



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Identity and Territory: Regionalism, Nationalism and Modernity in Central and South-Eastern Europe



Iași, September 10-11, 2025

Organizers:

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

Faculty of History

Center for the History of International Relations (CIRI)

Society for Historical Studies in Romania (SSIR)

Laboratory for Historical and Prosopographic Research on the Romanian Elite (CIPER)

Balkan History Association

Partener:

Iași City Hall

“Mihai Ursachi” Culture House

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PhD. Professor **Cristian Ploscaru** – Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

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PhD. Associate Professor **Mircea-Cristian Ghenghea** – Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

Wednesday, September, 10th
Vespasian Pella Room (“Casa Universitarilor”)
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University
Chair: Cristian Ploscaru

9.30-10.15: Conference Opening and Welcome Speeches

Mihai Chirica, Mayor of the City of Iași

Liviu-George Maha, Rector of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University
of Iași

Lucrețiu Mihailescu-Bîrliba, Dean of the Faculty of History,
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

Cristian Ploscaru, Center for the History of International
Relations (CIRI), Iași

Wednesday, September, 10th
Vespasian Pella Room (“Casa Universitarilor”)
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

First Session
Identity and Territory in Nation-State Building
Chair: Cosmin Mihut

10.15-11.00: Keynote Speaker

Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (University of Santiago de Compostela),
Political and cultural renaissances in Mediterranean Europe
(1860-1945): a comparative approach

11.00-11.30: Coffee Break

11.30-13.00: Plenary Session

Anna Pigoń (University of Wrocław), **Miloš Řezník** (Chemnitz
University), *Peripheral Regions as the Nation’s Treasury*

Katalin Schrek (University of Debrecen), *Imperialism, Modernity*
and National Identity: The Challenges and Alternatives of
Infrastructure Developments in the Balkans (1860–1890)

Ion Cârja (Babeş-Bolyai University), *Une histoire contrefactuelle. D.*
D. Pătrăşcanu et la participation de la Roumanie à la Première
Guerre Mondiale

13.00-15.00: Lunch – Restaurant “Casa Universitarilor”

Wednesday, September, 10th
Ion Simionescu Room (“Casa Universitarilor”)
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

Second Session
Urban Culture and Community Identity in Change
Chair: Jeremy DeWaal

15.00-17.30: Plenary Session

Agata Łysakowska-Trzoss (Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History), *Between Local and National Needs: The Activity of Charitable Organizations in Nineteenth Century Greater Poland as a Sphere of Polish Engagement under Prussian Rule*

Cristian Ploscaru (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University), *Parochialism, Local Power, and Identity: Iași and Kishinev in the mid-19th Century*

Lida-Maria Dodou (University of Vienna), *Local Allegiance and National Indifference of Salonikan Jews, 1880-1938*

Mircea-Cristian Ghenghea (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University), *The 1862 ASTRA Exhibition in Brașov – Regional Consciousness and National Identity*

Anastasia Romanova (Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova), *Dynamics in Urban Place Names as Means of Identity Shift (Kishinev, Republic of Moldova)*

17.30-18.00: Coffee Break

Wednesday, September, 10th
Ion Simionescu Room (“Casa Universitarilor”)
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

Third Session
Reshaping Identity: Ideology and Conflict
Chair: Mircea-Cristian Ghenghea

18.00-19.00: Plenary Session

Blagoj Conev (University of Skopje), *The Nationalism as a Factor for the Dissolution of Yugoslavia: How Western Understanding of the Nation-State Produced the Yugoslav Wars*

Gabriel Leanca (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University), *(Romanian) Populism: Critique of a Persistent Concept*

19.00-20.30: Dinner – Restaurant “Casa Universitarilor”

Thursday, September, 11th
Vespasian Pella Room (“Casa Universitarilor”)
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

Fourth Session
Representations of Space in National Context
Chair: Xosé M. Núñez Seixas

09.15-10.00: Keynote Speaker

Jeremy DeWaal (University of Exeter), *Beyond Nationalist Regional Frames: Narratives of West German Border Regionalisms as Pro-European Forces, 1945-1990*

10.00-11.30: Plenary Session

Cosmin Mihuț (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University), *A Project for a Romanian-Serbian Confederation on the Lower Danube (1837): Imperialism, Provincialism and National Identity*

