

DIFFICULTIES OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: CONSEQUENCES ON NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The specifics of the post-Soviet state Republic of Moldova is that the Russian-speaking community comprises not only the Russian national minority (5.95%), but also other ethnic minorities – Ukrainian (8.34%), Bulgarian (1.94%) Gagauz (4.36%) – which were subjected in Soviet times to an intense process of denationalization and Russification. Its integration into the Moldovan culture is quite low. A bad integration into Moldovan society, a poor knowledge of Moldovan (Romanian) language by the Russian-speaking minority leads to the fact that they prefer the Eastern vector, despite the clear advantages offered by the European integration. The success of a good forward of the country on the path of European integration, supported by a reinforced majority of Moldovan society, involves making efforts to a better integration of Russian-speaking community.

Keywords: *Integration, Russian-speaking community, separatism, societal security, Republic of Moldova.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The specificity of the post-Soviet state, Republic of Moldova (RM) refers to the fact that the Russian-speaking minority is not only comprised of the Russian national minority (5,95% at the 2004 census) but also of other national/ethnic minorities, which have undergone a process of denationalization during the Soviet period, through the *educational system* with teaching in Russian, *the media* which used Russian and others. Therefore, national minorities such as the Ukrainian (8,34% at the 2004 census), Bulgarian (1,94% at the 2004 census) or the Gagauzian (4,36% at the 2004 census) currently use the Russian language in public places: in public administration and in teaching. In comparison, another ethnic minority, the Romanian minority, which is less numerous, was

less Russified during the Soviet period because it had a lower exposure to the teaching system and to the impact of the Russian media and culture. The difference between the concepts of *national minority* and *ethnic minority* refers to the fact that the former speaks about the communities that have a mother-country of origin (Ukrainians – Ukraine, Bulgarians – Bulgaria, Russians – Russia), whereas the latter refers to communities that do not have a mother-country (although some people link the Gagauzians with Turkey and the Gypsy with India).

The native majority (Romanian-speaking) is comprised of 77,96% (75,8% who said that they are Moldovans and 2,16% who said that they are Romanians at the 2004 census).

Looking at the ethnic map of Republic of Moldova, one can notice that on the Moldovan territory there are four regions which have to be taken into account by the central authorities:

1. The Nistrian Region (both its Bessarabian side – the city of Bender and the following seven villages: Gâsca, Proteagailovca, Mereneşti, Chiţcani, Cremenciug and Zahorna, which are controlled by the authorities Chişinău; as well as its Transnistrian side without the six villages controlled by the authorities of RM: Coşniţa, Pârâta, Doroţcaia, Pohrebea, Molovata Nouă şi Cocieri);
2. The Gagauz autonomy (from 1994);
3. The Taraclia Rayon, mostly inhabited by Bulgarians; in 2015 the Parliament voted a law project regarding a status of *cultural autonomy*;
4. Rural areas mostly inhabited by Ukrainians plus the city of Bălţi, with a Russian-speaking majority – in the north of RM.

With some small exceptions, the national/ethnic minorities of RM represent a linguistic community – a Russian-speaking community. It is worth mentioning that in the Soviet period a part of the titular ethnical community was also subjected to a process of Russification, especially in the urban area where there were not enough kindergartens, schools and universities which taught in the language of the titular ethnical community (even now students with traditional Moldovan names but whose native language is Russian go to schools where the teaching takes place in Russian). The integration degree of the Russian-speaking community in the Moldovan society, on the whole, may be regarded as very low. Being tied through language and culture to the Russian Federation, the Russian-speaking community in RM is inclined to integrate the Moldovan state within a cultural space dominated by the Russian Federation (from an institutional point of view: The Eurasian Economic Union). Often, support for the Eastern vector of the external affairs of RM, from the Russian-speaking community, represents a consequence of some bad information regarding the advantages of European integration, because of some insufficient knowledge of the state language. The low degree of integration in the Moldovan society – poor knowledge of the state's language and of the culture of the titular major population – makes the Russian-speaking minority prefer the Eastern vector of the external politics of RM despite the obvious advantages offered to the Moldovan state by the European integration. This is why, in order for RM to be successful on the path of European integration, supported by a vast majority of the Moldovan society, a lot of effort has to be put in in order to better integrate the Russian-speaking community within the country. The difficulties of integrating the Russian-speaking community have to be overcome using a pragmatic approach: by establishing a mission of the state, by stating a vision about its development, by having a state building policy, a strategy, some tactics and an action plan. The state of RM must become attractive both to its majority population (a reduction of the number of people who go abroad seeking a better life) and

to the ethnic and linguistic minorities. Managing to integrate the Russian-speaking community (of all the national and ethnic minorities) can solve the problem of ensuring *societal security* – on the five sectors of *national security* (together with sectors such as: political, economic, environmental and military).

