

Dear reader,

This is an author-produced version of an article published in John C. Wood (ed.), *Christianity and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Europe*. It agrees with the manuscript submitted by the author for publication but does not include the final publisher's layout or pagination.

Original publication:

Grigore, Mihai-Dumitru

»Orthodox Brothers«: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, National Identity and Conflict between the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches in Moldavia

in: John C. Wood (ed.), *Christianity and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Europe*, pp. 91–112
Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016

URL: <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666101496.91>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

Published in accordance with the policy of Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: <https://www.vr-elibrary.de/self-archiving>

Your IxTheo team

Liebe*r Leser*in,

dies ist eine von dem/der Autor*in zur Verfügung gestellte Manuskriptversion eines Aufsatzes, der in John C. Wood (Hrsg.), *Christianity and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Europe* erschienen ist. Der Text stimmt mit dem Manuskript überein, das der/die Autor*in zur Veröffentlichung eingereicht hat, enthält jedoch nicht das Layout des Verlags oder die endgültige Seitenzählung.

Originalpublikation:

Grigore, Mihai-Dumitru

»Orthodox Brothers«: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, National Identity and Conflict between the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches in Moldavia

in: John C. Wood (Hrsg.), *Christianity and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Europe*, S. 91–112
Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016

URL: <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666101496.91>

Die Verlagsversion ist möglicherweise nur gegen Bezahlung zugänglich.

Diese Manuskriptversion wird im Einklang mit der Policy des Verlags Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht publiziert: <https://www.vr-elibrary.de/self-archiving>

Ihr IxTheo-Team

“Orthodox Brothers’: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, National Identity and Conflict between the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches in Moldavia”

Mihai-D. Grigore (IEG Mainz)

Introduction

On 30 July 2007, the elderly Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Teoctist Arăpașu died in hospital.¹ With his death, a controversial era of religious politics in the transformation period following the collapse of the communist regime in Romania also came to an end. Teoctist, the fifth Romanian Patriarch, was conferred the patriarchal dignity in 1986. He led the Romanian Church for two decades, through the last years of the dictator Ceaușescu and the first seventeen years of the “free Romania” that followed the national revolution in 1989. He has been a deeply polarizing figure: given his prominent position in the hierarchy of the communist regime, it seems quite plausible that he and his entourage would have worked closely with the oppressive communist authorities,² which is an accusation that has been made both in ecclesiastical circles and by representatives of Romanian civil society. He may well have been an informer for and a collaborator with the *Securitate* (the main Romanian secret service). These accusations led to Teoctist’s temporary withdrawal from public life in 1990 (from 10 January through 4 April). However, because no conclusive proof of his collaboration with the communist regime emerged, Patriarch Teoctist returned in his position.

¹ See *Gandul.info*, s.v. “Patriarhul Teoctist a murit”, <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/patriarhul-teoctist-a-murit-867789>, accessed 5 June 2015.

² See the polemical article by Felix Corley from 2 August 2007, after the death of Teoctist in “The Independent” (Romanian translation on *Romanialibera.ro*, s.v. “*The Independent: Teoctist, cântărețul lui Ceaușescu*” <http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/international/the-independent--teoctist--cantaretul-lui-ceausescu-102797>, accessed 5 June 2015; further articles against Teoctist on the web-page of *Evenimentul Zilei*, s. v. “Trecutul communist al Patriarhului Teoctist”, <http://www.evz.ro/trecutul-comunist-al-patriarhului-teoctist-423690.html>, accessed 5 June 2015.

On the other hand, many Romanian Orthodox believers wanted their shepherd back and were relieved at the Patriarch's return. This substantial group of the faithful trusted Teoctist to be capable enough to guide the Romanian Church and society (86.8 per cent of the people declared themselves in 1992 to be Orthodox³) through the difficult transition after the December 1989 "revolution". Patriarch Teoctist did not disappoint his supporters in this regard.⁴ After his return to the Patriarchal See and until his death in 2007, he managed to consolidate the popularity of the Church in Romanian society: surveys have consistently shown it to be the country's most trusted institution. He also cultivated constructive relations with the political leadership and promoted the restitution of Church property confiscated by the communists in the 1940s and 1950s. Teoctist also helped to ensure a positive reputation for the Romanian Orthodox Church on the European level, establishing good relations with both Protestant and Catholic Churches. It should not be forgotten that Romania was the first Orthodox country to receive the visit of a pope when John Paul II was the guest of Patriarch Teoctist in May 1999.

However, the most important accomplishment of the long pastoral activity of Teoctist is his success in maintaining the unity of the Romanian Orthodox Church. It has been the only Orthodox Church in the former Eastern Bloc not to become divided into different competing "Patriarchates" and "Metropolises"⁵, a development that has occurred in the Churches of Ukraine, Bulgaria and Serbia, among others. Teoctist succeeded in preserving one Church for one nation: the Romanian Orthodox Church⁶ is therefore today the second largest autocephalous

³ See *Colectaredate.insee.ro*, s.v. "Recensământul populației și locuințelor" <http://colectaredate.insee.ro/phc/aggregatedData.htm>, accessed 5 June 2015.

⁴ See <http://ziarullumina.ro/memoriame/patriarhul-teoctist-de-un-lumea-dreptilor>, accessed 5 June 2015.

⁵ Usually the Patriarchate is the highest administrative level of a Church, signifying that that Church is independent (autocephalous). A Patriarchate consists of several Metropolises. There are also autocephalous Churches organized as Metropolises or Archbishoprics – for instance the Greek-Orthodox Church. Both "Patriarchate" and "Metropolis" are administrative units of the Churches, not hierarchical pastoral categories. Orthodox ecclesiology recognizes only three hierarchical levels: deacons, priests and bishops. Therefore, Patriarchs and Metropolitan are regular bishops entrusted with specific administrative duties.

⁶ See *Patriarhia.ro*, s.v. "Administrative Organisation", <http://patriarhia.ro/administrative-organisation-5656-en.html>, accessed 05 June 2015.

