

POLITICAL AND LEGAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE IDENTITY CLAIMS OF GAGAUZ AND BULGARIAN ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA¹

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Abstract

In the present paper we aim to analyze the specific situations of several minorities groups Republic of Moldova has developed an ample legal framework for the protection of minority rights. The political and legal measures concerning the protection of minorities targeted to assign certain special forms and conditions of autonomy by establishing special statutes adopted by organic laws. There are put to the issue the interpretations of territorial and non-territorial autonomy as policies for the minorities' protection. The study argues that any model of autonomy, whether territorial or non-territorial, is viable when it can provide three desiderata: The protection of ethnic identity, impact on human development and the maintenance of the national unity of the state. The choice of territorial or non-territorial autonomy must be weighed depending on the moral force of identity claims. The political and legal measures adopted by the Republic of Moldova by rendering territorial autonomy to Gagauz ethnicity disregard the basic criteria for assessing the claims of ethnic minorities, largely ignoring the normative political theory in the analysis of decisions that target the management of ethnic diversity. We suggest that for the Republic of Moldova a model of non-territorial autonomy will respond more effectively to identity manifestations, provided that they are assumed as "local management" in the ethno-cultural sphere, based on the principle of local autonomy and decentralization.

Keywords: *democracy, minority, ethnic group, non-territorial autonomy, territorial autonomy, human rights.*

JEL Classification: H83, K23

1. Introduction

In 1991 the Republic of Moldova declared its independence. At the time of the declaration of independence, the ethnic structure of the Republic of Moldova, which had 4,335,733 dwellers, consisted of 63.86% Moldovans (Romanians), 13.47% Ukrainians, 12.47% Russians, 3.57% Gagauz, 2.02% Bulgarians, 1.5% Jews and 3.11% other ethnicities. The protection of minorities is assumed before the declaration of independence, along with the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In a relatively short period, the Republic of Moldova has joined other international documents aimed at exercising the rights of minorities, being protected from any attempt to assimilate against their will. Two of these are the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

In 2001, it was adopted Law No. 382-XV on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the legal status of their organizations. Despite these efforts, the start of constructing the new state was marked by interethnic tensions, which caused particularly complex situations: polarization of the population of the former Moldovan SSR based on ethno-linguistic criteria, separatist movements in the eastern (Transnistria) and southern districts of the country (inhabited by Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnics). The representatives of national minorities did not agree to the declaration, in 1989, of "Moldovan language with Latin writing", a phrase included in Article 13 of the Constitution adopted in 1994 by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova as a state language, even though the study of the languages of national minorities - Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Jewish was the subject of government decisions adopted from 1990 to 1992. The legal framework stipulated very clearly that the rights of minorities would be respected. The discontents

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were generated by the fact that all members of the state administration will be bound to know and speak Romanian within their responsibilities.

In this manner, at the beginning of 1990, a country where ethnic minorities lived peacefully together contends with two separatist manifestations – claiming the right to autonomy of the Gagauz from the south of the republic and claiming the right to “self-determination of the Transnistrian people”.

This context required the development of a constitutional and legal framework on political rights for ethnic groups living compactly on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. This study analyzes the political and legal measures adopted by the Republic of Moldova for the protection of ethnic minorities and the extent to which the Republic of Moldova was /is able to turn to account the best options for the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups. We are putting forward non-territorial solutions for the autonomy of ethnic minorities. The framework of the analysis is the Gagauz minority and the Bulgarian minority in the Republic of Moldova.

2. The Gagauz minority

The Gagauz are an ethnic group poorly spread on the western shore of the Black Sea. The Gagauz ethnic groups are divided into more or less compact groups in the territories of the Republic of Moldova, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and Ukraine. Groups with the *Gagauz* ethnonym live in the European part of Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but this group has a Muslim religion. Two-thirds of the total Gagauz population of about 250.000 people live in southern Moldova and adjacent Ukrainian regions.

It is widely accepted that the Gagauz are of Turkish origin and have migrated towards the south of Moldova in several waves since 1780. Together with the Bulgarians, they finally settled in the steppes of Bugeak during the Russo-Turkish wars. They are Orthodox Christians and speak the Gagauz language, a language from the group of Turkish languages of the South-West.

