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Andrei Tulum

**The Effect of Institutional and Political Cultural Traditions on the Formation  
of Language Regime in the Republic of Moldova**

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

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Ekaterina Entina

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## *Statement of research problem*

Globalisation, the emergence of new independent states, and the development of international law, among other systemic changes in the late 20th century, led to a reconsideration of the role of language in politics, both within domestic political processes and interstate relations. This has resulted in an increase in research on the connection between language and concepts such as national identity<sup>1</sup>, citizenship<sup>2</sup>, nation-building<sup>3</sup>, language rights and the rights of ethnic minorities<sup>4</sup> as well diversity management<sup>5</sup>. These issues form the basis of language policy, which is traditionally the focus of sociolinguistic research. However, the complexity of political processes, in which language and ethnicity are important factors, has led to increased interest from political scientists, who have made a significant contribution to understanding the normative effects of language policies<sup>6</sup>. They have also proposed ways to combine the methods and approaches of these two disciplines in order to enhance research tools<sup>7</sup>.

Another strand of research touched upon *the politics of language*, which the Russian expert N. M. Mukharyamov<sup>8</sup> later defined as “an area of relations, exchange of activities, and attitudes about language and politics,” which should be

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<sup>1</sup> Schmidt R. Sr. *Political Theory and Language Policy* // Ricento, T. (ed.) *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006. P. 95–110.

<sup>2</sup> Ricento T. *Thinking about Language: What Political Theorists Need to Know about Language in the Real World* // *Language Policy*. 2014. Vol. 13. P. 351–369.

<sup>3</sup> Hornberger N. *Frameworks and Models in Language Policy and Planning* // Ricento T. (ed.) *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006. P. 24–41.

<sup>4</sup> Arzoz X. *The Nature of Language Rights* // *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*. 2007. Vol. 6(2). P. 1–35.; Castiglione D. *Introduction: Negotiating Language Regime* // Castiglione D., Longman C. (eds.) *The Language Question in Europe and Diverse Societies: Political, Legal and Social Perspectives*. London: Hart Publishing, 2007. P. 1–14.; De Varennes F. *Language Rights as an Integral Part of Human Rights* // *IJMS: International Journal on Multicultural Societies*. 2001. Vol. 3(1). P. 15–25.; De Varennes F. *Language, Rights and Power: The Role of Language in the Inclusion and Exclusion of Indigenous Peoples* // *UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (OHCHR: Geneva, 2011). URL: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/StudyLanguages/> (accessed August 10, 2024); May S. *Rearticulating the Case for Minority Language Rights* // *Current Issues in Language Planning*. 2003. Vol. 4(2). P. 95–125.

<sup>5</sup> Pool J. *Optimal Language Regimes for the European Union* // *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 1996. Vol. 121. P. 159–180.

<sup>6</sup> Kymlicka W., Patten A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003. 364 p.

<sup>7</sup> Schmidt R. *Op. cit.*; Peled Y. *Normative Language Policy: Interface and Interferences* // *Language Policy*. 2014. Vol. 13. P. 301–315.

<sup>8</sup> Mukharyamov N. M. *The politics of language and language policy* // *Identity: Personality, society, politics. The encyclopedic edition* / Edited by I. S. Semenenko. M.: Publishing house "The Whole World", 2017. P. 677–684.

distinguished from conventional *language policy*, typically defined as a set of government measures to regulate language use and ensure the rights of language speakers. This approach allowed us to consider not only the actions of individual governments which are usually limited by time, but also the ongoing practices related to language in political life that involve a wide range of formal and informal actors rather than just the government<sup>9</sup>.

At the same time, there has been a clear lack of works explaining the process of how a specific model of language policy is adopted. In an attempt to fill this gap, L. Cardinal and S. Sonntag proposed the concepts of “state traditions” and “language regimes”<sup>10</sup>. Working within the framework of historical institutionalism, they argue that state traditions understood as institutional and normative patterns of public policy determine how the state implements its policies, including language policies. A case in point appears to be Canada, where historically established traditions of political compromise and federalism have led to the creation of a bilingual language regime<sup>11</sup>.

In recent years, the explanatory power of this approach has been applied in a number of studies on language regimes. However, most of these studies have focused on cases that have been studied more than once, such as those located in North America, Western Europe, and less frequently in Latin America and Southeast Asia. However, similar linguistic situations and challenges of diversity management exist worldwide. According to L. Cardinal and S. Sonntag<sup>12</sup>, Eastern Europe is a

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<sup>9</sup> Mukharyamov N. M. Language policy and the politics of language: on the issue of “actors” // Bulletin of the Perm University. Political science. 2021. Vol. 15(4). P. 5–15.; Khilkhanova E. V. People in language policy: theory and practice of a discursive turn in sociolinguistics (the cases of Russia and Western Europe) // Acta Linguistica Metropolitana. 2020. Vol.16(3). P. 756–815.; Phillipson R., Skutnabb-Kangas, T. The Politics and Policies of Language and Language Teaching // Long M.H., Doughty C.J. (eds) The Handbook of Language Teaching. Malden: Wiley, 2009. P. 26–41.; Schmid, C. The Politics of Language: Conflict, Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in Comparative Perspective. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. 232 p.; Sonntag S. K., Turin, M. (eds.) The Politics of Language Contact in the Himalaya. New edition [online]. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019. 181 p.

<sup>10</sup> Cardinal L., Sonntag S. (eds.) State Traditions and Language Regimes. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015. 288 p.

<sup>11</sup> Cardinal L. State Tradition and Language Regime in Canada // Cardinal L., Sonntag S. (eds.) State Traditions and Language Regimes. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015. P. 29–44.

<sup>12</sup> Cardinal L., Sonntag S. State Traditions and Language Regimes: A Historical Institutionalism Approach to Language Policy // Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies. 2015. Vol. 8(1). P. 5–21.

region of particular interest. Unlike Western countries, here one can observe how state traditions from the socialist era conflict with those that emerged in the 19th century and those that have appeared only recently through the process of Europeanisation. So the question arises about the applicability of the concept of state traditions to countries that, as a rule, used to be part of federal unions and, after the collapse of communist regimes, became independent countries for the first time in their modern history. These countries therefore do not have state traditions in their original form. In this context, it seems more correct to discuss political and institutional traditions, whose continuity can be traced.

