Current Dimensions of Affirming National Dignity in a Pluricultural Context

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Abstract: The article analyses the contemporary dimensions of affirming national dignity within the current pluricultural context, characterized by accelerated social dynamics, globalization processes, and the intensification of interactions among cultures. National dignity is approached as an axiological expression of collective identity, grounded in historical, cultural, and symbolic values assumed at both individual and community levels. From this perspective, national dignity reflects a community's capacity to value its own identity, to affirm continuity, and to maintain cohesion within a space shaped by cultural diversity. Several current dimensions of affirming national dignity are highlighted. The cultural dimension focuses on promoting language, traditions, and tangible and intangible heritage as markers of historical continuity. The axiological dimension emphasizes the assumption of moral, civic, and spiritual values that support collective self-respect and social responsibility. The educational dimension underlines the role of forming identity awareness, values education, and the development of respect for cultural plurality. The communicative dimension is expressed through intercultural dialogue, value exchange, and the capacity to represent national identity within an open framework of intercultural relations. The civic and institutional dimension reflects the affirmation of national dignity through public policies, normative frameworks, and social initiatives aimed at protecting identity and promoting community cohesion. The content emphasizes the affirmation of national dignity as an open, relational, and dynamic process, achieved through valuing one's own identity in interaction with other cultures. National dignity is outlined as a resource for identity balance, community cohesion, and social responsibility, with relevance for integrating national dignity within a contemporary pluricultural space.

Keywords: national dignity; national identity; pluriculturalism; intercultural dialogue; national values

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1. Introduction

The finding that today's society is going through a moment of interference between major historical epochs is frequently present in the literature. This context is characterized by large-scale transformations, such as globalization, Europeanization, population mobility, socio-economic, epidemiological or demographic dynamics, manifested at global, continental, national and local level.

In its historical evolution, each people or nation has been constituted on a territory in a continuous process of becoming, through the affirmation of the language, culture, traditions inherited from previous generations. Within this framework, *the national identity* is built through the human community, the living space, the language, the culture and the traditions transmitted, which support the historical continuity and cohesion of a nation.

The population is the defining component of any state, and the Republic of Moldova is part of the same logic of state organization. The existence of a state is conditioned by the presence of a human community, organized in a coherent social form, subject to a common legal framework, based on general rules and equal rights. The state is constituted as a community of people who live together on the same territory and participate in social life according to established norms. One of the most sensitive problems faced by many states is the coexistence of ethnic groups. In the current stage of development of human society, marked by computerization, globalization and population mobility, this issue acquires an increased relevance. The rights and freedoms of cohabiting national minorities are a major concern both in state policies and in international relations, being considered an indicator of respect for democratic principles and social cohesion.

In the context of the profound changes that characterize today's society, there is a need to reflect on how human dignity and national dignity can be maintained, as well as on the conception that can sustain the continuity and endurance of a people. These questions concern both the collective dimension and individual responsibility, being present in the constant concerns of the community.

2. National Dignity

Maintaining national dignity and verticality implies assuming responsibility for protecting and developing one's own identity, in relation to the processes of European integration and openness to European and universal values. In this framework, it becomes necessary to think openly, with a global perspective, as well as a rigorous clarification of the place and its own role in the dynamics of the current social and cultural space.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the statement that the recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of the human family, as well as their equal and inalienable rights, constitutes the basis of freedom, justice and peace worldwide: "Considering that the recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of the human family and of their equal and inalienable rights constitutes the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..." (I DOUBT). This formulation highlights the fact that human dignity is a reference value within international society, from which the fundamental rights and freedoms of the person derive.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, include convergent provisions on dignity in the preamble. Both documents underline the idea that the recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of the human family and of their equal and inalienable rights is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace, rights that have their origin in the dignity of the human person. The States Parties to the present Covenant, considering that, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of the human family and of their equal and inalienable rights inalienable constitute the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world; recognizing that these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person...".

In the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, *human dignity* is enshrined as the supreme value of the state.