2. THE POOR INTEGRATION OF THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY – VULNERABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ENSURING SECURITY IN RM

The poor integration of the Russian-speaking minority in RM represents a vulnerability in the context of ensuring its national security. This vulnerability refers to the *societal sector* of national security, and is part of a list of vulnerabilities which involve the other sectors as well:

- an inefficient governance, corruption in the state bodies, political crisis, such as those related to the inability to establish some strong alliances within the Parliament, the political corruption, contesting the electoral process – all these elements represent problems of the *political sector*;
- the degradation the soil and of the waters (the lower flow of the Nistru river which offers water to the city of Chişinău and to other cities), and the illegal deforestations represent vulnerabilities in the *environmental sector*;
- lower and lower indicators of industrial and agricultural production and of the service industry (the loss of some traditional markets and the inability to approach new markets) – vulnerabilities in the *economic sector*;
- a poor military base, military technique and equipment that needs modernization – vulnerability of the *military sector* (Jurnal de Chişinău, n.d.; Gândul, n.d.).

All these vulnerabilities reflect aspects that have to be dealt with by the Republic of Moldova in order to eliminate them. They can also be used by external forces that can indulge in challenges, creating risks that can be transformed in threats to the national security of RM.

Republic of Moldova is an integral part of the extended region of the Black Sea – a space characterized by a series of conflicts which also have an ethnic connotation:

- The Mountainous Karabakh (Azerbaijan),
- South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia),
- Crimea and Donbas (Luhansk and Donetsk – Ukraine),
- Transnistria (Republic of Moldova).

In most of these conflicts one can notice the manifestation of an external factor: Russia which supports the regimes from Transnistria, Donbas (Luhansk and Donetsk), Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Armenia supports, not without having the support of the Russian military capacity, the administration from the Mountainous Karabakh (a territory belonging to Azerbaijan). Therefore, since there are vulnerabilities in a certain region (or in certain regions) of a particular state, a regional power, which involves itself by supporting some separatist movements of some ethnic or linguistic minorities, may create risks and threats to the security of a vulnerable state. Exploiting the vulnerabilities of a state, a regional power can impose its control on a space, which it regards as its sphere of influence (in particular, for Russia, the post-Soviet space represents its sphere of influence: ближнее зарубежье – close foreign countries). This is why the authorities of every multi-ethnic state – including those of RM – should approach the problems of interethnic relationships very carefully, contributing to the consolidation of the society by integrating the ethnic or linguistic minorities. Because of the poor integration of the ethnic minorities in RM there are rare situations in which the representatives of those particular communities obtain professional recognition at a national level and have important positions in the public, academic or cultural environments.

One of the important aspects related to the problem of the poor integration of the Russian-speaking minorities refers to the fact that RM does not have a positive image on the inside – it is not attractive to the young generation of ethnic minorities. There is no attractive cultural environment (movies, theatres, TV shows, etc.). In schools that use Russian as the teaching language, especially in the Autonomous Gagauzia Region, the level of teaching in the state language is low. Therefore, by accessing the media within the Russian Federation, the Russian-speaking minority lives in a parallel space with the majority of the population in RM.

This is why the Moldovan society is geopolitically divided – and this makes the state of RM vulnerable. Considering a hybrid war, especially thinking about the “Novorossia” project, a Russian-speaking community poorly integrated in the Moldovan society makes the state of RM more vulnerable to external risks.

