222) enriched with many words of Serbian origin (Simion quoted in Băluțoiu 2009: 269).

The linguistic reality of the Timok Valley Vlachs should not be seen in clear cut terms as Romanian scholars describe it, reports made by Romanian mainstream media show that many self-declared Vlachs are assimilated or close to linguistic assimilation within the Serbian majority population. This is especially valid for the ethnics that moved to the cities; they use Serbian words to a large extent in their daily-life conversations,

whereas Vlachs residing in mountain villages speak a language very similar to the one spoken in Romania (Dancu 2.03.2011; Dancu 9.03.2011).

#### **3.1.1.4. The minority rights status of the Vlachs**

The causes for the alleged assimilation of the Vlach are various: lack of schooling and religious service in Romanian, few media outlets available in their native language for the ethnics but also the Serbianization of the names that Vlach give to their children. Serbian authorities do not use Vlach in local administration claiming that the language needs to be standardized, while in 2009 former leaders of the VNMC told the Council of Europe experts that Romanian should actually be in official use in municipalities where important Vlach minorities live (Kučevo, Žagubica, Bor and Boljevac). Vlach is taught only in private courses and although some parents asked for the language to be taught in public schools as well, the authorities did not implement their requests (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia May 2009: 10-16).

Religious service in Vlach/ Romanian for the ethnics living in the Timok Valley is also a problem, since it is available in two churches only: in Malainița (Sb: Malajnica) and Isacova (near Čuprija); most priests employing old Slavonic language in their preach. This situation is attributed to the fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church still holds strong ties in politics and in complicity with the state imposed bureaucratic barriers to the building of Romanian religious establishments, but also due to the fact Romanian clerics who attempted to establish churches with service in Romanian were subjected to harassment (by the authorities and other opposing parties). This situation was brought in the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), who

issued a report in which the Serbian authorities were recommended to find “a practical solution whereby freedom of religion is made a reality in eastern Serbia” (Dancu 9.03.2011; Fira & Pârvu 2010: 89).

Serbianization of names was another problem brought into discussion by Romanian activists and media, who claim that priests accept to baptize only children with Serbian names, while authorities do the same with regard to birth certificates. Certain sources mention that this practice is still in use (Dancu 9.03.2011; Fira & Pârvu 2010: 90), others that it was employed only in the past (Dancu 7.03.2011), while the Council of Europe experts noted that “requests to change family names to their Vlach form and to name children in Vlach depend in practice on the goodwill of the authorities” (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia May 2009: 13).

The problematic minority rights situation of the Vlachs in Serbia has been subject to diplomatic disputes and negotiations between the Serbian and Romanian governments. The conflict reached its peak in 2012, when Romanian diplomats threatened to block Serbia’s awarding of EU candidate status at the General Affairs ministerial meeting held on February 28 (euractiv.com 29.02.2012). The blockage was surpassed after the Serbian and Romanian Governments signed an agreement which stipulates that the Serbian authorities should be monitored by the European Commission to assess their respecting of minority rights for the Romanian communities (revista 22 website 1.03.2012).

#### **3.1.1.5 Vojvodina**

While the Vlachs in the Timok Valley lack basic cultural rights, the Romanians in Vojvodina in Northern Serbia benefit to a high degree from minority rights, including

press and education in their mother tongue. They are represented at political level and local government decisions are also published in Romanian (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia 6.05.2009). Most of the declared Romanians in Serbia live in Vojvodina (30000), the majority being countryside dwellers (26000), according to the Statistical office of Serbia 2002 of Serbia. Although the Council of Europe experts noted that there still are some problems with regard to respecting minority rights of the declared Romanians (only a small number of Romanian parents send their children to receive schooling in Romanian), the 2009 report made by this institution is generally positive with regard to the status of Romanian ethnics (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia 6.05.2009).

### **3.1.2. Historical background of the Romanian communities in Serbia**

Most Romanian historians agree that Romanian speaking ethnics living in Serbia (Romanians and Vlachs) are descendants of the Latinized populations that inhabited the Balkan Peninsula and the present day territory of Romania during the last centuries of existence for the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages, before the Barbarian invasion changed the ethnic landscape of the region (Fira & Pârvu 2010: 43; Tanașoca & Tanașoca 2004: 68; Zbucea & Buchet 2008: 96). They claim that during that period the populations residing in the Balkans and Romania spoke a relatively unitary Latin language but after the arrival of the Slavic tribes the Romanized communities were split into 2 main branches: one to the North of the river Danube and the other to the South. As a result the Romanian language developed 4 main variants or

dialects: Daco-Romanian (spoken to the north of the Danube in Romania and Moldova); Aromanian (mainly spoken in parts of Greece, Albania and Macedonia), Megleno-Romanian (mainly used in a few villages from Greece and Macedonia) and Istro-Romanian (spoken by small communities residing in the Istria peninsula, Croatia) (Fira & Pârvu 2010: 43-44; Zbucea 1999: 5-8; Zbucea & Buchet 2008: 94-97). All these ethnic groups, in spite of the cultural and linguistic differences between them, were attributed the exonym “Vlachs” by foreigners fact which made room for the ambiguous understanding of the identity attributed to the Romanian speakers from the Timok Valley.

The origin of the Vlach people in the Timok Valley is a contested issue between Romanian and Serbian historians. The former claim, as I said earlier, that they were born as a nation in the territories in which they currently reside, descending from the Romanized Thracians, while the latter argue that the Vlachs come from Serbs (or Bulgarians) that were nomadic shepherds (Zbucea 2007: 8). In Serbian schools children are taught that Vlachs are Serbs that migrated to the Romanian principalities during the Middle Ages, forgot the Serbian language and after a period spent in the lands from the North of the Danube they returned to the Timok Valley as Romanianized Serbs. This argument was refuted by Vlach activists on the ground that in Romania still exist a significant Serbian minority which did not lose its identity; therefore Vlachs do not have a Serbian ancestry (Dancu 9.03.2011). Romanian historians agree that migrations from the Romanian principalities to the Timok Valley region in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries contributed to the increase in the number Vlachs, but they argue that the migrants already encountered an old and well established Romanian population in that area. The Vlach community from Timok was enlarged, according to some Romanian historians, also

because Aromanians coming from the South of the Balkan peninsula settled there (Fira & Pârvu 2010: 81-83; Zbucea & Papari 2003: 108-109).

The earliest written proof of the Vlach presence in the region between the rivers Timok and Morava (or the Timok Valley) is in a report dating back to 1198 AD, authored by Ansbertus on the journey of Fredrik Barbarossa. The Timok Valley area was incorporated in the Serbian state in 1292, by King Milutin (Du Nay 1996: 35). After the conquest of the Serbian kingdom by the Ottomans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Timok Valley Vlachs preserved an improved status benefiting from fiscal facilities as a result of their military contribution to the needs of the Porte and enjoyed cultural autonomy (Turks were not allowed to settle in their lands and ethnics had their own churches) (Păiușan & Cionchin 2005: 136-137). However, as soon as the Serbian principality gained control of the region in 1833, according to Romanian historians, Vlachs lost their special status and rights to cultural autonomy. Schooling and religious service in Romanian were banned, while the Vlach Timokans were no longer allowed to baptize their children using Romanian names (Păiușan & Cionchin 2005: 167-168; Zbucea & Papari 2003: 112-115). Although there were some diplomatic attempts by Romanian policy makers in the interwar period and after 1990 to improve the status of Vlachs, the Serbian government was reluctant towards the requests of the Bucharest officials. The only beneficiaries of the agreements reached by the Romanian and the Serbian authorities on the protection of domestic ethnic minorities were the Romanians from Vojvodina who nowadays enjoy an acceptable level of cultural autonomy (Longin 25.03.2003; Fira & Pârvu 2010: 84).

## **3.2. Ukraine**

### **3.2.1. The socio-political background of the Romanian speaking communities in Ukraine**

In Ukraine the Romanian speaking community is, like in Serbia, divided, being comprised of Romanians and Moldovans. According to the 2001 Ukrainian Census there were 151000 declared Romanians living in Ukraine and 259000 citizens who claimed Moldavian (or Moldovan) ethnicity. Romanians are mostly concentrated in the Zakarpattia (32000) and Chernivtsi (114000) regions, while Moldovans are more spread on the territory of Ukraine, living mostly in the regions Odessa (123000), Chernivtsi (67000), Mykolaiv (13000), Kirovohrad (8000), Vinnytsia (3000), Kherson (4000) and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (3700) (All-Ukrainian Population Census 2001 website 1.06.2011). There are also several thousands of Romanian speaking volohs (Romanian: “volohi”, a derivation from the Vlach/ Walachian medieval demonym) reported to reside in a few villages from the Zakarpattia Oblast. Most of them live in extreme poverty and what is peculiar about them is that they speak Romanian, but never heard of Romania. They virtually had no direct contact with Romanian contemporary culture or access to schooling in their mother tongue, and as a result, they speak an archaic version of Romanian filled with Slavic neologisms. The origins of the volohs are disputed: they are either descendants of military detachments deployed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to defend the border of the Hungarian Kingdom or their ancestors were Carpathian shepherds (Crișan and Lucăcel 2008; Șiman 18.02.2011).

