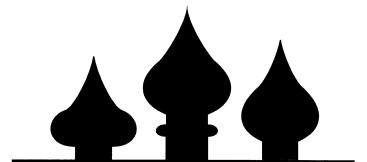




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Occasional Paper #290  
Whose House is  
Moldova?  
Hospitality as a Model for  
Ethnic Relations

Jennifer R. Cash



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Whose House is  
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**Whose House is Moldova?  
Hospitality as a Model for Ethnic Relations  
by Jennifer R. Cash**

For more than a decade, the Republic of Moldova has struggled with the challenges of state building. In addition to the formidable tasks of creating democratic institutions and building a market economy, Moldova is faced with the need to define its national identity. The country's population is ethnically and regionally diverse, increasing the complexity of accomplishing such fundamental tasks as selecting state and official languages, crafting citizenship laws, and devolving political authority to local districts. Moreover, Moldova's citizenry and politicians currently respond to national questions as if politics and policy formulation are a "zero-sum" game.<sup>1</sup> Representatives of both the majority and minorities perceive any gain by others as a loss of power or rights for themselves. Perceiving ethnic rights as a zero-sum game is a legacy of Soviet nationality policies that pitted ethnic groups against each other in a competition for limited power and resources,<sup>2</sup> but liberal political theories have also failed to yield satisfactory solutions for guaranteeing ethnocultural rights.<sup>3</sup> If a new model for ethnic politics is not developed in Moldova, the consequences will be severe, including the prolonging and possible worsening of two ethnoregional conflicts.

To achieve stability and prosper as a democratic state, Moldova requires a new

model of the state and its relations with ethnic groups. Moldova especially requires a political model that specifies the responsibilities, as well as rights, that citizens have toward and in the state. As a socialist state, the Soviet Union relied on a political model in which citizens exchanged loyalty to the state for the satisfaction of their basic needs and wants. A democratic state, however, requires citizens to actively run the state, meeting their own needs and interests through collective action.

There are many models for organizing democracies, some of which encourage more conflict between interest groups than others. Because ethnic conflict is already one of the most visible and volatile political legacies in post-Soviet Moldova, I argue that the new country requires political models of democracy that deemphasize conflict, or at the very least, redefine political relations between ethnic groups in ways that deemphasize conflict.<sup>4</sup> This paper offers a preliminary discussion of one model—the state as a house—that might be useful in reformulating identity politics into a "win-win" endeavor. In this model, which draws on local conceptions of hospitality, individual citizens and ethnic groups are more than the "owners" of their political "house." Whether the house is defined as a region or as the whole state, its owners are also "hosts" who take pride in

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offering hospitality to others.

In the ordinary routines of daily life, Moldova's citizens deeply value hospitality and take pride in being "good hosts." As hosts in their own homes, adults generously offer food and drink to guests, even when they arrive uninvited or unknown. Hosts also strive to speak their guests' language. In other words, Moldova's citizens ordinarily strive to anticipate and meet the material and social needs of others. Offering hospitality, even across ethnic lines, ordinarily arouses pleasure and pride. When dealing with individual "guests," Moldova's citizens do not experience using a language other than their own as an imposition. Instead, they are generally willing to learn and use other languages, and even cultural habits, to provide hospitality, enable communication, and forge mutually beneficial and enjoyable social relationships. By defining citizens as hosts, a new model of political culture based on the ideals of hospitality could generate political institutions, procedures, and behaviors that respect, recognize, and promote both unity and diversity in Moldova.

After giving an overview of Moldova's political situation and recent conflicts, this paper uses several ethnographic encounters to discuss how hospitality currently intersects with Moldova's political culture of ethnic competition. The conclusion outlines tentative guidelines for fostering a political culture based on the ideals of hospitality. Most important, I caution *against* relying on government initiated policies, laws, projects, imagery, or rhetoric to institutionalize hospitality and multiethnicity as central pillars of Moldova's national identity. Like other post-Soviet and postsocialist states, Moldova requires creative political solutions that do not closely resemble previous state- and nation-building initiatives. It is for this reason that hospitality, whether better taken as an existing model or as a guiding

metaphor in creating new models, has so much potential. I urge policymakers to consider infusing all projects related to Moldova's development and transition with the ideals of hospitality already shared by the country's diverse inhabitants.

## OVERVIEW OF MOLDOVA'S POLITICAL SITUATION

In 1991, the Republic of Moldova became an independent state for the first time. The country is formally organized as a "nation-state," but the centrality of identity questions in domestic and international politics suggests that Moldova might be better described as a "nationalizing" state (Brubaker 1996).<sup>5</sup> The population is ethnically diverse in the following proportions: 64.5 percent Romanian-speaking,<sup>6</sup> 13.8 percent Ukrainian, 13 percent Russian, 3.5 percent Gagauz, 2.0 percent Jewish, 1.5 percent Bulgarian, and others (Encyclopedia Britannica 1997, 670).<sup>7</sup> The first issue facing the new state is thus whether to define itself as a "territorial" or "civic" nation.

The primary difference between territorial and civic nations rests on how citizenship, or state ownership, is allocated. As a territorial nation, Moldova would belong equally to all its ethnic groups. But as an ethnic nation, Moldova would only belong to one or a few ethnic groups with special provisions made for minorities. This basic choice between a "civic" or "ethnic" form of state is complicated by a second (and older) debate regarding the identity of the majority. Romanian-speakers in Moldova have long been referred to as "Moldovans," meaning that any discussion of a "Moldovan" nation or state tends to suggest that the state is already "ethnic" in form, and already belongs (or should belong) solely to the Romanian-speakers. During the past decade or more, the

dominant model for Moldova's national identity has shifted several times.

Beginning in the late 1980s, questions of national identity dominated Moldova's political scene throughout the 1990s. Before and just after independence, public debate focused on defining the identity of the ethnic majority, and it emphasized the Moldovan-Romanian question: Was there a separate "Moldovan" language and nation, or did the "Moldovans" in the Soviet Union speak the same language, and share the same culture and history with the "Romanians" in neighboring Romania? During the late 1980s, the Pan-Romanian movement gained particular political strength and public presence, asserting that the Moldovans and Romanians constituted a single nation and should be united in a single state. Much to the surprise of international observers, the pan-Romanian movement quickly lost its prominence after Moldova gained independence. Moldova did not unite with Romania after gaining independence in 1991. Instead, power struggles between two regional centers and the central government in Chisinau developed into violent "ethnic" conflicts when political leaders played on minority fears related to the potential "Romanianization" of the country.

## POST-SOVIET CONFLICTS

In the early 1990s, Moldova's dominant approach to "ethnic" politics resulted in two violent conflicts. The primary political demands openly voiced during perestroika in Moldova, as in other former Soviet republics, equated democratization with de-Russification. Participants in numerous public meetings and rallies in 1988-89, usually led by the emerging Popular Front party, demanded that Russian be eliminated as the state language, and that the "Moldovan" language be recognized as "Romanian," written

in the Latin alphabet (instead of Cyrillic), and instated as the republic's official language. During 1989 and 1990, Transnistria (the region on the east bank of the Dneister River) and the Gagauz (a Turkic-speaking ethnic group concentrated in southern Moldova) also declared autonomous republics.

Initially, the Transnistrian and Gagauz demands for increased political recognition did not visibly conflict with the demands advanced by the Popular Front. For example, the Gagauz Halki sent representatives to the founding meeting of the Popular Front in 1989 (King 2000, 215). The Gagauz also originally envisioned increased autonomy within Moldova (Chinn and Roper 1998, 94), but by 1991, called for an autonomous republic within Russia. Transnistrian officials also originally voted for an autonomous region within Moldova (Hamm 1998, 170). But, the Front's increasing rhetorical emphasis on Moldova's Romanian identity, and its success in institutionalizing Moldovan as the official language in September 1989, intensified the fear and uncertainty felt by ethnic minorities concerning their place and rights in a future Romanian-dominated state.<sup>8</sup>

In a development that Kaufman (1996) refers to as "spiraling," fearful masses began to support a few political elites who were primarily concerned with "outbidding" each other for power. To leverage an advantage over their opponents, these elites played on ethnically localized fears of language extinction, political domination, and—especially—job prospects for individuals who did not speak the official language. In 1990, the central government in Chisinau, dominated by members of the Popular Front, sent armed volunteers into Transnistria and among the Gagauz to quell separatist activity, resulting in violent conflicts in the two regions between 1990 and 1992.



