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MEDIA FRAMING OF MOLDOVA'S DEMOCRACY
BETWEEN 1991 AND 2014

by

Ecaterina Stepaniuc

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of "Arts and Letters"
and the Department/ School of "School of Mass Communication and Journalism"
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation work seeks to analyze the implications of government and independent owned media outlets framing democracy in the Republic of Moldova from 1991 until 2014. Existing literature reports on the decisive role media played in the process of democratization when referring to former Soviet republics. To understand the role Moldovan media played in the democratization process, the author applied content analysis of three print publications and one televised news program to examine Moldova's democracy between 1991 and 2014.

The sample consisted of 346 *Mesager* script news stories aired on the public TV station in Moldova, and 608 newspaper articles and editorials printed in three national newspapers, *Glasul Națiunii*, *Timpul de Dimineață* and *Moldova Suverană*.

The findings indicate that each news outlet framed democracy differently, mainly depending on the medium's political interests and policies. *Glasul Națiunii* associated democracy with Moldova reuniting with Romania. *Moldova Suverană* as a government publication presented democracy positively, while as an independent publication framed democracy negatively. *Timpul de Dimineață* endorsed a balanced agenda when it came to presenting democracy to the Moldovan people and referred to both, positive and negative portrayals. Overall, the message on democracy evolved from a positive frame with Moldovan people welcoming the new governance system, to a negative frame indicating Moldova's democracy stagnation.

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Finally, I thank God for giving me this great opportunity to earn a doctorate degree in the United States. Above all, I thank Him for bringing incredible people in my life and allowing me to build life-long relationships.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral degree to my supportive husband, Ghenadii Bitco, my newborn son, George Joseph, and my incredible families in Moldova, and in the United States of America, who have encouraged me to stay focused and reach the end of this road. Thank you!

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

From the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 until now, the Republic of Moldova found itself in a perpetual state of accepting, promoting and experiencing democracy as a political system of government. The nation enthusiastically embraced the democratic ideological principles the new government promised to endorse when it became independent. The new political system engaged to offer those much-desired democratic values and liberties missing from the previous several decades of totalitarianism and communism.

While no one doubts the decisive role the media played in the process of democratization, there remains one meaningful area which has been ignored by Moldovan and international scholars. When the Moldovan government endorsed a brand new democratic government, national media inherited the role to report on democracy and introduce the democratic characteristics and manifestations to the Moldovan nation. Therefore, this dissertation study proposes to examine and analyze how televised news programs and print editorials in Moldova presented the idea and the concepts of democracy to the Moldovan nation since the country became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991. Particularly, this work examines how the public TV station (Moldova 1) daily news program, *Mesager*, and three widely-thought influential national newspapers, *Glasul Națiunii*, *Moldova Suverană* and *Timpul de Dimineață*, framed democracy and reported on democratic principles to a society where democracy was an unknown phenomenon. Understanding that democracy as a term and as a practice was a new concept to the society, the author strives to observe the agenda that media channels set

when presenting the idea of democracy to the Moldovan nation which declared itself to be a free and democratic society.

Purpose of Study

When one ponders on the importance the media play in keeping a society well informed on social, cultural and political tendencies, one realizes the meaningful position media hold. This position gains more value when media becomes a separate institution in the state and is not controlled by the political powers anymore. Under the Soviet Union, Moldovan media reflected only one point of view, that of the communist party. When the Soviet Union fell, Moldovan media unexpectedly became a separate independent institution and thus accepted to perform its new role: to correctly inform and educate the public. History shows that political liberation in Moldova reached its culmination in 1989 when the first publication in the Romanian language, *Glasul Națiunii (The Voice)* was published and broke out in the souls of Moldovans by fiercely challenging the entire population to a national revival. This first publication printed in the Romanian language became a clandestine newspaper offering a tribune to free men and women who encouraged the nation to not be afraid of the tyranny they suffered for half a century. An equally relevant media channel that became influential on political, social and cultural issues since Moldova's independence and up until today belongs to the national public television station Moldova 1. The public TV station carried a valuable role to keep the society informed due to the fact that it was the only TV station aired in Moldova at that time and it geographically covered the entire territory of Moldova. People watched the evening news on a constant basis wanting to understand the course the nation was taking and what the new political system promised to offer.

Several years later the media market began to grow and more newspapers, radio channels and television stations started to function in Moldova. By 1996 there were 209 publications in different languages, while 88 of them were printed in Romanian (Vintea, 2015). One of these publications became the governmental newspaper called *Moldova Suverană*, previously printed in Russian language. *Moldova Suverană* carried the responsibility to inform the society on all policies and activities involving the government, parliament and president. Therefore, observing and analyzing the specific perspective the governmental publication took in regards to democracy and how it chose to present democracy to the Moldova population would become extremely significant to this project.

A third publication included in the analysis is the newspaper *Timpul de Dimineață*. *Timpul de Dimineață* was first printed in 2001 and it soon developed the reputation of being the only independent daily newspaper at the time in Moldova. The newspaper's editorialist vociferated to support the western vector for the country and promoted democratic values and liberties through the content of the publication. Examining this publication's editorials would allow the researcher to understand a different perspective shared by a publication which seems to have been directly interested in supporting a political orientation and a democratic government.

Regardless of the fact that Moldova has not overcome the transitional era it entered when it became independent, few sought to analyze the role that media embraced since the country's independence and the contribution it brought to explaining democracy to the people. Many agree that Moldova failed to completely embrace democracy as an authentic political system and the country's transitional era keeps getting delayed to

finally reach an end. However, no one seems to have tried to understand the role the media carried in helping the country transition and present democracy to the public.

With a thorough examination of the televised news and print editorials over a 24 year period, one should come away with a clearer picture. More important, one should come away better prepared to understand the message independent publications and non-independent media outlets transmitted on democracy and how their message changed or evolved over time.

Structure of Study

The overall structure of this research work contains seven parts with an introduction, followed by a literature review section. The third section discusses methodology, followed by results/findings. The final chapter discusses the overall findings along with some limitations and ends with future research suggestions.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

Background on Moldova

Republic of Moldova is the region situated between Ukraine and Romania and occupies most of what has previously been known as Bessarabia. Throughout history, Moldova had experienced a turbulent time considering its location on one of the crossroads of Europe. Over the course of millennia multiple empires have expanded their territories by taking over or annexing the Moldovan territory. Until 1940, Moldova had to suffer multiple territorial seizure from the Greeks, Romans, Huns, Bulgars, Ottoman Turkish, and Russians (Johansson, 2011). In 1940, Romania was forced to cede eastern Moldova to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R). It then became the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (M.S.S.R.) after merging the autonomous republic east of the Dniester and the annexed Bessarabian portion. Moldova remained as an integral part of U.S.S.R until the early 1990s (Johansson, 2011).

Moldova declared its independence on August 27, 1991, and adopted the declaration of independence in its first parliament. The official language according to the constitution is Moldovan. The language still generates unending arguments among the society. Pro-Romanian supporters insist on the fact that Moldovan language does not exist as a language. Instead, it is a dialect and respectively it cannot be considered an official national language. On the other side, pro-Russian supporters hold to the premise that Moldovans constitute a separate nation from Romanians, and therefore, the language they speak is not Romanian, but Moldovan. After 22 years of controversial debates, on December 5, 2013 the Constitutional Court (CC) put an end to endless discussions about the state language of the Republic of Moldova. The CC judges decided that the state

language in Moldova is Romanian. Magistrates consisted then thought that Romanian language and Moldovan dialect actually represent the same exact language. However, the CC judges explained that they back up their argument of the fact that the text of the Declaration of Independence, which states that Moldova's language is Romanian, take precedence over the text of the Constitution, where it says that Moldovans speak Moldovan (Realitatea.md, 2014).

On the grounds that Moldova suffered frequent invasions by other nations, a number of different ethnicities remained in the country, thus creating quite a diverse native population. Some of these ethnicities are Russians, Gagauz, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Romanians, etc. Each group speaks a distinct language and practices customs and traditions characteristically to their own ethnic group. All these ethnicities along with the natives, make up the population of Moldova. According the National Bureau of Statistics, the population of Moldova on January 1, 2016 made up about 3.5 million people, (Biroul National de Statistica, 2016). Due to massive migration, the number of the population continues to drop by a few hundred thousand every year.

Republic of Moldova joined the Council of Europe in 1995 and since then, Moldova has been under the observations of the EU on how the country adjusts to a new democratic system. It ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government (hereinafter "the Charter") in 1997, and the instrument came into force on 1 February 1998. The situation of local and regional democracy in Moldova has been the object of several information and monitoring reports prepared by the Congress of Europe, both when the country was applying for membership of the Organization and after it became a

member state, according to the 2004 report by Pascal MANGIN in France, as the Chamber of Local Authorities Political Group: EPP/CD.

After Moldova was liberated from the oppressor's yoke of the Soviets, it became free to choose its destiny and create its own future. When one ponders on the historical and political achievement that Moldova experienced, one hopes to find a successful, democratic country considering its acceptance of the democratic political system. This hasn't been the case for Moldova. Poverty, corruption, alcoholism, human trafficking and mass migration stagnated the country from becoming a political and economic success.

Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe according to BBC (2016). Transparency International (2015) shows that Moldova ranks in the top five most corrupt countries in Europe, this "indicating a widespread problem with perceptions of public sector corruption define from 2010." The report also suggests that the decline is reflective of a difficult political year detailing the fall of three governments and the lack of accountability in implementation of anti-corruption reforms in the private sector and the judicial sector. As a result, the EU-Moldova Association Agreement struggles to increase citizens' faith in its democracy government's capacity to fight and face corruption, concludes the study (Transparency International, 2016).

The issues of corruption, poverty, lack of democratic values and free institutions suggest the fact that Moldova is still going through a political, social and democratization stagnation process which has been going on since its independence. For that matter, citizens lost faith in their democratic government to the point that they yearn for the former Soviet Union's stability and desire to go back to what they once had. To them, democracy only brings poverty, migration, corruption and lack of jobs.

Media Used for Analysis

Mesager

The first televised program in Moldova broadcast on April 30, 1958, at 19:00. It included a welcoming speech by the Soviet party organs from Moldova. In the first period the television emitted several times a week. In 1963, it began to release programs on a daily basis and in 1974 it started broadcasting in color. In the early 80s, in Moldova, over one million people had TV sets and in 1991, the national television for the first time began to broadcast programs received from Romania. In 1992, Moldovan TV became a member of the European Broadcasting Union. At the moment Moldova 1 is owned by the national public audio-visual, *Teleradio* Moldova while the company “Teleradio-Moldova” represents the public service broadcast in Moldova. The public TV station has a national coverage being 100 percent land provider. The main informative program of the day released by the public TV station in Moldova is *Mesager* broadcast in two languages, Romanian at 21:00 and Russian at 19:00. *Mesager* focuses on a wide variety of news, including political, economic, cultural, social, sports, foreign and diverse themes and lasts for 30 minutes.

After the 90s the TV station went through a complicated and controversial period. From transparency, openness to historical truth, objective, impartial and unbiased public it turned into a medium reflecting political servitude, ideological subordination and dictate editorial. However, the editorial independence was disputable during 2005-2009, while the station was controlled by the Communist Party that was elected with the majority of the population in 2001. In the second half of the first decade of the 21st century, there was an increasing movement of journalists, creative workers from

television to transform them into genuine public service broadcasting. Analyzing the public TV station's main important news report of the day will allow one to identify the agenda *Mesager* supported when delivering the news to the Moldovan people.

Glasul Națiunii

The first publication in the Romanian language served as the culmination of the national revival that broke out in the souls of Moldovans in the late eighties of the last century, called *Glasul Națiunii* (The Voice). Printed initially as a clandestine newspaper, it became the tribune of free men and the mirror of the historical events of that time. The newspaper was printed by the Union of the Moldovan Writers in Moldova.

Glasul Națiunii appeared on February 15, 1989 at a printing house in Latvia's capital, Riga. Its initial circulation was of 60,000 and it came to Chisinau hidden in a tanker trailer. Due to hundreds of thousands of letters from readers, the authorities allowed Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to publish the newspaper in Moldova. As a result, the third edition of the newspaper was printed in Orhei, a small town in the center of Moldova according to a popular Moldovan TV station, (Publika. Md, 2012).

The first edition published about deportations and the crimes of the totalitarian communist regime. The authors of the first materials expressed that it was unbelievable that they could express themselves freely. The first several editions were not published periodically, but in 1990 the newspaper started to be printed four times a week (Publika. Md, 2012).

Glasul Națiunii was the first newspaper to bring national revival and a message of liberation to Moldova. It spread its impact by offering long, detailed articles on democracy to the Moldovan society and united the people into the message of

independence. Even after Moldova gained its freedom from the Soviet Union, the newspaper kept using the liberation message and insisted on keeping it as a priority. Glasul Națiunii published in the print version for the last time in 2009 and moved its activity online.

The value and authenticity of Glasul Națiunii stands in the fact that the newspaper became the only publication printed in the Romanian language during a time when the rest of the publications were printed in Russian and supported the Communist party. Ultimately, Glasul Națiunii represented a radical political ideology compared to what Moldovans were used to reading. After the years of independence, Glasul Națiunii kept writing on democracy and maintained its liberation message.

Moldova Suverană

The independent national newspaper Moldova Suverană New Series LLC, (Sovereign Moldova) was founded on December 31, 2005. Until that time, the newspaper was published as Sovereign Moldova, whose founder was the Government, which has withdrawn from this status on the strength of the Council of Europe recommendations. Therefore, the national independent daily "Sovereign Moldova - New Series" LLC was founded in accordance with Art. 7 paragraph (2) of the Media Law in Moldova, which states: "If the founder (co-founders) takes the decision to shut down its newspaper or news agency and does not establish a new newspaper or news agency with the same name and hesitates to reregister it within 30 days from the date of closure, the editorial team, the editor, head of the agency have the right to establish a new publication or media agency with the same name."

Moldova Suverană, previously called Plugarul Roșu (Red Plowman), then Moldova Socialistă (Socialist Moldova) is now a Romanian language newspaper. It was renamed Moldova Suverană in 1991 after the independence, this time trying to reflect the actual situation of the country. In 1994 the circulation reached 100,000 copies per day. In 1994 the newspaper started to be printed four times per week. From 1991-1993, Moldova Suverană was printed five times a week. Until 2005, Moldova Suverană had the status of a governmental newspaper and its tasks were to guarantee the multilateral coverage of the state legislative activity of the Parliament, President and Government of the Republic of Moldova. Considering the newspaper's editorial policy of guaranteeing permanent coverage of the state legislative activity, the author found it imperative to select this newspaper for this analysis. Analyzing the government's agenda on presenting democracy to the Moldovan citizens will contribute to the study and provide a different perspective to this analysis. The Moldovan government changes every four years, therefore, it would be insightful to observe the frames used by each government when presenting democracy to the Moldovan society. The researcher will be able to investigate the various phases and probably the contradictory perspectives on democracy that politicians transmitted to the society using their governmental newspaper. After Moldova Suverană became an independent publication in 2005 and stopped being the spokesperson of the government, one can suggest that frames on democracy probably took a different shape. Therefore, to observe these frames and the form they took during the years, will bring understanding to the investigated issue in this dissertation.

Timpul de Dimineață

Timpul de Dimineață (The Morning Time) is the only national daily newspaper in Moldova at the moment. The newspaper started its activity in September 2001 as a weekly publication. According to the newspaper's web site it is the most popular newspaper in Moldova and it constitutes the most important source of information about the socio-political situation (Timpul.md, 2014). Since January 2005, the newspaper was converted into a national daily independent with five issues a week becoming the only Moldovan newspaper with such a qualification. The newspaper is distributed throughout the country, including Transnistria, and is not controlled by any political structure or economic group, (Timpul.md, 2014).

The newspaper reflects an influential status in the Moldovan press and is considered to be an uncomfortable medium for the local government. Considering the newspaper's status, popularity, influence and national distribution, it will serve as a great resource for the present study. The researcher believes the perspective that Timpul took regarding the education of democracy in Moldova was probably obvious. That is due to the newspaper's policy and western orientation. The publication is openly supporting a closer relationship to Romania and not Russia. Also, because the newspaper is declared as independent, the researcher is interested to observe its different frames on how it presented democracy to Moldovans.

Analyzing the public TV evening news program and these three different Moldovan newspapers will allow the researcher to get a very clear image of how democracy was presented to the society after it gained its independence from the Soviet Union. These three newspapers have probably presented democracy from totally different perspectives considering their distinct editorial characteristics. Therefore, this will allow

the researcher to get a full picture of the way democracy was presented to the Moldovan society.

Values Democracy Promised to Offer

Although Moldova embraced a democratic government on paper in 1991, the echoes of the authoritarianism or totalitarianism ideology inherited from the Soviet Union were still engrained in the public's psyche. Suddenly, the new political system became a popular idea of a democratic government promising to offer a free press, human liberties and social rights. Therefore, the former societies that stepped into this dramatic transformation of democracy, had to first understand the impact of the past they hoped had ended. The past for Central and Eastern Europe countries "was what people were trying to escape from," according to Richard Rose (2009, p. 9). The system that was in place before the transformation left its prints on state institutions so hard that when new institutions were created they supplanted the past. The Soviet Union made sure of this by imposing Communist regimes in all the countries it controlled. "Marxist-Leninist ideology emphasized that Central and East Europeans were living in a different world that people in the Western Europe" (Rose, 2009, p. 10).

Living under the Communist bloc of states meant that freedom of speech was prohibited, and people could not choose what party should govern. Media functioned only under strict censorship and citizens were isolated without the ability to connect with those outside the Soviet Union. Schools gave priority to Russian language and limited teaching the national language or the history of a pre-Soviet country, according to Ross. Everything was so well thought out, that people had literally no way out of this controlling environment. Marxism-Leninism adopted and consistently destroyed many of

the cultural characteristics detrimental to a democratic society that had been established over centuries of Eastern European history; to these it added new antagonistic elements inimical to democratization and democracy itself (Bideleux & Jeffries, 1998).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 meant the “beginning of the end of the Cold War division of Europe,” writes Ross (2009, p. 14). The start of the transformation began for each country individually which differed with national circumstances. Republic of Moldova’s transformation started through the media. It reached its culmination in 1989 when the first publication in the Romanian language, *Glasul Națiunii (The Nations’ Voice)* was published and ignited the hearts of Moldovans by fiercely challenging the entire population to a national revival (Publika. Md, 2012). However, even if the government changed suddenly, its policies and habits had not.