Lucian Turcu (Babeș-Bolyai University), *Territorial Union Without Religious Unity? Debates and Projects Around the Confessional Union of Romanians in the Interwar Period*

Andrei Popa (The Institute of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989), *An ‘Inherited History’: The Nationalistic Discourse of the Ceaușescu Regime*

11.30-11.45: Coffee Break

Thursday, September, 11th
Vespasian Pella Room (“Casa Universitarilor”)
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

Fifth Session
Young Researchers Workshop
Chair: Miloš Řezník

11.45-13.45: Plenary Session

Eusebiu Diaconu („Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University), *Imperial Odessa in the First Half of Nineteenth Century: the ‘Florence of Russia’?*

Mădălin Anghel (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University), *Local Revolt or National Uprising? Interpreting the Moldavian Events of Spring of 1848 through Great Power Consular Reports*

Kešetović Meldin (University of Sarajevo), *Localism and Fragmented Identities in the Peripheral Regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1941): Between Ottoman Legacy and Yugoslav Nation-State Building*

Bogdan Ștefan Barcan (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University), *The Albanian Community in Romania and the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920)*

13.45-14.15: Final discussions, Conclusions

14.15-15.30: Lunch – Restaurant “Casa Universitarilor”

17.00-19.00: Guided Tour of Iași

19.00-20.30: Dinner – Restaurant “Casa Universitarilor”

ABSTRACTS

Mădălin ANGHEL (Romania)

PhD Student, Faculty of History, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași

Local Revolt or National Uprising? Interpreting the Moldavian Events of Spring 1848 through Great Power Consular Reports

This study revisits the Moldavian upheavals of spring 1848, culminating in the violent repression of the opposition on March 29/April 10. While rooted in internal grievances and the erosion of regime legitimacy under the impact of Romantic nationalism, these events must also be situated within the wider framework of Great Power politics. Newly contextualized consular reports and domestic testimonies suggest that segments of the Moldavian opposition contemplated aligning with a Polish insurrection against Russia and envisaged placing the Principalities under Austria's constitutional protection, potentially through a Danubian Confederation. Such projects reflected broader diplomatic scenarios entertained by France, Prussia, and Austria in their attempts to isolate Russia, yet none were realized. In Iași, the interplay of divided opposition strategies and Prince Mihail Sturdza's repressive measures precipitated the crisis. Nevertheless, the episode illustrates the responsiveness of Moldavia's political elite to the revolutionary wave sweeping across Europe and to the shifting diplomatic agendas of the Great Powers seeking to exploit the principle of national self-determination against Russian dominance.

Bogdan Ștefan BARCAN (Romania)

PhD Student, Faculty of History, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași

The Albanian Community in Romania and the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920)

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Romania played a crucial role in supporting the Albanian national movement, becoming one of the main centers of political and cultural activity for the Albanian diaspora. Bucharest hosted important Albanian cultural and political societies, such as "Drita" and "Shpresa," and served as a publishing hub for newspapers and books in the Albanian language, widely circulated throughout the Balkan Peninsula. Notable figures like Jani Vreto, Nikolla Naço, and Sotir Peci were active in promoting national identity and the cause of Albanian independence.

During World War I, Albania was fragmented and occupied by various powers, threatening its recently proclaimed independence of 1912. In this challenging context, the Albanian community in Romania remained one of the most active diasporas, mobilizing financial, journalistic, and diplomatic resources to defend national interests. At the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920), leaders of the Albanian community in Romania, in cooperation with representatives from the United States and Western Europe, submitted petitions and memoranda to the Great Powers, requesting recognition of Albania's borders and sovereignty. Their role was essential in shaping a coherent diaspora stance and keeping the "Albanian question" on the international diplomatic agenda.

