

„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

PhD Thesis Summary

„Between Bruxelles and Moscow. Identity and geopolitical options of the Republic of Moldova
(1991-2019)”

- History field-

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Keywords: Republic of Moldova, European Union, Russian Federation, Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy, Association Agreement, geopolitical options, identity options.

This doctoral thesis is the result of research aimed at studying the transition of the Republic of Moldova after obtaining independence from the Soviet Union. Through this approach I intend to investigate the dynamics of the main developments in the Republic of Moldova in all the 28 years since the time of the independence of the Republic of Moldova from the Soviet Union. In trying to do this, I will consider the transition of the Republic of Moldova in areas such as foreign policy, domestic political life, educational policies and so on.

The present paper starts from an approach based on the premise that the Republic of Moldova is a state divided both ethnically and culturally, as well as politically. The political division of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova is a geopolitical one and aims to split the members of the Moldovan society between the option of European integration and the idea of Eurasian integration of the Republic of Moldova. Another hypothesis is related to the fact that the current division between the citizens of the Republic of Moldova also has an ethnic component, and this was favored by the policies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to colonize the region and to artificially modify the ethnic structure in the region. The ethnic, political and cultural division of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova is a basic element in this paper. The increased attention given to this issue is given by the fact that the analysis of the split of the Moldovan society may offer some explanations regarding the difficulty with the process of European integration of the Republic of Moldova or other important political processes for the whole country. Also, it should be noted that this analysis has the role of bringing more awareness regarding the dynamics of regional trends. Here we refer to the fact that the situation in the Republic of Moldova is similar in many respects to the progress of things in Ukraine and even Georgia - states that, like the Republic of Moldova, aspire for European integration manifested in the last two decades. These aspects, but also many others, have the role of conferring a significant academic importance to the present approach and which gives this work the chance to become a significant contribution in the national historiography on this topic. For the historical research in Romania, the present paper has a novelty note and a certain importance given that the work brings together historiographical

contributions and primary sources in both Romanian and numerous Russian contributions, to which many of the Romanian researchers do not have access.

Starting from the ones discussed in the above statement, I considered it very important that the first chapter of the paper be devoted to the analysis of the historiography of the subject. In this first chapter, the analysis focuses on studying the most representative works in the Romanian, Moldavian, Western and Russian historiography about this paper. In the vast majority, regardless of the area of origin, the works discuss the weaknesses of the Moldovan state and the lack of a unitary vision regarding the country's identity and geopolitical options¹. Also, the analysis of historiography contains many works that address the situation in the Republic of Moldova in a regional and even global context, but also discuss the weak character of the Moldovan state. At the historiographic analysis section, we also analyzed a series of papers that discuss the identity dilemma observed in the case of the Republic of Moldova. Here comes a unanimous opinion that the situation can be expressed by the formulation that in the case of the Republic of Moldova it is not possible to discuss a clear identity perception². Another idea in this regard is the fact that the authors conclude that in Moldova we can discuss a national identity under construction. Many of the works analyzed in the introductory historiographic essay have at the center of the approach the internal and external political problems that the Republic of Moldova faces. This is where the political class from Chisinau is split between the idea of European integration and the idea of Eurasian integration of the Republic of Moldova. Also, some authors discuss the excessive dependence of the Republic of Moldova on its neighbors, whether we talk about the Russian Federation, Romania, Ukraine, the European Union or even some international actors from a geographical point of view such as the United States or even China³. In this regard, it should be noted that several authors analyze the energy dependence of the Republic of Moldova on resources

¹ For more details see: Monica Heintz, *Stat Slab, cetățenie incertă. Studii despre Republica Moldova*, Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing, 2007; Vitalie Ciobanu, *Anatomia unui faliment geopolitic: Republica Moldova*, Iași, Polirom, 2005; Sergiu Musteață, „Dilemele Republicii Moldova”, în *Archiva Moldaviae*, vol. IV, 2012, p. 103-124.

² In this order of ideas, I will mention just some works: John Weeks, „Mistaken identity: ‘Middle income’ Moldova and the consequences”, in *Global Social Policy* 11(1), 2011, p. 45–68; Julien Danero Iglesias, „An Ad Hoc Nation An Analysis of Moldovan Election Campaign Clip”, in *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Volume 29, Number 4, November, 2015, p. 850 –870; Katja Lasch, *Român, basarabean sau moldovean? Frământări identitare și aserțiuni politico-sociale în Basarabia începutului de secol XX*, PhD Thesis, Cluj-Napoca, Babeș-Bolyai University, 2013.

