

PARALLEL READINGS:

Bessarabia and the Republic of Moldova in the Romanian and Russian Historical Narratives

FLAVIUS SOLOMON

SOLOMON, Flavius. Parallel Readings: Bessarabia and the Republic of Moldova in the Romanian and Russian Historical Narratives. *Historický časopis*, 2026, 74, 2, pp. 343-364, Bratislava.

The article discusses the Russian-Romanian dispute and the conflicting claims regarding the belonging of historical Bessarabia (Republic of Moldova), from the opposing perspectives of competing national narratives. The author specifically emphasises the connection between official discourses (structured and conditioned by frequent changes of political regimes, but also by the repeated border shifts and revisions) and the narratives developed on the scholarly / academic, cultural, and educational levels. The paper argues that border territories contested by two (and more) national projects—and the struggles over their belonging—represent essential elements of the narratives through which collective identities are shaped and reshaped. The competing historical narratives concerning Bessarabia are viewed as an important element structuring the current relations between the Russian Federation and Romania. These narratives also have a significant impact upon the present situation in the Republic of Moldova.

Keywords: Bessarabia/Republic of Moldova. Russian-Romanian Relations. Historical Narratives. Borderlands.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2026.74.2.6>

An Anniversary vs. a Commemoration

In the second half of May 1912, numerous newspapers in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa published lengthy and remarkably detailed articles about a series of festive ceremonies and solemn events held in a city that was otherwise rarely mentioned on the front pages of the Russian press. These celebrations marked the centenary of Bessarabia's incorporation into the Russian Empire, while the city concerned was Kishinev (Chişinău in Romanian), the capital of the gubernia. In the years prior to World War I, Kishinev was mainly known, outside the region itself, due to the anti-Jewish pogroms that occurred there in 1903 and 1905. The town had thus gained the sad notoriety of the *City of Slaughter*, mostly due to the prophetic poem *Massâ Némirov* (A Story about Nemirov) authored by Haïm (Ḥayyim) Nahman Bialik.

Starting from May 16, 1912, both in Kishinev and in other Bessarabian localities, mostly in smaller towns serving as district centres, various solemn and lavish public displays and shows were organized. These activities had been thoroughly prepared for the past several months and involved the civilian authorities and the local church hierarchy. On the day of the celebration, in the presence of an impressive official delegation which had come all the way from St. Petersburg, several large-scale religious processions, accompanied by solemn speeches, were held. The city centre was decorated with several enormous arcades, which were adorned by inscriptions glorifying the tsar, mighty Russia and the Russian people. The next day, on May 17, the foundation stone was laid for the future monument dedicated to Emperor Alexander I—“Bessarabia’s liberator”. During the festivities, several thousand brochures praising the tsar, glorifying Russia and emphasizing the purported benefits that the local population enjoyed as a consequence of Bessarabia’s belonging to the Russian Empire were distributed throughout the region’s churches and schools. Public readings of these materials were also organized. Among the materials printed on the occasion of the anniversary were 150,000 copies of a brochure authored by a local activist. Somewhat unusually for officially approved publications, this booklet was also published in Romanian, albeit using the Cyrillic script.¹

At the same time, in Romania, mostly at the initiative of the League for the Cultural Unity of All Romanians, a series of mainly unofficial gatherings and ceremonies were organised in Bucharest, Iași, and other Romanian cities. The speeches held, on this occasion, by various prominent academics, journalists or even politicians openly invoked Romania’s rights regarding Bessarabia and harshly condemned the policy of Russification to which the Romanian population of the region was subject to. The same year, a number of press articles, brochures, and books concerning the history of Bessarabia were published in Romania. Among these publications was the booklet *Our Bessarabia*, authored by the famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, bearing the heading written one hundred years after its seizure by the Russians.²

Perhaps the most revealing proof of the fundamentally different ways in which the same event was understood, perceived, and interpreted in Russia and Romania can be provided by the parallel reading of the two short poetic fragments quoted below.³ The authors of these rhymes were both teachers—S.S.

1 LASHKOV. *Stoletie prisoedineniya Bessarabii k Rossii, 1812 – V/16 – 1912 // O sută de ani de la trecerea Basarabiei către Rossia 1812 – V/16 – 1912*. Kishinev 1912.

2 IORGA. *Basarabia noastră. Scrisă după 100 de ani de la răpirea ei de către ruși*. Vălenii de Munte 1912.

3 See LASHKOV, *Stoletie prisoedineniya* and MUNTEANU-RÂMNIC. *Pentru Basarabia. Culegere de texte*. Ploiești 1912, pp. 87-88.

Orlov, a teacher working at a high school (*gimnaziya*) in Chişinău, and Eugeniu Revent, employed at a lyceum in Bacău, a town in northern Romania:

<i>Many precious gems, Glowing with shimmering hues, Shine within the Imperial Crown Of the Orthodox Tsar! And among them, you are not the least, Bessarabia, wondrous land, Land of freedom, of abundance, Our most fruitful land! From Turkish oppression, You were freed by Great Rus', And forever tightly bound To her family of peoples.</i>	<i>Let us ring the dead bells, For today is the holy exhumation Of the glory of olden times, From the Prut⁴ and the Dniester to the sea... A deeper sorrow is setting in, Towards Suceava⁵ and Bender⁶, And near the Prut, river full of tears, The city of Iaşi⁷ is now sad and forlorn... In his grave, the tsar who stole The land of our country stirs, And may his dust tremble At the lightning of revenge!</i>
---	--

The Emergence of Two Competing Visions on Bessarabia

The brief discussion, above, of the ways in which, in May 1912, the one-hundredth anniversary of the signing of the peace Treaty of Bucharest was commemorated in Russia and Romania and of the opposing narratives this occasion generated relates, in fact, to the “Bessarabian Question”. The controversy over Bessarabia proved to be a recurring and conflict-prone subject within the Russian-Romanian (before 1917 and after 1989) and Soviet-Romanian relations. Analysed in a broad, long-term historical context, the “Bessarabian Question” essentially concerns the Russian/Soviet-Romanian conflict and mutually exclusive claims regarding their “historical rights” over a part of the territory belonging to the former Moldavian Principality, situated between the Prut and Dniester rivers, as well as concerning the ethnic and national identity of that region’s inhabitants.

In the next pages I focus on the trajectory and dynamics of the “Bessarabian Question” by tracing how it was reflected and instrumentalised within the Romanian and Russian canonical narratives concerning Bessarabia’s historically defined territory and its population. Further, I will tackle the connection and relation between territory, as an objectively given entity, from the perspective

4 The river Prut. After 1812 it became the official border between the Moldavian Principality (later – Romania) and the Russian Empire.

5 One of Moldavia’s capitals during the medieval period.

6 An ancient Moldavian fortress, situated on the Dniester River.

7 Iaşi (Yassy), the capital city of the Moldavian Principality from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

of physical geography, and territory as an imagined construct, shaped and influenced by specific historical and political circumstances.

