

THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: THE EUROPEAN OPTION EXAMINATION

Victor MORARU¹

¹Prof., PhD, Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova
Corresponding author: prof.moraru@gmail.com

Abstract

The present article follows the topic of the European option of the Republic of Moldova and attempts to shape the current questions on the path of European integration of the country. The author revealed obstacles that hinder the achievement of this goal (poverty, political instability, unresolved conflict in the eastern territory of the country) and further emphasizes that this result should be the effort of the entire society. Also, of great importance is acquiring and learning from the experience of other states, which are currently members of the European Union. In these circumstances the media plays a special role. At the same time, the media coverage of the topic of European integration it is not a simple and univocal question. In the journalistic circles, as in political ones, it is recognized the complexity of the problem. Accordingly, the pages of the press, the radio and the TV often submit a confused perception of many aspects of it, a superficial treatment of the issue, derived from insufficient knowledge concerning specific situations. It often operates with schemes and with clichés to which readers, listeners and viewers are familiar. Yet, journalists would not come to overthrow these schemes, but rather they adjust, maintain and perpetuate them. Most often the dilemma of "to reveal the essence of the phenomenon" and „look spectacular element" is resolved in favour of the second option. Talking about European integration on the media, means, quite frequently, to speak at the chapter of „funny". Therefore, it is argued in the article, that a successful effort of European integration resides at the crossroads of the several issues that still need solving.

Keywords: *Republic of Moldova, foreign policy, European integration, europeanization, media, european issues on the press.*

The release of the fundamental social changes produced the last century, at the end of the 80's-the beginning of the 90's, made the Moldovan people discover the fact that the fundamental truth referring to the democratic principles and the human rights are very important for the post-communist countries, like for the Occidental ones. The same changes marked the process of substitution of the old values throughout their

own values of the contemporary Occidental society.

The novelty of movement imposed very quickly. From that moment, the orientation towards the universal paradigm of the Occident would indicate the objectives set.

The motivation that led to the reversal of this mentality can be made as simple as it is eloquent "a huge supermarket is always better than a huge barracks"¹. In this opening to the Occident, which expressly derived its apology, society dominated for years by an austere economic reality, saw a true encounter with Panacea - a cure for all evils inherited from the totalitarian past.

The implementation of this atmosphere which represents a continuous aspiration towards change - an entertaining slogan of the political class, which wanted to blur the previous nomenclature - was favoured by the media endeavour unleashed within the space of the new realities and opportunities.

The itinerary of the Republic of Moldova at the end of the 20th century and in the first years of the new millennium proved more complicated than it appeared at the beginning of the great transformations. The inefficiency of the country's governments determined an almost permanent socio-political instability, placing the political realities of the country in the sphere of confusions and doubts.

The necessity of proving its capacity of overcoming the long-lasting crisis and of adequately dealing with the poll's expectations led the new government to promote a more pragmatic approach, intensifying the cooperation with international organisms and deepening the

diplomatic efforts in order to avoid the country's isolation and marginalization. The current foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova has among its successes, for example, the real prospects of signing an Association Agreement with the EU, within a reasonable timeframe. The most important percentage, in the current political situation, is occupied by the answer to a question asked to the democracy, as the prestigious French author Jean-Francois Revel notices, "whether or not the art of being elected has anything to do with the ability to govern"².

"The race towards Europe" hasn't actually begun, for the Republic of Moldova, a few years ago³. Basically, the European vocation of the Republic of Moldova is perennial and constant⁴ and, under current conditions, the primary objective aims at achieving the quality of a European Union member state⁵. Therefore, there is no exaggeration in acknowledging the fact that "integration" has become the slogan of the day, representing a major topic in the government's political agenda. However, the image of the political situation and of the people's predisposition appears, according to opinion polls, quite ambiguous for the moment. Therefore, there is a clear must: that of a careful interrogation of the phenomenal development framework, the necessity of examining the way in which elements from the past appear in the background of some new elements. It is obvious that the latter cannot appear in a fast pace, they are inserted in the preexisting structure, changing it, and determining the adequate contemporary development model has to overcome, as proved by the experience of the previous years, a difficult road, oscillating between stereotypes of thought and revelation, between certain prejudice and probative arguments

For the moment, there is a series of factors which represent obstacles in Moldova's European integration endeavour. Internally, we speak about some statistical data which place the discussion related to the topic in a context marked by a series of harsh truth. This context could be defined very simple: poverty, which continued to be, throughout the years and governments, a profoundly destabilizing factor in the society. As in other parts, the inability to meet generates, as people noticed⁶, "growing masses of desperate

people who seek to enter in Western Europe and the United States." In fact, the Moldovan political class is preoccupied by the fight against poverty, the search for its own identity, reforms, basically an entrance in Europe, in the sense of European integration, but in a more decent manner. The concerns expressed by the European experts are absolutely true in the case of the Republic of Moldova: the problem of poverty, together with the country's problem of the eastern territories and the problem of corruption are those Gordian knots without which it is impossible to solve the further shaping and building of the Moldovan society that would meet European standards and values. This is why it is justified to ask ourselves about the capacity of the political class to promote a reasonable and efficient integration politics, and by default of national and international security. It is absolutely obvious that the task of offering some explanations and of aiming some activities towards the reaching of a national consensus also belongs to mass-media. These activities contribute to the identification of the problems and the search, by means of public debate, to find some reasonable solutions. In reality, mass-media analysing daily events, having its own perspective, usually influenced by political interests, contributes to perpetuating a state of general confusion, and the problems are dealt with in two manners, according to a French journalist "either from the Kalashnikov rifle perspective or from the perspective of the absolute pink colour"⁷. But, if we accept the metaphor according to which mass-media represents a mirror of reality, we aren't allowed to get upset on the mirror, even if we don't like what we see in it. Of course, the mirror doesn't have to be deformed.

