

BALTIC STUDIES IN ROMANIA: SOURCES, BEGINNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

This article analyses the beginnings, development and prospect of Baltic studies in Romania. The article stands on three pillars. It starts with an investigation on the main sources of Romanian knowledge of the Baltic region and sorts out the way they have been represented in the Romanian mental images. Throughout the analysis, knowledge of each other is bonded to the concepts of memory and history based on the assumption that the largest part of our knowledge derives from remembering, this being applicable even in the high sphere of international relations. This theoretical framework is sampled to the case-study of Romania’s knowledge of Baltic area assessing the medieval, modern and 20th century legacy of the Romanian encounters with the Baltic States discovering that, although the distance between Suceava, the medieval capital of Moldova, and Vilnius is less than 1,000 km. (or 600 miles) and the Principality of Moldova of Stephen the Great neighbored the state of Jagiellonians, in most cases, the legacy of the relations between Romanians and Baltic nations played little role in feeding a sense of solidarity or complementarity between these nations. This pattern is now challenged by courses on Baltic and Nordic studies taught at Valahia University of Târgoviște and the activity of the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies, which joins the efforts of scholars from various Romanian institutes and universities, especially from Iași, Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest, Constanța and Târgoviște. The analysis of these endeavors, the other two pillars of this article, brings forth educational, scholarly, editorial and dissemination efforts designed to change the perspective of the Romanian public in this respect.

Rezumat:

Acest articol abordează începuturile, dezvoltarea și perspectiva studiilor baltice în România. Materialul se sprijină pe trei coloane. Acesta debutează cu o analiză a principalelor surse ale cunoașterii românești cu privire la regiunea baltică și scoate în evidență maniera în care aceasta a fost redată imagologic în România. Pe parcursul analizei, cunoașterea reciprocă este legată de conceptele de memorie și de istorie, pornind de la asumția că cea mai mare parte a cunoștințelor noastre derivă din memorie, un factor aplicabil chiar și în sfera înaltă a relațiilor internaționale. Acest cadru teoretic se eșantionează studiului de caz al cunoașterii zonei baltice în România, care evaluează moștenirea medievală, modernă și a secolului al XX-lea a legăturilor românești cu statele baltice, descoperind că, deși distanța dintre Suceava, capitala medievală a Moldovei, și Vilnius este mai mică de 1000 km. (sau 600 de mile), iar Principatul Moldovei de la Ștefan cel Mare s-a învecinat cu statul jagiellonian, în majoritatea cazurilor moștenirea relațiilor dintre români și națiunile baltice a jucat un rol minor în edificarea unui sentiment de solidaritate sau complementaritate între aceste națiuni. Acest tipar suferă acum ameliorări sub impactul cursurilor de studii baltice și nordice predate la Universitatea Valahia din Târgoviște și al activității Asociației Române pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice, care așază împreună eforturile de cunoaștere ale unor cercetători din diferite instituții și universități din România, în special din Iași, Cluj-Napoca, București, Constanța și Târgoviște. Analiza acestor întreprinderi, celelalte două coloane ale acestui articol, aduce în atenție contribuțiile educaționale, științifice, editoriale și de diseminare menite să modifice perspectiva publicului românesc în acest sens.

Keywords: Baltic studies, summer schools, journal, cultural events, monographs, conferences

Aims and research questions

This paper investigates the main sources of Romanian knowledge of the Baltic region, sorts out the way they have been represented in the Romanian mental images and focuses on the Baltic studies developed in Romania in the past 17 years. In approaching this issue, I attach the concept of knowledge to memory starting from the premises that the largest part of our knowledge derives from remembering. Some authors even define a supposed “apparent memory” whose function in the realm of memory is

paralleled to the role of sense perception in perceptual knowledge.¹ It also starts from the assumption that, besides knowledge, perceptions, mindsets are important factors in the dialogue of the nations of today's Europe, in the decisions that are being adopted at a European level and in the region-building processes that occur inside the European Union to which both Romania and the Baltic Sea rim nations belong. As Kenneth Boulding has argued long ago in his classical book *The image: knowledge in life and society*:

"There are very few processes in the history of society in which the perception and the mindset do not appear as an important intermediary, if not as the dominating factor."²

In the perception-building process, history matters insofar as, according to Boulding, the image of the past "gives rise both to the image of the present and of the future".³ In the process, poets, writers, historians, journalists play an important role. More recently, Glen Fisher has emphasized that the reaction of individuals to events or issues is not customarily based on empirical judgement of facts but rather on their perceptions of the facts, on the way they have interpreted history and challenge. In Fisher's words, "international relations revolve around an interplay of images."⁴ Thus, besides the investigation of historical facts, the knowledge of the way history is remembered is also relevant to this study.

In this article I define the notion of Baltic nations rather narrowly so as to include especially the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, although Finland, Sweden, Poland, Germany or Russia often played a significant role in bridging the relations between Romanians and the Baltic nations and this will be reflected herein. In so doing I am fully aware of the post-Cold War conceptual debate on the notion of Baltic region, but I am restricting my approach as this article is part of a series of undertakings envisaging the educational status of Baltic and Nordic studies in Romania.

The main research questions are, therefore, when, where, how the encounters between those nations have taken place, where and how they affect their European interaction, how their European interaction can further affect their mindsets and perceptions of each other and especially

¹ J.L. Pollock and J. Cruz, *Contemporary theories of knowledge* (Maryland: Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 18.

² K.E. Boulding, *The image: knowledge in life and society* (University of Michigan Press, 1961), 121.

³ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴ G. Fisher, *Mindsets: the role of culture and perception in international relations* (Intercultural Press, 1997), 4.

how R&D and education reflects the history and potentialities of this knowledge. Thus, the paper analyzes archival documents, mass-media, memoirs, diaries and other historical sources. It also deals with the current tendencies regarding the Baltic studies in Romania and investigates study programmes and teaching content at Valahia University of Târgoviște, the only Romanian university where such teaching are organized. It particularly focuses on the progresses in Baltic studies in Romania during the 2000s and on the goals and activities of Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies (ARSNB) and *Revista Română pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice - RRSBN (The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies)*. In dealing with the history of Romanian encounters with the Baltic people, I'm not going to investigate the details, but rather to catch the main lines of evolution of these encounters and their effects on the formation of perceptions of other(s) and how they are used in order to further the bonds with Romania and to facilitate R&D and education in this regard.

