

## THE CONCEPT OF *ETHNIC ELITE* IN THE INTERWAR ROMANIAN EUGENIC DISCOURSE

Mihai A. Panu \*

**Abstract:** *This paper attempts to generally deal with the problem of national identity in interwar Romania, focusing primarily on the mechanisms of ethnic representation in the eugenic scientific discourse as part of this identity construction. In this respect a major objective of this analysis is to answer the following question: What is the contribution of the Romanian eugenic school in generating the national-identity related concepts such as “ethnic elite”? The concept of “ethnic elite” is symptomatic and decisive for understanding the key factors in the process of national identity formation in 20<sup>th</sup> century Romania.*

**Keywords:** ethnic elite, eugenics, nationalism, ballast minorities, interwar Romania

### Introduction

The investigation of interethnic relations in the Central-Eastern European space represented a major preoccupation in modern historiography. In the first half of the 20th century, the internal structure of Central and Eastern European societies changed significantly, especially because of the continuous political transformations. The relevance of political change in resetting the ethnic interactions in certain parts of the continent was systematically neglected by the mainstream historiography. In this respect, the necessity of reevaluating the socio-cultural aspects and patterns in modern East European communities becomes scientifically relevant. This analysis attempts to investigate the identity formation processes of ethnic minorities by taking into account the political realities of that particular period of time. The central analytical interrogation aims particularly at the different levels of ethnicity representation in the public, political and scientific discourses at that time. In interwar Romania the ethnic representation and self-representation mechanisms consisted primarily in the struggle to foster and to consolidate the idea and the ideal of nation-state.

After the First World War and the Great Union the new Romanian state faced new challenges. The new social and political constellation in interwar Europe was the breeding ground for radical socio-political phenomena originating in the efforts of European societies to reshape statehood and to create national identities, especially in the eastern part of the continent. Fostering national identities was a difficult and partially dangerous political undertaking. The political elites were not able to optimally deal with the social realities of that time as a result of many concurring

---

\* Asistent Drd., Universitatea de Vest, Timișoara; e-mail: panu\_mihai@yahoo.de

factors: lack of consensus in the decision making process, unsolved minority issues, underdeveloped political culture, a certain degree of populism and fragile democratic systems etc. Consequently, much structural pathology emerged and expanded, culminating in the notorious ideological supremacy of nation-state.

The Romanian interwar period is utterly important especially because of its socio-political deviations. The radical movements such as the “Iron Guard”, the democratic deficit and consequently the radicalization of the political area fall together with the process of redefining nationhood in multiethnic Romania. The emergence of Greater Romania represented first of all, a necessary reset of interethnic relations. In this process, the heritage of former political models based on the idea of multiculturalism (such as the Danube Monarchy) played a decisive role. In Banat or Transylvania, historical regions under foreign administration before 1918, the communities, regardless of their ethnic profile, had to make a necessary and predominant artificial identity switch as part of their incorporation into Greater Romania. The granting of Romanian citizenship to ethnic minorities (for example to the Jews), was one of the first steps to foster a kind of inclusive national identity. In most cases, the fundament of national identity derives primarily from the loyalty of the individuals towards their state, but gaining the unconditioned loyalty of the citizens is not an easy task, especially for a young state such as Greater Romania. The difficulties of creating a Romanian national identity originated not necessarily in the loyalty of the new citizens but in the dichotomy of inclusive vs. exclusive representations of the Romanian nation.

### **Why ethnicity matters?**

#### **Community consciousness and nation representation in interwar Romania**

The ethnic identity is represented by core elements common to all individuals belonging to an ethnic group. These factors determine individuals to be united and to show solidarity, to share the same values, rules, aspirations and ideals, to have a sense of community and to recognize the traditions, customs and common origins. All these represent the multifaceted character of this concept. Ethnic identity is not necessarily a myth. But certainly, there is a myth of ethnic identity. They are an important part of the political mythology emerged during the process of building nation-states. These myths can generally be considered as a form of affirmation of social and political imaginary, which are expressions and characteristics of the communitarian sense of identity such as ceremonial rites, flags, anthems, logos etc. The ethnic awareness operates through concepts and symbols (like the ones mentioned above), in order to achieve its unity, but the ethnic self-representation is not a constant and linear process.

