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Introduction

To understand the Romanian discourse on identity one needs to take a step back. As the whole Romanian culture after communism returned to the inter-war ideology and debate, any review will have to survey the twentieth century as well. Political culture was and is still conceived to a great extent as identity. American anthropologist Aaron Wildavsky (1987: 3-22) labeled Romania a "fatalistic" culture on the basis of the Romanian folk ballad, *Mioritza*.

Mioritza is the story of a shepherd who reacts to the news that his envious fellows plan to kill him in order to steal his herd with perfect indifference, preparing for death and a cosmic wedding with the Universe. Wildavsky cross-tabulates the strength of group boundaries with the nature of prescripts binding the groups. Whether prescriptions are strong and groups are weak – so that decisions get frequently made for them by external factors – the result is what he calls a "fatalistic" political culture (Shafir, 1985: 133-134), dominated by distrust on all levels. The individual citizen sees no point in neither exercising his free will", nor trusting his fellow citizens to try engaging some collective action. The others are perceived as envious and distrustful, the self as victim. It is true that Romania belongs to the part of the world where foreign influence is the most important agent of political change. In 1940 the constitutional monarchy was reversed by domestic fascism due less to the strength of the Iron Guard than to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The pact deprived Romania of important territories, which dealt a mortal blow to the legitimacy of the monarch. The subsequent communist regime was entirely Soviet sponsored; the fall of Ceau escu, who was betrayed by the Army and the *Securitate* in front of a yet manageable popular uprising in late 1989, has also been attributed to a plot led by Moscow.

In the context of this article, 'culture' or 'discourse' refers to the prevalent elite social representations of identity, the political order and the norms derived from them. By social representations I understand "not simply widespread beliefs, but theories or branches of knowledge in their own right that are used for the discovery and organization of reality", organizing principles that provide common reference points for

individuals and communities at a given point in time, thus enabling communication among members of a community by providing a code for naming and classifying the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history (Moscovici, 1993). Most of the social representations of the Romanian intelligentsia in the twentieth century were defined in connection with, and more often than not, in opposition to these modernization endeavors imposed from top down by an enlightened, Western oriented oligarchy grouped around the constitutional monarchy.

For most of modern Romania's history until the advent of the Second World War, except for brief moments; and despite many setbacks, the ruling elite has incessantly pursued a modernization project mainly inspired by the French model. The remarkable continuity of this project, despite the controversy surrounding it, may be attributed to the uneven distribution of power, which allowed this group enjoying the consent of the monarch to carry on with little investment in building some societal consensus over the target pursued. Whenever Romanian Liberals pushed ahead with democratization as a natural consequence of their overall modernization project, they discovered that widespread participation was very likely to endanger the modernization project itself. On several occasions, this prompted the Liberals to make a full stop and go back on their commitments in an attempt to regain control of the process, which in turn generated strong anti-Liberal resentments leading up to a confrontation with, at times an outright rejection of, the modern political system that had emerged after the adoption of the franchise.[1]

Most of the interwar discourse that we will present in this paper has therefore never become part of the official discourse;[2] but its radical taint is at least partly due to its development in contrast to, or dissent from, an ever-patronizing liberal bourgeois oligarchy running the country. Many radical voices in this discourse also had roots in Western Europe, where radical rightwing ideology in various forms and shapes had been growing constantly since the end of the First World War. Romanians were part of the European intellectual environment; Romanian doctoral students were generally enrolled in West European institutions of higher learning, most notably in Paris, Berlin and Vienna, and translations from *en vogue* authors such as Oswald Spengler or Georges Sorel flourished in Bucharest.[3]

Along the lines of the interwar national discourse, what is and is not Romanian today? Further more, what were the political solutions that the postcommunist Romanian government found for accommodating ethnic minorities' demands? Was the consociationist governance solution a lasting one in the case of the Hungarian minority? What are the challenges posed by the large Roma minority in Romania and what was the evolution of the tolerance discourse towards them? To answer all these questions, the paper will first go through the main national identity components, as determined by Romania's geographical location, its institutional heritage, its cultural identification and its new status of EU member state. Further on, we will look at the main challenges posed by the discourse towards the largest ethnic minorities in Romania – Hungarian and Roma – and review the current status of tolerance in public discourse and government policy towards them, in terms of individual and collective rights, cultural differences and access to public resources.

1. The Iron Guard, an Orthodox nationalist movement with grass root support, was the very embodiment of this kind of anti-system opposition.
2. Except for the short-lived government of the Iron Guard between September 1939 and November 1940.
3. Equally influential were the French Catholic right with authors like Charles Maurras and Hermann Keyserling, the White Russian radical right (A. Soloviov, Léon Chestov [Lev Shestov], Nikolai A. Berdiaev) and Italian fascists like Benito Mussolini. Edmund Husserl's and Martin Heidegger's classes were also frequent-ed by students in philosophy. Carl Schmitt seems to have been largely unknown. *Romanian Political Culture in the 20th Century.*

National identity: Romania is…

Balkan

Along with other neighboring countries, Romania has long disputed its placement in South Eastern Europe, as the Balkan Mountains are not even close to its territory and its language is Latin-based. In studies of nineteenth and twentieth-century nationalism and nation-building, the custom has indeed spread to use the term "Balkan" as a negative, albeit poorly defined, attribute, in relation to ethnic diversity, mass violence and intricate wars. The legitimacy of such definitions came recently under attack as they clearly reflected less geographical or socio-economic realities and more cultural stereotypes (Todorova, 1997; Wolf, 1994), but they are still prevailing in journalism and best-selling travel books. What remains uncertain is if, East to Trieste or South to the Dniestr, there was (and still is) a community of some coherence, to which Romania draws on. If yes, then what are the legacies that being part of this community leaves to Romania as a modern nation state and the Romanian identity?

There is a common historical background to South-Eastern Europe, which can stand to justify the ranging of Romania alongside the rest of the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire not only granted religious autonomy to the Balkan peoples, but it also adopted many of the Byzantine political practices making them its own. This means that Balkan societies were left behind on two accounts. On one hand, they followed passively the Ottomans in their stagnation and decline, being both politically and economically subordinated; on the other hand, institutions such as the Church remained suspended to the late Byzantine Empire, an abstraction passed beyond time, therefore beyond evolution. The legacies with a lasting impact for the Balkans present political institutions and culture can therefore be summarized as follows:

1. *Social.* Due mostly to sharing the Ottoman pattern, which was at the heart of the Empire's organization, the Balkans emerged from pre-modern times with small peasant holdings as main form of property in rural areas and no autonomous cities, the Ottoman city being state-centered and state-managed. Unlike Bulgaria and Serbia, the Romanian principalities enjoyed limited autonomy, so they used to have large estates, but they adopted the small holdings property model at the end of the First World War due to populism and pressure of the model existing in neighboring countries. The scarcity of political and professional elites is the third central element of the model.

2. *Political. Byzantine tradition.* The Byzantine model was indeed followed, in its grandeur and ambition, by rulers from the Balkan Peninsula to Muscovy, but as historians showed, more in the conception of monarchy and its exterior appearance than in anything else (Pippidi, 2001: 23-77, 151-164). Some essential features were enough salient, however, to matter for pre-modern and modern political culture of the Balkans. Those were, in brief, three. The first is the historical inferiority of the Church to the ruler, missing the historical tension among the two which created the first source of power polarity in Western Europe. The second feature of the model, the autocracy of Byzantine despots, to some extent dependent of the first, was inherited by the flock of would-be followers in the Balkans. Finally, the third Byzantine inheritance is the absence of the Germanic, later continental, model of one son inheriting all.