The Medieval Legacy

During the long age leading to modernity the Romanians and the Baltic Sea rim peoples had remained to a large extent unknown to each other. An exception was constituted by the early exchanges, proved by the archaeological findings, of Baltic Sea rim's amber with Black Sea region's agricultural products using the waterways uniting Northern and Eastern Europe (such as the Dniester).⁵ During the first phase of the Middle Age the eastern expeditions of the Vikings, who crossed the Baltic Sea and went by the interior rivers of Russia reaching the Black Sea and Constantinople, created a cadre for earlier contacts. By 858 the Vikings which consisted not only of Swedes, but also of Finns or Estonians, have established themselves in Kiev and perhaps entered into contacts with the Romanian population.⁶

Better documented bonds with the Baltic peoples starts gradually with the personal unification of the Kingdom of Poland and the Duchy of Lithuania in 1385. From then on geography will facilitate the contacts as Dniester River around Soroca, Orhei and Lăpușna gradually became a common border of Poland-Lithuania with Moldova. The Principality of Moldova acquired some significance to its bigger Nordic neighbour by being crossed by the commercial road linking the Baltic and Black seas where merchants from Germany and Flanders exchanged their goods with Genovese and Armenian traders who offered them textures, wines, pepper and slaves. This was a time of relative prosperity to both Poland-Lithuania

⁵ M. Klinge, *The Baltic World* (Helsinki: Otava Publishing Company, 1994), 7, 9.

⁶ I. Heath and A. McBride, *The Vikings* (London: Osprey Military, 1995), 20, 22.

and Moldova. The former tried to control this commercial route and the country it crossed, Moldova.⁷ In these circumstances, throughout the 15th century the kings of the Poland-Lithuania have constantly aimed at including and maintaining the voievodes of Moldova and the grand master of the Teutonic Knights as their vassals.⁸ In September 1387, the Moldovan voievod Peter I Mușat acknowledged for the first time the suzerainty of Władysław II Jagiełło of Poland-Lithuania. He promised to look for no other lord than the king of Poland-Lithuania.⁹ His example will be continued by his successors such as Alexander the Good (1400-1431) and, for a while, by Stephen the Great (1457-1504).¹⁰

Mixed Moldovan-Lithuanian marriages also occurred, Alexander the Good presenting in 1421 his Lithuanian bride Rynghalla (Rimgailė) with the town of Siret and other feuds by a document signed by the voievod and 51 of his boyards, a fact which proves its importance.¹¹ Although the marriage was unsuccessful due to Rynghalla's failure to convert her husband to Catholicism, he took part in the battles of Grunwald (1410) and Marienburg (1422) on his suzerain's side. His son, Ilie, married Marinca, the sister of the queen of Poland-Lithuania, Sophia, of the Lithuanian family Olgimontovici-Holszański.¹² On his part, Stephen the Great of Moldova acknowledged Polish-Lithuanian suzerainty in 1462 and swore his oath of allegiance in September 1485 to Casimir, duke of Lithuania (1440-1492) and king of Poland (1447-1492).¹³ After an "interstice" when the relations between the two parties have deteriorated to the point of an outbreak of a war, on September 14th, 1499 a treaty of perpetual alliance

⁷ P.P. Panaitescu, *Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială* (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1994), 83-84.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹ Veniamin Ciobanu, *Țările române și Polonia: Secolele XIV-XVI* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 1985), 7.

¹⁰ Valentina Eșanu, *Marii demnitari ai Țării Moldovei în domnia lui Ștefan cel Mare (1457-1504)*, teză de doctor în științe istorice, (Chișinău: Academia de Științe a Moldovei, Institutul de Istorie, 2015), 133.

¹¹ G.I. Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și Adunarea stărilor în Principatele Române* (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1995), 111.

¹² Constantin Rezachievi, „Cine a fost soția lui Ilie voievod, fiul lui Alexandru cel Bun? Un alt episod dinastic moldo-polono-lituanian”, *Arhiva genealogica* vol. 2, 1/2 (1995): 16-17.

¹³ Victor Eskenasy, „Omagiul lui Ștefan cel Mare de la Colomeea (1485). Note pe marginea unui ceremonial medieval,” în : Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol”, XX (1983): 257-267; I. Ionașcu, P. Bărbulescu and G. Gheorghe, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900). Culegere selectivă de tratate, acorduri, convenții, și alte acte cu caracter internațional* (București: Ed. Politică, 1971), 94-95, 123-126; N. Iorga, *Istoria lui Ștefan cel Mare pentru poporul român* (București: Ed. Pentru Literatură, 1966), 26.

between Moldova and Lithuania was signed in Suceava between Stephan the Great and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Alexander (Aleksandras Jogailaitis), who will eventually be enthroned also at the helm of the common Polish-Lithuanian state, providing for reciprocal military aid in case of necessity and the freedom of Lithuanian trade in Moldova after paying the custom duties.¹⁴

The voievod of Valahia, Mircea the Elder (1386-1418) also committed himself to alliance with Poland-Lithuania in 1389 and 1390 on an anti-Hungarian basis. The treaty named the two parties as “confederates” and lasted until 1395, to be reinforced in 1411. The Polish and Lithuanian merchants received in 1403 the privilege of having their goods charged with custom duties only in the town of Târgoviște and nowhere else.¹⁵ Thus, in the 15th century, Lithuanian travellers and merchants could be met on Moldovan and Valahian territories and Moldovan and Valahian boyards sometimes travelled not only to Lwow but also to Vilnius.

The heydays of the 15th century relations between Lithuania as a grand regional power and the principalities of Moldova and Valahia, however, would gradually be over and the intensity of the bonds would diminish in the subsequent centuries. On the one hand, it was the advance of the Ottoman Empire that transformed Valahia and Moldova into vassals which produced this outcome. To Moldova and Valahia, the effort to maintain the anti-Ottoman front was wearisome and therefore they profited of the fact that the Ottoman main thrust was directed by the south of Danube to Central Europe in order to reach an agreement with the sultan. On the hand, when Lithuania concluded in July 1569 the Lublin Union and formed the Rzeczpospolita, the Polish side of the union had also undertaken the administration of the Ukrainian lands of Lithuania neighbouring Moldova.¹⁶

Comparatively little significant encounters remembered by history between the Lithuanians and Romanians have occurred in the subsequent three centuries. Yet, there existed some notable exceptions from this canon. One of them was the marriage of Maria (Mary), the daughter of Prince Vasile Lupu of Moldova to mighty Lithuanian prince Janusz Radziwiłł

¹⁴ Eșanu, 133; Ionașcu and others, 140-143.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-88, 94-95, 99-101, 123-126.

¹⁶ A. Eidintas, V. Žalys and A.E. Senn, *Lithuania in European politics. The years of the First Republic, 1918-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 8.