With regard to the minority rights situation of the Romanian speaking populations it is important to distinguish between the way it was constructed in the media (by

Romanian nationalists) and its assessment by the Council of Europe (CoE) experts. In general, Romanian journalists stress the claimed artificial distinction between Romanians and Moldovans, while emphasizing the problems faced by the ethnics with regard to accessing media, schooling and religious service in Romanian. Newspaper articles might give the reader a biased view on the status of the Romanians from Ukraine, since the report designed by the Council of Europe is generally positive of the Ukrainian authorities; Romanians in Ukraine benefit of minority rights at satisfactory levels. This does not mean that all problems are captured by the CoE report, but what is important to keep in mind is that the picture is broader than Romanian journalists present it.

The Council of Europe Committee of Experts were aware of the on-going controversy on the relationship between the Romanian and the Moldovan languages, but they considered that this debate should not affect the implementation of minority language legislation at European standards; therefore the two languages should be treated equally and separately (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Ukraine 7.07.2010). Therefore, the “artificial separation” between Romanian and Moldovan ethnics blamed by Romanian media is legal according to CoE requirements and should not necessarily be seen as a means of oppression employed by the Ukrainian authorities. The historico-ideological origins of the Moldovan national identity are more thoroughly discussed in the section of this chapter dealing with the history of the Romanian communities in Ukraine.

The 2010 CoE report on protection of minority languages generally describes the degree of cultural autonomy awarded to Romanian speakers in Ukraine in positive terms. For example, preschool education in Romanian is offered in 42 institutions from the

Chernivtsi region (1800 children) and 2 establishments from Zakarpattia (65 children), which is at an acceptable standard according to CoE experts. The report was also positive with regard to the primary education offered in Romanian to the ethnics by the Ukrainian authorities (8671 pupils benefit from teaching in their mother tongue in 12 Romanian schools and 2 mixed schools) but it mentioned one notable problem: textbooks are old, insufficient in number and poorly translated (ECRML Ukraine 2010: 31).

An important issue concerning education in minority language publicized frequently by Romanian nationalist media is the order adopted on April 25 2008 by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education. It required the introduction of more classes in Ukrainian in institutions with teaching in minority languages (including maths, history and geography) and the representatives of the Romanian, Russian and Hungarian communities complained to the CoE officials that they were not consulted when this bill was adopted. While Romanian media framed this policy as aiming towards linguistic assimilation (Damian 4.2.2009), the Council of Europe officials refrained from making comments on the substance of this piece of legislation by only recommending Ukrainian government officials to have discussion with minority group representatives when such reforms are adopted (ECRML Ukraine 2010: 26). However, after Yulia Tymoshenko lost elections in 2010 and was replaced by Viktor Yanukovich, the newly appointed Ministry of Education promised to change the bill in a manner favorable towards ethnic minorities (Timoc press 15.3.2011).

In Romanian media the most disfavored ethnics are presented to be the Romanian speakers in the Odessa region. Although, the Council of Europe accepts their registration as Moldovans and discovered no particular problems with regard to the provision of

education in their native language, “Moldovan” (ECRM Ukraine 2010), Romanian nationalistic media emphasizes the fact that many of them were forced not to declare their Romanian ethnicity and that they are frequently monitored (and harassed) by the Ukrainian authorities (Dancu 7.02.2011; Dancu 9.02.2011). According to Romanian newspapers, the Ukrainian state prevents the minority groups in Odessa from establishing churches and receiving religious service in Romanian (Timoc press 2.02.2011). Popescu & Ungureanu (2009: 360) confirmed in their socio-linguistic study that the Romanian/Moldovan language is scarcely used in religious establishments located in villages from the Odessa region that have a large proportion of Romanian speakers. In contrast to Odessa, Romanians from the Chernivsti or Zakarpattia regions can attend masses in Romanian in a significant number of churches, which are mainly located in villages with compact Romanian populations (Popescu & Ungureanu 2009: 357-358).

### **3.2.2 Historical background of the Romanian communities in Ukraine**

The Romanian communities in Ukraine are located in the historical regions called Northern Bukovina (the Chernivtsi Oblast), Northern Maramureş (Zakarpattia) and Southern Bessarabia (the Odessa Oblast). These territories have historical background of foreign occupations by the Habsburg Empire, the Tsarist Empire and the Soviet Union. These powers encouraged the settlement of foreign population within the regions, which are nowadays characterized by a diverse ethnic landscape (Russian, Ukrainians, Germans, Hungarians etc.).

### 3.2.2.1 Northern Bukovina

Bukovina is a historical region situated in the north-east of Romania and the South-East of Ukraine. The northern part of this ethno-cultural is situated within the boundaries of the Chernivtsi Oblast from Ukraine. The city of Chernivtsi (Romanian: Cernăuți; German: Czernowitz), the administrative center of the region, was mentioned as early as 1408 as commercial link between the Romanian Principalities and Poland (Dima 1983: 19).

According to Romanian sources, Bukovina did not exist as distinct ethno-cultural region for a long time during its history, being mostly a territory within the Upper Land of the Medieval principality of Moldavia (Dima 1983; Țîbrigan 30.08.2011). Ukrainian sources consider that the region belonged during the 9-13<sup>th</sup> to the Slavic Feudal states of Kyivan Rus and Halych-Volyn principality (Vasylova 2008: 23), a historical aspect on which Romanian and Ukrainian scholars do not agree.

Its history as a separate political entity starts in 1774, when it came under the control of Austrian imperial authorities. The Habsburg Empire claimed the region from the Ottoman Empire during the negotiations of the Kuchuk – Kainardji peace treaty, which was signed in the aftermath of the Russo – Turkish war of 1768 – 1774. At the time of the annexation the population in the region was Romanian, even though it is hard to establish a ratio between the Romanian population and the Ukrainian one. Some sources say that the territory came under Austrian rule, there were approximately 50000 Romanians and 20000 Ruthenians. (Popescu & Ungureanu 2009: 78). After the occupation of Bukovina by the Habsburg Empire the proportion of non-Moldavian inhabitants grew mostly due to the colonization policies that brought in Germans and

Ukrainians to the territory, but also because the Romanian population fled to Moldavia. (Popescu & Ungureanu 2009: 82)

Dima (1983: 21) wrote that in 1778, Vienna asked for an oath of loyalty and began pursuing a nationalization policy targeted at the Romanian population. In order to break the ties with the church of Moldavia, the territory was placed under the archbishop of Karlowitz who encouraged Ukrainian settlements. Despite the unfavorable situation, Romanians managed to set up in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century their own political organizations, which played a key role in the unification with the kingdom of Romania (Dima 1983: 21).

At the end of the First World War, on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the General Congress of Bukovina proclaimed the union with Romania which was officialized in 1920 by the Paris Peace Conference (Zbucnea& Buchet 2008).

In the summer of 1940, as a result of the Ribbentrop Molotov Pact, The Soviet Union annexed Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina after giving an ultimatum to the Romanian authorities. The regions came back to the control of the Romanian army for a short period period of time (1941-1944), but were incorporated in the Soviet Union at the end of World War 2 (Dima 1983: 22). In the Romanian media, the Soviet occupation of Northern Bukovina is negatively framed, mostly because of the Fântâna Albă and the Tâtarca massacres committed against Romanian population during the war but also because of the policies of Russification implemented after 1945 (Țîbrigan 12.04. 2012).

### 3.2.2.2. Northern Maramureș

Maramureș is an ethno-cultural region nowadays split between Ukraine and Romania, along the upper Tisa river, that was ruled by independent voivods (princes) at the beginning of the Middle Ages, but for a large part of its history came under the control of the kingdom of Hungary. The Northern part, belonging to Ukraine roughly corresponds to the administrative boundaries of the Zakarpattia Oblast (Zbucea & Buchet 2008: 73).

In 1918, a Romanian delegation from Northern Maramureș asked for the unification of the territory with Romania, but the demand had no political- administrative outcome, since during the 1919 Paris Peace conference, it was agreed for the region to be incorporated into Czechoslovakia. After the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, in 1938, the provisions of the First Vienna Award allowed for the Hungarian annexation of the region. After 1944 the region was slowly incorporated into the Soviet Ukraine. (Zbucea & Buchet 2008: 75). In 1991, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union Northern Maramureș remained under the control of the newly independent Ukraine. The Romanian communities of Northern Maramureș are nowadays mostly located in the Tiachiv and Rakhiv raions (Popescu & Ungureanu 2009).

### 3.2.2.3. Southern Bessarabia

The region of Southern Bessarabia (also known as in historiography as Budjak) has a long record of territorial changes: it belonged in turn to the Medieval principality of

Moldavia, the Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia, the kingdom of Romania, the Soviet Union and Ukraine (King 2000). It is nowadays confined within the administrative boundaries of the Odessa Oblast.