Political solutions to Moldova's two "ethnic" conflicts have not yet been fully achieved. A political solution with the Gagauz was reached only in 1994 with the constitutional establishment of Gagauz Yeri as a semiautonomous region. Meanwhile, Transnistria declared itself a sovereign and independent republic in 1996. No other state or international organization recognizes the Dneister Moldovan Republic, but repeated attempts to reintegrate Transnistria within the Republic of Moldova, including through the country's federalization, have failed. The most recent federalization proposal, drafted by Russia's representatives in the negotiating process, was very nearly signed by Moldova's president in late November 2003, but it met with mass protests in Chisinau, and criticism from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United States, and the European Union.<sup>9</sup> The international community remains optimistic about federalization in principle, but a realistic plan that satisfies all interested parties will take considerable time and skillful negotiation. Every new proposal regarding Transnistria's status also brings Gagauz representatives to reconsider their own status within Moldova. Thus each conflict requires the settlement of the other to be fully resolved.

### **THE ETHNICIZATION OF CONFLICT AND POLITICS**

The emergence of violent conflict in Moldova during the early post-Soviet period, whether best described as "ethnic" or "regional," "mass" or "elite," is especially tragic because it seems to have been avoidable. Kaufman (1996) argues that Moldova's conflicts only occurred because of a convergence of three factors in the chaos of the late-Soviet period: hostile masses, belligerent leaders, and interethnic security dilemmas.

Indeed, Crowther (1998) demonstrates that the general population's relatively low levels of ethnic antagonism, coupled with their greater interest in economic reform, helped break the spiral of conflict as citizens withdrew their support from the Popular Front in favor of more ethnically moderate parties. King's (2000) analysis of political developments in the middle and late 1990s further demonstrates that political success in Moldova does not require, and perhaps necessitates against, a strong stance on national identity or ethnic relations. Successive governments have continually deemphasized pan-Romanian rhetoric and increasingly emphasized Moldova's multiethnic character since 1994. Yet periodic public strikes over proposed laws related to language, education, history texts, minority rights, or federalization plans testify to the population's deep mistrust that the state represents "their" interests.

In fact, Moldova's current political system effectively discourages the formation or recognition of distinct constituencies (King 2000, 160). The whole country constitutes a single electoral district; voters select parties, not individuals; and parliamentary seats are distributed to parties in proportion to the total share of votes received. Political structure, procedures, and rhetoric work against discovering issues and interests that do not correlate with ethnic identity.

In many cases, "ethnic" interests might be better glossed in terms of rural/urban or regional differences. That is, Moldova's ethnic groups are distributed unevenly throughout the country, and they correspond to regional as well as rural/urban divides.<sup>10</sup> Transnistria has a high percentage of Slavic speakers (48 percent combined Ukrainian and Russian, compared with 26.8 percent in the country as a whole), and Gagauz are concentrated in the south. The

coincidence of uneven ethnic distributions with distinct regional identities has led some analysts (e.g., Kolsto and Malgin 1998) to conclude that the conflicts of the early 1990s are examples of “ethnicized” regionalism. From this perspective, conflicts with the central government have deeper support among the population because of a sense of regional difference.

The case for Transnistria’s regionalism is especially pronounced because its history and political experience diverges sharply from that of Bessarabia.<sup>11</sup> For example, Bessarabia was part of the medieval principality of Moldova, was later governed as a *guberniia* within imperial Russia, and was also united with the Kingdom of Romania between World Wars I and II. Transnistria, however, had no political identity until the early 1920s, when the Soviet Union created the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) within Soviet Ukraine. As part of the MASSR, Transnistria was industrialized and Sovietized more thoroughly than Bessarabia, to which it was joined in 1940.

Although the conflict with the Gagauz emerged more clearly from ethnically specific demands, we should also not overlook the potential existence and importance of regional identity in the south. Historically, the Russian empire opened southern Bessarabia to colonization by Gagauz, Bulgarians, Germans, and others during the 1800s, whereas Romanian-speakers dominate the relatively older settlements in central Bessarabia. Today, the Gagauz share many aspects of a common culture with these other neighboring ethnic groups (personal interviews with Hülya Demirdirek in 1995, cited by Chinn and Roper 1998, 90).<sup>12</sup> Due to its drier climate and relative neglect by successive governments, the south has also been historically poorer than the rest

Moldova. Other ethnic groups in the south share such “Gagauz” grievances as environmentally related health epidemics and poor-quality education, roads, water quality, and medical facilities (see King 2000, 212). Considering the evidence of regional and rural/urban diversity, political analysts would do well to ask why ethnic questions retain such prominence in the politics of post-Soviet Moldova.

Although conflicts in Transnistria and Gagauz Yeri may have been avoidable, they have reinforced a model of zero-sum politics between the ethnic majority and minorities. Today, power in Moldova’s eastern and southern regions is held by minority groups who resist policies that they perceive as attempts to “Romanianize” Moldova. Romanian-speakers in turn resist policies perceived as attempts to “Russify” Moldova, even when these policies intend to promote the rights of all minority groups. The settlement of both conflicts requires that the state create a political structure that satisfies the combination of language rights, regional autonomy, and national representation demanded by these two regions and possibly other minorities, while meeting the Romanian-speaking majority’s own demands for cultural and political self-determination. To break the cycle of reactive conflict, and forestall the development of future “spiraling” into violence, Moldova also needs a political model that recognizes ethnic identity as a central feature of social and political life and that emphasizes cooperation rather than conflict.

## CREATING A MULTIETHNIC STATE

Since 1994, Moldova’s leadership has progressively abandoned pro-Romanian political rhetoric. Instead, the new state appears to be defining itself as a territorially based civic nation with a multiethnic or supraethnic

political culture.<sup>13</sup> The language of the 1994 Constitution suggests a “multiethnic Moldovan *Staatsvolk*,” and even as early as 1991, Moldova extended citizenship to everyone born on the territory, or resident in 1990 (Neukirch 1999, 52–53). The country’s language laws are similarly liberal: Moldovan is the state language, but laws and official documents must be published in Russian, and the right to address public institutions and receive answers in Russian is guaranteed. Furthermore, minority students have the right to be educated in their own language, but most actually receive most instruction in Russian or Moldovan. In 1995, Moldova outlined a “foreign policy concept” that further established the country’s official commitment to multiethnicity (King 2000, 170).

In practice, Moldova is less multiethnic than official statements advertise. On the basis of a thorough review of the 1994 Constitution’s content, ordinary legislation, and real politics, for example, Neukirch concludes that Moldova is still a “national state with a titular nation and different national minorities” (1999, 53). Indeed, the possibility of giving Russian an official status repeatedly surfaces in political debate, generating public discord among Romanian-speakers. Because the state has not yet succeeded in achieving “symmetric bilingualism,” or an even greater degree of multilingualism, language and identity remain highly symbolic and emotional issues that political figures manipulate to gain popular support. Unfortunately, politics as usual still tends to polarize the electorate over ethnic issues.