3. *Political. Ottoman tradition.* The absence of autonomous cities meant the absence of civil society and balance of the power of the landowners in the principalities. The absence of a domestic aristocracy throughout the Balkans meant the absence of equilibrium between the central government power and the periphery, which further allowed for arbitrariness of appointments and dismissals, and consequently central interventionism and developed informal devices to keep them and their families afloat. The overwhelming presence of a hyper-regulatory state in the life of these provinces led therefore to a generalized behavior of rules avoidance. The need to act evasively, if not dishonestly, became a necessity when the well organized and governed Ottoman state was transformed into a chaotic and corrupt polity.

4. *Demographic. Ottoman legacy.* Historians agree that the most resilient Ottoman legacy, and the one causing most problems presently is demography. The Ottoman rule induced intentionally, on one hand, and prevented unknowingly, on the other hand, that natural process of ethnic homogenization which took place in most of Western Europe, leaving, as Ernest Gellner (1983) keenly observed, the burdensome task of ethnic cleansing for the modern times to carry out.

Not Western: Modernization as rape

The social representation of modernization as a violation of the traditional self has a history stretching far beyond the First World War, and beginning in the late 19th century with conservative group of "Junimea" [Youth], who opposed imported Western institutions and considered them "forms without content". Later on, both Nicolae Iorga, the most influential intellectual of the generation of founding fathers, and his disciple Nae Ionescu, who was to become a professor and intellectual advisor of Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran, resented the import of modern political institutions and were skeptical not only of the compatibility of Romanian traditional society with these novelties but also, and more importantly, about their suitability in the Romanian setting. Ionescu was completely against any form of Westernization. Iorga, a historian, was more moderate, and confined himself to warning that domestic institutions must not be overlooked. He was very critical towards the two modern Romanian constitutions, that of 1866 and of 1923, and to the idea of importing ready-made constitutions altogether. Iorga warned that such imitations made in total disregard for unwritten laws embedded in Romanian society would remain confined to paper.

While specific policies should have helped the institutions defined by the 1866 Constitution become engrained in Romanian soil, Iorga hit a sensitive nerve when drawing attention to the distance between formal and informal rules. His point was that establishing formal rules in ignorance of or disregard for unwritten traditional rules would compromise the Romanian project of political modernization from the very onset. The traditional ideas that he considered part of the unwritten Romanian "Constitution" over a variety of past regimes were the national character of the state, the limits to and defense of a "traditional" territory and above all the state as an expression of the peasant society, whereby the oligarchy did not serve as an intermediary between the ruler and the ruled.

The Liberals believed that the difference between the East and West was simply one of development and was due to different historical evolution.

It would have been difficult for the leading liberals –the Brătianu family– to think otherwise, considering they had ruled the country for two generations –through the war of independence with the Ottoman Empire, to the creation of the nation state and through the adoption of the first two modern constitutions. These steps had taken almost 50 years, in which literacy levels and urban development skyrocketed. However, the Brătianu family's opponents, whether left or right, believed that structural differences separated the West from the East. Nae Ionescu would reduce the antinomy to the opposition between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Nationalists and pro-Westerners alike identified Orthodox Christianity as the heart of the matter.

But European...

As in Central Europe, the first vote against communist parties in free elections signified also and mostly 'a return to Europe'. The prospect of joining the European Union has, from the very beginning, been the engine of democratization and transformation which has taken place in our countries. A "Return to Europe" was what our citizens voted for in the first free elections' (Havel et al., 2002). After the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, no significant political leader in the region dares to be openly anti- European: former nationalists convert overnight under the pressure of popular enthusiasm for European accession and lure of European funds. While millions of Balkan inhabitants cross daily the Western border legally or illegally to work in the European Union, technocrats, experts and selected politicians in Western as well as Southeastern Europe struggle to bring Europe to the battered Balkans. There is no alternative project, neither on the table, nor in the social imagination.

A return to Europe, but whose? When comparing Eastern and Western European histories the temptation is to explain individual countries' poor performance in the region by what Emil Cioran's *bon mot* would summarized as: *'Nous sommes mal placés!'* And indeed local elites indulge frequently in blaming geopolitics for the present state of their societies. Historical facts, such as the resistance of local princes to the Ottoman advance in Europe are turned into full explanatory and justifying myths: the Balkans are backward compared to Western Europe because they defended Western Europe at the cost of their own Europeanness. Only exceptionally the opposite argument is found, that the Byzantine tradition is *not* European, and its legacy of autocracy and synthesis of powers in the person of the monarch is completely different from the Western story of competition among various powers (Iorga in Todorova, 1996). The story of Southeastern Europe as told by its inhabitants is one of nostalgia for the brief time when the Balkans were nearly European –between the two world wars.

A return to Europe, but to what Europe? While ordinary people started to have some grasp of current EU due to cheap cable TV and temporary labor migration, which had exploded in Romania and Bulgaria since 2003, intellectuals are the ones left behind. They are slow to understand that Europe is now EU. If the new Europe is to be uniquely the product of economy and Brussels' bureaucracy, will its labyrinths created at the beginning of the new century put into practice Kafka's labyrinths from the beginnings of the last century?' (Michnik, 2001: 6). What made EU's strong initial attraction, the identification with Europe, was later revealed as an important source of misunderstandings and reciprocal disillusionment (see Rupnik, 2003).

Political elites, those who keep winning elections on the count of their openness towards European values, have quite a different stance. While fully unaware of cultural affairs, and truly committed to Europe as a development dream, most of them remain fairly ignorant in European affairs. A TV crew scorned Romanian MPs after the publishing of the European Commission highly publicized Progress Report on Romania and Bulgaria in 2003 because few were able to name the organization which produced such reports or even place it in Brussels. Prior to 2007, party position papers on European accession produced by individual parties in Romania and Bulgaria remained the exception rather than the norm. The discourse on Europe was fairly general and nonspecific. The few technocrats who had some knowledge on Europe were all involved in negotiations on both sides, either the domestic government or the local EU delegations that represent the European Commission. Most of the local expertise, which was both quantitatively and qualitatively limited was mobilized by EU- funded agencies like the European Institutes. The purpose of such agencies was to inform policy by producing impact accession studies, but actually the few good studies that were occasionally produced originate from independent think-tanks.

Cultural diversity challenges in the past 30 years in Romania

There are three main cultural diversity challenges in Romania. Two of them are related to the rights and situation of the Hungarian and Roma minorities, while one has to do with the religious identification of the Romanian majority. In this section we will discuss each of these three main challenges. According to the results of the latest Romanian Census (2002), the distribution of recognized ethnical minorities in Romania is synthesized in the table below.