Orthodox Church in the world after the Russian Orthodox Church. It has a broad basis of almost 17 million ethnic Romanians and propagates an influential discourse of a purportedly intrinsic link between “the Romanian people” (*neam*), their “Forefathers’ faith” (*crediința strămoșească*) and “Romanian lands” (*țară*). This strong association of Romanian faith, ethnicity and territory has sometimes involved the Romanian church in intense rivalries and struggles for power and influence with other Orthodox Churches: in particular, there have been a number of conflicts with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Beneath the surface unity of Eastern Orthodoxy, there have been (and continue to be) many tensions over and struggles for influence, pre-eminence, jurisdiction and popularity. The Orthodox Churches share a common dogma, doctrine and liturgical communion as well the tradition of the Church Fathers and the Seven Ecumenical Councils (between 325–787). They are organized after the so-called synodic principle of brotherly equality between the autocephalous Churches, which take fundamental decisions (dogmatic, cultic, and jurisdictional) only in ecumenical synods. However, while such institutional factors theoretically provide a framework of harmony and inter-church agreement, this has often been undermined in specific historical contexts. The last universally recognised Ecumenical Council was in the eighth century, and as a result many jurisdictional problems linked to the historical evolution of the various churches over almost 1200 years have remained unsolved. While the Orthodox Churches have indeed been capable over this long period of time of preserving a substantial degree of dogmatic, liturgical and spiritual unity, they have failed in many regards to clarify their jurisdictional problems.

In this essay, I will demonstrate the complexity of the divisions within Eastern Orthodoxy with regard to national identity through considering the example of the Romanian and Russian Orthodox Churches after 1989, giving particular attention to their struggles over the status of the Orthodox Church in Moldavia. The sources I use to explore this issue consist mainly of

newspaper articles in the media debate caused by the jurisdictional frictions between the two Churches. The debate surrounding the Moldavian issue has been highly public, and the churches themselves as well as their respective supporters on both sides have been key actors in shaping the resulting press and political discourses. However, religious viewpoints have been expressed well beyond the official churches or even the faithful more broadly defined. Of particular interest with regard to the issue of faith and national identity, it is striking to find that in Romania, for example, even anti-clerical newspapers (such as *Adevărul* [“The Truth”]) took the side of the Romanian Orthodox Church in debates over Church jurisdiction, putting national interests ahead of their otherwise critical position on institutionalized religion.

Orthodoxy and Nation

The Romanian Church has sought to use the historical and nationalist argument of “one people, one faith, one Church”, and it has also made reference to the thirty-fourth Apostolic Canon, which stipulates that every ethnic group has the right to choose its own bishops and create its own autonomous Church body.⁷ In addition, the canons of the second and third Ecumenical Councils from 381 and 431 forbid jurisdictional appropriations between bishops.⁸ These are basic elements of the theological attitude of Orthodoxy towards ethnicity and nation. The “nation” is thus accepted as a legitimate category for the organisation of religious communities and discourses, and in defining what a “nation” is, ethnicity is given particular importance. There is nothing inherently contradictory, from the Orthodox perspective, about even a relatively strong association between nation and faith. The tensions between universalism and

⁷ Ferdinand Boxler (ed.), “Die sogenannten apostolischen Constitutionen und Canonen”, in *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter online*, 1874, <https://www.unifr.ch/bkv/kapitel3180.htm>; Theresia Hainthaler, “Autorität und Autoritäten in der Alten Kirche. Patristische Anmerkungen zum Ravenna-Dokument”, in Christoph Böttigheimer/Johannes Hofmann (ed.), *Autorität und Synodalität. Eine interdisziplinäre und interkonfessionelle Umschau nach ökumenischen Chancen und ekklesiologischen Desideraten* (Frankfurt 2008), 49–78, on pp. 64–67.

⁸ Cemârtan, *Mitropolia Basarabiei*, 36.

particularism – which are in themselves not specific to Orthodox Christianity – have continued to shape the history of the church through the twentieth century and up to the present day.

Shifting our gaze to the historical context of the Kingdom of Greater Romania after the Treaty of Versailles, we notice that the entire inter-war period was characterized by discursive, political, administrative, economic, cultural and – closest to the focus of this essay – theological attempts to define the nature and character of the “Romanian nation”.⁹ In Romania in the 1930s, two highly influential Orthodox theologians, Nichifor Crainic (1889–1972) and Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993), wrote between them two major theological works (in 1938 and 1939) with the aim of underpinning the link between Orthodox faith (with its universalist valences) and national particularism.¹⁰ The main line of argumentation in the work of Stăniloae is highly dogmatic. The ideal type of inter-personal communion, he argues, is that represented by the Holy Trinity. A communicative field leading to community and further to communion¹¹ can only be established between personal beings – i.e. beings with their own will, affect and rationality – and human community and communion should also function in ways analogous to the pattern of the Trinity. Human communities are structured by common determinants, common history and common aspirations, shared among all those who belong to them. What Christ did was to re-establish a functional communicative and communional field among all human beings. However, those people themselves have to take the initiative and shape their relations in the specific social circumstances in which they live, but they should do so according to the model of community and communion established by God: the nation, Stăniloae wrote, would in this view be the sign

⁹ Florian Kühner-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Zentralstaatliche Integration und politischer Regionalismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (München 2014).

¹⁰ Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrăție* [Orthodoxy and Ethnocracy] (Bucharest 1997); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie și românism* [Orthodoxy and Romanianhood] (Bucharest 1998). See also Dumitru Stăniloae, *Națiune și creștinism* [Nation and Christianity] (Bucharest 2003).

