

THE EVOLUTION OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA RELATIONS WITH ROMANIA (1991–2013)

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In this article the authors comprehensively analyze the evolution of the bilateral relations between Romania and Moldova. Relations between Romania and Moldova, two sovereign and independent states, have a privileged, particular character, deriving from the community of people, culture, language and national history. The currently existence of the two separate Romanian states instead of one as a whole, can be explained by the political history of the twentieth century, through the international situation that has been created both after the USSR collapse and the socialist camp, and by interests of modern great powers

Keywords: *foreign policy, international relations, regionalism, security, national interest, regional integration.*

EVOLUȚIA RELAȚIILOR REPUBLICII MOLDOVA CU ROMÂNIA (1991-2013)

În acest articol autorii analizează evoluția multiaspectuală a relațiilor bilaterale ale Republicii Moldova cu România. Relațiile dintre România și Republica Moldova, două state suverane și independente, au un caracter privilegiat, special, decurgând din comunitatea de neam, cultură, limbă și istorie națională. Existența la momentul actual a două state românești separate în loc de unul întregit poate fi explicată prin istoria politică a secolului XX, prin conjunctura internațională care s-a creat odată cu dezmembrarea URSS și cu prăbușirea lagărului socialist, precum și prin interesele unor mari puteri contemporane.

Cuvinte-cheie: *politică externă, relații internaționale, regionalism, securitate, interes național, integrare regională.*

Relations between Romania and Moldova, two sovereign and independent states, have a privileged, particular character, deriving from the community of people, culture, language and national history. The currently existence of two separate Romanian states instead of one as a whole, can be explained by the political history of the twentieth century, through international situation that has been created both after the USSR collapse and the socialist camp, and by the interests of modern great powers [10, p.42].

Lately relations between Romania and Moldova, being more than a decade on the outskirts of policy concerns and international diplomacy, become the subject of increased attention This happens also because both Romania, and Moldova were in the past few years, each separately, ones of particular interest due to events such as: Romania's accession to NATO, relations of Romania and the Republic of Moldova with the enlarged Europe, and, of course because of accelerated internationalization of the Transnistrian problem. Undoubtedly, this increasing interest in the two countries was due to regional conjuncture, or, the South Eastern Europe as a whole was a scene of action with global resonance in the last years of the second millennium and the early years of the third millennium [14, p.127].

Thus, in the context of the new created conditions, the Moldovan-Romanian relations can be examined from two perspectives: from the perspective of Romania's interest to create a zone of security and stability on the eastern border, and from the perspective of the national interests of the Republic of Moldova to join the EU. For a better understanding of this phenomenon, as well as the process of evolution of Moldovan-Romanian relations policy it is needed to take a cursory look on how the relations between the two countries were configured. Romania was the first country that recognized the Republic of Moldova, after its state independence proclamation on August 27, 1991 [1, p.68-69]. From the Romanian government declaration, made on that occasion, it was clear that, according to the authorities from Bucharest, Moldova's independence was considered a form of emancipation from tutelage of Moscow and a first step towards reunification with Romania.

Concerning the Moldovan-Romanian political relations, we can say that the main lines are exposed in two basic documents: Concept of Foreign Policy of Moldova in 1995 and the Program "Foreign policy and promotion of real Romania image". If we examine the first document one of the main directions of the Moldova foreign policy refers to multilateral cooperation with Romania [2]. Analyzing the second document, we can say that in that Chapter 11.2.4 referring to "Enhancing bilateral relations" it is stipulated that the Government will seek to prioritize development with dynamism and pragmatism special and privileged relations between

Romania and Moldova, on the identity of language, culture and history through the development of complementary economic areas, supporting investment flows in Moldova, continuing direct economic support, assistance to diversify energy resources available to the Republic of Moldova to raise the country's energy independence, supporting the admission of the Republic of Moldova in the Stability Pact in South East Europe, supporting European projects of regional and sub-regional cooperation that Moldova could participate [11].

Retrospectively analyzing the formal relations between Chisinau and Bucharest during the period of independence and so far, we find that they have evolved sinus [5, p.368], ranging from excitement, enthusiasm, the offered military assistance in 1992, during military actions from the left bank of Dniester River, to a tension situation, of public accusations, which had negative effect on both states. Through these cases there are noted, on the one hand, certain statements of the Romanian Parliament and Government, which put into question the independence and security of the Republic of Moldova, and, on the other hand, the political decisions of the authorities in Chisinau, which affected the neighbour state.