Ion CÂRJA (Romania)

PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Une histoire contrefactuelle. D. D. Pătrăşcanu et la participation de la Roumanie à la Première Guerre Mondiale

En 1925, Dimitrie D. Pătrăşcanu, homme politique de tendance conservatrice et père du dirigeant communiste Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu, publiait un recueil d'essais et de réflexions politiques intitulé *Face à la nation (În faţa naţiunii)*, dont le premier texte, intitulé *Interprétant les signes du temps (Tâlcuind semnele vremii)*, se distingue particulièrement. Cet article attire fortement l'attention par l'évaluation tout à fait inédite qu'il propose de la participation de la Roumanie à la Première Guerre mondiale. En substance, D. D. Pătrăşcanu affirme que la réalisation de l'idéal national par la constitution de la Grande Roumanie ne fut pas le résultat d'un effort militaire ou politico-diplomatique roumain, qui fut un échec, mais plutôt la conséquence d'une conjoncture exceptionnellement favorable, marquée par la désintégration des deux grands empires, l'Autriche-Hongrie et la Russie tsariste, à la fin de la guerre. D. D. Pătrăşcanu déclare littéralement que si la Roumanie était restée neutre jusqu'à la fin, elle aurait atteint ses objectifs et l'idéal national aurait de toute façon été réalisé, sans le prix matériel et humain exorbitant payé par le pays durant les années de guerre. Cette évaluation audacieuse, aujourd'hui complètement oubliée, de la participation de la Roumanie à la « Grande Guerre » est fondamentalement un texte de polémique résolument antilibérale, une critique acerbe des décisions prises par Ion I. C. Brătianu entre 1916 et 1918, formulée depuis une position

conservatrice par un homme politique et intellectuel de conviction pro-allemande, tel que l'était D. D. Pătrășcanu. Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une perspective contrefactuelle sur la participation de la Roumanie à la Première Guerre mondiale, l'analyse de cet homme politique moldave invite aujourd'hui, plus d'un siècle après le grand conflit, à une réflexion salutaire sur l'engagement de la Roumanie dans le premier conflit mondial de l'histoire, permettant de dépasser la vision héroïsante, si souvent rebattue, concernant la Roumanie, la « Grande Guerre » et la Grande Union.

Blagoj CONEV (North Macedonia)

PhD, Associate Professor, University of Skopje

The Nationalism as a Factor for the Dissolution of Yugoslavia: How Western Understanding of the Nation-State Produced the Yugoslav Wars

This paper explores the dissolution of Yugoslavia through the lens of nationalism. The central hypothesis of the study is that nationalism, in its core aim to produce separate nation-states, was a fundamental factor in the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and this hypothesis is supported through comparative analysis and synthesis of both internal dynamics and international responses. Furthermore, the paper argues that the Western conception of the nation-state — grounded in ethnic homogeneity — contributed significantly to the fragmentation of the multiethnic Yugoslav federation. While nationalism is often treated as a spontaneous or inevitable force in the Balkans, this study contends that it was strategically mobilized by political elites within a deteriorating institutional context and reinforced by inconsistent international responses. The analysis challenges the popular narrative of ancient ethnic hatreds and instead situates the Yugoslav wars within broader trends of elite manipulation, political mythmaking, and normative confusion in international diplomacy. Comparative insights from Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland further illuminate the contingent and constructed nature of nationalism and conflict. By tracing the interplay between internal dynamics and external influences, this paper reveals how the application of the Western nation-state model without sufficient safeguards or inclusive governance mechanisms accelerated the collapse of Yugoslavia and legitimized ethnonationalist agendas. through the lens of nationalism, critically examining the hypothesis that nationalism, in its core aim to produce separate nation-states, helped in the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It further argues that

the Western conception of the nation-state — grounded in ethnic homogeneity — contributed significantly to the fragmentation of the multiethnic Yugoslav federation. While nationalism is often treated as a spontaneous or inevitable force in the Balkans, this study contends that it was strategically mobilized by political elites within a deteriorating institutional context and reinforced by inconsistent international responses. The analysis challenges the popular narrative of ancient ethnic hatreds and instead situates the Yugoslav wars within broader trends of elite manipulation, political mythmaking, and normative confusion in international diplomacy. Comparative insights from Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland further illuminate the contingent and constructed nature of nationalism and conflict. By tracing the interplay between internal dynamics and external influences, this paper reveals how the application of the Western nation-state model without sufficient safeguards or inclusive governance mechanisms accelerated the collapse of Yugoslavia and legitimized ethnonationalist agendas.

Jeremy DeWAAL (United Kingdom)

PhD, Senior Lecturer, University of Exeter

Beyond Nationalist Regional Frames: Narratives of West German Border Regionalisms as Pro-European Forces, 1945-1990

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalists struggled intensely to define regionalism in national borderlands on their own terms. The German case is no different, and nationalists and National Socialists both sought to depict such regions as fortresses of the nation. In the Rhineland, for example, this is best seen in the topoi of the “Watch on the Rhine,” while similar narratives can be found in places like Baden or the Palatinate. Similar dynamics can be seen in maritime regions. In the Hanseatic cities along the coast, nationalists promoted narratives about the cities as “gates to the world” which were defined as projecting German national power onto the global stage.

