
MOLDOVA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (2009-2017). A SHORT OVERVIEW

Gheorghe Cazacu*

Abstract

The author of this article is trying to analyse the dynamic of the relations between Republic of Moldova and the European Union after 2009. At the heart of the debate will be the main events and documents signed between the two sides. Based on this analysis, the author aims to present the main lines based on the bilateral reports between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union in the analysed time segment.

Key-words: European Union, Republic of Moldova, Eastern Partnership, Action Plan, Association Agreement.

Introduction

Republic of Moldova is a small country strategically located in South-Eastern Europe. The importance of the geopolitical localization of the country is given by the fact that it is situated at the borders of two worlds. At one hand, Moldova is located at the eastern borders of the European Union (the border with Romania on river Prut). On the other hand, Moldova represents the western limits of the former Russian Empire and former Soviet Union (Dima 1998; Serebrian 2006; Bocancea 2016).

It is important to mention the fact that the location of the Republic of Moldova between NATO and the European Union, on the one hand, and the former Soviet Empire, on the other, puts the young European state ahead of a difficult decision. The last 25 years since independence from the Soviet Union was a period of profound political turmoil in the Republic of Moldova. In this context, the political decision-makers in Chisinau had to make some

* Gheorghe Cazacu is a PhD Candidate at Babes-Bolyai University, Doctoral School of International Relations and Security Studies.

complicated and crucial decisions at the same time for the Moldovan Society (Enache, Cimpoieșu 2000: 42; Kaplan 2014: 194). On the external side, it was necessary to provide an answer to the question of the direction in which Chisinau foreign policy should be directed? Should it remain in the orbit of the former Soviet Union or concentrate its efforts on approaching NATO and the European Union?

The government of the Republic of Moldova decided to make a major switch in the foreign policy of the country. After 2009, the year when the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova loosed the majority in the Parliament (***) "[Alegerile parlamentare anticipate în Moldova din 29 iulie 2009](#)", 2009; (***) "[Alegerile parlamentare anticipate în Moldova din 28 noiembrie 2010](#)"; (***) "[Informații generale despre alegerile parlamentare anticipate 2010 în Moldova](#)"; (***) "[Alegerile parlamentare în Moldova din 30 noiembrie 2014](#)"), the ministry of the foreign affairs of the country took the decision concentrate their efforts to achieve European integration. The government of the Republic of Moldova considered, from that moment, the option of European integration not only a „fundamental desideratum of both internal and external policy of the Republic of Moldova“ but also a „major of political and social cohesion“ of the Moldavian society (***) "[Relațiile RM-UE](#)". In other words, the representatives of the Ministry the Foreign Affairs of Republic of Moldova and of the entire government considered that European integration can be a possible way out from the political chaos which dominated and still dominates the Republic of Moldova.

As far as the cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union is concerned, it should be noted that this takes about two decades (***) "[Comentariul MAE IE cu privire la Concluziile privind Republica Moldova adoptate de Consiliul Afacerilor Externe al UE](#)". Nevertheless, the intensification of the bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Western Euro-Atlantic structures can only be discussed after the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova was elected in 2009. With the elections in July 2009 (***) "[Alegerile parlamentare anticipate în Moldova din 29 iulie 2009](#)"; (***) "[Informații generale despre alegerile parlamentare anticipate 2009 în Moldova](#)") and with the accession to governance of the Alliance for European Integration there is a change in the external political vector of the small state in south-eastern Europe. This change implied the inclination of the Balance in favour of a policy mainly on cooperation with NATO and the European Union against a policy favourable to Moscow, previously practiced by Communist leaders.