¹¹ “Communion” is the spiritually deeper form of religious bond between human beings and creation on the fifth level, among human beings on the fourth level, among Christians on the third level, between Christians and their God on the second level, and between God-Father, God-Son and the Holy Ghost within the Holy Trinity on the first level.

of a functional community leading to communion between human beings according to the pattern of Holy Trinity. “In God there has to be a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. These divine persons do not change places between them. On the other hand, because they possess the same common godly nature in one common dimension of love, they are on equal positions to each other and not in a relationship of superiority and inferiority or how people are to *foreign persons*.”¹² It suggests that while relationships in one’s own community should be based on the equalitarian relations of the Trinity, relations with those *outside* that community might be legitimately addressed as a form of (inferior) otherness. Further, Stăniloae developed his argument in the direction of *national* communion, which, in his view, would be built upon an intrinsic quality of every person: “[This national quality] is part of the essential horizon of every human being; his national quality counts among the determinants of his eternal visibility and presence. The heavenly pattern of every human being is the concrete pattern of the historically articulated human being.”¹³ And this is, of course, the national, particularistic valence of humanity. Nichifor Crainic is more subtle and speaks of a “Christian nationalism” of the Romanians grounded in the timeless values of Romanian peasantry. “Nationalism”, he wrote, “represents the integrative factor of spiritual solidarity which shapes the way of life of our peasantry”:

The Orthodox spirit is the formula of Romanian solidarity, but the Romanian solidarity does not exhaust the Orthodox spirit, which can also be deeply rooted in other [national] solidarities, such as the Greek, Serbian, or Bulgarian ones. [...] In Orthodoxy, Greeks live like Greeks, Serbians like Serbians, Romanians like Romanians. Ethnic unity is the spiritual basis of Orthodoxy. The Orthodox universalism or the ecumenicity concretize in the harmonic symbiosis between nations, which are differentiated by race, but related in

¹² Apud Constantin Schifirneț, “O concepție antropologică creștin-ortodoxă despre națiune” [An Anthropological Christian-Orthodox Concept of Nation], in Dumitru Stăniloae *Ortodoxie și românism*, ed. by Constantin Schifirneț (Bucharest 1998), V–XXXVII, on p. XVI. Emphasis added.

¹³ Schifirneț, *Concepție*, XVIII.

the Holy Ghost. The Church, in its earthly organization, follows this principle: it is ecumenical in doctrine, hierarchy and discipline, but national in the specific ways of administering the ecumenicity.¹⁴

We see that Crainic was more preoccupied with conciliating national particularism and Orthodox universalism; for this reason, rather than addressing dogmatic and theological arguments (like Stăniloae), he focused on cultural and ethnical patterns. The theological perspectives of Stăniloae and Crainic – as leading Romanian theologians – have been deeply influential on – and remain quite typical of -- Romanian Orthodox views in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They are at least implicitly visible in the context of more recent issues. Before explaining them,¹⁵ however, we must turn to other important elements of the historical background to the Orthodox dispute over Moldavia.

Historical Background on the Religious Conflict over Moldavia

The situation of the Moldavian Church as a “battlefield” on which the Russian and Romanian Orthodox Churches have struggled started in the early nineteenth century, when the Russian Empire incorporated a substantial part of the territory of the Principality of Moldavia (between the Rivers Dniester and Prut). This was a result of the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest ending the Russo-Turkish war, which had begun six years earlier.¹⁶ Since that time, this new territory under tsarist authority has been referred to as “Bessarabia”. Prior to the treaty, the old Principality of Moldavia had had – since the fourteenth century – its own Church organization: a Metropolitan see under Constantinople jurisdiction in the capital Jassy. After the loss of Bessarabia, the two

¹⁴ Crainic, *Ortodoxie*, 150.

¹⁵ Nicolai Staab, *Rumänische Kultur, Orthodoxie und der Westen. Der Diskurs um die nationale Identität in Rumänien aus der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Frankfurt 2011).

¹⁶ Charles King, *The Moldovans. Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford 2000), 19.

bishoprics of the Moldavian Church that lay beyond what had become the frontier river of Prut, Hotin and Chişinău, passed into the jurisdiction of the Muscovite Patriarchy. At first, they formed their own Metropolis, which was later downgraded to the level of an archbishopric.¹⁷ This situation continued with only slight changes for nearly a century, until 1919 when the Treaty of Versailles recognised the Bessarabian Great Council's (*Sfatul Țării*) decision from 27 March 1918 to become part of the Kingdom of Romania.¹⁸

After 1812, the Russian Patriarchy acted like every other imperial Church in European history with regard to the new territory: the ecclesial organization was made to correspond to the provincial organization of the imperial state. This old pattern had roots in the first Church organization under Emperor Constantine the Great (306–337), when the dioceses were based upon the existing provincial units of the Roman Empire.¹⁹ Since that time, all other European Empires, including Tsarist Russia, had followed the same procedure. But while there was nothing new in this strategy, what had changed in south-eastern Europe by the nineteenth century, however, was that the process of nation building was in full swing.²⁰

In the early nineteenth century, the ethnic Romanians in the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were fully conscious of sharing a cultural and linguistic unity with each other, and there were popular movements in both territories that aimed toward a political unification, which

¹⁷ Lucian Turcescu/Lavinia Stan, "Church-state conflict in Moldova: the Bessarabian Metropolitane", in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36 (2003), 443–465 on p. 445.

¹⁸ The Kingdom of Romania resulted from the union of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859. After the end of the First World War, Bessarabia and Transylvania were added to these initial territories to form the so-called "Great Romanian Kingdom" (*Regatul României Mari*).

¹⁹ Elisabeth Hermann-Otto, *Konstantin der Große* (Darmstadt 2007), 166–168.

²⁰ Holm Sundhaussen, "Nationsbildung und Nationalismus im Donau-Balkan-Raum", in *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 48 (1993), 234–235; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York 2000); Thomas Bremer, "Nationalismus und Konfessionalität in den Kriegen auf dem Balkan", in Konrad Clewing/Oliver Jens Schmitt (ed.), *Südosteuropa: von vormoderner Vielfalt und nationalstaatlicher Vereinheitlichung: Festschrift für Edgar Hösch* (München 2005), 463–476, on pp. 464–472; Hans-Christian Maner/Norbert Spannenberger (ed.), *Konfessionelle Identität und Nationsbildung in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2007); Konrad Clewing, "Staatsystem und innerstaatliches Agieren im multiethnischen Raum: Südosteuropa im langen 19. Jahrhundert", in Konrad Clewing, Oliver Jens Schmitt (ed.), *Geschichte Südosteuropas. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Regensburg 2011), 432–553; Ulf Brunnbauer, "Der Balkan", in *EGO. Europäische Geschichte Online*, 10 June 2013, <http://ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/crossroads/grenzregionen/ulf-brunnbauer-der-balkan/?searchterm=nationalismus#DieradesNationalstaats>, pp. 24–34.