Starting from the early nineteenth century, as a consequence of frequent and recurring border shifts, Bessarabia (or parts thereof) often changed hands. It passed from the jurisdiction and control of the Moldavian Principality (at the time under Ottoman suzerainty) to the Russian Empire (1812), then switched back to the Moldavian Principality (1856), later reverted from Romanian to Russian control (1878), afterwards becoming part of Romania (1918) and then again being reclaimed by the USSR (1940). In 1940, most of Bessarabia's territory was included into the newly created Moldavian SSR, which subsequently proclaimed its sovereignty/independence from the USSR in 1990/1991. Throughout this period, the region witnessed various types of political regimes, radical and successive shifts in its ethno-demographic structure and balance, as well as various experiments aimed at shaping collective identities, imagined and/or built using either social or ethno-national criteria.⁸

During the Tsarist period, until roughly the 1850s, Bessarabia remained a relatively unknown and unattractive region, in contrast to the Polish Kingdom, Finland or Livonia. It was often perceived in orientalist terms, as a kind of "little Orient" within the empire's Western borderlands. Travel notes sporadically published in the St. Petersburg or Moscow press or occasional discussions within the literary clubs visited by the elite contributed to the construction of a fractured, fragmentary and essentially exoticised image of this remote borderland. The famous Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin, for instance, who lived in Chişinău during his quasi-exile in the early 1820s, described the city using a highly critical, even disparaging language:

*Проклятый город Кишинев!
Тебя бранить язык устанет.
Когда-нибудь на грешный кров
Твоих запачканных домов
Небесный гром, конечно, грянет,
И—не найду твоих следов!*⁹

8 For a general overview, see the following works: KING. *The Moldovans. Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. Stanford 2000; van MEURS. *The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography. Nationalist and Communist Politics and History-Writing*. New York 1994; IHRIG. *Wer sind die Moldawier? Rumänismus versus Moldowanismus in Historiographie und Schulbüchern der Republik Moldova, 1991–2006*. Stuttgart 2008.

9 In his poem *Iz pis'ma k Vigelyu (Proklyaty gorod Kishinev)*. (PUSHKIN, A. S. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. T.2. Leningrad 1977, pp. 140-141).

*(Damned city of Kishinev!
My tongue grows weary of cursing you.
One day, the sin-filled roofs
of your dirty homes, for sure
will know the wrath of the heavenly thunder
And—I will find no trace of you!)*

The overwhelming majority of the historical, geographical, military and ethnographic research produced during the early period of Bessarabia's integration into the Russian Empire, with some of these works still unpublished or practically unavailable,¹⁰ was mainly the result of practical concerns, dictated by the logic of *raison d'état*. These works aimed at expanding and enriching the available knowledge of a territory to be fully integrated into the empire. The case of Filip Wiegel, a high-ranking Russian official serving in Bessarabia in the 1820s, who was also, for a time, Bessarabia's deputy governor, is especially revealing in this regard. In fact, Wiegel was the addressee of Pushkin's above-mentioned poem. In his writings about Bessarabia Wiegel, in contrast to most of his Russian peers who later contributed to the deeper knowledge of the region, discussed the province's past and the national-ethnographic specificity/character of its inhabitants with apparent detachment: *"I had the occasion to study the soul of the Moldavians. These Rumanians, or Romanians, as they call themselves, originate from Roman colonists and the Slavo-Dacians defeated by Emperor Trajan. In the language they speak, the Latin element is dominant."*¹¹ Other important Russian authors who wrote about Bessarabia—at least up until the early 1860s—such as I. Liprandi, A. F. Weltman, A. I. Zashchuk or N. I. Nadezhdin, constructed their narratives in the same key, using the same basic arguments. A. I. Zashchuk, an officer in the Russian army who later, in 1877, achieved the rank of general, found (in his work, published in 1862¹²) no difference between the inhabitants of Bessarabia and *"their brethren from the Romanian Principalities"*.¹³

Although it might seem surprising, in contrast to the situation within the Russian Empire, until the 1860s and 1870s Bessarabia did not elicit any particular interest from the part of the Moldavian Principality than had remained under

10 ȘAROV. *Basarabia în istoriografia rusă (1812–1862)*. Chișinău 2024.

11 ȘAROV, *Basarabia în istoriografia rusă*, p. 77.

12 ZASHCHUK. *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii, sobrannye ofitserami General'nogo Shtaba. Bessarabskaya oblast', chast' 1-2*. St. Petersburg 1862.

13 CORMAN. *Das Bessarabien-Bild in der zeitgenössischen russischen Reiseliteratur 1812–1918*. Leipzig 2015, pp. 225–276

Ottoman control, while the still weak and fledgling local intelligentsia was only timidly beginning to acquaint itself with the thought of the Enlightenment. Things started to gradually change only following the union of Moldavia and Wallachia (1859/1861), and, especially, after the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877–1878, which resulted in the proclamation of Romania's independence (1877) and of the Romanian Kingdom (1881). Romania's (retro)ceding of Southern Bessarabia to Russia, in exchange for Dobruja/Dobrogea (according to the decision of the Berlin Congress), following the categorical demands of Romania's erstwhile ally in its war against the Turks, generated a virulent and powerful backlash within the Romanian diplomatic and political circles. However, contrary to the expectations produced by the initial political and intellectual stirrings and the "propaganda war" provoked by the decisions of the Berlin Congress, Bessarabia will feature, during the decades before World War I, in a rather secondary and subordinate position within the heated debates concerning the Romanian "national body" that were raging in the intellectual milieus in Bucharest and Iași. In the imagined hierarchy of "national priorities", Bessarabia came to gradually hold a marginal position, much less prominent than the territories inhabited by Romanians within Austria-Hungary, or even in comparison to Dobrogea. The placing of Transylvania and Bukovina, rather than Bessarabia, at the core of the Romanian national discourse is due to several factors.

Among these, one should emphasize the following: 1) the role played by the Romanian elites of Transylvania and Bukovina, starting from the late eighteenth century, in spreading Enlightenment thought (including the national idea) in Wallachia and Moldavia; 2) the modernisation and standardisation of the Romanian language through its rapprochement to the other neo-Latin languages; 3) the activity, in the Romanian Kingdom, of certain important intellectuals hailing from Austria-Hungary; 4) the close and constant links of the Romanian literary and political milieus with the Romanian elite of Transylvania and Bukovina. In Bukovina's case, an additional important element was related to the fact that this province represented the birthplace of medieval Moldavian statehood and Orthodoxy, given that the most important medieval monasteries were situated there.