(1612–1655) in order to consolidate the political relations between the two princely houses.¹⁷ Another essential though indirect moment was when the Hungarian prince of Transylvania Stephen Báthory (1533–1586) became in 1576 king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania. In this new capacity, he established three years later *Almae Academia et Universitas Vilmensis Societatis Jesu*, the forerunner of the University of Vilnius. When in the 18th century the exclusive Ottoman domination of the Romania principalities was established, *Rzeczpospolita* was also divided and annexed by Russia, Austria and Prussia, with the territories of the former Grand Duchy passing into Russian hands.¹⁸

As Glen Fisher has emphasized, the way one perceives or remembers events, issues, or policies depends on how they are presented. The perception or memory are contingent on the “intensity, strength, duration, and repetition, and in the way they are tuned to fit into the needs and interests of the perceiver”.¹⁹ To apply this to our case, the history of medieval relations between Moldova, Valahia and Lithuania is still to be apprehended insofar as in the Romanian historiography this was generally fit into the frame of reference of Romanian-Polish relations. The reason is that in contrast to the bonds with Poland, the ties with Lithuania lacked the stimuli to remember: during the twenty-two years of the first Lithuanian independence, Romania was an ally of Poland²⁰ and as a result of the acute tensions between Poland and Lithuania relations between Bucharest and Kaunas made little progress. Eventually, Lithuania’s annexation to Soviet Union and Romania’s communization prevented serious debate upon this legacy of the past outside the circle of professional historians, and even there this was limited due to the lack of knowledge of each other’s languages and lack of fruitful bilateral contacts. It lacked the intensity, strength, duration, repetition, needs and interests to be re-evaluated. Therefore, when the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies was established in 2009 one of its aims, as will be later discussed, was to

¹⁷ A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiana, Istoria Modernă (De la Matei Basarab și Vasile Lupu până la fanarioși)*, vol. IV, ediția a IV-a (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1993), 36.

¹⁸ A. Armand, *Nouvelle Europe* (Paris: Editions A. Pedone, 1936), 126.

¹⁹ Fisher, P. 29.

²⁰ Florin Anghel, *Construirea sistemului „Cordon Sanitaire”. Relații româno-polone 1919-1926* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Nereamia, Napocae, 2003).

endeavor to fill this gap of knowledge and support fresh research into these topics.

The Modern Legacy

In the 17th and 18th centuries the fluctuating relations between the Principality of Transylvania and the Kingdom of Sweden during the Thirty Years War and king Charles XII of Sweden presence in Bender (southern Bessarabia) for five years, as well as his relations to Valahian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714) and Moldovan prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1710–1711), created the main frame of reference in the history of Romanians with Baltic Sea rim peoples. As a result of Charles Twelve's machinations, *inter alia*, Prince Brâncoveanu himself and his family were beheaded on 15 August 1714. In the autumn of the same year, Charles XII and his party found their escape to Swedish lands by crossing Valahia and Transylvania.²¹ In the Swedish Army, a Romanian regiment under command of Colonel Sandu Colțea acquired a good fame, while Romanians fighting in the opposing camp were about to take Charles XII prisoner for Peter the Great.²² During Charles Twelve's residence in southern Bessarabia, the Tower of Colțea (48 meters high and 38 meters circumference) was built in Bucharest with the help of Charles XII soldiers. This was at the time the tallest such building in the capital of Valahia.²³ These encounters between Romanians, Swedes, Finns and perhaps other Baltic peoples would be recalled after the establishment of consular and diplomatic relations between Romania and Sweden and Finland in the 19th and beginning of 20th century and thus Charles Twelve's leadership of Sweden from southern Bessarabia and his influence on political developments in Valahia and Moldova is better remembered and documented.²⁴

The Russian expansion toward the Baltic and Black Seas created during the Modern Age new avenues of contacts and intersection between Romanians and Baltic Sea rim peoples. This must be added to the

²¹ Veniamin Ciobanu, *Les Pays Roumains au seuil du 18e siècle. Charles XII et des Roumains* (Bucarest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984), 39–41, 54–54, 68, 74–75, 91, 97, 107–109, 156–161.

²² *Ibid.*, P. 42, 51, 53.

²³ George Cristea, *Regi și diplomați suedezi în spațiul românesc (secolele XVII–XX)* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, 2007), 127–134.

²⁴ Ciobanu, 39–41.

revolution in transportation, knowledge, mass-media, movement and to industrialization to give a more rounded picture for the Romanian-Baltic encounters from the 18th to 20th century. The clashes between the empires which had dominated East-Central Europe until the end of World War I had inflicted damages or affected either the territories or the populations of those areas. In these circumstances, Romanian presences in the Baltic areas are documented as well as Baltic presences on the Danubian principalities' territory. To give but an example, during the Swedish-Russian war of 1741-1743 a Romanian regiment, fighting in the Russian Army, was documented as residing in Laihia, a locality situated on the Finnish western coast, close to the town of Vaasa.²⁵ Following the gradual absorption of the Baltic nations, Finland and Bessarabia within the Russian Empire, after 1809/1812 became co-subjects of the same emperor or in more modern terms compatriots. The Grand Duchy of Finland and Bessarabia has acquired, at the beginning, a rather similar privileged status in the Russian Empire, although the parallel would soon subside.²⁶

The Russian - Ottoman wars of the 19th century (especially the 1828-1829 and 1877-1878), turned out to be to Russian soldiers and officers of Finnish and Baltic stock such as Lieutenant-Colonel Gustav-Adolf Ramsay, Major Fredrik G. Nyberg, Colonel Baron George Ramsay occasions to observe the Romanian people and cross the legendary Danube River. Their witness on the semi-periphery Romanian lands - if we are to adopt Immanuel Wallerstein's periphery/semi-periphery/center division - bears the imprint of their cognitive systems and frames of references. The majority of them, however, pointed out to the exceptionally fertile Romanian land, the Liberal system of governance, the beauty of the inhabitants, but also the laziness of peasants, the low quality governance, and the social rifts between poor and rich and between Western and

²⁵ Lauri Lindgren, „Un corp de oaste românească în Finlanda”, *Columna*, Vol. 4. Octombrie 1984.

Universitatea din Turku. P. 5-10.

²⁶ Silviu Miloiu, „The preliminaries of the Romanian-Finnish relations before 1914,” *Faravid*, 30, Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi. 2006. 129-145; G.F. Jewsbury, *Anexarea Basarabiei la Rusia: 1774-1828* (Iași: Ed. Polirom, 2003), 147; Veniamin Ciobanu, „Problema Basarabiei” în contextul chestiunii orientale”, in *Basarabia. Dilemele identității*, eds. F. Solomon and A. Zub (Iași: Fundația Academică „A.D. Xenopol”, 2001), 143; M. Ș. Ceaușu, „Românii din Bucovina și Basarabia. Sfârșitul secolului XVIII - secolul XIX”, in Solomon and Zub 2001, 157; O. Jussila, *Finland from province to state, in Finland. People, nation, state*, eds. M. Engman and D. Kirby (London: Hurst&Company, 1989), 96-98.