The paper I propose to present in Iași examines efforts to transform such earlier nationalist narratives of regional belonging after the war, looking specifically at the case of West Germany. It will show how pro-European groups of regionalists after the war sought to toss out nationalist narratives about their regionalism and promote notions of themselves as “bridges” across the border which could foster European unification. I will draw on cases from

the Rhineland, the German Southwest, and the Hanseatic cities in the first two decades after the Second World War.

Already after 1945, tropes like the Watch on the Rhine were quickly replaced, for example, by ideas of the Rhineland as an international bridge which harmonically combined the historic influences from France, Latin Europe, and Germany. Many regionalists in the Southwest similarly emphasizes how their regionalism was about reaching in a spirit of reconciliation across the border, with many heralding historic influence on their region from France and Switzerland. Similarly minded groups in the Hanseatic cities, meanwhile, turned to the historic idea of their cities as “gates to the world”. Rather than eliminating the metaphor, pro-European localists instead refashioned it—abandoning notions of the metaphor as about projecting national power onto the world stage and adopting narratives of the gate as about a site of international reconciliation and contact.

Eusebiu Diaconu (Romania)

PhD Student, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

Imperial Odessa in the First Half of Nineteenth Century: the ‘Florence of Russia’?

This paper examines the geographical and political determinisms that shaped nineteenth-century Europe. Its purpose is to explore how British travelers and diplomats constructed representations of “Eastern Europe.” The analysis advances as its working hypothesis the perception of the Russian Empire, an identity that shaped and administered the urban life of the port city of Odessa. Whether described as a “city of dreams” or the “Florence of Russia,” Odessa remained bound to the constraints of this political geography.

The methodological challenge of this study lies in the comparative analysis of sources, with particular emphasis on the distinction between narrative accounts and diplomatic records. While the former are ascribed a higher degree of subjectivity, our task is to situate these texts within their historical context, ultimately assessing whether the images of Russia and Odessa conform to the classical paradigm of representing the “East” through Western eyes, or whether the British case reveals significant divergences in perception.

Lida-Maria DODOU (Austria)

PhD Candidate, University of Vienna

Local Allegiance and National Indifference of Salonikan Jews, 1880–1938

In 1938, right after the Austrian Anschluss, Rachel Levy, a Salonikan Jewess living in Vienna since the fall of the Habsburg Empire, filled out an emigration questionnaire provided by the Jewish Community of Vienna. Asked about her nationality, she replied simply: “Salonika.” Rachel wasn’t the only one to demonstrate such a strong allegiance to her regional homeland. Some 20 years earlier, amidst WWI, a well-to-do merchant from Salonika gave the same answer when asked about his nationality by the French border police, and already by the end of the 19th century, the Judeo-Spanish press in Salonika reported on the habits of the “Salonikans of Vienna” who frequented cafés but not the Sephardi community of the city.

What these examples demonstrate is a widespread identification with Salonika, across times and social strata, and the construction of a strong sense of belonging. They also denote a lack of a national identity, which, as evinced in the case of Rachel Levy, persisted well into the 20th century. Some scholars have even argued that the formation of national consciousness of Salonikan Jews only occurred in the concentration camps of WWII. The aim of this paper is to propose a re-examination of Salonikan Jews’ identities by focusing on a group of Salonikan migrants to (post-) Habsburg Central Europe. It will examine their persistent allegiance to and identification with Salonika instead of any national identity, by employing the conceptual framework of National Indifference, which has until now been used with a focus on East Central Europe, utilizing archival sources in Judeo-Spanish, German, Greek and French. Thus, the paper will draw from Migration Studies to examine not the “hybridity”, but the perseverance of aspects of one’s identity that had been formed back home and it will contribute to a gap that has prevailed between the historiographies of Southeastern and East Central Europe.