One of these countries is the Republic of Moldova, hereinafter referred to as Moldova or RM. Despite the fact that Moldova became an independent state within its current borders only in 1991, a unique linguistic situation developed on its territory in the 19th century. The joining of Bessarabia to the Russian Empire in 1812 marked the start of the widespread use of the Russian language in the region. By the end of the century, Russian had become the primary means of communication among various ethnic groups residing in the area<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, the policy of Russification implemented by the Tsarist government prevented the development of other languages, primarily the Moldovan language, which was not taught in schools. After the 1917 revolution, Bessarabia became part of Romania, which, until 1940 and during the occupation period (1941 – 1944), pursued a policy of Romanisation, promoting the Romanian language and identity. After the end of World War II, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, established in 1940, was restored, in which the Moldovan language used Cyrillic script. However, Russian again began to play a significant role as the language for interethnic communication within the USSR, creating an imbalance in the usage of both languages.

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<sup>13</sup> In 1916, Moldovans made up only 2/3 of the population of the province, followed by Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, as well as German, Bulgarian and Polish immigrants. See Kaba J. Politico-Economic Review of Basarabia // United States Army. The Hoover Commission for Roumania. 1919. 32 p. URL: <https://www.loc.gov/item/19019112/> (accessed August 10, 2024).

The modern language regime in the Republic of Moldova was formed in 1989 when the law “On the Functioning of Languages in the Territory of the Moldavian SSR” was adopted. This law established that Moldovan, written in the Latin alphabet (which is essentially Romanian), was the only official language, while Russian was designated as the language for interethnic communication. However, due to dissatisfaction with this law, which led to armed clashes in predominantly Russian-speaking regions of Transnistria and Gagauzia, the current language regime can be characterised as heterogeneous. Romanian is the state language throughout Moldova, whereas in the Autonomous Republic of Gagauzia Moldovan/Romanian, Gagauz and Russian are all recognised as official languages. As for Pridnestrovia, Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan (written in the Cyrillic alphabet) have an equal official status. Thus, it is interesting to study the political and institutional traditions that led to the formation of the modern language regime within the internationally recognised borders of Moldova, and to trace how this regime is changing due to the country's European aspirations, which were formalised in 2014 with the Association Agreement with the European Union and strengthened by Moldova's status as a candidate for EU membership in 2022.

#### *Literature review*

The issue of language regimes has only recently come to the attention of researchers, and as a result, a universal theoretical approach to its study has not been developed yet. Most works on this topic focus on case studies, while comparative studies are less common. A separate strand of literature looks at the language regimes of the European Union and other international organisations. However, in this research, existing approaches to language regimes are classified based on whether they view them as the result of government language policy or as language practices that reflect formal and informal relations on language and politics among various actors.

The most common interpretation of the first approach to language regimes is given in the works by J. Pool. While arguing about the interdependence between

national political and language regimes, he defines the latter as a situation when the members of community that is to form a nation are (virtually) all competent in a language and use it (virtually) exclusively in communication with one another. In other words, a language regime, according to Pool, is a static situation or, as he calls it, “a set of official languages and rules governing their use”<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, it is also seen as a consequence of the language policies of a national state or an international organisation, which involve measures aimed at determining official, working, or minority languages, as well as their standardisation and promotion. This interpretation is widely used sociolinguists, who typically focus on evaluating the effectiveness of various models of language regimes and determining the factors that contribute to their success and stability<sup>15</sup>.

Most often, the European Union is the focus of these studies. Due to the increasing number of member states, the key issues for the EU remain the search for an optimal language regime<sup>16</sup>, Global English as a growing threat to EU language diversity<sup>17</sup> as well as the potential disenfranchisement of EU citizens if multilingualism is to be rejected<sup>18</sup>. A key study in this area is M. Gazzola's book “The Evaluation of Language Regimes: Theory and application to multilingual patent organisations”<sup>19</sup>. In his book, Gazzola explores both the need for assessing language regimes and the criteria for doing so, such as efficiency and fairness.

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<sup>14</sup> Pool J. Language Regimes and Political Regimes // Weinstein B. (ed.) Language Policy and Political Development. Norwood: Ablex, 1990. P. 241–61.; Pool J. Optimal Language Regimes for the European Union // International Journal of the Sociology of Language. 1996. Vol. 121. P. 159–180.

<sup>15</sup> Castiglione D. Op. cit.; Gazzola M. The Evaluation of Language Regimes: Theory and application to multilingual patent organizations. Amsterdam, Netherlands, Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014. 380 p.; Moormann-Kimáková B. Language-related Conflicts in Multinational and Multiethnic Settings: Success and Failure of Language Regimes. Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS, 2016. 278 p.

<sup>16</sup> Ammon U. Language Conflicts in the European Union // International Journal of Applied Linguistics. 2006. Vol. 16(3). P. 319–338.

<sup>17</sup> Civico M. Simulating Language Knowledge across the EU: Language Regimes, Language Learning and Consequences for Linguistic Disenfranchisement // Journal of Computational Social Science. 2022. Vol. 5. P. 537–563.; Leal A. The European Union's Translation Policies, Practices and Ideologies: Time for a Translation Turn // Perspectives. 2021. Vol. 30(2). P. 195–208.; Phillipson R. Language Policy and Education in the European Union // May S., Hornberger N. H. (ed.) Encyclopedia of Language and Education. New York: Springer, 2008. P. 255–265.; Van Parijs P. Europe's Linguistic Challenge // European Journal of Sociology. 2004. Vol. 45(1). P. 113–154.

<sup>18</sup> Gazzola M. Multilingual communication for whom? Language policy and fairness in the European Union // European Union Politics. 2016. Vol. 17(4). P. 546–569.; Ringe N. The Language(s) of Politics: Multilingual Policy-Making in the European Union. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. 264 p.

<sup>19</sup> Gazzola M. The Evaluation of Language Regimes: Theory and application to multilingual patent organisations. Amsterdam, Netherlands, Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014. 380 p.

The second approach is primarily based on studies by L. Cardinal and S. Sonntag, which have already been mentioned. Their conceptualisation of the language regime as “language practices as well as conceptions of language and language use as projected through state policies and as acted upon by language users”<sup>20</sup> allows us to understand how the language regime developed in a particular country. This approach goes beyond simply considering the legal framework resulting from the state's language policies. The explanatory power of this approach, grounded in historical institutionalism, has led to its application in numerous works published over the last decade<sup>21</sup>. A curious case is a study on language regulation in Spain, in which the authors plan to further investigate the differences in regional language regulations, found with the help of normative approach, by following the concept of state traditions<sup>22</sup>. This clearly demonstrates that both approaches have become well established in science yet properly differentiated.