Ethnic identity continuously invents and reinvents itself by using symbols and myths as conceptual bricks. The profile of an ethnic group is not conceptually predefined and therefore stagnant, it rather has an interior dynamic which consist in the self-perception of the group members at a given period of time: “*Community is*

*just such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members' unique orientations to it. In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community's boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment*"<sup>1</sup>. Given these circumstances, we can affirm that in certain conditions the internal dynamics of ethnic self-representation can be modified, reoriented or manipulated. An ethnic group represents an important category in the field of national construction and representation, but the ethnic groups are not self-sufficient and distinctive because they are interconnected and therefore constantly exchange identity elements and meanings.

The interaction between ethnic groups is in most cases constant and can generate simultaneously hybrid identity profiles but also a certain degree of stratification. This is the core idea of ethnicity. In this respect the ethnic awareness plays a decisive role: *"The term ethnicity refers to relationships between groups whose members consider themselves distinctive, and these groups may be ranked hierarchically within a society"*<sup>2</sup>. The concept of ethnicity therefore reflects the dynamic of a group's interactions and the profile of any given society as a whole. The ethnic groups as well as the ethnicity are not objective, clearly identifiable concepts. They are *"socially constructed categories, not based on any objectively measurable criteria"*<sup>3</sup>. In heterogeneous societies different groups have an interconnected existence because each of them builds its own identity mainly in opposition to others. The uniqueness of one ethnic group resides in the exclusive features that define it in comparison to other ethnic groups. Consequently there is a direct linkage between the group's interactions and their identity representation. The ethnic groups are not predefined categories. They are subjects of negotiations and renegotiations of meanings between different societal actors. The identity of ethnic groups is also context dependent: *"If ethnicity has primordial elements but is constantly changing, situational and/or multi-layered then how might 'groups' emerge (as distinct from loose collectivities)? The fact remains that 'groups' are made both from without and from within. Often they are the product of centuries-old conflicts and alliances, or based on common claims on territory"*<sup>4</sup>.

The emergence of nation-states in Central Eastern Europe after the First World War had significant repercussions at the societal level. Communities formally embedded in more inclusive socio-political constructions (the case of Banat and Transylvania under the Danube Monarchy administration), were faced with the new realities of nation-states. The construction of national identities also required a new

<sup>1</sup> Anthony P. Cohen, *The symbolic construction of community*, Routledge, 1985, p. 15

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, London, Pluto Press, 1993, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Carmen Fought, *Language and Ethnicity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Ratcliffe, *Race, Ethnicity and Difference. Imagining the Inclusive Society*, Berkshire, Open University Press, 2004, p. 31.

construction of ethnic identities and the reposition of group's members towards the nation-state, regardless of their former identity profile. In order to create the nation-state, a delicate question had to be immediately answered: What defines a nation? Or in other words, who is part of the nation?

### Representations of nationhood in interwar Romania

In interwar Romania the idea of national identity was increasingly subject of some interesting theoretical debates and in many cases the battleground of opposite representations. The starting point of those divergences was the national profile of the Romanian state. Given the fact that the Romanian space was inhabited by many ethno-cultural groups, certain social and political cleavages inevitably emerged. Before establishing a national identity the complicated problem of nationhood had to be solved: Should the Romanian national identity be more inclusive or rather exclusive? Theoretical conceptions about the national model refer primarily to a political and cultural dimension: „*Scholarly discussions revolve principally around two conceptions of the nation and the lines of argumentation connected to them: the political 'nation by an act of will' (the German Willensnation) and the nation defined by culture (Kulturnation) which is often linguistically defined and ethnically based*”<sup>5</sup>.

The controversies regarding the national profile generated, especially in the last decade of the interwar period, a visible radicalization of social and political life, culminating in the manifestation of an extreme form of nationalism: the ethnic nationalism: „*(...) there are, fundamentally, only two kinds of nationalism: civic nationalism, characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive; and ethnic nationalism, glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive*”<sup>6</sup>.

The ethnic construction of the national identity was best expressed at the level of public and political discourse, in the so called ethnocratic state (a concept intensively used by politicians and public figures such as Nichifor Crainic): „*Statul etnocratic diferă profund de statul democratic. Statul democratic se bazează pe numărul populației, fără deosebire de rasă sau de religie. Temelia statului etnocratic o reprezintă pământul și neamul românesc*”<sup>7</sup>. The usual representations of nationhood based on its political, economical or judicial profiles, were perceived more and more obsolete or incomplete in interwar Romania. The nation behaves like an organic structure and precedes all these elements: „*Națiunea nu este o simplă entitate juridică,*

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Wodak (et al.), *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Second Edition, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*, Harvard University Press, 2004, p.133.