In 1812, The Russian Empire extended its control over the eastern part of Moldavia, in the region between the Prut and Dniester rivers, called Bessarabia (including Budjak). The Western part of Moldova united, in 1859, with Walachia and the newly formed state took the name of Romania. Near the end of the First World War, Romanian troops crossed the Prut River, under the pretext of maintain order along its Eastern borders and in March 1918 the Bessarabian National Assembly voted for the Union with the Romanian Kingdom. The territory was occupied, in the summer of 1940 by the Red Army, being incorporated in the already existing Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic. Romanian troops reoccupied the area in 1941, but in the aftermath of World War 2 it came back under the Soviet rule (King 1994; Popescu & Ungureanu 2009).

#### **3.2.2.4. The origins of the Moldovan identity project**

The background for establishment of an independent Moldovan identity, distinct from the Romanian was set up by the Tsarist occupation of Bessarabia which lasted for more than 100 years (1812-1918) and entailed a pronounced degree of Russification promoted among the domestic population. After the province came under Romanian Administration in 1919, many of the inhabitants from the West bank of the river Prut continued to feel attachments to the Medieval principality of Moldavia, this being coupled with the fact that a large of the Bessarabian elite was Russian speaking (Bojoga

2009; King 2000). Soviet Russia, who did not recognize the unification of the province with Romania saw in this situation an opportunity and established in 1924 along the eastern border of Bessarabia a Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR). Within the boundaries of the new Socialist Republic existed a consistent Romanian speaking minority who did not benefit from schooling in their native language. This situation was exploited by the Soviet authorities who started the attempts towards standardizing an independent Moldovan language. The core idea of this Moldovanist movement was that the official Romanian language got corrupted by French and bourgeois influences, fact made it unintelligible to the Bessarabian population. The Moldovan language and identity were mostly designed as propaganda tools by the Soviet authorities, for encouraging the Bessarabian population to fight for the separation from Romania, and after the occupation of the province by the Soviet Union, in 1944, they became part of the host state's policy on assuring minority rights for the Romance speaking population in the MASSR (Bojoga 2009: 245-260; King 2000: 57-79).

## IV. Methodology

### 4.1. *Methods and research design*

The method I employ to research the presence of mythical structures in the articles about Romanian communities from Serbia and Ukraine is comparative discourse analysis. The epistemological reason that grounded my option for choosing discourse analysis as a research tool in this thesis is the fact that discourses are socially constructed (Gill 2000: 173; Schröder 2002: 116), meaning that texts published in the media refer to wider social contexts and phenomena (Bruhn Jensen 2002; Madianou 2005; Mautner 2008, Taylor 2001). For my case, the texts present in the media outlets are related to nationalist movements in support of the Romanian minorities from Serbia and Ukraine. While I do not claim that my analysis will reveal the social conditions specific to the Romanian minorities from Serbia and Ukraine, I contend that this study will bring a better understanding of how homeland nationalism and particularly the Romanian version of this ideology is constructed to appeal for communal identification of ethnic communities which are *de facto* classified as distinct. Discourse analysts are not interested in empirical generalizations but in the construction of the texts per se (Gill 2000: 174-175), therefore the results of this study do not have a claim of being representative at societal level, but they can help understand what discursive means are employed for raising awareness about the situation of ethnic communities which are framed to be part of a homogenous nation.

The usefulness of conducting a discourse analytic project is its potential for further qualitative research (Bruhn Jensen 2002: 248). Schrøder (2002: 116) wrote that the aim of many discourse studies is to contribute to the understanding of the effects of media consumption on social and cultural phenomena, by taking into consideration the relevance of public opinion and ideology reproduction. The potentiality for the propagation of Romanian homeland nationalism aimed at protecting Romanian speaking minorities in Serbia and Ukraine may result in an attitude change of Romanian public opinion towards Serbia's accession to the EU and Romania's diplomatic relations with Ukraine, as a result of its dissemination in the media.

My understanding of discourse analysis is the one given by Rosalind Gill (2000: 188) "a careful, close reading that moves between text and context, organization and functions of discourse". It is practically a detailed rational based interpretation of a text that takes into consideration historical and cultural context. For the purpose of this study, the taking into consideration of the socio-political *context* in which the communities reside is extremely important because it helps limit of the potential of producing a flawed research and it allows for the comparability of the two units of analysis: the media reporting about the Romanian minorities from Serbia, respectively Ukraine. Wodak (2008: 17) showed that the risk of bias in a research can be minimized if the researcher follows the triangulation principle, which means that for discourse studies the scholar should focus not only on the linguistic features of the data but to also consider "historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimensions" in the analysis of a particular discursive situation. This implies that the scientist should account for the context in a

discourse analytic research, which according to the author (Wodak 2008: 17-18) has four levels:

- 1) “the immediate, language or text internal co-text”
- 2) the linkage at intertextual and interdiscursive level between words, texts and genres
- 3) the “sociological variables” and institutional frames pertaining to a particular “context of situation”
- 4) the socio-political and historical contexts which are attached to the “discursive practices”.

Gill (2000) shares the same ideas with Wodak (2008) with regard to the relevance of the socio-cultural context in discourse analytic studies. In her view, the social constructionist epistemological background of this type research implies that our understandings of the world are relative and historico-culturally specific, and that our views on knowledge emerge not from the “nature of the world itself” but from “social processes (Gill 2000: 173). In the case of this study, I will attempt to minimize the bias by including in the analysis of the context reports made by the Council of Europe on the application of minority rights provisions in Serbia and Ukraine, newspaper articles pertaining to the situation of Romanian speaking ethnics in the two countries, Romanian books about ethnics living in territories bordering Romania, reports made by research institutes and other sources. One of the shortcomings of the study is the poor referencing to studies and books published by foreign authors on the present situation of Romanian minorities in Serbia and Ukraine, the literature on this topic in the Anglo-Saxon world being virtually non-existent. Vlachs are particularly an interesting case,

since most of the books written by foreign authors who make references to this ethnicity do not discuss the situation of the Romance speaking population in the Timok Valley region, but the socio-cultural features of the Aromanian communities from the Balkans, who are also called Vlachs (cf. Winnifrith 1987; Panayi 1999). Nevertheless, my analytic framework will be driven by a balance between the emic and ethic approaches to qualitative research (Bruhn Jensen 2002: 236-237).

With regard to the internal or linguistic context of discourses, Taylor (2001: 23) wrote that this aspect is extremely important for comparative studies and it has to be taken into account continuously at the early stages of the research when the project design has not been yet clearly defined. Considering the fact that the social and political backgrounds specific to the two politically divided minority groups is similar, I could assume that this could result in resembling discursive patterns in the media reporting on the situation of the Romanian ethnics from Serbia and Ukraine. On the other hand, certain differences between the two units of analysis are inherent since, unlike in the case of Ukraine no territory from present day Serbia was ever part of the unitary Romanian national state (1918-1940), but also because of the distinct regionally based customs and traditions (which are relevant for the depiction of national identity at folk festivals).

#### **4.2. Data body**

The body of data consists of articles reporting about the situation of Romanians in Serbia, respectively Ukraine published in 2010 and 2011 on the websites of the Romanian Global News and Timoc Press news agencies. Concerning the representation

of Romanian speaking minorities in Ukraine, I identified 24 articles in the Romanian Global News and 23 in Timoc Press; while in the case of the Romanian ethnics living in Serbia the sample was composed of 23 articles published in Timoc Press and 32 published in Romanian Global News. When digging for the data within the websites of the two outlets I used keywords like Ukraine, Chernivtsi, Serbia, Vlachs, or Timok so that the search engine will reveal only articles that correspond to my interests. I excluded from the analysis articles that reveal only general information about the politics of Serbia and Ukraine, my focus were news stories about Romanian minorities from those countries. I also refrained from analyzing very short press releases publicized by the news agencies, especially if they contained only factual information (announcements for conferences or exhibitions etc.).

Timoc Press defines itself as an electronic press agency which reports news from the areas where Romanians live (including minorities like Istro-Romanians, Aromanians, Meglenovlachs etc. who speak languages related to Romanian). It is financed by the Romanian Government through its Department from the Romanians Abroad and the main of focus of the journalists working for this agency is on the situation of the Romanian speaking ethnics in Serbia. It is important to mention that they report news about Romanians living in other regions of the world as well and, that the editors publish a part of the articles also in English and in Serbian.

Romanian Global News is according to their website a news agency that reports about Romanian communities living abroad with the purpose of transmitting the information to the Romanian media, Government, Parliament, and President, therefore seeking an agenda setting effect. It is financed by the Foundation of the Romanians All

Over the World, whose aim is the “realisation of programs subordinate to the interests of the Romanian unitary state in its relationship with the Romanians from all over the world”. They also receive funding from the Romanian Government through its Department for the Romanians Abroad, according to their website, but it is unclear to what extent they depend upon it. Their news are gathered from their own correspondents, but also from private media or from the information sent by users.