Nevertheless, this approach has limitations due to the lack of ability to trace state traditions in countries that have recently gained or regained their independence. This is particularly true of former colonial and post-socialist states with weak state apparatus, fragile feelings of belonging and civic loyalty, and ethnic diversity<sup>23</sup>. As noted above, to solve this methodological issue, it is proposed to examine political and institutional traditions instead of state traditions as the former

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<sup>20</sup> Cardinal L., Sonntag S. (eds.) *State Traditions and Language Regimes*. P. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Burckhardt T. Linguistic Territoriality in Switzerland: Exploring the Roots of a Constitutional Principle // *Language Problems and Language Planning*. 2021. Vol. 45(2). P. 187–217.; Liu, A. The Politics of Language Regimes: Comparative Analysis of Southeast Asia // Cardinal L., Sonntag S. (eds.) *State Traditions and Language Regimes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. P. 137–153.; Maráz L. Is the EU Accession a Critical Juncture for Romania's Language Policy? // *Belvedere Meridionale*. 2017. Vol. 29(4). P. 28–42.; Rousseau S., Dargent E. The Construction of Indigenous Language Rights in Peru: A Language Regime Approach // *Journal of Politics in Latin America*. 2019. Vol. 11(2). P. 161–180.; Szul R. Poland's Language Regime Governing Kashubian and Silesian. // Cardinal L., Sonntag S. (eds.) *State Traditions and Language Regimes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. P. 79–96.; Terlikbayeva N., Menlibekova G. The Dynamics of Language Shift in Kazakhstan: Review Article // *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. 2021. Vol. 3(2). P. 12–22.; Walsh J. The Irish Language Regime and Language Ideology in Ireland // Cardinal L., Sonntag S. (eds.) *State Traditions and Language Regimes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. P. 62–78.

<sup>22</sup> Morales-Gálvez S., Cetrà D. Regulating language: Territoriality and Personality in Plurinational Spain // *Ethnicities*. 2022. Vol. 22(2). P. 253–273.

<sup>23</sup> Beichelt T. Stateness // Merkel W., R. Kollmorgen, Wäger H-J. (eds.) *The Handbook of Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*. Oxford, UK: online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Mar. 2019. P. 657–660. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198829911.003.0076> (accessed August 10, 2024).

can be traced even when the form of government changes. In addition, political and cultural traditions should be taken into account since they reflect people's language attitudes that may have been affected by past policies as well, and in turn can influence the formation of a new language regime. Carlá also supports this line of reasoning<sup>24</sup>. As he studied how political institutions affect social relations between different linguistic groups, he suggests evaluating the government's language policy based on how well it can neutralise discriminatory attitudes and normalise linguistic diversity.

If we turn to Russian research, N. M. Mukharyamov points out the lack of a clear conceptualisation of the issues related to language regimes<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, we can consider N. V. Borisova's works as the key contributions to the study of language regimes in our country<sup>26</sup>. Based on studies by her colleagues, she proposes her own interpretation of the notion "language regime" as a form of social order, which is the result of various communicative activities and interactions related to the institutionalisation and rational legitimatisation of language usage practices and norms within a community. Her comparative analysis of language regimes in complex polities has shown that both pooling and parting language regimes contribute to the maintenance of territorial integrity of states.

As for the research on Moldova, the linguistic situation and the issue of diversity management in the republic have been the subject of a limited number of studies<sup>27</sup>. Most of them have been put in the context of nation-building or become part of works on the foreign policy of the country and related geopolitical processes.

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<sup>24</sup> Carlá A. Living Apart in the Same Room: Analysis of the Management of Linguistic Diversity in Bolzano // *Ethnopolitics*. 2007. Vol 6(2). P. 285–313.

<sup>25</sup> Mukharyamov N. M. The politics of language and language policy ...

<sup>26</sup> Borisova N. V. The concept of linguistic territorial regime // *ARS ADMINISTRANDI*. 2016. Vol. 3. P. 5-15.; Borisova N. V. Factors of variability of language policy and language regimes in complex polities: dis. ... Dr. polit. Sciences: 23.00.02 / Borisova Nadezhda Vladimirovna. Perm, 2021. 320 p.

<sup>27</sup> Furman D. E. Moldovan Moldovans and Moldovan Romanians: the influence of Moldovan national mindset on the political development of the Republic of Moldova // *Institute of Europe Reports*. Issue 206. M.: Russian Academy of Science Institute of Europe, 2007. 133 p.; Ciscel M. A. Separate Moldovan Language? The Sociolinguistics of Moldova's *Limba de Stat* // *Nationalities Papers*. 2006. Vol. 34(5). P. 575–597.; Ciscel M. Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova // *Comparative Education*. 2010. Vol. 46(1). P. 13–28.; Osipov A., Vasilevich H. Transnistrian Nation-Building: A Case of Effective Diversity Policies? // *Nationalities Papers*. 2019. Vol. 47(6). P. 983–999.; Marandici I. Multiethnic Parastates and Nation-Building: The Case of the Transnistrian Imagined



The works published in the 1990s and 2000s mainly analysed the reasons for the failed attempts at Moldovan contemporary nation-building. Among the key factors, they tended to indicate the politicisation of language and historical issues by the elite, a significant lack of understanding between the ideologues of nation-building projects and the nation they wanted to create, as well as the uncertainty of linguistic identity, which was difficult to overcome due to the multicultural nature of the country's population<sup>28</sup>. Research in the 2010s and 2020s continued to explore the issue of national identity in Moldova, primarily within the framework of established directions. Some studies trace the formation of modern Moldovan identity and sought to understand the reasons for its double nature<sup>29</sup>. Others aim to identify possible types of national identities and set their boundaries<sup>30</sup> or even define behavioural patterns that are peculiar to them<sup>31</sup>. Special attention is paid to the foreign policy factors that have transformed the traditional Romanian and Russian identities into geopolitical European and Eurasian ones<sup>32</sup>. However, most authors emphasise the primacy of the linguistic factor in shaping the national identity of Moldovans, complicated by ideological and political divisions. Of particular interest in this regard is a study by Marquardt. While exploring the cases of Pridnestrovie and Gagauzia, he investigated the relationship between language and separatism and

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Community // Nationalities Papers. 2020. Vol. 48(1). P. 61–82.; Wolfschwenger, J., Saxinger, K. Federalism, National Identity and Overcoming Frozen Conflicts: Moldova's Experience // *Ethnopolitics*. 2020. Vol. 19(4). P. 356–368.