Mircea-Cristian GHENGHEA (Romania)

PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

The 1862 ASTRA Exhibition in Braşov – Regional Consciousness and National Identity

In the years of the “liberal regime” from the Habsburg Empire (1860–1867), the cultural development and the affirmation of the Romanian national

movement in Transylvania began to be increasingly linked to the activities of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian People – ASTRA, which had been founded in 1861 in Sibiu. Representing the most inspired and successful formula for bringing together Romanians of all denominations in Transylvania, ASTRA became, as early as 1862, a structure of national, pan-Romanian importance, transcending the simple regional framework. The event that undoubtedly contributed greatly to this was the exhibition organized in 1862 in Braşov, an event with special meanings in the particular context of the time. Through our paper we aim to highlight these issues of the moment in 1862 and to present the impact that the exhibition had on its contemporaries.

Gabriel LEANCA (Romania)

PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University

(Romanian) Populism: Critique of a Persistent Concept

When someone thinks of politics in Romanian context, a literary reference comes immediately into mind. It is the situation portrayed in the much-acclaimed play by Ion Luca Caragiale entitled *A Lost Letter*. The plot of the play consists of various events related to the election campaign in a provincial town south of Romania in 1883. Irony plays the central role in the show. All characters are dominated by uncontrolled emotions and hypocrisy and, mostly, by an ambition to be successful in life at any cost. The lost letter is actually a love note that proves the existence of an affair between the wife of the president of the local electoral committee, incapacitated by senility and narrow-minded conservatism, and the prefect of the town. The embarrassing document falls into the hands of one of the agitators who's editing a newspaper and who wishes to run for office. Blackmail comes to his mind in order to get support in the local constituency from no other than the president of the electoral committee and from the prefect of the town. During one of the election rallies, the wannabe politician, after receiving the needed support from the two blackmailed officials, tries to cover his strategy by telling the voters that he is the right one to do the job for the community. And he explains his position: 'Like any good Romanian, like any son of the hard-working people, in these solemn moments, I think of my country, of my homeland, of Romania... [*he is tearful, his group applauds*]... of its happiness, of its progress, of its future!'. This is the most influential intellectual illustration of political demagoguery in

Romanian context, far more prominent than any existing piece of academic work or social media construct. It is undeniably a satirical representation of conservatism and liberalism after Romania became an independent state. But does the Romanian public and policy-makers equalise the discourse of the vicious political aspirant with so-called 'populist *zeitgeist*'? To what extent a notion like populism provide an intellectual framework and a valuable insight into the evolution of the Romanian society? What are the many faces of such a hyped concept and why one should determine its notional value before using it to explain social and political realities? One can doubt the relevance of a concept like populism, but not its success, at least in the last thirty years. Studying populism can be rewarding at least from three perspectives: 1) it can offer interesting insights into the evolution of political science (if not of political studies, if one recalls the explosive confessions of Giovanni Sartori); 2) it can built up various litmus tests and working hypothesis that help shape broader perspectives of political history; 3) it can advance research on the political vocabulary of the 20th century and on the ways in which it shaped and still shapes the image of the 19th century. From this point of view, populism can be analyzed as a trope or a metaphor, which cover power relationships. This paper will emphasize on a number of general theoretical aspects on populism and will dive into the way Romanian scholarship integrated this concept. It will moreover provide some working hypotheses on the intellectual history of a term like populism.

Agata ŁYSAKOWSKA-TRZOSS (Poland)

PhD, Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences

Between Local and National Needs: The Activity of Charitable Organizations in Nineteenth Century Greater Poland as a Sphere of Polish Engagement under Prussian Rule

In nineteenth-century Greater Poland (then under Prussian rule), the activity of Polish charitable organizations – such as the Ladies' Charity Society of Poznań, the Society for Supporting the Poor and Needy, the Ladies of Mercy Society, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul – went beyond the statutory duty of assisting the poor. While their primary mission was to provide care for those in need, these organizations also played a crucial role in preserving the Polish language, traditions, and historical memory, becoming instruments for strengthening Polish national identity. Inspired by Western European models of philanthropy, they simultaneously shaped a "micro-level" identity – rooted

in local conditions yet linked to a broader national project. These societies were based on modern models and served as platforms for building communities, both among activists and beneficiaries, though integration occurred to varying degrees – more strongly within the membership (and even between different organizations) than between members and their beneficiaries. An important role was played by the leaders of these organizations, who came from both urban and landed gentry backgrounds. The aim of this paper is to characterize the activity of charitable organizations in nineteenth Century Greater Poland as a sphere of polish engagement under prussian rule. Patriotic activities took diverse forms: for members, they included history lectures or participation in commemorations; for beneficiaries – the establishment of small schools and reading rooms, as well as the organization of exhibitions and performances. Particularly significant was the role of women, who – barred by the 1850 law from participating in political associations – used charitable work as a space for public and civic engagement. The analysis of these forms of philanthropy reveals how charitable activity in nineteenth-century Greater Poland became an integral part of the process of shaping and sustaining Polish national identity.

