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**THESIS TITLE**

**Ethnic, Linguistic, Cultural, and Religious Identities in the Republic of  
Moldova (1989-1994)**

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The present study investigates the intricate landscape of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identities in the Republic of Moldova during the period of 1989-1994. In an era of significant political and social transformations, the paper delves into how diverse elements of identity have taken shape, interconnected, and interacted within the context of regional and global developments. By addressing these key themes, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the social processes that influenced the shaping of ethnic and national identity during a period of substantial changes and redefinitions in the Republic of Moldova. My desire to comprehend the history of the Republic of Moldova gradually evolved as I traversed the years. While my master's thesis dealt with a similar topic, namely: *The Republic of Moldova in the Geopolitical Context of the 20th Century*, I felt it was essential to broaden my perspective and focus on identity, political, and social aspects in my doctoral research, with a particular emphasis on the time frame of 1989-1994. This approach to my research subject adds a complementary element to the conclusions drawn from my earlier analyses. Through this, I hope to unveil a clearer and more intricate picture of how the dynamics of identities, political developments, and social influences intersected and impacted the Republic of Moldova during the analysed transition period. This research amplifies my understanding of the diverse layers of Moldovan history and brings to the forefront the subtle connections between identity elements and the political events of the time. In an attempt to explore the period 1989-1994, my aim is to highlight key moments and factors that contributed to shaping ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identities. Ultimately, I hope that this research effort will provide a significant contribution to understanding the complex context in which the Republic of Moldova molded its distinct historical trajectory. Thus, I embarked on this study with the purpose of thoroughly investigating the subject, utilizing specific research questions to shed light on the most crucial aspects of the work:

- 1) How did ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identity factors influence the social and political evolution of the Republic of Moldova during the period 1989-1994?
- 2) What were the main debates and changes concerning the concepts of nation, state, language, sovereignty, and independence during this period?
- 3) How did the declaration of sovereignty and independence influence the political and identity evolution of Moldova?

- 4) What were the key factors that led to the armed conflict in Transnistria, and what was its impact on the ethnic and cultural diversity of the region?
- 5) How did the rival concepts of "moldovenism" and "românism" take shape during the period 1989-1994, and what were their implications for the national and cultural identity of the Republic of Moldova?
- 6) How did the ethnic and cultural specificity of the Gagauzia region manifest within the context of political and social changes during that period?
- 7) How did the two metropolises influence social and political relations in the Republic of Moldova during the analysed period?
- 8) How did ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identity factors interact in shaping individual and collective perceptions of identity in the Republic of Moldova in the years 1989-1994?
- 9) How did identity factors influence the evolution of language policy and related language concepts during this period?
- 10) How did the interactions between identity factors and political changes contribute to the formation of the social and political landscape in the Republic of Moldova during the analysed period?

In order to obtain the sought-after answers, it was crucial to follow a structured process, reflected in the distinct chapters of this doctoral thesis. The chosen chapter structure is motivated by the need for a comprehensive approach to the subject and the desire to examine in detail the various aspects that influenced the social and political landscape of that period. Each chapter contributes in a specific way to the complex understanding of the evolution of identities and political factors in the Republic of Moldova during the analysed period. In this regard, the thesis is structured into three chapters that encompass the study subject and analyse it from various perspectives. The first chapter, titled *The Ethnic Factor in Social and Political Evolution*, examines the impact of the ethnic factor on the social and political transformations in the Republic of Moldova during that time. By analysing the relationships between different ethnic groups and their influence on political decisions and social developments, this chapter highlights the essential role that ethnic identity played in shaping events and political directions. In the second chapter, titled: *National and Cultural Identities*, the study investigates how national and cultural identities developed and interacted within the Republic of Moldova during the mentioned time frame. By analysing the various components that make up national and

cultural identities, this chapter contributes to a clearer understanding of the interconnections between them and their influence on social and political dynamics. The final chapter, titled: *The Church and Society*, delves into the complex relationship between the church and society. Through the examination of the church's involvement in social and political life, as well as its influence on religious and cultural identities, this chapter provides a crucial perspective on the church's impact in the broader context of changes during that period. Each chapter of the thesis contains relevant sub-chapters that enhance the clarity and depth of the presentation. The structure of the first chapter is thoughtfully designed to thoroughly analyse the influence of the ethnic factor on social and political events in the Republic of Moldova during the 1989-1994 period. By organizing into well-defined subsections, this chapter aims to offer a comprehensive and detailed analysis of various aspects related to ethnic identity, creating a solid framework for understanding the complexity of developments during that time. In the first analytical segment of the chapter, the theoretical concept of nation is explored, delving into the etymology of the word to provide a profound understanding of its cultural, historical, and social significance. Regarding theoretical considerations about the state, language, sovereignty, and independence, an essential conceptual framework is established for understanding the interaction between the ethnic factor and social and political evolution. These concepts serve as the cornerstone for further analysis of events and decisions that influenced the political and social course of the Republic of Moldova. To clarify crucial aspects related to the historical heritage of the Republic of Moldova, the decision was made to provide readers with a *Brief History* section, offering essential historical context and discussing major events and developments that set the stage for changes in the 1990s. The Declaration of Sovereignty and Independence marks the beginning of the autonomy process, while the *Armed Conflict in Transnistria* and *Language and Linguistic Policy* explore how the ethnic and identity factors influenced subsequent developments.