The Republic of Moldova is the only country where Gagauz can assert themselves as an autonomous political entity where they have the opportunity to develop their language and culture. The claims for the preservation and development of Gagauz cultures have increased after the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova. Against a background of ethnic mobilization in the Gorbachev era, in 1988 a movement appears, called “the People of Gagauzia” (Gagauz Halki). Even though the support of Chisinau for preserving the cultural identity of Gagauz people is quite consistent, in 1989 it was already insisting on the recognition of territorial autonomy as a solution for preserving the Gagauz language and identity. The Gagauz believed that their problems would be solved if they were granted territorial autonomy within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova⁵.

On August 17, 1990, in Comrat is declared the autonomous republic of Gagauzia, within the composition of the Soviet Union, the action is declared illegal by the Government of Chisinau. There ensued multiple confrontations among constitutional forces and those of the alleged autonomous Gagauz Republic. These are powered by two conflicting identity theses – “Moldovenism” and “Romanism”. These two ideal types approach differently the name of language, the interpretation of history, cultural and ethnic affiliation⁶, and they directed the political life of the state, affecting the entire country.

Paradoxically, the Gagauz opposition to Chisinau was not unitary. A large part of the Gagauz intellectuals attempted to inspire a Turkish renaissance, trying to move away from the Slavic influence and anchoring them in a (pan) Turkish renaissance. Others oriented themselves to the

⁵ Marcin Kosienkowski, *The Gagauz Republic: An Autonomism-Driven De Facto State*, „The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review”, Volume 44: Issue 3, 2017, p. 296.

⁶ J. D. Iglesias, (2013). *Integration of Minorities in the Public Discourse from Republic of Moldova*, „Polis”, p. 20; A. Barbăroșie (2012). *Integrarea grupurilor etnice și consolidarea națiunii civice în Republica Moldova*. Chișinău: Institutul de Politici Publice, p. 40.

Russian/Soviet components of the Gagauz culture and tried to keep this ethnic minority within the "Russian world."

The claims of the Gagauz minority took shape by building the Gagauz autonomy within the limits of the legal and constitutional area of the Republic of Moldova, which gave rise to one of the first post-Soviet autonomy - the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) - Gagauzia/Găgăuz Yeri, regarded by some authors as „de facto state”⁷. In late 1994, the Chisinau Parliament recognized the territorial autonomy of the Gagauz, whose special status is mentioned in the Constitution. A (baskan) governor, an executive committee, and a legislative assembly (Halk Toplusu) are elected by local vote in 1995. The “autonomy” decided an official status for three languages – Gagauz, Russian and “Moldovan”, and in case of a “change of status of the Republic of Moldova”, it kept the right to determine its own fate⁸.

The Gagauz-Yeri territorial-autonomous unit has an area of 1,830 square km, the region being divided into three administrative districts, called "dolay", being about Comrat, Ceadir-Lunga and Vulcanesti. More specifically, the autonomous territorial unit has 32 localities, out of which two municipalities, one city, 23 townships and six villages. The 2014 census showed that 134,535 dwellers live in the region, down from 2004, when 155,646 were registered, and in the capital of the region there are more than 20 thousand dwellers. The law concerning the special status of Gagauzia stipulates that the region speaks, as official languages, the Gagauz, the Romanian (which in the region is called Moldovan) and Russian. Nevertheless, the de facto situation shows that most locals, but also public institutions, use the Russian language in everyday communication⁹. Russian prevails over the state language as the mother tongue for all minority groups except Roma. The level of proficiency in Russian is higher than in the mother tongue¹⁰. The official website of UTA Gagauzia www.gagauzia.md proposes for search RU, GY, RO, EN. The amplest and most complete information is shown in Russian, even though there are some materials in Gagauz, Romanian and English. Other sites in UTA Gagauzia use exclusively Russian, for example, the Portal <http://www.gagauz.md/>, the official Ceadâr-Lunga website <http://ceadir-lunga.md/>¹¹. The study programs of the University of Comrat are taught mainly in Russian.