As one of the cases of post-Soviet studies: Alpatov V. M. 150 languages and politics: 1917 – 2000. Moscow: Kraft+IV RAS, 2000. 224 p.; Laitin D., Petersen R., Slocum J. Language and the State: Russia and the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective // Motyl A. (ed.) *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. P. 129–168.

<sup>28</sup> Cash J. Origins, Memory, and Identity: “Villages” and the Politics of Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova // *East European Politics and Societies*. 2007. Vol. 21(4). P. 588–610.; Ciscel M. *The Language of the Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and Identity in an Ex-Soviet Republic*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007. 171 p.; Cusco A. The “Politics of Memory” and “Historical Policy” in Post-Soviet Moldova // Miller A., Lipman M. (eds.) *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2012. P. 175–210.; King Ch. *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. Stanford: Hoover Inst. Press, 2000. 303 p.

<sup>29</sup> Baar V., Jakubek V. Divided National Identity in Moldova // *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics*. 2017. Vol. 11(1). P. 58–92.

<sup>30</sup> Brie M. Comparative Conceptual Perspectives on Identity Borders in the Republic of Moldova // *Europolity*. 2021. Vol. 15(2). P. 5–29.

<sup>31</sup> Knott E. What Does it Mean to Be a Kin Majority? Analyzing Romanian Identity in Moldova and Russian Identity in Crimea from Below // *Special Issue: New Frontiers in the Comparative Study of Ethnic Politics and Nationalism*. 2015. Vol. 96 (3). P. 830–859.

<sup>32</sup> Negura P., Suveica S. Everyday Ethnicity and Popular Responses to Nation-Building Projects in Moldova After 1989 // *Comp. Southeast Europ. Stud.* 2023. Vol. 71(4). P. 465–487.; Simionov L. M. Shifting Attitudes towards Identity, Borders and Geopolitical Choices: The Case of Moldova // *Regional Science Policy & Practice*. 2023. Vol. 15. P. 200–221.

concluded that language can be a more significant factor in the development of separatist sentiment than ethnic identity<sup>33</sup>.

Among the alternative approaches to interpreting the current situation in Moldova, F. Prina's work stands out. In her analysis, Prina examines the case through the lens of linguistic justice<sup>34</sup>. She argues that the promotion of the Moldovan language as the sole state language compensates for the ethnic majority's injustice during the Soviet period, when Russian was the dominant language. However, this has also created another injustice for the Russian-speaking population who must now adapt to the reality of this new nation-state. Prina wonders if the Moldovan elites truly seek to resolve the language issue or they prefer to exploit it for their own interests. Considering the latter to be more likely, some researchers propose focusing on "everyday" nationalism in Moldova that exists at the individual level and is separate from ethnicity<sup>35</sup>. Such an approach allows us to view the causes of separatist movements within the republic in a different light. It suggests that these movements originate within communities of national minorities and are not the result of outside interference<sup>36</sup>. Additionally, this approach helps to uncover previously unexplored gender and religious aspects of the national revival<sup>37</sup>.

Summing up the above discussion, it can be noted that scholars place the main responsibility for the failure of nation-building in Moldova on the government and its leaders. They have proven unable to create a national identity that would be accepted by the majority of the country's population, but instead have only exploited linguistic divisions throughout the period of independence. Meanwhile, there has been no study on Moldova that would have explained the prerequisites for the

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<sup>33</sup> Marquardt K. Language, Ethnicity, and Separatism: Survey Results from Two Post-Soviet Regions // *British Journal of Political Science*. 2022. Vol. 52(4). P. 1831–1851.

<sup>34</sup> Prina F. Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post Soviet Realpolitik: The Ethnolinguistic Cleavage in Moldova // *Ethnopolitics*. 2015. Vol. 14(1). P. 52–71.

<sup>35</sup> Van Meurs, W. Moldova: Nested Cases of Belated Nation-building // *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, Editions NecPlus. 2015. Vol. 46(1). P. 185–209.

<sup>36</sup> Solonari V. Popular Sentiments and Political Failures: Understanding the Disintegration of the Republic of Moldova, 1989–1990 // *Comp. Southeast Europ. Stud.* 2023. Vol. 71(4). P. 488–516.

<sup>37</sup> Cash J. Widening "Ground-Up" Nationalism: Some Reflections on Religion and Gender in the Republic of Moldova // *Comp. Southeast Europ. Stud.* 2023. Vol. 71(4). P. 546–564.

government language policy and reasons why it does not resonate with the attitudes the people of Moldova have towards languages and multilingualism. This dissertation attempts to fill this gap by using the concepts of “state traditions” and “language regimes” by L. Cardinal and S. Sonntag with some adjustments.

### *Research question*

What political institutional and political cultural traditions led to the formation of the contemporary language regime in the Republic of Moldova?

### *Purpose and objectives*

The **purpose** of this dissertation research is to investigate what political institutional and political cultural traditions, historically present in the territory of the Republic of Moldova, influenced the formation of the country's current language policy.

To accomplish this purpose, the following **objectives** have been set:

1. Examine and organise the various approaches to language regimes available in academic literature and justify why it is of importance to independently use the term “language regime” in language policy studies.
2. Conceptualize the notions of “language regime”, “language policy” and “politics of language”, as well as explain the relationship between them.
3. Adapt L. Cardinal's and S. Sonntag's concepts of “state traditions” and “language regimes” for the analysis of postsocialist and postcolonial countries.
4. Identify the political institutional and political cultural traditions that developed in the territory of modern Moldova during its time in the Russian Empire (1812 – 1917) and Romania (1918 – 1940), as Bessarabia, and during the Soviet period in the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1924 – 1940) and Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (1940 - 1991).

5. Analyse the formation of the legal framework for the modern language regime in the Republic of Moldova and determine how it is affected by political institutional and political cultural traditions from previous historical periods.

6. Describe language practices in public services, education, media, and commerce in the Republic of Moldova.

7. Trace the evolution of the language regime in the republic in light of the Association Agreement with the European Union and Moldova's status as a candidate for EU membership.