According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (dex), dignity is defined as the quality of being dignified, reflected by an attitude marked by moral authority, gravity and greatness. From an etymological perspective, the term has its origin in the Latin *dignitas, -atis*, derived from the word *dign.*

Conceptually, national dignity is considered by some authors as a supreme value of any people, being linked to the historical past and to the truth, motivating and

determining the continuity in history of a community. It involves a *deep respect for national identity* and awareness of the nation's distinct cultural traits; it includes knowledge of the nation's contribution to world culture, loyalty to the national community, and a commitment to contributing to its well-being. National dignity should not, however, be confused with aggressive nationalist attitudes or exacerbated pride; on the contrary, it is an ethical attitude, of collective self-respect, which is manifested by defending one's own convictions and values in a responsible and balanced way. Studies show that there is no intrinsic contradiction between national identity and universal values, as long as they are harmonized, with cultural and civilizational values often having a common denominator on a planetary scale. Therefore, the affirmation of national dignity in a pluricultural context means valuing one's own heritage in parallel with respect for human diversity.

National dignity is represented as a multidimensional construct, configured through the interaction of the cultural, axiological, educational and communicative dimensions, which support its formation and manifestation at the individual and social level, Figure 1.
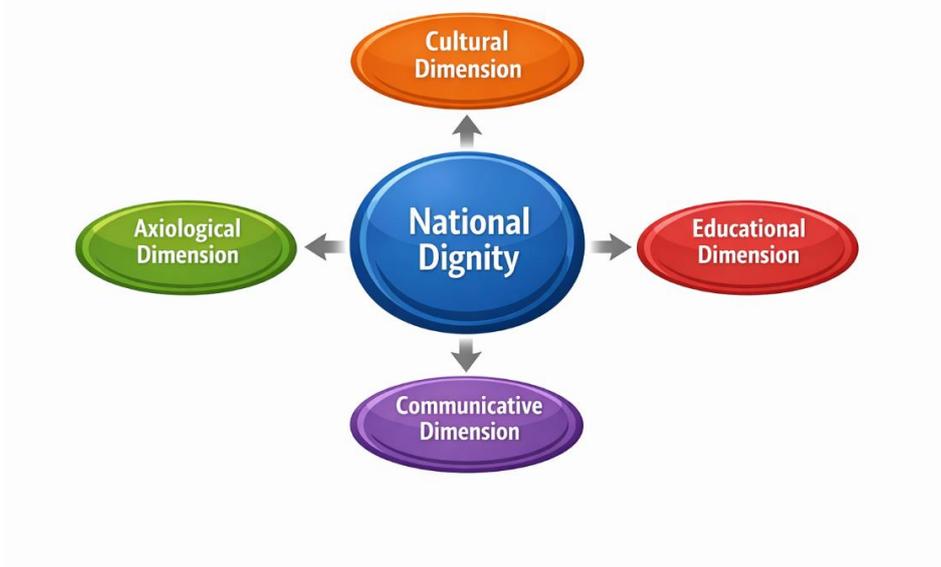

Figure 1. Configuration of The Dimensions of National Dignity

3. Cultural Dimension

One of the most visible and concrete ways of affirming national dignity lies in the cultural values of a people: the language, traditions, customs, artistic creations, as well as the tangible and intangible heritage inherited from generation to generation. *The national culture* represents the set of material and spiritual values created by a nation throughout its history and constitutes a fundamental indicator of national identity, the true *"business card"* of a nation. The promotion and protection of one's own culture is therefore essential for maintaining historical continuity and national specificity. UNESCO defines culture as *"a set of distinct characteristics of a society or social group, expressed in spiritual, material, intellectual or emotional terms",* a definition that emphasizes both the diversity of cultural forms and their identity role.

One of the most well-known definitions of culture belongs to E. B. Taylor (2016), formulated in the work *Primitive Culture*, according to which the term "culture" or "civilization", in its widespread ethnographic meaning, designates a complex that includes the sciences, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, as well as other skills and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Taylor, 2016). Starting from this definition, R. Bennegadi (1993) identifies four common elements: culture provides answers to all the actions of the individual in relation to the problems of existence, provides means of interaction with the environment, provides balance and orientation through religious and folkloric traditions and, at the same time, can generate potentially threatening influences, which imprint on the environment a character of insecurity (Bennegadi, 1993).

Researchers today approach the concept of *cultural power of a society*, understood as the set of activities oriented towards knowledge and communication, the creation of values, education and the acquisition of new codes of spiritual life, as well as the processing of information and the formation of skills of its use (Georgiu, 2001, p.9).