Kešetović MELDIN (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Master's Student, University of Sarajevo

Localism and Fragmented Identities in the Peripheral Regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1941): Between Ottoman Legacy and Yugoslav Nation-State Building

This paper explores the complex interplay between localism, regional identities, and the processes of nation-state building in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Austro-Hungarian occupation (1878) to the establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The region's peripheral position, compounded by its multi-confessional composition and Ottoman administrative legacy, created fragmented collective identities that resisted homogenization efforts by central authorities.

Focusing on microhistorical case studies of small towns and rural communities in northeastern Bosnia, the paper examines how local elites, religious institutions, and community networks navigated shifting political geographies. Particular attention will be given to the dynamics of cultural parochialism, where local affiliations and loyalties often outweighed the imposed national identities of Serbs, Croats, or Muslims (Bosniaks). The Austro-Hungarian policy of controlled modernization and the subsequent

Yugoslav centralist projects encountered persistent local resistances manifested in everyday life, political behavior, and cultural practices.

Using archival sources, local newspapers, and oral histories, the paper argues that the fragmented identity landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplifies how the “periphery” actively shaped, rather than passively received, the discourses of nation and modernity. The case of Bosnia reveals broader patterns of contested identities in Central and Southeastern Europe, where regionalism, religious identity, and imperial legacies intersected in complex ways during the formative period of modern nation-state building.

The presentation will contribute to the conference’s broader discussion on how local and fragmented identities persisted, adapted, or dissolved under the pressures of modern nationalism, offering Bosnia and Herzegovina as a paradigmatic example of identity-territory dynamics in a multi-ethnic frontier region.

Cosmin MIHUȚ (Romania)

PhD, Lecturer, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

A Project for a Romanian-Serbian Confederation on the Lower Danube (1837): Imperialism, Provincialism and National Identity

In 1837, a secret document proposed a Romanian-Serbian confederation on the Lower Danube as a means of resisting Russian dominance. It pledged mutual aid, independence, and constitutional government, written in the style of revolutionary manifestos and sealed with ritualistic oaths. Though later attributed to leaders like Miloš Obrenović of Serbia and Alexandru D. Ghica of Wallachia, their involvement is doubtful, and the pact was likely more symbolic than binding. The project must be seen within the wider geopolitical struggles of the time. Russia exerted direct influence over Wallachia and Moldavia, while Britain, France, and Polish émigrés sought to counterbalance this power by encouraging Balkan resistance, though without openly undermining Ottoman sovereignty. In this climate, the confederation plan reflected both local national aspirations and the maneuverings of imperial powers. More a political tool than a practical blueprint, it symbolized the interplay of imperialism, provincial ambitions, and emerging national consciousness in the Lower Danube during the 1830s.

Xosé M. NÚÑEZ SEIXAS (Spain)

PhD, Professor, University of Santiago de Compostela

Political and cultural renaissances in Mediterranean Europe (1860–1945): a comparative approach

This paper aims at a transnational comparison that includes regions, ethnic minorities, stateless nations, and small nation states that have developed in the Mediterranean basin (or southern Europe) over the long term, with the purpose of identifying similarities and more or less common trends. Although each case is unique, and local conditions often play a decisive role, a diachronic typology will be sketched, seeking to highlight the most relevant factors in the process of national and territorial identity formation in southwestern Europe and the Mediterranean. The relevance of “cultural renaissances” and their intertwining with political mobilisation will be emphasised, as well as the role played by nation-states, social actors, and ethnocultural preconditions in the emergence of ethnoterritorial identities, from Catalonia to Cyprus.