Although Bessarabia gradually vanished from the spotlight, it did not completely disappear from the Romanian public sphere and national discourse. A number of important public intellectuals, coming from the community of Russian political exiles who settled in Romania (among them were Bogdan Petriceicu-Hasdeu, Zamfir Ralli-Arbore, Constantin Stere) or Romanian politicians affiliated with the pro-German political tendency, who saw Russia as the main danger for the future of the Romanian nation, contributed to this

enduring preoccupation for Bessarabia. Within the Romanian public sphere, the “Bessarabian cause” was also advocated and supported by certain intellectuals who articulated an “integrative” perspective on the national discourse. This vision argued for a “harmonious” approach to the national priorities, which presupposed an equal proportion, within the collective national imaginary, for all the territories inhabited by Romanians (sometimes, these could also include parts of the Balkans featuring a Vlach/Aromanian population). Among the most outspoken and influential representatives of this version of the integrative national discourse were Mihai Eminescu (generally viewed as the most important Romanian poet) and Nicolae Iorga. The latter brought additional weight to the plight of the Romanians living outside Romania’s borders due to the outstanding reputation he enjoyed within the European academic circles.

In the Russian Empire, during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Bessarabia was likewise relegated to a secondary and subordinate role in the public discourse, but within the press and in academic works dealing with the Russian borderlands. The emerging Russian nationalism was heavily stimulated by Russia’s perceived backwardness and its presumed lags on the path to modernisation, especially in comparison to the other European Great Powers, which it frequently saw as both models and rivals (e.g., Austria-Hungary, Germany, France, Great Britain). Russian nationalism was also boosted by the gradual consolidation of non-Russian, centrifugal national movements in the empire’s Western borderlands (e.g., the Polish revolt of 1863–1864). Therefore, Russian nationalism perceived Russification as an important tool for homogenizing the empire and, consequently, for securing its survival. Aside from the structural similarities with the cases of other non-Russian ethnic groups from the Western regions of the empire,¹⁴ the Russian public and academic discourse towards Bessarabia also possessed some important peculiarities, which are easily discernible in the writings dealing with this province. These peculiarities essentially transformed Bessarabia’s case into a periphery which became less problematic, from the centre’s perspective, compared to other borderlands. At the time of its annexation by Russia, Bessarabia was a relatively peripheral, sparsely populated region of the Moldavian Principality. It did not have a large and significant local elite, which would have been capable to articulate, fight for and negotiate serious and well-grounded political, economic, and cultural demands, as was the case, for instance, with the Polish or Swedish-Finnish elites. For this reason, the few noble families who stayed in Bessarabia after 1812 chose the path of political and cultural assimilation.

14 MILLER. *Zapadnye okrainy Rossiiskoi Imperii*. Moskva 2007.

Most of the region's previous local population, mainly Romanian-speaking and belonging denominationally to the Christian Orthodox confession, consisted of peasants, who were, in their overwhelming majority, illiterate. Similar to the cases of the Byelorussians and Ukrainians, these factors were, in principle, a fertile ground for Russification. However, the linguistic differences between Russian and Romanian (as opposed to the perceived closeness between standard Russian and the Ukrainian / Byelorussian dialects), as well as the isolated and patriarchal way of life of most peasants, contributed to the preservation of a strong regional Moldavian specificity, especially in the central, heavily rural, part of Bessarabia, even up to the early twentieth century. An additional factor that made Bessarabia peculiar in the context of the late Russian Empire was the existence, across the border, of a Romanian nation-state. This situation created many apprehensions both among the Russian political elites and within the academic milieus and the broader educated circles. Moreover, the Romanian nation-state was also a source of "national inspiration" for the fledgling Bessarabian intellectuals, who were mostly recruited from the children of well-to-do peasants who had received their primary education at Russian theological seminaries.¹⁵ Under certain circumstances, this growing intelligentsia could also (it was feared) formulate territorial claims or other radical political demands.

This specific situation of the region impacted the way in which Russian official circles, but also the academic milieus and the press constructed their discourse concerning Bessarabia. Thus, to the extent that the emerging Russian nationalism was increasingly reacting to the demands and claims formulated by the non-Russian national activists from the empire's Western borderlands, Bessarabia gradually became a fertile testing ground for various experiments in the field of Russification policies (mainly promoted through the educational system and the church). The loyalty of the province's population did not represent a serious issue for the imperial centre, although the existence of the Romanian nation-state across the border had to be taken into account. The Russification policy was accompanied, on the discursive level, by a growing body of works authored by ethnographers, historians or journalists. At the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the previously dominant, ethnically and nationally balanced approaches were increasingly replaced by publications which strove to integrate Bessarabia's history into the broader history of Slavic peoples. Moreover, the national-cultural Romanian identity of the Moldavian population was increasingly cast into doubt, even though, ethnographically speaking, the idea of the common origin of the Russian Empire's Moldavians

15 CUSCO. *Bessarabiya v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii (1812–1917)*. Moskva 2012, pp. 285–292.

and of the Romanians living in the Romanian Kingdom and in Austria-Hungary was still fundamentally accepted. A revealing and often invoked example in this regard is the synthetic work coordinated by Pompei N. Batyushkov, *Bessarabiya. Istoricheskoe opisanie*, which was published in Saint-Petersburg in 1892.¹⁶

However, Bessarabia's status as a contested borderland, which could be claimed, at any time, by a neighbouring country, could not be ignored in broader geopolitical assessments. Therefore, in the years prior to World War I, certain alternative approaches emerged within the Russian academic and journalistic sphere. These alternative visions had as their starting point the idea that it would be much more convenient for Russia if the region were to be ceded back to Romania, in exchange for securing a Russian-Romanian alliance. In a newspaper article published in the aftermath of the anniversary ceremonies,¹⁷ the well-known pan-Slavist journalist and publicist Nikolai N. Durnovo¹⁸ was building on the ideas that he had already expressed earlier, several years previously, in his book *Russkaya panslavistskaia politika na pravoslavnom Vostoke i v Rossii*.¹⁹ In the above-mentioned article, Durnovo asserted that, given the foreseeable and inevitable clash and confrontation between the Slavic world (under Russia's leadership) and the Germanic world, rather than passively waiting until "*this powder keg [the Russian-Romanian controversy over Bessarabia's belonging] would ignite and engulf the entire Orthodox East into a bloody wildfire that would forever bury Russia's glory as the liberator of the Orthodox East,*" it would be preferable and much wiser for Russia to secure Orthodox Romania's "natural friendship" through granting Bessarabia back to the Romanian Kingdom.