Education oriented towards culture and humanism, in its scientific, technical and artistic dimensions, has as its purpose the formation of man in the position of receiver and creator of culture. Through education and the cultural offerings, it proposes, a personalized cultural lifestyle is outlined, a unique way of relating to the world and to oneself, as well as the process of building personal identity. It is also through education that the need to live culturally and to capitalize on the benefits of culture and civilization develops. At the same time, education supports the formation of the conviction that "a culture is not inherited, but conquered" (Andre Malraux, as cited in Callo, p.47).

In this perspective, it is necessary to highlight the fact that education systems, respectively educational institutions, occupy a privileged position in transmitting,

disseminating and capitalizing on the dimensions of culture, as institutionalized forms of culture. Such a positioning implies assuming a major responsibility in selecting the directions, strategies and models through which the educational act is carried out.

The analysis of some landmarks of the etymological evolution of the term "culture" reveals the fact that, in relation to the notion of "civilization", also coming from the Latin language (civis – citizen of the city), two distinct interpretations have emerged in the French and German traditions. In the French view, culture was conceived as a derived dimension, integrated into the broader framework of civilization. In the German interpretation, culture designated the "spirit", the universe of values, the "spirit of the people" and the "spirit of the age", located on a higher plane than civilization, the latter expressing mainly the practical and external aspects of existence, such as technologies, institutions and normative systems. From this perspective, the ideas of L. Blaga (2011), a supporter of the German orientation, who emphasized that "culture responds to human existence in mystery and revelation, and civilization responds to existence in self-preservation and security", between the two there being a difference of ontological depth (Blaga, 2011, p. 410).

R. Linton (1998), synthesizing several convergent perspectives on cultural influences on personality, highlights some defining aspects: personality norms vary from society to society, members of each society manifest significant individual differences in personality, and much of this diversity, along with similar personality typologies, is found in all cultures (Linton, 1998). Studies of different cultural contexts show that individuals belonging to the same society, while expressing a wide range of distinct individualities, nevertheless share common features of a sufficiently coherent structure to be designated as the basic personality type of that society, and these types differ from one society to another (Linton, 1998).

Culture is recognized as an element of cohesion and a factor of convergence, which, even though its diverse forms of manifestation, facilitates consensus and understanding between people at a global level. D. de Rougemont (1990) underlines the fact that, beyond political conflicts and economic imbalances, there are deeper and more stable realities, represented by cultures, in their broad sense, namely their own ways of thinking, feeling, believing, legislating, imagining and acting. In this perspective, the role of intellectuals consists in contributing to a better political and economic understanding by capitalizing on the past, in the sense of identifying ways to deepen the mutual knowledge of cultures, a process that involves an authentic and organized dialogue (Rugemont, 1990).

Therefore, communication through culture and its values is a way of amplifying the cultural contribution to the existential emancipation of man, as well as to the strengthening of relations of knowledge and closeness between societies and nations.

In this respect, the national language occupies a central place. Language is often considered the soul of a nation, *"the first great poem of a people",* a fundamental pillar of cultural and ethnic identity, which preserves the collective memory and links individuals to their historical community. By speaking the mother tongue, a community expresses its way of thinking, values and accumulated experiences, and the transmission of this language to the new generations ensures the perpetuation of the national identity. Many cultures consider language *the supreme value of a nation*, through which people reveal its being, mourns its pains and celebrates its joys. In the context of European linguistic diversity, the preservation and cultivation of the Romanian language (in the case of Romania and the Republic of Moldova) represents a cultural, identity and national dignity act. The laws of these countries often enshrine the status of the official language, and initiatives such as the declaration of Language *Days* or the inclusion of the Romanian language in the protected cultural heritage are examples of cultural affirmation of identity.

Also, folk traditions and customs, folklore, traditional costume and crafts convey a set of values and symbols that reinforce the pride of belonging to a historical community. By respecting ancient customs and promoting national or local holidays, the members of a community express their respect for the cultural heritage and, implicitly, the dignity of belonging to that culture. National dignity, as a hypostasis of human dignity at the collective level, is explicitly expressed *through love for the country and the nation, respect for ancestral traditions, knowledge of national history and honoring heroes, as well as through the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage*. These elements, the love of the homeland, the historical memory and the care for the heritage, are landmarks of historical continuity and contribute directly to the affirmation of national identity and dignity.