Eastern patterns. The majority of these documents have remained practically unknown to Romanian readers until in mid-1930s when Romania's envoy to Helsinki, Raoul Bossy, had gathered and published them in a volume of documents.²⁷

Besides, the fact that Finnish press correspondents covered the evolutions of the Russian - Ottoman war where Finnish soldiers also fought drew the attention of Finnish newspapermen to Romania, a country which would soon join the political map of independent states. Two microfilms with the articles from the Finnish press (especially from *Helsingfors Dagblad*) concerning Romania had been passed on to the Romanian National Archives and remained until recently largely unnoticed.²⁸

During the epoch of Russification, Romania decided to open the first Romanian honorary consulate in Helsinki on 17 November 1890. The first to serve as Romania's vice-consul in Helsinki was Eduard Evensen whose assigned duty was to defend the interests of the Romanian subjects in Finland. On 26 January 1898 he was appointed full honorary consul. Evensen's activity as Romania's consul lasted for more than a decade and a half when on 28 April 1907 he was replaced by Axel Holmström, a merchant and ship owner.²⁹ The fact that Russification in Finland did not pass unnoticed in Romania is proven by the reaction of I.G. Duca, a would be Prime Minister and foreign minister of his country, professed outrage with regard to Russia's infringements on Finland's freedoms. Writing in the most popular Romanian newspaper, 'Universul', in March 1901, in the aftermath of the Paris World Fair and soon after the conscription law, Duca concluded that 'the abolishing of the Grand Duchy of Finland, its annexation to the empire and the forced Russification of this peaceful population have as the only palpable result the alienation from the Tsar of a region loyal to the throne.'³⁰

²⁷ R.V. Bossy, *Mărturiile finlandeze despre România* (București: Ed. Cartea Românească, 1937) (the second edition was published by Miloiu S. under the title R.V. Bossy, *Mărturiile finlandeze și alte scrieri nordice despre români* (Târgoviște: Valahia University Press, 2008).

²⁸ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (hereafter, ANIC), Fond Microfilme Finlanda. Microfilms 1 and 2.

²⁹ Alexandru Popescu, *Confluente româno-finlandeze. Trei secole de contacte, 85 de ani de relații diplomatice* (București: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2005), 53.10, 167-170, 269.

³⁰ I.G. Duca, *Lumea la început de veac* (București: Editura Eminescu. 1994), 91

One of the most significant and durable in its effects Romanian – Baltic encounters occurred in the university centre of Tartu in full swing of Russification. It is common knowledge that Tartu University attracted students not only from Estonia and Livonia, but also from other western peripheries of the Russian Empire. It is however barely known that an important part of the leaders of Bessarabian national movements who will contribute to this province's unification with Romania in 1918 was endowed with university knowledge and matured in nationalistic thinking in Tartu University. The Romanian students of Tartu University set up in 1899 the student nationalist organization called "Pământenia Basarabiei" (The Roots of Bessarabia).³¹ The students who founded this organization – Ion Pelivan, Gheorghe Chicu, Vasile Mahu, Pantelimon Halippa – were graduates of Kishinev Orthodox Seminary and won a stipend to study abroad from Bessarabian governmental authorities.³² To take but two examples, Pelivan, a graduate of the seminary in 1898, had enrolled in Tartu University. A founder of "Pământenia Basarabiei", he was jailed for his nationalistic beliefs in February 1902. He nonetheless graduated in May 1903 soon before being rearrested and dispatched to Arkhangelsk, eventually launching his career in Bessarabia.³³ Pantelimon Halippa had initially followed a similar path. Graduate of the seminary in 1904, he enrolled the same year in Tartu University to study physics and math. From here, his *curriculum vitae* depart from that of his conational. While enrolled in the third year of studies, he was arrested as a participant in the All-union Peasant Congress. After his release, he was sent under escort to Bessarabia being forbidden the return to Tartu.³⁴ As underlined by a fellow ministerial colleague during Bessarabia's unification to Romania "the national idea among Bessarabian students is born not in Bessarabia, but in Dorpat, where Latvians and other minorities studied, and in Kiev, the center of the Ukrainians of Russia's movement." This allows the author of these words, Ștefan Ciobanu, to reach the conclusion that the national idea

³¹ K. Siilivask (editor), *History of Tartu University* (Tartu: Perioodika, 1985), 162, 166.

³² M. Păcurariu, *Basarabia. Aspecte din istoria Bisericii și a neamului românesc*, (Iași: Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, 1993), 97; Ștefan Ciobanu, *Contribuția Basarabiei la dezvoltarea literaturii naționale* (București, 1941); Idem, *Din istoria mișcării naționale în Basarabia* (Chișinău, 1933); Idem, *Cultura românească în Basarabia sub stăpânirea rusă* (Chișinău, 1923).

³³ "Viața Basarabiei", no. 7-8/1936.

³⁴ Păcurariu, 97.

and the idea of autonomy must be fitted within “the revolutionary ideology of the subjugated peoples of Russia.”³⁵

Against this backdrop, the Moldovans joined in 1905 the Revolution demanding the autonomy of Bessarabia, the reintroduction of Romanian language in the schools and the publication of Romanian books. Moldovan representatives attended the Educational Congress of Nationalities of Terijoki, Finland (nowadays Zelenogorsk, Russian Federation), where they underscored their desire for education in Romanian language.³⁶

This earlier links contributed to the Baltic nations’ influence upon Bessarabians in 1917-1918 in their drive to autonomy, independence and then unification to Romania, an affirmation proven by the Bessarabian press and leaders of national movement of the time. Romanians of Bessarabia, Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians will participate in all-Russian or western Russia congresses of nationalities and present there their national goals.³⁷ Strikingly though it may be, during the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, 70 years later, the Baltic nations will once again be taken as an example by the Moldovans in their quest for autonomy and independence.³⁸ In the course of events, the works of key figures of the 1918 Bessarabian unification with Moldova were published and in the perception-building process history was used as means of validating the new drive of Moldovans for separating from their Russian empire.

The world war had once again created the circumstances in which large groups of people travelled long distances in pursuit of their military or humanitarian objectives. The presence of the Estonian 36th Regiment is documented in October 1917 in Bucovina.³⁹ Eesi Rahva Muuseum preserves in its collections a photo of this Estonian uncommon presence. Several months before the tsar had dispatched General Gustav Emil Mannerheim on the Romanian front in command of the Russian 12th Cavalry Division starting with December 1916. Mannerheim’s assigned task was initially that of taking a defensive position on a frontline situated about 40 km. north of Focșani reporting to General Alexandru Averescu,

³⁵ Ștefan Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei. Studiu și documente cu privire la mișcarea națională din Basarabia în anii 1917-1918* (Chișinău: Ed. Universitas, 1993), 21.

³⁶ Ciobanu 1993, 22-23; Păcurariu, 98.

³⁷ Ciobanu 1993, 33-35.

³⁸ Interview with Vytautas Landsbergis, Vilnius, 15 June 2009.