Anna PIGOŃ (Poland)

PhD, Institute of Polish Philology, University of Wrocław

Miloš ŘEZŇÍK (Germany)

PhD, Professor, Chemnitz University

Peripheral Regions as the Nation's Treasury

National movements in Europe not only generated new territorial discourses in general, but also, within this framework, stimulated new processes of regionalization. On the one hand, regions functioned as a kind of “foil” through which the otherwise rather abstract idea of the nation could be explained; on the other hand, they underwent nationalization in the sense that they were integrated into the concept of national territoriality, and their specific characteristics were interpreted in relation to national identity and the model of national culture. Nevertheless, individual national movements adopted markedly different attitudes towards regional specificities: in extreme cases, regions could be perceived either as obstacles to national unity and an overarching national identity, or, conversely, as evidence of the richness, breadth, and diversity of national culture, heritage, and language.

In several national movements, certain regions were identified which, although constituting structural and political peripheries, were nonetheless regarded – or actively sought – as embodying the purest, most authentic forms of national culture, language, or tradition, particularly in their folkloric manifestations (e.g. Karelia in Finnish case, Dalarna in Swedish case etc.), which were subject to the constructed notion of “folk culture.”

The proposed paper addresses the extraordinary intensification of these processes in the modern period, when they were further reinforced by criticism of the contemporary industrial mass society. It focuses on examples from the Polish, Czech, and Lithuanian cultural movements, and in a European comparative perspective, analyses the ennoblement of the regions of Podhale, Slovákco, and Samogitia within the national discourse – an evolution that culminated in the construction of new ideas concerning the national style.

Cristian PLOSCARU (Romania)

PhD, Professor, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași;
Center for the History of International Relations (CIRI), Iași

Parochialism, Local Power, and Identity: Iași and Kishinev in the mid-19th Century

In the context of the ideological affirmation of nationalism and of the nation-state building project, regional identities, based on a certain historical and political heritage, manifested themselves in a variety of forms. My paper proposes a comparative analysis of two case studies, associated in the medium term with the process of territorial and political shaping of Romania. I focus on three main aspects: 1. the issue of a provincial autonomy, based on historical, economic and social reasons; 2. the attitude of the urban elite in Iasi and Kishinev towards the process of administrative centralization; 3. the cultural debates on community identity, based on historical particularities and ethno-linguistic diversity, in relation to the Romanian national discourse of identity, with its mainstream features and community unifying function.

The cases analyzed are quite different in their historical substance, but relevant to the main theme, namely the relationship between provincial identity and nation-state building. In Iași, the local elite was confronted with the consequences of the establishment of a unitary nation state, which shifted the political and economic center of gravity to Bucharest; in Kishinev, the local elite adapted to Russian administrative and educational policies, but the attempts to Russify the Orthodox Church and the massive colonization with Slavic

populations generated a revival of *Romanianism* as the identity foundation of the local elite. We propose to analyze these cases comparatively with the help of the concepts of “parochialism” and “local power” (Tomaney, 2012; Henk te Velde, 2023), taking as a reference point the attachment to a certain historical heritage and the reaction to the policies of the central government.

Andrei POPA (Romania)

PhD, Scientific Researcher, Institute of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989

An ‘Inherited History’: The Nationalistic Discourse of the Ceaușescu Regime

The Ceaușescu regime implemented a policy of gaining popular legitimacy through the glorification of Romania’s history. To this end, a nationalistic discourse was heavily promoted in political speeches, history textbooks, and during certain public celebrations. This discourse also contributed to the marginalization of regional or local identities in favour of a unitary national narrative aligned with the Party’s ideological goals. Within this paradigm, the organization of events commemorating significant moments in Romania’s past also played a role. On such occasions, the Romanian Communist Party portrayed itself as the continuator of the Romanian people’s struggles to defend their independence, while Ceaușescu was depicted as the heir to great historical leaders who had resisted foreign powers.

In the present study, we will examine how this discourse was applied to specific historical periods, focusing on the figures of Burebista, Mircea the Elder, Michael the Brave, and Vlad Țepeș, during celebrations dedicated to them in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, we will observe why these figures were important to the regime, how they were portrayed through the lens of historiographical discourse, and how they fit into the broader policy of identifying the Communist Party with the Romanian people and their national history.

Anastasia ROMANOVA (Moldova)

PhD, Associate Professor, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova

Dynamics in Urban Place Names as Means of Identity Shift (Kishinev, Republic of Moldova)

The critical study of toponymy has paid considerable attention to the renaming of urban places following revolutionary political change. Such

renaming is intended to institutionalize a new political agenda through shaping the meanings in everyday practices and landscapes.