For the purpose of this study the analysis will be divided into two groups of articles: the first one dealing with the situation of Romanian speaking ethnics in Serbia, respectively the one depicting the politico-cultural situation of Romanian speaking ethnics in Ukraine. I practically merged reports about Romanian minorities in Serbia published by Timoc Press and Romanian Global News into a single group, because the research items, the articles, are sufficiently homogenous with regard to content, themes, and primary sources of information. The same procedure was applied in the case of the news items reporting about Romanian speaking populations in Ukraine. The homogeneity of the data is given by the underlying Romanian homeland nationalism present in all articles, the inclusion of myths and discursive macro-strategies I could trace in the texts written by activists or journalists. With regard to the sources of information, Timoc Press and Romanian Global News share structural similarities: both media outlets function as news aggregators, drawing a large part of their materials from articles published by other media organizations: Romanian and Moldovan local or national newspapers, blogs or websites with nationalistic content but also news items published by Serbian or Ukrainian sources. Sometimes the two news agencies publicize each other’s materials, situation which proves that the gatekeepers of these media outlets consider that they share

common ideological values, they write about the same things in similar patterns. Both press organizations have correspondents in Serbia and Ukraine (many of them write on a voluntary basis) and rely heavily on documents (press releases, meeting minutes, political agreements etc.) produced by organizations with a nationalist agenda: minority councils, NGOs, Government officials etc.

## **V. Analysis**

In this chapter I will present the main findings of my analysis. By referring to the theorizations of Smith (1999; 2000) and Schöpflin (1997) I structured my analysis according to the mythical structures of decline and regeneration that could be identified in the data. The chapter starts with the analysis of the group of articles on Serbia and it continues with research of mythical structures in the materials about Romanian Ukrainians in the second section, while in the next chapter dedicated to the conclusions I present the similarities and the differences between the two bodies of data, by linking them to the general understanding of homeland nationalism.

### **5.1. Romanians in Serbia**

#### **5.1.1. Myths of decline and regeneration**

As it was seen in chapter 3, in the works of Smith (1999; 2000) and Schöpflin (1997) myths of decline and myths of regeneration were theorized as distinct concepts. While the former evoke a state of decay which affected the nation, the latter are mainly employed to mobilize people to exit a state of misery or induce a sense of refreshment to the community. The problem is that both concepts take as a reference point a moment of decline in the existence of a nation and within the content of my data they rarely exist independently from each other. For analytical purposes, these myths will not be separated because the themes of decline and regeneration frequently appear in conjunction with each other. Although many articles speak about an allegedly miserable situation affecting

the Romanian communities abroad (a mythical decline), they frequently provide solutions or mobilize actors for the safeguarding of the nation (mythical regeneration). There are of course exceptions, articles which simply describe an issue relevant for the decay of the nation without offering prospects for improvement or appealing for remedial political actions, but for the groups of articles on Serbia such instances are rare. This is why I decided to merge the myths of decay and those referring to the renewal of the nation into a wider category called myths of decline and regeneration.

### **5.1.2. The historical decline myth**

The only subcategory of myths of decline and regeneration that speak about a decay of the nation without containing the renewal component is the historical myth of decline, which refers to the evolution in the past of the Romanian communities in Serbia, framed as period of hard times experienced by the ethnics. The underlying assumption behind this myth is that Romanians in Serbia have a background of suffering that continued for hundreds of years to the present times. The history of suffering is described by minority representatives as being a proof of the vitality of the national collective. One Romanian artist from the Timok Valley interviewed by the media stated that Romanians in Serbia have a background of hardships while music helped them pass through the difficult times: “[...] Stanișă Păunovici, a famous folk singer from Timok, showed that Romanians retain a collection of songs unequalled in Europe, which speak about the grieves, joys, the land and the life of the people, and they [Romanians n. ed.] survived in the vicissitudes of history precisely because of their songs” (Copcea Timoc press 11.07.2010). The reference to the “vicissitudes of history” is an expression which

suggests the background of suffering experienced in the past by the Romanians living in Serbia, while the possessing of beautiful songs conveys the idea that Romanians share a prestigious cultural identity. In another article, the long historical record of national decay is referenced when the journalist describes the religious ceremonies specific to the Timok Valley, region where Vlachs could not benefit from religious service in their language until two churches were erected recently. According to the article, the decline was surpassed by the ethnics through the perpetuation of their own religious customs: “Although they [the Romanians from Timok] were obliged *over the course of time* [my highlighting] to stay away from churches, they did not lose their faith, conducting liturgical ceremonies in their own houses” (Timoc press 22.04.2011). The point of this quote is to show that Vlachs experienced hardships during a long part of their history, but they nevertheless preserved their moral integrity. It is however, historically inaccurate, since Romanian historians (Fira & Pârvu 2010; Zbucea 2007) agree that Vlachs benefited from a favored status (which included religious freedom) until 1833, when the Timok Valley area became a part of the Serbian kingdom.

The basic message behind the historical myth of decline promoted in the online media is that the nation was oppressed at several points in time by evil external agents, who contributed to its decrease and denationalization. In an interview republished by Timoc press, that was taken to Sandu-Cristea Timoc, a Romanian historian born in Serbia, the decay of the Romanian populations in Serbia is framed as a continuous process caused by the repeated invasions that took place in the Balkan peninsula:

For at least seven centuries after Christ the true Greater Romania was the Balkan peninsula... Times changed, the Slavs came as invaders in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, after another seven hundred years the Turks arrived (1453), then, in the Western parts, the Austrians descended; at the same time the Romanian

people from the Balkans was spreading, decreasing in size, and in certain areas like Montenegro or Bosnia-Herzegovina it disappeared. Besides the Aromanians from Macedonia and the Pindus mountains, from Albania and Bulgaria, the *Daco-Romanians from Timok* (my highlighting) [...] resist in compact groups to the present day (Popescu, Timoc press 18.08.2011).

In this passage the mythical decline is constructed to explain why the Vlachs are in an inferior position, this being assumed from their small number in the overall population of Serbia. The responsible evil agents are negatively framed as “invaders”, who outnumbered the Romanian ethnics living in the Balkans. This quote is embedded in a constructive macro-strategy (Wodak 1999: 33) because it refers to an issue of communal identification: the Aromanians and the Vlachs from the Timok Valley should all be seen as belonging to the larger Romanian nation.

Another instance representing the historical mythical decline of the nation is the reference to the Milosevic period, a point in time when numerous abuses were conducted against ethnic minorities, according to the media. It serves as a reference point to characterize the contemporary injustices perpetrated by the Serbian authorities against ethnic groups, authorities who behave just like in the 90’s, as it is framed in certain articles (Romanian Global News 7.06.2010; Romanian Global News 15.03.2011). In one news story, the June 2010 “rigged elections” for the Vlach National Minority Council are depicted as a proof that the Serbian state prefers to “to further founder in the denial of democracy and European values”, instead of “surpassing the Milosevic epoch” (Romanian Global News 7.06.2010). In another article (Romanian Global News 15.03.2011) which reports about a meeting between Romanian and Bulgarian minority party leaders in which the status of ethnic minorities was debated, the journalist describes the hidden aim of Serbian politicians

of controlling the Councils of National Minorities. According to the article, there are three reasons why the main parties of Serbia seek control of these institutions: to construct a positive image about the situation of ethnic minorities to European bodies, secure votes and monopolize the access to funding dedicated to ethnic minorities. The journalist depicts the situation of Minority Councils in Serbia as a retrospection of the 90's, a period of bad memories for the ethnic groups living in Serbia:

All these [abuses] remind us of the Milosevic period, when among the Socialist Party members, representatives of national minorities loyal to the regime were present, and with the help of the latter the minorities' situation was presented much better than it was in reality. All these problems indicate the fact that Serbia is going back to 90's with regard to the respecting of minority rights (Romanian Global News 15.03.2011).

The reference to the Milosevic period is apparently employed to present the background of national decay inherited by the Romanian minorities in Serbia; it is suggested that the Serbian state revives bad practices from the past. As a matter of fact, all the cases when myths of historical decline are employed appear to have been created for describing objects and situations specific to the present times: the beauty of Romanian songs (Copcea Timoc press 11.07.2010); the religiousness of the Vlachs (Timoc press 22.04.2011); the small number of Romanians living in Serbia (Popescu, Timoc press 18.08.2011); the abusive control of the National Minority Councils by Serbian politicians (Romanian Global News 7.06.2010; Romanian Global News 15.03.2011). All of these contemporary artifacts and situations (beautiful songs, religiousness etc.) seem to draw their fundamental bases from the background of oppression and suffering inherited by the Romanians who reside in Serbia. In the construction of Romanian homeland nationalism the reference to mythical decline

appears to be purported by the need to create an emotional link with the reader (who should feel moved by the ethnics' long history of suffering). Another function of the historical decline myth seems to be raising awareness about the abusive behavior of a nationalizing state, depicted as if the latter is returning to a notorious totalitarian past (the Milosevic period).

### 5.1.3. Myths of contemporary decline and regeneration

It is important to point out that most of the mythical constructs of decline and regeneration are linked to events that took place in contemporary times. Therefore, I came up with a general category of interpretation called *myths of contemporary decline and regeneration*. As it is suggested by their name they refer to discursive instances which depict a moment of national regeneration achieved in the present times. As shown by the data, they embody two main subcategories: the *regeneration through rituals myth* and the *regeneration through mobilization myth*.