³ Alexandru Baltag, *Aria moldo-ucraineană. Jocuri geopolitice între Occident și Rusia*, Doctoral thesis, Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of History and Philosophy, International Relations and European Studies, 2012.

such as natural gas or petroleum products, which usually come from the Russian Federation⁴. All the papers insist on the fact that the energy security of the Republic of Moldova is affected by the excessive dependence on the need to import both gas and oil, as well as electricity or other energy resources needed for domestic consumption in the Republic of Moldova.

Another concern for many of the researchers analyzing the situation regarding the Republic of Moldova is related to the attempt to analyze the split of the Moldovan society between the idea of European integration and that of Eurasian integration that is active in the Republic of Moldova. The authors analyzing this issue underline the danger posed by the impossibility of finding a consensus in this regard by the Chisinau authorities. Also, in this regard, the authors also analyze the danger that this has to the security at regional level, and the conclusion is that many authors consider that the unstable situation in the Republic of Moldova is a serious risk factor for regional security.

By summarizing the ideas discussed in the works analyzed in the first chapter of the present paper, we cannot overlook the fact that all the works, in one form or another, discuss the numerous problems faced by the Republic of Moldova. All the papers insist on the idea of a weak state in the case of the Republic of Moldova. The works analyzed by me in the chapter on historiography bring different information, with a different degree of utility for this approach, but all insist on the problems faced by the Republic of Moldova.

The second chapter of this paper is an analysis concerning the status of the Republic of Moldova of a country situated between two worlds. Specifically, the object of the analysis in the second chapter is a historical approach in which the main moments in the history of the Proto-Dniester area are treated and analyzed. The analysis starts from the time of annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian Empire in 1812 and continues to this day. The focus, within this chapter, is on the presentation of the main moments in the history of our region of interest in the 20th century and, especially, regarding the recent history of the Republic of Moldova. This approach has the role of presenting, in a summary way, the main moments that had the long-term effect of the split of the Moldovan society between the option of European integration and the idea of

⁴ Sergiu Moraru, *Securitatea națională a Republicii Moldova în contextul democratizării societății: aspecte politico-informaționale*, Teză de doctor în politologie, Academia de Științe a Moldovei, Institutul de Cercetări Juridice și Politice, Chișinău, 2015; Vitalie Varzari, *Securitatea națională a Republicii Moldova în contextul opțiunii de integrare europeană*, Autoreferatul Tezei de doctor în politologie, Academia de Științe a Moldovei, Institutul Integrare Europeană și Științe Politice, Chișinău, 2012.

Eurasian integration. Among the most important ones analyzed in this chapter are: the annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian Empire and the policies of colonization and Russification, the last years of Soviet communism and the accentuation of the cultural and political rupture within the Moldovan society, as well as the main political developments in Republic of Moldova after 1991. The analysis of the second chapter is carried out under the sign of the split of the Moldovan society and of the way in which this aspect influences the decision-making process by the political elite from Chisinau. The result of this chapter is that we have shown that both the Moldovan society and the entire political class in Chisinau are divided between the two streams of geopolitical thinking, and this fact makes multiple political processes in the Republic of Moldova very difficult and numerous. impediments.

The next chapter of the present paper is, in fact, a continuation of those discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast to the second chapter of the paper, where the debate focused on political elements, in the third part of the present paper the analysis refers to cultural issues. As in the case of the second chapter, the Moldovan society is culturally divided between East and West⁵. The East, as it can be easily deduced, is represented by the cultural values proposed by the Russian world, and the West is represented, first, by the Romanian culture to which a large part of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova are united. In other words, the cultural division overlaps the political one. In another exhibition, viewed from Chisinau, this problem can be translated in this way. Between the Romanian culture and the option of European integration of the Republic of Moldova can be put the sign of equality. The same can be done in the case of binomial Eurasian integration and Russian culture. This explains the fact that at the popular level, some Moldovans wonder if they are with the Russians or with the Europeans. The purpose of this chapter is to split the Moldovan society between the two cultural currents mentioned above and the cultural dependence of the Republic of Moldova on the Romanian culture and on the Russian culture. In the same vein, it should be mentioned that in this chapter I will discuss in part how the Romanian and Russian culture influence the identity and geopolitical options of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. As for the proximity of the Romanian culture to the Republic of Moldova, I will insist on the linguistic links and the import of Romanian culture in the Republic of Moldova. Regarding the proximity of Russian culture in the Republic of Moldova I will insist more because these