### **A NEW MODEL?**

To resolve persistent identity issues, Moldova may need a new model of the state and its relations with ethnic groups. During ethnographic fieldwork in 2001, I encountered

several discussions in which local citizens equated Moldova with a house by describing ethnic relations in terms of hospitality. More often than not, these discussions focused on breaches of etiquette in a host–guest relation, metaphorically describing social and political relations between ethnic groups in terms of “hosts” whose generosity had been abused and unappreciated, and “guests” who had made themselves too much “at home.” As I show below, however, local conceptions of hospitality also provide guidelines that individuals use in their daily lives to facilitate peaceable relations across ethnic and linguistic lines. I urge policymakers to consider how existing values of hospitality, and especially the basic identity of being “hosts” shared by adults of all ethnic groups in Moldova, can be translated into political behaviors that will enable the ongoing negotiation of ethnic relations in this country to be undertaken as a collaborative and tolerant enterprise.

This paper presents ethnographic data on hospitality in Moldova, and it investigates the rights, duties, and obligations that are normally associated with being a “host” or a “guest.” Moldova’s citizens deeply value hospitality. The “host” (or “hostess”) is one of the social roles performed most frequently by adults in Moldova, and is one of the most salient personal identities for individual men and women.<sup>14</sup> Although the rules of hospitality ordinarily apply only to the relationship between hosts and the guests they invite into their homes, many individuals also strive to demonstrate that they are “good” hosts in public interactions with strangers. This accounts for the “quite pragmatic and liberal manner” that people have of using multiple languages in markets and other public settings, as described by Neukirch (1999, 54). In these public encounters, “hosts” expect those they define as “guests” to exhibit certain behaviors—especially in language use—in

return for their demonstrations of generosity. By understanding the rights, obligations, and responsibilities associated with the more ordinary forms of hospitality in Moldova, especially where they involve questions of ownership, generosity, and language, we may be able to better understand how individuals are willing to behave toward each other as citizens in a common state, as well as how they expect to be treated in return.

The particularities of hospitality indicate that it is possible to build a civic and ethnically tolerant national identity in Moldova. First, hospitality is part of a common culture that is shared by the country's several ethnic groups. Second, the value placed on hospitality reveals the population's general openness to people who speak different languages, and a generally positive evaluation of cultural diversity. Recent political experience, along with assumptions about ethnic difference, have conditioned Moldova's citizens to expect political competition between ethnic groups for state power. Hospitality, however, provides a model in which, if state power is adequately devolved, individual citizens can conceptualize themselves as belonging to a political community of "hosts." In such a community, attention is focused on how well hosts perform their social responsibilities, rather than on how well guests acknowledge their host's generosity. Such a community assumes and promotes equality over the long term, and it seeks to minimize institutionalized inequalities. As a model for political relations, hospitality also offers a model for overcoming society's ethnic and linguistic divides in the immediate present and longer future.

## **HOSPITALITY AND POLITICAL CULTURE**

Experience reveals that civic nations are more stable in the long term because they

grant equal "ownership" of the state to all individual citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, or membership in other social groups (Smith 1991). Yet stability and legitimacy require more than a legal structure stipulating the civic nation-state's existence. Stability and legitimacy also require the existence or establishment of a common political culture, which includes "public or political values, ideals, practices, institutions, mode of political discourse, and self-understanding" (Parekh 2000, 200).

In a multiethnic state, this common culture too often reflects only the culture of the politically dominant ethnic group, resulting in a dialectical relationship between the state's attempts to create a civic identity, and the population's tendencies toward ethnic conflict and separatism (Smith 1991, 133–34). Newly independent states, including Moldova, are especially susceptible to this dynamic. Although a common political culture cannot be "officially engineered," policies can be crafted that highlight existing cultural commonalities and emphasize their relevance in public and political spheres (Parekh 2000, 222).

There is substantial evidence of commonalities between Moldova's ethnic groups. Moldova's citizens are quick to tell Western researchers that there are no "ethnic problems" in their country, and opinion surveys do bear out a lower degree of ethnic chauvinism than in neighboring Romania, for example (Crowther 1997, 1998). Ethnic intermarriage is also common,<sup>15</sup> meaning that many individuals actually have close personal relationships that cross ethnic boundaries. Local ethnographers also report few major cultural differences between ethnic groups, citing the shared Orthodox religion along with long-term cohabitation and cultural borrowing as the major sources of cross-ethnic commonality. It is not clear,

however, how any of these commonalities might translate into a common political culture.

During nearly a year of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2001, I found that local discussions of hosts and hospitality provide a potential model of political ownership. Therefore, I offer an ethnographic account of hospitality in the hopes that it will reveal some key values that Moldova's ethnic groups already share that could be incorporated and elaborated into a common political culture.

### **HOSPITALITY IN MOLDOVA**

Adults in Moldova generally enjoy inviting friends, family, and even strangers into their houses where they treat them to food, drink, and a convivial atmosphere. These mutually pleasurable episodes of hospitality also accomplish a great deal of "work" by establishing and strengthening critical social relationships. Hospitality usually mediates relations that directly affect the welfare of a domestic household, and "guests" are drawn from the ranks of a family's friends, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues. Because people frequently try to reconfigure national politics into the idiom of home and family, however, hospitality also symbolically mediates relations between social groups. In Moldova, hospitality especially comments on ideal and normative relations between ethnic groups. The following investigation of the rules observed by good hosts and guests therefore offers an opportunity to discuss how Moldova's citizens think the country's ethnic groups should ideally relate to each other in the political and social frameworks of a common state.

#### **The Importance of Being Hospitable**

In May 2001, I attended the going-away party of a fellow American graduate student

who had spent the academic year of 2000–1 studying Romanian and Russian while living with a host family. As host of her own going-away party, my colleague would have to give the first toast. In the days before her party, my friend drafted and practiced her little speech, but she was still extremely nervous when she stood to speak. As soon as she thanked the administrator from the American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study, her host family, and her teachers and their extended families for being "*atît de primitori*,"<sup>16</sup> she needed to say no more. Her guests were nodding and smiling. She had just thanked them for being hospitable.

It was the reaction to this speech that made me attentive to the number of times the quality of being hospitable, of being *primitori*, came up in discussions about individuals, families, and even other countries and peoples. In the nearly six months I had previously spent in Moldova, I had noticed, of course, that people were hospitable. I had always been offered food, for example, when entering someone's house. I was rarely asked to do chores, and in fact, the possibility of doing them often seemed hidden from me. I was usually sent out of the house during the morning "to study," and I returned later to find that my elderly landlady and her sister had traveled across the city on buses to the central market to bring back heavy loads of potatoes, a whole lamb, or other large quantities of produce. I watched them struggle to convince the nineteen-year-old grandson of the family to help beat rugs outside, and turn down my offers to help, only to reluctantly accept them after a week had gone by without being able to get the grandson's help. Even then, my landlady insisted that we should beat the rugs when I "wasn't busy."

In general, my efforts to join household activities were subtly undermined, even

when I expressed great interest in learning how something was being done—cooking, canning, or harvesting grapes and making wine, for example. I struggled to fulfill my role as “anthropologist,” while my hosts enacted their own roles. Their attempts to be hospitable often kept me from learning what they actually had to do to run a household. Instead of hospitality, people had most often called my attention to Moldova’s cultural and spiritual wealth, and to their country’s beauty. These were the themes I was prompted to discuss when meeting new people, and the themes around which I had first learned to structure my own toasts.

Yet even before my colleague’s going-away party, I had witnessed occasions when individuals were deeply offended by foreigners who did not recognize their attempts to be hospitable. For example, the director of the local office of the International Research and Exchanges Board urged me to understand what people were really like, and how they made decisions regarding their relations with strangers. He had been appalled once to overhear a Peace Corps volunteer say that a village family was making money off her stay with them. She paid them about \$70 dollars a month for room and board, and she did no chores. The woman she lived with even did her laundry.

Recounting these details, I was asked how this American could have no idea that what she paid in rent did not even pay for food? How could she not know that people in Moldova would starve themselves to give a guest meat and other good food? How could she not know that this family was not making money, but in fact was probably spending dearly to host her? When I asked what would motivate a family to host a foreigner who actually cost them extra money and housework, the answer came without hesitation: The Peace Corps volunteer represented not a source of income but a language resource.