3. Identity manifestations of the Bulgarian minority. Chronology of claims

The ethnic Bulgarians count about 7 million, being geographically found in 39 countries. Except from Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova is the sixth country (after Germany, Spain, Ukraine, USA and United Kingdom) on whose territory live most ethnic Bulgarians. On the territory of the Republic of Moldova the ethnic Bulgarians are in a proportion of 1.9%. This figure represents the free declaration of persons concerning ethnicity, mother tongue, commonly spoken language and religion, an essential principle applied in the 2014 census. The last two censuses show that membership of Bulgarian ethnicity has not undergone any essential changes. We specify this taking into account that the freedom to choose belonging to an ethnicity has caused changes in the ethnic structure of the population of the Republic of Moldova. For example, compared to 2004, the weight of the population identifying themselves as Moldovans decreased by 1.0%, while the weight of people who declared themselves Romanians went up by 4.8% compared to 2004. The weight of the Russian and Ukrainian ethnic population has diminished respectively by 1.9 and 1.8% in the last 10 years.

Like the Gagauz, the Bulgarians arrived in Bessarabia in the 18th and early 19th century seeking refuge from Ottoman persecution. Ethnic Bulgarians of the Republic of Moldova are descendants of the Transdanubian colonizers settled in Bessarabia, following the multiple waves of

⁷ M. Kosienkowski, *op. cit.* (2017), p. 293.

⁸ O. Ticu (2021), *Minoritățile etnice din Basarabia, Găgăuzii*. Available: <https://timpul.md/articol/minoritatile-etnice-din-basarabia-gagauzii-107134.html>.

⁹ W. van Meurs (2015). *Moldova: Nested Cases of Belated Nation-building*. „Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest”, 46, 185-209. Available: <https://doi.org/10.3917/receo.461.0185>.

¹⁰ Etnobarometru, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/ro/hcnm/505312>, p. 18-53.

¹¹ I. Condrea (2017) *Incertitudini ale situației sociolingvistice actuale în Republica Moldova*, ”Revista de Știință, Inovare, Cultură și Artă „Akademos”, 1(44), pp. 123-129.

emigrants after the Russian-Ottoman wars of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829. The Bulgarian immigration was also sustained by Tsarist Russia, which carried out intensive work to persuade Bulgarians to settle in the territories annexed by Russian from which the Tatars had been driven. The Bulgarian colonizers settled not only in Bessarabia, but also in the Cherson region¹². A document signed by A. Koronelli, the main guardian of the Transdanubian immigrants from Wallachia, Moldova and Bessarabia, indicated 2,624 families (10,933 people) coming from across the Danube in Bessarabia and in its surroundings. In 1812 there were up to 2700 families of Transdanubian colonizers in Bessarabia. For the Transdanubian colonizers it has been set up a special administration regime¹³.

The claims for the protection of the Bulgarian minority, expressed through legislative initiatives by groups of politicians, are gradual and are considered by the initiators as "pioneering" solutions. Following the declaration of independence, for a certain period, the Republic of Moldova inherits the Soviet model of organizing public power, the territory being divided into districts - territorial entities, whose borders during the Soviet Union were established based on calculating the pace of military mobilization and the number of primary organizations of the Communist Party¹⁴. After the Constitution amendment in 1994, of the territorial administrative reform from 1998-1999, the territory of the Republic of Moldova is reorganized into 11 counties - level 2 territorial collectivities, constituted by pooling the districts. The main reasonings that underlay the basis of the new administrative-territorial structure were of an economic-financial nature, oriented towards ensuring the conditions for the newly created entities to be self-financing¹⁵. Following this reform, the Taraclia district was included in the Cahul County. However, upon the request of the Bulgarian Community, it was created the Taraclia County. In 2002, when it was rejoined the territorial-administrative organization based on districts, the Taraclia County became again the Taraclia district.

A first claim by the Bulgarian minority is the maintenance of the former Soviet district of Taraclia as a level 2 territorial-administrative unit.

Two other initiatives regarding the protection of the Bulgarian minority target to render a special status on the Taraclia district. In September 2013, a group of politicians, who also had the support of the PCRM, launched the idea of conferring Taraclia district the status of national-cultural district. Chisinau is warned that in case it fails to endorse this idea, on the agenda it will be put forward the question of Taraclia district joining the Gagauz autonomous region, as a matter of fact an idea backed up by the Gagauz autonomy authorities.