was realized in 1859 with the formation of a single Romanian state. Therefore, we can understand that the incorporation of a substantial part of the Moldavian territory into the Russian Empire was seen by the young Romanian nation as a rupture.²¹ The transnational system of the Russian Empire²² had to confront the national structures and mentalities of the Principality of Moldavia, where the Moldavian Orthodox Church represented the backbone not only of the nation but also of the state. This role had a long history: in the fourteenth century, when the Moldavian Metropolis under Constantinople jurisdiction had been established, this new institution had offered the former lords of the land the necessary instrument to preserve the autonomy of the Moldavian Principality, which was surrounded by Catholic powers such as Poland and Hungary. The same can be said, in the later period, of the Orthodox Church – which had long successfully resisted Latin missionary efforts – which offered a resource for seeking and maintaining political autonomy by establishing a religious identity coupled with ethnic allegiance. Now that much of Moldavia’s territory and population had been separated from it by force, after almost five centuries of unity, intense national resentments emerged in Bessarabia that posed a potential threat to the Russian imperial order in the region.

Given the strength of proto-national feeling in the newly acquired territory, the Russian authorities realized that simply transferring some bishoprics from the Moldavian Metropolis (who was under the jurisdiction of Constantinople) to the authority of the Muscovite Patriarchy – i.e., precisely the venerable imperial strategy described above – would not function as well as it once had. The Bessarabian Bishoprics and their flock first had to be, in a sense, de-nationalized in order to weaken their national feelings and turn them into potentially loyal subjects of the

²¹ By “nation” I refer to a common national sense of belonging, one that may well precede the formation of the national state. This sense of belonging was based upon a common language, common religion and common culture. All these tendencies were crowned in 1859 when the territorial unity was gained and the “Romanian nation” could finally be regarded as fact.

²² In order to maintain its unity every imperial political form has to develop integrative structures that are able to offset the different boundaries between local traditions and cultures included in that empire. For pre-modern empires the ethnic units were the problem, while for modern empires, like the Russian or the Habsburg ones, the nations were the most powerful destabilization factor.

Russian order. As a result of this awareness, between 1812 and 1918 both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities of Russia engaged in an aggressive de-nationalization policy in Bessarabia – through re-settlement, attempts to change language and the installation of Russian hierarchs for Bessarabian bishoprics.²³ The national thinking of the Bessarabian people was the chief opponent of the transnational imperial system of the Tsarist Empire: from the Russian perspective, therefore, it had to be broken. This campaign cannot be regarded as successful, given the ease and near mutual unanimity with which the political union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918 – after almost a century of Russian rule – was achieved.

After 1919 and the treaty of Versailles,²⁴ the Romanian Church reintegrated the Bessarabian Church into its structures, after banishing the Russian Metropolitan Anastasij Gribanovski. A new head of the Bessarabian Church (consisting of the two aforementioned dioceses of Hotin and Chişinău) was appointed: Gurie Grosu, who became Archbishop of Hotin and Chişinău after being officially confirmed by the Romanian Synod in Bucharest on 30 December 1919.²⁵ This state of affairs ended with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939, when Bessarabia returned to the Soviet Union, the heir of the Tsarist Empire.

After 1945, the Church rivalry lost much of its intensity because both Romania and Russia were governed by repressive – and officially atheist – communist regimes. The Russian Orthodox Church was almost extinguished by Russian authorities. While the Romanian Church could preserve most of its structures (with regard to, for example, bishoprics, the educational system, monasteries and media) one cannot say that the Romanian communist regime was more permissive than the Russian: the Church was officially marginalised in Romania. In both

²³ Of course, the language was the main source of national cohesion. Well before the annexation of Bessarabia into the Russian Empire in 1812 the Romanian language had come to replace Slavonic as the liturgical language of the Church. Thus it was the Romanian language that was seen as one of the prime “enemies” in the new situation, in which Slavonic was reintroduced by the Russian state and ecclesiastical authorities as the cultic language of the Bessarabian Church.

²⁴ King, *Moldovans*, 32–35.

²⁵ Turcescu/Stăn, *Church-state Conflict*, 446–447.

countries the Churches were for the most part preoccupied with struggling for their own national survival, leaving relatively few resources and little opportunity for international relations. One might think that the fact that both the Romanian and Russian Churches were victims of communist oppression would have enhanced their brotherly feeling of solidarity on the basis of a common martyrdom. Nothing of the kind. Effective collaboration and good relations between the Churches in hardship would have been at least indirectly taken as a critique of the oppressive totalitarian regimes in Russia and Romania. Churches avoided seeking to develop collaborations since this only would have increased their suppression by the state. So every attempt to open themselves was inhibited. In these conditions, the jurisdictional problem of the Bessarabian Church simply dropped off the agenda. However, the issue rose again after 1989 and the freeing of Romania from Soviet domination.

The Situation after 1989

Among the many transitions to post-Communist rule in Eastern Europe that began in 1989, the Romanian “revolution” of that year was marked by an exceptional degree of violence, signified not least by the trial and execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife. It has been argued that, in the wake of these events:

Moldovan Romanian-speakers’²⁶ expectations for political independence from Moscow to be followed by religious independence reactivated the centuries-old conflict between the world’s largest Orthodox Church bodies, since neither the Moscow Patriarchate nor

²⁶ The issue of language is quite important and complex issue in this situation. A shared Romanian language may have been the first and most important element in the building of a national consciousness in Romania. Since Moldavia was a historical part of this linguistic area from the Middle Ages up to the present day, it is probably not surprising that many of the most “national struggles” centred on linguistic issues. Romanian had already been introduced as the liturgical language since the eighteenth century, so the partition of Moldavia after 1812 implied the attempt of the Russian authorities to reintroduce Slavonic as the cultic language for the Bessarabian Church. During the period of Soviet rule Moldavians were similarly only able to speak their language at home: at school Romanian was only offered as a foreign language. Everything else was in Russian. Both Tsarist and Russian regimes tolerated at most the term “Moldovan language”, but never admitted, that Bessarabian Moldavians, in fact, speak Romanian.

the Bucharest Patriarchate were willing to relinquish traditional dominance over Moldovan church affairs.²⁷

The years immediately following the revolution in Romania saw a growing instability of the Soviet system, posing a variety of challenges to the existing institutional arrangements, and those involving faith were no exception.