Local families, I was told, value hosting foreigners because their children may learn another language during the guest’s stay.

### **Hospitality, Ethnicity, and Nationality**

During my fieldwork, I interacted most often with Romanian-speakers. It is therefore important to ask whether hospitality is only a central value and source of identity for the Romanian-speaking citizens of Moldova, or whether members of other ethnic groups place a similar value on being hospitable and demonstrating hospitality. In general, Moldova’s citizens define ethnic groups by language, and they expect to find cultural similarities and differences following the divisions between languages and language families. As the examples below indicate, individuals notice and publicly remark on both cultural similarities and differences that do not correspond to linguistic divisions. Although I had fewer interactions with non-Romanian-speakers, I found those I did meet engaged in discussions and evaluations of hospitality that were similar to those of my Romanian-speaking contacts.

For example, there is a Russian word that is used equivalently with *primitor* (*gostepriimnyi*), and Russian-speakers warm to its use just as Romanian-speakers warm to *primitor*. The director of the local office of the International Research and Exchanges Board, who was so upset by the American Peace Corps volunteer, is both ethnically Ukrainian, and a native of Transnistria. On multiple occasions, I also heard a Gagauz acquaintance contrast the hospitality offered to guests in Moldova with that he had experienced in Turkey. Perhaps the most striking example came one night while we were eating dinner with a Romanian-speaking family. My Gagauz acquaintance wove together a compliment to our hosts, an explicit directive that I should notice hospitality in Moldova,

and a political statement that Romanian-speakers and Gagauz share a common culture, by telling an anecdote about a wedding he attended in Turkey. The wedding was a striking example of *inhospitality* because the guests had to pay to attend and were then barely fed. In contrast, he reminded me that guests at weddings in Moldova can always expect plenty of food and are never expected to pay for it.<sup>17</sup>

The perspectives on “hospitality” I encountered with non-Romanian-speakers may not be fully representative of “Ukrainian,” “Gagauz,” or even “Transnistrian” models of ideal host–guest relations. Ethnic and regional differences in hospitality should certainly be further examined before assuming that my account is fully shared throughout Moldova. At the very least, however, my experience indicates that non-Romanian-speakers know and use a similar discourse of hospitality to shape and evaluate the results of their interactions with strangers.

Keeping track of what people had to say about the hospitality they encountered while traveling, I found that differences in hospitality (and culture in general) are expected to coincide more closely with ethnic divisions than with state borders. Thus the drop in hospitality perceived by Romanian-speakers who travel to Romania, and for the Gagauz (who speak a Turkic language) when they travel to Turkey, is especially upsetting and provokes negative comments. Conversely, cultural differences are expected along state borders that correspond to ethnic boundaries. I soon learned that for citizens of Moldova the world can be divided into more and less hospitable nations.

Here is the consensus on global hospitality as I came to understand it. Ukraine and Germany are not hospitable countries, and yet they are not without their merits.

Ukrainian women are excellent cooks and hard workers, whereas Germany is an extraordinarily clean and orderly country. France is a delightful but not terribly hospitable country; a guest is likely to be offered only a small cup of coffee. This is also the case with Italy, except that the Italians are otherwise so much like Moldovans that one feels very much at home there anyway. People in Moldova also have difficulty assessing American customs. Many visitors to this country experienced great kindness and help from Americans, but they were surprised by the need to make appointments to see people well in advance. Even with your neighbor, they discovered, you cannot just drop by for a visit. Conversely, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the rest of the Caucasus are considered truly, truly hospitable. A guest is always fed absolutely fresh food, and sometimes a whole sheep is even killed, just so that the guest will have fresh meat.

This synopsis conveys a general appreciation for cultural diversity when differences coincide with the ethnically defined “national” boundaries of states. At the same time, the ambiguity of Moldova’s own national identity is reflected in the attempts that ordinary citizens make to determine just who among their co-citizens is as hospitable as “they” are. The Gagauz man cited above may insist that the Gagauz and Romanian-speakers in Moldova are equally hospitable, but this is just one position in a wider debate. In other encounters, I discovered that individuals often suspect other ethnic groups of being inhospitable. For example, I witnessed the distrust Romanian-speakers have of Gagauz hospitality on multiple occasions. I also witnessed how individuals who have experienced the pleasant surprise of being well received in a Gagauz home will recite the extraordinary details of their welcome when an appropriate occasion arises.

In other words, two kinds of narrative

circulate in Moldova regarding ethnic relations. One emphasizes irreconcilable moral and cultural differences, while the other reports on a shared culture, a common value of hospitality, and the ability to understand one another. Most important, both narratives arise (at least in part) from individual experiences of being ill treated or well treated by members of another ethnic group. Finally, the accepted standards of hospitality in Moldova guide individuals in interpreting the balance of positive and negative aspects of their encounters across ethnic, as well as national, lines.

Successful multicultural societies build on the values and aspirations their inhabitants already share (Parekh 2000). As was shown above, the value of hospitality, and the rituals, customs, and everyday behaviors through which it is demonstrated already unite the citizens of Moldova. From their own reports, differences in hospitality also distance Moldova's many groups from their closest ethnic neighbors across state lines. Yet individuals are still surprised when confronted by evidence of this territorially defined aspect of shared culture, and they do not fully recognize the potential implications of the common value of hospitality for political culture.

### **RULES FOR OFFERING AND RECEIVING HOSPITALITY**

During my fieldwork in Moldova, I learned much more about what good hosts do than what good guests do. This is perhaps paradoxical because I was—in fact—a guest. However, my attempts to clarify how well I was performing the duties of a guest were usually met with nonanswers. There are certain minimal guidelines I did confirm: It is good for guests to bring their hosts small gifts—food, drink, flowers, and toys for children, for example. A guest ought to make an effort to speak his or her host's language as

well. In general, both hosts and guests are to behave as if they “have seven years at home” (a Romanian expression that covers the basic etiquette and behaviors children are to have learned before interacting with “society”). But if hospitality is a relation of exchange (Herzfeld 1992), what are guests to give their hosts?

### **The Good Host**

In Moldova, episodes of hospitality are socially important for what they reveal about the host. Because hospitality is entwined with adult gender roles, particularly those related to household management and activity, the moral and social evaluation of individual men and women, as well as whole families, depends partly on the skill with which they demonstrate hospitality. At a minimum, a household demonstrates hospitality by offering food and drink to guests. Hosts are pleased to have guests, and hurry to serve them as well and as quickly as possible. When a household is expecting guests, lavish displays of food are prepared in advance. If guests arrive unexpectedly, hosts still hurry to serve them. Women do the cooking. Men have already made the wine, and hurry to the cellar to retrieve it. Sometimes guests are invited into a household's wine cellar to drink directly from the family's wine barrels. Even when he is not receiving guests in his own home, a man pours wine as a matter of course to demonstrate that he could have made the wine, and is therefore a good host.

Gender roles are reflected in demonstrations of hospitality, but the preparation and presentation of food and drink comments more meaningfully on the organization, management, and productivity of a household. Because of the tremendous amount of work that goes into supplying a household with food, the hospitality offered by a household also demonstrates how hard



and well the household works in general. Food can be difficult to procure. In the city, people tend to shop in markets because grocery stores are expensive and rare. Because few of the people I knew owned cars, most had to make frequent trips to the market on foot or crowded public transit. In addition, some markets have lower prices, better products or variety, or specialized products, and people regularly travel to several locations to purchase food and other necessities. City inhabitants are also involved in complex food exchanges with their home villages.