In April 2015, it is advanced as a legislative initiative the bill for supplementing Article 11 of Law No. 764 of 27 December 2001 on the administrative-territorial organization of the Republic of Moldova, which implied the allocation of districts that are of particular importance in the field of national economy, as well as for the history or culture of the state of the status of "national-cultural district".

On November 12, 2015, the bill of the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova regarding the ethno cultural status of Taraclia district was registered. This status is, according to Article 1 of the bill, "a form of self-determination of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, who live compactly on the territory of Taraclia district, identify themselves with the ethnic community of Bulgarians, based on the voluntary self-organization, for the purpose of independently solving issues related to identity, language development, education and national culture".

The bill provides for a special ethno-cultural status for the Taraclia district of the Republic of Moldova, as a mechanism to ensure the protection of the Bulgarian Community living on the territory of the district as a compact group and representing the majority of the population within its limits.

Through the proposed ethno-cultural status, the bill assigns rights and powers to Taraclia district, but also to state authorities, in the main areas of interest for Bulgarians living in the district. Its stated purpose is to ensure the preservation, protection and development of the linguistic and

¹² I. Nistor (1991). *Istoria Basarabiei*, Chişinău: Cartea Moldovenească, p. 200-201.

¹³ S. Cornea (2019). *Organizarea administrativă a Basarabiei sub ocupație țaristă (1812 -1917)*. Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei „Carol I”, p. 71.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

cultural identity of the Bulgarians of Taraclia, in accordance with the Constitution, domestic legislation and relevant international instruments to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

The status of ethno-cultural district is proposed as an additional guarantee for the preservation of Taraclia district in the context of a future territorial reform in the Republic of Moldova.

Both initiatives are rejected, being invoked the fact that the constitutional rules of the Republic of Moldova do not provide the conferring of a special status to administrative-territorial units based on ethno cultural aspects. The Legal Affairs Department of the Moldovan Parliament provided a detailed legal opinion on the bill, concluding that the bill concerning the ethno cultural status of Taraclia district raised issues of constitutionality and discrimination against other minorities living in the Republic of Moldova. The main arguments brought in the rejection of the project regarded the legal clarity regarding the concepts and terminology used in the bill, the consistency of the bill, as well as the consistency with the legislation in force. At the same time, the opinion mentioned that, as it follows from the 2004 population census, out of the 26 administrative-territorial units that make up the Taraclia district, the ethnic Bulgarians form the majority of the local population in the 8 villages and the Taraclia town, while in the other units, the majority of the population consists of ethnic Moldovans, Ukrainians, Russians and Gagauz¹⁶.

Also, the Venice Commission, through its Opinion expressed concerning this bill, also warns about the issues of legal certainty, finding that the initiative brings little added value to the existing legal framework¹⁷. The bill fails largely to provide clear, precise and consistent legal definitions and regulations for the specific concepts and principles it introduces, which appear essential for the functioning of the proposed ethno cultural district. The clarity of the definition of the “ethno-cultural district” concept is lacking, as well as the required clarity as concerns the division of responsibilities between the state authorities and the potential of the ethno-cultural district. Furthermore, the bill seems to mix the Bulgarian protection rules at the national level and specific arrangements provided for the Taraclia district.

The discussions held by the rapporteurs with various stakeholders, including local authorities in Taraclia, have brought to light that the reason that lead to the proposed special status is only to some extent related to the real situation of the Bulgarian minority¹⁸.

4. Discussions and conclusions

In 1991, the Republic of Moldova declared its independence. The existential question of the moment was what kind of state would be built on the ruins of the former MSSR?¹⁹ Although some political leaders and some authors consider the Republic of Moldova a multiethnic or poly-ethnic state, the figures clearly show that, according to Rogers Brubaker's concept, the Republic of Moldova falls into the category of national states in which there is a majority ethno-cultural nation, consisting of Romanians/Moldovans, depending on self-identification²⁰ and other ethno-cultural minorities whose rights are respected. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the events following 1991 show “a late and conflicting national construction”²¹.