Table 1. Main ethnic minorities in Romania, 2002		
	Number	**Percentage of total**
Population total	*21,698,181*	*100*
Romanian	19,409,400	89,5
Hungarian	1,434,377	6,6
Roma	535,250	2,5
Germans	60,088	0,3
Ukrainians	61,091	0,3
Russian	36,397	0,2
Turkish	32,596	0,2
Tatar	24,137	0,1
Serbian	22,518	0,1
Slovak	17,199	0,1
Bulgarians	8,092	<0,1
Croats	6,786	<0,1
Greek	6,513	<0,1
Jewish	5,870	<0,1
Czech	3,938	<0,1
Polish	3,671	<0,1
Italian	3,331	<0,1
Chinese	2,249	<0,1
Armenian	1,780	<0,1
Macedonian	731	<0,1
Albanian	520	<0,1
Slovenian	175	<0,1
Other	15,537	<0,1
Undeclared	5,935	<0,1

Source: Romanian census 2002

As opposed to Western European countries, immigration does not yet impose cultural challenges in Romania. According to the data provided by the National Immigration Bureau, around 1% of the Romanian population is represented by immigrants. Most of them come from neighboring countries – Moldova, Ukraine and Turkey – while a very small percentage is represented by non-European immigrants. Immigration of Asian workers (China, North Korea) reached its peak in 2007 and 2008, in response to a labor market deficit in the sectors of the economy booming at the time – constructions and textiles. In 2009 and 2010 the number of work permits decreased significantly. The short period of increased Asian immigration led to the creation of small ethnic enclaves in Bucharest and few other major Romanian cities. Due to their small numbers, immigrants in Romania still do not have enough visibility and even though reports of rights' violations have been made by various non-governmental organizations, their issues have not yet reached the agenda. For this reason, we do not consider immigration to raise major diversity challenges in Romania yet, and we focus the report on the challenges faced by historical minorities.

Challenges post-2000: Orthodoxy as identity standard

Orthodoxy as the fundament of Romanian identity, deeply embedded in the nationalist thought, was associated to a high extent with the fight against communism, being thus prone to resurface again and again after 1989, when a sort of religious revival indeed took over the Romanian intellectual life. The communist regime was tolerant, and to some extent even supportive of the Orthodox Church, but the fundamentalist Orthodox laic tradition was censored due both to its doctrine of prevalence of spiritual over material life, and its historical association with the Iron Guard. Despite this, after 1989 intellectuals rediscovered Orthodox fundamentalism through the works of Nae Ionescu and Mircea Vulcănescu, which were reprinted in mass editions together with translations from the White Russian tradition by A. Soloviov, L. Chestov, V. Volkoff and N. Berdiaev. The main Romanian publisher, Humanitas, came under attack from the French intellectual Left for these reprints,[4] but the publishing house was merely adapting to the market trend. Fundamentalist civil society groups, such as *Anastasia*, founded their own publishing houses, which became extremely successful putting out this type of literature.

The influence of the interwar fundamentalist Right made itself felt well beyond the overt political discourse during the first post-communist decade. The *Museum of the Romanian Peasant* [Muzeul Ţăranului Român], initiated and designed by painter Horia Bernea, who himself was the son of a leading Iron Guard intellectual, retrospectively fulfilled Eliade's programmatic vision of "a people living entirely under the sign of the Cross". Bernea returned the former museum of the Communist Party to its original destination as a folk art museum, blowing it up into a glorification of peasant Christian metaphysics very much along the lines of Blaga. Thanks to his artistic vision and dedicated team, the museum eventually became a faithful image of traditional orthodoxy as pictured by interwar intellectuals, although a not-so-true, idealistic, representation of peasant imagery and life. Bernea's personal qualities – he was a charismatic figure and among the few intellectuals not tainted by collaboration with the communist regime – helped to make the museum of folk art into a success story. This museum completely eclipsed the *Museum of the Romanian Village* [Muzeul National al Satului "Dimitrie Gusti"], designed by the old Romanian Social

4. The debate included also some Jewish non-French authors, such as Michael Schafir, but it revolved around the polemic between Gabriel Liiceanu, director of Humanitas and his defenders and a few French journalists from *Le Monde* and *L'Esprit Moderne*. Michael SHAFIR, "The Man They Love to Hate", in: *East European Jewish Affairs*, 31 (2000) 1. P. 60–81, provides a summary of the debate.

Institute, even though the latter features the most extraordinary collection of old houses, mills and churches brought from all over Romania to Bucharest on the occasion of an interwar exhibition. This testifies to the infatuation with tradition, Orthodoxy and peasant life among Romanian post-communist intellectuals.

According to the latest Romanian Census (2002), 86.7% of the Romanian population defines itself as Orthodox. This percentage is followed at great distance by other Christian confessions, among which Catholic (4.7%) and Reformed (3.2%). The Romanian Orthodox Church has currently under its supervision a total number of 15,218 churches, which makes for an average of one church per 1,500 inhabitants who declared themselves orthodox. To get a sense of this number, we will take the example of the Catholic Church, the largest in the world. For its registered 1,163 million members, the Catholic Church administers worldwide 408,637 local churches and missions, counting for an average of one church per approx. 2,800 registered Catholics. That is almost less than double the concentration of Romanian Orthodox Churches per registered member. The argument of larger number of churches in Romania due to lower density of Orthodox Church members is not valid, as the countries that were considered when assessing the concentration of Catholic Churches are also mostly Catholic, ranging from 76% (Spain) to 91% (Italy) of population registered as Catholic, with an average similar or even lower population density.

The issue of separation between State and Church has reached the Romanian public agenda on various occasions in the past decade. One of the biggest issues, still in debate, was building the National Redemption Cathedral, a project that would have been financed out of public money, the construction of which would have lasted for 20 years and destroyed one of Bucharest's parks on the way. The Romanian Orthodox Church still claims its request for public funds is legitimate, since the issues related to restitution of church property seized under Communism has not been solved yet. Due to strong public opposition, the project is currently postponed. The economic crisis has raised the issue of Church financing once again. Since financing religious activities out of public money is equivalent to sponsoring the Romanian Orthodox Church, more and more voices are asking not only for financial self-sustainability for Churches, but taxing their activity. How does that play into the notion of the Romanian traditional self as being inseparable of the Orthodox values, it is yet to be seen.

Hungarian minority

Beyond any doubt, Romanian nationalism of the 1990s was targeting the Hungarian population. However, that does not mean that the nationalist outburst has a unique form of manifestation. The data collected in a previous study (Mungiu – Pippidi, 1999) revealed at least three types of nationalist elite manifestations.

1. *Professional nationalists.* It is always difficult to discern between the real problem of the national or ethnic group, mirrored by leaders or elite, and the problems the leaders help subsist in order to take advantage on them and consolidate their position. Some politicians can be described as *professional nationalists* as they are directly interested not to solve an ethnic conflict on whose behalf their career is made.

2. *Crusaders.* Other persons with political ambitions denied by their position in society –such as priests and journalists- also discover nationalism as a 'cause' they pretend to embrace in a non-political and non-partisan manner, in order to gain primarily political influence. These are the voluntary soldiers of nationalist causes, *the crusader nationalists*. Their cause is most of the times a language – but they can also focus on a minority religion or denomination, even on the genetic heritage threatened by mixed marriages.

3. The third and the largest category of nationalists are, however, the *conformists.* Many influential people in a community would never have nationalist initiatives or would support personally such a movement, but since they are dependent of the group/community they are willing to pay to have their identity as good group members confirmed by nationalists who speak in the name of the group. This leads to the subordination of elites which otherwise have both the money and the wit to do their own politics to the nationalist leaders. Many middle-class and business characters find themselves passive supporters of nationalism due to this mechanism, although they are disinterested by the nature of their occupation in linguistic battles and prestige wars, favoring communication over extreme differentiation.

Each of these three categories could be found among the elites of both ethnic groups – Romanian and Hungarian. The situation was obscured even further by the absence in Romania of a class of professional politicians. The people serving as politicians in those times of 'transition' were either lawyers, or, quite often, intellectuals and priests, so exactly from categories aspiring to reach political influence by nonpolitical means. It is a well known fact that writers tend to be nationalist leaders in the first stages of a nationalist movement: in the former USSR Republics Popular and National Fronts were mostly lead by writers in the late 80s and early 90s, and so was DAHR (the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians Romanian).