Only the results of the 1998 parliamentary elections and the formation of a democratic and reformist majority in Chisinau, with taking the power of new forces interested in making serious reforms to modernize the country, it was possible to move from declarations to pragmatic relations, including adjusting foreign policy priorities. It was declared bluntly that the EU integration is a key priority of national interests abroad. These new elements Moldovan on political scene, which had a special character, according to the traditions of friendship and good neighbourliness, had a beneficial impact on relations with Bucharest, where the new Moldovan authorities understood very well the importance of close cooperation with Romania. It was intensified the dialogue at presidents, prime ministers, ministers' level and the statements were replaced with concrete actions.

Between 30 to 31 August 1999, Mr. Ion Sturza, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova at that time, following his official visit to Romania at the invitation of his counterpart Mr. Vasile Radu said that Romania would become a core provider of Moldova not only regarding electricity, but also oil products. Also, the head of Government from Chisinau wanted to clarify that in Moldova there were political conditions for good relations with Romania, moreover, within the government program of his Cabinet, the Moldovan-Romanian relations were mentioned as priorities. As a result of this visit it was found the strengthening of good communication between the two countries' prime ministers, both insisting on institutionalizing of further meetings character. Also, for the first time it was publicly announced the Moldovan desire to have as main electricity provider a neighbouring state - Romania, and this message has taken a serious political connotation. Based on priority quality of relations between Moldova and Romania, the parties considered necessary a strict monitoring, within the Government of all bilateral activities. In this way, it would increase the accountability of those involved in project implementation and would increase the level and effectiveness of cooperation [15, p.122].

To strengthen cooperation between Romania and Moldova including Ukraine, two Euro-regions were created. The "Lower Danube" was established on August 14, 1998 and the "Upper Prut" was founded on September 22, 2000. The cooperation in Euro-region "Upper Prut", whose members are Edinet and Balti in Moldova, Botosani and Suceava in Romania and Chernivtsi region in Ukraine, is currently focused on the implementation of concrete projects and programs crossing line simplification state border and customs procedures control for citizens and economic agents who operate within the Euro-region. In the Euro-region there are also addressed issues related to opening new border crossings and modernization of existing ones, expanding exchanges and cooperation mechanisms to align the normative-legal base of the three states to the European requirements in regional policy domain, self and interregional cooperation.

The Euro-region "Lower Danube" in which activity Galati, Braila and Tulcea in Romania, Cahul in Moldova and Odessa region in Ukraine are involved is also facing joint projects between the three partner countries. In this respect, international folklore festivals for children, scientific sessions in archeological domain, school contests, exhibitions, summer camps, joint expert meetings, draft environmental cooperation are held [7, p.194].

The Euro-regions activity so far have focused on creating a common framework to achieve a trilateral meeting calendar, for information and documentation, on issues of common interest including high-level, consultations and coordination on environmental protection, small business facilitation between adjacent zones, including setting up of new international border crossing points, initiating joint efforts under the international financial and economic organizations, providing funding for projects of common interest in the framework

agreed tripartite collaboration and developing a plan of measure actions to combat organized crime, terrorism, illegal trafficking in arms and banned substances, illegal migration and illegal border crossing.

Thought of as a space of joint initiatives and projects, to respond to regional wishes and desires that more than one country could contribute, the Euro-regions are designed to foster cooperation between different levels of society from one country to another. The so called "mirror" of national cooperation between states within the Euro-regions there are addressed a wide range of projects, thinking in such a manner as to exploit the strengths of each participant, and also to learn them the values, benefits and liability in case of joint projects. Perhaps, for reasons of heterogeneity theme of these projects is to notice that their current state is not sufficiently known to the public.

Although we want the region to be characterized by a spirit of collaboration and exchange of ideas on common progress, the region, unfortunately, confronts most serious problems. Arms and drugs trafficking phenomenon, human and machines trafficking are often encountered in the region to which they belong Romania, Moldova and Ukraine [17, p.77-88]. The Ukraine, Romania and Moldova are both source countries, and transit states as to the ex Yugoslavia, Albania. Thus, there is a positive acceleration of some concrete facts in Moldovan-Romanian bilateral relations. On April 18, 2000 the text on Privileged Partnership Treaty was initialled, bringing the most diverse reactions from both countries. There were different opinions: some said it was a good end, to others - the given act was a big mistake. But the reactions didn't delay to occur also in Romania. The most representatives over Prut River were against signing the Treaty until there will not be reviewed certain issues and included causes of bilateral terminated and consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. The Ex President P. Lucinschi said that initiating the treaty was a good sign for both for us, and for Europe, because the borders of each state recognition was one of the primary requirements of the European Union [8]. During the visit to Chisinau on April 28, 2000, Mr. Petre Roman, former Romania's Foreign Minister, said that the Treaty had a special content, different by political treaties signed by Romania, up to that time. Moldovan-Romanian relations have taken a more constructive character, the pragmatism being ideal track that would help to overcome economic difficulties and to proximity to Europe [9].