The proclamation of independence by the former Soviet Republic of Moldavia (27 August 1991) brought the historically charged issue of the Moldavian Church's allegiances to the fore.²⁸ The Metropolis of Bessarabia was reactivated by the Romanian Church in September 1992; it functioned in parallel to the so-called Metropolis of All Moldavia under the Muscovite jurisdiction. However, two centuries of de-nationalization policies under both Tsarist and Soviet regimes had reduced the "Romanian" population of Moldavia to a narrow majority²⁹ over Ukrainians and Russians. There was, however, an important difference of definition between the two churches with regard to how nationality was defined: as seen by the Romanian Orthodox Church, this group consists of "Romanians" while the Russian Orthodox Church sees them as "Moldovans".³⁰ This enabled the Russian Orthodox Church to continue the "classical" religious policy of the Russian State: it put the Moldavian Church under Muscovite jurisdiction in January 1991. Moldavia's secular authorities officially recognized this latter form of Church reorganization in 1993 under the name *Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldavia (Mitropolia*

²⁷ Turcescu/Stan, *Church-state conflict*, 454.

²⁸ See the original Romanian text: "Declarația de Independență a Republicii Moldova (1991)", in *istoria.md*, http://istoria.md/articol/573/Declara%C5%A3ia_de_Independen%C5%A3%C4%83_a_Republicii_Moldova, accessed 11 June 2015.

²⁹ King, *Moldovans*, 68–70. In the census in 2004 75.8% of the population declared themselves to be "Moldovans" and only 2.13% to be "Romanians" (<http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=295&>, accessed 11 June 2015). A new census took place from 12 to 25 May 2014 in the Republic of Moldavia, but its results have not yet been published (<http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=30&id=4615>, accessed 11 June 2015). However, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldavia decided in December 2013 that the official "Moldovan" language has to be replaced in the text of the Constitution by "Romanian": "Chisinau Recognizes Romanian as Official Language", in *Radio Free Europe*, 5 December 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/moldova-romanian-official-language/25191455.html>.

³⁰ Andrei Panici, "Romanian Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova", in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2/2 (2003), 37–51, on p. 37 and pp. 40–41.

Chişinăului și a întregii Moldove). So both the Russian and Romanian Churches established simultaneous claims to the Moldavian Church, each claiming the Moldavian Church to be under its jurisdiction. The secular government of the Republic of Moldavia then intervened and recognised the Russian claim only, its decision being influenced by the great economic and political dependence of Moldavia on Russia in the 1990s.

The parallel Romanian Orthodox institution, the Metropolis of Bessarabia that had been reactivated under the authority of the Bucharest Patriarchy, did not obtain the official recognition of the Moldavian authorities (who were, it should be noted, officially communist) in spite of having made eleven applications. While theoretically and ecclesiologically it is technically impossible to have two overlapping jurisdictions, the fact is that there, somewhat absurdly, are. Moreover, the Romanian Orthodox Church suffered diverse forms of harassment – financial, institutional and juridical – at the hands of the Moldavian regime, which was afraid to compromise its relations to the Russians, who supplied the country with energy. The result was that the only officially recognised Moldavian church was organised solely under Russian rather than Romanian Orthodox authority.

The Romanian Orthodox Church's reaction came promptly: Patriarch Teoctist recognized without consultation with the Russian Patriarch Aleksey the Bessarabian Metropolis as the *Metropolis of Bessarabia, autonomous and of old style (Mitropolia Basarabiei, autonomă și de stil vechi)* on 19 December 1992, and included the Metropolitan Petru in the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church.³¹ The reactivation of the Bessarabian Metropolinate was considered in the official *Patriarchal and Synodal Document from 19 December 1992* – issued by the Romanian Church – to be “a holy act of truth and justice, which completes the unity of

³¹ Romeo Cemârțan, *Cazul Mitropoliei Basarabiei – interferențe politice și religioase* (Chişinău 2004), 15–20. Turcescu/Stăn, *Church-state conflict*, 454–455. See the administrative organisation of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the official web-site, <http://patriarhia.ro/administrative-organisation-5656-en.html>, accessed 11 June 2015.

our forefathers' faith and the community of Romanian consciousness".³² The Russian Church, unsurprisingly, protested vigorously, invoking "canonical regulations" that were not given any further explanation. The Muscovite Patriarchy threatened the calling of a pan-Orthodox tribunal to condemn the unilateral reactivation of the Bessarabian Metropolis by Bucharest. However, this threat was never acted upon: the Russian Church knew it would in all likelihood lose the case, since there were similar precedents in the Orthodox world to bear out the actions taken by the Romanian Orthodox Church.³³

Nonetheless, the Bessarabian Metropolis – although it had been declared by the Romanian Church – at first remained unrecognised by the Moldavian government. Romanian State authorities as well as the Romanian Orthodox Church sought to bring pressure on the Moldavian authorities to compel this official recognition. They commenced, for instance, a legal action at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which ultimately decided that the Moldavian authorities were legally obliged to recognize the Bessarabian Metropolis. The Moldavian authorities postponed the implementation of the ECHR verdict as long as they could, but finally complied in 2002.

The Bessarabian Metropolis saw the recognition as a "victory of the Romanian Orthodoxy", as it declared on its official website.³⁴ This international success was used by the new Patriarch, Daniel Ciobotea, elected on 12 September 2007. Ciobotea's first pastoral decision was to strengthen the Metropolis of Bessarabia. Between 22 and 24 October 2007, he reactivated three bishoprics within it: the bishopric of Bălți (former Hotin), the bishopric of Cantemir (former Cetatea Albă-Ismail) and the bishopric of Dubăsari and All Transnistria (formerly the Romanian

³² Gheorghe Badea, "O victorie a adevărului istoric - 7 ani de la recunoașterea oficială a Mitropoliei Basarabiei de către Guvernul Republicii Moldova", in *Mitropolia Basarabiei*, <http://www.mitropoliabasarabiei.md/news/47/>, accessed 11 June 2015.