Cultural heritage, both tangible (monuments, historical sites, art objects) and intangible (traditions, folkloric expressions, rituals, gastronomy), is a precious resource for national dignity. Protecting it through museums, archives, heritage laws and the inclusion of objectives or practices in the UNESCO World Heritage List are institutionalized ways of recognizing the value of national identity. UNESCO states that *"heritage in all its forms must be preserved, valued and passed on to future generations as a testimony to the human experience, in order to fuel creativity in all its diversity and inspire an authentic dialogue between cultures"*. Thus, the

preservation of its own heritage is not an act of isolation, but becomes a bridge to other cultures: a nation that values its culture and brings it into dialogue with other cultures contributes to the richness of global diversity and affirms its dignity in a way respected by others.

4. Axiological Dimension

National dignity has a strong axiological side, that is, linked to the system of moral, civic and spiritual values shared by the community. This dimension refers to *collective self-respect* and awareness of the intrinsic value of the nation, manifested through ethical behaviors, social solidarity, and responsibility for the common good. At its core, a worthy nation is one that bases its identity on the sound moral character of its members.

In the analysis of the axiological dimension of national dignity, the axiological perspective on education and culture provides relevant theoretical landmarks. V. I. Pâslaru (2006) and collaborators (Pâslaru, 2006, p.6) highlight the fact that pedagogy is part of the axiology of culture, as it represents a field of human activity oriented towards the creation of human values. In this framework, the definition of culture as an axiology of education is supported by its dual-unitary, objective and subjective character, which reflects both the social and personal dimensions of values. Updating the statement as Aurel Tănase argues (as cited in Pâslaru 2006), according to which "man is not, but becomes a cultural being", it can be argued that national dignity is progressively built through education and culture, in the process of internalization and assumption of identity values. This perspective emphasizes the fact that national dignity is configured as an axiological expression of the cultural becoming of the individual and of the community.

An important principle is that the dignity of a nation derives from the dignity of every citizen. National character is built when each member of society becomes a person of integrity, trustworthy, capable of mutual respect and cooperation. Material prosperity or external prestige are not enough to define national dignity, the enduring strength of a nation comes from *the human heart*, from the depth of shared values and mutual trust between people.

Axiological education supports the development of values in the personality structure, in relation to the already internalized values, assumed through experience and affective living, processes of value synthesis are carried out, which lead to the

outlining of new axiological landmarks. By practicing and manifesting them, values become visible and confirm the uniqueness and unrepeatability of the person (Antoci, 2020).

Moral values such as truth, honesty, justice, freedom and solidarity constitute the axiological foundation of national dignity. A people that knows its historical past and assumes both the lights and shadows of that past manifests' dignity, because respect for the truth and the lessons of history prevent the repetition of mistakes and provide identity coherence.

Traditional moral education is carried out in the context of contemporary popular culture through specific objectives, principles and contents, considering the integration of moral, intellectual, aesthetic, physical dimensions, as well as new educations, within lifelong learning. This type of education is shaped by the transmission of moral experience from the elderly to children, a process through which moral notions and convictions are formed, as well as habits of moral conduct (Silistraru, 2006, p.137).

National dignity also has an important civic-spiritual component: respect for the rights of each one, attachment to freedom and democracy, as well as to the spiritual beliefs and values that coagulate the community.

Last but not least, national dignity implies a balance of values: to be proud of what you are without despising others, to love your nation without hatred towards other nations. This balance derives from the understanding that all human beings have dignity and that our national values can be enriched by contact with the values of others.

5. Educational Dimension

Although the importance of education for the formation and affirmation of human dignity, as well as for the development of interhuman respect, is widely recognized among educational theorists and practitioners, there is little attention paid to systematic and large-scale research dedicated to these fundamental dimensions of the existence and evolution of the human being. The approach to the theme of dignity from an educational perspective is emerging as a relevant research direction, capable of opening new perspectives for further investigations, in-depth analyses and the formulation of working hypotheses with theoretical and applicative value (Albu, 2017).