The first subtype depicts renewals of the national feeling through publicly performed rituals while the second one holds that the regeneration of the nation lies with the actions performed by the involved actors (the ethnic minority members, the host state or the motherland). There are articles which report the story of an ethno-folkloric festival (rituals) and contain at the same time requests for improving the status of the nation (mobilization); in those situations, the context helped to distinguish the ritual myths from the mobilization ones. The passages which described the ritual gestures as contributing towards the renewal of the nation were categorized as belonging to the regeneration through rituals mythical typology, whereas the request for remedial measures set forth by

participants at festivals was attributed to the regeneration through mobilization myth. The regeneration through mobilization myth contains appeals towards all the actors of the triadic nexus described by Brubaker (2005): the national minority (ethnic leaders or community members in themselves), the nationalizing state (the Serbian authorities) or the external national homeland (the Romanian authorities).

#### 5.1.4. Regeneration through rituals myth

For Schöpflin (1997: 20-21) rituals are the tangible expression of nationalistic myths, being extremely important for community maintenance because they create a linkage between participants at ceremonies, who may not share uniform beliefs in their daily life. The characterization of rituals by Smith (2009: 63) captures the framing that is given to these events by the media: they contribute to the promotion of *identity* by depicting the distinctiveness of the community in these public manifestations and they reveal the *authenticity* of the nation, who gets the chance to explore its own cultural artifacts.

Rituals are depicted as moments when the vitality of the nation is expressed, when ethnics themselves can engage in intimate cultural encounters. Rituals performed in ethno-national festivals are framed as events when the nation shows its cultural distinctiveness. The latter is suggested by the quality of the artistic performance performed by community members themselves, the beauty of their customs being framed as typical of Romanian culture: “The gathering did not consist merely of tasting culinary delights because in the `menu` it was also included an artistic moment, the ethno group “Amater” from Milanovac offering an impressive spectacle. The young dancers beat the

floor with their jumping steps, showing how dynamic and beautiful is the Romanian folklore.” (Țuțuman Timoc press 30.07.2010). Linkage with the nation from the motherland is discursively constructed because the “beautiful” and “dynamic” dance performed by the young dancers is depicted as representative of Romanian folklore and not specific to the Vlach individual culture, conveying a message of brotherhood ties between ethnics from Serbia and Romania.

Folkloric festivals described by the online platforms are full of symbolic moments which contain identity struggles and affiliations with the alienated nation members. During such an event that took place in Kladovo and was reported by the media (Romanian Global News 30.07.2010; Țuțuman Timoc press 30.07.2010), all the ethnics got engaged in a “hora”, a traditional Romanian circle dance that symbolizes the unity of the nation (this dance is frequently displayed at Romanian public national holydays). Struggles to preserve an endangered national identity are suggested when the narrator shows that alienated community members have knowledge of Romanian national culture, despite the fact that they do not benefit from education in their mother tongue: “The public applauded frenziedly the performance of the young Timokans who although do not have access to schooling in Romanian could recite out of the top of their minds the Miorița ballad [...]” (Marina Romanian Global News 14.07.2011). Miorița (literally meaning “The little ewe”) is the title of a Romanian pastoral ballad which is considered a national symbol and a representative literary piece of Romanian spirituality; the fact that ethnics living in a foreign country are familiar with a national masterpiece expresses at a discursive level a feeling of brotherhood linkage between the endangered minority and the homeland nation members. The struggle to preserve the national culture through the

organizing of folkloric festivals is emphasized when the abuses perpetrated by the nationalizing state are blamed. One article containing this frame reports about the development of an old Vlach festival, “Matcalău”, forbidden by the Yugoslav communist authorities and revived on the ruins of an old Romanian monastery. An ethnic leader present at the event was quoted by the media when he described the fight of the ethnics against the nationalizing policies of the host state:

[...] Dragan Demici, the vice-president of the Romanian Democratic Party from Serbia reminded everyone the reason why our ancestors gathered here [near the ruins of the monastery n. ed.] and why the Romanians restarted to gather to this holy place... Those that wanted to destroy our roots [the Serbian authorities n. ed.] thought that we, the Rumanians, will not come here, where our ancestors came for hundreds of years, where we had a Romanian monastery (Timoc Press 6.05.2011).

In this passage the organizing of a regenerative festival is framed as representing the distinctiveness of the ethnics, who did not abandon a place which symbolizes their identity (an old Romanian monastery) by managing to surpass the difficulties caused by the nationalizing state.

Ethno-religious festivals can also suggest a transfer of cultural inheritance from experienced nation members to the inexperienced ones. This act is depicted in an article reporting about an evening gathering called “Șâzătoare” in which traditional rural crafts are shown and stories are told:

During the “The days of the Rumanian culture” event in Zlot took place a “Șâzătoare”, custom in which all the village women gathered to show traditional crafts, or `handicrafts` as Timokan Romanians call them. The women spun wool and weaved. In the meanwhile, men practiced games from their youth and childhood “Plecerca, tunu”. In the evening, old people told how things were and how customs were preserved during their times, while some young Romanians from Zlot participated for the first time at the "Șâzătoare" (Romanian Global News 28.02.2011).

In this specific piece of writing a ceremonial act of passing on the national cultural identity is being narrated (old people told stories to the young attending for the first time the event). The act of passing the culture from the old to the young suggests the renewal of the nation, but also the preservation of its authenticity since group members discover cultural representation specific to own their national collective. The article expresses an idea of linkage between the homeland and minority group members since the mentioned customs are specific to villages from Romania as well (telling evening stories, spinning wool). The underlying message is that Timokan Vlachs preserved the spiritual features of traditional Romanian peasants; therefore they can make a claim of belonging to the Romanian nation.

Textual indicators show that all these representations of the regeneration through rituals myth are embedded in a macro-strategy of perpetuation (Wodak 1999: 33). The framing of the ritual myths within the boundaries of a macro-strategy of perpetuation is suggested by the underlying message present in all the articles that describe public rituals where the ethnics are engaged: the manifestations were performed to protect an endangered identity, to reproduce and preserve the authenticity of the Romanian culture. The portrayal of the endangered identity of the ethnics is expressed in metaphors like “they have been looking for their identity” (Timoc press 30.07.2010), “destroy our roots” (Timoc Press 6.05.2011) or through the pointing out of a real-life problem: “they do not have access to schooling in Romanian” (Marina Romanian Global News 14.07.2011). Preservation of the endangered national identity is suggested by the emotional tone of the articles, the narrators appear to be engaged sentimentally in the events they describe. If the media reported the rituals just like random events, without an aim of showing a nation

fighting to preserve its culture, the participants to the festivals would have probably been labelled in rather impersonal terms: the Vlachs, the peasants, the organizers, but they are generally identified as Romanians, members of the nation. In addition to that, one would expect the articles to contain fewer adjectives that qualify positively the manifestations: “dynamic”, “beautiful”, “holy”. Last but not least, the reproduction of the national culture is suggested by the reference to customs which are typical to many Romanian villages: weaving, the “Șâzâtoare”, the “hora” and the “jumping steps” dances.

In the construction of Romanian homeland nationalism the employment of regeneration through rituals myth plays two key roles: disentangles the difference between the national minority and the external national homeland members, and it suggests a feeling of hope for the estranged co-nationals. The first idea is implied by the reference to Romanian customs and traditions, artefacts which are meant to proof the similarity between the ethnics living in Serbia and Romania. The depiction of hope is achieved by expressing contrasts between two discursive constructions: presenting the ethnics as alienated and describing the festivals as animated by true Romanian culture. This conveys and underlying message that the external homeland elite should not cease its efforts to protect the co-nationals from the neighbouring country because they are not completely assimilated, their identity awareness can be awoken.

#### **5.1.5. Regeneration through mobilization myth**

The regeneration through mobilization myth suggests that the renewal of the nation can be obtained if practical actions are performed by the involved parties. It can be

either framed in the form of requests for reparatory measures (the adoption of improved laws, the awarding of funding etc.) or the mentioning of efforts that will/should be made by the involved parties (diplomatic pressures, lobbying by NGOs etc.). It is important to point out that mobilization does not refer to the encouraging of social movements (such discourses are rarely present in the data), but rather to a set of proposed practical actions, that should be taken in order to achieve the harmony of the community. The regeneration through mobilization myth establishes the prospects for strengthening the national identity of the ethnics and defines the concrete tasks to be performed for protecting an endangered minority.

There are two main subtypes of the regeneration through mobilization myth, depending on the actors which are supposed to hold the key to solve the problem: actions by internal agents and actions to be performed by the nationalizing state. The first one refers to acts which members of the Romanian nation in Serbia (minority leaders or ethnics themselves) are required to perform (e.g. declare their ethnicity) or claim they have performed for improving the status of the minority (e.g: organize a political meeting on minority issues). The second subcategory entails requests directed towards the nationalizing state to better the situation of the Romanian ethnics.