³³ Cemârtan, *Mitropolia Basarabiei*, 22–23.

³⁴ "Victorie a ortodoxiei românești" in *Mitropolia Basarabiei*, <http://www.mitropoliabasarabiei.ro/evolutia-procesului-de-inregistrare/victorie-a-ortodoxiei-romanesti/>, accessed 11 June 2015.

Orthodox Mission of Transnistria). While the two first bishoprics were old Romanian bishoprics that had been disaffiliated by the Soviets after 1945, the third is a new creation. Transnistria was never part of the old Principality of Moldavia, so the Moldavian Church or later the Romanian Church lacked the historical argument invoked for the Metropolis of Bessarabia and did not have in fact any jurisdictional claim to the territories beyond the Dniestr. Thus, by creating this bishopric, the Romanian Orthodox Church was seeking to extend its authority into new areas that had historically been in the hands of Russian Orthodoxy.

The Muscovite Patriarchy's reaction was vehement.³⁵ Previous Soviet "provinces" such as the Ukrainian Church or the Metropolitanate of Chişinău and All Moldavia (see above) unanimously condemned the decision of the Romanian Church as a form of Romanian "invasion" (*năvălire*) in Moldavia.³⁶ The Ukrainian blog *Voices from Russia*, for example, took over the title of an Interfax report, "Ukraine's Moscow-run Church Slams Romanian Synod",³⁷ and changed it to the more polemical "Canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church Slams Romanian Synod".³⁸

The Moldavian communist regime joined this campaign and threatened to withdraw the official recognition of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate that it had (reluctantly) granted in 2002.³⁹ The Moldavian President Vladimir Voronin compared the reactivation of the Bessarabian Bishoprics with the unilateral declaration of independence in Kosovo. He further stated, as the Moldavian

³⁵ Alina Neagu, "Patriarhia Rusă cere BOR să nu reactiveze cele trei eparhii în Republica Moldova", in *hotnews.com*, 8 November 2007, <http://m.hotnews.ro/stire/1003934>.

³⁶ Serinela Spătărelu, "Mitropolitul Ucrainei acuză Biserica Ortodoxă Română", in *ziare.com blog*, 27 December 2007, <http://www.ziare.com/stiri/acuzatii/mitropolitul-ucrainei-acuza-biserica-ortodoxa-romana-203240>; Adriana Toma, "BOR criticată din nou de patriarhul rus Aleksei al II-lea", in *ziare.com blog*, 18 December 2007 <http://m.ziare.com/stiri/bor-criticata-din-nou-de-patriarhul-rus-aleksei-al-ii-lea-197914>; Alexandru Canţîr, "Biserica Moldovei critică năvălirea României", in *BBCRomanian.com*, 16 November 2007, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/romanian/moldova>.

³⁷ "Ukraine's Moscow-run Church slams Romanian Synod", in *Interfax*, 25 December 2007, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=4108>.

³⁸ "Canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church Slams Romanian Synod", in *Voices from Russia*, 26 December 2007, <https://02varvara.wordpress.com/2007/12/26/canonical-ukrainian-orthodox-church-slams-romanian-synod>. "Canonical Ukrainian Church" implies here the claim that only the ex-Soviet Churches under Muscovite jurisdiction are to be considered "canonical", the others, like the Estonian Church or Bessarabian Church, are "schismatic".

³⁹ Serinela Spătărelu, "Mitropolitul Ucrainei acuza Biserica Ortodoxa Romana", in *ziare.com blog*, 27 December 2007, <http://www.ziare.com/stiri/acuzatii/mitropolitul-ucrainei-acuza-biserica-ortodoxa-romana-203240>.

press agency IPN reported on 1 December 2007 (the national holiday of Romania), that “it [was] the same provocation scheme against us, against the independence, sovereignty, against the country, identity and people [of the Republic of Moldavia]”.⁴⁰ The Russian press agency Interfax titled a story on 6 November 2007: “Romanian Orthodox Church to gain strength in Moldova and Ukraine”.⁴¹ The Russian President Vladimir Putin himself took a position on the issue, bestowing the Award of the Russian Orthodox Church on President Voronin. In his accompanying speech, Putin stated that the “consolidation of Orthodoxy represents the foundation for the positive development of inter-state relations”. He congratulated Voronin, saying that “this is an homage and a recognition of the personal merits Your Excellency has in the consolidation of spiritual relationships between Orthodox peoples and, especially, between our countries” (as quoted by the press-agency *Amos News* on 22 January 2008).⁴²

Those critics named (Voronin, Russian Patriarch, Hierarchs of the Ukrainian and Moldavian Church) accused the Romanian Church of “nationalist expansion”, and, indeed, there are suggestions that this claim might not be that far from the truth, since in 2007 the Romanian Orthodox Church implemented the Bessarabian Metropolis in a foreign territory. But Romanian Church claims it is extending its pastoral care to people who are Romanians, even if they happen to live outside of the Romanian state’s borders. So, in this case, territorial interference was at the centre of the religious and nationalist policy not only of the Romanian Church but also – at least implicitly – of the Romanian State, which has consistently supported the decision of the Bucharest Holy Synod from October 2007 to reactivate the Bessarabian bishoprics.⁴³

⁴⁰ “Vladimir Voronin threatens Bessarabian Metropolitan Church with annulment of its registration”, in *ipn*, 1 December 2007, <http://www.ipn.md/en/politica/11804>.

⁴¹ “Romanian Orthodox Church to gain strength in Moldova and Ukraine”, in *Interfax*, 6 November 2007, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=3885>.

⁴² “Putin a apreciat poziția lui Voronin în cazul Mitropoliei Basarabiei”, in *Amos News*, 22 January 2008, <http://www.amosnews.ro/arhiva/putin-apreciat-pozitia-lui-voronin-cazul-mitropoliei-basarabiei-22-01-2008>.

⁴³ “Patriarhia Moscovei acuza Patriarhia Romana de expansiune nationalista”, in *România Liberă online*, 1 November 2007, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/patriarhia-moscovei-acuza-patriarhia-romana-de-expansiune-nationalista-110213>.