### *Scope and limitations of research*

**Geographically** the study covers the whole internationally recognised territory of the Republic of Moldova.

In terms of **time constraints**, this research starts with 1812 when the territory of modern Moldova, also known as Bessarabia, became part of the Russian Empire. It marked the beginning of the formation of political institutional and political cultural traditions of diversity management in these territories. The study continues up to the present. To accomplish the purpose of this research we should turn to the history of the country. There are several stages that can be distinguished:

- the 19th century – the end of the First World War: Bessarabia as part of the Russian Empire;
- the Interwar period: most of modern-day Moldova was part of Romania, while the left bank of the Dniester River being the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) as part of the Ukrainian SSR;
- the socialist period: the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the Soviet Union;
- the modern period: since the adoption of the law on the functioning of languages in the territory of the Moldavian SSR in 1989, which led to the formation of the current language regime.

## *Key notions*

**Language policy** is a set of measures taken by the state to regulate the use of languages within its borders and ensure compliance with these regulations. This includes decisions about the official language(s) of the country, the language(s) used for education, and the rules for language use in public spaces.

**The politics of language** refers to an area of formal and informal relations regarding language and politics within a community.

**Political institutional traditions** are the institutional patterns and principles that guide public policy, which form as a result of the development of a nation-state. For instance, in Italy there are “regions with special status” that were created several decades ago to preserve national unity. While national minorities threatened Valle d’Aosta, Sud Tirol and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, separatist movements endangered Sicily and Sardinia.

**Political cultural traditions** are a combination of subjective attitudes and sentiments as well as objective symbols and beliefs that together influence political behavior and provide structure and order for the political process<sup>38</sup>. For example, Soviet internationalism was expressed through the idea of “friendship among peoples”. In the case under discussion, political cultural traditions can be illustrated by the idea that Moldovans are “Bessarabian Romanians” or by the opposite view on Moldovan and Romanian as different languages, cultivated in Pridnestrovie.

**Language regime** is a set of institutional language practices that reflect the nature of formal and informal relations regarding language and politics in a certain community, influenced by its political institutional and political cultural traditions. In this study, we operationalise the language regime through four key

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<sup>38</sup> Pye L. Political Culture // Krieger J. (ed.) The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World, 2001. URL: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195117394.001.0001/acref-9780195117394-e-0596> (дата обращения: 10.08.2024).

areas where the politics of language is best manifested in social life: public services, education, media, and commercial services.

**Language practices** are the habitual pattern of choosing a specific language among the linguistic repertoire available to members of a multicultural community for use in specific situations or areas of public life<sup>39</sup>.

The terms “**Republic of Moldova**”, “**Moldova**”, and “**Moldavia**” are all used interchangeably to refer to the Moldovan state, which was proclaimed on August 27, 1991. The linguonyms “**Moldovan**” and “**Romanian**” are both designations for the same language that has an official status in both the Republic of Moldova and Romania. In this dissertation, their use as synonyms or as distinct concepts depends on historical and political factors and practices that are described in different chapters of the text.

### *Methodology and methods*

The **theoretical framework** of the dissertation draws on the concepts of historical institutionalism, specifically the “path dependence” which allows us to understand how political institutional and political cultural traditions influence the selection of a specific language policy model, thereby affecting the formation of a language regime. This process typically occurs at “critical junctures” that can be defined as sudden changes in social, economic, or even natural circumstances. It also provides insight into how and why language regimes shift over time.

Based on this, the main **method** of this study is *process tracing*. It is “an in-depth within-case study method used in the social sciences for tracing causal mechanisms and how they play out within an actual case”<sup>40</sup>. It involves determining whether there is a causal mechanism implied by the assumptions of the chosen theory in place or not. The mechanism connects the initial conditions of the case and

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<sup>39</sup> Spolsky B. *Language Policy. Key Topics in Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 255 p.

<sup>40</sup> Beach D. *Process Tracing Methods* // Oxford Bibliographies. *International Relations*. URL: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0227.xml> (дата обращения: 10.08.2024).

the outcome, often expressed in terms of variables<sup>41</sup>. However, as the use of variables to describe historical events can present a puzzle and be unhelpful<sup>42</sup>, we suggest applying an interpretivist version of this approach that is *practice tracing*. V. Puglio, who is one of his authors, considers practices to be important units of analysis since they are processes and have a causal effect as well<sup>43</sup>. Practices contribute to the reproduction of other practices that shape social and political reality, such as a regime. However, as Puglio points out, it is also important to take into account that the generative power of practices stems from the meaningful context in which they occur and in which they gain meaning for those who enact them.

In the case of Moldova, the language practices that constitute the language regime have been framed by the nation-building process. The use of practice tracing in this study allows us to identify what political institutional and political cultural traditions that are also practices influenced the formation of the language regime in Moldova.

First, we analyse formal and informal relations regarding language and politics within Moldovan society. The former imply a public policy on language aimed at creating a legal framework for the language regime while the latter represent the exchange of attitudes and ideas about languages and their use that frame the public policy. To do this, we study not only the texts of the laws of the republic and of government strategies and programmes concerning language policy but we also investigate the political processes within the country, and, above all, within government institutions which led to the elaboration and adoption of these laws and policies. That is why, our main focus is on the Constitutional Court where competing political forces appeal against the provisions of some laws, which

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<sup>41</sup> Mahoney J. Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis // Mahoney J., Rueschemeyer D. (eds.) Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. P. 337–372.

<sup>42</sup> Bengstonn B., Ruonavaara H. Comparative Process Tracing in Housing Studies // International Journal of Housing Policy. 2011. Vol. 11(4). P. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Pouliot V. Practice tracing // Bennett A., Checkel, J. (eds.) Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool. Strategies for Social Inquiry. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015. P. 237–259.

resulted in the Constitutional Court verdicts becoming the main instrument in the politics of language in Moldova. The analysis of these appeals and the rulings made by the court allows us to identify which political institutional and political cultural traditions language policy actors in Moldova adhere to nowadays.

Then, we explore language practices in four key areas: public services, public education, mass media, and commercial services. We analyse available statistical datasets that give us an opportunity to trace the way legally entrenched policies have been implemented in all of the four areas, and to examine how political institutional and political cultural traditions have affected it. In the case of public and commercial services, we also study the elements of virtual language landscape that is a relatively accurate reflection of language practices<sup>44</sup>. The study of official websites of government institutions and private companies allows us to learn if their language practices align with the stated principles of language policy, and what they tend towards in the context of digitalisation<sup>45</sup>.