Peter Gross (2002), an Eastern European Studies research scholar, explained in his book, *Entangled Evolutions: Media and Democratization in Eastern Europe*, that “it could take generations for the political, social, economic and professional cultures of Eastern Europe to be transformed,” after the deep rooted era of the Communist tradition completely harmful to democracy in its own right (p. 3). Moreover, Gross suggests that in order for Eastern European nations to become stable democracies, they must be subjected to desired transformation, “by adopting certain beliefs, attitudes, habits, behaviors, and values universally essential to the birth and substance of democracy” (p. 3). Patience is another necessary condition for countries that transition from communism to democracy. Democracy would become a “slow process, measured in generations,” according to Robert Dahl (1971, p. 47). Rose (2009, p. 36) emphasizes this statement using England as an example which took three centuries to finally evolve into a democracy.

Although the Berlin Wall fell overnight and in less than a year free elections were held across Central and Eastern Europe, constructing new democratic institutions of “polity, economy and society was certain to take longer,” insists Rose (2009; p. 37). Political regimes are appointed institutions that are hard to change easily or often. Max Weber (1948; p. 128) described politics, “as strong and slow boring of hard boards.” For more than half a century, former Soviet countries and their citizens lived as hostages in their own countries and the consistency of the Soviet ideology and the Communist party was deeply infiltrated into their minds. Change of mind and identity could not happen as rapidly as the government experienced. This kind of change required patience and time. People who patiently waited for the Communist regime to finally end had that hope realized. Yet, they needed to accept the fact that regime change did not solve the governance issues. When the people got rid of the Communist regime they suddenly inherited problems of the past they needed to deal with. Transformation brought with itself economic inflation and unprecedented unemployment which forced everyone into an impatient phase questioning how long their suffering would continue.

A daily need that people have is food. Rose (2009, p. 53) suggested that for this reason, societies demand institutions that can and are able to supply the country with enough food to meet the basic needs. People required of their societies that they reform their economy, agriculture and offer them jobs so they can provide for their families. They came out of a collectivization system and suddenly they were given lands that needed meticulous labor invested in them. A democratic system embraced by Moldovans in 1991 meant a collapse of the former collectivized agriculture. On the other hand, when the collectivized agriculture collapsed, the farmers reached a new unknown phase that

forced them to work the land with their own hands after most of the tractors and tools they used on working the land were stolen the moment freedom hit their country.

Freedom became another basic political right that democracy had to offer. For people who lived in a Communist regime, freedom probably became the most important value they longed for because it was absent from their lives. Likewise, Moldovans had the value of freedom taken away from them. Security services spied on everything people believed, thought or supported. Sometimes ordinary people risked losing their jobs, endured harassment and deportation to the cold Siberia simply because they disagreed with the party or they attended church on a Sunday morning. The ideological campaign educated by Communism sought to force a collective way of thinking, speaking and believing. Every single state institution faithfully obeyed the state and gave its reverence to Lenin's (1917) claim from *State and Revolution*, "Where state exists, there can be no freedom." The party controlled what people read, spoke in public or where they wished to travel. These forced teachings manipulated the people to the point that neighbors would easily betray family and friends for the sake of a position within the regime – all because they lived in permanent fear of the party. As soon as Moldova became a part of the Soviet Union, the local population had to endure terror, which was manifested by persecution, deportation, starvation, and denationalization, explains Mariana Taranu (2010), a Moldovan historian, "through propaganda and terror, churches were destroyed and clergymen were persecuted or deported. Fear and terror destroyed personality, so people became easily manipulated and docile." Democracy promised to offer everything people lacked under the Soviets: individual freedom, religious acceptance, free press and ultimately a government that represented the people and respected human rights.

Role of Media in the Fall of the Soviet Union

Media bore a significant role as an institution because it became one of the quickest and most overt witness to the fall of Communism, explains Gross (2002, p. 25). In each former Soviet country, media outlets quickly doubled, tripled or quadrupled in number, according to Oleg Manaev and Yuri Pryluk (1993). As soon as the media monopoly of the Communist Party vanished, a battle for ownership and control over the new media outlets began. Governments, states, political parties, politicians, ethnic and civic organizations, organized religions, businesses, and other individuals or organizations wanted to “influence politics and audiences according to their own political beliefs,” (Horvat, 1991). Each of the former Communist countries initiated a new identity search and mass media became the proper instrument to influence the masses. Gross (2002) insists that “mass studies can reveal the potential of mass communication to affect change, the constraints or opportunities of the sociopolitical reality, and the nature of the social culture.” Gross also explains that in the Eastern European case, media studies reflect a process of transformation and adjustment at the political, social, economic, cultural, and individual level. These studies that Gross refers to provide data and intelligence concerning the possibilities and realities of the media’s roles in advancing social, political, and economic goals, in helping to form and sustain groups and associations that represent varied interests, and in helping to educate individuals struggling to understand their new circumstance and to participate in the future of their societies (p. 26).

In the years after 1989, various scholars offered models which explained the evolution of the new media in the transition and transformation post-Communist era of

Eastern Europe. Of these models, three provide a sense of diversity of views and approaches. The transitional model adapts “several antagonistic prescriptive press concepts, that is, the developmental, authoritarian, communist, libertarian, revolutionary, and social responsibility normative concepts” allowing them to work concurrently, indicates Ognianova (1997). Slavic hal (1993) explains that Eastern European media are developing along Italian lines. According to Splichal’s understanding the media are strongly partisan, their elites are strongly integrated with the political elites, and their professional ethics are neither consolidated nor shared.

By contrast, Marxists Colin Sparks and Anna Reading suggest an alternative model, of a more general Western European Model. They propose that the media in post-1989 Eastern Europe quickly evolved into a “fiercely competitive” system that only benefited the political elite and ignored the civil society, based on Sparks and Reading (1998). According to Karol Jakubowicz’s (1995) three stage model of media development, politics, economics, and legal issues have the ability to predict the course and eventual outcome of the media’s evolution.

Michael Gurevich and Jay Blumler (1990) suggest a fourth media model, one that embraces the major concerns of automatization, pluralism, and diversity, as well as the nature and meaning of journalistic professionalism. They propose eight prescriptions for the media in a democratic society. Taking Gurevitch-Blumler prescriptions, Habermas (1992) translates them into media that:

...ought to understand themselves as the mandatory of an enlightened public whose willing ness to learn and capacity for criticism they at once presuppose, demand, and reinforce... to preserve their independence from political and social pressure... to be

receptive to the public's concerns and proposals, take up these issues and contributions impartially, augment criticisms, and confront the political process with articulate demands for legitimation.

Such transparent and equidistant media needed the post-Communist countries after 1989 (p. 378). Democracies need accurate, fact-based journalism. Otherwise, without it the decision-making process is "itself falsified," in Revel's (1991) opinion. Gross (2002) explains the importance of allowing the media rely on accurate, fact-based journalism. He writes, "Information is the fuel of public discourse, and a plurality of opinion, expressed in commentaries and editorials, gives rise to heated, health, and productive debates on the issues concerning a free society and free, self-governing individuals." (p. 4.) Alexis de Tocqueville (1956) put it in other words when he explained that a free media offers the citizens of a democracy the opportunity "to converse every day without seeing each other, and to take steps in common without having met."

Therefore, understanding the role that mass media inherited as a democracy facilitator in post-Communist countries after 1989 becomes crucial. Moldova, as one of these countries, deserves this honor. Moreover, researchers that study the role of media in Moldova's democratic process should have an engagement towards all Moldovan citizens to bring light to this question of democracy that has been ignored for almost a quarter of a century. Once again, the researcher pursues this study and attempts to contribute to the explanation of Moldova's democratic stagnation, and also identify the role that government and independent media took in presenting democracy to its people.

Previous Research on Moldova

For a long time, Republic of Moldova was the country studied the least in Europe according to Stephen White (2000). Previous studies indicate that until the end of the Soviet Union, most scholars raised the theme of ethnicity of the Moldovans and most times it correlated to the issue of language (Bruchis, 1984; Klees, 1955). Van Meurs' (1994) historiographical study of the Bessarabian story gives a great overview regarding the portrayal of the history of the Moldovan region from the perspective of the Soviet Union and Romania. "Moldovan history, nevertheless, remains a minefield for every scholar who approaches it, even with the understanding that Romania, on the one side, and Russia and the Soviet Union, on the other, can both be described as liberators and perpetrators," according to Johansson (2011).

Since Moldova has declared its independence the body of literature has grown considerably. This indicates an increased interest in the country and much of the region. Much of the literature from the early years of independence focused on the tangled character of the Moldovan nation in order to find an explanation for the burgeoning identity conflicts on the Moldovan territory (Chinn and Roper, 1992; Crowther, 1991; Fane, 1993; King, 1994; Kolstø, 1993) and to explain why a union with Romania, against the expectations in 1990, did not yet take place (Neukirch, 1996). Starting with the 1990s the literature started to focus more on the national issues and minority relations, including the attempts to find a solution to the Transnistrian conflict (Hanne, 1998; Kolstø, 1998), the status of the Gagauzian minority in south region of Moldova (Demirdirek, 1998; Thompson, 1998) and the political situation of the country (Neukirch, 1998). In 2000, Charles King wrote a book about Moldovans where he combined both the post-

independence literature dealing with the region of contemporary Moldova, and also captured the main issues of a national orientation during the first ten years of independence. The author highlighted the political uses of culture explaining the ways in which language, history, and national identity can be manipulated by political elites and their agendas.

In contemporary Moldova the idea of the nation is described “by more than a single phenomenon,” stated Johansson in a study conducted in 2011, where he investigated the relationship between nation and democracy in the Republic of Moldova and explored the possible paths to democratization for Moldova as a divided nation.

Moldova - A Hybrid Regime

According to some political studies Moldova meets the qualifications of a partially-free regime, also called a “hybrid regime” democracy (Morlino, 2008). “Hybrid” regimes represent “ambiguous systems that combine rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially illiberal or even authoritarian traits,” according to Ottaway (2003). As a result, these kind of hybrid democracies have to find and hold the middle ground between outright authoritarianism and fully-fledged democracy, states Carothers (2002, p. 9). Ultimately their democratic structures remain un-developed. Menocala, Fritz & Rakner (2008) characterized hybrid regime democracies as representing populist politics “unaccountable ‘delegate’/ strong-man leadership, and opaque decision-making processes” where the president to some degree is above the law. In hybrid democracies institutions that are decisive to follow and make democracy work suffer from a lack of credibility and as a result citizens do not trust these

institutions. Because people do not trust the state institutions, they tend to have a reduced political implication outside of elections. The reason that people do not trust the political institutions is because formal institutions are perceived as biased or dishonest, and therefore they are not worth respecting (Uslander, 2007). Hybrid regimes are moved by personalized interests. The public good does not concern state officials who only care about furthering their own agenda. When outside actors tend to get involved in the decision-making of a hybrid democracy it usually creates more instability. Menocala, Fritz & Rakner (2008) explains this phenomenon arguing that “the state may be overwhelmed by the new demands brought about by democratic pressures, and unable to respond adequately because it lacks the necessary institutional and administrative capacity, and even the legitimacy and credibility, to do so.” Finally, hybrid democracies can easily embrace an authoritarian behavior when political leaders justify their decision on the grounds that strict measures are needed to strengthen state capacity.

Other political studies suggest that “hybrid regimes” reflect a loose definition for post-Soviet societies that transition to democracy Gel’Man (2003). There is a need to go beyond the ‘transition’ (Rustow, 1970) and ‘consolidation’ (Merkel, 1998) studies and find new approaches which will help understand the new trajectories of post-Soviet societies in their transition to democracy. Vladimir Gel’Man (2003) writes the following:

...The reality in the post-Soviet area is far different; democracy will not come about in that way. Realism in the study of post-Soviet politics demands a more value-free approach to analyzing the causes and consequences of the dynamics of actors’ behavior and institutional change, in both an international and intra-national (that is, cross-regional) comparative perspective...

Therefore, for one to understand the phase of democracy in post-Soviet societies, one needs to consider the option that formal institutions can become dominant and contribute to advancing the process of democratization. Although recent studies show that Moldova met the description of a “hybrid” democracy, it almost overcame this identity in 2009 when European Union (EU) launched the Eastern Partnership where Moldova became one of the EU’s six eastern neighbors to partner with the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The partnership was expected to help “overcome the drawbacks of the ENP,” writes Varvara Barysevich (2014) in her work. According to the Commissioner for Enlargement and the ENP Štefan Füle, this initiative needed to become a better apparatus to ‘support democratic and market-oriented reforms in partner countries, consolidate their statehood and bring them closer to the EU’ (Füle, 2010).

Moldova took an even more convincing step towards an advanced phase to an authentic democracy on June 27, 2014 when the former Prime-Minister, Iurie Leanca signed the Association Agreement between Moldova and the European Union. The agreement focused on democracy and the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, the proper functioning of the market economy and sustainable development (Calugareanu, 2014). The happy ending story took three steps back the following year when one billion dollars were stolen from three banks in Moldova and several imposing politicians were involved. The corrupt system brought disappointment to the Moldovan citizens in state institutions and in everything democracy represents.

When one tries to understand the way democracy progressed in Moldova, one can probably identify a few distinct phases by observing Moldova’s political changes. The

first phase began with the birth of democracy, which took place at the end of the 1980's, and the beginning of the 1990's when Moldova signed the declaration of independence and elected its first democratic government. The first phase served as a start to Moldova's democracy. The first constitution and declaration of independence were adopted.

Democratic policies started to make their way slowly into Moldovan politics. Various reforms were implemented. Mass media began to develop as an independent institution in Moldova.

The second phase started ten years later when in 2001 the Communism Party, led by Vladimir Voronin, regained its authority in Moldova and became the party accumulating the majority of seats in the Parliament. Moldova is known to be the only former Soviet country that went back to the communist system since the fall of the Soviet Union. This Communist Party of Communists (PCRM) won the elections with 50.07 % with 71 mandates in the parliament. The second phase reminded some about the Soviet Union's control and discrimination. During the two mandates of the communists no evangelical churches were allowed to be officially registered. Some media channels were forced into closure. Businesses were taken by force by the Communist leaders and their supporters. This phase was over after the second consecutive mandate of the Communist party came to an end.

The end of the Communist era served as a start to the third phase of Moldova's democracy. During the 2009 elections, the Communist Party went into opposition while the First Alliance of European Integration obtained the majority of seats in the Parliament. During those years, Moldova began to implement more visible democratic values considering the accomplishment it reached when it signed the Pact of Association

with the EU in June 2014. The signing of the Pact stirred up the spirits of the Moldovan citizens who hoped their country would eventually get rid of corruption and illegalities and offer political and social stability.

When one ponders on the fundamental principles of democracy, one needs to identify them and understand their role. Marc Bühlmann and his colleagues (2008) argue that democracy relies on three fundamental principles: equality, freedom and control. These three principles are mutually necessary and, at the same time, there can appear tensions and interdependencies among them (Lauth, 2004, p. 96). Therefore, a modern democracy can be verified by observing how equality, freedom and control are manifested in a society.

According to Dahl (1976), political equality is one of the most important assets in the development of a democratic government. Equality in a modern democracy assumes the fact that the government provides equal treatment to all citizens. Citizens should be assured equal rights to participate in elections. Equality should also meet the requirements of morality, prudence, and acceptability.

Freedom is significant principle in a modern democracy. Berlin (2006) explains freedom as to the absence of heteronomy. Freedom rights involve rights that protect an individual against the state's, or the government's, invasions. Merkel et al. (2003) adds to the list of freedoms, freedom of opinion, freedom of association, freedom of information, etc. For Beetham (2004, p. 62) there is no democracy without freedom. Democracy without freedom is a "contradiction in terms," writes Beetham (2004). Berlin (2006) differentiates "positive" and "negative" freedom. Self-determination refers to positive freedom, when people have the right to govern themselves, be able to exercise "free

speech” and the “right to privacy.” Marc Bühlmann et al. (2008) generalize and argue that “positive rights establish those participation rights necessary for democratic governance, negative rights provide the foundations on which participation can be exercised in a meaningful way.”

The last fundamental principle is control, which becomes essential for democracy and the institutional core of a democracy. Marc Bühlmann et al. (2008) write that in order for the government to work on the behalf of the citizens and secure them with freedom and equality, the latter have to control their representatives. “This also implies that political institutions, first and foremost participants and governments, have such control over policies as is enabled by the people’s will and jurisdiction,” explains Bühlmann and colleagues (2008).

Moreover, the European Union after understanding its strategic location willingly took the significant role of promoting democracy in the Eastern European neighborhood after the fall of the communism era. EU created four different approaches to achieve the purpose of democratization of the post-socialist Europe. Irene Hahn (2011) in his study “Democratizing Power Europe?” lists and explains these four approaches: 1. *Integration*, stands for enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe of former Soviet countries, 2. *Stabilisation* involves a stability pact for South Eastern Europe, 3. *Association*, encourages European neighborhood countries to endorse a policy towards Eastern Europe and 4. *Building a partnership*, specifically with Russia, as the largest former-soviet region in Europe. To achieve credible results, EU committed to promote democracy by implementing a ‘learning by doing’ process (Rissel, Börzel 2009a). Mainly, this meant the EU would offer specific help to societal groups, civil society, non-governmental

structures or state level organizations explains (Carothers, 2009). Moreover, the European Council of Ministers 2006: 4 gives a more detailed picture of the different types of assistance that EU engaged to offer in order to promote democracy in Eastern European neighborhood countries:

...It may be long term and highly structured as in an accession partnership agreement (e.g. combining a road map, financial and technical assistance, benchmarks, monitoring) or very short term and highly specific (e.g. election observation). It may involve very indirect action to assist in creating a conducive environment for democracy to flourish (e.g. through peace building initiatives, educational reform, action to combat drug trafficking) or direct technical support for a specific political process (e.g. security sector reform). Any action to facilitate, advocate, inform, educate, or bring pressure to secure particular policy changes (e.g. quotas for women in Parliament, abolition of torture) may be considered a form of democracy promotion...

Republic of Moldova, as one of the Eastern European countries - and being in EU's focus - received tremendous support in implementing a democratic government throughout the years. The current study will almost become an instrument that will test and analyze EU's success or failure in achieving its democracy promotion agenda. Either way, this study will provide a larger and more detailed picture of Moldova's media contribution in explaining democracy to the Moldovan people, which could potentially become an extraordinary resource for the EU's feedback results on promoting democracy.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation study proposes that Moldovan media embraced the role of setting an agenda when presenting democracy to their publics. Moreover, the researcher suggests that specific media frames were endorsed by each media outlet included in this analysis, in order to present democracy to the Moldovan people and create a specific image of what democracy represented. Agenda-setting media theory suggests the premise that mass media create public awareness and concern of salient issues. Therefore, agenda setting theory is best suited as a theoretical framework in this study.