In the villages, families buy relatively little of their food. Fruits and vegetables are grown and picked, and animals (chickens, ducks, pigs) are raised in the house's enclosed yard. Corn is shucked and then ground or kept for animal feed. Villagers often bake their own bread; they also can and preserve fruits and vegetables for winter. Wine and some other liquors are also made at home; sugar beets are distilled in the north, and plums in other regions. Villagers must also find ways to obtain products they cannot easily produce: wheat flour, refined sugar, tea and coffee, processed foods, and specialty alcohols. In the city and village alike, people celebrate with menus that include such products as mayonnaise and tinned fish, and champagne, cognac, vodka, and beer. No matter where one lives, celebrations can only be properly held if a household has cash to buy these specialty products. Finally, village households regularly produce food for city friends and relatives, which they give or exchange for processed foods, manufactured goods (medicines and cement, for example), or favors.

The production of a household's supply of wine is also hard work. Beyond the technical aspects of grape growing, harvesting, and processing, individuals need social skills and connections to round up adequate help at harvest time. Wine making also

requires substantial planning and organization. Wine is a necessary household staple, and celebrations—including birthdays, religious holidays, weddings, christenings, funerals, and commemorations of the dead—cannot be held without it. If a household does not want to buy its wine from others, then it must produce enough wine to last a whole year, and perhaps two, in case of a poor harvest the following year. An especially diligent household can also produce a wine surplus to sell or trade in exchange for goods and labor. Good hosts are not necessarily wealthy, but they are industrious, well organized, capable of complex planning, and skilled at social and economic negotiations.

### **The Bad Guest**

The “rules” of hospitality most immediately require hosts to welcome guests into their home, serve them food and wine, and take pleasure in their guests' company. Yet when people discuss actual instances of a host welcoming a guest, it is clear that there are other “rules.” As was discussed above, the guest is expected to have rudimentary social graces, but these are rarely outlined in the abstract, and lapses are rarely mentioned. Rules that become explicit when discussing actual cases of hospitality are most immediately related to the language used by host and guest.

In an ideal situation, hosts and guests speak the same language. When they do not, a good host will use the guest's language, or at least the guest's preferred language, during their interaction. The host also has a responsibility to help a guest improve his or her language skills, if and when possible. In turn, a good guest should exhibit the desire and willingness to use the host's language. Even if a host begins by speaking the guest's language, he or she can reasonably expect the guest to eventually switch to using the host's language.

An example of this dynamic occurred when a team of ethnographers I accompanied spent a few nights in a Gagauz village. Our host was the Gagauz man cited above; his wife, a Romanian-speaker, spoke with us in Romanian. Although the wife's first language is Romanian, she and her husband speak Russian to each other. Thus, the "house" language could be considered either Romanian or Russian, depending on one's perspective.<sup>18</sup> Because all the other team members are Romanian-speakers, the wife's choice as a hostess was clear: She spoke Romanian because it was her guests' language. On the last day of our stay, however, it came up that I had used Russian very little since coming to Moldova. Consequently, though my Romanian was improving to near fluency, it was difficult for me to freely use Russian in regular conversations. My hostess apologized—had she known, she would have spoken in Russian to help me improve. She said nothing of changing languages for the benefit of the other team members, leading me to conclude that she only lapsed in offering hospitality to me (by not giving me the chance to learn the house language), but had still been correct in using Romanian with her other guests. The situation clearly gives rise to additional questions. For example, all the other team members speak Russian fluently. Should they have spoken Russian while visiting their Gagauz colleague at home even though his wife is a Romanian-speaker? From the wife's perspective, the important question was whether she had extended hospitality as fully as possible, and she was dismayed to discover that she may have fallen short in her interactions with me.

For hospitality to be fully realized, the host depends on the guest to speak the host's language. This was made clear to me when the aunt of my landlady's ex-husband arrived from Bucharest for a visit of several weeks.

During this visit, she spent much time with my landlady and my landlady's sister, visiting mutual friends and relatives, watching soap operas, and talking. Inevitably, it seems, the conversation would turn to the status of the Romanian language in Moldova. The visiting aunt, who is herself from Moldova, but moved to Bucharest as an adult, had nothing but complaints. She complained about the number of Russian newspapers, about the quantity of Russian language programming on television; and about the paucity of Romanian being used in public places and the media.

One day while she and I were eating lunch, my landlady's sister referred to the visitor. She said the *românca* (Romanian woman) only talks about how bad things are here in Moldova. While this was upsetting, my landlady's sister had been particularly upset by a moment when the woman corrected her nephew's spoken Romanian. I quickly learned that this was wrong; my landlady's sister explained to me that the woman is a guest, and when guests come to visit you, you want to speak in your own language. Because they come to your house, she clarified, they have no right to command the language in which you speak to them. Here, I discovered a refinement to what I had already learned about hospitality: Good guests should not place expectations or demands on their host, especially regarding language use.

### **WHOSE HOUSE IS MOLDOVA? CITIZENS AND STRANGERS, HOSTS AND GUESTS**

As a dimension of political culture, the shared value of hospitality can have two very different effects. It can unite and equally enfranchise Moldova's ethnic groups as citizens vis-à-vis the state. Or it can create and reify political inequalities. For example, citizens

already recognize a parallel between the language negotiations required in offering hospitality with the country's current language politics. Among Romanian-speakers, for example, it is not uncommon to hear assertions that the state should stop entertaining the possibility of having multiple official languages. From their perspective, Romanian should be the sole official and state language, and other ethnic groups (and foreigners) should learn and use Romanian while living and working in Moldova. As the examples below will indicate, individuals legitimate this one-language policy by making allusions to the normative practices between guests and hosts. Although arguments of this sort do "make sense," their logic hinges on the implicit assertion that Moldova is a Romanian-owned "house," and that all non-Romanian-speakers are "guests." Clearly, non-Romanian-speakers resist this line of argumentation. As individual "hosts" themselves, minority demands to "be at home," linguistically and otherwise, make just as much sense.

As the previous examples indicate, individuals consider language use to be one of the key features in distinguishing good host-guest relationships from bad ones. Although hospitality ostensibly depends only on household management, and is represented by the ability and willingness to offer guests copious food and drink, hospitality actually encompasses other social behaviors. Good hosts and guests alike are expected to welcome opportunities to use—and especially to learn—languages other than their own. In the best case, the guest will speak the host's language, either because he already knows it, or because he learns it from his host. When this does not occur, hosts oblige their guests, taking pleasure in both the ensuing interaction, and the chance to further demonstrate their own skillfulness with languages. When the guest does speak the host's

language, even if he or she is not fluent, then the host can also feel "at home." Thus although hosts value their ability to speak other languages to make guests feel "at home," they also appreciate guests who make the effort to learn and speak the host's language. When this mutual exchange of languages occurs, both host and guest can feel "at home."

Hospitality is an especially apt metaphor for describing ideal and normative relations between ethnic groups in Moldova, because hosts and guests are supposed to negotiate language use. Ethnic groups in Moldova are defined primarily by language, and the definition of national identity in Moldova has also depended largely on language politics. According to Soviet ethnic categories, the "Moldovans" were a distinct nation from the Romanians, and this difference could be objectively documented through the existence of two separate languages. Today, the international and local consensus is that "Moldovan" does not exist as a distinct language from Romanian.<sup>19</sup>

A similar consensus has not been reached regarding the question of whether Moldovans and Romanians constitute a single people, ethnic group, nationality, or nation. Each of these terms carries connotations of political rights, sovereignty, and statehood. Consequently, political debates regarding the choice of official and state languages, as well as minority language rights, double as debates about how state power will be divided among ethnic groups and regions. Because the model of hospitality outlines rules for language use, the themes of exchange, generosity, and rightful expectations that appear in discussions of good hosts and bad guests can also be transferred to a discussion of the real and ideal relations between ethnic groups in Moldova.