Although the Republic of Moldova is not classified as a developed country and has faced economic challenges throughout its period of independence, it is still relevant to analyse the virtual language landscape in the country, given the growing role of digital space in the daily lives of Moldovan people. According to ANRCET, in 2022, mobile internet penetration in the country accounted for 113.6%, with 2.8 million active users out of 2.5 million residents (79.4% in 2018), while fixed internet access was at 67% per 100 households (49.7% in 2018)<sup>46</sup>. In addition, Moldova ranks ninth in the world for the affordability of internet services in 2024<sup>47</sup>, and it was

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<sup>44</sup> Ivkovic D., Lotherington H. Multilingualism in cyberspace: Conceptualising the Virtual Linguistic Landscape // *International Journal of Multilingualism*. 2009. Vol. 6(1). P. 17–36.

<sup>45</sup> Gomaa Y. Language Policy in the Virtual Linguistic Landscape: the Case of the Kingdom of Bahrain E-Government National Portal // *Cadernos de Linguagem e Sociedade*. 2020. Vol. 21(2). P. 19–37.; Maseko B., Siziba L. On the Dialectics of Policy and Practice: Multilingualism and the Virtual Linguistic Landscape of a South African University // *Cogent Arts & Humanities*. Vol. 10(2). P. 1–16.

<sup>46</sup> Anuar statistic dezvoltarea comunicațiilor electronice în Republica Moldova în anul 2022 // Agenția Națională pentru Reglementare în Comunicații Electronice și Tehnologia Informației. URL: [https://anrceti.md/files/filefield/Anuar.statistic\\_anul2022.pdf](https://anrceti.md/files/filefield/Anuar.statistic_anul2022.pdf) (дата обращения: 10.08.2024).

<sup>47</sup> Global broadband pricing league table 2024 // Cable.co.uk. URL: <https://www.cable.co.uk/broadband/pricing/worldwide-comparison/#cis> (дата обращения: 10.08.2024).



ranked 53rd in the UNCTAD E-commerce Readiness) Index in 2020, up from 62nd in 2014<sup>48</sup>.

In addition, the following **qualitative methods** are used to achieve the objectives of the study. The historical method is chosen to examine the process of formation and evolution of the language regime in the territory of modern Moldova during the three historical periods mentioned above. Meanwhile, the comparative method helps explain why the situation in Pridnestrovie and Gagauzia happened to be different. The normative method is applied to study the legislation and international agreements, allowing us to streamline and systematise official documents at various levels that form the institutional framework for the language regime in Moldova. Descriptive statistics are used to analyse public opinion polls and other statistical data.

#### *Selection of empirical data*

The key sources of information for this study are legislative acts and official documents from the authorities of the Republic of Moldova (including the former Moldavian SSR) and the unrecognised Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, primarily regarding issues related to ethnolinguistic regulation, education, and public service. Additionally, various media materials and statistics are used. The latter mostly include statistical and ethnographic data collections from various periods, such as “Materials for Geography and Statistics of Russia collected by Officers of the General Staff (1859 – 1868)”, data from the population censuses of the USSR, the 2004 census of the Republic of Moldova, and the 2014 census of population and households in the Republic of Moldova. Other sources involve the Yearbook of the State Statistics Service of PMR as well as reports and surveys delivered with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme and other international organisations such as OSCE and the Council of Europe.

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<sup>48</sup> UNCTAD Technical Notes on ICT for Development № 17 // United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. 2020. URL: [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tn\\_unctad\\_ict4d17\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tn_unctad_ict4d17_en.pdf) (дата обращения: 10.08.2024).

### *Contribution to the discussion of the problem in existing literature*

The research outcomes allow us to make contributions to several areas of political science.

Firstly, this dissertation suggests moving away from the traditional view of a language regime as the result of exclusively state language policy. In our interpretation, a language regime is considered as a set of institutional language practices that reflect the politics of language in a particular community. The latter implies both formal and informal relations regarding language and politics among a wide range of actors.

Secondly, this study proposes adjustments to the concept of “state traditions” developed by L. Cardinal and S. Sonntag for studying cases of countries with no experience of statehood or a short period of independence. In regard to them, we suggest looking at political institutional traditions, which can be traced despite changes in the form of territorial administration, as well as political cultural traditions that appear to be more stable. The latter imply the perceptions and attitudes the members of a community have.

The methodological novelty of this dissertation is the use of practice tracing method which is an interpretivist version of process tracing. Moreover, the method of linguistic landscape borrowed from sociolinguistics allows for an in-depth study of institutional language practices. In this research, it has been adapted to analyse the virtual language landscape.

The dissertation also contributes to the understanding of the nation-building process in Moldova by expanding the range of analytical tools available to researchers. It shifts the focus away from the traditional identity politics framework and towards the field of language regimes. The study avoids limiting the discussion to an analysis of geopolitical factors in Moldova, which is often the case in previous works.

In addition, this study adds to the list of countries that have been studied using the concepts of state traditions and language regimes proposed by L. Cardinal and S. Sonntag and informed by historical institutionalism. The results of this study confirm that the formation of a language regime is influenced by the political institutional and political cultural traditions inherited by a state. Thus, a new theoretical framework adapted to the study of language regimes in newly independent states has been developed. This can serve as a stimulus for new case study research or comparative studies on the countries that face similar challenges of the management of ethnolinguistic diversity to be done.

*Statements to be defended*

1. The current interdisciplinary approaches to language regimes are mainly applicable to countries that have a long history of independent existence and stable state traditions. However, the study of diversity management issues is equally relevant for the countries that have only gained their independence or regained it in the late 20th century. In regard to them, it appears more correct to look at political institutional traditions rather than state ones, as the former are more likely to be traced, and, in this research, at political cultural traditions. The latter reflect the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of the community members that influence the state language policies, thereby affecting the formation of its language regime as well.

2. Since 1989, the politics of language in Moldova has evolved from an exclusively state policy on the regulation of ethnolinguistic diversity to an area of relations regarding language and politics among various actors. The latter include political parties, academic institutions, media, non-governmental organizations, the church and businesses. With certain reservations, they can be divided into pro-Romanian and Moldovenist camps. The first one stands for the Romanian identity of the language and the people of Moldova, while the second one supports the preservation of Moldovan identity, as well as the role of the Russian language as the language of interethnic communication. Thus, in our conceptualization, the language

regime in Moldova is not a legal framework formed by the government language policy but institutional language practices that reflect the politics of language in the republic.