The 2002 census recorded approximately 1.5 million Hungarians and around 550,000 Roma (although other estimations suggest 1,000,000 may be closer to truth), relatively close to the numbers in the 1991 census. Despite this fact, fantastic exaggerations like this one are necessary in order to make the point. The nationalist argument for self-government relies on the numbers when stating we cannot treat Hungarians as a minority, but as a nation. The Romanian political system is however a democratic one. Allowing Hungarian representation in Parliament and bringing them in a close alliance with Romanian parties was worth, since at all times, when DAHR was dominated by nationalists as since it was dominated by moderates the national problem remained in the framework of the law. Only once in ten years did DAHR asked for civil disobedience, when requesting parents to boycott schools to protest against the 1995 Education Law. It was the opportunity for them to measure the ethnic mobilization. Passive mobilization had been a success: 400,000 Hungarians signed for modifications to be made in the Education law. However, very few followed the appeal to civil disobedience. The Law allowed for teaching in maternal language and more recently it has been amended to allow for curriculum development specific to minority education. The implementation of the legal provisions is still far from perfect. While the privatization of manuals' development and distribution was supposed to lead to supply diversification, after a few trials, it turned out to be more profitable for editorial houses not

to print manuals in minority languages. Thus, for schools that chose to teach in Hungarian, structuring the curriculum depended on the availability of imported teaching materials. Most of the times, this means access only to Mathematics and Hungarian Language manuals for primary school children.

Was there an inter-ethnic conflict in Transylvania? Since the 1990s and up until now, both political parties and ordinary citizens in Romania dismissed the idea of an ethnic conflict in Transylvania. Foreigners, ranging from organizations to citizens pointed out usually that at least during the 1990s there was a serious amount of ethnic competition going on, but refrained themselves from qualifying it as 'conflict'. In mid 1990s the connection with a country neighboring Yugoslavia the use of this term risked being politically explosive. Ordinary people showed even more restraint. In a research conducted in Transylvania in the end of the 1990s, the first reaction in all the focus groups was similar to this line of a Hungarian peasant in Covasna : 'It's only the bosses, they make the trouble, the bosses and the television, we ordinary people get along fine'.

But the 'bosses' are there and so is the media, always ready not only to show nationalist speeches, but to amplify all kinds of incidents, real or fictitious, bringing the national problem daily in the house of every Romanian or Hungarian and therefore prompting a further need of security. People who discarded easily the idea of an 'ethnic conflict' imagine a conflict is necessarily and always violent. In fact it is not: many ethnic conflicts, from Quebec to Belgium, from South Tyrol to Slovakia are not violent. But they are nevertheless conflicts, that is, fights to attain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, affect or eliminate rivals (Horowitz, 1985). Ordinary people feel that you can have a conflict without violence: 75% Hungarians and 45% Romanians (absolute and relative majorities) consider a conflict exists between Hungarians and Romanians (UBB poll, 1997). Why then in every group people were reluctant to admit it? Because the logic of the group discussion was centered on one's community. To admit an ethnic conflict exists would have been to accept it exists in the close vicinity, therefore to assume some kind of personal involvement. Asked for a global evaluation Transylvanians admit the conflict, asked for a personal one they reject it and attribute the responsibility to elites. This is a national conflict, centered on national symbols at the scale of the two communities as whole, and not a daily communitarian conflict for small rewards or resources. From this point of view it is indeed an elite-engineered conflict. Romanians and Hungarians did not fight in Saturday night discos and pubs: instead they were reminded via media by their leaders that they belong to a group and should act as such. Youths who should be the most susceptible to engage in daily aggressive conduct were in fact the most disinterested.

Why did more Hungarians feel a conflict exists than Romanians do? We can think of two complementary answers here. One answer is the minority status of Hungarians; being in minority Hungarians feel more easily threatened by nationalist and xenophobic speeches constantly made in the Romanian Parliament. The other is that Hungarians are dissatisfied with the status-quo and want more rights than the Romanian state is willing to grant them so it is natural they feel more than Romanians a conflict exists. Romanians being satisfied with the situation at the time they tended to react only at the excessive publicity of nationalist statements by some DAHR leaders. For the rest they considered there

would be no problem at all if DAHR does not make one. It is clear, however, that the public debate around the problem feeds the problem. This is why people considered in polls that the relations between Hungarians and Romanians degraded after 1989, although the problems of the Hungarian community were greater before: but before it was clear Ceausescu was the cause and any public discussion of the matter was impossible. According to IMAS only half of the Hungarians, compared to a large majority of Romanians shared this view. This only strengthened the idea that Romanians were in fact ignorant of the problems of the Hungarians so they considered there was no problem at all. However, a majority of both Hungarians and Romanians considered that improving the relationship between the two groups is an emergency (IMAS poll, 1996). The relationship between the groups is only the tip of the iceberg in the equation of the conflict. The relationship would be good if Hungarians ceased to ask for more rights, Romanians believed. The relationship would be good only if Romanians grant the rights the Hungarians desired, Hungarians thought. And it was not easy for an observer to say who was right. Was bilinguism and self-government going to solve problems, or create others? Was it going to bring together the two communities or was it only going to estrange them further?

The Roma: The ignored challenge

Having escaped the wave of nationalistic backlashes that most of the other new EU member states had experienced in 2005/2006, with a nationalistic party that did not make it to the Parliament in 2008, Romania found its new national enemy in the Roma as the shame inflicting non-Romanian ethnic group that jeopardizes the legitimacy of its newly gained European status. In fact, increased freedom of movement seems to have placed Romanian authorities in the uncomfortable position of not being able to shove the garbage under the mat anymore. The old news of poor access to services of Roma children and segregated communities is finally coming out, creating a spur of reactions, limited for the time being to better advice from the Western democracies that are currently expulsing ethnically Roma Romanian citizens back to their home country.[5]

It was just in late September 2010, in the midst of the European wide scandal related to Roma expulsions from France, that a Romanian MEP announced his intention to push for a piece of European legislation meant to change the politically correct term of "Roma" into "Gypsy", as Roma can be confused to the capital city of Italy, while Romani – the name of the spoken language of a part of the Roma groups – can too easily be mistaken for Romanian. The idea of regulating the right of the ethnically Roma European citizens to potentially make a claim on Romanian identity has at least three interpretations. The first one is straightforward: "Romanians are not Roma", wherefrom the absolute denial of Gypsy heritage as part of the Romanian national identity. Secondly, the Roma are not one people, therefore their entitlement to collective rights within the EU should be kept within national borders, judged case by case, and not in terms of a broader participation to European decision making. Thirdly, the Romanian state has no responsibility in solving the Roma issue, no more than it does towards the rest of its 19 legally recognized and politically represented national minorities. Each of these reveals a different set of challenges, which will be discussed in the following section.

5. "Italy to ask EU for permission to expel Roma", Euractiv. Com, online: http://www.euractiv.com/en/socialeurope/italy-ask-eu-permission-expel-roma-news-497050

Romanians are not Roma. The lack of a written history is not to be underestimated. The few historical records scattered from modern Northern India, through Central Asia and Northern Africa, all the way to Western Europe and to some extent the Americas, have allowed for politically half-inexistent Romanian nationalists, such as Corneliu Vadim Tudor, to mockingly respond to the issue of expulsions with "Why not consider sending them to their real home country: India!", in reference to the Sinti branch of the Roma. The "they are not Romanian, nor Roma, but Gypsies" debate cannot be more straightforward when it comes to national identity claims: Romanians are not Roma. Therefore, no association, cultural or otherwise should be made between the two groups. But how legitimate is that claim? We analyze it further on.