Moldova-EU relations. The beginning

At the formal level, as mentioned on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, the bilateral reports between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union were formally registered in 1994 (***, "Relațiile RM-UE"). On November 28, 1994 a partnership and cooperation agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Moldova (***, "Acord de Parteneriat și cooperare între Comunitățile europene și statele membre ale acestora și Republica Moldova"). This agreement was intended to establish general guidelines for cooperation between the two parties. The agreement established a partnership between the two sides. Among the objectives of this agreement were: Ensure an appropriate framework for political dialogue between the parties, develop trade and investment, provide a basis for legal, economic, social, financial and cultural cooperation, as well as support Moldova's efforts for consolidating their own democracy, developing the economy and ending the transition process a market economy. The document provided several proposals of measures to be taken to ensure a favourable climate for trade between the two sides, respect for intellectual property, economic cooperation.

As can be seen from this document, the agreement was intended to establish some rules and principles upon which to base further cooperation between the two sides (***, "Acord de Parteneriat și cooperare între Comunitățile europene și statele membre ale acestora și Republica Moldova"). This document establishes the legal framework of the bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union in the political, commercial, economic, legal, cultural and scientific field. By signing this agreement, an important step has been taken to bring the two sides closer together and to intensify interaction in various fields of activity. In analyzing this document, I concluded that the 1994 agreement, like the basic principles and the use of its provisions, with the basic political treaties signed by the Republic of Moldova and other states (these agreements were signed by the Republic of Moldova in the opening of diplomatic, economic and cultural reports with Romania, Ukraine, Russia and other states). The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement marked a new beginning for Moldovan diplomacy for the existence of the Republic of Moldova as an independent state. It is important to note that this type of agreement is a common one for the European Union in the context of its expansion to Central, South Eastern and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War.

Eastern partnership

One of the most important frameworks on which the bilateral relations between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova are developed is the Eastern Partnership. In a simpler formula, this type of partnership can be translated as the EU's policy mix of US cooperation with the Central and Southeast European states, which until 1989 and 1991, depending on case, were member states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova catalogs the Eastern Partnership as a "step-by-step initiative to deepen the European Neighborhood Policy to support and accelerate the European Union's eastern-eastern dimension (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) their gradual rapprochement with the European Union (see more at [***](#), [European Neighbourhood Policy \(ENP\)](#)).

This concept is a new one in terms of international relations as it was officially launched on May 7, 2009 at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague. The Eastern Partnership is part of the broader European Neighborhood Policy, conceived in the context of the 2004 enlargement. To avoid creating new dividing lines and bringing the new neighbors of Eastern and Southern Europe closer to the political, economic and values of EU-specific standards ([***](#), ["Ce este Parteneriatul Estic?"](#)). It can also be said that the Eastern Partnership is a political instrument on the basis of which the European Union conceives its state with the two partner countries. A first dimension is a bilateral dimension, which implies the signing and implementation of the Association Agreement, Free Trade Areas and deepening of the visa regime ([***](#), ["Discuții pe marginea vizelor: misiunile Uniunii Europene la Chișinău"](#), 2010; [***](#), ["Dialogul RM-UE privind liberalizarea regimului de vize"](#)). The second dimension is multilateral. This dimension is based on thematic platforms and flagship initiatives. As you can see, the Eastern Partnership is another way in which the European Union is trying to strengthen its relations with the states of Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, it is an attempt to bring the standards in these areas closer to what they are accustomed to in the States that are already members of the European Union ([***](#), ["Ce este Parteneriatul Estic?"](#)).

The EU-Moldova Action Plan

In the context of the enlargement of the European Union in areas where Communist regimes have been established, the European Union has taken some steps to work with the new states emerging from communism. In this

context, the proposed action plans proposed by the European Union to each state in this area of Europe. The EU-Moldova Action Plan falls within the context of the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, an extension that has led to a historic change for the union in political terms, the economic class. This context, and now it is mentioned by some specialists, further strengthened the economic ties between the two sides. The framework of this agreement aimed to establish political, economic, cultural and security ties between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. If the partnership and cooperation agreement that was signed in 1994 established some general principles on which to base the relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union for a period of 10 years, then the actions brought some changes in more detail and proposed to strengthen the strategic cooperation between the two parts (***, "Planul de acțiuni UE-Moldova").