<sup>7</sup> Peter F. Sugar, *Naționalismul est-european în secolul al XX-lea*, București, Curtea Veche 2002, p. 227.

(The ethnocratic state profoundly differs from the democratic state. The democratic state is based on the population's number regardless of race or religion. The fundament of the etchnocratic state is the Romanian blood and soil. t.n.)

*economică, administrativă sau politică, ci înainte de toate un organism, cu o structură biologică specifică încheată de-a lungul mai multor milenii*<sup>8</sup>.

The nationhood represents more than its political, economic, administrative or juridical components. The Romanian nation is not only a political construction, an institutional product of modernity, it is furthermore an organic structure having its roots in the ancient past and extracting its identity from its millennial continuity. The ethnocratic state in interwar Romania represents an act of national self-representation. The phase of the ethnocratic state (and therefore the nation-state) can be achieved by fostering the ethnic exclusivity and by highlighting the millennial links between the Romanian ethnic group and the Romanian soil: „*Iată de ce, pentru a se asigura o permanență neamului nostru (...), credem ca o sfântă datorie a tuturor să grijească de stăpânirea efectivă a pământului. Plugarii noștri trebuie să înțeleagă un adevăr: pământul lor a fost românesc din veac și trebuie să rămână românesc. Fiecare palmă de loc vândută altora înseamnă o trădare a vetrei strămoșești*”<sup>9</sup>. The historical realities of multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism were rejected in order to ensure the continuity of Romanian blood and Romanian soil. The clear distinction between a democratic state and an ethnocratic state resides primarily in this logic of national self-representation. The prevalence of ethnic elite (the Romanians) is a necessary condition for the Romanian nation-state. This can only be achieved through the legitimization of the ethnocratic state. The superiority of the ethnocratic state compared to the democratic state is obvious, considering this perspective. The ethnic exclusivity represents a major condition for establishing a nation (and a sense of nationhood). The ethnocratic state plays a key role in the process of fostering national identities: it simplifies the societal symbolic interactions by homogenizing multiple identities and, moreover, leads to a strong bond between two major and decisive elements of any given nation: people (Romanians, understood as the ethnic majority) and their inherited soil. The democratic state, on the other hand, cannot guarantee the exclusivity and the superiority of any ethnic group (Romanians) and a potential form of national identity will necessarily remain plural, diluted in the heterogeneity of the existing and sometimes competing groups of a multicultural state such as interwar Romania. This can be a valid explanation for the anti-democratic elements that can be identified in the political discourse of the Romanian interwar period.

<sup>8</sup> Iordache Făcăoaru, *Amestecul rasial și etnic în România*, „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic”, vol. IX, nr. 9-10, septembrie-octombrie 1938, p. 279. (The nation is not a simple juridical, economic, administrative or political entity. It represents first of all an organism with a specific biologic structure established during millennia. t.n.)

<sup>9</sup> Grigore Bugarin, *Țărani români nu vindeți pământul decât între voi*, „Dacia”, anul IV, nr. 259, 20 noiembrie 1942, p. 1. (Hence, to ensure the future of our nation (...) we believe that a sacred duty of everyone is to take care of the actual possession of land. Our ploughmen must understand the truth: their soil was always Romanian and must remain therefore forever Romanian. Every inch of land sold to strangers is a betrayal of our forefathers. t.n.)

### The eugenic construction of the Romanian „ethnic elite”

In interwar Romania the concept of „ethnic elite” emerged in the context of radicalization of the political and social area. It was introduced to the public agenda by the representatives of the Romanian eugenic school and it was immediately confiscated by the extreme-right oriented propaganda and therefore exploited ideologically. The concept itself contained the roots of an obvious integral nationalism, but as formulated by the Romanian eugenicists, it also had some other distinct implications. An important element (among others) of the interwar Romanian eugenic discourse was the idea of state modernization. The concept of „ethnic elite” does not only highlight the idea of national self-representation among the Romanian elites of that time, but does also emphasize the historical dynamics of modernization in the Romanian state and society. The „ethnic elite” is not necessarily an instrument of delimitation between Romanians and non-Romanians; it also represents an instrument of conceptual delimitation between the Romanian ethnic group as a whole and the genuine ethnic elite namely the rural/biological elite: *„Cât privește țara noastră, nici populația suburbiilor, și nici aceea a satelor din umbra marilor orașe nu poate avea o inteligență atât de scăzută ca aceeași populație din țările cu o înaltă civilizație. Oportunitatea socială care smulge pe toți cei capabili în vârtejul ascensiunii (urbanismul și marea industrie) e la noi, de o mică eficiență. Pentru trecut chiar dacă a existat o astfel de oportunitate ea a așezat un baraj persistent în drumul ascensiunii elitelor noastre etnice. Astfel, ceea ce a fost un dezastru social în istoria noastră s-a convertit într-un beneficiu biologic; însușirile de elită ale neamului s-au păstrat, comori ascunse, în scrinul etnic al satelor”*<sup>10</sup>.