Our paper investigates the role streets play in the formation of cultural and collective identity, collective awareness and the perception of history. Streets are thereby treated as the elements that get to be transformed, during the collective identity formation process, from the means of everyday communication and interaction to symbols constructed by political elites in order to manipulate and direct the collective history perception, collective memory and collective identity.

The paper presents the study of the linguistic landscape of Chisinau (Kishinev), capital of Moldova, ex Soviet Republic. The paper focuses on the change of street names during the period 1989 till present. The paper lists and analyzes changes of names according to the data given in the official documents.

Analysis of official changes in street names throughout Chisinau history resulted in categorisation of five groups.

The changed street names indicate the orientation of Moldova toward national ideals, discarding and forgetting its heritage of socialism and Soviet Union. Yet, more than explore the persistence of the socialist-era name within everyday practice.

By developing a richer and more nuanced understanding of the ways in which people respond to place names in their everyday lives, we can better appreciate why and how naming works (or does not work) and, more broadly, how relationships with urban landscapes contribute to the construction of collective memory.

Katalin SCHREK (Hungary)

PhD, Senior Lecturer, Researcher, Institute of History, University of Debrecen

Imperialism, Modernity and National Identity: The Challenges and Alternatives of Infrastructure Developments in the Balkans (1860–1890)

The construction of railways in the Balkan Peninsula was a complex issue, with many layers. While the need for major development of the road and rail infrastructure in Southeastern Europe was clear, this necessity raised a number of questions at local and international levels. Following the Berlin Congress, significant progress was made in the development of infrastructure in the Balkans. Treaties signed in 1878 committed Serbia and Bulgaria to

developing their railway networks. However, the opportunities available to the Balkan states and Ottoman territories were greatly affected by the foreign policies of the imperial powers (Russia, Great Britain and, in particular, Austria-Hungary). Alongside traditional methods, these powers began to employ 'soft power' instruments, especially with regard to economic penetration. This study addresses the following research questions:

- How did great power or imperial efforts align with the goals of the emerging Balkan nation-states?
- Did the great powers aim to support regional development, or was their focus more on serving their own strategic interests?
- Was the main purpose to improve connectivity, economic relations and trade, or did military strategy and logistical requirements also play a significant role?
- How did the Balkan nation states respond to these foreign aspirations?

For the Balkan states, asserting control over railway development became a way to defend national interests. They began regulating foreign railway concessions and coordinating construction at the national level. Bulgaria and Serbia are clear examples of cases where railways became more than just infrastructure; the issue of railways became a symbol of national identity and an expression of independence. In my presentation I would like to highlight the imperial and national aspects of infrastructure building in the Balkans through the examples of Serbia and Bulgaria based on archive materials from the HHStA, the National Archives of London and other published Serbian and Bulgarian sources.

Lucian TURCU (Romania)

PhD, Lecturer, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Territorial Union Without Religious Unity? Debates and Projects Around the Confessional Union of Romanians in the Interwar Period

Our paper will discuss the issue of biconfessionalism among Romanians in the interwar period and the solutions proposed by various opinion leaders for achieving religious union between the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The ideological and symbolic valences of Orthodoxy in the Old Romanian Kingdom and the consolidated status of the Orthodox Church in the interwar period will be taken into account. We aim to analyze the public discourse surrounding the Greek Catholic Church, as an institution that

fulfilled, as was claimed at the time, its role with the unification of all Romanians in 1918. Contrary to this current of opinion, a major challenge that the Greek Catholic Church had to face after the First World War was to overcome the image of a regional Church, specifically Transylvanian. The task did not seem to be an easy one, considering that for more than two hundred years the nucleus of the territorial organization of the Greek Catholic Church was represented by the Transylvanian province and it was here that its institutional ramifications appeared. Therefore, a real test, which meant expansion beyond a consecrated territory, was the one that was to test the institutional flexibility of the Greek Catholic Church, the capacity to take root in the extra-Carpathian area and the possibilities of adapting to a territorial, confessional, political and cultural context, profoundly modified compared to the pre-war period. Our conference will consider some of the primary projects for the union of the two Romanian Churches formulated by public figures, such as Onisifor Ghibu or Marius Theodorian-Carada, along with the conclusions of a series of sociological investigations on the issue of the religious unification of Romanians.