3. During the nearly 180 years that the territory of modern Moldova was part of the Russian Empire, Romania and the Soviet Union, various governance traditions developed. From an administrative perspective, there was a situation of either the absence or selective inclusion of ethnic Moldovans in the administrative elite of their country. Meanwhile, two competing models emerged in terms of the management of ethnolinguistic diversity. The first model is the imperial and Soviet tradition of peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups that is based on the Russian language as a language for interethnic communication. The second model is the Romanian tradition of a unitary national state that recognises only the Romanian language as official. Since the adoption of language laws in 1989, these political institutional and political cultural traditions have been reflected in Moldova's contemporary language regime.

4. The development of the legal framework for language regime in Moldova can be divided into two distinct stages. The first one, from 1989 to 2001, saw a desire to strike a balance between competing traditions in legal acts and to incorporate international standards for the protection of minority rights. The second stage, beginning in 2001, has been characterised by efforts to shift the legal framework towards one of two models of the management of ethnolinguistic diversity. Multilingualism has traditionally been supported by left-wing parties such as the Party of Communists and the Party of Socialists, while monolingualism has always been promoted by right-wing Romanian parties, including the successors of the Popular Front of Moldova, the Liberal Party, and the Party of Action and Solidarity.

5. Language practices adopted by government institutions, educational institutions, media and businesses in Moldova have shown that the aspirations expressed in the language laws of 1989 to restore social functions to the Moldovan language have generally been successful. However, attempts to significantly reduce

the use of the Russian language have not been accepted by Moldovan society due to the strong internationalist tradition that Russian underlies. Therefore, government policy has limited impact on language practices in Moldova, thereby creating a situation when the practices of public administration and actual language practices do not fully align. This is especially evident in the areas where ethnic minorities prevail, such as Gagauzia and Pridnestrovie.

6. The process of European integration of the Republic of Moldova may harmonise legislative and normative activities related to the regulation of ethno-linguistic diversity. However, it is unlikely that it will be able to completely overcome the gap between the government language policy and the actual language regime. The functioning and evolution of the language regime in the republic will remain path dependent on political institutional and political cultural traditions that historically developed in the territory of Moldova if ethnic and linguistic diversity is to remain intact.

#### *Presentation of research outcomes*

The study outcomes that reflect the development of research at different stages were presented at the following international conferences:

1. The IV International Conference “Multilingualism in Urban Space: Policy, Identity, Education” (Moscow, April 7 – 8, 2022). The topic of the talk was “Factors Contributing to Language Shift in Pridnestrovie”.

2. The International Scientific Conference “The Public Diplomacy of Great Powers and Regional Powers in the Mediterranean-Black Sea Region” (Moscow, October 20 – 22, 2022). The topic of the presentation was “The Public Diplomacy of Great Powers in the Republic of Moldova in 2014 – 2022”.

3. The V International Conference “Multilingualism in Urban Space: Policy, Identity, Education” (Moscow, April 6 – 8, 2023). The topic of the talk was “Combining ‘Thinking Politically’ and ‘Thinking Linguistically’: Theoretical Approaches to Language Regimes”.

The main findings of the research were published in leading peer-reviewed academic journals recommended by the regulations of the HSE University.

1. Tulum A. S., Zubalov D. Yu. Impact of Language Ideologies on Language Practices in Pridnestrovie // Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences. 2022. Vol. 15(11). P. 1552–1572.

2. Tulum A. S. Theoretical Approaches to Language Regimes // Social Sciences and Contemporary World. 2024. Vol. 4. P. 128–136. (in Russian)

3. Tulum A. S. The Role of Non-State Actors in the Politics of Language in the Republic of Moldova // International Analytics. 2024. Vol. 15(3). P. 122–137. (in Russian)

### *Main findings*

The **first chapter** provides an overview of the various approaches available to study language regimes and formulates the theoretical framework for the dissertation. While analysing the tools from political science, where the concept of “language regime” was first introduced, and sociolinguistics, where most of language policy studies belong to, we have come to the following conclusions.

The use of “language regime” as a distinct concept, rather than synonymous with language policy or language ideology, has been justified by its greater potential to explain the relationship between linguistic and political phenomena. This confidence is supported by both political scientists and sociolinguists that point out the need to study the context in which language regimes form, including not only legal norms but also institutional practices and language attitudes within a given community. This implies the examination of two levels of social interaction related to power and social relations among language groups, resulting in the formation of language regimes. As a result, we suggested moving away from the traditional view of a language regime as the result of exclusively state language policy. In our interpretation, a language regime is considered as a set of institutional language practices that reflect the politics of language in a particular

community. The latter implies both formal and informal relations regarding language and politics among a wide range of actors.

Then, after we explained the reasons why we chose historical institutionalism over rational choice one, we finalised our approach to language regimes. Based on the Cardinal and Sonntag conceptualisation informed by historical institutionalism, we propose to understand language regimes as historically determined language practices that reflect formal and informal relations among various actors regarding language and politics. Formal relations refer to a public policy on language diversity, while informal relations can be defined as the exchange of attitudes and ideas about language, linguistic diversity, and methods of managing it. The path dependence of the practices is to be conceptualised as political institutional and political cultural traditions, respectively. The possibility of tracing their continuity in the case of newly independent states significantly enhances the explanatory power of this approach, thereby addressing the research problem of this dissertation of whether the concept of “state traditions” is applicable to the study of the language regimes of the countries that have recently gained or regained their independence.

As a result, we have formulated a theoretical framework for the study, which implies that political institutional and political cultural traditions specific to a particular community influence the government language policy, thereby affecting the formation of language practices that constitute the language regime. To solve the problem of “localisation” of the concept, we supplemented the theoretical framework with the level system proposed by E. Royle and H. Lewis<sup>49</sup>. It has allowed us to structure the study of the language regime in the Republic of Moldova by highlighting the sub-state levels of Gagauzia and Pridnestrovie as well as the institutional context of the European Union and the conventions and charters of the Council of Europe.

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<sup>49</sup> Royles E., Lewis H. Language Policy in Multi-Level systems: A Historical Institutional Analysis // *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 2019. Vol. 21(4). P. 709–727.

The **second chapter** of the study is devoted to the formation of political institutional and political cultural traditions in the territory of Moldova during the Imperial (1812 – 1917), Romanian (1918 – 1940), and Soviet (Moldavian ASSR in 1924 – 1940 and Moldavian SSR in 1940 – 1991) periods. It also examines the language laws of 1989 that reflect these traditions.