McCombs & Shaw (1972) explain that agenda-setting theory seems quite appropriate to help one understand the pervasive role of the media (for example on political communication systems). One of the agenda setting assumptions is that media concentrates on a few issues and subjects, and leads the public into perceiving that those issues are more important than other issues.

“The power of the news media to set a nation’s agenda, to focus public attention on key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence,” suggests McCombs (2003).

Agenda setting function of the mass media was first put forth by Maxwell McComb and Donald Shaw in 1972 in *Public Opinion Quarterly*. They originally suggested that the media sets the public agenda, in the sense that they may not exactly tell you what to think, but they may tell you what to think about. In their first article where they brought this theory to light their abstract states the following:

...in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but

also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign...

This theory is intended to apply to the news media, although in certain cases it has been applied to other areas of the media and messages which they transmit to audiences. The theory suggests that media is capable through repeated news coverage to raise the importance of an issue in the public’s mind. However, if the media do indeed have an agenda and support it, then there might be the possibility that media are more interested to report about some issues while ignoring other issues.

An impressive large number of studies suggest that mass media play “the role of civic teacher” in democratic societies (McCombs, 2004, p. 51) by creating citizens’ agenda list of issues and to a certain degree defining their public opinion. To better visualize how agenda setting works, it’s probably easier to look at the theory split in two phases. At the first phase, agenda-setting theory explains how people understand the most important issues in their country based on the projection of those issues in media reports. The second phase suggests that by emphasizing certain characteristics while discussing specific issues, mass media intends to draw the public’s attention to those specific attributes when they think or discuss those issues (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004, p. 259).

McCombs (2004) gives a more thorough perspective on the concept of agenda-setting role of mass media in a latter study. He writes:

...The agenda of a news organization is found in its pattern of coverage on public issues over some period of time, a week, a month, an entire year. Over this period of time, whatever it might be, a few issues are emphasized, some receive light coverage, and many are seldom or never mentioned...

Applying agenda setting theory to this study would provide significant findings on the predominant frames media outlets chose to use when they presented democracy to the Moldovan people. Moreover, the fact that this study looks at the dominant frames print and televised media focused on over the 24-year period would add towards the body of knowledge on how the usage of agenda setting theory explains the popular media frames on democracy in a post-Soviet Republic. Lindita Camaj (2014) conducted a study on Kosovo using agenda setting theory and its priming attribute and investigated the role of mass media in the democratization process in this post-conflict transitional society in Southeastern Europe. Specifically, Camaj (2014) aimed to understand media effects on citizens' political trust. The study showed that "in societies in undergoing transitions a plural media system can fulfill one of its most basic democratic functions: informing people about institutional performance," concludes Camaj (2014). Moreover, the results suggest that mass media are beneficial to the democratic process, "as they contribute to citizens' formation of attitudes to political institutions that are not necessarily exclusively negative," adds Camaj (2014). The concept of media framing is related to agenda-setting theory and expands the way in which information is presented to its audiences. Goffman (1974) was the first to concentrate on framing as a form of communication and defined "framing" as a "schemata of interpretation" that enables individuals to "locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences or life experiences (Goffman, 1974). Robert Entman

modernized this definition by specifying that “to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a ‘perceived reality’ and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 51). By incorporating media framing with agenda setting, priming and bias, Entman argues that readers can better comprehend how and why framing occurs in the media. “Agenda setting serves as the first function of framing as it defines the problems worthy of government attention.” Bias, as defined by Entman, is “consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side of conflicts over the use of government power” (Entman, 1993, p. 166).

Consumer culture has penetrated the business of media through the use of framing, agenda setting, priming and bias, which facilitates its commerce. According to Budd, Craig and Steinmen (1999)

“Media meet recommended or endorsed bias at the most fundamental levels: consistent framing in favor of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, individualism, consumerism and White privilege, among other deeply entrenched values that help allocate power in American society” (Budd, Craig & Steinmen, 1999). Considering the premises of agenda setting theory in this study will allow one to identify the consistent frames promoted by the Moldovan media and observe the favored perspectives media relied on when reporting about democracy.

Political Function of the Media

Media have certain functions to meet in a democracy. Katrin Voltmer (2013) lists three primordial functions in regards to what is expected of media to do in a democratic country:

- media should act as a “*watchdog*” and hold the government officials to account by reporting on their misuse of power or their failures policy wise. The watchdog function of the media is a direct indication of press freedom. Voltmer (2013) emphasizes that “press freedom is understood as freedom from and against the state.”

- media should keep citizens *informed* and provide them with the necessary knowledge for them to be able to participate in the democratic process meaningfully and responsibly. Information should be made available and reliable to all citizens, not only to a small circle of elites. Media are responsible to assure the citizens with the information they need in order for them to be prepared to exercise their active role as responsible citizens.

- media should serve as *forum* for different voices, by giving an equal chance to both official and alternative representatives to reach their publics and mobilize them to support their causes. This function focuses on giving political actors the proper environment to communicate with their voters and reach them through the media.

Each of these media functions are equally important in a democracy. If at least one of them is not responsibly met by the media, then democracy suffers for it.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this study was to answer the broad question how government and independent media presented democracy to the Moldovan nation from

1991 to 2014. To answer this question, three distinct newspapers' editorials and front page articles and the scripts of the evening news program, *Mesager*, aired by the national TV station was analyzed.

RQ1: How did Glasul Națiunii frame democracy to its audience from 1989-2009?

By analyzing the heroic newspaper that triggered political liberation and awoke the national consciousness of Moldavians, one will observe Glasul Națiunii's frames on democracy and the dominant portrayals the newspaper endorsed when it came to reporting on democracy.

RQ2: How did Mesager frame democracy to its audience from 1991-2014?

By analyzing the most popular news program of the day, one will establish the agenda that the national TV station promoted in order to inform the audience on democracy. When Moldova declared itself independent, there were few media outlets available for the people to receive information from. The whole country gathered in front of TV screens during the evening news program, *Mesager*, wanting to understand the vector their country would choose. For years, *Mesager* was the only daily televised news program that Moldovans could watch. People trusted the program and faithfully received their information from it. To analyze the program for 24 years and identify the dominant frames on democracy will become a tremendous resource to this project.

RQ3: How did Moldova Suverană frame democracy to its audience from 1991-2014?

By defining the character of a governmental newspaper, one will establish the government's agenda on democracy and which popular frames it endorsed. *Moldova Suverană* symbolized the mouth of the political government. Observing the agenda that

each political government promoted through their newspaper in regards to democracy, one will have the skills to draw respective conclusions and understand what kind of democratic messages the government endorsed and presented to the people.

RQ4: How did Timpul de Dimineață frame democracy to its audience from 2001-2010?

Timpul de Dimineață entered the Moldovan media market ten years after the country's independence and choice of democracy. By investigating the picture this publication painted on democracy and the message it sent to the readers, one should come to a more nuanced understanding of the frames the editor preferred to create when writing on democratic issues. *Timpul de Dimineață* openly promoted a pro-Romanian, and thus a pro-EU, vector. This leads one into speculating on the premise that the newspaper promoted a western message on democracy. Was this the case or not, is the question that the current research will answer.

RQ5: Were the frames on democracy presented in the government and public owned media outlets different from the frames presented in independent media publications?

Identifying the most dominant frames that government/public and independent media promoted individually will become a significant finding of this dissertation. This will potentially help media professionals review their role in setting the agenda and raising awareness on issues selected by them. Finally, answering this research question will provide a clear picture on the difference between media frames and the popular themes these media outlets insisted on from 1991 until 2014. To answer this research question, the researcher created a new variable and labeled it as Recoded Media Name,

by recoding into different variables the ‘name of media’ variable. Number 1 was attributed to government and public media outlets (Mesager and Moldova Suverană), while number 2 was attributed to independent media outlets (Glasul Națiunii and Timpul de Dimineață).

RQ 6: How was the message on democracy framed from one government to another from 1991-2014? Did it evolve over time?

Moldova bears the reputation of being the only former Soviet Republic that elected the communist government shortly after getting rid of it in 1991. After 10 years of independence and democracy, the Moldovan people elected the communist party with the majority of votes. To the surprise of the European Union and even Russia, this fact led to a deadlock of the country’s orientation towards the EU and pushed Moldova towards the Eastern vector for two consecutive governments. Due to these created circumstances, one could speculate that under the communists, Moldovan media began presenting democracy differently. Therefore, by answering this research question, one would understand the agenda each government endorsed when it came to framing democracy to the Moldovan nation. The researcher added a new variable labeled ‘Years Separated by Phases,’ where the coders identified the year of each article according to the democratic phase it represented. Therefore, all media materials from 1989 until 2000 fall under Phase 1, those from 2001-2009 fall under Phase 2, and newspaper articles or news stories starting in 2010 until 2014 fall under Phase 3.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To obtain meaningful data and answer the research questions proposed in this dissertation, the researcher utilized quantitative methodology. The method applied to the current study was content analysis.

The researcher created a coding sheet specifically designed for this study after consulting in detail with the literature review and main concepts connected to the study. As a guideline, the author consulted Mohamad Hamas Elmasry's (2012) study in which he analyzed independent, government, and opposition newspapers in pre-Revolution Egypt using content analysis method.

Research Sample

The universe of the study consisted of all print publications and televised news channels in Moldova between the years of 1991 and 2014. Out of the entire universe, the researcher purposefully selected three print publications and one televised news program. The argument for the researcher's choice is explained in the introduction section of this dissertation study. The following paragraphs focus on the sample selection process for each media outlet analyzed in the study.

Mesager was the only televised evening news program in the beginning of the 1990's in Moldova. Its impact and authenticity during that time resulted in the fact that the public TV station, "Teleradio-Moldova," had national coverage and as a result *Mesager* became the only informative program of the day for the entire country. To gather the *Mesager* data sample, the researcher spent the month of June of 2015 and the month of July of 2016 in the national TV station's archive. After an official approval was

given to the researcher by Mircea Surdu, the former director of the national TV station, the researcher was able to begin data collection. It is important to mention that this study analyzes the scripts of *Mesager* evening news program. Unfortunately, the video copies of the program were not preserved in the archive and therefore, the researcher settled with analyzing the scripts, which are a reflection of the video files. It is also important to mention that due to the time longevity of the study and natural climate accidents the archival room of the national TV channel went through, a large content of *Mesager* has been lost, or the paper quality has been affected. The archive did not have any *Mesager* news stories on the following years: 1995, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. Despite this fact, a large amount of *Mesager* news stories were collected and utilized in this dissertation study. The researcher took pictures of every page of the *Mesager* evening news program and saved the images in separate computer folders.

Mesager samples consisted of three weeks (21 days) randomly selected from each year, starting 1991 until 2014, a total of 24 years. The researcher wrote the 12 months of the year on individual pieces of paper and blindfolded chose one for each year. Then, the researcher wrote on individual pieces of paper numbers 1 to 31 which stand for the number of days consisted in a month. She then selected one piece of paper and starting with that number, the researcher counted seven days that became part of the selected sample. For instance, if the month selected for that year was August and the number was 21, then the archival worker will locate the *Mesager* folder and bring it to the researcher. The researcher will then locate the evening news program starting on August 21 and ending on August 27. Then the researcher picked another month of the same year and another number for that month. These steps would be repeated three times for each

individual year. As a result, the researcher would end up with a total of 21 days from one year.

When the sample selection for *Mesager* was completed, the researcher numbered each news story in consecutive order. Considering each evening news program would end up having 10 plus news stories, over 2000 news stories per total were numbered. These 2000 news stories do not include international, sports or weather content materials. The researcher only considered and respectively numbered the political, economic, social and cultural news stories discussed in the main news block of the evening program. The researcher identified that the main news block ended when the International news story page began.

Out of the 2000+ news stories, the researcher randomly selected 452. The researcher kept for analysis the first story of the news program, discarded the following three and kept the fourth. For instance, N1 - considered, n2, n3, n4 discarded, N4 considered, n5, n6, n7 discarded, N8 considered, etc. This technique was applied for the entire *Mesager* news program analyzed in the study. The researcher decided to select a sub-sample of *Mesager* so the results of the study would not be skewed by the large number of *Mesager* news stories in comparison with the newspaper articles.

Glasul Națiunii, also referred to by the Moldovan people as the liberator publication was one of the top newspaper choices considered by the researcher in the current study. *Glasul Națiunii* became the first print publication published in the Romanian language in the late 1980's, a crucial time for the Republic of Moldova and its citizens. Because of the liberating message the newspaper spread and the courage with

which it proclaimed it, the researcher found it significant to consider *Glasul Națiunii* for the study's analysis.

Original copies of *Glasul Națiunii* newspaper can be located in Moldova's National Library archive. The researcher used the month of June 2015 to collect the necessary sample required in the study. The researcher took pictures of the front page of each newspaper. If the articles continued on other pages, then the continuation of the articles was photographed. Only front page articles/editorials contributed to the final sample size for this study.

The sample selected for *Glasul Națiunii* consisted of one month (four consecutive weeks) of each year starting in 1989 up until 2009. The researcher decided to collect newspaper copies printed in one month assuming that if the publication printed any reports on democracy on a certain day, then the topic on democracy might be discussed in a following number too. This way, the researcher had a better chance to analyze and potentially understand which specific frames on democracy *Glasul Națiunii* promoted. The sample selection ended in 2009, because in 2009 the newspaper stopped printing physical copies and went fully online. The researcher considered that the nature of the current study shouldn't look at online stories.

In 1989, *Glasul Națiunii* was not printed periodically due to the printing difficulties and political tension Moldova was going through at the time. Starting with 1990 and until 2009, *Glasul Națiunii* was printed once a week. Therefore, for consistency methodology reasons, the researcher selected three random copies of *Glasul Națiunii* printed in 1989. Starting with 1990 and until 2009, one random month of each year was selected based on the same month selection technique used for *Mesager*. Over 80

newspaper copies were gathered. To assure random article selection, the researcher divided the front newspaper page in four equal squares and wrote on individual pieces of paper numbers one to four. The right top square represented number one, the left top square number two, the right bottom square number three and the left bottom square number four. One number was randomly selected for each newspaper. The number picked by the researcher reflected the article considered in the analysis. One newspaper article was selected from each week.

Moldova Suverană as a governmental newspaper would mostly report on things that involved the president, parliament and government of Moldova. Original newspaper copies of *Moldova Suverană* can be located in Moldova's National Library's archive. Copies that date before 1991 are well preserved. The researcher was able to photograph copies of the newspaper and use them in her study. For this publication, the researcher was specifically interested in analyzing editorials. When a newspaper did not include an editorial, then the same front-page article selection technique applied to *Glasul Națiunii* was used to pick a *Moldova Suverană* article for analysis.

Moldova Suverană was published four times a week. One random month was selected for each year. The same random month selection technique used for *Mesager* and *Glasul Națiunii* was applied to *Moldova Suverană*. On average, about 15 newspaper copies each month would contribute to creating the sample for this publication. A total of 326 editorials and newspaper articles made up the sample for *Moldova Suverană*.

Timpul de Dimineață served as the third and final print publication included for analysis. *Timpul* was first printed in 2001 as a weekly publication and starting with 2005 as a five times a week publication. A total of 14 years were included in the study with

one month randomly selected. For this publication, the researcher was again interested in analyzing editorials. However, if the newspaper did not include an editorial, then a similar article selection technique was applied as for the previous publications.

Copies of *Timpul de Dimineață* were located in Moldova's National Library archive. The researcher collected the necessary sample during the month of June 2015. She photographed the newspaper and numbered the articles in consecutive order. A total of 210 editorials and news stories made up the sample analyzed in the study.

In the case of when an article would jump to later pages, coders followed the news story to the indicated page and continued coding to the end of each article.

The researcher purposefully chose to analyze editorials or opinion pieces for both *Moldova Suverană* and *Timpul de Dimineață* because of the particular nature opinion pieces reflect. In Moldova, editorial pieces are considered to be the main article of a publication. This is because opinion pieces or editorials report not only the editor's opinion, but also emphasize the publication's stance on social or political issues. Constantin Tanase (2014), the director of *Timpul de Dimineață*'s expressed his perspective on editorials saying that "an editorial is not only what we think of it, or just a newspaper article expressing the opinion of a publication's management of an important issue today." To Tanase, editorials played a significant role on the pages of his publication. Adding editorials to this study will contribute to a better understanding of the perspective *Moldova Suverană* and *Timpul de Dimineață*'s editorialists took on democracy.

This study's coding sheet explains six different categories, each of them defining a specific concept the researcher is interested in analyzing. All coding categories use

nominal variables that are mutually exclusive. Respectively, a more detailed explanation of the coding categories can be found in the codebook located in Appendix A.

General Information makes the first category of the coding sheet. It provides the necessary general information for each individual article or news story. This category includes the *article #, coder information, type of media analyzed, year/month/date of the article, type of format analyzed and geographical region* that news story refers to.

Topic is the second category the coding sheet touched on. This category was created for the purpose of identifying the theme or main topic discussed in the article. A list of seven popular themes (*political relations, elections, economy, education, Moldovan international relations/issues, culture/custom, human rights*) plus the *other topic* option were provided. Based on the coder's selection for the main theme, he/she has later identified the subtopic that best fit the article under analysis.

Democracy is the third category included in the coding sheet. The researcher touched on three significant questions directly involving the current study. The first question identified if the word democracy is part of the title of the story or news article. The second question asked if the word democracy is mentioned in the story or news article, and the third question denoted whether the story or news article refers to democracy in general. If the answer to the third question was negative, then the coder stopped analyzing that specific news story. The researcher was only interested in examining news stories or articles that directly refer to democracy. If the answer was affirmative, and the news story touched on the democracy theme, then the coder moved onto the next coding category, frames.

Frames is the fourth category added to the coding sheet. The researcher was interested in identifying the frame that democracy was associated with in the story or news article. Therefore, the first question focused on the main theme/frame that democracy relates to in news story or article. The second question identified the frame given to democracy as positive, negative, mixed or none (no frame at all). And the third question established which frame or portrayal was the dominant one in regards to democracy.

Role of Media is the fifth category included in the coding sheet. Here the researcher's concern aimed on recognizing the political function that the story or news article reflects. The coder identified if the political function of the news story under analysis meets the function of *watchdog*, *informing* the public, *servicing as forum for different voices*, *a mixture of these functions* or *other* (another function). For the following question the coder established if the news story represents opposing opinions or not.