Coming the Party of Communists to power did not bring any hope on warming Moldovan-Romanian relations, despite the claims made by some political commentators, who tried to convince us that relations between the two countries would be pragmatic [9], but during the first year of governance of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova, relations between the two countries have cooled considerably – Romania accusations of interference in the internal affairs of state during mass protests in Chisinau; declaring the military attaché of the Embassy of Romania to Moldova persona non-grata.

Despite the duplicitous policy of Chisinau, Romania has always encouraged and welcomed Moldova's European integration desires. Romania has supported Moldova's European aspirations not only in words but also through actions. Romania granted and continues to support political, diplomatic and economic actions of Moldova, coming to greet the neighbouring needs and gain meaning Moldova connections with developed countries, with European and NATO organizations. The western countries and representatives of various international bodies correctly perceive and appreciate this support. Thus it was significant the statement made by the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP), Bodo Hombach, in Chisinau in 2001, where the high official stressed that relations for the Republic of Moldova the relations with Romania are a vital interest and the accession to SPSEE on June 28, 2001 is due to insistence of Romania, who worked hardly and consistently in this direction. Trying to internationalize the Transnistrian conflict within OSCE during the 2001 of Romanian Presidential and mandates of the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly of Mr. Adrian Severin, had a major importance for Moldova.

The cooperation between the two countries has materialized by enshrining legal mechanisms work created by governments of Moldova and Romania, with separate government structures that dealt with managing relations. Important was that the two countries have signed bilateral documents that regulated and promoted cooperation between them on all levels (political, economic, cultural, international ones). Moreover concerns of the two countries to meet EU requirements have materialized in Chisinau in 2001 signing of the Agreement between Romania and the Republic of Moldova on mutual trips of citizens on the basis of passports [16], and on June 27, 2001 it was signed the Agreement on readmission of foreigners [13]. Also in this period there was signed the Protocol between the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Ministry of Border of Romania and Department of Border Guards of the Republic of Moldova on mutual trips of citizens of both countries.

After the elections in late 2004 in Romania, the President Basescu T. resorted to adopting a foreign policy speech in which attached great importance to the Black Sea area. Pontic policy involved solving frozen conflicts in the region, especially the Transnistrian conflict. Under this strategy Transnistrian problem played a central role. In relations with Transnistria, Basescu called for a more active role of Romania in solving the conflict and its cooperation in negotiations. In this context, we consider that Romania has become a deciding factor in settling the Transnistrian conflict, especially given the fact that our neighbor is a member of NATO and the Transnistrian problem is one that affects the security of South-East [3].

The improving relations with Moldova were one of the basic dimensions of this "new foreign policy" of Romania. For Mr. Traian Basescu, Moldova was the first country that he visited as president at the initiative of his Moldovan counterpart Mr. Vladimir Voronin on 21 January 2005. For Moldova, this visit meant resuming talks with Bucharest after a period of six years and is what the fifth stage of the Moldovan-Romanian relations. During the visit, the presidents adopted a joint statement, where the two states expressed their intention to tap the potential of bilateral cooperation in order to assert European standards and values, as well as strengthening European and regional security and relations between the two countries in the various areas: trade and economic, social, humanitarian and cultural.

Placed in an objectively position, we can see that Moldovan-Romanian relations during the years 2005-2006, unlike previous years, have been developing enviable. This is due to the fact that Romania has supported Moldova in the scroll modernization, democratization and European integration, doing everything possible to support the political, economic and diplomatic policies according to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Romania continued to closely monitor the evolution of the Transnistrian conflict, to contribute actively to identify viable solutions based on democratization and demilitarization, the withdrawal of troops and weapons illegally stationed in eastern part of Moldova. Moreover, Romania was committed to be a faithfully lawyer of Moldova in Europe, helping it to learn quickly the "acquis communautaire" [4].