During my fieldwork, I encountered

a few occasions on which citizens intentionally used the values of hospitality to make political points. For example, the comment made by my landlady's aunt about her visiting relative was also meant to criticize the attitudes that Romania and Romanian citizens hold toward Moldova's generally lenient policies regarding the use of Russian. Although my landlady's aunt is a Romanian-speaker herself, she resents Romania's intrusion into Moldova's domestic politics. In the visitor's defense, she was not just a visitor from Romania but also a senior family member who used to live in Chisinau. Thus, she (and her other family members) may well have expected that she was "coming home," and was therefore not a "guest" but a senior family and community member, who was well within her bounds to comment critically on pressing social issues like language.

As demonstrated in the following example, hospitality can also be used to make pointed political arguments about ethnic relations and citizenship rights in the new state. In May, I attended a rehearsal by a folk music ensemble. After the rehearsal, several musicians stayed to visit with each other; two members took up a collection and went to buy wine, bread, pâté, mayonnaise, and lunchmeat from a nearby store. We spent an enjoyable hour together and then went our separate ways. Three of us (myself, the musician who had invited me to the rehearsal, and his friend Andrei)<sup>20</sup> were heading to the same neighborhood, and Andrei suggested we prolong the evening. First we went to a sidewalk café for beer, then to a second café for coffee.

Language had been a topic of conversation in the first portion of the evening. The earnest discussion over the differences between "Moldovan," and "Romanian," had given way to joking, but as we were drinking coffee, Andrei and Matei returned to the

topic of state language policies. The conversation was reignited when Andrei asked how Matei and I had met; the occasion had been a festival for children's folkloric ensembles the previous month. Matei mentioned that a Gagauz ensemble had also attended the festival, and this prompted Andrei to comment at length on language and the Gagauz. His choice of topics may have been equally prompted by Matei's aside to me that I should continue building my proficiency in Romanian.

At any rate, Andrei picked up the conversation and said that the language spoken by people did not matter. When he was a student at the university, some Gagauz students came to his room one night, and they played music together. He liked them so much that he went to Comrat for two years. He lived in a dorm there, but he told his parents that he was staying in a hotel. He even learned some Gagauz.

At this point in the story, Matei asked whether Andrei's friends had stopped speaking Romanian as soon as he started to speak some Gagauz. Andrei tried to avoid the question. Matei insisted, saying that the Gagauz should speak Romanian, not Russian. They are not grateful, he said, that Stefan cel Mare gave them the piece of land on which they are now living.<sup>21</sup> He continued, conceding that it was okay for them to speak Gagauz, but they also needed to speak Romanian. Ideally, he said, there will be schools, and books and newspapers in Gagauz, so that everyone can study in his own language. But the country is poor. Therefore, the Gagauz should work with Romanians to build Moldova. Andrei was visibly agitated by the direction the discussion had taken. He rarely made eye contact with Matei, began to look for the waitress, and continuously shifted in his seat. Matei asked if Andrei disagreed. Andrei replied that Matei had missed the

point. The conversation ended, and we soon left.

This conversation is an excellent example of the way in which the ordinary rules of language use between hosts and guests can provide a model for the ideal or normative relations between ethnic groups in the political realm. Significantly, Andrei did not dispute the factuality of Matei's historical account. It would have been easy to point out that the Gagauz originally received land during the reign of Catherine the Great, not under Stefan cel Mare, but Matei is not talking about history per se, and Andrei obviously knew that. Matei was instead interested in demonstrating that the Gagauz ought to be loyal to Romanian-speakers, not Russians. He stops short of saying that the Gagauz should assimilate, but he places the common economic good of all citizens before the cultural rights of minorities.

Andrei refused to continue a political discussion, and he told Matei that he missed the point of the story. He did not clarify it then, but his story is actually straightforward: It is about ethnicity not being a barrier to friendship, or even living together, and about Andrei's own ability and willingness to learn another language. In light of prevailing notions about what makes a good guest, Andrei did the right thing when he learned some Gagauz while living in Comrat. Among other things, Andrei was demonstrating to me (a "good" guest, because I was speaking Romanian) that he also was a "good" guest.

In fact, Matei did understand Andrei's point. He simply twisted it around, pointing out that the way Andrei tells the story implies that he was living "at home" with the Gagauz. He makes the counterargument that the Gagauz are really living on Moldovan territory—that is, in a Romanian-speaking "house." Matei agrees that Andrei was a good guest on the micro level, but he wants to know if the Gagauz were also good guests at

the macro level. Did they continue speaking Romanian with Andrei, even after he had learned some Gagauz? That is, did they acknowledge their debt to Moldovans that was established when Stefan cel Mare founded Moldova, and gave the Gagauz their home?

As Matei's question indicates, it is possible to imagine the Moldovan state as a household. In this situation, some ethnic groups can be imagined as hosts, and others as guests. At this point, hospitality ceases to be a mere reflection of the host's generosity, industriousness, skillfulness, and social and moral standing. Hospitality becomes a means through which the "owners of the house" can "impose obligations of eventual reciprocity and the acknowledgement of moral indebtedness on the recipient" (Herzfeld 1992, 171). By dividing Moldova's ethnic groups, all of which have been present on the territory for at least two hundred years, into "hosts" and "guests," the shared value of hospitality is used to impose and legitimate inequalities along ethnic lines.

As a dimension of political culture, the shared value of hospitality can create and reify political inequalities. At least some of Moldova's citizens, including some of the most politically "pro-Romanian" individuals I encountered, are not indifferent to the negative social and political effects of building the new state as an exclusively "Romanian" house. As Matei recognizes, the ideal situation would be for Moldova to have an economy and infrastructure capable of supporting the country's ethnic and linguistic diversity. If the country were better developed, he suggests, the current discourse (that even he perpetuates) about who "owes" whom loyalty in the form of linguistic assimilation and ethnic solidarity would be unnecessary. Even with an improved economy, however, the political culture requires shaping. In Moldova, the task is to encourage citizens to recognize how

hospitality can unite and equally enfranchise them both individually and as members of ethnic groups, as citizens vis-à-vis the state.

### THE PROMISE AND PITFALLS OF HOSPITALITY IN POLITICS

Political theory and international relations have long used the concept of “international hospitality” to discuss the relations, rights, and mutual obligations that obtain between a “host” state and newcomers (Cavallar 2002). At one extreme, Vitoria posited that foreigners can expect “freedom of residence, nationalization, and citizenship” (quoted in Cavallar 2002, 3) and have the right to force their “hosts” to grant these privileges. Other theorists insist that guests have no natural rights to the privileges of citizenship but may be granted privileges out of the host’s own benevolence and goodwill. From yet another perspective, Kant suggests that foreigners have some rights—to visit, for example—but that they must be peaceable and hospitable during their visit and must leave within a reasonable time. Longer “visits” or more permanent living arrangements require special pacts between the receiving and sending states, and do not necessarily require the receiving state to grant citizenship.

Recent scholarship and global debates on international law, migration, refugees, and human rights have reinvigorated “hospitality” as a political concept. The trend has been to define both states and legal citizens as “hosts” in opposition to alien “guests.” In the political realm, as in ordinary relations of hospitality, guests are expected to acknowledge the generosity bestowed by their hosts. Yet the host–guest relation is riddled with potential problems: Hosts fail to offer hospitality, guests are not grateful, may be dangerous, and sometimes fail to leave (Rosello 2001, 18, 33). Recently, social critics have closely examined the French discourse on “hospitali-

ty” to demonstrate that country’s failure to offer the “hospitality” it promises to immigrants.