3. THE HYBRID WAR IN THE CLASH BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN THE EASTERN PART OF EUROPE

The hybrid war represents a tool in the clash between the East (Russia) and the West (USA and its NATO and EU allies) in Eastern Europe. At present, the ethnic or linguistic minorities are used as tools in this hybrid war. They are mobilized from the exterior against the central state power in countries in which they live together with the titular majorities. The American researcher Joseph S. Nye Jr. explained in one of his papers that after 1945 the number of wars between states and various groups has increased. “Such groups can be divided into rioters, terrorists, policemen and criminal organizations, although these categories can overlap and fade over time” (Nye, 2012). Nye concludes: “The end of such conflicts is rarely settled on the conventional battle fields, with the help of some traditional armies. They become hybrid wars – an amalgam of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behaviour in the conflict space”. According to a definition given by the American researcher, “in hybrid wars, conventional forces, physical destructions and the informational war are imbedded” (NYE, 2012).

It is worth mentioning that the phenomenon of the hybrid war is not a new one. In his paper entitled “Diplomacy,” Henry Kissinger referred to a critical analysis of the relaxation, prepared by a group of eminent specialists” and put forward to the Subcommittee for the control of the weapons, which he was presiding, by the Senator Henry Jackson in June 1974. The document stated that: “in the current Soviet terminology, détente or «peaceful coexistence» refers to a strategic alternative to the militant antagonism against the so-called «capitalist countries». This does not mean that the Soviet

Union and its allies to abandon the conflict with the Western liberal countries... The frontal conflict will be replaced by some indirect fighting methods, using unmilitary tools, described as «ideological»: in the Soviet practice this concept hides subversion, propaganda, political blackmail and the operations of the information services” (KISSINGER, 2013). As one can notice, during the time of the Cold War the phenomenon that we today refer to using the collocation *hybrid war* appeared all the time.

The Eastern Europe region currently seems like a space under attack, some of the states in the region being subjected to some more serious tests than in other regions by the important actors which aim to accomplish their own geopolitical interest in the region. Republic of Moldova, part of the Eastern Europe regions is at present a battlefield between Russia and the West. At present, the Russian Federation, under Putin’s presidency, tries to regain control over the post-Soviet territory, which it called, from the beginning of the ‘90s, ближнее зарубежье. Putin’s 2011 statement that “collapse of the Soviet Union” war the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century” is well-known. The title that was attributed to the Kremlin leader, especially after the annexation of Crimea – “собиратель земель русских” (*The gatherer of the Russian lands*), the promotion of the concept of “русский мир” (*Russian world*) referring to the post-Soviet space (where there still is a large community of Russian ethnics or Russian speakers – 25 million according to some sources, 18 million according to other sources), the “Новороссия” (*Novorossia*) project, which refers to the junction of the separatist forces in Donbas, in the East of Ukraine, with those from Transnistria, from the east of RM and the taking over by these forces supported by Russia of the Ukrainian sea-shore of the Black Sea (Ukraine would therefore become Malorossiya – The Little Russia). All these elements represent alarming signals, risks that can be transformed into threats towards the security of the young Moldovan state.

Since Russia shows an increased interest for the Eastern Europe region and due to its actions in this particular space, one can notice that Kremlin encourages the Russian-speaking population in areas such as Transnistria and Donbas, in order to destabilize the situation in the region so that

Russia can consolidate its role in a region that it regards as its *sphere of influence* (its sphere of major interests). Through conflicts, even if they are frozen, maintained by the Russian Federation in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia or hot, such as the one in Donbas, Kremlin manages to block European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine – countries who signed association agreements with the EU and who clearly stated their desire to be part of the civilized European space and therefore to get out of the *Russian sphere of influence*.

It is worth mentioning that the dialogue, and lately, the clash between Russia and the West also include the Republic of Moldova in one of its topics, including the frozen conflict from the Nistrian region. In his work, “Diplomacy,” the well-known historian and specialist in Security Studies, Henry Kissinger, wrote down: “Bush [senior, note A.L.] was sad because of the disintegration of Gorbaciov’s USSR and Clinton [during Eltin’s presidency, note A.L.] consented to the efforts of rebuilding the former Russian sphere of influence” (Kissinger, 2013). In the light of this testimony of a very well informed and influenced personality of the American academic and politic world, it becomes more and more clear why USA did not firmly manifest its support for RM during the 1992 Russian-Moldovan conflict, in the Nistrian region. In comparison to the period of the ‘90s, when we noticed an amiable dialogue between Washington and Moscow, nowadays, especially starting from 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and supports the separatist regimes from Luhansk and Donetsk, one can notice tension and an increased distrust between the two geopolitical power poles.