The references to the regenerative actions performed by internal agents of the Romanian nation are in most of the cases connected to political activities performed by parties and NGOs operating in the Timok Valley. In the context of the 2012 census of Serbia such organizations were either framed as supporting the propagation of the “false” Vlach identity (Timoc press 2.07.2011) or as encouraging the ethnics to declare their Romanian identity through political activism (Romanian Global News 28.02.2011;

Romanian Global News 7.06.2011). The census was defined as a reason for mobilizing the nation members who are given the opportunity to “say what they feel” (Timoc press 13.07.2011) by understanding “that Vlach is an abstract notion” (Timoc press 2.07.2011). The political meetings organized by local ethnic leaders are framed as bringing a wave of refreshment for the endangered nation. For this case, the regeneration ideal is suggested by the anti-nationalizing action plans proposed at the gatherings (Romanian Global News 7.06.2011) or by revealing the fact that the meetings survived the sabotage conducted by evil politicians (Romanian Global News 28.06.2011; Romanian Global News 21.12.2010).

To sum up, the internal agents’ mobilization myth draws its regenerative function from the reference to two main issues: a) improving the status of the nation by encouraging Vlachs to declare their real ethnicity at the 2012 census; b) the struggle to achieve solidarity between local ethnic leaders. The second theme is suggested in the reports about the political meetings that were organized successfully despite sabotage attempts by evil agents (Romanian Global News 28.06.2011; Romanian Global News 21.12.2010), but also in the public appeals towards Vlach/ Romanian leaders to overcome artificial division and “fight for the formation of a union of all Romanians – Vlachs, Rumanians, Aromanians” (Copcea Timoc press 15.1. 2010).

The mobilization of the nationalizing state mythical subcategory refers to appeals that are made to the Serbian authorities (by the minority leaders or the homeland elite) for improving the status of the Romanian ethnics in Serbia. The underlying message contained in such requests is that the Serbian state should function according to the standards of a functional democracy and should abide to the rule of law requirement.

Solicitations vary from “modest demands for administration or education in the minority language” (Brubaker 2005: 112) to appeals for justice to be enforced. “Modest demands” for minority rights expressed in the media cover all aspects of the political and cultural life of the community: administration of the National Minority Council by true members of the nation (that speak Romanian), unique institutional representation for Vlachs and Romanians, education, schooling and press in the Romanian language. In the media, such requests are made public either by minority representatives, parties and ethnic leaders (Romanian Global News 07.11.2010) or by elite homeland representatives (Timoc press 30.07.2010). The demands are framed as prerequisites of a fully democratic state: “individual and collective rights guaranteed by the Constitution and legislation of Serbia should be respected on the entire territory of the country”, not only in Vojvodina is mentioned in one article (Romanian Global News 07.11.2010). References to democracy and the rule of law are made also in the cases when minority leaders ask for justice to be done. They point out abuses performed by representatives of the authorities: border guards which prevented a bus full with children of Romanian origin to enter Serbia (Romanian Global News 27.07.2011) or the banning of radio shows in Romanian by the local authorities (Romanian Global News 7.06.2011; Timoc press 12.08.2011). When referring to such situations ethnic leaders speak of the “breaching of the law” and the fact that basic “rights are not respected” (Romanian Global News 27.07.2011; Timoc press 12.08.2011), conveying the idea that not the fulfillment of narrow interests is at stake when they make requests for justice but the well-functioning of the democracy.

The references to the rights and laws contained within this mythical subcategory appear to be employed for conferring legitimacy to the requests set forth in the media,

they convey the idea that the demands for reparatory measures are of interest to the whole nation, they are not trivial complaints coming from narrow interest groups. In the construction of homeland nationalism the publicizing of requests made by minority representatives to the nationalizing state appear to serve the function of showing that the struggle of the ethnics for cultural autonomy has a legal and moral basis, therefore it is legitimate. It portrays the picture of a nation that is active in its fight for an improved status, by abiding to the rules of democratic polity.

## **5.2. Romanians in Ukraine**

### **5.2.1. Myths of decline and regeneration**

An important difference between the Romanians in Serbia and the Romanians in Ukraine ones is that within the content of the Serbian articles, mythical structures of decline seem to predominate, while the possibilities for the regeneration of the nation appear to be less frequently mentioned by the media. There are, however, common discursive patterns in the construction of the Romanian homeland nationalist rhetoric between the Serbia and Ukraine groups, and I refer here to the references made to historical myths of decline or to the contemporary myths of decline. What is important to point out is that the regeneration aspect appears to be mentioned only with regard to practical actions that can be taken to safeguard the nation, while rituals do not play, as it happens in the articles on Serbia, a major role in the discursive construction of nation renewal. As a result, within the content of the data on Ukraine I could identify only the

mobilization subcategory of regeneration myths, while rituals appear to share a different function in the construction of nationalistic rhetoric: they commemorate historical moments when the nation suffered great downfalls. This is why for this section of the analysis I will analyze three main mythical typologies: historical decline myth, contemporary decline myth and the regeneration through mobilization myth. In the selection of the discursive utterances that can be classified as myths I preserved the rules and definitions given in the analysis of the data on Serbia, since they capture well the theoretical arguments made by Schöpflin (1997) and Smith (1999, 2000) and they are sufficiently comprehensive to allow for comparative generalizations (set forth in the Conclusions chapter).

### **5.2.2. The historical decline myth**

The underlying message contained by the historical decline myth about the Romanians in Ukraine is that the nation shares a tumultuous destiny, shaped by the territorial changes enforced by foreign powers, the Austro-Hungarian and the Soviet “Empires”. These great powers were framed as evil agents who fought to denationalize the Romanian ethnics, while Ukraine is depicted as a descendant that continues the assimilation policies of these states. In a review of a book about the history “full of turmoil” of the Romanians in Ukraine published in Timoc Press (27.01.2011) the author captures in the basic features of the myth: “The main idea of the book is that, despite two centuries of intensive denationalization and linguistic assimilation, with never-ending patience, great wisdom and by showing martyr heroism, the Romanians spread on what is nowadays Ukraine managed to preserve their beautiful language, their firm faith and their

ancestral customs unaltered”. The main characteristics of the myth revealed by this paragraph are that the Romanian nation in Ukraine endured many hardships during a long part of its history (continuous oppression theme) and that the ethnics share a special identity (ethnic election theme), they can distinguish themselves in the world of nations. In another article, discussing the history of the Romanian Ukrainians, the myth is constructed not only through the referencing to the continuous oppression and ethnic election themes, but also by mentioning the names of the agents responsible for the decay of the nation, the nationalizing states:

The Bukovinans persisted in affirming their identity as Romanians, by passing through the Austro-Hungarian denationalization project, then through the Soviet one, and through the one of Ukrainization in the present days. [...]. In Northern Bukovina, the preservation of Romanian symbols became part of a continuous fight against the process of Germanization-Slavicization-Ukrainization. (Romanian Global News 07.03.2010).

The political oppression perpetrated by clearly established actors (Austria-Hungary, the Soviet Union, Ukraine) is suggested by the references to the assimilation processes (denationalization, Ukrainization), while the distinctiveness of the Romanian ethnics is derived from their struggle to preserve their national symbols, they are framed as a people with a strong national affiliation. Both passages are embedded in a macro-strategy of perpetuation (Wodak 1999), the underlying aim of the authors appearing to be the preservation of the endangered national identity of Romanian Ukrainians, who were allegedly submitted to a continuous process of assimilation.

So far, we have seen discursive instances where the origins of the denationalization affecting the Romanians in Ukraine were traced back to the times of Austria-Hungary, but it is important to mention that a large portion of the articles

containing this myth focus more on the Soviet legacy of the Ukrainian state. The state of decay under the Soviet regime contains references not only to denationalization but also to deportations, famine, massacres and territorial losses (Romanian Global News 9.02.2011; Romanian Global News 4.04.2011; Soros Romanian Global News 29.10.2010; Tibrigan Romanian Global News 30.08.2011; Robu Timoc Press 2.02.2011). The most frequently mentioned instrument of denationalization is the creation of the allegedly “false” Moldovan identity, framed as having been imposed forcefully upon the ethnics by the Soviet authorities, who falsified the censuses: “The Romanians living there [I.E. in Ukraine] say that not census was conducted correctly during the past decades, when Northern Bukovina was under administration of the Russians or of the Ukrainians extremists.” (Tibrigan Romanian Global News 30.08.2011). The imposition of the “false” Moldovan identity during the Soviet era is demonized because it produced negative effects for the present times, the result being that schooling in Romanian is difficult to access by ethnics living in Southern Bessarabia: “In Southern Bessarabia, unlike in Northern Bukovina or the historical region of Maramureş, the situation of the Romanian schools is more difficult due to the fact in the Soviet period the Romanians from this area were recorded under the “Moldovan” designation” (Romanian Global News 10.03.2011). The cause for the mythical decline of the nation was depicted as emerging not only from the abusive imposition of the Moldovan national identity but also because the number of Romanians decreased after the massacres perpetrated by the “Soviet satraps” during the World War 2 (Robu Timoc Press 2.02.2011). To attract an emotional attachment from the audience, the depiction of the Soviet massacres is focused on the situation of the victims: “the survivors were chased by the cavalymen and stabbed with the bayonets” (Romanian

Global News 9.02.2011); “people [that were] taken away by the Soviet bullets” (Romanian Global News 4.04. 2011).