For example, Ben Jelloun (1999) argues that—contra public and political discourse—France does not have an immigration “problem.” The problem is rather that France is reneging on its own, self-ascribed role as “host” and failing to offer “hospitality.” According to him, hospitality is

“a reciprocal right to protection and shelter,” or more simply, the act of taking someone into one’s home without any thought of recompense. It brings together an action (a welcome), an attitude (the opening of oneself to the face of another, whether that somebody is poor or a passing traveler, and the opening of one’s door and the offering of the space of one’s house to a stranger), and a principle (disinterestedness). (1999, 1–2)

In concentrating on the actions of its guests, France has failed to remain a disinterested host. In contrast, a good host would take the following position: “I have duties toward other people, just as they have duties toward me. But the only duties I have to bother about are my own. If the other person won’t play the game and doesn’t obey the rules, that’s his business. . . . His attitudes, shortcomings, or betrayals are no affair of mine. The important thing is that I myself should do my duty and respect him” (Ben Jelloun 1999, 5). Moreover, the official forms of “hospitality” being invoked by the French state in immigration policies, citizenship laws, and the (legal) rights of immigrants are at odds with the forms of hospitality that mark everyday social life in France. Thus, even French citizens are not really hosts in their own “home” state because they can be punished for offering real hospitality (in the form of shelter or assistance) to unauthorized

“guests” (see also Rosello 2001, 37).

As contemporary debates about immigration, citizenship, and national identity in France illustrate, building a political culture around the concept of hospitality can both generate conflict and contribute to its resolution. How can the existing values of hospitality be shaped and applied to promote a sense among all Moldova’s ethnic groups that they belong to a common political community, and are all hosts of a common state household? Perhaps the solution is close to what Ben Jelloun suggests: Hosts should not focus on assessing their guest’s behavior. A productive discourse on civic hospitality would not seek to distinguish “guests,” define them primarily by their relation to hosts, judge how well the host–guest relation has been conducted, or expect a guest’s gratitude to be of equal measure to a host’s generosity.

The above examples suggest some of the ways in which existing political tensions can be transferred into the idiom of hospitality without being significantly reformulated. For example, from the perspective of someone who identifies as a “Moldovan,” “Romanians” often fail to acknowledge their real status as “guests,” and meddle in Moldova’s internal affairs as if they were “family.” Thus, the existing tensions between Moldova and Romania could be reconceptualized as an ongoing breach in hospitality. Domestically, Romanian-speakers may reconfigure their dissatisfaction with the Gagauz and Transnistrians for demanding various forms of cultural and political rights and autonomy. For the Romanian-speaking “hosts,” the Gagauz and Slavic-speakers who dominate Transnistrian politics are simply bad guests who fail to recognize their hosts’ generosity.

Transnistria also serves as a potent example of how the “Russians” perpetually take advantage of Moldovan hospitality, eating the local population “out of house and

home,” as it were. A common compliment Romanian-speakers made when they heard me speaking Romanian was “the Russians have been here for a hundred years, and haven’t learned Romanian.” From the rules on language exchange outlined above, the interpretation is clear: Russians epitomize the “bad guest.” Again from the perspective of Romanian-speakers, any concessions the state makes to minorities, especially in the domain of language, has the effect of making them feel like “guests in their own home.” Although the “hosts” are continually obliged to speak a language other than their own, the “guests” benefit from their hosts’ unceasing generosity.

In their turn, every ethnic minority in Moldova can also claim that the current and dominant status of Romanian language and culture renders them permanent “guests” who are perpetually indebted to their “hosts.” Clearly, simply translating Moldova’s existing debates on collective rights to state power into the idiom of hospitality will not substantially change ethnic relations.

Hospitality’s power in the political domain relies on its ability to establish and naturalize a metaphoric relation between how an individual behaves “at home” and how he or she behaves as a citizen. In everyday life, every adult in Moldova is assumed to be a host or hostess. Some fulfill this social role better than others: They are more generous, or have more to give; but no one is expected to permanently take on the social role of “guest.” One is only a guest temporarily; it is a situational identity, rather than a core or salient one. Writing about hospitality in Crete, Herzfeld notes that the common injunction for a guest to behave “as if in his own house” carries several implications, among which is the possibility that the host may one day be received in his guest’s house (1987, 77–8). At a minimum, individuals who recognize that they are surrounded by other

hosts engage in equal exchanges and recognize their mutual responsibilities. Thus a productive discourse on civic hospitality in Moldova would assume that all individuals are (potential) hosts, and ask what relations (should) obtain between two or more hosts when they interact.

## CONCLUSION

As an element of shared culture, hospitality can inform attempts to develop political culture in two main ways. First, demonstrations of hospitality in ordinary life reveal that Moldova's citizens already have a model for interacting with strangers, and that this model includes special provisions for interacting with strangers who speak a different language. In other words, hospitality provides a medium for people to translate the principles of their interactions with individual members of different ethnic groups and language communities into the more abstract principles that underlie ideal political relations between ethnic groups and language communities. As my examples indicate, individuals already engage in this kind of political imagining. Policymakers can therefore engage Moldova's citizenry in a discussion of ethnic relations through the rhetoric of hospitality, encouraging political life to develop around what people already "know"; namely, there are ways to practice ethnic and linguistic tolerance that do not require some groups to be dominant and others to be subordinate. The difficulty in this approach will be shifting the political discussion away from dividing ethnic groups into "hosts" and "guests," and exploring what a community of "hosts" must do.

Hospitality, however, also supports this second level of developing a tolerant political culture. Specifically, language rules emerge only from the practice of hospitality. As a cultural ideal, hospitality is not understood as

a relation of exchange between a host and guest but as a gift freely given by the host. Opportunities to offer hospitality are valued by individuals in Moldova precisely because they provide an opportunity to demonstrate that individual's goodness (because he or she "does the right thing" by offering hospitality), as well as his or her skillfulness in household management. As I have already demonstrated, household management involves additional skills such as economic forecasting and planning, resource management, and social relations. A host or hostess is first and foremost a steward of material as well as social goods and resources.

There is much to gain by shifting national political discourse in Moldova to the rhetoric of hospitality. This shift can be initiated through the channel of language rights and ethnic relations. Ultimately, the discourse should be shifted to incorporate the whole set of cultural values attached to hospitality as the model for political culture and a civic form of national identity. Such a shift, however, can probably not be unilaterally accomplished by Moldova's political leadership, nor should it be in the new democratic structure.<sup>22</sup> One of the strongest Soviet legacies in this country is a pervasive suspicion of any and all government attempts to "engineer" ethnic and social relations. Changes in the system of political representation could help off-set some, but not all, suspicion of government and political activities. While seeking to enlarge the share of "real" ownership citizens have in the state, Moldova's government should also avoid making heavy-handed and sudden decisions related to ethnic and national identity.

The sudden publication and attempt to implement a "history of Moldova" in Moldova's schools in early 2002 is one such example of a government initiative that generated a public backlash of "pro-Romanian"



sentiment. Replacing Moldova's current postindependence educational curriculum in the "History of Romanians" is not a bad idea.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, a history of the independent republic could foster a shared patriotism and national pride across ethnic lines, contributing to the country's future unity and stability. But politically active Romanian-speakers rejected this history manual because it came from the government and because it replicates Soviet-style histories. History books, school curricula, citizenship education, public service messages, pageantry, and other techniques of nation building are unlikely to succeed in fostering Moldova's development as a multiethnic state, unless they are developed and promoted by citizens themselves. Furthermore, they must be created not as political tools but as the spontaneous and natural projects of scientists, scholars, educators, homeowners, villages and neighborhoods, musicians and artists, groups of friends, and the like.

Because Moldova's political culture cannot be easily instituted from the top down, the challenge is to support, encourage, and enable Moldova's inhabitants to apply their existing and shared value of hospitality in the political realm. A first step might be to provide opportunities through which members of different ethnic groups, as well as regions, can discover both the depth and nuances of this widespread value of hospitality. Many people already experience cross-ethnic commonality as individuals, but the collective knowledge built up through small-scale exchanges and discussions among friends and family is not yet widely or publicly acknowledged as having political and social import beyond the limited scope of individual and household reactions to "others." Educational efforts in multiple languages, not just teaching Romanian to non-Romanians or expecting Romanians to

speak Russian, should accompany these more diverse intercultural exchanges.<sup>24</sup>

Second, the close ties between hospitality and economic self-sufficiency suggest that for people to behave as "hosts" in public life, they must have the means to be a "host." Enabling people to be hosts requires a second set of initiatives focused on "ownership" that might well encompass economic programs designed to give individuals greater control over their financial well-being, as well as social and political programs that provide individuals with opportunities to "own" their local communities and the state. In short, I am suggesting that by incorporating the expectation that people in Moldova want to be "hosts" as often and completely as possible, the full range of "transition" programs—whether originating abroad or locally in Moldova—can be tailored to promote and support the development of a civic and ethnically tolerant national identity.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Ambassador William Hill for providing the succinct description “zero-sum game.”