The valorization of tradition and the recognition of the biologic superiority of the rural world represented the core idea in the Romanian eugenic discourse about elites. Unlike other social elites the rural ethnic elite is considered to be authentic, biologically pure i.e. uninfluenced by external factors such as the social environment. The lack of modernization (for example industrialization and urbanization) is turned into a national benefit as long as, according to the Romanian eugenicists, less modernization led to a conservation of the national authentic ethnic elite.

Compared to other elite groups, the rural elite is from a eugenic perspective the authentic one, because it incorporates biologic characteristics that remained untouched

<sup>10</sup> Ovidiu Comșia, *Elita Etnică*, „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic”, vol. XI, nr. 1-2-3, Cluj, Institutul de Igienă și Igienă Socială, Ianuarie-Februarie-Martie 1940, p. 5. (In our country neither the population of the suburbs nor the population of the villages neighboring the big cities can have such a low intelligence rate as the population in the countries with high civilization. The social opportunity that directs all the capable individuals to the vortex of ascension (urbanization and high industrialization) is in our case less efficient. In the past, even if such an opportunity existed, it generated obstacles for an eventual ascension of our ethnic elites. Consequently, a presupposed social disaster in our history converted itself into a biological benefit; the elitist characteristics of our people have been preserved, hidden treasures in the ethnic chest of our villages. t.n.)

and undiluted by the external environment. The eugenic discourse always operates a clear delimitation between authentic elites (rural ethnic elite) and the false (socially constructed) elites: „*Mediul social nu favorizează întotdeauna ascensiunea elitelor autentice. (...) Ascensiunea prin muncă creatoare talent sau geniu face ca în ramurile ierarhiei respective să intre numai elite adevărate deci oameni cu o înaltă valoare genetică. Nu am putea spune desigur același lucru despre reușita politică sau financiară. Multe din însușirile pe cari le pretinde ascensiunea în aceste domenii se confundă adeseori cu defectele. (...) Astfel reușita socială nu ne dă decât excepțional, măsura valorii ereditare, atributul fundamental care definește o elită*”<sup>11</sup>. The eugenic perspective underlines the decisive role played by the rural ethnic elite in the process of national identity formation. The existence of rural elite represents a guarantee for the survival of the nation. The valorization of the rural world and tradition becomes in this context an instrument to justify the lack of modernization and to individualize the Romanian national construction: less modernization generated the conservation of the rural world i.e. the authentic ethnic elite and the existence of the rural world is the fundament of the entire nation. As long as the rural world exists, the nation has its future ensured: „*Istoria este martoră că nici un popor nu s-a prăbușit atâta timp cât a dispus de o pătură țărănească sănătoasă și prolifică. Decadența demografică adevărată începe întotdeauna la sate; viața rurală se scurge spre orașe, din orașe spre metropole, din metropole spre neant*”<sup>12</sup>.

The ethnic construction of national identity represents a major part of the eugenic discourse in interwar Romania. Given the circumstances of an increasingly radicalized social and political area, not only in Romania but also in Europe, the science of eugenics became part of the extreme right ideology. The need to identify authentic Romanian ethnic elites was part of the struggle to create a genuine Romanian national identity and a sense of Romanian ethnic exclusivity. Romania to the Romanians – this was the national buzz phrase of those times. The eugenic discourse, as well as the nationalist discourse, operated with ethnically based distinctions and antagonisms. Distinctions such as: superior vs. inferior, Romanians vs. strangers, ethnic majority vs. ethnic minorities, were invoked, activated and used for the creation of an exclusive Romanian national identity. Despite the realities of a multiethnic Romania, the idea of nationality became ethnicized and increasingly exclusive: „*In east central Europe, ethnicity speaks this potentially explosive language of nationality. Nationality or nationhood, in turn, is understood as based on ethnicity (language, culture, a vague sense of shared descent, and so on), rather than on citizenship or state frontiers. One*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem* p. 2-3. (The social environment does not encourage the rise of authentic elites. (...) The ascension based on creative labor, talent or genius, makes the hierarchy branches accessible only to people with high genetic values. This is not the case of political or financial success. Many of the qualities required to ascend these domains are often confused with defects. (...) The social success only gives us exceptionally the measure of hereditary value, which is the fundamental attribute of the elite. t.n.)