The last category of the coding sheet is sources. Here the coders identified if the story or news article reporter quotes any sources. If the answer was affirmative then the coder established if the sources reported anything on democracy. Which perspective do they support, a pro-democracy, an anti-democracy or a mixture of the two? Lastly, the researcher's objective with this category was to identify which perspective media sources took on democracy when interviewed in a story or news article.

The entire outcome of the study depends on how successful the coding sheet was designed. To find this out, the researcher conducted a pilot study to test for coders' inter-reliability.

Reliability Test

The researcher and three additional coders analyzed 10% of news articles by closely following the coding sheet categories explained in the codebook. Each coder received individual training provided by the researcher. The number of articles that reached 10% were proportionally selected to represent each media outlet. In other words, the researcher culled 10% of articles published in *Timpul de Dimineață*, 10% in *Moldova Suverană*, 10% in *Glasul Națiunii* and 10% of *Mesager* news stories. By selecting a representative number of articles from each media outlet, the researcher wanted to avoid bias issues that could potentially affect the study's reliability.

A total number of 123 articles made up the inter-reliability testing sample. Overall, the results of a Cohen Kappa reliability test produced an accepted agreement when it comes to content analysis studies. According to Gottschalk (1994), 20 percent forms the acceptable human error when conducting content analysis. Also, Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998), who analyzed media messages using quantitative content analysis supported Gottschalk's (1994) suggestions and noted that 80 percent is usually considered the baseline level for a simple agreement test.

Considering four independent coders, including myself, participated in data analysis, the inter-reliability test was performed between two coders at a time. For instance, the coding results of Coder 1 were compared to those of Coder 2. A second test was performed between Coder 1 and Coder 3, a third test between Coder 1 and Coder 4, a fourth test between Coder 2 and Coder 3, a fifth test between Coder 2 and Coder 4, and lastly, a sixth test between Coder 3 and Coder 4. The average was then calculated and reported.

The first coding category focuses on the format of the piece analyzed by the coder. The result of the test indicated 85.7 percent of agreement between the four coders. In the second coding category the main concern was to identify the primary topic each news story or editorial referred to. The coders agreed on 87.9 percent of cases when selecting the main primary topic discussed in news story. The following category refers to democracy. The reliability test indicated 84.01 percent of agreement on the question if news story refers to democracy in general and 80 percent of agreement on the main theme that democracy is associated with in news story. The fourth category analyzes the predominant frames that democracy is associated to in a news story or editorial. The coders reached 82.3 percent of agreement on how democracy is framed and 85.4 percent on democracy's dominant portrayal. The fifth category analyzed the political function the news story or editorial reflects. The coders agreed in 93 percent of the cases and reached a moderate agreement baseline level with 79.9 percent of agreement on the representation of opposing opinions in news story. The last category focuses on media sources present in a news story or editorial. Therefore, the inter-reliability test indicated 81.9 percent of agreement on sources reporting on democracy, and 89.2 percent of agreement on the perspective most sources support when it comes to discussing democracy in a news story or editorial. The simple agreement results generated by the inter-reliability test determined the researcher could move forward with the study and write the results chapter.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis on the Most Dominant Frames

This chapter will outline the findings of the content analysis study, which identifies democracy portrayal differences between public, government and independent news outlets. The study's sample ended up reaching 954 news stories. 346 of these news stories were televised during the *Mesager* evening program at the public TV station, Moldova 1, while 608 were printed in three national coverage newspapers, *Glasul Națiunii*, *Moldova Suverană* and *Timpul de Dimineață*. *Mesager* made up about 36 percent of the sample with 346 news stories, *Glasul Națiunii* made up 7.5 percent of the sample with 72 stories, *Moldova Suverană* made up 34 percent of the stories with 326 articles, and *Timpul* made up 22 percent of the sample with 210 articles. Most stories, over 65 percent (627) from the entire data, refer to national interest issues. Less than 2 percent (18) discuss international topics and about 32 percent (309) of the stories reflect both international and national issues.

The format of the pieces discussed in news stories reported the following results: 532 news reports, 327 opinion pieces, 32 interviews, 10 feature stories, 9 investigating pieces, three news summaries, 18 mixed media materials and 23 other type of format. 242 news stories analyzed were printed between 1989 and 2000. This first time period analyzed represents the first phase of democracy in Moldova, a time that probably set the foundation for the democratic development of the Moldovan people. 2001 became the year the Communist party reached the majority in the Parliament. The second phase starts in 2001 and ends in 2009. These eight years represent two consecutive mandates of the

communist party in the Moldovan parliament with 390 stories analyzed in the study. Finally, 322 stories from 2010 to 2014 represent the time when AIE (The Alliance for European Integration) parties made up the majority in the parliament and the communist party moved into the opposition.

Research Questions Results

RQ1: How did *Glasul Națiunii* frame democracy to its audience from 1989-2009?

The main primary topic discussed in newspaper stories or editorials in *Glasul Națiunii* focused on cultural Moldovan aspects with 31.4% (22) followed by articles explaining Moldovan international relations or issues with other countries in 27.1% (19) and political relations related topics in 17.1% (12) of stories. Table 1 offers a detailed picture on the main primary topic discussed in *Glasul Națiunii* news stories.

In most of *Glasul Națiunii*'s articles, democracy took a negative perspective - 53.7 % (22) of articles - while 43.8% or 18 stories portrayed democracy from a positive angle. The dominant frame that *Glasul Națiunii* endorsed in regards to democracy was uniting with Romania with about 34.1% of stories touching on this subject. Because most articles published in *Glasul Națiunii* depicted Moldova's democracy negatively, the second most dominant frame in regards to democracy present in the articles was 'no solutions, but same old problems' that people had to live with making up about 24.4% from the total number of stories published in this newspaper.

So, in regards to RQ1 the data shows that freedom became the main theme that democracy was associated with in most stories, with 46.3% (19) of articles analyzing this variable. Moreover, 68.3% of news stories endorsed the political function of informing

the public on the types of issues and problems Moldovans went through after gaining their independence and failing to reunite with the motherland, Romania. The media's watchdog role was observed in 29.3% of stories, while 2.4% of stories reflected the forum for different voices political function.

RQ2: How did *Mesager* frame democracy to its audience from 1991-2014?

Moldova's international relations received the most attention during *Mesager* evening news programs. About 28.7% (99) of stories reported on this topic and kept the country informed on the relationships Moldova was entering in with other countries as a new democratic country. In regards to RQ2 the data shows that democracy was framed as a positive phenomenon in most of *Mesager's* news stories, with 150 (78.1%) stories presenting democracy from a positive perspective, and only 18.2%, or 35 stories, framed democracy as a negative portrayal that Moldova endorsed in 1991. Moreover, a frequency test indicated two dominant frames that *Mesager* promoted when reporting on democracy. Democracy meant 'better life' with 40 (20.8%) stories and 'human rights' with 40 (20.8%) stories referring to this topic. Also, democracy was presented as being 'desired by Moldovans' in 36 (18.8%) news stories. Twenty (10.4%) stories framed democracy as being in enmity with Russia, 15 (7.8%) stories portrayed it as providing no solutions, but instead living with the same old problems. Ten (5.2%) stories as a delayed process for Moldova. Table 2 provides a detailed picture on the dominant frames *Mesager* picked to present democracy to its audience.

Out of 346 *Mesager* news stories, 192 of them were attributed to a main theme in regards to democracy. The main theme that democracy was associated with in *Mesager*

news stories was 76 (39.6%) *reform* stories, followed by 52 *rights* stories (27.1%), 44 *freedom* stories (22.9%), 10 *control* stories (5.2%), one *diversity* story (0.5%) and nine *other theme* stories or (4.7%). About 20% of the *Mesager* news stories used sources which endorsed a supportive perspective on democracy.

RQ3: How did *Moldova Suverană* frame democracy to its audience from 1991-2014?

As a governmental newspaper for most of the time period under analysis, *Moldova Suverană* became almost like a bridge that would take out the information discussed in the highest political state institutions and deliver it to the Moldovan people. Therefore, the majority of *Moldova Suverană*'s stories, about 70%, referred to democracy. However, because *Moldova Suverană* became an independent newspaper on December 31, 2005, the researcher compared the results of how *Moldova Suverană* framed democracy as a governmental newspaper with the frames it selected after it stopped serving the government. A frequency test reported that 198 articles of *Moldova Suverană* were analyzed until 2005, and 128 articles from 2006 until 2014. A chi-square test of independence showed a significant relationship between these two time periods the newspaper was analyzed and the way democracy was framed $\chi^2(3) = 42.10, p < .001, V = .43$. *Moldova Suverană* was more likely to frame democracy positively until 2005 while it acted as a government newspaper than after it became independent. Moreover, another chi-square test of independence reported a significant relationship between these two time periods and the most dominant frame *Moldova Suverană* endorsed, $\chi^2(9) = 45.35, p < .001, V = .45$. It seems that while *Moldova Suverană* was a governmental newspaper, the most dominant frame attributed to democracy was 'better life' with 25.3% of stories,

while after the newspaper became independent, it framed democracy as a ‘no solutions, but same old problems’ phenomena with 54.1% of stories.

When referring to the main primary topic discussed in news story, a frequency test indicated that until 2005, *Moldova Suverană* focused on Moldovan international relations partnerships and issues making about 30 percent (60) of the stories. After *Moldova Suverană* stopped serving the government, the primary topic it referred to were national political relations, making up about 28 percent of the stories (34).

RQ4: How did *Timpul de Dimineață* frame democracy to its audience from 2001-2010?

A more specific feature that *Timpul de Dimineață* has in comparison with the other media outlets considered in this study is that most stories analyzed were opinion pieces, making up about 73%, or 154 articles, of the total number of stories (210) included in the study. The researcher explained the reason to willingly incorporate opinion pieces or editorials in the methods chapter. The main primary topic discussed in *Timpul de Dimineață* became political relations, making up almost half of the newspaper’s sample with 46.1%, or 95 stories. Out of these stories, about 80% of them (165) referred to democracy. The main theme that democracy was associated with became freedom making in 50.9% (84) of articles followed by rights with 29.1% (43). *Timpul de Dimineață* assumed a neutral position when it came to the way democracy was framed. 69 stories (41.8%) reported on democracy from a positive perspective while the same exact number of stories 69 (41.8%) presented democracy from a negative perspective. The rest of the stories (16.4%) endorsed a mixed frame. A delayed process for Moldova, 32.1% (53) is what most stories’ dominant portrayal for democracy took. Despite this fact, democracy is desired by Moldovans as *Timpul de Dimineață* stories

report in 27.3% or 45 stories. Table 3 provides a detailed picture on the dominant frames *Timpul de Dimineață* picked to present democracy to its audience.

RQ5: *Were the frames on democracy present in the public/government media outlets different from the frames present in independent media outlets?*

The researcher performed a chi-square test for independence to examine the relationship between the public/government and independent media outlets and the frames on democracy portrayed in these mediums. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(10) = 133.75, p < .001, V = .46$. Independent media was more likely to present democracy as a delayed process for Moldova (56), while the government and public media was more likely to lean towards framing democracy as a better life (81) system for Moldovans.

A second chi-square for independence was performed to analyze the relationship between the public/government and independent media outlets and the main theme democracy was associated with. The chi-square showed a significant relationship between these variables, $\chi^2(6) = 87.35, p < .001, V = .37$. Government owned media outlets were more likely to focus on reforms (204) as the main theme democracy was associated with while independent media outlets associated democracy with freedom (103).

Lastly, a third chi-square tested the relationship between the government and independent media outlets and how democracy was framed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 52.32, p < .001, V = .29$. Government media was more likely to describe democracy from a positive perspective (267) than independent media (87).

RQ 6: *How was the message on democracy framed from one government to another from 1991-2014? Did it evolve over time?*

A chi-square test for independence was performed to examine the relationship between the three different phases that Moldovan democracy went through from 1989 until 2014 and the dominant frame that democracy was associated to during this time. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(20) = 70.29, p < .001, V = .23$. Media outlets tended to portray democracy as offering a better life to Moldovans in the first phase. From 1991 until 2000, 21.7% of stories framed democracy as better life, while the second phase (20.8% of stories) and third phase (23.3% of stories) referred to democracy as struggling with the same old problems and bringing no solutions. However, a second chi-square test for independence was applied to analyze the relationship between the three different phases Moldovan democracy transitioned to and how democracy was framed during this time. A significant relationship between these variables was observed, $\chi^2(6) = 26.40, p < .001, V = .14$. Media outlets tended to frame democracy more positively in the first phase than in the second and third. However, during all three phases, Moldova's democracy was framed positively overall.

A third chi-square test for independence showed a significant relationship between the three different phases of democracy in Moldova and the main theme democracy was associated with. The chi-square test showed a significant relationship between these variables, $\chi^2(12) = 30.71, p < .05, V = .15$. Media outlets tended to report on reforms (76) and freedom (43) during the first phase of democracy while focusing on freedom (80) and reforms (77) in the second phase and on reforms (80) and freedom (71) in the third phase.

A frequency test indicated that about 25 percent (242) of news stories fall under the first phase of Moldova's democratic process, about 37 percent (350) of news stories reflect on the second phase, and about 38 percent (362) the third phase.

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

Glasul Națiunii Associates Democracy to Uniting with Romania

After 50 years of totalitarian rule by the Soviet Union where people endured brutalities of deportation, silenced voices and a mutilated national identity, the Republic of Moldova became independent. With its independence Moldova welcomed democracy as a system of government. This new governance system became totally new and definitely opposite to the one Moldovans lived under for the past half century. People eagerly embraced their independence and an exploration of democracy, probably hoping for a better life and for more freedoms and liberties.

As a facilitator of democracy, the media should have helped in showing Moldovans the way to a true democracy. In fact, political liberation began with great excitement when the first Romanian publication entered Moldova in 1989 hidden in a tanker trailer. The national revival that this publication was about to create in Moldova echoed for a long time in the minds and hearts of the people. Most reporters that published in *Glasul Națiunii* represented the national writers union, intellectual people who openly expressed their pro-Romanian political preference. Therefore it is perfectly understandable why the largest percentage of articles written in *Glasul Națiunii* from 1989 until 2009 referred to cultural aspects as the dominant topic discussed on its pages. Cultural aspects involved stories on the history of Moldova, the national language, national holidays and traditional customs. The newspaper openly promoted a pro-Romanian policy. This was observed from the first appearance of the newspaper on the media market. On February 15, 1989, when the newspaper entered Moldova as the first publication printed in the Romanian language, it wrote about issues like mass

deportations and the great famine that Moldovans struggled with in 1946. It was finally the time when people found the courage to openly share their stories. *Glasul Națiunii* became the channel that this hurting people were willing to use and share their hurts and pains. People from all over Moldova were willing to call out the system that had taken all they had and destroyed their families. One would wonder, why were they ready now? Probably because they were hit by the impulse of freedom and national liberation, when *Glasul Națiunii* courageously appeared on the media market.

Vlad Ciubucciu, vice-minister of education between 1972-1998, and counselor of the President of Republic of Moldova from 1999-2001 shared the story of his village and what the night of July 6, 1949, meant to them. The forced collectivization served as the main reason for hard working people's deportations from the village of Șibca to the cold Siberian land. Ciubucciu (2008) refers to that summer as the "summer of the ordeal," when people disappeared overnight and few knew anything about it.

Nicolae Coșciug who suffered of hunger during the organized famine in Moldova told another sad story. One of the newspaper's authors, Ștefan Melnic (1989), introduced sequences of his discussion with Nicoale Coșciug from Suhuleni village, Telenești district. Mr. Coșciug shared about his begging experience as a child and how the people were forced to travel long distances to find food. He was only 12 years old, but he remembers how his father sold the cow trying to save one of his sons' life who was very ill in the hospital. Five out of seven siblings related to Nicolae died because of lack of food. He concludes his sad story calling the famine time, "another war we went through."

Another sensitive topic that *Glasul Națiunii* reporters wrote on in the first number of the publication was Moldova's return to the Latin alphabet after using the Slavic

alphabet in all spheres of society for about 50 years. Going back to the Latin alphabet represented a great victory and it meant, “finally being able to write our names correctly after it being corrupted for such a long time,” writes Vlad Pohila (1989). This triumph symbolized returning to Moldova’s roots as a Romanian nation, culturally and historically. Right from the beginning, *Glasul Națiunii*, wished to become the voice of those people that had no voice, a medium that would facilitate people’s courage to open up and be willing to confront the past in order to create a better future. Ion Hadirca (1989) writes in one of his articles titled, “The Proud Voice,” about the great opportunity that *Glasul Națiunii* would offer to Moldovan people. Hadirca (1989) writes, “and so, we will be opened up to the broader mysteries of transparency, the grace of hearing the unreachable and seeing the invisible.” In other words, this meant Moldovan people will start to experience freedom, one they lacked for so long, but wished for so desperately.

The second most dominant theme covered in news stories became Moldovan international relations. It seems that *Glasul Națiunii*’s reporters discussed in detail meetings and relationships Moldova had with Romania. Out of all the articles discussing this theme, about 70 percent of them touched on the relationships Moldova had with Romania. They either discussed the common history Moldova shared with Romania, the similar language or the historical national characteristics of both countries. *Glasul Națiunii*’s only option for Moldova to progress and to finally become democratic implied reuniting with Romania and becoming part of the former motherland. If you chose not to be supportive of Romania, then you automatically picked Russia. Valeriu Valeavschii (1990) in his article “With the Romanians or with the Russians,” approaches this idea and blames the intellectuals from Moldovan villages for the anti-romanism they are

representing after being influenced by the degrees they pursued in Soviet universities on Moldova's history. Furthermore, Leonida Lari (1992), one of the newspaper's founders quite plainly expresses her perspective on Moldova's direction and writes, "the right direction (for Moldova) is to the West, to the motherland."

It's pretty obvious that from the very first years of independence, *Glasul Națiunii* had not accepted the idea of Moldova being democratic and independent. To a certain degree, this almost became an oxymoron for the newspaper's editorial policy. A democratic Moldova meant a Moldova united to Romania. A total of 34.1% of *Glasul Națiunii* stories framed democracy as Moldova uniting to Romania. Leonida Lari openly emphasized the crucial responsibility that 1991 political leaders had to make this unity possible. Lari strongly believed that those politicians, both Basarabians and Romanians should have insisted on reuniting Moldova with Romania in order for the country to become democratic and united again. She writes that after she moved to Romania, she realized the equation is pretty simple, "if you love your country, you are a nationalist, if you despise it and you leave it to foreigners, you are a democrat..." (Lari, 1997). To her, the 1991 Moldova independence meant that the Soviet Union actually won the battle over Moldova. This type of freedom or independence implied that the Soviets succeeded in creating of Moldova a new nation, one that was different from Romania. To the unionist (people that support the idea of Republic of Moldova uniting with Romania) promoters this actually meant a half-won victory. Due to this failure, Moldova fell short from truly becoming democratic, Lari suggests. She believes that instead of the Declaration of Independence, the politicians should have created a Declaration for Union, with Bucharest initiating it. According to Lari (1997), the former president of Romania, Ion

Iliescu, had committed a big historical mistake when in 1991 Romania failed to sign a Treaty of Union with Basarabia, but instead agreed to the Treaty of Good Neighborhood and Friendship with U.S.S.R. To her disappointment, the union between Moldova and Romania did not take place because neither of the countries involved desired it strongly enough nor acted upon this premise.