<sup>2</sup> Suny (1995) and Slezkine (1994), for example, both describe how Soviet political structures, institutions, procedures, and even ideology encouraged “ethnic” politics to flourish and generated ethnic conflicts. Verdery (1993) attributes the persistence and periodic intensification of ethnic conflict in Romania more generally to the political and economic centralization inherent in all socialist states.

<sup>3</sup> Kymlicka (1998) outlines general weaknesses in how Western liberal democracies have historically addressed ethnic relations and ethnocultural rights. He also offers some guidelines for applying liberal principles in East Central Europe, but he reminds us that the West has no models or solutions for some of the dilemmas in postcommunist Europe. Additionally, postcommunist countries will not eliminate the centrality of ethnic identity from public and political life merely by adapting liberal-democratic norms: “Controversies and conflicts over the management of ethnocultural diversity won’t go away, or spontaneously resolve themselves. They are a permanent and enduring feature of liberal-democracies which must be tackled head-on” (p. 320).

<sup>4</sup> In American politics at least, conflict is valued and encouraged to the extent that it indicates active and equal participation between different interest groups, including ethnic groups. As Beissinger and Hajda (1990) suggest, American ethnic politics provide a poor model for understanding ethnic politics in the former Soviet Union. Despite surface resemblances of ideology and rhetoric, the Soviet Union was neither a “melting pot” nor an “ethnic mosaic.” To conceive of Soviet nationalities as temporary epiphenomena or as “pressure groups” is equally inadequate.

<sup>5</sup> Brubaker introduced the term “nationalizing state” to stress that the national identity of a state is constantly being formed, reformed, contested, and changed. A nationalizing state is “a dynamically changing field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual figures within and around the state, competing to inflect state policy in a particular direction, and seeking, in various and often mutually antagonistic ways, to make the state a “real” nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation” (1996, 66). The dynamism of national identity is particularly evident in new states, where the basic choice between ethnic and civic models of identity is being debated, as well as the particular content of both. Even

in more established states, successive articulations of the country’s national identity will contain both civic and ethnic elements (see also Smith 1991, 13), but one model will dominate the ongoing discourse.

<sup>6</sup> My response to the Romanian-Moldovan question (discussed below) is to refer to all members of the ethnic majority in the Republic of Moldova as Romanian-speakers. My choice is an attempt to accurately reflect social identities as I encountered them during fieldwork. Namely, I found that most people accepted that the “Moldovan” language was the same as the “Romanian” language, but that their ethnic identification as Romanian or Moldovan shifts situationally; there are very few Romanian-speakers who do not sometimes refer to themselves as “Romanians” and at other times “Moldovans.” Nevertheless, because no one (of any ethnicity) uses “Moldovan” to refer to non-Romanian-speakers, I also prefer to use terms like “citizens” or “population” when I am not focusing on ethnic identity. Context determines my use of “Moldovan” as an adjective; in this paper, I have always meant to be ethnically inclusive when using “Moldovan nation,” “Moldovan state,” or “Moldovan identity.”

<sup>7</sup> I cite Britannica’s figures because they show less evidence of rounding census figures than do other available sources, including U.S. Central Intelligence Agency factsheet figures.

<sup>8</sup> Chinn and Roper (1998, 92) also identify a parliamentary report on minorities published in 1989 as the “final blow” to cooperation between Gagauz political leaders and the Popular Front. This report identified Gagauz as an ethnic minority, not an indigenous people. Unfortunately, Chinn and Roper do not fully explain the significance of this reclassification.

<sup>9</sup> List-Moldova (moldova@yahoogroups.com), maintained by Adrian Evtuhovici (evtuhovici@noos.fr), carried several news items on the federalization plan, its near ratification, and the criticisms it met during late November 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Ukrainians and Russians are predominantly urban dwellers, concentrated in the northern and eastern portions of the country, whereas the Gagauz and Bulgarians reside almost exclusively in southern villages; Romanian-speakers are spread throughout the country but remain concentrated in rural areas.

<sup>11</sup> Bessarabia refers to all the land, north to south, between the Prut and Dneister Rivers, while Transnistria corresponds with the land east of the Dnesiter River.

<sup>12</sup> Hülya Demirdirek is a Norwegian-trained social anthropologist conducting ethnographic research in

Gagauz Yeri. Local ethnographers with whom I had contact in Moldova also document many cultural similarities between the country's ethnic groups.

<sup>13</sup> I am using Smith's categorization of nations and national cultures (1991, 110–12).

<sup>14</sup> I am using Stryker's (1980, 61) discussion of salience. Stryker notes that because individuals usually perform multiple social roles, it is necessary to distinguish the salience of the multiple social identities that accompany these roles. The most salient identities are those that are invoked most frequently when an individual interacts with others.

<sup>15</sup> Moldova had the fourth highest number of ethnically mixed families in all the Soviet republics, with 179 per 1,000 families in 1970 being multiethnic. Latvia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan had higher total numbers of ethnically mixed families, but Moldova's urban areas had the highest number (nearly double other urban areas) of ethnically mixed families anywhere in the Soviet Union, with 344 per 1,000 in 1970 (Fisher 1980, 218). Interethnic marriage rates are not a fail-safe measure of either ethnic exclusivity or inclusivity, but they do indicate the possibility that individuals have access to, and cultural knowledge of, other groups.

<sup>16</sup> Unless otherwise noted, words in italics are Romanian.

<sup>17</sup> An American might disagree with this, citing the fact that guests do give money to the bride and groom during weddings in Moldova at least twice: when they greet the bride and groom at the entry to the wedding feast, and in the middle of the feast when a collection is taken.

<sup>18</sup> Each parent speaks his or her first language with the children, meaning that the children are trilingual, speaking Gagauz, Romanian, and Russian.

<sup>19</sup> Dyer (1996) provides a succinct and comprehensive analysis of the proposed "Moldovan language."

<sup>20</sup> I have changed individual names to provide anonymity and retain confidentiality.

<sup>21</sup> The origins of the Gagauz in Moldova are contested. However, the general agreement (see King 2000, 211) is that they came between the 1780s and 1870s in conjunction with the Russo-Turkish wars. Matei's argument is thus not historically accurate, since ʹtefan cel Mare lived in the fifteenth century. He maintained this line of argument on other occasions, however, and was clearly aware of the historical discrepancies.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, an analysis of political parties, their names, symbols, and platforms may indicate that the basic idea of seeing Moldova as a common "house" already

exists. The overall parameters of the discourse on national identity, as outlined above, tend to focus the debate as a choice between different models of an ethnically defined (even if multiethnic) "nation," and attempts to move away from ethnicity as a central political issue are greeted with suspicion (even when supported) because such moves often resemble Soviet programs and agendas.

<sup>23</sup> Solonari (2002) provides a detailed comparison of how the "history of Moldova" and "history of Romanians" are presented in recent textbooks. The basic narratives of both histories, he concludes, fail to "imagine Moldovan collectivity" in ways that correspond with reality, and fail to yield "humane" histories (p. 445). The "history of Romanians" replicates the national exclusivity of Romanian historiographies, whereas the "history of Moldova" replicates many of the xenophobic tendencies of Soviet historiography.

<sup>24</sup> Neukirch (1999) provides a succinct analysis of the problems involved in current efforts to teach Romanian to non-Romanian-speakers. Briefly, there are problems at the levels of funding, implementation, and recruitment.

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