All these mythical representation of the Soviet times are embedded in a macro-strategy of perpetuation, since the media creates a picture of an endangered community struggling to survive. In the construction of Romanian homeland nationalism they serve both attract sympathy from the receivers (through the depiction of suffering) but also to offer an explanation for contemporary downfalls of the nation: why the community is divided, schooling in Romanian difficult to access in certain regions, the small number of ethnics as compared to the overall population. It also establishes causal explanation for the perceived nationalizing policies of the Ukrainian authorities who continued the evil practice born in the “Soviet period” of recording Moldovan ethnics (Romanian Global News 10.03.2011), by promoting a policy of “division” similar to “what Stalin did” (Stefan Timoc press: 11.08.2010).

### **5.2.3. Contemporary myth of decline**

When constructing a picture of a contemporary national mythical decline the media reporting about Romanians living in Ukraine conveys two fundamental messages: 1) the nationalizing state is the main actor responsible for the bad situation of the ethnics; 2) the attempts toward denationalizing the Romanians are a proof that the Ukrainian authorities have totalitarian tendencies. These are, however, only general features of the myth, a unitary message contained within the Romanian homeland rhetoric being difficult to disentangle due to the variety of the data content. The media frames as problematic almost all aspects specific to the life of the Romanian ethnic minorities: access to

schooling, religious service, media and public administration in their native language. Within the content of the articles, the difficult access to minority rights is depicted as being deliberately infringed by Ukrainian governors, who share authoritarian behaviors: “Ukraine, a country wishing to enter the European Union promotes the same Stalinist policy of denationalizing Romanians. The methods are now more perfidious, but they have the same goal: denationalizing minorities, especially Romanians.” (Ștefan Timoc press: 11.08.2010). This passage suggests that the Ukrainian state inherited its nationalizing practices from the “evil” Soviet Union, but also that it perfected them, since they became “more perfidious”. Referring to the theoretical framework, this discursive utterance belongs to the “myths of unjust treatment” subcategory, because it implies that the ethnics were mistreated by a “malign actor” who oppressed the ethnics for being what they are (Schöpflin 1997: 30). The quoted paragraph suggests that Romanians were deliberately targeted by the Ukrainian authorities (“especially Romanians”) from the mass of ethnic nations that live within the boundaries of the country, fact which introduces an idea of victimization to the Romanian communities in Ukraine.

Although Romanians are depicted as the main target of the Ukrainian nationalizing agents, considering the fact that “Hungarians bear no problems [...] and Russians only have advantages” (Dancu Timoc press: 11.02.2011), the alleged oppression directed against them is framed as being more strongly concentrated on specific communities, particularly on the Moldovans living in the Odessa Oblast (area frequently mentioned in the data as Southern Bessarabia). The journalists criticize the Ukrainian authorities for allegedly preventing ethnics living in that region to erect religious establishments patronized by the Romanian Orthodox Church (Cubreacov

Romanian Global News: 9.09.2011; Romanian Global News 16.09.2011; Vasiliu Romanian Global News 24.10.2011), to attend Romanian cultural events (Romanian Global News 23.03.2011; Romanian Global News 25.03.2011), but also for harassing the ethnics that want to declare their Romanian identity (Dancu Timoc press: 11.02.2011; Vasiliu Romanian Global News 24.10.2011). All the situations referring to the mythical decline of the Romanian speakers from the Odessa Oblast are summarized in the review of a book about their minority status: “demolished churches, priests that were beaten, vandalized monuments, desecrated cemeteries, the Romanian language banished from schools, denationalization and ethnic cleansing” (Timoc press 2.02.2011).

To further my point about Romanian speakers from Southern Bessarabia, I argue that the mentioning of their minority rights status enables homeland nationalist media to evoke an extreme situation, about which they imply they cannot be wrong. The reference to the endangered national identity of the Romanian speakers from the Odessa Oblast is employed as a benchmark for emphasizing the “Stalinist” denationalizing policies of the Kiev officials; there is a substantial number of reports about minority rights infringements in Southern Bessarabia, fact which enables the media to demonize the host state.

#### **5.2.4. Regeneration through mobilization myth**

Despite the fact that a general message of decline predominates within the data, there are instances when the media refers to practical solutions that could potentially bring a wave of renewal for the endangered nation; they converge in the construction of the regeneration through mobilization myth. There are three key actors whose actions

could potentially regenerate the national identity awareness of the ethnics: internal agents, the nationalizing state, external homeland members.

Internal agents or members of the national minority from Ukraine are indicated by the media as an important element for solving the assimilation problem because they are in direct contact with the phenomenon of denationalization. For the regeneration of the nation to be achieved all discursive instances mention the defects shared by group members and the actions that should be taken by them to increase their national identity awareness. Vasile Bâcu, the leader of a Romanian cultural association in Ukraine revealed the errors that are made by many ethnics who live in Chernivtsi, but also the actions performed by his organization to improve the minority status of the community:

There are many [Romanians from Chernivtsi] who just brag about [their national identity] and do nothing but to stir things up. Our fight is to keep the Romanian spirit alive, to build up schools that teach the Romanian language, to convince parents that it is not useless to teach Romanian to their children, to have press and publishing houses in Romanian, to make it possible to celebrate our national values; that is our fight. With regard to other issues, only the heads of states can deal with them, when the proper moment will come (Tibrigan Romanian Global News 30.08.2011).

In this passage the defects specific to community members causing the decay of the nation are exaggerate pride and reluctance by Romanian parents to teach the mother tongue to their offspring, while the proposed solutions lie in the fight of the cultural association to increase the gains in terms of minority rights (schools, press and publishing houses). The lack of interest in teaching the Romanian language to their descendants was mentioned as an issue which causes the drawback of the nation by another promoter of Romanian nationalism, Horia-Roman Patapievici, the head of the Romanian Cultural Institute (RCI). In a statement given to the press during a conference he suggested that

the abandoning of this behavior, along with convincing the Romanian communities living abroad to rely on their efforts rather than state support would be bring a wave of renewal to the nation: “‘If you are patriots teach your children the Romanian language!’ he [Patapievici n. ed] said to the participants at the event. In the same manner, the president of RCI encouraged the Romanian communities living abroad not to see themselves as ‘assisted communities’, but rather as ‘communities of destiny’.” (Timoc press 4.10.2011). Both passages that were quoted above are embedded in a macro-strategy of perpetuation, because the reference to teaching Romanian to their own children by group members implies that the identity of the ethnic communities is endangered, while taking action can assure the reproduction and preservation of the Romanian national affiliation.

Other defects of the group members contributing to the state of national decay for which the regeneration lies in the mobilization of group members are the lack of national identity awareness of the volohs and the reluctance to declare their Romanian identity shared by certain ethnics. As I showed in the third chapter of the paper, the volohs are an ethnic group living in a few villages from the Zakarpattia Oblast which consist of individuals that speak Romanian but are unaware of their Romanian origins and virtually have no knowledge about the culture of their homeland. Ion Popescu, a Romanian deputy in the Ukrainian Parliament, pleaded in an article published by Timoc Press (24.10.2011) for “bringing them back to their roots” but also for a general mobilization of the Romanian ethnics during the 2012 Census, actions that should regenerate the nation. The statement he made to the press shows that the solution for national renewal lies in the promotion of Romanian pride: “[...] This is our mission, of the Romanian community in

Ukraine, to demonstrate that people should not be afraid to declare their ethnicity, because being Romanian at your home place is not a shame.” (Timoc Press 24.10.2011).

The statements made by the Romanian deputy Ion Popescu are particularly important in the process of mythical regenerative construction because they establish linkages between the endangered national minority and the nationalizing state. This happens because the deputy together with other Romanian ethnic leaders promoted the candidacy of Viktor Yanukovych (a representative of the nationalizing state) during the January 2010 presidential elections. In exchange for his electoral support he received a seat in the Parliament on the Party of Regions’ list and promises that the legislative provisions on minority rights will be improved. This situation made him appear at the same time as a representative of the national minority and of the nationalizing state, but he claimed to continue fighting for the interests of the ethnics from his position. In the interviews delivered by the deputy to the media (Timoc press 24.01.2010; Cochino Timoc press 5.02.2010) he depicted the potential for nation renewal in terms of major gains to be received from the Ukrainian government: the annulment of provisions from the educational legislation that are unfavorable to ethnic minorities; usage of minority languages in municipalities where ethnic groups are numerous; representation in rayon Councils for minority groups and inclusion of Romanian ethnics among the trainers of public administrators. The political agreement reached by the Romanian, Hungarian and Russophile minority parties and the Party of Regions was described by the deputy as a guarantee of national regeneration because it was based on the moral values of honesty and reciprocity: “At this stage [first round of the presidential elections n.ed.], the Romanian, Hungarian and Russophile communities kept their word and voted in

majority, for Viktor Yanukovich. We are waiting for the second stage [of presidential elections n.ed] and we consider that our contribution will be given to the full and that the commitments will be honored by both sides.” (Timoc press 24.01.2010). In this discursive instance the possibility for government change is framed as a prospect to transfigure Ukraine from a nationalizing state to a polity protective towards ethnic minorities.