Certainly the most efficient defense tools used against the influence of Kremlin in the post-Soviet states are the consolidated democratic institutions, including the efficient anti-corruption institutions, with a functional judicial system, an authentic democratic political process (fair elections), real progresses in the economic and social development of the country (the implementation of a functional market economy, attracting advanced investment and technologies). But in this context it is important to notice another aspect: it is extremely necessary to consolidate the society, civic peace, and to ensure *societal*

security. This desideratum can be achieved by establishing and implementing a *country project* (of a mission, vision and state-building policy, of a strategy, tactics and action plan) that can transform RM into an attractive state, both for the majority population, and for its ethnic minorities (including the Russian-speaking minority). However, because of the clash between Russia and the West, the ethnic and linguistic minorities can also be involved in the hybrid war which facilitates the interaction between the two power poles.

4. THE COUNTRY PROJECT - REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The American researcher Robert Kaplan considers that Republic of Moldova is a very weak state, without any identity and national idea, and this makes it even more vulnerable to external threats. In his opinion, RM is a victim of the internal chaos, because it has weak institutions. "Moldova is a country with a very low national identity. It has not been an independent state up to 1991. It moved back and forth between the Tsarist Russia and Romania and between the Soviet Russia and Romania. Besides the ethnic Romanian it also has Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauzia and Turkish ethnics who do not feel a great sense of psychological attachment towards the Chisinau government. This is why it represents a border country. It is a border country and inside Moldova there are many other borders. That is why it has a poor national identity. It has a chaotic government and it has weaker institutions than Romania. Romania constantly complains about its government, but it is highly institutionalized in comparison to the other side of the border. Therefore, I really fear that the Moldovan chaos could get worse, that destabilizing the country is in Putin's national interest, in the way in which he perceives this national interest," said Kaplan (Hotnews, 2016).

In one of his manuscripts Mihai Eminescu wrote: "The common idea, either religious or politic, seems like the handle used by the potter for every pot, so that you can have them all in the same place on the same thread. Without common ideas we cannot have a nation" (EMINESCU, 1981). An idea or some common ideas of a nation

can refer to the mission that that particular nation gets, accomplished within a state. Eminescu's expression of *the common idea* (of a nation) is also used in the contemporary period under the idea of *national idea*. A national idea developed within a *national project* represents an element that cannot lack when it comes to the good development of a state with a strong identity. A *national idea*, a *mission* of a nation is directly linked to *an ideal*, a *national dream*. The development of the national idea and the establishment of a national project represent a major responsibility of politicians and intellectuals within every state.

The history of the Moldovan state shows us that the Moldova principality was throughout the centuries situated among strong states and glorious empires. This may have been the main factor which led to the perpetuation of the Moldovan stability up to the present. In all its history, Moldova had a mission connected to the national security of the region of which it was part. We find Moldova's mission statement in an epistle belonging to Stephen the Great, on January 12, 1474 sent to the princes of Europe: "Our country is a gate towards Christianity and God has protected it so far. If this gate, which is our country, will be lost - God forbid something like this to happen - then Christianity will be in great danger. And we, on our behalf, promise on our Christian belief and with our oath that we will fight to death for our Christian law. This is what you also have to do, at sea or on land, after we cut off the enemy's hand with the help of the All-mighty God." From this extract we notice that Stephen the Great together with his people pledged to protect Christianity - Europe from the medieval times - from the danger represented by the Ottoman Empire.

In an article from November 2, 1879 the great intellectual Mihai Eminescu stated the mission of the Moldovan state after the unification of the Vlach or Danubian principalities in 1859. It is known that following the Crimea War (1853-1856), the European powers who defeated Russia made it give Moldova back in 1856 the three Bassarabian districts: Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail. Starting from that moment Moldova received a mission related to the national security. Eminescu wrote down: "We have to become a cultural layer at the mouths of the Danube; this is the Romanian

state's only mission and whoever wants to use its powers towards another goal, threatens the future of our successors and destroys the work of our ancestors" (EMINESCU, 1990).

At present, the society of Republic of Moldova is trying to find the lost sense or meaning. The sense/meaning has to be identified, and established as a national/country project. The citizens of a country can only be united for a national project, they can serve their country and sacrifice for it, if necessary.