³⁹ Silviu Miloiu, *România și Țările Baltice în perioada interbelică* (Târgoviște: Ed. Cetatea de Scaun, 2003), 43-44.

the commander of the Romanian 2nd Army, the most outstanding Romanian frontline commander of the World War I.⁴⁰ Mannerheim was eventually promoted to the position of commander of the Vrancea Group constituted of mixed Russian and Romanian troops. The group consisted of four cavalry and two infantry divisions and an infantry brigade. During December 1916 and January 1917 the Finnish general contributed to the stabilization of the mountainous front down rivers Șușița and Putna. Although he remained for a short period of time in Romania, Mannerheim managed to establish close relations with Romanian officers. At the end of January 1917 he left the Romanian front at the head of his division.⁴¹ Following his departure from the Romanian front Mannerheim was awarded Mihai Viteazul Order, 3rd Class. Mannerheim's diary concerning his mixed experiences on the Romanian front is held in the Finnish National Archives.⁴² Mannerheim's presence on Romanian soil would eventually be remembered time and again during the Winter War and, subsequently, during the Continuation War when the Romanians and Finns would become informal anti-Soviet allies and thus left its mark on Romanian conscience.⁴³ In the 1990s, again, when the Romanian nationalists sought to resuscitate the tragic figure of World War II dictator Marshal Ion Antonescu, they tried to associate it to his Finnish counterpart by overlooking the differences between the two personages, first and foremost the impossibility to associate the Finnish marshal with radical nationalism. In this case, they not merely tried to change the perception of the way the people consider the deeds of a historical figure, but to reinvent the past as well.

The mass disruptions to habitual life brought about by World War I and its outcome and by the Russian Revolutions and Civil War affected the destiny of thousands of hundreds of refugees and prisoners of war. At the end of the conflagration, a number of 18,000 Romanian subjects will find their escape to their country, with support of Nansen Commission of the League of Nations, by the way of Baltic harbours. The documents regarding their escape from the havoc of Russian bloody social conflicts are

⁴⁰ C.G.E. Mannerheim, *Memorii* (București: Ed. Militară, 2003), 50-51.

⁴¹ J.E.O. Screen, Mannerheim, *The years of preparation* (London: Hurst&Company, 1970), 112.

⁴² Kansallisarkisto, Folder Mannerheim, Microfilm VAY 5667.

⁴³ Silviu Miloiu, „The Marshals as Key Symbols of the Romanian - Finnish Cooperation during World War II”, *Annales d'Universite "Valahia", Section d'Archeologie et d'Histoire*, X, 2008, 71-80.

preserved in the Nansen Commission files of the Archives of the League of Nations.⁴⁴

The Twentieth Century Legacy

The profound changes in the political configuration of East-Central Europe occasioned by the dislocation of the great powers which have dominated the area for centuries created the frame for the declarations of independence by Finland (6 December 1917), Lithuania (16 February 1918), Estonia (24 February 1918) and Latvia (18 November 1918) and the unification of Romanian lands. Gradually, after some persuasive effort by Finland, Estonia and Latvia backed by Poland and by Romanian diplomats in the North Finland had opened a Legation in Bucharest as early as summer 1920 and a talk about a trilateral alliance between Poland, Romania and Finland received some measure of approval from the Romanian foreign minister Take Ionescu in November 1920. Ionescu nevertheless rejected the inclusion of Latvia and Estonia in the projected alliance with the argument that the Romanian public opinion would not understand a participation of their country in a war against with Soviet Russia on behalf of the barely known Latvia.⁴⁵ This evoked a negative reaction from the Latvian Foreign Ministry which complained of Romania's ignoring of the existence of the Latvian State. At the end of the day, these talks proved futile and what remained of them was the March 1921 Romanian-Polish alliance and the exchange of intelligence regarding Russia between Romania, Poland, Estonia and Latvia (sometimes with the participation of Finland) in the 1920s.⁴⁶

Gradually, Romania had opened legations and consulates in the north-eastern Baltic Sea rim states starting with Finland, then with Latvia and Estonia and ending with Lithuania. Ironically, the unknown Latvia of Take Ionescu would be in the centre of this diplomatic undertaking, Romania dispatching, in May 1929, Prince Mihail R. Sturdza as its first

⁴⁴ Silviu Miloiu, „Românii și Comisia Nansen (1919-1921). Contribuții”, *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în sec. XX*, eds. Vasile Ciobanu and Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Ed. Techno Media, 2009), 94-108.

⁴⁵ V. Tanner's dispatch no.16 of 12 November 1920, Ulkoasiainministeriö arkisto, folder Microfilms Bucharest 5, C14.

⁴⁶ Silviu Miloiu, „Some aspects of the military cooperation in the Border States area in the first half of the 1920s,” in *România și sistemele de securitate colectivă în Europa, 1919-1975*, eds. I. Ciupercă, B.A. Schipor and D.C. Măță (Iași: Ed. Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2009). 65-78.

envoy to Riga. Instead, Romania's relations with Estonia have been covered by honorary consuls and the Legation in Riga until 1935 when a permanent diplomatic mission was set up in Tallinn. The Vilnius dispute between Poland and Lithuania, as already mentioned, hindered the establishment of diplomatic relations between Romania and Lithuania. In 1923 the Lithuanian envoy to Prague called for an audience on the Romanian foreign minister. It was only in August 1924 that Poland consented to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lithuania and Romania. A permanent Romanian Legation in Kaunas was never founded, but the Romanian envoy to Riga, who covered the developments in Kaunas, held in January-February 1938 a series of lectures regarding the Romanian medieval legend about the origin of Lithuanians and Latvians, the Moldovan-Lithuanian bonds of the 14th and 15th centuries, the commercial ties of Moldova with Lithuania through the Baltic and Nordic seas during the 14th to 18th centuries etc.⁴⁷ The conferences started a perception-building process which was however too little and too late to achieve any durable success.

If the achievements in the diplomatic and political relations between the two states were according to all standards limited, an interesting project was that of cutting a water channel between the Baltic and the Black seas using the course of the rivers Vistula (Wisla), San, Dniester and Pruth. The extremities of this channel would have been the Baltic Sea harbour of Gdansk and the Danubean harbour of Galatzi and the total length would have been 2,000 km. The channel was projected to be functional in 1925 and the preparatory work to this end had started. The memory of the Viking expeditions to the Constantinople and the remembrance of the prosperity which spread in the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries due to the commercial road linking the Baltic and the Black seas perhaps played a role in the project. However optimistic the aims, nothing came out of this project which would have greatly facilitated the development of the commercial relations between Romania and the Baltic Sea rim countries.⁴⁸

The Romanian Foreign Ministry Archives preserve 11 files dedicated solely to Latvian domestic and foreign developments, including the bonds with Romania, six dedicated to Lithuanian developments and one dedicated to Estonian developments, in addition to numerous personal

⁴⁷ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, folder Vasile Stoica. file I/69. 18-21 and 34-35.

⁴⁸ "Adevărul", 3.01.1925.

files and issue files concerning the evolutions in the three Baltic states. The Finnish evolutions are better documented especially due to the fact that when the Romanian – Baltic diplomatic relations ended in 1940, the Romanian – Finnish relations just resurfaced to become the closest in their history.

Although some cooperation in various areas have been undertaken during the interwar period, when Soviet Union embarked upon re-annexing the Baltic nations and Bessarabia in 1940 few Romanian had ever heard of Lāčplēsis or Kalevipoeg and even fewer had ever taken the pains of travelling to the Baltic states on the south-north axis although, in fact, the distance to Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn was not unbearable in any case. A few books⁴⁹, some scientific articles, several newspaper articles or radio broadcasts as well as diplomatic encounters are responsible for the little progress achieved, although the academic exchanges had been casual. The basic premises in the perception-building process never fully materialized during the two decades of the interwar period.