Therefore, the exciting phase of national revival ended shortly after it started. With enormous economic issues and a constant threat of anarchy, Moldova knelt to the forces of corruption, human trafficking and deep poverty. The second most dominant frame that democracy was associated with in *Glasul Națiunii* confirms this. It seems that a large number of articles referred to democracy as a phenomena that brought to Moldova no solutions, but instead kept the same problems of poverty, corruption and lack of rights. Openly criticizing the political leaders and their policy-making strategies became a popular theme on the pages of the *Glasul Națiunii*. Nastase (1996) picked on Iov, the Minister of Transport and a former deputy and communist who furiously fought against the Romanian language. According to Năstase (1996), Minister Iov failed the country because he has not been fixing the roads in the capital and throughout Moldova since he has been over the Ministry of Transport.

Similar articles that criticize Moldova's political, economic, social and cultural perspectives persisted throughout *Glasul Națiunii*'s analysis. These articles embody the greatest failure of Moldova as a country - not succeeding to reunite with Romania and continuing to write its story as one country, but as two separate independent entities. Overall, this frame on democracy paints the entire picture of *Glasul Națiunii* as an independent, pro-Romanian leaning newspaper.

When looking at the results that RQ1 provided, it seems the *Glasul Națiunii* focused its attention entirely on one single aspect of Moldova's democracy post-independence. The newspaper's agenda centered on promoting a pro-Romania orientation, both politically, economically and culturally. Nevertheless, the support for the Romanian language and Romanian history meant bringing Moldova closer to Romania. In the frames of *Glasul Națiunii* reporters and editors, this approach directly meant reuniting with Romania and continuing to develop and mature as one entity. At the same time, *Glasul Națiunii* reporters kept emphasizing the past struggles Moldova endured from the Soviet Union. They wrote about them wishing to call out the communism system and make sure the Moldovan people remember the pain and hardships they endured for 50 years. To *Glasul Națiunii*, relationship with Russia seemed like an unimaginable act. Moldova would not have any future if it decided to turn back to the East. On the other hand, the RQ1 results indicate that the West, specifically the European Union, was not necessarily a favorite direction the newspaper endorsed. The only West the newspaper's policy strongly supported meant Romania, and just Romania.

Mesager Frames Democracy as Better Life

The only televised channel that Moldovans had access to when the country gained its independence from the Soviet Union was TVM Moldova 1. *Mesager* turned out to be the sole news program the entire country would watch on a daily basis in order to be informed on the things that were taking place in their new democratic country. It is obvious that as the main informant and agenda creator, *Mesager* inherited a significant role in the minds of Moldovans. The way people would perceive democracy directly correlated with the information they daily received on it. The most dominant frame that

democracy was associated with during *Mesager* evening program from 1991 until 2014 was a positive one, specifically focusing on a better life and human rights that democracy would bring to the Moldovan people. The results also showed that the Moldovan people desired democracy. This finding makes perfect sense when observing Moldova's context and past. People had come to the end of their struggles and were eager to embrace a governing system that would provide a better life.

For one to understand what 'better life' meant to the brand new democratic Moldova, one should first analyze the previous experiences of the country. *Glasul Națiunii* probably contributes the most in terms of providing a complete picture on this issue. Moldovans endured deportations, an organized famine by the Soviets at the end of WWII, their heart language and alphabet were replaced by the Russian language and alphabet, their history disappeared after the Soviets erased it from all textbooks and finally, they were forced to give up on their own national conscience. In other words, they needed to become a new nation the Soviets had created overnight, one that would quit any relationships with their ancestors' roots and history.

History shows that the Soviets succeeded in their plans and managed to make of Moldova exactly what they intended. However, their success came to an end with Moldova's independence. This 'better life' that Moldovans dreamed of when they chose democracy probably symbolized gaining back all that was taken away from them by force. Moreover, now that they managed to end up with a free media, not controlled by the communist party, they probably realized how everything would start to change for the better. Things indeed started to change officially, with Moldova signing the declaration of

independence on August 27, 1991, with its first line, “The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, constituted following free and democratic elections...” (Istoria.md, 2018) directly pointing to the path Moldova wished to take. A few years later, in August 1994, the “plenipotentiary representatives of the people of the Republic of Moldova, deputies in the Parliament” (Constituția Republicii Moldova, 1994) adopted the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. Other official documents followed, all perceived by the people as promising a better life, one they wished so much to attain. They were now able to act independently and create their own future. One of the most significant issues Moldova’s politicians and citizens were interested to solve dealt with the eastern territory of Moldova. Various politicians gathered on a regular basis to find a solution to the created problem. For instance, on May 27, 1992, *Mesager* reported on the initiative of the social-democrat party representatives who met in a press conference and reported on the social-democrat party representatives’ press conference that dealt with possible solution to Moldova’s territorial crisis, (Mesager, 1992).

Unfortunately, the happy story of Moldova’s democracy in the first years of its life began to struggle almost immediately. One of the main issues pointed towards the media. Moldova became independent and democratic just like mass media should have become. To a certain degree, media attained democracy, except the fact that journalists and reporters had to teach themselves what democracy was and how to present it to the Moldovan nation. On paper, Moldova became democratic, but in practice it had a long way to go. As a facilitator of democracy, media should have helped in showing the people what democracy is and how to exercise it. While analyzing *Mesager* news stories in the early phase of Moldova’s democracy, the researcher identified scripts typed in the

Russian language, (Mesager, Erusevschii 1992). Even though Moldova returned to the Latin alphabet and the Romanian language after it became independent, the national TV station struggled with incorporating the new changes immediately. It looks like the evening news program reporters found it challenging to switch from the Slavic to the Latin alphabet immediately. Overall, this instance shows a sad reality that Moldovan media and Moldova's democracy faced since its birth. This, however, wasn't the only struggle Moldovan people went through.

Since its independence Moldova became very poor with its economy striving to survive. People became needy and to a certain degree they immediately associated poverty with democracy. To most, the Soviet Union maintained an economic stability, people had regular jobs they went to everyday, and had food to place on the table. Now, most families fought for their survival. People were not paid in monetary salaries at their jobs, but in food supplies. Being constrained by these circumstances, a large number of Moldovans went abroad to search for a job. From the mid 1990s, over one million people went to Western countries or to Russia to look for work opportunities in order to be able to provide for their families, reports the National Bureau of Statistics cited by The Economist (2017). Because of Moldova's economic issues, the country became attractive to human traffickers, criminals and illegalities. Once more, this sad scenario placed democracy in a negative portrayal and led the people into thinking their new governance system is to blame.

Mesager, however, did not report too much on these issues. On the contrary, the main dominant theme democracy was associated with in the news stories was a positive

one. As a public TV station, Moldova 1's evening program *Mesager* reported on the three main powers, the Parliament, President and the government officials. Most of the stories placed these officials and their actions in a positive light and reported on their activity trying to take Moldova out of poverty. For instance, on March 2, 1994, *Mesager* made reference to the President of the Republic of Moldova, Mircea Snegur, who welcomed the French senator Josette Durieu, also a member of the European Counsel, to observe the elections that took place at the end of February that year. Durieu explained that the entire election process served as an exam for Moldova. The official praised the country for passing it and emphasized that Moldova's elections process revealed a democratic character. Considering this took place less than three years after Moldova's independence, it seems that Moldovan politicians, specifically President Mircea Snegur, jumped right into implementing democratic reforms in Moldova and wished to assure his people with democratic elections.

Mesager news reporters continued to frame democracy positively, referring to the liberties, rights and freedoms Moldovan citizens would experience. Moreover, an increased attention was placed on framing democracy as a boost in economic reforms. *Mesager's* dominant theme informed people about Moldova's partnerships with both, European Union countries and Eastern countries. The first several years of independence, Moldovan officials, mostly the President, focused on building close relationships with neighboring countries as well as other countries from afar. Out of 346 *Mesager* news stories under analysis, 99 stories (28.7%) touched on this topic. Mircea Snegur (*Mesager*, 1994) publicly expressed his political agenda during Durieu's visit and told his compatriots about Republic of Moldova's intention to promote the same political course:

“Internally, I will consolidate the statehood and the firm progress of reforms, while externally, I will develop mutually beneficial relationship with all the countries of the world.”

Due to this kind of news stories, it looks like *Mesager* reporters were probably trying to set a positive agenda about democracy in the minds of the people. Informing the audience on a regular basis about potential partnerships, international help offered to Moldova and positive economic changes sounds very promising. Creating this ‘better life’ frame in the minds of the people would alleviate the negative environment Moldovans were living in and make their attention shift from the negative portrayal they struggled with on a daily basis to a more promising and positive future. There is no doubt that as a public program, *Mesager* was to a certain degree expected to create a more assertive image of democracy so that the democratic government would not be blamed for all of Moldova’s problems. The evening news program needed to present the best side of the democratic political government and its representatives. When *Mesager* reporters quoted an official in their stories, about 90 percent of the time the delegate supported a pro-democracy perspective. Once again this directly contributes to a reflection of *Mesager*’s agenda when it comes to the portrayal of democracy it promoted.

Overall, in regards to RQ2, it seems that *Mesager* news program, being supported by the government, never bit the hand that was feeding it. They quietly shifted the attention from the poverty and struggles Moldovans were dying of, towards positive reforms, better life and respected human rights democracy was promising to provide. This way, people would accept *Mesager*’s agenda, ponder on its premises and hopefully

vote accordingly when the following elections approached. This strategy worked for some time. Actually it was successful until April 2001, when Moldova's first democratic phase ended and the second one began.

Moldova Suverană as a Government Publication Presents Democracy Positively while as an Independent Publication Refers to Democracy Negatively

Moldova Suverană as a government owned publication for most of the time under the study's analysis shared quite a few similarities with *Mesager* when it comes to the dominant frames democracy received in news stories since Moldova's independence. Democracy received a positive portrayal while the newspaper was a government-owned publication.

The most dominant frame on democracy that *Moldova Suverană* promoted referred to 'better life' promised to the Moldovan people. Despite the economic, social and political struggles Moldova faced during this time, it seems that *Moldova Suverană*, as a governmental newspaper closely followed the government's suggestions on how to portray democracy to the Moldovan people. A 'better life' meant new reforms and new partnerships with foreign countries that Moldova would benefit from. Moldovan international relations became the primary topic that *Moldova Suverană* referred to when presenting democracy to its audience. Once again, it looks like government-owned media followed a set agenda, one that would focus on positive portrayals of democracy and led the people into thinking and wanting to endorse this adjusted democracy as it was presented to them.

The publication had also considered writing on democracy and the role that media play in a democratic society. During the first communism mandate, *Moldova Suverană* printed an article by Ion Bătrînu (2002), on the front page of the newspaper, titled “We take lessons on democracy, but we don’t pass them.” The journalist provides a report on the meeting between Vladimir Voronin, the Moldovan president during that time, and the media representatives. Bătrînu (2002) emphasizes President’s Voronin stance on the role of the press in Moldova. The article states Voronin’s address to the press after the latter failed to report on the President’s appeal to the Moldovan people: “On a list of things, both the current political leaders as well as the press should come to a reasonable agreement,” insisted Voronin. This statement in itself is probably reflecting a complete picture on Moldova’s democracy and on the freedom of the press during the first mandate of the communist party. On the surface, *Moldova Suverană* framed democracy positively while it represented the Moldovan government, indicate the results of this study. However, the reality shows an opposite perspective. The Moldovan president was calling the media to cooperate with the country’s political leaders and ‘come to a reasonable agreement.’ Should a democratic government be entitled to such a request? This rhetorical question remains unanswered when it comes to Moldova’s democracy and the role national media play in framing freedoms and liberties.

In 2005, at the European Counsel’s recommendations, *Moldova Suverană* became an independent publication. From its independence *Moldova Suverană* began to portray democracy from a negative perspective. The results indicated that the dominant frames on democracy have taken an opposite image in comparison to the newspaper’s previous activity years. To some degree, the publication had probably decided to reflect on the real

social, political and economic situation that Moldova was going through. *Moldova Suverană*'s reporters began presenting democracy as a struggling time for the country, when people expected changes, but sadly no solutions seemed to come their way. George Soros, the president of the Opened Society Foundation had probably identified those responsible for Moldova's sad democratic situation. During the Summer University for Democracy held at Strasbourg in 2007 where about 600 representatives from political studies schools coming from east-European countries, including a delegation from Chisinau, Soros explained his perceptions on the failure of implementing democratic reforms in countries like Moldova. Oleg Cristal (2007) quotes Soros, who said "in opened societies politicians create virtual realities, by manipulating the public opinion," therefore the press and the civil society must contribute to counteracting the lies generated by politicians. Once again the media is attributed the role of intervening in the politicians' manipulations and causing a positive change in a transitional society.

As Soros refers to the politicians' depravity, *Moldova Suverană*'s articles expressed an almost identical perspective. Those responsible for Moldova's poverty, instability and stagnation of democracy seemed to be the country's politicians. *Moldova Suverană* touched on this aspect and starting in 2006, it detailed stories on the relationships among national politicians. More than that, the newspaper often criticized the democratic political forces while elevating the communist party. It seems very strange to understand *Moldova Suverană*'s stance in these circumstances, because the editorialist Mihai Conțiu kept promoting a pro-communist party support even after Vladimir Voronin and his party were not Moldova's direct leaders. "The efficiency of Moldovan democracy against communism" is the title of an editorial Conțiu wrote in 2013. He starts

with the following statement, “Starting with 1998 and up until today, we find it desolate that the Communists from the Republic of Moldova continue to be ahead in election preferences, and the leader of the communists, Vladimir Voronin, continues to be as influent of a leader as he was. Why?”

Moldova Suverană became an independent publication while the Communist party was governing Moldova in 2005. However, the frames that Conțiu as an editorialist promoted when it comes to democracy and the communist party seem to keep serving the communist party and their leader. Even though *Moldova Suverană* was to stop representing the 2005 government, it actually had not done that even after it became an independent publication. It looks like Mihai Conțiu was Voronin’s most faithful supporter and with every occasion would brag on his achievements as a leader and point to his party’s success in Moldova. While Conțiu and the publication he worked for praised the communists, they were also openly using every opportunity to criticize and even attack the democratic forces in Moldova. In that same editorial, Conțiu (2013) writes, “For four years we have a democratic and pro-European governance. Why then, even today for instance, in the Northern regions of the country, Moldovans don’t want to hear about European integration of the country, in spite of the fact that EU, USA or countries members of the EU finance numerous projects there.”

While the EU and other democratic societies tried to educate democracy in Moldova, a former Soviet Republic, and the only former Soviet Republic that elected the Communist Party for two consecutive mandates, the so called independent media framed democracy as a not-desired phenomenon by Moldovans. The results of this research

question seemed to at first confuse the researcher's understanding of the *Moldova Suverană*'s contribution to presenting democracy to the Moldovan people. But, after better analyzing the newspaper's editorials, it looks like the now independent publication promoted the kind of democracy that was strongly educated and exercised by the communist party but was totally against the kind expressed by the democratic forces that came to governance in 2010. This outcome explains the reasons why *Moldova Suverană* began to present democracy from a negative perspective after the publication became independent.

To a certain degree it almost looks like *Moldova Suverană* promoted positive frames on democracy while it acted under the Moldovan government. But, when it became independent and was required to be transparent and represent the people, the publication decided to continue to criticize the current democratic government and advertise on the former government it used to faithfully serve. On a ironic note, one would wonder if it would have been better to let the publication openly serve whichever government ruled Moldova and not 'force' the publication to pretend acting as independent when in reality it was still in love with the former master - the communist party, and their leader.

Clearly, this opposite change in perspectives directly makes one ponder on the newspaper's credibility as a national publication and also question its reliability as a media source. For most Moldovans, this will not be too surprising, as the quote "Moldova is the land of wonders" has become very popular on the lips of most Moldovans in the last years.

Along with the role that *Moldova Suverană* gained both as a governmental publication and as an independent outlet was the political function every news story reflected. Under both leaderships *Moldova Suverană* claimed to endorse the political function of informing the public. However, a substantial change was observed in 2006, when the news stories endorsed the watchdog political function. When referring to the first political function of informing the public, one would be supportive of this role. Media play a significant role of keeping its audience informed on everything that is taking place in society. It serves as a “bridge between government and society,” as Sangita Narendra Solaki (2016) referred to at the inaugural function of ‘Gramin Media’ workshop organized by the Press Information Bureau of Government of India. She added, “The media is playing a key role in conveying the message of the government to the people, and through the media, the government is able to know about the aspirations and expectations of people from it.”

However, this political function should not be the only one the media follow. As an independent institution in a democratic society, the media are responsible to represent the people, but they are also required to call on the government when it tries to cheat the people. Solaki (2016) touched on this political function attributed to the media and suggested that “people also get to know about the various welfare schemes being run by the government.” In other words, media should meet the watchdog role in a democratic society and call on the government anytime it forgets to represent its voters. After *Moldova Suverană* stopped representing the government’s editorial policy, the publication should have begun to serve the people. But, as seen above this has not happened. Even though the publication shifted the news stories’ political function from

an informant to a watchdog, the reason behind this shift was not an authentic one. Instead of watching over all the politicians and calling on all their failures, manipulations and corruptive interests, the publication simply began attacking the current government and kept on praising the former one. Katrin Voltmer (2013) presents the watchdog role of the media in a democratic society differently from what *Moldova Suverană* practiced. *Moldova Suverană* was to question the credibility of all government officials and hold them accountable when necessary.

Moreover, the new political perspective of *Moldova Suverană*'s editorialist Mihai Conțiu (2009) narrowed down to an anti-Romanian preference. More than one time, Conțiu openly expressed his views on the relationship between Moldova and Romania. For instance, in a 2009 editorial Conțiu writes, "Most Romanians, regardless of their social, financial or religious condition, know or had the opportunity to find out the profound differences that exist among citizens of the Republic of Moldova and those of Romania, despite the fact that there exists a languishing relationship and 'somehow' a historical one too."