Several years later, in the summer of 1916, Russia would indeed succeed in securing Romania's agreement to sign an alliance with the Entente and to enter World War I on the side of the Allied powers. This decision, made as a result of lengthy and complicated Russian-Romanian negotiations, was not motivated, however, by a mutual agreement on giving Bessarabia back to Romania. It was, on the contrary, based on the Russian-offered guarantees concerning the acquisition by Russia's new ally, at the end of the war, of the Austro-Hungarian territories inhabited by Romanians. Besides other diplomatic and military reasons and shifts, such as, for instance, the failure of the pro-German tendency in Romanian politics, Romania's decision also represented a recognition and

16 BATYUSHKOV. *Bessarabiya. Istoricheskoe opisanie*. Sankt-Peterburg 1892.

17 DURNOVO. Po povodu stoletiya prisoedineniya Bessarabii k Rossii. In *Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti*, 27 May, 1912.

18 (1842–1919).

19 DURNOVO. *Russkaya panslavistskaia politika na pravoslavnom Vostoke i v Rossii*. Moskva 1908.

further confirmation of the hierarchy of national priorities mentioned above, which gave Transylvania and Bukovina an indisputable primacy. Even historian Nicolae Iorga, who had, several years previously, projected a starkly negative image of Russia in the books he had published about Bessarabia on the occasion of commemorating one hundred years since the region's annexation, was, in the new context, purportedly "discovering" the real and "true Russia".²⁰

Political Caesurae and Shifting Historical Narratives

Other major political ruptures and upheavals, also stemming from the dynamics of World War I, radically changed the nature and overall framework of the evolution of the Russian-Romanian controversy over Bessarabia. The overthrow of the imperial regime in Russia, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, followed by the collapse and disintegration of the Russian army fighting on the Romanian Front, in the summer and fall of 1917, made the occupation of the entire country by the German and Austro-Hungarian armies a realistic prospect and thus even endangered the throne and the continued existence of the Romanian reigning royal dynasty of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. This dire situation forced Romania to enter separate peace talks with the Central Powers, negotiating its exit from the war. The final provisions included territorial losses in favour of Austria-Hungary, along the line of the Carpathians, and in favour of Bulgaria and Germany in Dobrogea. In the context of the negotiations with the Central Powers, in particular with Germany, the possibility of Bessarabia's acquisition by Romania was also brought up. This scenario was envisaged as a kind of compensation for the territories lost to the Central Powers, involving either the whole of Bessarabia or, at least, most of its territory. After the suppression, in December 1917, of an attempted coup, orchestrated by the Bolshevized Russian troops deployed around Iași (Romania's provisional capital at the time), in January 1918, following a formal request filed by the government of the newly established Moldavian Republic and with Germany's tacit acquiescence, the Romanian army entered Bessarabia. In early April 1918, the local Bessarabian diet (Sfatul Țării) proclaimed, in Chișinău, Bessarabia's (conditional) union with Romania.

Until 1940, the dynamics of the Soviet-Romanian relations were almost exclusively conditioned by the evolving controversy over Bessarabia. On the one hand, Romania argued that Bessarabia's inclusion into the Kingdom had a democratic character. This argument was reinforced by the international

20 SOLOMON. How Much Ideology can Diplomacy Endure? The Early Phase of Soviet-Romanian Relations, November 1917–February 1918. In *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2015, Vol. 63, no. 3, p. 395.

recognition of the new border in the post-war settlement sealed by the Paris agreements. On the other hand, Soviet Russia, and later the USSR, rejected this territorial change, invoking a whole array of arguments. These could be either ideological (emphasizing the “suppression of the revolution” in Bessarabia by the Romanian army) or ostensibly based on international law (highlighting that Russia did not take part in the Paris Peace Conference). In the early 1920s, a particularly prominent role in the construction of the official Soviet discourse regarding Bessarabia was played by Christian Rakovsky (Cristian Racovski), a former leader of the Romanian Social-Democratic Party. Interestingly enough, he was, for a long time, highly, even vehemently, critical of Russia’s Balkan policy and expressed strong doubts about Bessarabia’s belonging to the Russian Empire (a revealing example for his previous opinions was his book *Rusiya na Iztok*, published in Bulgaria in 1898).²¹ Initially in his capacity as chairman of the Government of Soviet Ukraine (1919–1923), and later from his position as ambassador of the Soviet Union in London (1924–1925) and Paris (1925–1927), Rakovsky was a part of the narrow circle of Soviet leaders who initially shaped the USSR’s policy towards Romania. He mobilized and coordinated the Romanian left-wing émigrés within the Comintern, took part in direct negotiations with the representatives of the Romanian government and published a number of press articles and brochures concerning the history of and current developments in Bessarabia.²²

Given the fact that the Soviet diplomats lacked relevant information regarding the Soviet territorial dispute with Romania, in the early 1920s a group of Soviet archivists collected and synthesized a rich array of sources relating to the “Bessarabian Question.” Some of this information is currently preserved, in manuscript form, at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, while other sources have been published, during the interwar period, under the documentary series hosted by the journal *Krasnyi Archiv* as well as within the collection *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v epokhu imperializma*. In their overwhelming majority, the works published in the USSR prior to 1940 closely followed the ideological direction prescribed by the Communist (Bolshevik) party. These works were, in most cases, brochures or short books. They often summarised their conclusions for the readers already in their titles, e.g.: *At the Seventh-Year Anniversary of Bessarabia’s Annexation; Romania’s Unjust Claims Over Bessarabia; 10 Years of Struggle against the Romanian*

21 RAKOVSKI. *Rusiya na iztok. Istorichesko izsledvane na ruskata politika na Iztok i chastno v B’lgariia po ofizialni, ofiziozni ruski i drugi chuzhdi iztochnitsi*. Sofiya 2017.

22 RAKOVSKI. *Rumynskie pretyazaniya na Bessarabiyu*. Moskva 1925; RAKOVSKI. *Rumyniya i Bessarabiya. K semiletiyu aneksii Bessarabii*. Moskva 1925.

*Boyers; A Stolen Country. 10 Years of Occupation in Bessarabia; Bessarabia's Peasantry under the Occupation of Kulaks and Great Landowners; etc.*²³ For the purposes of popularizing Bessarabian-related themes within the Soviet Union, the journal *Krasnaya Bessarabiya* (Moscow, 1926–1938) had a particularly important role. Since history often takes unexpected twists and turns, the main staff and editors involved in the activities of the above-mentioned journal (Samuil S. Bantke, Vladimir O. Dembo, but also Christian Rakovsky himself) were accused, in 1937–1938, of high treason and espionage in Romania's favour, being later shot by firing squad.