The ethnic Gagauz and Bulgarian people from the Republic of Moldova expressed their desire to preserve their national culture, traditions, customs and, especially, their mother tongue. The claims of Gagauz ethnicity were met by granting territorial autonomy, constitutionally recognized and by adopting the law on the special legal status of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yery). The claims of Bulgarian ethnicity were not accepted, being argued that, in the Republic of Moldova, there is a legislative and institutional framework for their satisfaction. Resonating with Ruth Lapidot's explanations, ethnic Bulgarians have autonomy, this autonomy being associated with the right to act on their own

¹⁶ Venice Commission, 2016

¹⁷ Venice Commission, 2016

¹⁸ Venice Commission, 2016

¹⁹ I. Munteanu (2000). *Dezvoltări regionale în Republica Moldova*. Chișinău: Cartier.Munteanu, 2000, p. 119.

²⁰ I. Chifu (2016, March 7). *Mitul statului poli-etnic și afirmarea națiunii băștinașe*. Deschide.MD.

²¹ W. van Meurs, *op. cit.* (2015), p.189.

discretion in certain aspects, no matter whether the right is possessed by a person or an official body²². The law concerning local public administration stipulates that, in the accomplishment of their competences, local public administration authorities have autonomy, approved and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the European Charter of Local Autonomy and other treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. The branch of competences also includes the socio-cultural field, the local authorities having the power to decide on aspects related to the organization of services in this field.

Conferring the territorial autonomy for the Gagauz minority in the Republic of Moldova was the product of intense negotiations that followed the period of ethno-political mobilization in the early 1990. The regulation of autonomy has become a response to an acute need to regulate the ethno-political conflict in order to prevent its further escalation. However, this legal solution may be deemed convenient for groups of interests rather than a long-term strategic approach, and beneficial for preserving ethnic identity. Although the Gagauz autonomy is often considered a rare case of successful change of conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the actual implementation of the provisions on autonomy is a highly contested matter²³. Perhaps the solution of territorial autonomy for Gagauz ethnicity to which the Republic of Moldova appealed has somehow faded out interethnic tensions, but this solution can hardly be considered effective in preserving and developing identity culture. Moreover, the political decision was taken without evaluating the moral force of identity claims. The normative political theory concludes that identity claims do not have an independent moral force as long as there are proper substantive social conditions and where identity claims are just social constructions. Moral force can be judged in terms of three criteria: (1) the jeopardy condition, which establishes what of importance to identity is jeopardized in a conflict; (2) the validation condition, which asks how a contested practice or a limitation to a practice is validated; and (3) the safeguard condition, which focuses on whether the practice or restriction on the practice places people at risk of harm²⁴.

Another aspect ignored is that the breakup of the Soviet Union fueled the identity manifestations of stigmatized groups within the empire. From an identity point of view, the claims of Gagauz and Bulgarians in the Republic of Moldova illustrate a situation in which two ethnic groups face a majority group in a full state reconstruction²⁵. But this majority group within the Soviet Union was equally stigmatized. The efforts of the Republic of Moldova as a state under construction are notable, but without the full support of ethnic groups.

Before and after gaining independence, Chisinau obviously supported the Gagauz community, offering it unique opportunities for development and propelling rapprochement with Turkey. The State Department for National Relations, set up after 1991, has been involved in more initiatives to resuscitate Gagauz traditions and history. Through the encouragement of the "Kardashlik" Cultural Association (Brotherhood), it was attempted to awake the traditional Gagauz holidays and popular culture, efforts that generated little interest from this community, since music, traditional clothing and specific folk art had practically disappeared under the Soviets.

The appearance of a weekly newspaper in Gagauz (Ana sozu – mother tongue) and the opening of a university with Moldovan funds in Comrat in 1991 contributed substantially to the cultural renewal of this Community. 2/3 of the teachers and 3/4 of the students were of Gagauz origin, and compared to 1989, when Gagauz made up only 1.4% of the total number of students from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova, in 1992-1993, their number reached 2.4% in the Republic of Moldova. There are backed the appearance of high schools and kindergartens, the union of Gagauz writers, women's association, libraries, monthly broadcasts in Gagauz language on national

²² R. Lapidot, (1997), *Autonomy: Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, p. 277

²³ O. Protsyk (2011) *Gagauz Autonomy in Moldova: The Real and the Virtual in Post-Soviet State Design. Asymmetric Autonomy and the Settlement of Ethnic Conflicts*, edited by Marc Weller and Katherine Nobbs, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 231-251. <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812205756.231>.