With the Baltic nations and Romanian Bessarabian forced back into the USSR in 1940 and 1944, the encounters between individuals of Romanian and Baltic origins increased and mixed marriages occurred. A number of Bessarabian Romanians have settled in the Baltic Soviet republics and married locals. It is ironical that the young diplomat who monitored from Riga the absorption of the Baltic States within Soviet Union, Grigore Niculescu-Buzești would become Romania's foreign minister when his country's takeover by a Soviet-controlled government took place half a decade later.

With Romania and Finland joining the Barbarossa Operation, the relations between the two states became close, a fact which contributed to the noticeable advance of the cultural, economic and political exchanges. If in the 1930s the Finnish visitors to Romania were puzzled by the patterns of corruption in the Romanian society and some of them, including the Nokia chairman, had to buy bricks or football game tickets to get their passports stamped, now Romania wanted to brighten its image with the Finns. The perception-building process was fully employed in bringing

⁴⁹ An interesting book is dedicated to the Baltic states' agrarian reforms of the beginning of 1920s that parallel the Romanian land reform of 1921, see V. Bulgaru, *Reforma agrară în Țările Baltice: Estonia* (Iași: Viața Românească, 1929); books dedicated to a specific country also existed, see G.I. Năstase, *Lituania* (București: Ed. Cartea Românească, nr. 16, 1924).

about the flourishing of the relations between the two nations and writers, artists, newspapermen were thus called in to fulfil this role. Famous Romanian writers and artists such as Liviu Rebreanu, Dinu Lipatti, Sergiu Celibidache⁵⁰ travelled to Helsinki, the first Romanian drama play “Veste Bună” was staged in the Finnish National Theatre with the daughter of Jean Sibelius, Ruth Snellman, playing the main female character, the first Romanian translation of *Kalevala* by Barbu Brezianu was published in 1942 in Bucharest, lectureships of Romanian, respective Finnish language and culture were set up in Bucharest and Helsinki, numerous decorations were bestowed on political, mass-media and cultural figures of the two countries and, above all, institutions of permanent cooperation called the Finnish-Romanian Association and the Romanian-Finnish Association were established in Bucharest and Helsinki. When the two countries ended the war on the losing side, their destinies departed them⁵¹ and regular contacts re-emerged especially in the 1960s and 1970s.

Throughout the long journey through totalitarianism, the links between Romanians of Bessarabian stocks and Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians have progressed within the Soviet Union where they were forcibly annexed. Some Romanian citizens endeavoured to enjoy the mid-summer in the Baltic countries. In the course of Baltic secession from Soviet Union, the Bessarabians followed their example, while the Romanian citizens learned from foreign media (Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, BBC) about the Baltic Chain and other developments in the area. In contrast to what happened seven decades before, no incentives were needed for Romania to recognize immediately after the collapse of Soviet Union the independence of the Baltic States and establish diplomatic and consular relations with them.

With the fall of Soviet Union and the emergence of independent Baltic states, and then with the application of the Baltic countries and Romania to the EU and NATO membership to be followed by their integration into these organizations, with the increase in academic exchanges and in the flow of tourism, the Baltic states became less of an enigma to Romanians. High level state visits took place and Romania and

⁵⁰ Caranfil's dispatch no. 795 of 11.10.1943, Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe ale României, folder 71. Finlanda. Vol. 15. P. 79-80.

⁵¹ Miloiu S., *Diverging their destinies. Romania, Finland and the September 1944 armistices* // Valahian Journal of Historical Studies. Vol. 10. 2008. P. 43-58.

the Baltic States shared the status of members of the Vilnius Group during their preparation for NATO membership⁵², and then of NATO and EU member-states.

Baltic and Nordic studies at Valahia University of Târgoviște

In February 2001, the first university course concerning the history of Baltic and Nordic countries was introduced at Valahia University of Târgoviște in the third year of studies of the students of the Modern and Contemporary section. The aim of the course was defined as an aspiration of meeting student interest in area studies, particularly in the history, culture and civilization of the „other” periphery of Europe, which during the modern and contemporary age managed quite successfully to overpass backwardness and raise to social, economic, cultural and political normality comparable to Western Europe. The course followed the regional developments in Northern and Baltic areas from the 18th to the 20th century with a focus on the dynamics which led to the formation of new national states (Norway in 1905, Finland in 1917, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in 1918) and the course of history of the Scandinavian and Baltic nations following the First World War. The understanding of Scandinavian welfare state, of the young democracies of Finland and Baltic states in the interwar period and the subsequent „silence regimes” of the Baltic states prior to WWII, the consequences of the Second World War on Nordic and Baltic states and the loss of independence by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Holocaust and the totalitarian regimes imposed on the latter nations also have belonged to the core of this course. Back in the community of independent states in 1990-1991, the Baltic nations have overcome, with much difficulty but determination, the post-Soviet transition, the state building process, the transition and the eventual integration into NATO and the EU which have been also taught to our students. The course has been scheduled in the second semester of the academic year and has consisted of 28 of lectures and 28 hours of seminars. In the 16 years passed since the course has been introduced the number of lectures has remained unchanged while the number of seminar hours has been halved. The lectures have taught by the author of this article while the seminars have

⁵² Silviu Miloiu, „The New Europe and the Narrative of the Vilnius Group,” in *Constructed Identities in Europe*, ed. M. Kangaspuro (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Series, 7/2007), 225-246.

been shared in some years with Dr. Cezar Stanciu, Dr. Oana Lăculeanu-Popescu and Dr. Elena Dragomir. With the passing of time an advanced course of Baltic and Nordic history was introduced to 2nd year MA students of Unity of European History master programme, which is currently called *Baltic Sea Region: European synergies*, thus reflecting the multifarious bonds with Europe and the diversity of human experiences which grew up, were introduced or reflected in the Baltic Sea region. The course takes a larger perspective of the area and analyses such aspects as the role of Vikings, the introducing of Christianity, the Hanseatic experience of the Baltic Sea region, the Kalmar Union, the advent of nationalism, modern ideologies, the idea of Scandinavianism and other geopolitical constructions, the role of wars and political regimes in transforming the region. The course is allocated with a number of 28 hour lectures and 14 hour seminars. During some years (the academic year 2006/2007, for instance) a course on *Scandinavian Welfare State* was also taught as an optional course to students of the 3rd year of studies. Following my successful defense of the Habilitation thesis on February 28th, 2014, I have started in the same autumn to supervise Ph.D. theses, *inter alia*, in the field of Baltic and Nordic Studies.

In the same vein, already in 2002 a fruitful cooperation started between Valahia University and the Finnish Helsinki and Turku universities, to which Tartu University, Vilnius University, University of Latvia, Riga Stradiņš University, Oulu University, Södertörn University, University of Oslo, etc. were eventually added. Erasmus agreements were concluded, students training in Baltic and Nordic studies were exchanged and scholars from these universities or from our university also taught on thematic subjects.