If Soviet historiography, including the history-writing concerning Bessarabia, evolved, during the interwar period, within an extremely rigid ideological framework, dominated, at least for a time, by the Trotskyite-Leninist dogma of world revolution, Romanian historiography was heavily influenced by the national narrative and by the assertion of the national idea. The creation of Greater Romania, which encompassed, for two decades, almost all the territories within which the Romanians constituted an absolute, or at least a relative, majority of the population, also stimulated the interest of the Romanian academic community in the newly incorporated territories. In this respect, Romania followed the general *Zeitgeist*, which could also be felt in other East-Central European countries which emerged (or significantly expanded their territory) after World War I. In this context, in an effort to compensate for the lacunae regarding the history, geography, economy and culture of the region, Bessarabia was the object of particular attention, second only to Transylvania's case. According to a specialized *Bibliography*, published in 1933,²⁴ during the past fifteen years more works had been published on Bessarabia than had been printed in over a century, before 1918, in the Moldavian Principality, and later in Romania. Similar to the Soviet case, the writing and publishing of many of these works, especially during the first years after 1918, was directly motivated by political-diplomatic reasons. These publications appeared in the context of the ongoing Paris Peace Conference, which also witnessed an intensive and constant activity of the White Russian Bessarabian émigrés, or in the context of the Soviet-Romanian negotiations concerning their territorial dispute or, conversely, regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations. These works targeted both

23 RAKOVSKI, *Rumyniya i Bessarabiya*; RAKOVSKI, *Rumynskie pretyazaniya na Bessarabiya*; BANTKE, *10 let bor'by protiv rumynskikh boyar*. Moskva 1928; GALAIDA, *Ukradenaya strana. 10 let okkupatsii Bessarabii*. Moskva 1928; DEMBO, *Bessarabskoe krestyansvo pod vlastiyu kulakov i pomeshchikov*. Moskva 1931.

24 DAVID, *Bibliografia lucrărilor privitoare la Basarabia apărute de la 1918 încoace*. Chişinău 1933.

foreign audiences, especially the Western diplomatic circles,²⁵ and the domestic public sphere, which was often not familiar with respect to Bessarabia's history.²⁶

Bessarabia's inclusion within Greater Romania's borders also provided the occasion for organizing solemn and festive public displays and processions, especially in the province's main city, Chişinău. These displays were meant not only to support and uphold the "historical rights" of the Romanian Kingdom to the territory between the Prut and the Dniester, but also to demonstrate the attachment of the local population to the Romanian national idea. For instance, in late April 1928, at the initiative of the central government in Bucharest, several solemn anniversary activities were organized in Chişinău, on the city's main street—Alexandru cel Bun Boulevard (formerly, before 1918, known as *Aleksandrovskaia ulitsa*). According to officially published figures, around 100,000 people participated in these ceremonies.²⁷ To symbolically emphasise the total break with Bessarabia's Tsarist past, the organisers included in the program of official festivities the unveiling, on Chişinău's central square, of the monument dedicated to Prince Stephen the Great, viewed as the most important ruler in the history of the Moldavian Principality. This statue was to symbolically replace the former monuments of the Russian emperors Alexander I and Alexander II, which had been torn down in 1918.

After the end of World War II, when former Bessarabia was again included into the USSR, reverting under Soviet control, the Soviet official narrative relating to this region was based upon the theory postulating the existence of a specific Moldavian nation, fundamentally separate and distinct from the Romanian nation, which pointed to the transformation of the previous Romanian-Russian conflict into a new, "Romanian-Moldavian" controversy. In fact, a relatively coherent discourse concerning the existence of a separate "Moldavian nation" had been developed, starting from the mid-1920s, following the creation, on the Eastern bank of the Dniester, of an autonomous Soviet republic within Soviet Ukraine. In the 1920s, the project of building a separate Moldavian nation became part of the broader campaign of shaping new "socialist" nations and

25 MURGOI. *La population de la Bessarabie. Étude démographique*. Paris 1920; PELIVAN. *Les droits des roumains sur la Bessarabie au point de vue historique, ethnique et de l'auto-détermination*. Paris 1920; CAZACU. *The Truth about the Question of Bessarabia*. Bucharest 1926; BOLDUR. *La Bessarabie et les relations russo-roumaines. La question bessarabienne et le droit international*. Paris 1927.

26 CIOBANU. *Basarabia. Monografie*. Chişinău 1926; NISTOR. *Istoria Basarabiei*. Cernăuţi 1923.

27 VIŢALARU. Între dispute politice şi recuperarea memoriei. Sărbătorirea unirii Basarabiei în primul deceniu interbelic. In *Analele ştiinţifice ale Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iaşi, serie nouă, Istorie*, 2018, Vol. 54, pp. 620-622.

encouraging the development of non-Russian national identities (*korenizatsiya*), promoted by the central Soviet government.²⁸ In 1940/41, and then, more forcefully, after 1944/1945, the purview of the “Moldovanist” theory, which also presupposed countless language-building experiments, essentially aiming at the standardisation of certain local dialects in order to create a “Moldavian” literary language, which was to use the Cyrillic script, was extended over the entire territory of the MSSR, combining most of the historical region of Bessarabia and several districts of the former MASSR. The above-mentioned linguistic experiments ultimately failed, to a large extent, because of the involvement, in the linguistic debates raging within the MSSR, of several well-known Soviet specialists in the field of Romance languages, based in Leningrad and Moscow.²⁹ The territorial-geographic principle was also applied for distinguishing and “demarcating” the common, “Romanian-Moldavian,” literary heritage, especially regarding the medieval chronicles and modern classical literature. Thus, according to the officially approved dogma, “Moldavian” literature comprised only those authors who had lived and worked on the “historical” territory of the Moldavian Principality. However, this definition also included “Moldavia” during the nineteenth century, when Bessarabia was a part of the Russian Empire.

Until the late 1980s, history school textbooks represented an important element for constructing the narrative regarding the existence of a separate Moldavian nation. In these textbooks, the purported differences between Moldavians and Romanians were retrospectively identified as far back as the early Middle Ages.³⁰ From a theoretical point of view, but also due to its practical impact, the synthetic volume *Moldavskaya sovetskaya gosudarstvennost' i bessarabskii vopros*, published by the Soviet Moldavian high-ranking official (and “official” historian) Artem M. Lazarev in 1974, can be viewed as a fundamental work for the development of the thesis concerning the “genesis” and the “*full self-assertion of the Moldavian nation*”.³¹ This 800-page book represented, up until the late 1980s, the basic “canon” of the Soviet historiography in the MSSR.³² Lazarev’s line of argumentation was built upon the idea of the existence of a continuous tradition of statehood of the “Moldavian people”, starting from the

28 MARTIN. *Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca 2001, pp. 274-275; KING, *The Moldovans*, pp. 63-90.

29 During the period from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s, the officially approved standard “Moldavian” language in the MSSR was essentially identical to the standard Romanian used in socialist Romania, with the exception of the (Cyrillic) alphabet.

30 MOKHOV. *Ocherki istorii formirovaniya moldavskogo naroda*. Kishinev 1978.

31 LAZAREV. *Moldavskaya sovetskaya gosudarstvennost' i bessarabskii vopros*. Kishinev 1974.

32 Van MEURS. The Bessarabian Question, pp. 250-253.

fourteenth century. This continuity presumably accounted for the emergence of the “bourgeois Moldavian nation”, during Bessarabia’s inclusion into the Russian Empire, and, later, for the emergence of the “Socialist Moldavian nation” within the USSR.