⁵ Dorin Cimpoeșu, Sergiu Mustață, *Basarabia la un secol de la Marea Unire: o istorie politică a Republicii Moldova (1991-2018)*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun, 2018.

aspects are vaguely known to the general public and to the academic community in Romania. At the same time, however, I did this based on my observation that Moldovan citizens are more connected to Russian culture than to Romanian culture now. The Russian culture exerts influence on the citizens of the Republic of Moldova through several elements. These include Russian (most citizens of the Republic of Moldova know this language on a medium to high level, which facilitates access to various Russian language resources for Moldovans. Also, it should be remembered that Russian is studied in schools in the Republic. Last but not least, we should mention that the Russian-speaking minority is a consistent one in the Republic of Moldova). Starting from a good knowledge of the Russian language in the Republic of Moldova, as well as from the massive presence of native Russian and Ukrainian or Russian speakers, which eliminates the cultural barriers for the large mass of citizens of the Republic of Moldova, the possibilities for the Russian Federation to influence the behavior of Moldovans grow exponentially. Another element through which the Russian Federation culturally influences the society of the Republic of Moldova is the Russian television that can be watched by cable or satellite television from the Republic of Moldova. Numerous Russian positions are followed by the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, which facilitates the promotion of messages from the Russian Federation to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. Another element through which the Russian Federation influences the identity and geopolitical options of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova is represented by numerous news sites, social networks and various informative sites in the Russian language. Through this way countless materials from the Russian Federation reach the users from the Republic of Moldova. Here would be added the print media and books and other advertising and advertising materials in Russian language that can be accessed by users in the Republic of Moldova. The latter resources facilitate access of information from the Russian Federation to Moldovan users. Finally, we should mention that piracy plays an important role in facilitating access of Moldovan users to various Russian-language information. Here, in addition to the resources mentioned above, we can also add movies, video games and many other materials in Russian language that can be accessed by users of all ages in the Republic of Moldova⁶. All this shows very clearly the fact that the Moldovan users are very well connected to the Russian culture and, implicitly, to the propaganda in the Russian Federation. As can be seen, in this chapter I have

⁶ Sorin Bocancea, Radu Carp, *Calea Europeană a Republicii Moldova*, Iași, A denium, 2016.

shown that Moldovans are slightly influenced by the Romanian culture and, especially, by the Russian culture, which makes the national security of Moldova a lot to suffer.

The fourth chapter of the paper focuses on the analysis of the main foreign policy directions of the Republic of Moldova. This chapter, like the previous three chapters, is dominated by the problem of dividing the Moldovan society and the political elite from Chisinau between the idea of European integration and the idea of Eurasian integration of the Republic of Moldova. This can be observed during the whole period when the Republic of Moldova exists as an independent state on the political map of the world. As we have shown in this chapter, the political elites from Chisinau oscillated between these two currents of geopolitical thinking. In this regard, we can recall that in the first years of the existence of the independent state the Republic of Moldova witnessed an attempt of rapprochement between Chisinau and Bucharest. After 1994, however, against the backdrop of the (neo) communism's gradual resurrection in the Republic of Moldova, we are witnessing a (priority) orientation towards the Russian Federation of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova⁷. After 2001, we are dealing with a (mainly) pro-Russian foreign policy, but that is gradually focusing its attention on relations between Chisinau and Brussels. At this stage, the Action Plan between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union takes place (February 2005), which brought to a new level the relations of the Republic of Moldova with the European Union. After the removal of the communist regime from the Republic of Moldova in 2009, we are witnessing a clear inclination of the balance in favor of strengthening the relations between Chisinau and Brussels. Now, the Republic of Moldova is in this stage of strengthening relations with the European Union, but it is not known how long this stage will last and if, in the next decade, the balance will remain the same. As can be seen from the above, the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova was influenced by a permanent oscillation between the West and the East or, better said, between the East and the West⁸.

A section of that fourth chapter of the present paper is a kind of applied case study that sums up all that has been discussed in the previous chapters. The parliamentary and presidential elections (i.e. those elections with a national character) meet the split between East and West (or, as many people say, the geopolitical factor), the conflict between the Romanian and the Russian

⁷ Marian Enache, Dorin Cimpoeșu, *Misiune diplomatică în Republica Moldova (1993-1997)*, Iași, Polirom, 2000.