The role of mass-media in society is important, but anyway it cannot be decisive in solving political problems, including the problem of European integration. The complexity of this problem is acknowledged both in journalistic circles and in political circles. The significance of the complexity, according to mass-media monitoring doesn't appear yet. More precisely, the pages of the newspapers, radio and TV shows often present a blurred perception of its multiple aspects, a superficial approach based on insufficient knowledge regarding real situations.

They often use set phrases which are familiar to the readers, listeners or viewers, and journalists not only that they don't interfere with them, but they also preserve and promote them. On numerous occasions there is a dilemma between "revealing the essence of the phenomenon" and "presenting its spectacular element" and it is usually solved in favour of the second one. Talking about European integration in mass-media means, quite frequently, talking about general stuff. Besides such journalistic subjects there are also some analytical materials required, such as investigation journalism, which are unfortunately missing or are insufficiently promoted. And this is why the realities on poverty and the abundance of bewailing overwhelm and even promote "a philosophy of begging." Anyway, the approach to the European integration phenomenon implies, both for the political forces and for the mass-media, the need to carefully observe the population's state of mind, and also the active involvement in directing those energies according to the demands of the present times. This is exactly something that doesn't happen or it happens very rarely. But, how can one achieve social consensus, when the mentality really represents a factor that cannot be ignored? We speak about that particular consensus which is required for Moldova's integration in the European Union.

The development of the complicated situations in the Republic of Moldova, as well as in other post-communist countries, generates interest, but also awakens some certain anxieties, generating different opinions in politicians and experts. In a crisis economy, the efforts of stabilizing the society cannot counteract the destructive tendencies of the transition period. Anyway, it is absolutely clear that there is a need for common effort, because "the success of a society is not the result of the state's activities, nor is it of the best government, but it is an united effort of the entire society⁸."

Therefore, which are the ways that allow the optimizing of the European integration policies? Which integration options and scripts are the most reasonable? How should one value European integration? How can one use the lessons and the already acquired experience in

this field? For this matter, what is the role of collaborating with NATO? What reactions, in the context of the political and geopolitical strategies of the Russian Federation, would the deepening of this collaboration generate? These are just some of the questions that the Moldovan society has to find an answer to as quickly as possible.

Undoubtedly, Moldova's intention of choosing the European path meets multiple obstacles. It is impossible to neglect the Russian factor in this context. Even if the Republic of Moldova didn't completely managed to promote, because of the presented circumstances, a more judicious and courageous foreign politics, that could fully correspond to its national interest, it would be unfair not to appreciate its efforts of finding its own development opportunities, in an attempt to overcome its position as Russia's satellite, as it was sometimes interpreted. At the same time, the Russian Federation still remains a power deeply interested in gaining control over the ex-soviet territory.

This doctrine proved to be, like Zbigniew Brzezinski mentions, nothing more than a "geopolitical illusion"⁹. Anyway, Russia, as the events show, will continually try to exert its influence on the Republic of Moldova.

Romania's accession to the European Union, and the European horizons which appear in the foreign policy of Ukraine, offer favorable perspectives for the upcoming future of the Republic of Moldova, but possible delays represent a risk for the country which may remain isolated in the new configuration of the European space. These circumstances have determined Moldova to revise, during the last few years, its outdated expectations and to completely embrace the pro-European initiatives. One can speak about some right steps in this direction, strengthening the institutional capacities and the real European premises; there is also the support offered by Romania along this road.

The awareness of the great difficulties that come along with Moldova's European integration itinerary doesn't diminish the optimism related to a European future. 7 out of 10 Europeans, according to a market research performed by the Eurobarometer said that they are optimistic

about the future destiny of Europe: therefore, the majority of the Europeans think that in 50 years' time the European Union will be a major force at the European level (61% of the respondents), that it will have its own army (56%) and that it will be headed by a President directly elected by the European citizens¹⁰.

Moldova's European integration marathon continues. How well it will manage to overcome obstacles depends, in this disputable context, on very many factors – the position and the activism of the external factors, the will of the political class, the contribution of each citizen.

Recent events confirm the fact that the Republic of Moldova successfully supports the European option exam and, despite all tendencies, expressed either open or silent, by the different political forces, to conteract, using slogans and electoral actions, the pro-European orientation by the pro-Eastern one, the future of Republic of Moldova remains still, without any doubt, within the great European family.

Endnotes

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