Starting from 2009 the pro-European government in Chisinau put forward the strategic goal of the European integration of RM. Does European integration represent a national idea for the Moldovan state? Because the Moldovan society is divided in two approximately equal parts, one that supports the integration vector and one that supports the Eastern vector, one can say that *the European integration* does not represent a national idea (belonging to all the members of the society). Even in some countries from inside the EU there are issues related to the idea of member of the EU (let's take the example of UK and Northern Ireland where 51.90% of the population voted in favor of Brexit (Ziare, 2016). For a state like RM, which is behind in its development and in many other fields, the European integration represents a useful way of modernizing and improving the politic, law, economic or social systems. Assuming and implementing the European standards when it comes to interethnic relationships, including the establishment of multicultural politics that can contribute to the improvement of such relationship, and therefore ensure the societal security in RM. Therefore, European integration represents an efficient tool in the development and improvement of the state. However, in a country project, the authors have to identify elements that can make Moldova useful within the EU (for its member states) and for the entire international community.

A country project could be structured on the five sectors of the *security* concept. Its authors should emphasize the contribution of the Moldovan state in the regional and international framework – therefore, what can RM offer in the following sectors:

- economic
- environment,
- societal,
- politic,
- military.

If important but also realistic goals will be established and if the necessary resource will be identified, then the Moldovan state will try to affirm itself in the regional and international plan, to develop an unmistakable and meritorious identity and to fulfil a purpose. A country project includes the following elements:

- a mission,
- a vision,
- a policy (a state building policy),
- a strategy,
- a tactic
- an action plan.

The mission of a state refers to *a dream, a national ideal*.

At a lower level one can compare the situation of RM to that of France after World War II. During that period, the problem that president de Gaulle had to solve was: "how could one rebuild the identity of a nation overwhelmed by the feeling of failure and vulnerability" (KISSINGER, 2013). In this regard, "managing a country full of intense conflicts over an entire generation and decades of humiliation, de Gaulle judged the policies not only using pragmatic criteria, but also according to their capacity of contributing to the rebuilding of the French feeling of dignity" (KISSINGER, 2013). This is a very good example for the government of RM.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The issue regarding the poor integration of the national/ethnic communities from Republic of Moldova (which are mainly Russian-speaking linguistic communities) are a reminiscence of the policies used during the Soviet period, and also of the incapacity to solve them during the independence period (1991 – up to the present). The poor integration of the Russian-speaking linguistic community represents a vulnerability towards the security of the Moldovan state. It makes the Moldovan state vulnerable to exterior

risks. In order to eliminate this vulnerability, the authorities in Chisinau can use EU practices regarding the interethnic relationships. Establishing and implementing a multicultural policy may have a significant role in ensuring *societal security* (one of the five sectors) in order to ensure *the national security* of RM.

The poor integration in the Moldovan society and the poor knowledge of the state's language by the Russian-speaking community make their members prefer the Eastern integration vector despite the clear advantages offered by the European integration. The success of a good path to modernization and European integration, supported by a consolidated majority of the Moldovan society implies efforts for a better integration on behalf of the Russian-speaking community.

In order to consolidate the Moldovan society and to ensure societal security the following measures could be put into practice:

1. the use of *soft power* in order to increase the attractiveness of the Moldovan state in relationship to the Russian-speaking community from inside the country, as well as in relationship to the other countries of the world;
2. the development of a public TV station broadcasting in Russian (following the example of Estonia);
3. the development of a national idea – a mission of the country, a country project;
4. the development of a national edification process;
5. the development and implementation of teaching programmes for the country's language, culture and national history in the Russian-speaking regions. These programmes could be supported financially by the EU;
6. Studying and taking over the experience of some EU countries (especially Romania) regarding the integration of ethnic minorities;
7. Enhancing the role of the Interethnic Relationship Office, that could be turned into a responsible Ministry in order to establish multicultural policies. Their implementation could ensure societal security.
8. Improving study conditions of the mother tongues and of their own cultures for the national/ethnic minorities.

In the context of European integration of RM, its collaboration with Romania and the support of the neighbouring state becomes highly significant. The relationship between Germany and Austria, two countries that are very similar from a cultural point of view, within the EU, may represent a useful model for the relationship between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, both in the pre-accession period and also when the Moldovan state will become a member of the European Union.

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