The publication of Lazarev’s book can be interpreted not only as an attempt to provide a synthesis of the Soviet historiographical views and achievements concerning the history of Bessarabia and the MSSR, but also as a significant scholarly and academic reaction to the signals of partial emancipation sent to Moscow from Socialist Romania.³³ The first inklings came with the Declaration of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party (RWP) issued in April 1964, and were then reinforced by the open condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia by the combined armies of the Warsaw Pact countries, in August 1968 and by Nicolae Ceaușescu’s trip to China, in 1971. After a two-decade long hiatus, during which any Bessarabia-related subjects and topics were almost totally absent from the public agenda in Romania, in 1964 the issue of Bessarabia made an impressive comeback to the field of historiographical debates. This happened after the publication in Bucharest, with the party leadership’s endorsement, at the publishing house of the Academy of the People’s Republic of Romania, of the collection *Însemnări despre români* [Notes on the Romanians], with Karl Marx as the presumed author.³⁴ Due to this volume, one of the fundamental aspects of the “Bessarabian Question”—the province’s annexation to the Russian Empire in 1812—could be openly discussed, for the first time, in communist Romania. This polemic, which also caught the attention of the international press, caused dissatisfaction and annoyance among the upper echelons of the Soviet leadership. After 1964, during the discussions and negotiations with the successive Soviet leaders, the Romanian leadership openly and repeatedly displayed its discontent with respect to the persistence, in Soviet historiography, of the idea that Bessarabia was purportedly liberated in 1812, but also concerning the widespread thesis regarding the existence of a Moldavian nation, separate and distinct from the Romanian one.³⁵

Bessarabia—A Perpetual Hurdle in Russian-Romanian Relations

The interpretation of the history of the Bessarabian region, with the post-1991 Republic of Moldova as its main successor state, continued to feature as the crucial subject of the Russian-Romanian historiographical controversies and

33 ANTON. *Instaurarea regimului Ceaușescu. Continuitate și ruptură în relațiile româno-sovietice*. București 2003.

34 Van MEURS, *The Bessarabian Question*, pp. 236-239.

35 CONSTANTINIU. Bessarabia în relațiile româno-sovietice (1976–1978). In *Studii și articole de istorie*, 2012, Vol. 79, p. 86.

public disagreements after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Similar to the previously analysed periods, these controversies were also amplified by a political agenda that was hard to ignore. Prior to February 2022, the academic contacts between Romanian and Russian scholars were intensive and fruitful. This reality found its historiographical reflection in the activity of a joint Russian-Romanian commission of historians, in the organisation of joint scholarly conferences, in the publication—under partnership agreements—of a number of collective thematic volumes or collections of archival documents, as well as in the translation, in both Russia and Romania, of books written (respectively) by authors based in the other country. However, the discursive chasm relating to the interpretation of Bessarabia's history (and later of the history of the Republic of Moldova) remains wide open and very strong.

This is reflected, perhaps, to the fullest extent in the school curricula and history textbooks published in Romania and the Russian Federation. In Romania, the publication of the first post-communist textbooks following the fall of the Ceaușescu regime also led to Bessarabia's reintegration into the general concept of Romanian history. While preserving, to a significant degree, the principles of the teleological perspective developed during the 1970s and 1980s, this model is constructed around the notion of "struggle for national unity", in the context of the alleged *"expansionist policy of the neighbouring empires"*. For instance, the shift in Bessarabia's international status resulting from the provisions of the Peace Treaty signed in Bucharest, in 1812, is interpreted as the outcome of *"appeasing Russia's appetite for conquest"*. On the contrary, similar to Bukovina's and Transylvania's cases, Bessarabia's unification with the Kingdom of Romania in 1918 is seen as *"a fruit and product of the people's will"*. Bessarabia's (and Northern Bukovina's) annexation by the Soviet Union, in June 1940, is likewise interpreted through a national lens.³⁶ By contrast, the history textbooks printed in the Russian Federation define Bessarabia's accession to Romania at the end of World War I as a hostile *"act of occupation"*, against the background of Russia's deep internal crisis caused by the Bolshevik revolution. A revealing example of this interpretation can be found in the recently published series of textbooks coordinated by Vladimir R. Medinskii. Likewise, Bessarabia's annexation in 1940 is placed within the broader context of the efforts to restore *"Russia's historical borders"*, undertaken by the Soviet leadership.³⁷

Besides academic works or school textbooks, the history of Bessarabia and the Republic of Moldova (within the broader context of the relations between

36 BARNEA. *Manual pentru clasa a XII-a*. București 2007.

37 MEDINSKII and TORKUNOV. *Istoriya Rossii, 10 klass. Bazovyi uroven'.* Uchebnik. Moskva 2023..

the Russian Federation and Romania) is frequently discussed in a popularizing framework, including various approaches and media outlets targeting a wider audience, e.g., press articles, TV shows and debates, or materials published and posted online. Some of these materials had a palpable and significant media impact. For instance, during the spring and summer of 2024, on the YouTube channel *Faculty of History* (Fakul'tet istorii), belonging to the above-mentioned V. R. Medinskii, who formerly served as Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation and is currently a close presidential adviser, perceived as having been, for over a decade already, “a man belonging to the ideological clan within the Kremlin”,³⁸ a two-part “public lecture” was posted. Under the title *Velikaya Moldaviya ili Velikaya Rumyniya* [Greater Moldova or Greater Romania], this lecture presents the history of Bessarabia using a specific language with obvious tendencies towards a “vulgarizing” version of the region’s history. This interpretation combines and merges certain basic identifiable elements relating to the ideology of Eurasianism or to the tenets of the Russian imperial (pre-revolutionary) and Soviet historiography.³⁹

The intensity, and, especially, the passionate overtones of the debates raging, on the level of national narratives, with respect to this region can also be, undoubtedly, explained by the totally different—and irreconcilable—ways in which the Russian and Romanian political discourses attempted to make sense of the developments within the Republic of Moldova. In fact, after 1991, the Republic of Moldova entered, as a new and independent actor, the long-standing Russian-Romanian debate and controversy concerning Bessarabia’s territory and its population. If the academic, literary, and journalistic discourse produced in the Republic of Moldova has, in general, closely followed the Romanian point of view, the official political discourse oscillated significantly in its interpretive grid, depending on the electoral cycle and the parties in power,⁴⁰ which elicited strong reactions both in Romania and in Russia. To mention only some recent developments, one should point, perhaps, to Russia’s hostile reactions and messages regarding the official position of the Moldovan government towards certain key moments of Bessarabia’s history, such as: the province’s annexation by the Russian Empire in 1812, Bessarabia’s union with Romania in 1918, the

38 IVANITSKAYA. Novoe pravitel'stvo: nabornyii kabinet'. In *Forbes*, 21 May 2012 [online], available at <https://www.forbes.ru/sobytiya/vlast/82393-belyi-dom-v-kremle>, accessed 14.09.2025; SUSLOV. *Putinism – Post-Soviet Russian Regime Ideology*. London 2024, p. 112, 118, 246.