In this context, the text of the action plan mentions that both parties wanted to raise the level of political cooperation, to continue the efforts of the European Union to solve the Transnistrian conflict, to intensify the trade relations and to lift the barriers that stand in the commercial domain, to stimulate investments and to increase economic. Among other types of aspects mentioned in the Action Plan we find mentions referring to the opening of a delegation of the European Commission to Moldova. This would have facilitated the cooperation between the two sides and the gradual integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European structures (***, "Planul de acțiuni UE-Moldova"). The Action Plan was a second important step in strengthening cooperation in various fields of activity between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. This plan involves deepening cooperation in areas such as economy, politics, culture, security, the legal field, freedom of expression, investment and growth, as well as many other spheres. The agreement itself is implementing its provisions for a period of 3 years and is aimed at intensifying the cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union (***, "Planul de acțiuni UE-Moldova").

The EU-Moldova-Association Agreement

A third and very important step in strengthening the cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union was the signing of the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union (signed on November 28, 2013) at the Vilnius summit on 28-29 November 2013 (***, "Parafarea Acordului de Asociere RM-UE"). This document is of particular importance both for the political decision-makers in Chisinau, for the population of the Republic of Moldova, doors for the

authorities of the European Union. The Association Agreement is an important step towards the gradual integration into the European structures of the candidate countries for accession to the European Union. Such agreements have been signed by the European Union with all former communist states in central and south-eastern Europe. This type of agreement is an important indicator, a sign that points to the states in this area that they have reached a quite advanced level in the European Integration process (***, "Acordul de Asociere RM-UE").

The Association Agreement between Republic of Moldova and the European Union is an important document signed with the purpose to strengthen the ties between the two sides. In other words, we could mention that the association agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union has contributed to the consolidation of the political base on which the ties between the two sides were based. This agreement provided the possibility of previous cementation with a new one and the elevation of the advanced level of cooperation, which offers multiple opportunities for future collaboration. This assertion is reinforced by the fact that the text of the agreement contains a number of provisions involving more elaborate and detailed collaboration in certain areas and sectors of activity (***, "Acordul de Asociere RM-UE").

This type of agreement is in line with the European Union's main line on the Eastern Partnership. It is important to mention that such kind of documents was previously signed by the European Union with countries like Ukraine and Romania. As with the Association Agreement signed with Ukraine, the EU-Moldova Association Agreement contains some general stipulations that come to confirm the line of single-mindedness regarding the Eastern Partnership. The introduction of this document is similar to that of the Association Agreement with Ukraine. The introductory part discusses "common values and close ties" between the two sides. These links, as set out in the text of the Agreement, have been established in the past through the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States on the one hand, and the Republic of Moldova, on the other, and which develops within the framework of the European policy of neighbourhood and the Eastern Partnership. The signing of the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union constitutes the consolidation of the basis of relations between the two parties. This is possible because, through this agreement, both parties are willing to meet certain common goals. These objectives, as set out in the text of the document, relate to the promotion of political association and economic integration between the two sides. All this could be done, as the decision-makers who drafted the text of the Agreement, based on some values

communes and close ties, including by increasing the Republic of Moldova's participation in policies, programs and agencies of the EU.

Conclusions

As a result of these discussions, conclusions can be made as a basis for future research on the analysis of bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that these connections are quite tight and should be cultivated in the future. This analysis shows that although we cannot talk about a very clear policy and vision of the Republic of Moldova towards the European Union, there is an option in the minds of the politicians in Chisinau. At the same time, Moldovan politicians have taken the first steps to establish political ties with the European Union. These efforts need to continue in the future. In order to achieve the set goals, the politicians in Chisinau need to be aware of the importance of the political choices they have made since 2009. Moreover, the political decision-makers in Chisinau must understand that they have engaged in a mission, and the results obtained within it depend on the future political class and the entire population of the Republic of Moldova.

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