The rejection of Roma culture as part of the Romanian one might be even more deeply rooted than one might think. Making a claim on Roma culture identification would mean identifying with a transnational group which would once again prove the non-European Romanian inheritance. What is more, it would strengthen the ties between Romanian identity and the Balkan one. Upon Dayton (1995), the internationally broadcasted Bosnian war drama reached the movie industry. With it, movies that were portraying the bitter sweet tragedy of war adjustment of this jolly transnational ethnic group – the Gypsies – started gaining ground all throughout Europe. Their Serbian born Bosnian director, Emir Kusturica, and soundtrack composer, Goran Bregovic, teamed up to create a series of internationally awarded movies the comic of which was almost entirely relying on Gypsy fetishes as ironical war survival techniques, with the underlying message of peace promoting residing in the international character of this ethnic group, that has no state allegiance, and in fact, no allegiance towards anything or anyone besides its own community. While the Balkans had already been ravished by ethnic conflicts, the Roma were left between battling camps. However, Kusturica's 1995 "Underground" or 1998 "Black Cat, White Cat", made it almost unavoidable for the Eastern European public not to relate to the heritage that the Gypsy travel across Europe had created. Despite the fictional nature of these movies, in the particular case of Romanian national identity, the fear was and still is that "Gypsy meaning Balkan" would eventually translate into "Romanian not being European".

Truth is there was no need for romantic reveries from Serbian directors in order to acknowledge the impact that the transnational cultural link of the Roma had on Romanian culture. The proof of anthropological claim on Roma culture as our own can be found in the most hidden places, carrying with them the charge of the inter-ethnic relation and most of all of the majority – minority power relation. For example, a small "anthropologically *sauvage*" territory in Eastern Romania, in the middle of the historical province of Moldova, takes pride on having conserved an unique New Years masque ritual, otherwise conceptually encountered all across Romania: at midnight the ritual of taming bears is performed by men dressed in real bear skins on the sounds of drums and lyrics which are meant to help the tamer enslave the bears. Playing out the "Bear's Dance" requires intense planning and the effort of the entire community. Those performing it today will be the first to offer a foreigner the front seat to the show, as this New Years' ritual will help him understand Romanian culture and identity. However, what they have seem to have forgotten, if they ever knew, is that this is a ritual performed by Gypsy slaves. The initial ritual was performed using bear cubs that were placed

on a heated metal platter or burning pieces of charcoal while the tamer would play the drum. The moves currently in the ritual are just an imitation of the squabbling moves of the tortured bear cubs, and what is actually preserved in this particular region better than in others, is that real bear skins are used. This particular case stands only as a mere example of a heritage that was realistically unavoidable given the interaction between these two cultures.

'Roma should not be called Roma' is a violation of collective rights. The denial of the right of this group to identify itself as "Roma" carries an even greater symbolic value and is far more aggressive than it might seem. As social anthropologists argue (Mcgarry, 2008), this ethnonyme was institutionalized as a politically correct reference to an Eastern and Central European minority that identified *itself* as being "Roma". Thus, it is an ethnical identity ascription that marks the common traits, ethnic or otherwise, that different minority groups in different countries have in common, despite their well known but fully embraced internal heterogeneity. According to Mcgarry (2008) and Klimova-Alexander (2005), the institutionalization of one term "Roma" to describe all that belong to this group regardless of national territory, allowed for the Roma social movement to occur, as the emergence of transnational organizations that would defend the minority's rights and promote its cultural heritage in Europe. The existence of an organized Roma civil society would fundamentally change the status of this minority into one that is entitled and able to make a claim on public space, internationally, regionally and nationally. If this thesis is indeed true, denying self-ascription as "Roma" is equivalent to denying the right of this minority to representation and participation in public decision making, as it has happened before in history.

The thought of striping this group of their right to choose their own name, especially one that refers to a trans-border group, has mainly two targets. On one hand, it shifts the responsibility from international/regional level to nation states, while, on the other, it secures the power of the nation state and eases the pressure that a transnational movement would put on it for access to more rights. If as Mcgarry and Klimova-Alexander argued, a Roma social movement does exist, and it is crucial for the defining the Roma ethnical identity and placing Roma issues on national and international policy agenda, then its success would depend to a large extent on the quality and effort of its elites. However, the internal divisions, which in Romania generally overlap with clan belonging, stay strong. Sides have their own political and civil society representation that it is neither able nor willing to coordinate in order to put in effect coherent action.

They are Gypsy not Roma, as government responsibility waver. "The Romanian Gypsies are a minority the problems of which need to be addressed just as those of the rest of the minorities", the Romanian government would argue. Moreover, "they need to obey rules if they want to be respected", as a recently interviewed mayor answered. The latest census data (2002) indicate that currently in Romania live 550,000 ethnically self-identified Roma people. Independent estimates placed them at around 1.5 –2 million people, which would mean approximately 7.5% to 10% of the total Romanian population. Since a part of the Roma do not carry official documents, it is extremely difficult to know their exact number. A recent report issued by the Open Society Foundation

(McDonald and Negrin, 2010a) as a mid-term evaluation for its Decade of Roma Inclusion program shows that independent estimates tend to indicate a number of Roma that is 45% to 99% higher than the official figures in Eastern European countries (ibid: 29). In fact, the lack of data is a real obstacle in formulating coherent and viable policy responses to the Roma issue. However, what the Romanian government – as others in the region – does not take into account is that lacking data is not the same thing as not knowing what the issues are. Those are well known, but for some reason they still do not make it very high on the policy agenda.

The discrimination against the Roma in Romania is the highest out of all other possible vulnerable groups. A survey issued by the Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) as early as 2004 showed that out of all vulnerable categories, the Roma and the poor are perceived to be the most discriminated. In fact, a study conducted by the National Agency for the Roma in 2008 indicated that higher discrimination towards poor people leads to even a greater degree of discrimination against the Roma who are poor and live in ethnically mixed communities. According to the same study, the only other Roma category that encounters the same high level of discrimination is that of average-wealth Roma living in segregated communities.

The overlap between ethnic based discrimination and the economic one is not a coincidence. In 2007 41,9% of Roma declared that in the past month their family had not had any source of income (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008: 131), as compared to 20,2% of the non-Roma control sample. Segregation is a crucial factor, as the chances of a Roma family to have access to at least one source of income increase by 20% in mixed communities as compared to segregated ones. The distribution of the primary source of income for the rest of 58% who declare to have at least one is presented in Chart 1.

Figure 1. Main source of income for the Roma minority in Romanian (%)
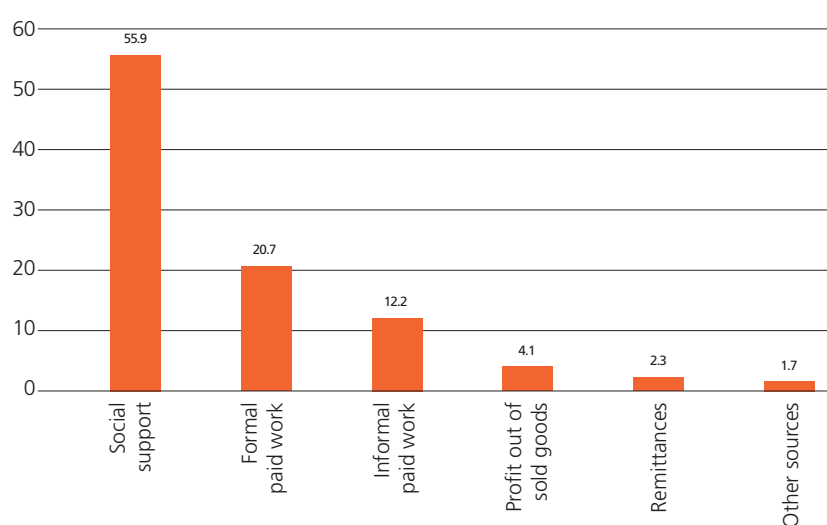
Source: Fleck and Rughinis (2008:133), based on 2007 survey data on the Roma community in Romania.