39 MEDINSKII and TORKUNOV, *Istoriya Rossii*.

40 DOM. *Fragile Loyalität zur Republik Moldau. Sowjetnostalgie und ‚Heimatlosigkeit‘ unter den russischen und ukrainischen Minderheiten*. München 2007; IHRIG, *Wer sind die Moldawier?*; KING, *The Moldovans*.

region's occupation by the USSR in 1940, or the change in the constitutional provision concerning the state language, by replacing the label "Moldovan" (language) with "Romanian". It is in this context that, during several of her recent public briefings, which received broad media coverage, Maria Zakharova, the official spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, accused the current Moldovan authorities of promoting "*historical revisionism*" and of engaging in the "*forced Romanianization of the country*".⁴¹

Conclusions

The Russian-Romanian controversy regarding Bessarabia originates from the Russo-Ottoman peace treaty signed in 1812 in Bucharest, according to which the Eastern part of the Moldavian Principality passed under the control of the Russian Empire.

At the diplomatic level, the trajectory of this territorial conflict, which became a real "stumbling block" for the Russian-Romanian relations,⁴² witnessed several stages, largely overlapping with the various political and diplomatic caesurae marking significant shifts in the balance of power in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. This trajectory started with the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the ensuing Paris Peace Conference (1856), going all the way to the collapse and fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent proclamation of sovereignty and independence of the newly established Republic of Moldova (1990/1991). In fact, even a cursory overview of the history of the Russian/Soviet-Romanian relations during the last 150 years or so should be enough to notice that these rapports have been impacted, to a significant degree, by the "Bessarabian Question". Even during the existence of the Soviet bloc, when Romania's possibility to articulate and promote an independent foreign policy was rather limited, the authorities in Bucharest periodically referred to or highlighted the above-mentioned territorial controversy. This occurred both during bilateral discussions with the Soviet leadership, directly concerning Soviet-Romanian relations, and within the framework of the broader debate regarding the general relations between the states belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence.

The Russian-Romanian conflict relating to the "historical rights" over Bessarabia represented a constant feature of the debates emerging in academia and in the public sphere, both in Russia and Romania, starting from the second

41 <https://tass.ru/politika/21625883>, 2.05.2025.

42 VINOGRADOV. Bessarabiya – kamen' pretknoveniya v rossiisko-rumynskikh otnosheniyakh. In VINOGRADOV, ed. *Ochagi trevogi v Vostochnoi Evrope (drama natsional'nykh protivorechii)*. Moskva 1994.

half of the nineteenth century. This controversy essentially followed and stemmed from the larger topic of defining the configuration of the “national space / body” of the two communities. Even if, in the Russian case, the “Bessarabian Question” never achieved the status of a central topic within the realm of national discourse (contrary, for example, to the past and present iterations of the “Ukrainian Question”), it was nevertheless frequently articulated within broader approaches regarding the empire’s symbolic geographies. In this respect, Bessarabia was (and still is) viewed as a territory claimed by Russia primarily by virtue of the courage and sacrifice displayed by the “Russian (respectively, Soviet) soldier”. For instance, during a conversation he had, in the fall of 1876, with the Romanian Prime Minister Ion C. Brătianu at Livadia (Ialta), the Russian emperor Alexander II allegedly justified the Russian territorial claims regarding Southern Bessarabia not by emphasizing the fact that Russia needed additional territories, but rather by invoking the need to overcome the trauma purportedly caused by the loss of a territory that had been acquired earlier through military means.⁴³ Moreover, the same type of argumentation can be also traced and identified at present, within the Russian official discourse concerning Bessarabia/the Republic of Moldova. This is clearly visible in the context of the Russian Federation’s leadership, including President Vladimir Putin himself, frequently resorting to historical arguments for the purposes of legitimizing and justifying certain major foreign policy decisions.⁴⁴

For various reasons, which have to do mainly with the peculiarities of the development of Romanian nationalism, the “Bessarabian Question” never achieved a dominant status (aside from rare and sporadic upsurges) within the Romanian political and intellectual discourse articulated by state-building elites, either. However, during certain moments of powerful and heightened tensions linked to the Russian-Romanian relations, some Romanian politicians and public intellectuals used and invoked this controversy to mobilize political energies and to shape and influence the attitude of the public opinion.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian-Romanian discursive and intellectual conflict over Bessarabia found a new and fertile environment in the independent Republic of Moldova. This controversy still functions according to the rules of a “symbolic competition” encompassing parallel, contested, and antagonistic histories, memories, and geographies.

43 VINOGRADOV, Bessarabiya – kamen’ pretknoveniya, p. 16.

44 HILL. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Washington D.C 2013, pp. 63-64; TROFIMOV. How Putin’s Obsession with History Led Him to Start a War. In *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2024.