Furthermore, Conțiu willingly included in his editorials opinions of Romanian reporters to prove Romania's anti-uniting desire to Moldova. Conțiu quoted one of these reporters, Cornel Ivanciuc, in an editorial. This is what Ivanciuc had to say on Moldova's relationship to Romania, "I don't feel anything towards this mutant state, and I don't understand why in relations to Moldova, Romania is called by some medium enthusiasm from Bucharest... 'The mother country'." Obviously, *Moldova Suverană*'s editorial political view, unlike *Glasul Națiunii*'s, expressed a reluctant relationship with Romania.

Furthermore, *Moldova Suverană*'s idea of a democratic Moldova didn't align with a future unity to Romania. Moldova was to stay independent and be its own country and nation. This perspective became extremely popular during *Moldova Suverană*'s 2009-2011 editorials, when Conțiu repeatedly wrote on anti-Romanism relationships and anything that involved Moldova's connections to Romania. On the contrary, he courageously supported a pro-Moldovenism perspective. To *Moldova Suverană*'s editorialist, it seems that all the difficult things Moldova struggled with happened because of Romania. Conțiu (2011) writes that Moldova is a country "that has been contested the right to existence in numerous ways for over two decades," blaming Romania for this.

To conclude on this research question, it seems that *Moldova Suverană* continued to act as an owned publication even after it became independent. The most dominant frames on democracy that the publication promoted have changed during the two phases under analysis, but this hasn't happened due to the newspaper's editorial policy change. On the contrary, it looks like the publication's perspectives and portrayals on democracy have not changed at all. They stayed the same, but just gained a new image.

Timpul de Dimineață Frames Democracy from a Neutral Perspective, Endorsing both
Positive and Negative Portrayals

To better understand the role that non-governmental media played after Moldova gained its independence from the Soviet Union, one should consider analyzing a fully independent publication and its frames on democracy. Looking at *Moldova Suverană* as both government owned and as an independent publication has already brought a wider

understanding to the topic under analysis. To add towards the importance of this study, the researcher considered including an independent newspaper, *Timpul de Dimineață*, which maintained a praiseworthy reputation among its audience. As noted in the results section, the majority of this outlet's materials under analysis were opinion pieces or signed editorials. The researcher purposefully wished to understand the editorial policy of this newspaper and the themes it endorsed when framing democracy.

Even though the publication appeared on the market in 2001, ten years after Moldova's independence, it managed to build a well-respected name throughout its entire activity. Moreover, the publication seemed to advocate for democracy and freedom of the press during the communist party governance. On this line of ideas, *Timpul de Dimineață* published an interview by Rodica Trofimov in 2001, questioning Angela Aramă, a news program producer at the national TV Company. Trofimov (2001) was trying to find out why Aramă's program was suspended by the communist Iulian Magaleas who was also the president of the State Company, "Teleradio-Moldova," during that time. It seems that Aramă's program became uncomfortable to the communist party. Aramă shared an instance when she invited Grigore Vieru to be her talk-show guest, who was a well-known Moldovan writer and poet, and also a promoter of the Romanian language and culture. After that talk-show, Aramă was asked to not invite him again. The strict censorship that the national TV station was under during the communist era in Moldova had raised questions on a permanent basis. *Timpul de Dimineață*, however, from its beginning as an independent publication on the market openly confronted the central authorities and supported fellow journalists who struggled with this kind of issues. On an ironic note, while *Moldova Suverană's* editorialist Mihai Conțiu presented himself as a

big supporter of Vladimir Voronin and the communist party, the *Timpul de Dimineață* reporters and editorialists became the communists' worst critics. Once again, *Timpul de Dimineață* expressed their solidarity with the National TV Company, "Teleradio-Moldova" in 2013, when a large group of reporters and program producers began to protest against the company's tightened censorship. The newspaper's report indicated that Moldova's central authorities "were abusively getting involved in the national audiovisual activity" (Declarație de Protest, 2013). The protesters continued to convey their complaints, making reference to the fact that "it is categorically forbidden to criticize the Power, but not their opponents" (Declarație de Protest, 2013). Moreover, any historical or cultural programs that involved any connections to Romania were to stop explicitly was added to the declaration. The fact that *Timpul de Dimineață's* editorialist, Constantin Tănase, decided to not only report about these instances, but also give fellow journalists space in his publication to deliver a message to Moldova's central power and to all the Moldovan citizens should be praised. *Timpul de Dimineață* was becoming a voice for those hurt by the system. Ultimately, this single trait reflects on the freedom of the press and allows one to hope for a better democracy in Moldova.

Nevertheless, one of the most impressive findings when analyzing this research question refers to the neutral side *Timpul de Dimineață* endorsed and how it framed democracy. It seems that the portrayal on democracy received an equal attention of positivism and negativism, with the publication's view on democracy reaching a balanced portrayal, 41.8% of news stories framed democracy positively, while 41.8% of stories referred to democracy from a negative perspective. A similar pattern was observed when looking at the main theme democracy was associated with in news stories, and the most

dominant frame democracy received. To be more specific, the main theme that democracy received from *Timpul de Dimineață* editorialists was freedom, which falls under a positive picture. On the other hand, the equilibrium is created by the most dominant frame democracy received. The newspaper portrayed democracy as a delayed process for Moldova. When referring to freedom, the two examples that involved the national TV Company, “Teleradio-Moldova” and their courage to challenge the governance party draws the picture of a different Moldovan press. Being willing to fight for freedom and go against the Power is the definition of a free press. As an independent publication, *Timpul de Dimineață* began to call on the power and support other media institutions that would do the same.

The publication did the same for opposition politicians who suffered because of the leading power. In the same number of the newspaper, *Timpul de Dimineață* published Serafim Urecheanu’s petition to the European Counsel, the Congress of Local and Regional Powers. Urecheanu makes reference to the flagrant violations of Moldova’s leadership with the occasion of electing the mayor for the capital of Moldova (Urecheanu, 2003).

When looking at the wave of desiring freedom, one would hypothesize that Moldova was once again going through an awakening time in spite of central authorities’ desire to intimidate and scare. To some, this was the truth. Actually, 2005 was the apogee year of this wave. 2005 was the election year when the communist party had first faced a stronger opposition and because they did not win the majority vote, they could not choose the president independently. That’s when the Popular Christian Democrat Party (PPCD)

with Iurie Roșca as their leader had betrayed the hopes and wishes of the Moldovan people after leading thousands of people into massive protests against the communist party. Roșca and his party voted Vladimir Voronin in his second term as the President of the Republic of Moldova. Once again the idea of democracy in Moldova was shaded. *Timpul de Dimineață*'s main editorialist reported on the happenings and sadly confirmed the death of the opposition power in Moldova. However, Tănase (2005) decided to continue to use *Timpul de Dimineață* as a platform for sharing the truth. The editorialist writes, "We consider our writings helpful, our reader needs the truth, and we will continue to share the truth, even if this might cost us much, even though I was kindly advised to 'calm down'" (Tănase, 2005).

Democracy kept being framed as a delayed process for Moldova because of the political things that had taken place in 2005, until then, and those that followed. Tănase attributes the political democratic delay entirely to the communist party and its leadership. However, according to the editorialist, the communists aren't the only one to blame. Tănase (2007) attributes the guilt to the Moldovan democratic forces in a front cover editorial by confronting them and strongly criticizing how they practice democracy. This is what Tănase (2007) had to say about them: "Our democrats have a 'small' problem: they are good with talking, but bad with acting. This genetic affliction played their fiesta in the last 17 years."

Positive democratic frames on democracy suffered as a result of the democrats' behavior and that is why *Timpul de Dimineață*'s most dominant frame on democracy was a delayed process for Moldova. Because democracy was often associated with certain

politicians and their political parties, the frames it received were according to the politicians' reputation. Iurie Roșca's story perfectly reflects this perspective. Being the leader of a democratic party and having the courage to stand against the communists in 2005 strengthened the message on democracy and the trust in opposition powers. Unfortunately, his betrayal of the people that believed in him and supported his cause denigrated democracy and anything it promised. To a certain degree, it seems that the frames on democracy that media outlets endorsed depended on the way democratic Moldovan parties reflected democracy in the society and how committed to its premises they were.

Overall, democracy seemed to be a desired phenomenon by Moldovans according to *Timpul de Dimineață* editorials. This positive frame revealed the publication's intention to encourage its audience to a more moderate perception on democracy. Even though the economic, political and social environment in Moldova weren't very promising, the independent publication chose a constructive agenda when it came to democracy. This might be correlated to the latest achievements of Moldova's policies towards the European Union vector. Signing the Association Agreement between Moldova and the European Union on June 27, 2014, marked a monumental achievement for Moldova and its democracy. *Timpul de Dimineață* had openly expressed an anti-Russia vector for Moldova. Moreover, in numerous instances, Constantin Tănase criticized Russia's involvement in Moldovan politics, especially referring to Transnistria as Moldova's territory. To Tănase and his publication's perspective, Moldova had no future if it decided to go back to the East and have dealings with it. The East had nothing to offer when it came to democracy and exercising freedoms and liberties. The only

available option for Moldova's democracy appeared to be the West, specifically Romania and the European Union.

Indeed, the victorious momentum that took place in Bruxelles in 2014 between the EU leaders and the Moldovan Prime Minister, Iurie Leancă, marked an incredible achievement for Moldova's democracy. In his speech, prime minister Leancă expressed his willingness for Moldova to reach the end of this road by returning back home to Europe. Moreover, according to the Counsel of the European Union the signing of the Association Agreement involved cooperation from both groups,

“The signing of the Association Agreement is qualified as a historic day not only for the Republic of Moldova but also for the whole of Europe. Thus, the Republic of Moldova has firmly committed itself to democratic reforms and European cooperation, and Europeans have expressed their confidence that our desire to observe these commitments is irreversible,” (Infoeuropa.md, 2014).

The expectations to implement democratic reforms in every political and societal sphere in Moldova were high. Furthermore, the victory that Moldova experienced in Bruxelles in 2014 was to serve as an incentive for the changes that were to take place. Moldova was given another opportunity to grow and develop democratically. Unfortunately, shortly after this victory the following year, the democratic politicians betrayed the trust of the EU and failed their countrymen by corruptly stealing one billion dollars from three Moldovan banks.

Looking at the frames democracy received from *Timpul de Dimineață*, one can easily identify a pattern. It seems that since Moldova's independence and first democratic

elections the country has been going through a vicious cycle when it comes to experiencing democracy. *Timpul de Dimineață* framed democracy according to Moldova's ups and downs political-wise. The newspaper's agenda on democracy directly correlated with the behavior of the democratic powers in Moldova.

Government Owned Media Frames Democracy Positively while Independent Media
Portrays it Negatively

The analysis of each individual media outlet and the dominant frames on democracy they promoted has already provided wide understanding of the topic under analysis. The following section of the discussion chapter will focus on the comparison between independent and government owned media outlets and the dominant frames on democracy they promoted. The results indicate that independent media outlets seem to present democracy as a delayed process for Moldova while government media leaned towards framing democracy as bringing a better life.

A quick overview of the publications indicates that *Glasul Națiunii* framed democracy negatively because of Moldova's failure to reunite with the motherland and continue its path as a part of Romania. *Timpul de Dimineață* presented democracy as a delayed process for Moldova and made reference to Moldovan democratic forces that failed to reflect an authentic democracy.

Overall, it seems that independent media outlets agreed in setting a critical agenda on democracy for their audiences. The reason for this finding could be the fact that both of these publications, *Glasul Națiunii* and *Timpul de Dimineață*, had openly declared independence and that they support a Western orientation vector for Moldova. However,

Not once these publications choose to challenge Moldova's government and political elites. They courageously criticized the failure of Moldova's ruling parties when it came to implementing democratic behaviors in Moldova. For example *Timpul de Dimineață* printed a story in 2007 in which Tănase calls out the democratic forces. The editorialist writes, "The tragedy of our democrats is that they can take over the power, but they can't maintain it." Similar approaches were quite common to find on the pages of these publications.

The main theme democracy was associated with on the pages of independent media was freedom. To *Glasul Națiunii*, freedom was a well-known value when it came to democracy. Being the publication that entered Moldova hidden in a tanker trailer, *Glasul Națiunii* assumed its role and challenged the enslaved people of Moldova to be courageous and finally speak out about the torture they endured the past 50 years. Freedom was totally foreign to the Moldovan people. Ross (2009, p.10) makes reference to the kind of lifestyle people had under the Communist bloc. Freedom of speech was not even an option offered to those living enslaved by the Communists. Under these circumstances, democracy needed to be associated with freedom. The past from which they came out was characterized by fear and no freedom. Moldovans did not exist and they did not own their own country. The claim that Lenin (1917) made in *State and Revolution*, "Where state exists, there can be no freedom," was so deeply infiltrated in their minds that they were in need of someone to save them from their own mentality. *Glasul Națiunii* to a certain degree became the savior for the Moldovans' national consciousness. The newspaper's founders probably realized that talking about freedom,

exercising it and framing democracy as freedom would sooner or later hit the minds of the people and they would eventually start believing in it.

Surprisingly, *Timpul de Dimineață*'s reference of freedom to democracy took a similar portrayal as *Glasul Națiunii*, even though Tănase's publication appeared on the Moldovan media market ten years after Moldova's independence. To be more specific, history seems to surprise someone when expecting it the least. *Glasul Națiunii* entered Moldova after 50 years of Communist control. *Timpul de Dimineață* appeared on the media market the year when the Communist party in Moldova won the elections and thus it marked the beginning of a new phase in the social-political and economic life of Moldova.

Democracy.md (2018) published the following on their website:

“The absolute victory of the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) in the early parliamentary elections of February 25, 2001 allowed PCRM to elect the head of state on April 4, 2001, and thus take over the entire political power in the state. As a result, PCRM became the first communist party to come to power through free and fair elections.”

It seems that once again the Moldovan people needed saving. This time they needed to learn how to exercise freedom under the new communist era that hit Moldova for the following eight years. *Timpul de Dimineață* embraced the role of helping people and reminding them what democracy is by associating it to freedom. On the fifth anniversary as an independent publication, Constantin Tănase (2006) as the main editorialist for *Timpul de Dimineață* wrote a sensitive message to his audience.

Tănase (2006) writes:

“When we were beaten from the right and left, those that pretended to be the great and only promoters of democracy and national unity ideals, instead of fighting with the communist decay, they were fighting with us, when the slander campaign and the torrent of insults reached paranoid odds, our readers trusted us and stayed with us. If today Timpul is free on the media market and we are the most read and credible publication, it’s not our merit, but it’s our reader’s, who have matured, have become more difficult to be manipulated and don’t accept to be fed with red or orange donuts, baked in the Russian press kitchens the belong to Voronin’s party.”

It seems that Constantin Tănase’s publication is now hoping to bring the Moldovan people to a higher understanding of freedom and democracy. For most, the 1991 freedom that *Glasul Națiunii* referred to meant being independent and outside the Soviet rule. On the other hand, the 2001 freedom that *Timpul de Dimineață* presented involved valuing freedom while being under the communist rulers and their democrat allies.

That is why to these independent publications, democracy became a delayed process for Moldova. The authentic values that were to accompany democracy have been lost from one government to the next. Moreover, the return of the communist party in the Moldovan Parliament, Government and Presidency have directly contributed to these publications’ frames on democracy and how democracy was exercised in Moldova at that moment.

Unlike the independent publications, government owned outlets referred to democracy positively. Reporting about Moldova's progress, better life and human rights had become the prevailing frames during *Mesager* evening programs and *Moldova Suvernă*'s reports. To explain this outcome, one would suggest that *Mesager*, as the only evening news program nationwide, chose a more moderate perspective on sensitive issues. Democracy became a brand-new governance system for Moldova and its people. People desired liberties and freedoms after breaking free from the Soviets. The country started to reform itself and most importantly choose its own fate and direction. This seemed more than enough in the beginning of its independence. Realizing the huge responsibility, the national company, "Teleradio-Moldova" gained as the only television station on the media market at that time, its programs were to frame democracy in such a way that it would become welcomed and wanted by the Moldovan people.

Every week, *Mesager* presented progressive actions taken by the new democratic government and this way it created a specific agenda in the minds of the people on democracy. The same agenda continued afterwards. Televised news stories framed democracy in conjunction to reform and rights. As a new democratic country, Moldova's president, prime minister and the rest of the high officials were present on a daily basis in the evening news program *Mesager*. The majority of them came with almost an identical message.

First, things in Moldova are changing for the better. New reforms are being implemented in the economy, education and other areas. Such reform was referred to by *Mesager* in 1991 when the Parliamentary Committee met to elaborate the new

Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. Second, with democracy as a new and better governance system, Moldovans will be assured more rights. “All mothers who raise four or more children will receive health insurance for free from the Moldovan government,” reported *Mesager* (2007) in one of the evening news stories. Third, Moldova is entering various partnerships with both Western and Eastern countries, willing to establish lasting and mutual relationships with them. For instance, *Mesager* televised a story in December 2008 reporting about close relationships between Moldova and Bulgaria. The news story informs, “Moldova has been included in the list of priority countries to which Bulgaria as a UE member will financially assist towards its development” (*Mesager*, 2008). All these portrayals related to providing a better life for Moldovans, and directly contributed to setting an agenda in which *Mesager* incorporated positive frames on democracy.

Even though *Moldova Suverană* had openly been a government owned publication for 14 years after Moldova’s independence, it seems that it continued to operate under Vladimir Voronin’s political party even after its independence from the communist government. The laudable articles addressed to Voronin and his party persisted on the pages of *Moldova Suverană* long after the communist party was not in power. For instance, the researcher observed no difference in how the publication approached the communist government while *Moldova Suverană* represented their governing techniques and their representation in *Moldova Suverană* afterwards. An article published by Andrei Frunză in 2001 called out the democratic opposition as if they had been criticizing the political activity of the Cabinet of Ministers lead by Vasile Tarlev, prime minister of that time. To be more ironic, the author of the news report states: “It has been enough for us to experience a decade of independence to get used to

not only surviving under some democratic regulations, but to also draw the respective conclusions.” To *Moldova Suverană* the past 10 years of Moldova’s independence and democracy had been a failure. But, with the communist party establishment in the Parliament things would begin to change for the best. The better life circumstances the communist governance promised to bring was reflected on *Moldova Suverană*’s pages and the frames the governmental publication endorsed on presenting this ‘new kind’ of communist democracy to the people. Twelve years later, when *Moldova Suverană* was acting as a independent publication, an almost identical portrayal was presented by Mihai Conțiu (2013) in reference to the democratic versus communist forces in Moldova. Conțiu writes, “Neither the communists, nor the Russians are the real danger to compromising our country’s integration in the EU, but the main political actors from the governmental arch are the exact ones to blame.” Obviously, *Moldova Suverană*’s preference for the communists had continued long after the publication had supposedly become independent. To a certain degree, it almost looks like the better life frame that democracy was associated with meant getting rid of the current government and re-electing the communist party, the only one able to take Moldova all the way to Europe and finalize its integration into the EU.