In 2003 a book about the relations between Romania and the Baltic states during the interwar period, the outcome of my Ph.D. work, was published in Romanian language. Several research grants have been won in national and international competitions, including *Romania and Finland in a European perspective (1920-1948)* and *A Romanian Conception of the North (19th-20th centuries)*, the results of which were conferences, monographs, collective volumes and articles.

The Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies

All these achievements represent nevertheless but a start: still relatively few Romanians possess more than a scant knowledge of Baltic countries; few Romanian businesses have been established in the area, and the commercial relations are still barely visible. To change this, in November 2008 the *Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies* (ARSBN) and *Revista Romana pentru Studii Baltice si Nordice - RRSBN* (The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies)⁵³ have been founded with the aim of giving an impetus to the relations between Romania and Baltic and Nordic states. The aims of these organizations are the promotion of research activities in the field of Baltic and Nordic studies, the encouragement of knowledge in public benefit regarding this geographical area, including by the means of education, especially of higher education, the cooperation with similar institutions and associations from Romania and abroad, the promotion of the dialogue and cooperation on the axis the Baltic Sea – the Black Sea. In so doing, the association starts from the premise that, as Fisher has argued, “normal socialization into one’s own culture leads one to adopt, *out of awareness*, many of the fundamental elements of one’s own mindset and to accept these as common sense, even as human nature.”⁵⁴

⁵³ The website of the association opened in March 2008 is www.arsbn.ro and to it a new website was established in November 2018, <https://balticnordic.hypotheses.org/>

⁵⁴ Fisher, P. 10.

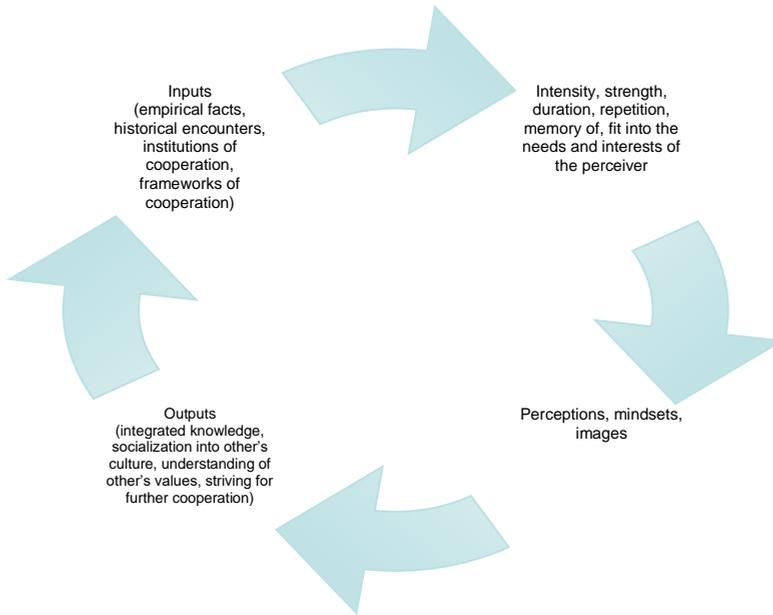


Figure 1

As shown in figure above, the knowledge of each other's culture and the strivings for cooperation is not a function of inputs alone. Even when such inputs existed, few Moldovans or Lithuanians still remember their neighbourly relations of six hundreds years ago. The memory of these encounters has long since vanished and no important needs or interests of the two parties have required their remembrance. Yet, this memory can be awoken as the Romanian envoy to the Baltic states Vasile Stoica attempted in the 1930s. Vague perceptions or mindsets of each other thus exist not to talk about knowledge or socialization into other's culture. This will give no real feeling of solidarity or complementarity to these nations. A solid ground for cooperation is thus missing and the relations between them lack the fundamentals. This is where our association is investing effort and knowledge in order to create the framework for cooperation and to give it the memory, intensity, permanency in order to prompt creating the outputs that will bear fruits in cultural, economic, social and political intersection of these civilizations.

In the nine years of activity has association has organized nine editions of Baltic and Nordic international annual conferences, has published 17 issues of *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies*, has hosted in cooperation with Valahia University of Târgoviște three summer

schools of Baltic and Nordic studies opened to 150 students, has published numerous monographs, volumes of documents, a dictionary, has opened a small thematic library entitled Leonidas Donskis, in the memory of one of its most respected members, has staged exhibitions, book presentations, various other seminars and scientific events, concerts, etc., many of whom were supported by the Romanian Foreign Ministry and the embassies of Baltic and Nordic countries in Romania. As a matter of fact, the honorary chair of the Association has always been an ambassador of these states in Bucharest, Vladimir Jarmolenko, The Ambassador of Lithuania, Ulla Väistö and Päivi Pohjanheimo, The Ambassadors of Finland having served in this capacity.

The annual conference of the association develops a project initiated in 2010, aiming at investigating, comparing and describing the relations, encounters, intersections, confluences, mutual influences and/or parallels between the Nordic and Baltic Sea areas, on the one hand, and the Black Sea Region, on the other hand. The project has been structured in annual international conferences. Thus, the first conference, entitled "Romania and Lithuania in the interwar international relations: bonds, intersections and encounters" was held on 19-21 May 2010 in Târgoviște and concentrated, as the title suggests, on the current and historical relations between the two countries belonging to these two areas. The following editions of the annual ARSBN conference enlarged their scope, being entitled "The Black Sea and the Baltic Sea regions: confluences, influences and crosscurrents in the modern and contemporary ages" (Târgoviște, 20-22 May 2011), "European networks: the Balkans, Scandinavia and the Baltic World in a time of economic and ideological crisis" (Târgoviște, 25-27 May 2012), "Empire-building and region-building in the Baltic, North and Black Sea areas" (Constanța, 24-26 May 2013), "A piece of culture, a culture of peace, re-imagining European communities in the North Sea, Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions" (Târgoviște, 17-19 August 2014), "Historical memory, the politics of memory and cultural identity: Romania, Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region in comparison" (Constanța, 22-23 May 2015), "Good governance in Romania and the Nordic and Baltic countries" (Bucharest, 24 November 2016), "Finland, Romania, Roma integration - Learning from each other" (Bucharest, 9 October 2017).

During its eight editions, the ARSBN conference addressed fundamental problems within the current agenda of the Nordic, Baltic and

Black sea states and contributed with fresh ideas and innovative research results to the general knowledge in the scientific field. Moreover, the conference advanced draft proposals useful to the European decision-makers of different fields.

While the participants to the first two editions of the conference concentrated rather on the historical dimension of the Romanian Baltic and Nordic relations, the following editions brought together specialists from various fields (political science, economics, international relations, minority studies, cultural studies, mnemonic studies, etc.) and addressed, besides the historical aspect of relations, other aspects relevant to the present time, i.e. the global economic crisis, the Balkan organized crime in Nordic Europe, region-building processes, the minorities in the Baltic Sea area and in the Balkans, the Roma minority integration, etc.