As it can be seen in Chart 1, the main source of income is social support, including minimum guaranteed income, child support, disabled pensions and social support, unemployment benefits and other types of social benefits. This disproportionate structure of income reflects how deep in the "poverty trap" the Roma are caught. Most of those who take some form of paid work have low skill jobs, in agriculture (32.4%), constructions (18.8%) or services (29.6%).

The lack of skills is the direct consequence of the low access to education. Even though the number of Roma children of school age who are not in school is not known, previous research has identified communities in which the percentage of Roma children who attend school is as low as 10% (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008: 148). After all, it comes down to an economic choice. A report issued by the National Statistics Institute (2010: 5) based on 2002 census data showed that the fertility rate of Roma women is 2.5 times higher than those of non-Roma women, which accounts for a lower average age within the Roma group as compared to non-Roma. Currently, the costs incurred by the parents to send their children to school, especially when child support might be the family's only source of income, are much higher than the short term benefits they can account for. Child labor, most encountered in Roma families, can be an additional source of income, meaning an additional set of disincentives for parents to send their children to school. A significant amount of factors contribute to the perpetuation of this situation. Poor access to education is probably one of the most relevant, as it affects the long term chances of this community to escape poverty, but spatial segregation and imposed habitation pattern, cultural differences and few and incoherent mediation initiatives fuel the current policy challenges related to the Roma community.

Romanian Roma are Romanian, or at least the statistics seems to prove that. The Roma Inclusion Barometer (2006) showed that the majority of Roma (80%) define themselves as having two ethnicities; 45% declare themselves as Romanian Roma, 32% that they belong to Roma subgroups, while only 23% say they are Roma alone (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008: 58). As such, the costs of Roma exclusion are felt at national level. A World Bank analysis estimates that the losses of Roma exclusion from the labor market rise up 887 million Euros in terms of annual productivity, and 202 million Euros in terms of fiscal productivity (de Laat, 2010). According to the same World Bank report, investment in the education of Roma children is the most profitable investment that governments can make in order to alleviate the situation of the Roma minority. It is estimated that ensuring transition of Roma children from primary to secondary education alone can lead to a 144% increase in earnings.

The discourse and definitions of tolerance in Romania

Individual versus collective rights: The language battles

Despite several discussions on the topic, Romania has not yet adopted a minorities' law. The life of the ethnic minorities and their entitlement to a public sphere of their own is regulated by the 2003 Constitution, the Law of Public Administration, and the Law on Education. The Ciorbea government coalition, of which DAHR was a member, proposed in 1997 amendments to the public administration law (Ordinance 22/1997) and

the Education Law (Ordinance 36/1997). Amendments to the administration law legalized for the first time the use of minorities' language in the state administration, although its practice, especially in Hungarian dominated regions, was widespread. The law also specifically required all mayors in regions where minorities make more than 20% of the population to display signs carrying denominations of towns or other important notices in the Hungarian language also.

The debates on education exposed the deep cleavage in the battle for bilinguism. Romanians were not prepared to accept Hungarian as a second official language. Hungarians did not present their claim as such, being aware of this fact. The language battles were the toughest of the 1990s. The diabolization of the Education Law 84/1995 as an instrument of 'cultural genocide' for introducing a test of Romanian at the admission exams in the University was however an exaggeration. It was a poor law, making steps back, which could only lead to revolt. The Hungarian political elite decided at the time to make it an example. People were instigated to civil disobedience, white flags hanged above Hungarian schools and 420,000 signatures gathered to support DAHR amendments to the law. However, a referendum of the boycott of schools was dropped because DAHR had clear signals there would be no mass following on this issue. Hungarian leaders went so far as to ask Hungarians to go on hunger strike in order to obtain the amendments debated. Although few registered as required as strikers the protest form is no less radical. The protest also showed the deep alliance between Hungarian educators, politicians and Church –the Church lead the Crusade against the education law recording people who decided to strike and encouraging people to take part in the protest. A group of youngsters marched on foot across Europe to protest in front of the Council of Europe at Strasbourg. The Education law was a mistake of the Vacaroiu government. But the debate and the unrest surrounding it only worsened the daily, usual relations between Hungarians and Romanians. Romanians mention always with fear this exceptional mobilization of the Hungarian community.

Political representation back in discussion

When most had already proclaimed victory of the consociationist governance model, the issue of collective rights and the way they play out in minority – majority relations is suddenly back on the agenda. In early October 2010 a massive toxic spill in Western Hungary, near the Romanian border, caused 7 casualties and destroyed 40 sq km of land. The wave of toxic waste is estimated to reach the Danube and affect flora and fauna on the course of the Danube all throughout Romanian territory. It so happens to be that the Romanian Minister of Environment –Laszlo Borbely– is a representative of the DAHR. The Minister is assuring the Romanian public that the wave of toxic wave will not jeopardize the health of Romanian citizens, as the debit of the Danube is high enough on Romanian territory. Since news of the toxic spill broke out, the public opinion has been fueling suspicions on the true intentions of the Minister of Environment, which would not go within Romanian interests, but the Hungarian ones. The media remind a similar case of a spill taking place on Romanian territory at the end of the 1990s, which had affected Hungarian waters and that had led to a sentence for Romania to pay Hungary 100,000 million EUR in damages. The Minister defends himself,

saying that he only wants to present things as they are and not scare people without any use, since regular tests are made on the water of the Danube when it enters the country and no dangerous concentrations of toxin was encountered. The situation is in full development, and its outcome is yet to be seen.

The policy of tolerance

Negotiating the accession of minority groups to public space and the way in which it would be regulated was never an easy task. The National Minorities' Bill spurred intense debates each time it reached the government's agenda. Since the mid 1990s when it was first drawn up and forwarded for debate by the DAHR, up until 2005 when it was blocked in the Parliament again, the adoption of a legal statute for national minorities in Romania seems to be more difficult than it looks. As mentioned earlier in the report, significant developments on the rights granted to minority groups were made since the beginning of the 1990s. Most of them had to do either with the ratification of UN Conventions into national legislation, EU accession negotiations and, later, transposition of EU Directives.

A lot has changed in the past 10 years alone, however not enough to put into question the very need for an official minority statute. Romania is the only country in Eastern Europe to give the constitutional right to organized and recognized ethnic minorities. Now there are 18 of them, besides Roma and Hungarian, and they occupy one seat each in the lower chamber of the Parliament, regardless of the vote turnout, as stipulated by Art 62 (2) of the Romanian Constitution of 2003. An UN - CERD official report issued in August 2010 as a response to a request coming from the still active Hungarian nationalist branch of the DAHR to grant territorial autonomy to the Hungarians in Transylvania, recognized the progresses made by the Romanian government for the past 20 years. Decentralization of public service provision and financing (e.g. social services, health, or education management) was seen as a form of autonomy and recognition of the right to self determination. Moreover, it is argued that the right granted to local administration in general through the Public Administration Law covers the collective rights that should be granted to any national minority as imposed by the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. CERD recommends the Romanian Government for the rights to cultural self identification to be indeed supervised by a National Council for Cultural Autonomy and that an official national minorities' statute be adopted.