About the Author

PhDr. Flavius Solomon

Romanian Academy, A.D. Xenopol Institute of History, Iași

Str. Codrescu 6, Pavilion C, 700479, Iași

Romania

e-mail: flavius.solomon@xenopol.acadiasi.ro

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4468-7069>

List of references and literature

Secondary sources

Monographs

- ANTON, Mioara and CHIPER, Ioan. *Instaurarea regimului Ceaușescu. Continuitate și ruptură în relațiile româno-sovietice*. București: Institutul național pentru studiul totalitarismului, 2003.
- ARBORE, Zamfir. *Dicționarul geografic al Basarabiei*. București: Atelierele grafice I.V. Socecu, 1904.
- ARBORE, Zamfir. *Liberarea Basarabiei*. București: Tipografia Curții Regale F. Göbl, 1915.
- BANTKE, S.S. *10 let bor'by protiv rumynskikh boyar*. Moskva; Leningrad: s.n., 1928.
- BARNEA, Alexandru et al. eds. *Manual pentru clasa a XII-a*. București: Corint, 2007.
- BATYUSHKOV, Pompei N. *Bessarabiya. Istoricheskoe opisanie*. Sankt-Peterburg: Tip. T-va Obshchestv. Polza, 1892.
- BOLDUR, Alexandru. *La Bessarabie et les relations russo-roumaines. La question bessarabienne et le droit international*. Paris: Librairie Universitaire J. Gamber, 1927.
- CAZACU, Petre. *The Truth about the Question of Bessarabia*. Bucharest: Cultura națională, 1926.
- CIOBANU, Ștefan. *Basarabia. Monografie*. Chișinău: Imprimeria Statului din Chișinău, 1926.
- CORMAN, Galina. *Das Bessarabien-Bild in der zeitgenössischen russischen Reiseliteratur 1812–1918*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015.
- CUSCO, Andrei. *A Contested Borderland. Competing Russian and Romanian Visions of Bessarabia in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*. Budapest; New York, CEU Press, 2017.
- CUSCO, Andrei and TAKI, Victor. *Bessarabiya v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii (1812–1917)*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012.
- DAVID, Aurel. *Bibliografia lucrărilor privitoare la Basarabia apărute de la 1918 încoace*. Chișinău: Cartea Românească, 1933.
- DEMBO, V.O. *Bessarabskoe krestyanstvo pod vlastiyu kulakov i pomeschikov*. Moskva: s. n., 1931.
- DOM, Rossana. *Fragile Loyalität zur Republik Moldau. Sowjetnostalgie und ‚Heimatlosigkeit‘ unter den russischen und ukrainischen Minderheiten*. München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2007.
- GALAIDA, K. *Ukradennaya strana. 10 let okkupatsii Bessarabii*. Moskva: Izd-vo TsK MOPR SSSR, 1928.
- HILL, Fiona and GADDY, Clifford G. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2013.
- IHRIG, Stefan. *Wer sind die Moldawier? Rumänismus versus Moldowanismus in Historiographie und Schulbüchern der Republik Moldova, 1991–2006*. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2008.

- IORGA, Nicolae. *Basarabia noastră. Scrisă după 100 de ani de la răpirea ei de către ruși*. Vălenii de Munte: Editura și Tipografia Societății Neamul Românesc, 1912.
- KING, Charles. *The Moldovans. Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
- LASHKOV, N.V. *Stoletie prisoedineniya Bessarabii k Rossii, 1812 – V/16 – 1912 // O sută de ani de la trecerea Basarabiei către Russia 1812 – V/16 – 1912*. Kishinev: Tipografiya Bessarabskogo Gubernskogo Pravleniya, 1912.
- LAZAREV, A.M. *Moldavskaya sovetskaya gosudarstvennost' i bessarabskii vopros*. Kishinev: Cartea Moldovenească, 1974.
- MARTIN, Terry. *Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- MEDINSKII, V.R. and TORKUNOV, A.V. *Istoriya Rossii, 10 klass. Bazovyi uroven'. Uchebnik*. Moskva: Prosveshchenie, 2023.
- MEURS, van, W. *The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography. Nationalist and Communist Politics and History-Writing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- MILLER, A.I. and DOLBILOV, M.D, eds. *Zapadnye okrainy Rossiiskoi Imperii*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007.
- MOKHOV, N.A. *Ocherki istorii formirovaniya moldavskogo naroda*. Kishinev: Cartea Moldovenească, 1978.
- MUNTEANU-RĂMNIC, D. *Pentru Basarabia. Culegere de texte*. Ploiești: s. n., 1912.
- MURGOCI, G. *La population de la Bessarabie. Étude démographique*. Paris : s. n., 1920.
- NISTOR, Ion. *Istoria Basarabiei*. Cernăuți: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură Glasul Bucovinei, 1923.
- PELIVAN, Ion G. *Les droits des roumains sur la Bessarabie au point de vue historique, ethnique et de l'auto-determination*. Paris: Impr. des Arts et des sports, 1920.
- RAKOVSKI, K. *Rumyniya i Bessarabiya. K semiletiyu aneksii Bessarabii*. Moskva: s. n., 1925.
- RAKOVSKI, K.G. *Rusiya na iztok. Istoricheskoe izsledvane na ruskata politika na Iztok i chastno v B''lgarii po ofitsialni, ofitsiozni ruski i drugi chuzhdi iztochnitsi*. Sofiia: Izdatelstvo GUTA-H, 2017.
- RAKOVSKI, K. and DEMBO V. *Rumynskie pretyazaniya na Bessarabiyu*. Moskva; Leningrad: s. n., 1925.
- ȘAROV, Igor. *Basarabia în istoriografia rusă (1812–1862)*. Chișinău: Editura USM, 2024.
- SUSLOV, Mikhail. *Putinism – Post-Soviet Russian Regime Ideology*. London; New York: Routledge, 2024.
- SUVEICA, Svetlana. *Post-imperial Encounters. Transnational Designs of Bessarabia in Paris and Elsewhere, 1917–1922*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.
- ZASHCHUK, A. *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii, sobrannye ofitserami General'nogo Shtaba. Bessarabskaya oblast', chast' 1-2*. St. Petersburg: s. n., 1862.

Articles in Journals, Chapters in Monographs

- CONSTANTINIU, Laurențiu. *Basarabia în relațiile româno-sovietice (1976-1978)*. In *Studii și articole de istorie*, 2012, Vol. 79, p. 83-89.
- DURNOVO, N. N. *Po povodu stoletiya prisoedineniya Bessarabii k Rossii*. In *Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti*, 27 May, 1912.
- IVANITSKAYA, N., BADANIN, R. and OSIPOV, I. *Novoe pravitel'stvo: nabornyi kabinet'*. In *Forbes*, 21 May 2012 [online], available at <https://www.forbes.ru/sobytiya/vlast/82393-belyi-dom-v-kreml>, accessed 14.09.2025.

- SOLOMON, Flavius. Die ethnokulturelle Politik der UdSSR und die "moldauische Nation". In SOLOMON, Flavius et al., eds. *Südosteuropa im 20. Jahrhundert. Ethnostrukturen, Identitäten, Konflikte*. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 2004, pp. 131-146.
- SOLOMON, Flavius and CUSCO, Andrei. How Much Ideology can Diplomacy Endure? The Early Phase of Soviet-Romanian Relations, November 1917–February 1918. In *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2015, Vol. 63, no. 3, pp. 390-411. DOI:10.25162/jgo-2015-0011
- TROFIMOV, Yaroslav. How Putin's Obsession with History Led Him to Start a War. In *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2024.
- VINOGRADOV, V. N. Bessarabiya – kamen' pretknoveniia v rossiisko-rumynskikh otnosheniyakh. In VINOGRADOV, V. N. et al., eds. *Ochagi trevogi v Vostochnoi Evrope (drama natsional'nykh protivorechii)*. Moskva: Rossiiskaya Akademiya nauk, 1994, pp. 11-54.
- VIȚALARU, Adrian. Între dispute politice și recuperarea memoriei. Sărbătorirea unirii Basarabiei în primul deceniu interbelic. In *Analele științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, serie nouă, Istorie*, 2018, Vol. 54, pp. 611-624.

Online resources

- MEDINSKII, V. R. *Velikaya Moldaviya ili Velikaya Rumyniya*, youtube, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDNz_uTTQsk, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfXURJ08vdQ>, accessed 14.09.2025.