²⁴ A. Eisenberg (2009) *Reasons of identity: a normative guide to the political and legal assessment of identity claims*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 73.

²⁵ R. D. Petersen (2012). *Identity, Rationality, and Emotion in the Processes of State Disintegration and Reconstruction*. In: Kanchan Chandra (Ed.), *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 121.

television, radio and local television, etc.²⁶ For comparison, during the Soviet period, Gagauz children were trained in Russian, only thirty-three books were published in Gagauz language²⁷.

In 2016, the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye found that „...*The law defines national minorities as persons residing on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, having the citizenship of the Republic of Moldova, possessing ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics that differ from the majority of the population (Moldovans) and are considered to be of another ethnic origin (Art. 1). Law no. 382 XV has relevant provisions regarding the rights of minorities, including the principle of equality and non-discrimination for persons belonging to national minorities (Article 4); the right to education in Moldovan and Russian, as well as the creation of conditions for education in the mother tongue for other groups, including ukrainians, gagauz, bulgarians and jews (Article 6); the obligation of local administrations with considerable minority groups to publish administrative acts in the language of minorities (Article 8); the right of persons belonging to national minorities to communicate with public institutions in Moldovan and Russian languages and to get a reply in the same language of communication (Article 12); the right to religious freedom of minorities (Article 14); the right to use their names, forenames and patronymics in official documents (Article 16); as well as the appointment of the Department of Interethnic Relations as the agency responsible for promoting state policy in the field of interethnic relations and of the Coordination Council as an advisory body (Article 25)*”²⁸.

The Republic of Moldova applied to the solution of territorial autonomy, a model of ensuring order and stability in multiethnic societies, given that it is a national state and given the fact that the legal framework included sufficient elements of a non-territorial autonomy model. The term and practices were not very strange, taking into account that in the former Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe such practices were known, only under another name - "national cultural autonomy"²⁹.

The five main categories of non-territorial autonomy, as it ensues from the academic consensus on the term, are found in the legislative documents and public policies developed in the Republic of Moldova. It is about (1) the right to act upon its own discretion; (2) independence; (3) decentralization; (4) exclusive powers provided in the legislation; administration and ad judgment of specific areas; (5) limited self-government seen mainly as part of the minority rights regime³⁰.

The advantage of non-territorial autonomy is that it can be applied to all members of an ethnic group, regardless of where they live. Furthermore, perhaps the area of personal autonomy could be extended to other fields, beyond issues of culture, language, charity, religion and education. Social capital, economic resources and the political climate are essential for non-territorial autonomy to function successfully. Debates on non-territorial autonomy should distance themselves a little from the "protectionist" idea of minorities and focus more on their social and civic activism. Just as local democracy is the reason for local autonomy, the social and civic activism of minorities could justify non-territorial autonomy. Even though it is not a "magic bullet"³¹, the capacity of this institutional arrangement to diminish ethnic tensions can be attractive to decision-makers, on condition that it is assumed as "local management"³² in the ethno-cultural sphere, based on the principle of local autonomy and decentralization.

²⁶ O. Țicu, *op. cit.*, 2021.

²⁷ S. Kaufman (2001), *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 160.

²⁸ R. Izsák-Ndiaye (2016). *Report of the special rapporteur for minority issues, made during her mission in the Republic of Moldova*. Human Rights Council, p. 5-6.

²⁹ E. Nimni (ed.) (2005) *National-Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 83.

³⁰ T. H., Malloy, A. Osipov, B. Vizi (2015). *Managing Diversity through Non-Territorial Autonomy: Assessing Advantages, Deficiencies, and Risks*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198738459.001.0001, p.17.

³¹ J. Coakley (2016). *Conclusion: Patterns of Non-Territorial Autonomy*, „Ethnopolitics”, Vol. 15 No.1, p. 166-185. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2015.1101840>, pp. 166-185

³² A. Osipov, (2020). *How productive are the debates about non-territorial autonomy?* Available at: <https://www.icelds.org/2020/01/20/how-productive-are-the-debates-about-non-territorial-autonomy/Osipov>, 2020.

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