However, criticism from within Orthodoxy of the actions of the Romanian Church in 2007 has come not only from the Churches of ex-Soviet provinces (such as the Ukrainian one): the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Istanbul (Constantinople) also stated that it was illegal to organize Church structures according to nationalist criteria. This position is understandable since it represents the old Byzantine imperial ideology, which has long remained influential at the Ecumenical Patriarchy. For example, the aggressive centralization policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was fully in accordance with this ideology, which was developed in order to combat the rise of national Churches in south-eastern Europe.⁴⁴

The issue of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Republic of Moldavia remains unsettled to this day, and there are thus two concomitant metropolitan sees – one under Muscovite the other under Bucharest jurisdiction – each of which has parallel functioning bishoprics. Furthermore, they very clearly do not always get along. For example, the Bishop of Dubăsari (within Muscovite jurisdiction) attacked the Bishop of Dubăsari (under Bucharest jurisdiction) – implicitly targeting the entire Romanian Orthodox Patriarchy – in his comments in 2007 to the Russian news agency *Ria-Novosti* that the Romanian Patriarchy had started a “crusade against the Russian Orthodox Church” that risked “destabilizing the foreign context in Western Europe”.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In this essay I have outlined the post-1989 jurisdictional conflict within the Eastern Orthodox Church around the ex-Soviet Republic of Moldavia with its Romanian speaking majority population.⁴⁶ The main protagonists were the leadership of the Russian and Romanian Orthodox

⁴⁴ Vasilios N. Makrides, “Why are Orthodox Churches Particularly Prone to Nationalization and even to Nationalism?” in *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 54/3–4 (2013), 325–352, on pp. 325–328.

⁴⁵ “Romanian Patriarchy attacked by the bishop of Tiraspol and Dubasari”, *HotNews.ro*, 30 October 2007, <http://english.hotnews.ro/stiri-archive-1750206-romanian-patriarchy-attacked-the-bishop-tiraspol-and-dubasari.htm>.

⁴⁶ See above on the issue “Moldavian” vs. “Romanian” in the respective discourses of Romanian nationalism and Soviet imperialism.

Churches, each of which offered arguments based upon history and national identity. The Russian Church has claimed that the Moldavian bishoprics are within its own jurisdiction because they belonged to the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century and to the Soviet Union in the twentieth century. The Russian Church has thus applied the imperial argument that Church administration has to follow provincial partition. As a former Tsarist and Soviet province, the Moldavian Church, in this view, has to subordinate itself to the Muscovite hierarchy. Its statute (administrative law) reveals the fact that the Russian Church's argumentation is based upon an imperial logic: when compared to the Romanian Church's statute we see that the Russian Patriarchy tends toward employing a more centralizing set of coercive measures towards its Metropolises (including the Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldova). Its priests and laypeople do not have same autonomous rights of self-administration as those granted by the statute of the Romanian Church for the Metropolis of Bessarabia for instance.⁴⁷

During his first pastoral visit to Moldavia, from 7 to 9 September 2013, the new Russian Patriarch, Patriarch Kyrill, affirmed: "our [Russian] Church is *multinational* and comprises tens of millions of people in sixty-two countries".⁴⁸ Nationalistic Moldavian circles, represented by the voice of the Mayor of Chişinău Dorin Chirtocă, accused Kyrill of playing the political games of the political leadership in Moscow. The suggestion that there was a political dimension to Kyrill's comments seems to be justified, since his pastoral visit to Moldavia took place immediately after the Russian Premier, Dmitrij Rogozin, warned the Republic of Moldavia on 2

⁴⁷ "Statutul pentru organizarea și funcționarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române", *patriarhia.ro*, <http://patriarhia.ro/statutul-bor-1400.html>, accessed on 06.08.2015; A. Klutschewsky, Th. Németh, E. Synek, "Das Statut der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche", in C. G. Fürst, R. Potz (Hg.), *Kirchenverfassungen*, Egling 2006, S. 41–72; Cemârtan, *Mitropolia Basarabiei*, 25.

⁴⁸ "His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of Moldova", in official website of the Russian Orthodox Church, 8 September 2013, <https://mospat.ru/en/2013/09/08/news90465/>. Emphasis added.

September 2013 not to sign the EU association accord, as was reported by *EurActiv.com*.⁴⁹ That this was mere coincidence seems highly unlikely.

The official reason for the visit was the celebration of the inclusion of the Bessarabian Bishoprics of Hotin and Chişinău in the Russian Church in the year 1812; as should be clear from the historical background provided above, this was a highly sensitive issue in the relations between Romania and Russia. Tendentiously describing what might be seen as a historical act of forcible incorporation as having instead resulted from “the burning desire of Moldavians to be in unity with the peoples of *Sacred Rus*”, the Russian high prelate warned that “false teachings of modernity, improperly understood liberalism, economic problems, and many other temptations have become a serious challenge for Moldavian society”. He further recommended “the Orthodox Church of Moldova” as being “the key to the preservation of the national identity and cultural independence of the Moldavian people”.⁵⁰ In other words, the “Moldavian identity” – administered by the Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldavia – would be endangered by the association with the EU. Moldavia, it was argued, should thus remain in the brotherly community of all peoples of “*Sacred Rus*”. This interpretation not only involved the location of Moldavian national identity within a historically imperial (and Russian) context but also the self-arrogation by Russia of the right to act as a necessary protector of a purportedly more genuine form of national community.

On the other side, the Romanian Church has openly framed its arguments in terms of the national and ethnic identity of the Moldavians: taking a dramatically different perspective than that offered by the Russian Church, it has emphasised not only that Moldavians are linguistically and culturally Romanians but also that Romanians historically once formed a unified political body

⁴⁹ “Russia threatens Moldova over its EU relations”, in *EurActiv.com*, 3 September 2013, <http://www.euractiv.com/europes-east/russia-keeps-threatening-neighbo-news-530198>.