Revista Română pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice – The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies, which carries out this article, is a biannual peer-reviewed journal dedicated to publishing the results of research in all fields which are intertwined with the aims of The Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies such as:

- History of Baltic and Nordic Europe;
- Geography of Baltic and Nordic Europe;
- Baltic and Nordic Europe in International Relations;
- Baltic and Nordic Europe societies and politics;
- Baltic and Nordic Cultures and Civilizations;
- Economics of Baltic and Northern Europe;
- Ethnic relations in Baltic and Northern Europe;
- Relations between Romania and the Baltic and Nordic Europe;
- Relations and links between the Black and Baltic sea areas

The journal has been established with the aim of fostering research and dialogue among scholars working in Romania and abroad in fields of research related to the interests of ARSBN. In the interest of pluralism, RRSBN accepts contributions in English or any other major European languages. Its pages have been opened to highly appreciated scholars of Baltic and Nordic studies, which served to raise the quality of this scientific endeavor.

The Association is equally committed to transferring and promoting values, competences and skills between Romania, the Black Sea region and the Scandinavian and Baltic states. In this respect, it has organized three

summers schools of Baltic and Nordic Studies as well as other various educational programmes and events designed for students, pupils and other categories of publics. The summer school has integrated activities divided into two modules: one on Scandinavian, Finnic and Baltic languages (Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian), and the other one on culture, history, geography, law and economy courses related to the North. It has also included workshops both for the students and the staff with a focus on the exchange of good practices and transfer of expertise between the Romanian trainers and the Norwegian partners. The past two editions were financed under the measure “inter-institutional cooperation projects of the EEA grants, the summer school being also meant to strengthen the institutional cooperation at the level of higher education sector between all the partners involved: Valahia University of Târgoviște as the Project Promoter, the University of Agder, the University of Oslo, the Embassy of Lithuania in Romania, Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania and the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies. The Programme Operator of the EEA Scholarship Programme in Romania was ANPCDEFP (the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training).

The Association has initiated since 2009 an ample programme of publications on subjects encompassing the history, culture, language, international relations, bilateral relations, political sciences, philosophy, etc. of Baltic and Nordic areas. Thus, the first monographs on the history of Finland⁵⁵, Lithuania⁵⁶ and Latvia⁵⁷ have been published and the activity will continue with monographs on the history of Norway, Sweden and Estonia in the following years. Romania’s relations with Baltic and Nordic countries have been covered by volumes on Romanian-Lithuanian relations⁵⁸, Romanian-Latvian relations⁵⁹, Romanian-Danish relations⁶⁰,

⁵⁵ Elena Dragomir, Silviu Miloiu, *Istoria Finlandei* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2011).

⁵⁶ Silviu Miloiu, Florin Anghel, Veniamin Ciobanu, and Zigmantas Kiaupa, *Istoria Lituaniei* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2011).

⁵⁷ Silviu Miloiu (coord.), Edgars Plētiens, Kristine Ante, Valters Ščerbinskis, and Bogdan-Alexandru Schipor, *Istoria Letoniei* (București: Eikon, 2018).

⁵⁸ Silviu Miloiu (coordinator), Florin Anghel, Dalia Bukelevičiūtė, Alexandru Ghișa, Ramojus Kraujelis, Bogdan-Alexandru Schipor, *The Romanian-Lithuanian Relations. Diplomatic documents (1919-1944)* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2011) and Silviu Miloiu (coord.), Octavian Țicu, Vladimir Jarmolenko, Adinel

while larger monographs on Romanian-Finnish relations and Romanian-Norwegian relations are forthcoming. A landmark Norwegian-Romanian dictionary⁶¹ and translations, especially of two of Leonidas Donskis's fundamental books⁶², have been also achieved within the association.

It is essential that the programmes of the association will continue and its contribution to the development of Baltic and Nordic studies will be achieved in areas such as education, research, publications, cultural programmes, translations, dictionaries, exhibitions, scientific gatherings.

Conclusions

This article aimed at investigating the main sources of Romanian knowledge of the Baltic region and sorting out the way they have been represented in the Romanian mental images, with the focus on the activities of The Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies and Valahia University of Târgoviște and its partners in this regard. Throughout the analysis, knowledge of each other was attached to the concepts of memory and history due to the fact that, according to Boulding and Fisher, the largest part of our knowledge derives from remembering, this being applicable even in the high sphere of international relations. I applied this theoretical framework to my case-study of Romania's knowledge of Baltic area assessing the medieval, modern and 20th century legacy of the Romanian encounters with the Baltic States.

In most cases, the legacy of the relations between Romanians and Baltic nations played little role in feeding a sense of solidarity between these nations. Very few Romanians still remember the significance of Lithuania in the 14th or 15th century in Moldovan and Valahian politics or the role of Tartu University in breeding the designs of Bessarabian intelligentsia for unification to Romania in 1918. For decades, the bonds

Ciprian Dincă, Nerijus Babinškas, *From Neighbourhood to Partnership: Highlights of Lithuania's Relations with Romania and Moldova* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2013).

⁵⁹ Silviu Miloiu (coordinator), Ēriks Jēkabsons, Laima Jēkabšone, Alexandru Ghișa, *The Romanian-Latvian Relations. Diplomatic documents (1918-1958)* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012).

⁶⁰ Oana Popescu, *România și Danemarca în prima jumătate a secolului XX* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2011).

⁶¹ Arne Halvorsen, and Crina Leon, *Dicționar norvegian-român*, Volumul I (A-K) (Iași: Editura Tehnopress, 2015).

⁶² Leonidas Donskis, *Forme ale urii: imaginația bătuită a filosofiei și literaturii moderne* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2013), *Putere și imaginație: studii de politică și literatură* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012).

between Romanians and Baltic nations were so scarce due to totalitarianism and Soviet control of history and memory that practically very little knowledge of each other existed.

However, in some instances memory and history did play a role in the perception-building process as it happened during World War II in the relations between Romania and Finland or in the 1989/1991 Moldovan breakup with Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, when the Baltic independence was re-enacted in 1990/1991 only vague perceptions or mindsets of each other existed. No mention in history or geography textbooks were made to the Baltic States and very few works devoted to these nations existed in Romanian libraries.

In order to produce knowledge and socialization into other's culture the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies (ARSBN) and *Revista Română pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice* were set up nine years ago. Their aims are discussed in the last section of the article, their goals of giving these bonds the memory, intensity and permanency being consistent with a fundamental change in the foundation of the Romanian-Baltic relations. The article also discusses Valahia University of Târgoviște's role in promoting the Baltic and Nordic studies in Romania. As a result of these endeavors some tens of events, books, journal issues and study programmes have been delivered and a new generation of Baltic and Nordic studies is already being nurtured as Crina Leon's article on the Norwegian studies at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași also aptly demonstrates.

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