Romania continued to pronounce itself for Moldova's EU entry. During the visit to Romania in February 2008 of the President of France, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, Mr. Traian Basescu spoke about the need for EU enlargement in Central Europe, considering this as a major event of the onset of the 21st century as a victory for democracy. Speaking before the French guest, Mr. Traian Basescu said that "this expansion is not completed, a number of countries, I think especially in the Balkans, and certainly with a foreseeable period, in Moldova, who has the vocation, also Serbia, to join the European Union. This expansion will transform the face of Europe in depth".

Important steps taken in strengthening the Moldovan-Romanian relations represented the official visits from Chisinau to Romania. During the visit in September 2005 in Iasi of the Foreign Minister of European Integration of Moldova, Mr. Andrei Stratan brought considerations to the Romanian side for its contribution in enhancing relations with the European Union [6]. In this context, no less important was the participation of the former President Vladimir Voronin at the inauguration "Wine Festival from Moldova in Bucharest" on December 13, 2005. During the meeting with his counterpart in Bucharest, Mr. Traian Basescu, the Transnistrian conflict was one of the main subjects of discussion. According to the Romanian president, Chisinau, under the Constitution, must gain political control over the entire country [12].

No less important for strengthening the Moldovan-Romanian relations referred the visit on March 14, 2006 in Chisinau of the Prince Radu of Hohenzollern-Viringen, the Special Representative of Romania for Integration, Cooperation and Sustainable Development [12]. All these visits of senior officials represented the confidence that has taken place in relations between the two countries.

Relations between Romania and Moldova in 2009 witnessed a dramatic evolution, from a state close to diplomatic war in the first half of the year, to a situation of complete understanding and coordination between the two capitals, at the end of the year, with the change of government in Chișinău. The 2009 year 'caught' two states in an almost total lack of dialogue and quite antagonistic relationship, after several exchanges of words from both capitals, but especially because of sick reactions of the former leadership of Moldova. The signing of the border agreement and the Basic Political Treaty were the main conditions required to restore relations while Bucharest continue to insist on signing of border traffic and the opening of two Romanian consulates in Balti and Cahul. In addition, the Moldovan authorities on several occasions accused Bucharest of involvement in the internal affairs of the Republic of Moldova and 'forced Romanization'.

April 2009 was accompanied by strong statements and recalls of diplomatic expulsions, threats and insults between Bucharest and Chisinau. On April 5, 2009, in Moldova were held the Parliamentary elections

which, according to the results, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova, governed for eight years, won another victory. The opposition contested the election results and accused of voting fraud. On 6 and 7 April in the center of Chisinau large anti protests were held, which turned into violence and lead to destruction of the Presidency and the Parliament buildings and clashes with police.

On 8 April 2009, the former President, Mr. Vladimir Voronin accused Romania of involvement in organizing protests, which he described as an attempt to usurp state power. He brings as an argument in this regard that, during protests on the Parliament and Presidency buildings there were hoisted flags of Romania. The same day, the Romanian Ambassador to Moldova, Filip Teodorescu, together with Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy Mr. Ioan Gabriel Gaborean were declared persona non grata and were forced to leave the country within 24 hours. The government adopted a decision where the visa regime for Romanian citizens was introduced, although, according to some experts, violated its own legislation. Also, Chisinau has recalled its ambassador in Bucharest. Subsequently, the Moldovan authorities have expelled almost all Romanian journalists accredited in the Republic Moldova. The scandal drew attention of the international community.

The period up to July 29, 2009, is marked by new mutual tough accusations between Chisinau and Bucharest, posts of Chairmen and the Chisinau refusal to accredit Romanian Ambassador, Mr. Mihnea Constantinescu. The results of repeated parliamentary elections on July 29, led to a gradual return of normalcy in relations between the two countries. The Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova lost parliamentary majority and the new majority, consisting of four parties, announced that it wants to eliminate abuses against the communist government in Romania and intended soon to abolish visa and sign the Agreement on local border traffic.