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem* p.3. (History proved that no nation has fallen as long as the rural world remained untouched and prolific. The real demographic decadence begins always in the villages: the rural life moves into cities, from the cities into metropolises, from metropolises it disappears into nothingness. t.n.)

might say that ethnicity is nationalized, while nationality and nationhood are ethnicized”<sup>13</sup>. The ethnicization of nationality can be perceived as a side effect of the raging interwar integral nationalism, but the phenomenon of nationality ethnicization can also be correlated with other systemic factors. In times of crisis, radical representations and radical solutions are more easily accepted.

The Romanian nationalists tried to activate an exclusive sense of ethnic identity in Greater Romania by creating a veritable image of the interior enemy at the level of the cohabiting ethnic minorities. The other ethnic groups were perceived as an immediate danger. The anxious attitude towards the cohabiting minorities in Greater Romania generated a serious mistrust and suspiciousness concerning the idea of democracy, as it was believed that a democratic system will amplify and consolidate the rights and the power of minorities and that the ethnic Romanians will be paradoxically less powerful in their own country. Such ideas became common in the public opinion and were also amplified in the press sometimes by famous journalists: „*Având în vedere structura etnică modificată a populației în noul stat, unii ziariști ca P. Șeicaru și-au exprimat teama ca într-un sistem democratic minoritățile să obțină o greutate determinantă cu prilejul alegerilor sau la formarea guvernelor*”<sup>14</sup>.

The Romanian eugenicists operated with qualitative categories in analyzing the ethnicity related problems. In order to legitimate and theoretically consolidate the idea of „ethnic elite” they used conceptual counterparts of this term. The most dangerous scenario for the ethnic elites was the ethnic crossbreeding. Consequently, a clear distinction between superior and inferior ethnic groups had to be made and the interference of such qualitative distinct groups (for example through mixed marriages) had to be by all means prevented: „*The political atmosphere of emerging authoritarian regimes in the late 1930s encouraged eugenicists to seek to prohibit mixed marriages between members of minority groups and those of the dominant ethnic groups*”<sup>15</sup>. The idea of Romanian ethnic elite was developed, as mentioned above, in opposition to the ethnic groups which were perceived as inferior: the so-called ballast minorities. The ballast minorities were considered a real danger for the ethnic elite and for the Romanian nation as a whole: „*Problema minorităților balast este extrem de dificilă pentru noi. Aci se*

<sup>13</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismul în România 1930-1940*, București, Edit. Enciclopedică 2004, p. 304. (Taking into account that the ethnic structure in the new state was modified, some journalists as P. Șeicaru expressed their fear that in democratic systems minorities will obtain a decisive weight on the occasion of elections or formation of governments. t.n.)

<sup>15</sup> Marius Turda, Paul J. Weindling, *Eugenics, Race and Nation in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940: A Historiographic Overview* in Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (eds), „*Blood and Homeland*”: *Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2007, p. 15.



*poate ascunde o primejdie mortală pentru neam. Să nu uităm că la fiecare grup de 6 români avem un element din această categorie*"<sup>16</sup>.

The ethnic construction of national identity was a highly exclusive form of nation-state representation. In interwar Romania the realities of a multiethnic and multicultural societal system were increasingly ignored or rejected by the supporters of eugenic ideas. Once identified, the ethnic elite had to be protected and the only viable way to ensure this process was a clear separation from other „inferior” groups. After centuries of interethnic cohabitation and mutual cultural enrichment, the ethnic minorities in Romania became victims of the radicalized eugenic and nationalist discourse. Even the idea of cultural assimilation of minorities by the majority group i.e. ethnic elite was considered a big danger and therefore completely rejected: „*Popoarele cari au adoptat principiul asimilării au dispărut definitiv din isorie. Corcirea cu noroade inferioare le-a exterminat mai activ decât războaiele, epidemiile și cataclismele naturei la un loc*”<sup>17</sup>. The problem of assimilation of minorities by majorities is more complex and requires distinct approaches. Inter-ethnic dialog and ethnic interactions are not sufficient conditions to eliminate the differences between ethnic groups. Assimilation or homogenization does not automatically occur even if the interactions between groups are frequent and persistent: „*cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence*”<sup>18</sup>. For the Romanian eugenicists the construction of a strong and healthy nation begins with its ethnic elite. This is the point where the eugenic discourse meets the interwar ethnic nationalism and adopts its core ideas (ethnicity, traditionalism, a sense of rurality). The concept of elite in interwar Romania was therefore ethnically constructed, nationalistically reinforced and restrictively perceived and used in the political discourse.