In conclusion, it seems that the dominant frames that both independent and public/government owned media outlets opted for when describing democracy to their publics depended entirely on the owner’s preferences. If the media outlet belonged to independent owners it would most probably present a more critical or negative perspective on Moldova’s democracy. On the other hand, if the medium was responsible to reflect positively on the government, then Moldovan publics would come in contact

with more positive and progressive frames on democracy. Overall, government/public owned media framed democracy positively, while independent owned media set a negative portrayal agenda in reference to democracy. Graph 1 in the Appendix presents a visual on how government and independent media framed democracy between 1991 and 2014 in Moldova.

Moldova's First Phase of Democracy was Framed Positively, while Second and Third Phase Refer to Democracy as Stagnation for Moldova

Moldova's independence brought a tremendous change to the country politically, socially, and economically. With these changes, Moldova began experiencing new challenges and struggles. However, the first new democratic governance system seemed very promising when it came to freedom, rights and progress. Like any new experience, this one involved certain responsibilities from the media as an institution responsible to inform the people on democracy and facilitate the changes Moldovan citizens were to get adjusted to. Looking at Moldova's development of democracy, there are three general phases that can be observed. The following section of this chapter aims to understand and analyze how the message on democracy evolved over time and if there were any changes observed in how media outlets framed democracy from one phase to another.

Print and televised news stories tended to portray democracy as a desired lifestyle by Moldovans in the first phase of Moldova's democracy. As a facilitator of democracy, it seems that media took its role responsibly and began informing the people on democracy. Learning and following other democratic countries' political, economic and social lifestyle, Moldovan media to a certain degree advertised everything democracy

promised to offer. Moreover, *Glasul Națiunii*, as the liberator newspaper, for the first time in the last 50 years was giving people the opportunity to share about the terror they endured under the Soviet Union. Whatever democracy was, to the Moldovan people it represented freedom, liberties and rights - values democracy is associated with.

Moreover, Sujia Guo (1999) in his essay reviews the democratic transition of Eastern European and the former Soviet Union. Guo (1999) states: “In the past ten years, the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have simultaneously undergone political, economic, and social transformations and brought about the undeniable success of democratic transition.” It seems that Moldova’s democratic transition started to transform successfully.

According to Richard Ross (2009, p.9), Moldovans were trying to “escape from the past” by calling out its wrongs and exchanging it for a promising future. Indeed, the historical events that followed in Moldova with the country’s independence seemed very promising. Marea Adunare Națională (Great National Assembly) that took place on August 27, 1991 gathered thousands of Moldovans willing to decide the future of their country. That same day an extraordinary meeting of the parliament was summoned during which the Declaration of Independence was adopted with a majority of votes, reports Bernard Noghiu (2011). Through this official act, Republic of Moldova was breaking away from the USSR and continuing its independent and democratic path. Holding the first democratic elections in February 1990, declaring the sovereignty of Republic of Moldova and choosing the red, yellow and blue Tricolor for the national flag have contributed to creating a spirit of victory and freedom in the hearts of the people.

The fact that mass media constantly reported on these achievements would to a certain degree set an agenda on democracy intended to reach the Moldovan people and make them believe in everything democracy offered. After the first elections and the inauguration of the first president, Mircea Snegur, things continued to be positively framed by the media. *Mesager's* evening news program, *Glasul Națiunii's* front-page articles and *Moldova Suverană's* reports from the Moldovan government seemed to convey a similar message on democracy. Some of these messages focused on the mutually beneficial partnerships between Republic of Moldova and other countries. Other media messages reported on specific reforms implemented in economy, administration, education and other areas.

In reference to the first phase of Moldova's democracy, it seems that the excitement freedom brought to the Moldovan people was not only experienced by the civil society, it was also present in print publications and in televised news stories. By reporting about these positive changes Moldova was practicing, the national media framed a positive portrayal on democracy and presented it as a desired phenomenon to the Moldovan people. It seems that media's purpose resulted in setting a welcoming agenda on democracy in the minds of the people and convincing them to embrace democracy and act accordingly.

Guo (1999) adds in his essay on "Democratic Transition: A Critical Overview" that "the subsequent consolidation" of the transition countries from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union "has been complicated and far from completed." This scenario was true for Moldova too. Unlike the first phase on democracy, the second and the third

phase seem to take an opposite portrayal in the Moldovan media. The excitement democracy brought in the beginning of the 1990s soon faded away due to the struggles people started to experience. Failing economically and politically led Republic of Moldova into a deep poverty and distrust in the new governance system. Democracy was no longer seen as freedom, liberties or rights. On the contrary, to most Moldovan families democracy meant being poor, losing your job, having no money to buy food and ultimately being forced to leave your family and travel illegally abroad in search of a job that would provide daily necessities for your family. Close to the end of 1990s over 1 million Moldovans went to Western or Eastern countries in search of jobs. Because the first two democratic governments failed to make of democracy what they had promised, in 2001 Moldovans elected the Communist party to lead Moldova.

Moldova's election choice shocked the entire world considering Moldova was the only former Soviet Republic that elected a Communist party after the fall of the Soviet Union. This political change awoke the media to a new reality. Under the communists' two consecutive mandates, non-communist media struggled to report objectively on the political situation in Moldova. Moreover, instances of censorship often prevailed in both public and private publications. Resulting from these circumstances, Moldovan media framed democracy as struggling with the same old problems and bringing no solutions to the people. Now, when both independent and public owned media publications began being reviewed by the government, the message on democracy suffered as well.

The third phase was not too promising either, even though the Communist party was removed from the government after peaceful protests against the "communist

pressure” were organized on April 7, 2009, by the Moldovan youth, reported Valentina Ursu’s interviewee in a 2013 report on Europa Liberă. That same year, the first Alliance for European Integration was created. The Alliance brought four democratic parties together and things began to change for the better after that. *Moldova Suverană* (2013) printed Vlad Filat’s, then prime-minister, opinion on the first (2009-2010) and the second (2010-2013) Alliance activity. “Undoubtedly, the Alliance for European Integration has had several important achievements. The AEI ended the authoritarian government of the Communists and relaunched the Republic of Moldova on the path of building an authentic democracy,” stated the former prime minister. Unfortunately, the permanent conflicts between the Alliance’s leaders and their different political views brought the country to its knees again when they corruptively plotted and stole one billion US dollars from three national banks of Moldova in 2013.

To provide some context here, one should understand that Moldova was considered to be the poorest country in Europe even before the theft took place. After the money, equaling about 12% of the GDP, disappeared, the country entered into an economic collapse. Prices increased while salaries did not. The average monthly salary in the economy, predicted for 2017, is 5300 lei, equalling 317.55 US dollars, reports Diana Pleașcă (2016). Once more the image of democracy was blunted because of these corrupt events that democratic parties were involved in. As a result, the frames that Moldovan media endorsed on democracy took a different perspective from the frames dominant in the first democratic phase Moldova encountered.

Despite Moldova's political and economic struggles, both independent and government/public media agreed on the overall frame of democracy and portrayed it as a positive phenomenon for Moldova. This finding seems very promising when considering the difficult circumstances Moldova transitioned to from 2001 until 2014. The second phase of Moldova's democracy seems to have taken a positive portrayal because of Voronin's control over the public and government owned media. It is also important to mention that *Glasul Națiunii* went entirely online in 2010 and therefore the newspaper's perspective could not challenge the portrayal on democracy during Voronin's era. To explain the positive portrayal attributed to democracy in the third phase, one should mention its victorious beginning when the democratic oriented parties create the Alliance of European Integration and managed to remove the communist party from reaching the majority in the Parliament. Also, it seems that the Pact of Association to the EU has influenced media frames on democracy during this time.

Once again, these findings indicate that Moldova media's frames on democracy were strictly correlated with the political and economical situation that was going on in Moldova at that time. Ideologically speaking, the second and third phase of democracy is pursued by many as a step back for democracy. Moreover, democracy seems to be shaped around the dominant political government that led Moldova at one time or another. Either way, the second and third phase of Moldova's democracy received a mixture of positive portrayals, but negative frames from the media. It seems that Moldovan media did not create the news, but instead it reported the news. To be able to reflect a portrayal on a given object or idea, one needs to visualize the prototype first. That is why in the second and third phase of Moldova's democracy, the prototype on what democracy looked like

depended entirely on the things that were taking place in society at that time. Moreover, the European Commission (1997) makes reference to a "Eurobarometer" analysis of democracy that involves 20 European countries located in central and eastern Europe and the results did not reflect a very positive picture. Moreover, citizens (76% of those questioned) of the former Soviet Union were unhappy with the way democracy was developing in their countries.

To conclude the discussion chapter, the researcher needs to step back from looking at each research question individually and try to understand them as a whole in order to generalize the results and see the entire picture. Looking at Moldova's democratic progress it is safe to suggest that Moldova's democracy can be described as a cycle that repeats itself. In 1989 Moldova begins to move away from the Soviet Union and desires freedom. In 1991 the country becomes officially free and independent. Soon after that, poverty, corruption and human trafficking kneel the country at the feet of the Communist Party. The message on democracy stagnates for eight years and freedom is under attack. Voronin's era ends with a massive protest removing the Communists from the Parliament and having the democratic oriented parties take over the country. Would it not be incredible for the story to end here, one would wonder?

Unfortunately, Moldova goes back to where it started. The media reports on democratic parties stealing from their own citizens one billion dollars and indebting the country and the generations to come. As a result of the democratic parties' failure, once again Moldovans turn their eyes from the Western vector towards the Eastern iron fist and elect Igor Dodon, an upright promoter of Russia as president of Moldova in 2016.

History seems to repeat itself when it comes to Moldova's political choices. Due to this political instability, Moldova's democracy continues to struggle to overcome the transition regime that has been going on for the past 26 years. Who is to blame for this? The media, the politicians, the geographical location, the mentality of the people...

This is believed to be the first research examining the dominant frames that Moldovan media endorsed on democracy since the country's independence in 1991. There were three primary reasons this study was necessary. First, Moldova's democracy has been struggling since the first steps the country took towards democracy. Mass media as a facilitator of democracy plays a significant role in setting an agenda and create public awareness of salient issues. Therefore, observing the agenda Moldovan media endorsed on democracy would bring great contributions and help to better understand Moldova's democracy. Second, after Moldova broke free from the Soviet Union little research has been conducted on the country's media. To the knowledge of the researcher, no studies have looked at the role that media played in the beginning of Moldova's independence and the frames it promoted for the next 24 years. Third, analyzing both print and televised news stories will add to the study's importance. Moreover, the fact that the researcher looked at independent, public and government owned publications will add to the body of knowledge and help one understand the vacillating ideas Moldovan media endorsed when reporting on democracy from 1991 until 2014.

This dissertation identified that *Glasul Națiunii* as an independent publication endorsed a negative portrayal on democracy. The most dominant frame referred to no solutions, but same old problems that people struggled with. However, the liberating

message that this publication stirred in the minds of the people associated with freedom. *Glasul Națiunii*, as the first publication printed in the Romanian language, promoted freedom and strived to associate democracy with Moldova's orientation toward the motherland - Romania. To *Glasul Națiunii*, democracy meant returning to the cultural and historical roots of Moldova and continuing its future by reuniting with Romania.

On the other hand, the only TV company "Teleradio-Moldova" that provided national coverage during and for quite some time after Moldova's independence endorsed a positive perspective on democracy during *Mesager* evening news programs. The most dominant frames on democracy were associated with better life and human rights. Because *Mesager* mostly reported on the activity of the government, the evening news program associated democracy with reforms and progress the country was making.

As a government publication for most of the time under analysis, *Moldova Suverană* framed democracy as a positive phenomenon. Because the publication was representing the government, it positively reflected on it and framed democracy as a better life. However, significant changes on the dominant frames the publication endorsed were observed after the publication became independent. After 2005, *Moldova Suverană* attributed a negative frame to democracy and presented it as bringing no solutions.

When *Timpul de Dimineață* appeared on the market Moldova was already ending its first democratic phase. As an independent publication, *Timpul de Dimineață* presented democracy from both positive and negative perspectives. The most dominant theme that democracy was associated with was freedom. *Timpul de Dimineață* entered the media

market when the communist party won the majority of mandates in the Moldovan Parliament in 2001. Constantin Tănase as the main editorialist used his voice to promote the message on democracy and encouraged his audience to not give up their freedoms. Even though democracy was framed as a delayed process for Moldova, the editorialist challenged the people to see beyond that and believe in an authentic democratic Moldova.

Independent media presented democracy as a delayed process for Moldova while public and government media leaned towards a more positive frame presenting democracy as bringing a better life to its people. To the independent media it was important to set the agenda on democracy focusing on the freedoms it provides while the public and government owned media referred to democracy by pointing to the reforms the country was accomplishing.

Moldova's democracy experienced several peculiar phases since the country gained its independence from the Soviet Union. The first phase framed democracy positively and presented it as a desired lifestyle by Moldovans. The second and third phase portrayed democracy from a negative angle, specifically referring to the same old problems people struggled with.

Overall, the researcher came to conclude that media's portrayal on democracy from 1989 until 2014 depended on two factors. First, the set agenda on democracy directly correlated with the publication's editorial policy. Second, the frames on democracy depended on the political, social and economical situation the country was going through. For instance, if the media was owned by the government or sponsored by it, then democracy took a more positive presentation. The media outlets focused on the

reforms, progress and desired changes the new governance system brought to Moldova. On the contrary, if the media was independent, then it endorsed a more critical perspective on how democracy was practiced by politicians - those responsible to imitate democracy and present it to the Moldovan people. To touch on the second factor, it seems that if things were going well politically and economically, the frames on democracy were taking a more positive stance too. When the country was struggling it was reflected in the frames democracy took.

The European Commission (2008) draws a conclusion that probably reflects on Moldova's situation when it comes to democracy. This is what the Commission (2008) reported:

A country's political institution and practices are often shaped by its history, culture, social and economic factors. Democratization is not a linear process that moves from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. It is a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary process that moves back and forth, where some institutions are more developed than others. A functioning democracy therefore requires many interdependent elements and processes that are based on a culture of citizen participation in public affairs.

Moldova's democratization process is not an exception when it comes to its political institutions. The media as an independent institution should challenge the citizens to engage in public affairs. Until the media embraces this role and is willing to exercise control over politicians and other state institutions, Moldova will not be able to

brag on its democracy and Moldovan people will not be involved in the decision making processes in their country.

The practical implications of this study focus on the knowledge obtained and the impact it can foster among media practitioners. This research can potentially help media outlets understand the significant role they play when setting an agenda in order to create public awareness. Moreover, when media choose to frame particular salient issues in a democratic society, they play “the role of civic teacher” (McCombs, 2004, p. 51) and ultimately influence the public opinion. This dissertation research adds to the body of knowledge being the first ever research study that analyzes media framing on democratic government ideology.

Research Limitations and Future Studies

The author faced several challenges in completing this dissertation work. *Mesager* evening news stories from 1993-1995 and 2001 until 2006 were missing from the archives. The researcher was told that these folders were either not preserved or they were lost in a flood that took place during one of those years. Because the researcher collected the data by taking pictures of televised news scripts and newspaper articles, some images turned out blurry and were impossible to read and include in the study. A potential source of error or bias could be attributed to the conscious or unconscious cultural background of the coders used in the study. Their political preference could have influenced them during the coding procedure. Finally, there were not an equal number of articles to represent each media outlet included in this study. The range difference between these numbers could have slightly skewed the results of the study.

Future research should add more nationwide coverage publications that appeared on the market later and repeat the study. It would also be useful to analyze regional publications and their take on framing democracy after Moldova's independence. Finally, after analyzing media messages and frames on democracy, it would be extremely interesting to survey the audience that came in contact with *Glasul Națiunii*, *Moldova Suverană*, *Timpul de Dimineată*, or watched *Mesager* evening news stories and analyze their perceptions on the dominant frames these publications presented.

APPENDIX A- Tables

Table 1 *Primary topic in Glasul Națiunii*

Primary Topic	F	%	Cum%
Political relations	12	17.1	17.1
Elections	1	1.4	18.6
Economy	5	7.1	25.7
Education	1	1.4	27.1
Moldovan	19	27.1	54.3
International			
Relations/Issues	22	31.4	85.7
Culture/Custom	4	5.7	91.4
Human rights	6	8.6	100.0
Other	70	100.0	
Total			

Table 2 *Dominant frames in Mesager*

Frame Category	F	Valid %	Cum%
Desired by Moldovans	36	18.8	18.8
Not Desired by Moldovans	3	1.6	20.3
Delayed process	10	5.2	25.5
Better life	40	20.8	46.4
Uniting with Romania	2	1.0	47.4
Becoming part of EU	13	6.8	54.2
Human rights	40	20.8	75.0
Enmity with Russia	20	10.4	85.4
Poorer Conditions	5	2.6	88.0
No solutions, same old problems	15	7.8	95.8
Other	8	4.2	100.0
Total	192	100.0	

Table 3 *Dominant frames in Timpul de Dimineață*

Frame Category	F	Valid %	Cum%
Desired by Moldovans	45	27.3	27.3
Not Desired by Moldovans	4	2.4	29.7
Delayed process	53	32.1	61.8
Better life	15	9.1	70.9
Uniting with Romania	8	4.8	75.8
Human rights	11	6.7	82.4
Enmity with Russia	11	6.7	89.1
No solutions, same old problems	15	9.1	98.2
Other	3	1.8	100.0
Total	165	100	

APPENDIX B - Figures

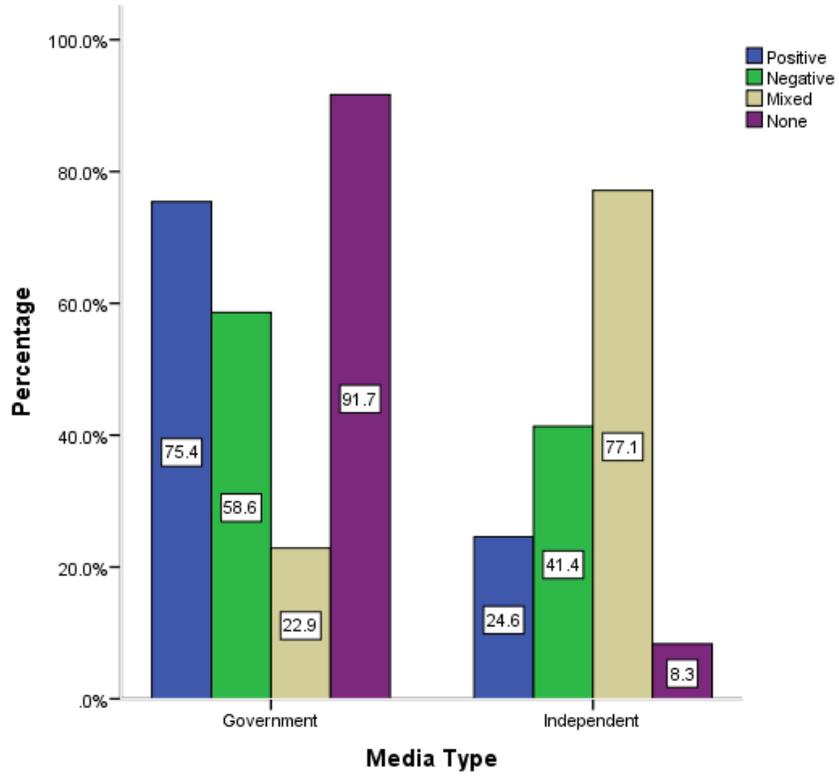


Figure 1. Democracy framed by media type

APPENDIX C – Coding Materials

Coding Sheet

General Information

1. Article ID# _____ . Title (write the author of the article too):
2. Coder # _____
3. Type of media
0=Television 1= Newspaper
4. Name of media outlet
1= Mesager 2 = Glasul Națiunii 3 = Moldova Suverană 4 =
Timpul de Dimineață
5. Year of News/Article _____ Month _____ Day _____

6. What is the format of the piece?

- 1= news report 2 = opinion 3 = feature 4 = investigation
5 = news summary 6 = interview 7 = mixed 8 = other

7. What is the geographical region of news story?

- 1 = National interest 2 = International interest 3 = Mixed

If you answered international interest, do not answer the following questions.