From the earliest years, children begin to assimilate family, national and civic values through socialization processes. Studies show that in early childhood, the family and the local community introduce the child to cultural and national values, and only at school age and adolescence, the national-civic identity fully develops, under the influence of formal education. Therefore, the school has the responsibility to continue this identity formation in a conscious and systematic way. *Exposing students to national history and familiarizing them with the essence and significance of national independence* should underpin subjects of study as well as broader educational activities aimed at awakening *the spiritual and civic consciousness* of young people.

In many countries, the curriculum includes subjects such as national history, geography of the homeland, national literature, civic and moral-religious education – all of which contribute to the development of a sense of belonging and pride in one's own nation.

In parallel, education for values (axiological education) is crucial. The school is not limited to transmitting factual-historical knowledge about the nation, but must instill in students a set of values such as respect, tolerance, justice, freedom and solidarity. An authentic national education does not promote hatred of the *Other*, but cultivates an enlightened patriotism, aware both of one's own values and of the need for respect for the values of others. In a diverse society, educational scientists emphasize three key objectives that must be pursued simultaneously: *recognition of differences* (educating students to appreciate and respect ethnocultural identities different from their own), *national cohesion* (strengthening common landmarks that unite citizens beyond differences) and *equality* (promoting justice and equal opportunities for all, regardless of origin). These educational values – recognition of diversity, unity around common principles and equity – together create a framework conducive to the formation of national identity in an *open and inclusive way*.

An example of combining national identity with multicultural openness is teaching humanities in a comparative way. For example, in the study of literature, students can learn both works from the national heritage and universal creations, following the way in which the national culture synchronizes and dialogues with the world one. Thus, they know their own cultural values while gaining respect for those of other peoples. *National identity is not a fad*, but is built through knowledge of one's own language and culture, family, faith, heroes and sufferings that have shaped the nation over time. But this knowledge must be accompanied by the awareness that others also have valuable identities. That is why modern pedagogy emphasizes intercultural

education, aimed at developing the skills of dialogue, empathy and peaceful coexistence. Students learn about the different cultures co-present in society, national minorities and their history, understanding that their collective identity is part of a larger, European and global context.

Collective self-respect (national dignity) goes hand in hand with *respect for diversity*. The school can cultivate this idea through positive examples from history where interethnic collaboration has been beneficial, by highlighting the contributions of minorities to national culture, or through school projects involving students from different backgrounds working together. The feeling of national belonging, if it is healthy formed, will not exclaim those who are different as foreigners, but will include them in a common civic vision. A sociological study conducted in the Republic of Moldova shows, for example, that all ethnic communities there share similar ideas about the foundations of societal unity – namely *culture and traditions, civil rights and freedoms and, essentially, the promotion of a project for the development of the country*. It suggests that, through education, the focus on common cultural elements, civic values and collective goals for the future can strengthen community cohesion, without denying internal diversity.

Contemporary education is oriented towards the configuration of formative landmarks that support the development of the young generation as balanced and coherent personalities, capable of consciously relating to the demands of social life and to the material and spiritual values of the community to which they belong. Within this framework, the educational process contributes to the cultivation of national dignity by transmitting and assuming value models that reflect cultural identity and civic responsibility. The teacher influences this process through professional and personal conduct, becoming an axiological landmark through the way of relating to social values and by assuming individual and community responsibilities. Values are complementarily integrated into educational contents, didactic and extracurricular activities, developing through learning and experience and being in a relationship of interaction with the cultural environment in which the students' personality is structured (Bunescu, 1998, p. 61).

Last but not least, education contributes to national dignity by forming critical thinking and civic awareness. An educated community knows its rights and responsibilities, participates in public life and defends its identity not through violence or intolerance, but through arguments and democratic participation. Affirming national dignity also means having well-informed and involved citizens. Educational initiatives such as national history competitions, language Olympiads,

heritage projects or volunteer services for the benefit of the community help young people to *live* identity values, not just to know them theoretically.