### Conclusions

The Romanian interwar eugenic movement articulated its discourse on the dichotomy of inclusive and exclusive representations of national identity. The existence of the Romanian nation-state can only be guaranteed if the nation belongs to the „legitimate” group, namely the Romanian ethnics. The co-inhabitants belonging to other ethno-cultural groups were perceived as an immediate danger for the national identity and therefore for the Romanian nation-state. A hybrid national identity was

<sup>16</sup> Iordache Făcăoaru, *Amestecul rasial și etnic în România*, „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic”, vol. IX, nr. 9-10, septembrie-octombrie 1938, p. 282. (The problem of ballast minorities is extremely difficult for us. A deadly danger for our nation *can be concealed by this problem*. Let's not forget that in every group of six Romanians you can find an element from that category. t.n.)

<sup>17</sup> Iordache Făcăoaru, *Socialantropologia ca știință pragmatistă*, „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic”, vol. IX, nr. 11-12, noiembrie-decembrie 1938, p. 354. (The nations which adopted the principle of assimilation disappeared definitively from history. The crossbreeding with inferior groups exterminated those nations, more actively and efficiently than wars, epidemics and natural disasters taken together. t.n.)

<sup>18</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1969, p. 10.

the main concern for the Romanian eugenicists. This type of national identity representation was ethnically based and vigorously rejected any form of inclusive representation of nationhood. Despite the multicultural realities of interwar Romania, the representation of national identity tended to be exclusive and ethnically based.

The Romanian eugenic school played a key role in generating the interwar nationalist and national-identity related concepts. As previously underlined, the eugenic movement was a complementary phenomenon of the interwar nationalism and contributed significantly to the reconfiguration of interethnic relation in Greater Romania and most important, to a restrictive sense of nationhood.

This paper attempts to investigate the nationalist manifestations in interwar Romania from a eugenic perspective. The importance of eugenics in shaping the public opinion and influencing the discourse strategies at a political level in interwar Romania is undeniable and significant. The exclusive ethnic construction of national identity is the result of several concurring factors. The decline of democracy and the problem of political representation of minorities, the economic crisis and the pathology of nation-state in entire Europe represent the wider context when analyzing national identity related issues. The Romanian eugenic movement reinforced the nationalist discourse by promoting and using concepts such as „ethnic elite”, „ballast minorities” etc. under the pretention of scientificity. In this respect the eugenic perspective has the potential to reveal not only the historical facts but also the conditions and motivations of the Romanian interwar nationalism.

#### Bibliography

1. Barth Fredrik, *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1969,
2. Brubaker Rogers, *Ethnicity without groups*, Harvard University Press, 2004
3. Bugarin Grigore, *Țărani români nu vindeți pământul decât între voi*, Dacia, anul IV, nr. 259, 20 noiembrie 1942
4. Cohen Anthony, *The symbolic construction of community*, Routledge, 1985
5. Comșia Ovidiu, *Elita Etnică*, in „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic” Vol. XI, Nr. 1-2-3, Institutul de Igienă și Igienă Socială, Cluj, Ianuarie-Februarie-Martie 1940
6. Eriksen T. Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, London, Pluto Press, 1993
7. Făcăoaru Iordache, *Amestecul rasial și etnic în România*, in „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic” Vol. IX, nr. 9-10, septembrie-octombrie 1938
8. Făcăoaru Iordache, *Socialantropologia ca știință pragmatistă*, in „Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic” Vol. IX, nr. 11-12, noiembrie-decembrie 1938
9. Fought Carmen, *Language and Ethnicity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006
10. Maner Hans-Christian, *Parlamentarismul în România 1930-1940*, București, Editura Enciclopedică 2004
11. Ratcliffe Peter, *Race, Ethnicity and Difference. Imagining the Inclusive Society*, Open University Press, Berkshire, 2004
12. Sugar F. Peter, *Naționalismul est-european în secolul al XX-lea*, București, Curtea Veche 2002  
Turda Marius (et al.) *“Blood and Homeland”: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2007.
14. Wodak Ruth (et al.), *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Second Edition, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009.