For nearly 180 years, there was a situation of either the absence or selective inclusion of ethnic Moldovans in the administrative elite of their country. During the Imperial period, this was due to the assimilation policy towards the local aristocracy and the low level of education and activity of predominantly rural Moldovan population. In the Romanian and Soviet eras, the authorities' lack of trust in Moldovan political loyalty was a limiting factor.

Meanwhile, it is possible to state that over this period of time competing traditions of the management of ethnolinguistic diversity developed as well. After it had annexed Bessarabia in 1918, the government of Romania<sup>50</sup> attempted to awaken the Romanian identity among the Bessarabian Moldovans, who had not had it due to Bessarabia's separation from the Moldavian principality in 1812 and its joining to Russia. However, despite their efforts at Romanisation, they only partially succeeded. The multi-ethnic diversity of the Bessarabian population and their loyalty to the Russian language and culture presented an obstacle to Romania's assimilation policy.

The Imperial project saw Bessarabia as part of the family of the peoples of Russia, which in many ways was continued by the Soviet internationalist project of promoting “friendship among peoples”, or more precisely, socialist nations. Initially, in the MASSR (1924 – 1940), the Soviet government attempted to compensate for the imperial past by promoting *korenisation*. They started building the Moldovan nation that later would include Bessarabia. At the same time, they constantly experimented with the concept of the “Moldovan language”, sometimes bringing it closer to literary Romanian, then distancing it from it. After the reunion

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<sup>50</sup> It emerged in the middle of the 19th century as a result of the union of the principalities of Moldavia and Walachia.



of Bessarabia with the Soviet Union, the authorities stopped denying the close relationship between the two languages and recognised the common literary foundation of both of them yet approved the use of Cyrillic script for the Moldovan language. However, the pendulum swing pattern of the Soviet Union's national policy in the subsequent decades, characterised by both new waves of korenisation and Russification, led to a serious imbalance in the use of the Moldovan and Russian languages in the republic. During the period of perestroika, the Communist Party of Moldova appeared to be unable to successfully resolve the issue, whereas the national intelligentsia that did not hide their pro-Romanian sympathies, on the contrary, were ready to act.

As a result, in the period of national revival, all the problems that had accumulated over two centuries unfolded, and the events of 1989 seemed to become a critical juncture for the language regime in Moldova. The republic could either follow the path of creating a national Romanian state, as demanded by many Romanian activists, or stick to the Soviet practice of national policy that defended the status quo. However, the language laws passed in 1989 represented both an embodiment of historical practices that had taken place in Moldova during the 20th and a compromise between them. On the one hand, they satisfied the demands of the Moldovan majority of the republic to elevate their national language to the status of a state language to restore all of its social functions, which had already happened under Romanian rule. On the other hand, the Soviet practice of creating a bilingual society was endorsed, and guarantees were provided for the development of the languages of all ethnic groups that traditionally reside in the republic. This respected the ethnic diversity of the country and continued the Soviet tradition of favouring multiethnic diversity, which was not typical of the Romanian nation-state<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, Russian was not recognised as the official language, despite the two-century-old practice of its preferential use in this territory. This led to conflicts in

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<sup>51</sup> Marácz L. Op. cit.

Gagauzia and Pridnestrovie, where Russian speakers demanded the status of a state language for Russian as well.

The **third chapter** of the dissertation explores the contemporary language regime in the Republic of Moldova. We first looked at how its regulatory framework was designed, then we used statistical materials, analytical reports, and data on the virtual linguistic landscape to examine everyday language practices in four key areas: public services, education, media, and commercial services. We also investigated how these practices correspond with the government language policy. Finally, we analysed the political factors that have influenced the transformation of Moldova's language regime.

Like the laws of 1989, the development of the legal framework for the language regime and attempts to reform it throughout all years of independence have been based on balancing competing historical traditions. As a result, the current language regime in Moldova can be characterised as heterogeneous.

The preservation of the Romanian language as the sole state language in Moldova is connected to both the desire to compensate for past restrictions on access to power for Moldovans and the aspiration of pro-Romanian forces to incorporate Moldova into a unitary Romanian state. The latter does not imply any official status for other languages, except Romanian. Meanwhile, keeping Russian as a functional language in Moldova is due to the internationalist Soviet tradition based on Russian a language for interethnic communication, which dates back to the Imperial era and continued even under Romanian occupation. This can be seen most clearly in Gagauzia, where a compromise has been reached to allow the use of three official languages. At the same time, the legislation of Pridnestrovie, which is not in line with the legal acts of Moldova, fully adheres to the tradition of multilingualism and the Soviet version of Moldovan historiography, which views Moldovan in Cyrillic script as a separate language from Romanian.

At the level of language practices, the heterogeneity of the language regime depends on how formal a domain of language use is used. The higher the level of formality and the greater the state regulation, the more pronounced

Romanian monolingualism becomes. For instance, the highest degree of discrimination based on language can be found in the justice system. In education and the media, the language regime is moving towards bilingualism with a predominance of the state language. However, in the digital media, the use of Russian is not limited by the state. A regime close to equal bilingualism can be observed in commercial services, where agents are interested in reaching a wide audience regardless of their ethnic background. Thus, their language practices are influenced by the political cultural traditions of Moldova, among which the Soviet internationalist one with Russian as a *lingua franca* prevails.

Language practices in Moldova also vary geographically. In areas where the Bulgarian and Gagauz ethnic groups are most concentrated, such as Taraclia and Gagauzia, Russian dominates over Romanian and the minority languages that, alongside Ukrainian, the language of the largest ethnic minority of the republic, have a minimal presence in public sphere. The language regime in Pridnestrovia can also be described as one where, despite the declared multilingualism, Russian is almost exclusively spoken in all four domains.

Although the process of European integration, which has been shaping Moldova's development for over 10 years, is presented by Moldovan authorities as an opportunity to harmonise the language regime through the promotion of multilingualism, respect for the rights of minority groups, and encouragement of their participation in society and governance, real government actions indicate the opposite. Parallel to the promotion of European standards, there are constant attempts to politicise issues related to the name of the state language or the status of Russian. This suggests that Moldova's potential accession to the European Union is unlikely to lead to a significant change in the language regime in the country, whereas the competing traditions of the Romanian nationalism and Soviet internationalism will continue to shape its evolution if ethnolinguistic diversity in the republic remains intact.