The second chapter, *National and Cultural Identities*, delves into the interaction between the ethnic factor and culture within the context of the Republic of Moldova. By exploring the theoretical considerations surrounding ethnic factor and culture, as well as analysing two rival concepts – „Moldovanism” and „Romanianism” – this chapter unveils the complexity of the evolution of national and cultural identities in the region. The initial subsection examines how the ethnic factor and culture intersect and reciprocally influence each other. The analysis focuses on how cultural aspects such as language, traditions, and values can be influenced by ethnic identity, and conversely, how ethnic identity can be impacted by the culture one is embedded in. The „Moldovanism” and „Romanianism” subsection explores the

confrontation between these two rival identity concepts, which influenced the evolution of the Republic of Moldova during this transitional period. The detailed analysis of these concepts highlights the rivalry between identity perspectives and reveals how historical, cultural, and linguistic interpretations have contributed to the development of these currents. The history of these two rival concepts within the territory between the Dniester and Prut rivers underscores how these identities evolved within a specific context, bringing to the forefront differing interpretations of the past and external influences on them. The ethnic and cultural specifics of Gagauzia examine the peculiarities of this autonomous region within the Republic of Moldova. The analysis focuses on how the ethnic and cultural identity of the Gagauz community interacted with Moldova's national identity during this time of change. From the exploration of theoretical considerations to the revelation of the rivalry between „Moldovanism” and „Romanianism,” as well as the ethnic and cultural specifics of Gagauzia, this chapter brings to light the complexity of identity evolution during a period of profound transformation.

In the chapter titled *The Church and Society*, is examined the complex relationship between politics and religion. After presenting theoretical considerations about the interaction between these two spheres, the chapter focuses on the role and influence of the The Metropolis of Bessarabia and the the Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldova in the context of political changes, struggles for precedence, and the evolving identity of the Moldovan population. In parallel, the intersection of politics and religion during this period of transition is analyzed, along with how interactions between religious leaders and political actors significantly impacted cultural and religious formations. This subsection provides a theoretical perspective on how such interactions can shape the evolution of a society undergoing change. The Metropolis of Bessarabia and the The Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldova are the main subjects of this chapter. By examining the influence of these religious institutions, the study reveals how they played a crucial role in shaping the identity and values of the Moldovan population during a pivotal moment in history. Their responses to political and social events of the period are also highlighted. Taken as a whole, this segment of the work illustrates how the church and society mutually influenced each other within the Republic of Moldova between 1989 and 1994. From the theoretical considerations of the interaction between politics and religion to the analysis of the influence of the Metropolis of Bessarabia and the Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldova on identities and values of the population, an attempt has been made to illustrate how religious factors contributed to identity formation in an environment characterized by change and transformation.

When it comes to the bibliography, the reader will be able to find works published in Romania, the Republic of Moldova, and also from the Russian Federation. Alongside the use of press materials from the 1989-1994 period as the primary source of information, this combination represents a well-founded and necessary methodological choice for a comprehensive analysis of the historical and cultural narratives within Moldovan society. The bibliography, comprising such books edited in the Russian Federation, Romania, and Moldova, brings to the forefront the multiple perspectives and interpretations of historians, researchers, and specialists from these countries regarding the subject at hand. This diversity of sources provides a broad view of different opinions, discussions, and interpretations of events and phenomena related to ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identities in the Republic of Moldova during the 1989-1994 period. The use of press materials from the 1989-1994 period as the primary source of information was essential in capturing the atmosphere and discourses of that crucial period. Newspapers and publications reflect real-time opinions, public reactions, political and social debates, providing an authentic perspective on how historical and cultural narratives were perceived and developed within Moldovan society in that specific context. With the help of these media sources, I aimed to highlight the beliefs and sentiments of ordinary people, in contrast to academic or institutional approaches, offering a more detailed and immediate insight into the events and developments of identity during that period. I believe that this methodological approach ensures a deeper and contextual understanding of how identities and beliefs were shaped and developed in Moldovan society during a time of significant transformations.

An important aspect is the inclusion of photographs from the National Archives of the Republic of Moldova in the appendices of the work. The images that can be found not only complement the written content but also provide an authentic and tangible visual perspective on the historical and cultural context in which the events unfolded. The examples provided from the archives are themselves reliable historical sources, preserved and documented in a verifiable manner. The reader will have the opportunity to capture authentic moments of daily life, political or cultural events, as well as social interactions, and can also directly observe how the ethnic communities in the Republic of Moldova lived, interacted, and reacted during a crucial period. For this reason, photographs from that period can offer complex and detailed information that written text may not convey fully. They have been selected in such a way as to highlight subtle aspects of cultural diversity, group relationships, and social dynamics. Through the use of images, readers of the work can connect more deeply with the subject and form a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social, political, and cultural

changes during that period. Additionally, using photographs from archives enhances the credibility of the research and provides a concrete basis for the interpretations and conclusions drawn in the work. Moreover, they can bring the subject closer to readers, making them feel and understand the past and the diversity of the analyzed identities more effectively.

In concluding this abstract, I remain optimistic that the efforts and research undertaken can shed the necessary light on the complexity and depth of the analyzed aspects. Through a careful examination of the interactions among these diverse dimensions of identity at a crucial moment in the history of the Republic of Moldova, I hope that this work can provide a clearer and more comprehensive perspective on how social, political, and cultural changes have influenced the landscape of identity in this country. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to address these complex subjects, and I believe that this paper can contribute to the development of a more complete perspective on the various facets of identities in the Republic of Moldova. I hope that this research will remain a valuable resource for those interested in the history and evolution of this region and that it will pave the way for new explorations and understandings in the field of cultural and historical studies.

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