6. The Communicative Dimension

In today's globalized world, where intercultural contacts are the order of the day, national dignity is also affirmed by the way a nation communicates with the rest of the world, through the dialogue it establishes with other cultures. Intercultural dialogue is the key concept of this dimension. The Council of Europe defines intercultural dialogue as *"an open and respectful exchange of perspectives between individuals and groups of different ethnics, cultural, religious and linguistic origins, based on mutual understanding and respect"*. Such a dialogue provides the framework in which a community can present its own values and traditions, while learning about the values of others, building bridges of understanding. The affirmation of national dignity through intercultural dialogue implies the ability to listen and explain – that is, to share with others the elements of one's identity (language, culture, beliefs) in a dignified and open way, but also to show respect and curiosity towards the identity elements of others.

Intercultural communication refers to the direct interaction between people belonging to different cultural contexts and involves more than knowing the specific norms of a group, involving the acceptance and respect of diversity. This has been shaped by the convergence of concepts such as cross-cultural communication, international or global communication, and intercultural relations, reflecting the dynamics of relations between cultures in contemporary society (Jandt, 2004, p. 23).

Culture influences the process of communication beyond the use of language, reflecting how individuals define, think, behave, and interact. The study of intercultural communication highlights the fact that cultural variables shape communication styles, perspectives and personal manifestations. When these variables become dominant in the act of communication, intercultural communication takes shape, characterized by the recognition and respect of cultural differences that are expressed in vision, behavior and personality (Duhlicher, 2010).

The communicative dimension also includes how the nation manages internal diversity from a communication perspective. A state that values national dignity will encourage dialogue and cooperation between the various internal ethnic and cultural groups. This can be translated into supporting platforms for dialogue between the

majority and minorities, organizing intercultural events internally and publicizing messages of unity in diversity. Only in a climate of mutual trust at the internal level can a positive external image be projected. As UNESCO points out, *intercultural dialogue is a transformative form of communication, based on mutual respect and the willingness to consider different perspectives; it is an effective tool to promote tolerance, acceptance of diversity and the desire for cooperation*. In this way, dialogue not only prevents conflict and misunderstanding, but also contributes to *building trust* at all levels of society, being fundamental for an inclusive and peaceful future (UNESCO).

Intercultural communication, when well-managed, leads to increased mutual trust and the reduction of conflicts, allowing each nation to live as an equal in dignity alongside the others. Thus, national dignity becomes not a wall that divides cultures, but a bridge that connects them, each nation bringing its distinct heritage to the table of dialogue.

7. Conclusions

Analyzing these cultural, axiological, educational and communicative dimensions, an overview of how national dignity can be affirmed in a *contemporary pluricultural context* is outlined. First of all, national dignity appears as an open, relational and dynamic process, not as a fixed state or as an isolated pride. It is continuously built and renewed by valuing one's own identity *in interaction* with other identities, through dialogue and cultural exchange. In today's societies, where identities are multiple and overlapping (national, regional, European, global), national dignity has the role of an identity anchor, providing the community with the sense of balance and continuity necessary in a rapidly changing world. At the same time, a nation with a strong sense of dignity will also know how to respect its international partners as equals, contributing to the *peaceful coexistence between cultures and identities*.

Secondly, the affirmation of national dignity has proven to be a resource of community cohesion. When citizens share common values, mutual respect and trust in each other, society becomes more united and resilient in the face of challenges. National dignity gives people *the pride of belonging*, which motivates them to work together for the common good. Experiences from various countries show that where communities felt respected and included in their national identity (regardless of their cultural differences), there was greater stability and social solidarity.

Thirdly, national dignity, thus understood, also implies increased social responsibility, can be seen in the facts: in policies that promote culture and education, in the ethical behaviors of ordinary leaders and citizens, in the way society reacts to injustice or to the needs of its members. A dignified community will take a stand against any acts that could harm its honor or integrity, from fighting internal corruption to defending the country's reputation abroad, from protecting its heritage from degradation to helping compatriots in need.

The affirmation of national dignity in a pluricultural context is an exercise in *balance* and *openness*. Balance between past and present, capitalizing on tradition, but also adapting to the present and future; balance between one's own identity and otherness, self-pride, but also respect for others, and openness is manifested through dialogue, education and cooperation. Authentic national dignity means building bridges: bridges over time (passing on heritage to the future) and bridges over differences (peaceful interaction between cultures). The integration of national dignity into a contemporary multicultural space means precisely the realization of this ideal: a world in which every people can assert its identity and value, while contributing to the multicultural symphony of humanity.

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