On September 17, the same day the Constitutional Court acknowledges its appointment as interim president of Moldova, Mr. Mihai Ghimpu, who signed a decree on the abolition of visa regime. A week later, the newly elected government approved a similar decision. Mr. Ghimpu has repeatedly requested an apology from the Romanian people for the abuses of the former governance. On September 25 it is vested the new coalition government, led by Mr. Vlad Filat. He announced through priorities to restore relations with Romania. On 13 November, Mr. Vlad Filat paid a visit to Bucharest, whom he had meeting at the highest level, including the Romanian President, Mr. Basescu and the Prime Minister, Mr. Emil Boc. During that visit it has been signed the Convention on small border traffic, which served as the subject of discussions between the two countries for more than a year and a half, during which Communist authorities refused to sign. Then, the government in Bucharest decided to grant financial assistance to Moldova totalling 100 million lei and about 400,000 doses of flu pandemic vaccine. On December 29, Mr. Ghimpu invited Mr. Basescu to visit Chisinau, noting "with satisfaction" that 2009 opened broad prospects for development of relations between Chisinau and Bucharest and appreciated especially "brotherly attitude" that Basescu expressed towards his country.

In an interview made in Agerpres in late of 2009, Mr. Ghimpu said that among the greatest achievements of the new government on relations with Romania recovery is the fact 'that we have restored to the Romania', as "citizens and the state leadership didn't deserve insults made by former President, Mr. Vladimir Voronin". The year 2010 continued developments in the second half of last year. On January 21, Bucharest has submitted an application for accreditation recreational, Mr. Marius Lazurca as Ambassador of Romania to Moldova. The next day, M. Ghimpu gave approval for accreditation of the new ambassador, so that soon it could be accredited. Mr. Traian Basescu accepted the invitation of his counterpart and paid a visit to Moldova on 27-28 January, which he would meet the entire top leadership of the Republic of Moldova and would receive the 'Order of the Republic' from Ghimpu, which is the highest honour of the Republic of Moldova.

Also in 2010, Romania allocated to Moldova a grant of 100 million euros. First part of this money, 25 million euros, was aimed to help victims of floods in Hancesti [19].

The relationship Romania - Moldova in 2011 was characterized rather by circumspection and high expectations, due to promises made by Romanian officials in the past two years. One of the achievements of 2011 was growth of trade between Romania and Moldova, which reached a volume of \$ 950 million.

In 2012, the trade turnover between the two countries amounted to about \$ 980 million, which is three percent more than in 2011. In 2012, the volume of Moldovan exports to Romania amounted to 400 million dollars, while import from Romania was equal to 600 million dollars, which is 8% more than in 2011 [18]. During the same year, in Romania were registered more than 400 thousand Moldovan-Romanian companies, with a total investment of capital of \$ 35 million. According to statistics, most foreign enterprises in Moldo-

va are Romanian. The largest of them are Rompetrol, Petrom, Romstal and Metro Cash & Carry and their investment of capital is of almost 400 million lei [18].

In the summer of 2013, Romanian President Traian Basescu visited Chisinau on an official visit. He held several meetings with representatives of the higher echelons of power. As a result of one of these meetings, he assured reporters that «... Romania remains unconditionally the lawyer of Moldova in the EU, respecting in the same time, the wishes of the country to be neutral from a military point of view» [20].

On August 27, 2013 was officially launched the construction of the pipeline Iasi-Ungeni which is designed to combine the gas transportation system of Moldova and Romania. Currently, 100% of the gas consumed by Moldova is imported from Russia. However, currently Romania doesn't cover its gas needs from its own sources and imports from the Russian Federation from 22% to 42% of the total volume of its gas [21].

The cooperation between the two countries is also evident in the aspect of cultural relations. For a better mutual knowledge and diversification of relations of cooperation, both countries are committed to developing friendly relations between youth, by conducting meetings, exchanges, deepening cooperation in the field of youth and sports. Also, both the Republic of Moldova and Romania have committed to provide scholarships for undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate studies (MA, PhD). Annually Moldovan students receive scholarships from schools and universities in Romania. In the academic year 2013-2014, the Romanian government has allocated 5,500 such scholarships. It is planned that in the 2014-2015 academic years, this number will increase to 6 thousand places [20].

As a result of the study of the key aspects of relations between Moldova and Romania in the new geopolitical context we might conclude: the European integration interest of the Republic of Moldova, depends on three key factors: the political will of the ruling elite, expressed not only by statements and concrete actions, but also the success of economic and institutional reforms; the coherent and dynamic foreign policy which will seek to promote the country's image abroad and strengthening relations with strategic partners, able to influence the acceleration of European integration process. Also, the success of the European integration of the country depends largely on the quality of relations with the neighbouring country - Romania. In order to maintain the existing dialogue between Moldova and Romania, we have to develop bilateral relations on the basis of a well elaborated legal framework, which we lack now. Also, the concept of foreign policy, which is under development, should stipulate more detailed aspects of cooperation between the two countries - Moldova and Romania.

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