⁵⁰ Pavel Korobov, “Canonical Diplomacy”, in *Komersant*, 9 September 2013, via *Russian Religion News*, <http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/1309b.html>.

with the “Moldavians” in what is today Romania, i.e. in the form of the historical Principality of Moldavia. It is not incidental to this argument that the restoration of political unity is desired by broad circles of the Moldavian and Romanian population.⁵¹ Against this background, the Romanian Church has sought to use the historical and nationalist argument of “one people, one faith, one Church”⁵², and it has also referred to the thirty-fourth Apostolic Canon (mentioned above) in justifying its claims. In addition, the canons of the second and third Ecumenical Councils from 381 and 431 are also quoted (see above). However, Romanian responses to the issue of the Moldavian Church have gone well beyond legalistic interpretations of canon law, and it is clear that nationalist sentiment has played an important role in shaping the public discourse around the dispute. For example, it is striking that the highly influential Romanian newspaper *Adevărul* (The Truth), despite its virulent anticlericalism, has backed the actions of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the question of the Bessarabian Metropolis: its criticism of the Church has taken a back seat to Bucharest’s national interests.⁵³

For its part, the Russian Church has also tried to argue on the basis of the aforementioned canonical stipulations of the Ecumenical Councils. It is a fact that the reactivation of a Metropolis or of new bishoprics while their pendants still exist is uncanonical. Nevertheless, this was also the situation in 1812. In order to use the stipulations of the thirty-fourth Apostolic canon on the freedom of ethnic groups to have their own Church organisations, the Russian Church needs to identify a nation in the Republic of Moldavia: and this is, in their view, the “Moldavian nation”. However, if we consider four key criteria of a national unit – language, culture, territory and religion – we see that the “Moldavian nation” as defined by the Russian

⁵¹ Panici, *Romanian Nationalism*, 42.

⁵² In Bucharest, Bishop Ciprian Cămpineanu stated: “The Republic of Moldavia always was a canonical province of the Romanian Orthodox Church”: “Republica Moldova a fost dintotdeauna teritoriul canonic al BOR”, in *Catholica*, on 7 November 2007, <http://www.catholica.ro/2007/11/07/republica-moldova-a-fost-dintotdeauna-teritoriul-canonic-al-bor/>.

⁵³ Valentina Basiul, “Biserica Ortodoxă Rusă și-a extins jurisdicția sa asupra Basarabiei contrar canoanelor bisericești”, in *adevarul.ro*, 5 September 2013, http://adevarul.ro/moldova/actualitate/biserica-ortodoxa-rusa-si-a-extins-jurisdicția-basarabiei-contrar-canoanelor-bisericești-1_52282e95c7b855ff564a539a/index.html.

Church and by Russian secular authorities can claim only its own territory: they do not have a distinct religion from their “Romanian” counterparts nor do they possess a different culture or language. Of course, there has been an attempt to develop the Moldavian idiom of Romanian into a distinct language, but there are a number of linguistic hurdles on the way to establishing a highly ideological concept like “Moldavian language”. Therefore, the absence of a “Moldavian nation” weakens the arguments of the Russian Church with regard to the Apostolic canon.

It is difficult to explain the dispute as being one about material interest – either by Russia or by Romania – in the Moldavian Metropolises, which are not especially wealthy. Their importance in the geopolitical context of the region is a more convincing driver of the dynamics of the conflict, not least since the Russian Church has, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, come to emphasise its cultural role in cementing Russian political, economic and military power and influence. First, the Russian Church has tried to establish its pre-eminence among other Orthodox Cultures, with Moscow serving as a sort of “Third Rome”, after Rome itself and Constantinople. The Russian Church has sought to coordinate its activities with the policies of the Russian state that are aimed at preserving its spheres of influence in areas bordering on the European Union and the NATO alliance. Second, the Romanian Church has sought – in its position as the second-largest Orthodox Church in the world – to increase its own power and influence in pushing back against the pan-Slavist narrative promoted by the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church in a region that is dominated by Slavic cultures. By stressing the national argument of the politically separated but “nationally” unified Romanians, the Romanian Church has sought to lay the ground for a political union between Romania and Moldavia, which has advanced to the top of the Romanian government’s political agenda in the light of recent developments in Ukraine.

While in their outward presentation (in particular on a European or global stage and vis-à-vis Catholics and Protestants) the Romanian and Russian Churches have sought to present

themselves as members of a harmonic Orthodox Commonwealth,⁵⁴ they have been radically divided by issues of national identity and of foreign (and imperial) policy. The case of Moldavia shows that in both Romania and in Russia the claim of a strict separation between state and church is a fiction: Church policies in both countries have served as instruments for the extension of political spheres of influence. In the context of the current crisis in Ukraine, the consolidation of the Bessarabian Metropolis has, for example, served not only the interests of the Romanian State but indirectly also of its NATO allies, who perceive the strengthening of the Moldavian dependence on Romania as a way to extricate it from the sphere of interest of Putin's Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church, for its part, has quite clearly seen a commonality of interest with the Russian state and even made itself an important ally of Russian foreign policy goals. Even in the contemporaneous Europe of human rights discourse and secular states, religious figures, institutions, ideas and identities still play a vital role – in some geopolitical contexts – in the regulation of trans-national spheres of influence.

And to return briefly to the crucial figure mentioned at the beginning. The last major project of Patriarch Teoctist was to promote the building of the Cathedral of National Redemption (*Catedrala mântuirii neamului*), which is currently under construction in Bucharest.⁵⁵ He died before construction began. Nonetheless, his projects – both material and spiritual – have been carried on by his successor, Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea, whose first major acts involved the reactivation of the Bessarabian bishoprics and pushing forward the Cathedral's construction. The Cathedral – which will be the tallest Orthodox cathedral in the world when completed and which has been criticised for what some find its excessive scale⁵⁶ – seems to symbolise the mixture of religious and national pride characterising a Romanian Orthodox Church that has played a

⁵⁴ Paschalis M. Kitromilides (ed.), *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Aldershot 2007).

⁵⁵ <http://www.catedralaneamului.ro/>, accessed 2 August 2015.

⁵⁶ Arielle Thedrel, "Les projets pharaoniques de l'Église orthodoxe à Bucarest", in *Le Figaro*, 1 February 2008, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2008/02/01/01003-20080201ARTFIG00478-les-projets-pharaoniques-de-l-eglise-orthodoxe-a-bucarest.php>.

central role in defining Romania's national identity and shaping its international relations since 1989. It seems likely that this role will continue in the coming years.