Despite considerable developments, institutionally, the protection of ethnical minorities tends to remain rather obscure. The National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD), setup in 2000, is in charge with overseeing regulation on discrimination against minorities, including ethnic ones. CNCD can mediate discrimination cases or can recommend the case for a judicial settling. In case it takes its own resolutions it can apply fines of up to approximately 2,000 EUR, as it did in mid-October 2010 with the case of the Romanian Sports' Ambassador –the tennis player Ilie Nastase– after stating that Romania needs to take its Roma back from France and needs to relocate them in Harghita, one of the three majoritarian Hungarian counties in Romania. The remark was taken as discriminatory and offensive to both Roma and Hungarians.

In charge with promoting ethnic diversity, is another state institution which only few people have heard of – the Department for Interethnic Relations of the Romanian Government. Its main task is to coordinate the Council for National Minorities, which brings together representatives of all ethnic minority groups in Romania. Judging by the information posted on the institution's website, nothing much seems to have happened since 2008. However, in 2009 and 2010 the Department sponsored small outreach projects on cultural diversity. There is no way of knowing who got them and how they were used.

In recognition to the challenges posed by the large size of the Roma community in Romania, the Government setup in 2004 the National Roma Agency (ANR). The Agency's mandate is stated to be that of "representation of the Roma minority in Romania". Nonetheless, ANR is part of the Center of Government, being directly subordinated to the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG), as most sector regulatory agencies in Romania. The financial information available on their website is a good indicator for the well known problem of Roma organizations – low capacity of spending. For 2007, 2008 and 2009, the ANR was able to spend up to 85% of the total amount of funds allocated. Thus, even though theoretically funds for Roma integration are available, the low capacity of spending is preventing them for reaching their purpose.

The ANR is also responsible with overseeing the implementation of the governmental "Strategy for improving the conditions of the Roma". From 2000 to 2005 UNDP and the GSG financed 17 programs that targeted infrastructure development – roads, energy supply infrastructure and school network rehabilitation in specific Roma communities. Each project was worth in average 750,000 EUR. Another 200 million USD were made available by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute in order to include Romania in their Decade for Roma Inclusion Program (2005-2015), which mainly aimed at increasing access to education and health for Roma, labor market integration and discrimination combating. The recently released mid-term evaluation (McDonald and Negrin, 2010a: 61-66) points out the obvious: the data collection problem that prevented governments in elaborating policies targeted to Roma to begin with persisted, thus preventing the efficient impact evaluation of the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

The war of political symbols: Catholic versus Orthodox

The East-West cultural divide is real and seems to be here to stay. Thus, the limits of tolerance to which non-Romanian identity can be culturally tolerated and to which it cannot, go back as far as the mid 19th century. The argument of "modernization as rape" was reshuffled to be radically transformed by Nae Ionescu and his students Mircea Vulcănescu and Emil Cioran, who portrayed modernization as the annihilation of the Romanian "essence" independently on whether this was good or evil. The father of this argument is Ionescu, the most charismatic intellectual leader of 20th century Romania. For him, the rejection of modernization is only a part of an overall refusal of the West identified with "Catholicism"; it is an active and transforming orientation towards the outside world that he identified as alien to the Orthodox spirit.

Young Emil Cioran, who considered populism "a shame", denounced it in violent terms. Had Romania followed the path of anti-modernism preached by populists, he wrote, "Romania would have been today like Asia, a land to be visited by ethnographic expeditions" (Petreu, 1999: 141 and 227). Unlike the rest of the "New Generation", Cioran saw modernization as a necessary rape and considered that the regime must "squeeze" the Romanian nation to cut its "unhistorical sleep" and force it into transformation and history. He was also quite unique in his generation, which embraced a sort of fundamentalist Christian Orthodoxy, in looking for a shortcut to modernity through a massive conversion to Catholicism, a belief that was influenced by his professor Nae Ionescu, who taught that Orthodoxy and modernization were incompatible.

The economics of ethnic diversity

Resource distribution is one of the core issues in minorities' politics, and hence the construction of the public discourse on tolerance towards ethnical minorities' issues. When discussing the spectrum of ethnic diversity tolerance there are three main issues that need to be addressed: 1) the minority dimension of the property restitution issue, 2) local self-government and unequal distribution of resources across geographical areas with clear cut and compact ethnic majorities and 3) the special case of the ethnically Roma Romanian. This section will address each one of these dimensions in relation to the tolerance discourse in recent Romanian history.

First, it is no secret that Romania has an outstanding number of ECtHR complaints on property restitution issues. In fact, there are so many that in the beginning of October 2010 the Court gave Romania an 18 months deadline to solve its issues before it addresses the property restitution complaints against the country. When expropriations began, in 1945, the Jewish, German and Hungarian minorities were severely affected. Even before the official nationalization of property had started (1948), once declared enemies of the state (1945), property belonging to these three minorities was seized, on and off the record (EP, 2010: 99-100). In the beginning of the 1990s, the adopted property restitution laws restricted the eligibility of claimants to Romanian citizens, disregarding the equal right to property of the Romanian national minorities that had been unlawfully expropriated, who had their properties confiscated in return of unjust compensations, or were simply forced to donate their properties to the State.[6] Foreign plaintiffs became eligible only in 2003, following a revision of the Romanian Constitution that allowed foreign citizens and stateless persons to own property in Romania.

Second, the ethics of redistribution under the centralized administration was one of the core issues of the public discourse on the Statute of Autonomy in the case of the Hungarian and Szekely minorities. The argument of higher productivity of the administrative units that had a local Hungarian or Szekely majority, which would have turned illegitimate the redistribution of revenues collected in this region to poorer regions of Romania, seems now to be a false one. Various factors can account for the differences of development between counties in Transylvania and the ones in the rest of the country (except for Bucharest and Constanta). However, what data tends to suggests (ADR Center,

[6.] Property was seized from national minorities in three waves: 1) immediately after the the 2nd World War, when they were declared "enemies of the state" and stripped of their right to own property in Romania, 2) along with the nationalization of property during communism and 3) when they would leave the country, representatives of the German and Jewish minorities would be forced to donate their property to the state. The property restitution laws adopted in the past 20 years address only the mainstream nationalization, while cases 1) and 3) that had minorities as a direct target were not not addressed in any way.

2007) is that while prior to the start of decentralization reforms this might have been partially true, with Harghita having one of the highest GDPs in the country in 1999, by 2004 it had become far form reality. Covasna, Harghita and Mures, the counties with the highest proportion of Hungarians in the country (see map below), had a GDP below their macroregion's average, while Alba and Sibiu, counties with very diverse ethnic composition, were 30 and respectively 10 percentage points above the regional average (ADR Center, 2007: 21).

Figure 2. Distribution of the percentage of Hungarian population out of total county population, across Romanian counties and regions.
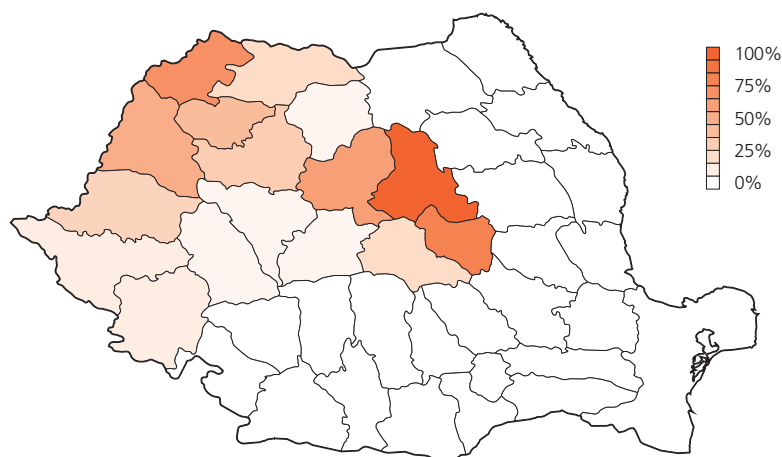
Source: n.p.
*In the center, the three counties – Mures, Harghita, Covasna – that have a Hungarian population close to 100%.