8. If it is national interest region, specify?

- 1 = Rural 2 = Urban 3 = Mixed

Topic

9. Of the primary topic listed below which one is the main one of this article?

- 1 = Political relations 2 = Elections 3 = Economy 4 =
Education 5 = Moldovan International Relations/Issues 6 =
Culture/Custom 7 = Human rights 8 = other

Based on the selection for previous question, which type of subtopic best fits the article?

10. If political: 1 = Moldovan political democratic process flourishes/achievements 2 = Moldovan political democratic regression 3 =
Pro-Government supporting protests 4 = anti-Moldovan government protests 5 =
other

11. If elections: 1 = Moldovan elections correctly conducted 2 = Moldovan elections falsification 3 = the opposition parties achieve the majority in Parliament 4 = leading parties achieve majority in Parliament 5 = other

12. If economy: 1 = Reforms/renovations in economy/job prospects opportunities, high salaries 2 = Weak/late reforms in Moldovan economy (poor economy and working conditions in Moldova, low salaries) 3 = International relations profiting Moldovan economy (funds and grants offered to Moldova to invest in economy)

4 = Moldovan citizens working in EU countries 5 = Moldovan citizens working in Russia 6 = Other

13. If education: 1 = good education services (good schools, great teaching, enough teachers, more education reforms, etc.) 2 = poor education (bad schools,

poor teaching, few teachers, no reforms, cheating on exams, school violence etc.)

3 = Other

14. Moldovan International Relations/Issues: 1 = relations/meetings with Romania 2 = relations with Northern/Western countries (EU countries including Romania) 3 = relations/meetings with Russia 4 = relations/meetings with Southern/Eastern countries including Russia/CSI countries 5 = international law that involves Moldova 6 = other

15. If culture/custom: 1 = National cultural aspects 2 = Romanization

3 = Westernization 4 = Russification 5 = other

16. If Moldovan Human rights: 1 = Women's rights; 2 = Religious rights

3 = Children's rights 4 = Minorities rights (ethnic, disability, etc.)

5 = Freedom of Speech 6 = Other 7 = Mixed

Democracy

17. Is the word democracy mentioned in the title of story/editorial? - N/A for TV stories

1 = Yes 0 = No

18. Is the word democracy mentioned in the news story/editorial?

1 = Yes 0 = No

19. Is the story/editorial referring to democracy in general?

1 = Yes 0 = No (If you answered no, do not answer the following

questions)

Frames

20. What is main theme democracy is associated with in the story/editorial?

Maybe add reforms as another variable

1 = Freedom 2 = Equality 3 = Rights 4 = Diversity 5 = Control

6 = Reforms

7 = Other

21. If democracy is discussed in the news story, how is it framed?

1 = Positive 2 = Negative 3 = Mixed 4 = None

22. What frame/portrayal is the dominant one in regards to democracy in the news story/editorial?

1 = desired/welcomed by Moldovans 2 = not desired by Moldovans 3 = a delayed process for Moldova 4 = better life 5 = uniting with Romania

6 = becoming part of the EU 7 = human rights/better facilities

8 = enmity with Russia 9 = poorer conditions 10 = no

solutions, same old problems 11 = other _____

Role of Media

23. What political function (Votmer) does the TV news story/editorial reflect?

1 = Watchdog 2 = Informing the public (with the information they need to participate in the democratic process) 3 = Forum for different voices, (both official and alternative, to mobilize the public support for their cause) 4 = Mixed

5 = other

24. Is the news story/editorial representing opposing opinions?

1 = Yes 0 = No

Sources

25. Does the news story/editorial use any sources?

1 = Yes 0 = No

If the answer is NO, don't answer the following questions on sources.

26. Are diverse/opposing sources interviewed in the story?

1 = Yes 0 = No

27. Are any of the sources interviewed reporting anything about democracy?

1 = Yes 0 = No

If you answered NO, do not answer to following questions.

28. What kind of sources report about democracy in the story/editorial?

1 = national sources 2 = international sources 3 = mixed (national and

international

If you answered international sources, skip question 29 and 30.

29. If national, what sources report about democracy in story/editorial specifically?

1 = central authorities 2 = local authorities 3 = businesses

4 = independent experts 5 = citizens 6 = mixed 7 = other

If the answer is not central authorities, skip question 30.

30. If central authorities

1 = president 2 = parliament 3 = government 4 =
judiciary 5 = mixed

31. What perspective do most sources support?

1 = pro-democracy 2 = anti-democracy 3 = mixed (pro and anti)

4 = none

Coding Book

General Information

Article ID # - Each news story/editorial will be numbered. Title: title of article

Coder # - Each coder will write their name on the coding sheet to be able to distinguish between the articles coded by different coders.

Type of Media - Each media outlet will be coded separately.

0 - Television

1 - Newspaper

Name of Media Outlet - Each media outlet will be coded separately.

1 - Mesager

2 - Glasul Națiunii

3 - Moldova Suverană

4 - Timpul de Dimineață

Year of article - year when article was published, month and date.

Format of the piece:

1 - news report - general informative story

2 - opinion - a journalistic material that makes no claim of objectivity. It desires to form subjective viewpoints, usually with some social or political purpose.

3 - feature - journalistic material where facts are imbedded in or interwoven with scenes and small stories that show rather than simply tell the information that is conveyed. Often features are framed by the specific experiences of those who drive the news or those who are affected by it.

4 - investigation - reporters deeply investigate a single topic of interest, such as serious crimes, political corruption, or corporate wrongdoing.

5 - news summary - a description on multiple news stories that are shortly referred to in a news program

6 - interview - a meeting or conversation in which a writer or reporter asks questions of one or more persons from whom material is sought for a newspaper story, television broadcast, etc. (According to Thesaurus.com)

7 - mixed - a mixture of two or more of these formats.

8 - other - a different journalistic piece, other than what has been listed above.

7. Geographical region of news story:

1 - national interest - if the news story/editorial focuses on national/internal issues in reference to a specific country

2 - international interest - when the news story/editorial focuses on a foreign country and does not mention or emphasize anything on Moldova

3 - mixed - a mixture of national and international issues covered in the story or the story focuses on Moldova's international presence

8. If national interest region:

1 - rural - news story covers information on villages in Moldova

2 - urban - news story covers information on cities Moldova

3 - mixed - news story covers both, rural and urban aspects of Moldova

Topic

9. Primary topic listed below:

1 - political relations - news story emphasizes a political aspect of Moldova, including government, parliament, president, relationships between national political leaders; any achievements/failures of politicians and government representatives.

2 - elections - elections won't be treated as a political aspect. News stories which explain the voting process, issues, results and manifestations.

3 - economy - news story refers to the economic aspects in Moldova, specific economic reforms accepted or denied, any kind of international help towards the Moldovan economy.

4 - education - news story refers to education situation/aspect in Moldova; news story refers to teaching institutions, reforms or struggles they face

5 - Moldovan international relations - news story describes the connections and partnerships Moldova has with other countries and their representatives. News story also focuses on any international laws that deal with Moldova.

6 - culture/custom - news story emphasize the traditional/cultural aspects of Moldovans (language), if Moldovans lean towards western values or culture, or eastern values or culture.

7 - Moldovan human rights - specifically referring to humans rights; it refers to different categories of people (women's rights, religious rights, children's rights, minorities, freedom of speech).

8 - Other - any other topic that is not listed above

10. If political:

1 - Moldovan political democratic process flourishes/achievements - news story explains that politicians are more democratic and the policies they propose are oriented towards a more democratic life in Moldova. News story lists a variety of political achievements they have reached. The government takes positive initiative and comes with new policies that would benefit Moldova.

2 - Moldovan political democratic regression/issues/corruption - new story emphasizes that Moldovan politics are not embracing any democratic values and reformation

3 - Pro-government supporting protests - when citizens meet in a large number to express their support towards the government

4 - Anti-government protests - when citizens meet in a large number to criticize and share their criticism towards the Moldovan government

5 - Other - any other political themes that are presented in news story.

11. If elections:

1 - Moldovan elections correctly administrated - news story reports on the voting process as being correctly organized with no falsifications and cheating

2 - Moldovan elections falsifications - news story reports on the voting process as a falsified event where cheating and lying are involved in order for a specific politician or party to win the elections.

3 - the opposition parties achieve the majority in the Parliament - news story emphasizes that after elections the opposition parties have gained the majority of votes and they will accede into the Parliament

4 - leading parties achieve majority in the Parliament - news story explains that after elections the leading party remains to rule Moldovan due to the fact that they obtained the majority of seats in the Parliament

5 - other - any other theme that involved elections

12. If economy:

1 - Reforms/renovations in economy - news story refers to specific economic achievements that Moldova reaches, for instance higher salaries, more jobs, better working conditions, etc.

2 - Weak/late reforms in Moldovan economy - news story reports about economy as being poor in Moldova, where people can't find a job, low salaries and low working conditions

3 - International relations profiting Moldovan economy - news story reports about specific funds and grants offered to Moldova to invest in economy and make it better

4 - Moldovan citizens working in EU countries - news story reports about Moldovan citizens that travelled to EU countries and work there

5 - Moldovan citizens working in Russia - news story reports about Moldovan citizens that travelled to Russia and work there

6 - Other - any other theme that involves Moldovan economy

13. If education:

1 - Good education services - news story explains that Moldova's education is improving, better schools, better teaching, better learning environment, more books, etc.

2 - Poor education services - new story reports about education as being in a very bad shape with more schools closing down because of lack of teachers and students; students cheat when they take exams; violence persists in schools, etc.

3 - Other - any other theme that involves education in Moldova

14. Moldovan International Relations/Issues:

1 - relations/meetings with Romania - news story reports about the political, economic, social, cultural, etc. relationships between Moldova and Romania

2 - relations with Eastern countries (EU, all except Romania) - news story reports about the political, economic, social, cultural, etc. relationships between Moldova and the European Union

3 - relations/meetings with Russia - news story reports about the political, economic, social, cultural, etc. relationships between Moldova and Russia

4 - relations/meetings with eastern countries (all except Russia) - news story reports about the political, economic, social, cultural, etc. relationships between Moldova and eastern countries (all except Russia)

5 - international law that involves Moldova - news story reports about Moldova as part of the international law agenda

6 - Other - any other theme that involves Moldovan International Relations

15. If culture/custom:

1 - national cultural aspects - news story reports about national Moldovan culture and traditions and emphasizes their characteristics

2 - Romanization - news story reports about Moldovan people supporting Romanian cultural values/customs and traditions

3 - westernization - news story reports about Moldovan people leaning toward western values/customs and promoting these values in Moldova

4 - Russification - news story reports about Moldovan people leaning toward Russian values/customs and promoting these values in Moldova

5 - Other - any other theme that involves culture/custom in Moldova

16. If Moldovan Human rights:

1 - women's rights - news story reports about the rights that women have in Moldova, either from a positive perspective or a negative perspective

2 - religious rights - news story reports about religious rights that people have in Moldova, either positive or negative

3 - children's rights - news story reports about the rights that children have in Moldova, either positive or negative

4 - minorities rights - news story reports about minorities rights (ethnic, disability, etc.) that people have in Moldova, either positive or negative

5 - Other - any other theme that involved Moldovan human rights

6 = Mixed - a mixture of rights

Democracy

17. The word 'democracy' mentioned in title - find if the word "democracy is part of the title"

1 - Yes

0 - No

18. The word 'democracy' mentioned in news story - find if the word "democracy is part of the story"

1 - Yes

0 - No

19. Story/editorial referring to democracy in general - when news story refers to democracy in general (speaks about freedoms, rights, liberties, democratic reforms, independence, progress, etc.)

1 - Yes

0 - No

Frames

20. Democracy associated with:

1 - freedom - news story refers to liberties (press, political, economic, social, cultural, religious etc.).

2 - equality - news story refers to the equal rights people have in a society. News story reports on the government providing equal treatment to all citizens.

3 - rights - news story reports on the freedoms and liberties people have in a democratic society, politically, economically, socially and culturally wise, etc.

4 - diversity - news story reports about different ideas and alternative views are present in the content of news story.

5 - control - news story reports about citizens controlling their representatives. This also implies that political institutions, first and foremost participants

and governments, have such control over policies as is enabled by the people's will and jurisdiction," explains Bühlmann and colleagues (2008).

6 - other - other than the choices offered above

21. Democracy framed:

1 - positive - news story portrays democracy from a positive/good for the citizens or a welcoming phenomena; democracy is portrayed by the journalist from a positive perspective in the context of Moldova's political situation - positive and supportive reforms are proposed to be taken to make democracy better

2 - negative - news story portrays democracy from a negative/bad for the citizens. No positive changes, same old problems; democracy is portrayed by the journalist from a negative perspective in the context of Moldova's political situation - the way democracy is exercised in Moldova is criticized by the journalist/media outlet because democracy is not promoted by politicians or other groups of people and not practiced according to its authentic principles.

3 - Mixed - a combination of both positive and negative frames

4 = none - not directly discussed in the story

22. Dominant frame

1 - desired/welcomed by Moldovans - news story emphasizes that Moldovans are eagerly accepting democracy as a political system. They welcome the democratic reforms and support a democratic future for Moldova.

2 - not desired by Moldovans - democracy is presented in news story as a negative phenomena, citizens dislike the reform and criticize the political system.

3 - delayed process for Moldova - democracy is portrayed as a positive, but a slow process to implement in a former Soviet country. It takes too long for things to get better in politics, economy, human rights, culture, etc.

4 - better life - news story emphasizes that democracy promises to offer a better facilities, including better salaries, better jobs, better political situation, better life conditions.

5 - uniting with Romania - news story reports about the option of uniting with Romania and becoming one country again. By becoming one country, Moldova's democracy could take a more positive image.

6 - becoming part to the EU - news story explains that Moldova's way to democracy is by becoming a part of EU.

7 - human rights - news story explains/reports about human rights that are a priority in a democratic country.

8 - enmity with Russia - news story reports that by becoming more democratic and uniting with EU or Romania, this would mean starting an enmity relationship with Russia.

9 - poorer life/condition - news story explains that democracy for Moldovans would still mean a poor life with no reforms, no jobs, no better conditions.

10 - no solutions, same old problems - new story explains that democracy hasn't provided Moldovans with a better life. Instead the same old problems persist and no solutions are offered.

12 - other - any other frame that is not listed in the options above.

Role of Media

23. Political function (dominant one)

1 - watchdog - the news story is informing the public on the misuse of power of the government officials.

2 - informing the public - news story supplies the citizens with the information they need so they can meaningfully and responsibly be capable to participate in the democratic process of their country.

3 - forum for different voices - the news story in itself is a platform for different voices, both governing or opposition representatives and encouraging the public to support their cause.

4 - other - any other functions that are not listed above, specify the function

24. News story representing opposing opinion

1 - yes - news story has more than one perspective presented in its content; people with different opinions are interviewed.

0 - no - news story supports only a single point of view and all the people or sources interviewed support this point of view.

Sources

25. News story uses sources

1 - yes - news story provides multiple voices in its content. A source can be any politician, expert, or any ordinary citizen.

0 - no - news story does not provide any voices. No state representatives were quoted in the news story.

26. Diverse/opposing sources interviewed in the story.

1 - yes - news story provides/quotes opposing sources. By opposing, it means sources that share different opinions on the same issue, or sources representing opposing political parties.

0 - no - news story provides sources, but they do not share an opposing perspective. All news sources support a similar perspective.

27. Any sources interviewed report about democracy

-1 yes - any of the sources specifically report about democracy (see question 22 to better understand frames on democracy), either pro or against.

0 - no - neither of the sources interviewed report anything about democracy.

28. Kind of sources that report about democracy

1 - national sources - all the people interviewed in the report are Moldovans

2 - international sources - the people that are interviewed are not Moldovans, they are all representing a foreign nation

3 - mixed - the sources interviewed are both Moldovans and representing other nationalities too

29. Sources that report about democracy

1 - central authorities - president, parliament, government

2 - local authorities - local council and the mayor

3 - businesses - representatives that represent any company or business

4 - independent experts - professional experts representing different non-governmental organizations

5 - citizens - ordinary people

6 - mixed - a mixture of two or more categories of sources

7 = other

30. If central authorities

1 - president - the Moldovan president is quoted/gives interview in the news story.

2 - officials from the parliament - representatives of the parliament and are quoted in the news story.

3 - government - representatives of the government are quoted/interviewed in the news story

4 - judicial - any representatives from the judicial system in Moldova quoted/interviewed in the news story

5 - mixed - a mixture of two or more categories of sources

31. Perspective of sources

1 - pro-democracy - most sources support a pro-democracy perspective, human rights, freedoms and liberties

0 - anti-democracy - most sources support an anti-democracy perspective, criticizing democracy and its peculiarities

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