⁸ Sorin Bocancea, Radu Carp, *Calea Europeană a Republicii Moldova*, Iași, Adenium, 2016; Alexandru Baltag, *Aria moldo-ucraineană. Jocuri geopolitice între Occident și Rusia*, Teză de Doctorat, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Facultatea de Istorie și Filosofie, Domeniul Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene, 2012.

culture (the cultural or identity factor) and many others. Analyzing all the parliamentary and presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova since 1991, we have found that the geopolitical factor is ubiquitous. Here we refer to the fact that the confrontation between the West and Russia was present every time the Moldovans were called in front of the ballot boxes. Also, based on the principle that the Romanian culture is complementary to the European integration, and the Russian culture is superimposed on the Eurasian integration, it can be concluded that the cultural (identity) factor is also ubiquitous in the case of every election in the Republic of Moldova. The analysis of the elections in the Republic of Moldova proposed for analysis, shows that the vote granted by Moldovan citizens is both ethnic and cultural (i.e. identity, i.e. influenced by Russian propaganda or by the persuasion of Romanian culture). In other words, the Moldovan vote is an ethnic and geopolitical one. From this observation, it should be remembered that the Russian and Ukrainian ethnic groups in the Republic of Moldova vote for the politicians and pro-Russian parties, and many of the Moldovans who identify with the Romanian culture give the vote of confidence to the political leaders and to the Unionist or pro-European integration parties. Regarding the ethnic vote for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, it should be recalled that in the regions where the Russian (Russian) and Ukrainian element is higher, the percentage of voters for the parties and pro-Russian political leaders is higher. This is observable in the southern and northern regions of the Republic of Moldova (regions where the Moldovan element is less than 50%). In contrast, in the central regions of the Republic of Moldova, regions where the Moldovan element is above 85% -90 %, the percentage of voters for pro-European political parties and leaders is over 50%.

The second criterion, the geopolitical one, is met among those who consider themselves Moldovans and are inclined (so they do, as a rule) to vote for pro-Russian formations and political leaders. Here we see that a good part of the Moldovan ethnic groups votes for pro-Russian parties and leaders, which means that their opinion (without mentioning the politics of buying votes practiced by most political groups in the Republic of Moldova) is influenced by the language resources. Russian. In other words, the options of the Moldovan electorate are diverse and are dictated both by ethnicity, and by the adherence of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova to the Romanian and Russian cultural precepts. However, the ones discussed in this chapter show us that the Moldovan national identity is unfinished and is not yet well defined. On the other hand, this state of fact identified in the Moldovan elections shows that the identity and geopolitical split in

the Republic of Moldova will remain the same for a long time. The only solution to mitigate the situation would be to improve the state of the national economy of the Republic of Moldova.

In the last chapter we discussed the geostrategic importance of the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the Republic of Moldova is geo-energetically important for Gazprom due to the positioning of the Republic of Moldova on the routes of the gas pipelines of Gazprom, as well as the fact that it is one of the numerous markets for the Russian energetic giant. Also, as we can see from the current situation of the Republic of Moldova, Chisinau faces an excessive dependence on the need to import domestic consumption of energy resources, which are usually imported from the Russian Federation. This, as we have detailed in the text of the paper, makes the Republic of Moldova dependent on the only source of vital energy products for the Republic of Moldova. This means that Moldova is dependent on the pricing policies of Gazprom⁹. Such a makes the Republic of Moldova dependent on the possible cessation of natural gas supply (as it was in the winters of 2006 and 2009). In other words, the situations described in the last chapter of the present paper attest to the presence of threats to the energy security of the Republic of Moldova.

As some conclusions for the present work some observations must be made. First, the Republic of Moldova is an ethnically and geopolitically divided country (a situation that is also observed in Ukraine), which hinders the country's European path. This makes the Republic of Moldova dependent in all respects on its neighbors.

Also, in the final part of the present paper I have attached a series of annexes that reflect those discussed throughout the paper. The annexes represent various statistics regarding the mother tongue in the regions of the Republic of Moldova, the ethnic structure of the Republic of Moldova. In addition to the official statistics, we presented several materials regarding the political options of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova: the attitude towards the union with Romania, the attitude towards the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union or the Eurasian Economic Union and others. In other words, the present paper shows that the Republic of Moldova is a (still) weak state and that the transition from communism to democracy and the market economy is by no means complete.

⁹ Svetlana Cebotari, *Interesele geostrategice ale Federației Ruse în contextul formării noii arhitecturi geopolitice (1991-2016)*, PhD thesis in political science, State University of Moldova, Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences, Department of International Relations, Chișinău, 2017.

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