With regard to the regeneration through homeland mobilization mythical typology there are two types of discursive instances employed for its construction: those that ask the Romanian authorities to take practical measures for supporting the ethnics, respectively those that requires diplomatic actions which should establish the dignity of the nation. Both categories of homeland mobilizing regenerative tools contain the underlying idea that the duty of the state to protect its co-nationals living abroad is sacred. This principle is expressed openly in a legislative bill adopted by the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament quoted in Romanian Global News (9.02.2011); the law instituted the 1<sup>st</sup> of April as the National Day for the memory of the Romanians killed during the Fântâna Albă massacre and the Famine in Ukraine:

Considering the sacred duty of the Romanian state towards the Romanians left without Country (sic), but also due to the fact that the Romanians living in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are among the main objectives of Romanian foreign policy, obligation stated in art. 7 of the Constitution [...] We have elaborated this bill, so that, through its eventual application, the historical truth and the ordeals faced by these Romanians will get to be known by the public [...]” (Romanian Global News 9.02.2011).

The holy character of the nation is expressed not only through the adjective “sacred” but also through the capitalization of the word “country”; in this particular passage regenerating the nation through the adoption of a commemoration law is framed as a

moral duty, nation members residing in the homeland should be informed about the massacres perpetrated against their co-nationals from the neighboring state so that they feel attached to the displaced ethnic group. This is one of the discursive instances in which the mobilizing of the homeland is framed as a prerequisite for restoring the dignity of Romanian nation. There are other examples in which the actions required from the external homeland elite are meant to bring a feeling of refreshment to the nation: a media organization pleads the Romanian president, Traian Băsescu, to come up with an official reaction towards the abusive expulsion of Romanian journalists from the territory of Ukraine (Timoc press 19.07.2011) or an article in which the journalist asks Romanian politicians to make use of the country's veto rights as member of the EU and NATO to pressure Ukraine towards improving the status of the Romanian ethnics (Grozavu Romanian Global News 31.10.2011).

Most of these instances in which the homeland elite is required in the media to take diplomatic actions for restoring the prestige of the community are based on the assumption that Romania is an European state which behaves according to the standards of a developed democracy. A representative passage when the belonging of Romania to the EU is evoked the mobilize the homeland elite for the regeneration of the endangered national group is in a statement made by an ethnic leader from Ukraine who asked the Romanian Ministry of Education to pressure the Ukrainian state to recognize the diplomas issued by Romanian universities: "Vasile Tărășteanu said that the Romanian Ministry of Education should be more firm in its relations with its Ukrainian counterpart, `not to share relations of giving in` and that Romania should show more dignity in its external policy, considering the fact that it is an European

state” (Ștefan Timoc press 11.08.2010). This is an example of homeland mobilization utterance in which the kin state is required both to take practical actions for safeguarding the welfare of the ethnics (assure diploma recognition) and also to restore the dignity of the Romanian nation. However, most mythical homeland mobilizing utterances do not mix these two issues: they frame the renewal of the nation as emerging either from practical measures enforced by the elite of the kin state or from diplomatic actions promoted by the same actors. Such practical actions range from the support of cultural activities (Romanian Global News 25.03.2011; Timoc press 11.02.2011) to financing outlets in their native language for the Ukrainian Romanians (Timoc press 24.10.2011). These forms of material support are framed as a mode of reassurance towards the ethnics that the kin state monitors the promotion of their welfare: “The Romanians from the South of Bessarabia and the other regions of Ukraine need constant support, solid *cultural* (my highlighting) and identity projects, clear signs that the Romanian State, through its institutions, never forgets its co-nationals and that they are the main objectives of its policies” (Romanian Global News 25.03.2011).

In the construction of homeland nationalism referring to Romanian speakers in Ukraine regeneration through mobilization myths appear to play three key roles: 1) reveal the defects of nation members for encouraging them to actively support the interests of the group; 2) to transfigure the perception towards the host state from nationalizing to protective toward minorities (only when the disseminator is a member of the state elite); 3) to require from the homeland to take practical measures that assure the welfare of the ethnics or diplomatic actions that restore the dignity to the

nation. As we have seen in this subsection of the analysis these roles are dependant upon the actors that are asked to take action: internal agents, members of the host state political elite or homeland elite members.

## VI. Conclusions

In this study I explained the main patterns that contribute to the discursive construction of Romanian homeland nationalism reporting about communities in Serbia and Ukraine. I referred to the concepts of nationalistic myths (Schöpflin 1997; Smith 1999, 2000) and discursive macro-strategies (Wodak 1999).

The analysis revealed that the homeland discourses from the two analyzed groups of articles share certain similarities in the construction of the homeland nationalistic messages. The first one is that they both seek to create a feeling of emotional attachment between the endangered community and the public opinion from the kin state through the depiction of historical moments when the nation experienced a mythical decline. A second commonality between the analyzed groups of data is that they present the possibility for national renewal as emerging from actions that should be performed by the members of the displaced minorities and by the nationalizing authorities (mythical regeneration).

The members of the Romanian communities from the two countries are framed as having a background of suffering experienced throughout their history, which stands as a proof of their special ethnic identity: for the case of Serbia, the long record of hardships explains why the Balkan Romanians have beautiful songs and the Vlachs are religious; with regard to the Romanian Ukrainians the long history of foreign occupations is the evidence that the ethnics have a strong national affiliation, since they struggled to preserve their culture and symbols. Moments in the past when the national minorities experienced a period of decay caused by domestic policy makers are referenced to show

that the contemporary nationalizing practices of the host states are inherited. In the groups of articles on Serbia the authorities are portrayed as behaving similarly to the Milosevic period when numerous abuses were conducted against ethnic minorities, while for the case of Ukraine the governing authorities are described as employing policies of denationalization consecrated in the Soviet era (the most mentioned one is the imposition of the Moldovan identity).

When referring to situations in which the national minority can experience a mythical regeneration, texts from both groups of articles put an emphasis on an action that should be performed by all the members of the community: to declare their real ethnicity.

Myths referring to a moment of national renewal evoke the relationship with the nationalizing state in differentiated terms: for the case of Serbia, the demands set forth by minority leaders are depicted as legitimate requests backed by the values of democracy and the rule of law, while in the materials on Ukraine there is an intention of transfiguring the host state from nationalizing into protective towards minorities. The latter message is constructed in the messages of an agent that acts at the same time as a representative of the national minority and of the host state (a minority leader member of the governing coalition), a situation which refutes Brubaker's (2005) assumption that the nationalizing and the national minority elite are always in competing positions.

The prospect for renewal in the reports about the Romanian minorities in Ukraine is mostly concentrated on the mobilization of the homeland elite, and to a lesser extent on the nationalizing authorities, Romanian politicians are asked either to take practical actions for assuring the welfare of the ethnics (funding, cultural activities) or to make

diplomatic efforts which should restore dignity to the oppressed community. Public appeals towards the governors of the host are rarely made, since the polity is frequently depicted as “Stalinist”.

An important difference between the analyzed groups of articles lies in the discursive construction of the factors that should bring the regeneration of the nation: while the reports about Romanian Ukrainians depict the potential for national renewal as emerging solely from practical actions (laws, declaration of ethnic identity etc.), the news stories about the Romanians from Serbia put a special emphasis on the power of public rituals, aimed at strengthening the community. In the construction of homeland nationalism rituals are employed for disentangling the differences between the national minority and the co-nationals living in the motherland, but also to suggest a prospect of hope for the alienated ethnics, who are framed as not completely assimilated.

The findings show that Romanian homeland nationalism is an ideology in which the mythical structures of decline and regeneration play a key role in constructing the messages aimed at preserving the identity of allegedly endangered minorities and it also serves the purpose of demonizing the perceived nationalizing policies of the host states. In his studies where he discussed dynamic interplay between the nationalist ideologies of the triadic nexus (national minority, nationalizing and homeland nationalisms), Brubaker (2000, 2005, 2009) did not put an emphasis on the mythical structures disseminated by the media but he focused on the general messages that animated such nationalistic movements. However, I consider that the disentangling of the mythical structures present in contemporary media discourses brings a positive contribution to the nationalism literature. My argument is that research on nationalism is focused too much on the

historical development of this phenomenon or it analyzes media messages referring to the situation of citizens living in the motherland (Bilig 1995), while nationalist rhetoric depicting the situation of nation members living in neighboring states is given little attention by the scholars.

With regard to the generalizability of the findings, considering the large amount of the sample I contend that the described patterns are fairly representative of the Romanian homeland ideology disseminated in the online media. Another aspect which makes the findings generalizable for the case of Romanian media is the fact that the analyzed outlets (Timoc press and Romanian Global News) are besides publishers of the news stories made by their own correspondents, also aggregators of Romanian mainstream media, they select articles which conform to their ideological aims. For this reason the research is representative not only of the analyzed platforms but of the Romanian speaking media in general.

The potential limits of the study are the fact that I analyzed only a small number of mythical structures (decline of regeneration), while the initial analysis showed that the data also contains examples of golden age, ethnic election, shared descent and even territorial myths. The limited space and time available for this paper prevented me from conducting a more comprehensive analysis, but the findings of the study can be expanded with additional researches on the Romanian homeland ideology.

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