The "area of benefit" financial allocation argument did not work one way alone. The results of the Ethnic Relations Barometer (2002: 26) showed that a large percentage of Romanians in Transylvania (67%) and outside (61%) considered that the rights minorities enjoyed at the time of the survey sufficed. Similar percentages were registered for Hungarians (64%) and Roma (61%) who thought that minorities in Romania enjoy too few rights. One thing was certain: granting further rights to the Hungarian minority without further decentralization would have not come in too cheap for the central government. With decentralization (or de-concentration, for some services) the financial costs of minority rights remained unobvious. Some were completely externalized, as was the case of manuals in maternal language for primary education. The failure to provide manuals in Hungarian, or German for all school subjects (except maybe for mathematics and literature) is entirely placed on the market, and not on the government for not being able to intervene and correct this natural effect of competition among manual editors. The situation persists.

Third, there are major discrepancies in terms of access to resources between the Roma and the other ethnic groups in Romania. For the Romanians, Hungarians and Roma the 2002 Barometer of Ethnic Relations (MMT, 2003) identified the distribution of intra-ethnic rates of poverty and extreme poverty (see Chart 2).

Figure 3. Poverty and extreme poverty rates distribution across Romanian, Hungarian and Roma ethnic groups in Romania, 2002
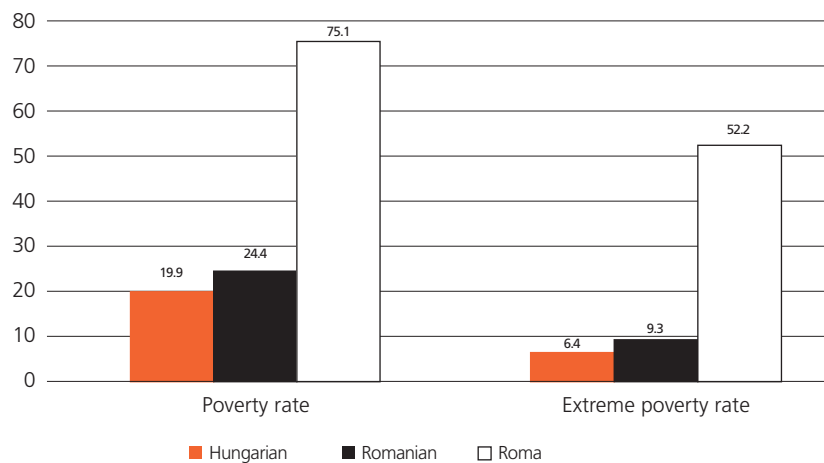
Source: Ethnic Diversity Research Center, Ethnic Relations Barometer 2000-2002

The question is what proportion of this discrepancy can be structurally explained and how much can be placed on discriminatory policies or attitudes. In a previous section we briefly touched upon the vicious cycle that the Roma are caught in: low access to education has made labor market integration difficult for Roma ethnics, which accounts for high differences between employment rates within the Roma and non-Roma populations. Not being able to access the labor market, means finding other sources of income. For a large percentage of the Roma (55.9%) this means some form of social support, while for others is staying on the black market. The problem is as real as it gets, and even though enrollment rates for Roma children were slightly increasing since 2000, the enrollment rate for Roma in primary school still remained significantly lower (by 25%) than that of non-Roma children (UNICEF, 2006).

Discriminatory practices, especially in relation to the Roma, aggravate the situation. A survey run in 2005 (CURS, 2005: 9) showed that the Roma population perceives itself as being the most discriminated as compared to the main ethnic groups (Romanian and Hungarian), as much as in comparison to other marginalized groups – HIV positive people, gay people or the elderly. Out of the situations when discrimination can be more pervasive the one at hiring stands out, with 68% of Roma considering themselves discriminated when they tried to get a job. Once hired, 63% of them feel discriminated at the workplace. The other two situations that come close are in school (60% of Roma children considering themselves discriminated) and in public places (50%). On the other hand, in the Eurobarometer on Perception and Experience of Discrimination (2008), only 40% of the Romanian population declared that they believe that discrimination on ethnic origin is fairly or very widespread, as compared to the 62% EU average. The same survey showed that Romanians are generally favorable towards ensuring equal opportunities at employment through affirmative action measures targeting minorities. However, they are the least favorable towards granting them to ethnic and sexual minorities.

ALINA MUNGIU-PIPPIDI AND SINZIANA-ELENA POIANA

Conclusions

Today it is still fashionable to search for grand explanations for Romanian exceptionalism rather than try to make comparative analyses and deconstruct it. Why would post-1989 intellectuals continue a tradition shared equally by the far right and the far left? One answer is obvious: because most intellectuals, after Stahl's death, are those who attacked him two decades ago. Another answer is scarier: because young intellectuals seem to follow more in the steps of Cioran and Eliade than those of Stahl and Gusti, mostly for reasons of cognitive convenience. Why? Well, since it is still easier to bolster one's self-esteem by easy rather than by hard means. The problem remains the lack of self-esteem one seems to get from being a part of a "minor culture" and the great ambition to surpass it fast and with little investment. The golden trio not only managed to achieve some fame for themselves, but they wrote hundreds of pages that may be seen as prescriptions of how to get cured from being a "cultural minor".

One of the challenges that need to be surpassed in order to set the premises for a truly plural Romanian society is the equivalence between Romanian and Orthodox. Is there anything wrong with Orthodox spiritualism, one could ask, besides its failure to contribute properly to the much-needed modernization? The sad answer is yes. The link between Orthodoxy and non-democratic attitudes is neither random, nor spurious. When left alone by intellectuals, Orthodoxy is far removed from practical life: it does not teach individualism or promote quests for justice and morality like Protestantism (Radulescu-Motru, 1904), nor does it endorse any political action of the kind recommended by Eliade or the Iron Guard. It can be accused of failing to provide the basis for democratic education, but no more. In the hands of the intelligentsia and nationalist clergy, however, more often than not it supplied the grounds and legitimacy for anti-liberalism.

The policy discourse towards the two main ethnic minorities in Romania – Hungarian and Roma – needs severe revision, which would hopefully be followed by a change in the public discourse as well. Two Romanian foreign ministers in a row, both selected from amongst these typical intellectuals (a historian and a theologian) made in recent years outrageously racist remarks concerning Roma. The whole Romanian policy towards the Romanian citizens begging and stealing in Western European capitals is to portray them as Roma, a group culturally unrelated to Romania. In contrast, Hungarians from Transylvania have always been seen as equals, despite not allowing them to call Hungarian the second official language (it is legal to use it in Courts and administration though). But there is no real communication between these groups. Nationalism, very popular in the early 1990s, has been to some extent tamed by EU entry. While the dominant discourse remains identity centered, policy is rather ambiguous. Moldovans born in Romania are granted citizenship, although in smaller numbers than they would wish. The recent decision of FIDESZ in Budapest to grant citizenship to Hungarians living in neighboring countries was received with indifference in Bucharest.

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