

POLITICAL PARTIES AS AN EXPONENT OF POLITICAL CRISES IN TERMS OF GEOPOLITICAL ORIENTATIONS: THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA*

Crisis and their management issues was and is extensively studied by many experts, analysts and is a major concern for both, the countries directly involved, and for the various powers and regional and international organizations. The community point of view is represented by political parties, which appear as leitmotif in relation crises - stability. In this paper we try to analyze the levels of penetration of parties in society and the state, to elucidate some relevant aspects of the political parties as an exponent of the relationship crises - stability in terms of Moldova's geopolitical orientation. Today, Moldova, after twenty-five years of independence, is also still projected between East and West. We realize how fragile foreign policy is, based on geopolitical orientations of Moldovan political parties.

Any analysis is done based on a series of specific concepts. The political crisis is one of the most important themes, because crisis situations arise constantly in any society, due to its versatility and imperfections. Their management is needed, through preventive action, limiting and resolving, otherwise, crises can gradually turn in violent and armed aggression.

In the literature, the concept of crisis is defined as a moment of rupture within a well-organized system. There are different approaches to the phenomenon of crisis, according to the activity that occurs or scientific interpretation that deals with the study of causes, appearance and manifestation, as well as the consequences malfunctions occurred in human society. Crisis and their management issues was and is extensively studied by many experts, analysts and is a major concern for both, the countries directly involved, and for the various powers and regional and international organizations.

According to the authors, Jeffrey J. Anderson, G. John Ikenberry, Thomas Risse, the crisis can be defined as a situation that meets one or more of the following circumstances: manifests a fundamental disagreement on what at least one party considers to be a vital interest; there appear a gap between the market interdependence and society; an institutional failure occurs in terms of rules and standards of the process. The community point of view is represented by political parties, which appear as leitmotif in relation crises - stability [1, 12].

The political arena engage in the politics play a variety of political parties, which constitute and pursue their activities in accordance with the law, and the scope of their ideological positioning, the guidance of geopolitical perspective, helps to manage and to

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typologies them. Parties may adopt different strategies in their construction issues and organizing work with voters. The option for one or another solution, affect the ability of the party to attract and maintain members and supporters, to bring their programmatic messages to voters to ensure a mutual relationship between the central bodies of the party, party members along and voters, which would allow us use of the phrase "power-opposition".

Definitions that the specialized literature gives upon the concept of political party are numerous; all definitions include the specific elements of the party concept, but each emphasizing a particular feature. Ideological component of the political party is outlined by philosopher and politician Edmund Burke, who defines this entity as a body of people united to promote, through their joint efforts, the national interest, based on a particular principle on which we all agree [4, 99].

In this paper we try to analyze the levels of penetration of parties in society and the state, to elucidate some relevant aspects of the political parties as an exponent of the relationship crises - stability in terms of Moldova's geopolitical orientation. Following the trajectory of political leaders, we will note that representatives of various political parties and non-governmental institutions have launched initiatives to identify who would overcome antagonistic divisions in Moldovan society politically and the orientation of the parties in foreign policy, pro-Eastern or the pro-European is the most circulated criteria to identify to which political pole, right or left, belongs a particular political party.

Changes in the political market of the consolidated democracies were synthesized by Jennifer Lees-Marshment. Participation in traditional politics has declined, as well as turnout, while engaging in other types of movements and pressure groups increased, because:

- Youth in particular are showing less interest in traditional politics.
- Voter behavior has become less predictable, while increasing electoral volatility.
- Television and more recently the Internet have become basic sources for political information.
- Number of media products has increased and the nature of competition has changed, becoming more commercial.
- The traditional fundamentals of segmentation and cleavages that separated voters, as well as classes, geographical origin, family profile has eroded, being replaced by other complex elements of separation.
- Voters are more critical upon the political elites and institutions [2, 22].

According to Philip Kotler and Neil Kotler, to be successful, candidates must understand their market, meaning the voters, their needs and aspirations, as well as their constituencies they want to represent. Market orientation means that a candidate must recognize the nature of the exchange when require a vote. If a candidate can make promises which are in line with the

needs of voters and, once installed in office to perform, then the candidate will enhance the satisfaction of his constituents and the public in general [6, 14].

Market studies in consolidated democracies show that citizens have become more critical of the performance of politicians, parties and institutions. Pharr and Putnam believes that dissatisfaction is partly the result of new kinds of expectations from the public and increasing access to information, which amended the criteria on which is evaluated the performance of political actors.

In light of political market changes, the public seems to behave more and more like consumers. The appearance of consumerism in the business and then in the public sphere, included political arena so that we can talk about "political consumers". The concept not only refers to how people vote, but the nature of their general attitude towards politicians, their needs through engagement, consultation and their reaction when they are not providing "services" promised [3, 12]. Therefore, the political crisis is conditioned mainly by the apparent ineffectiveness of policy, by the issues regarding legitimacy when public support is withdrawn. It is a moment when political power, represented by the president, parliament, government, the majority party, all together or only a part of these institutions, no longer has legitimacy while are in the office, when changing the governor team does not take place fast enough, through early election or on time, to alleviate the relations between political power and society.

Today, Moldova, after twenty-five years of independence, is also still projected between East and West. The current electoral context, customary of personal political disputes, announces itself mainly on the emotional factor, with debates whose themes do not correspond to concrete social needs. While the controversy on the political stage is amplified, crisis deepens and becomes the leitmotiv, gaining a political dimension. Political leaders use a variety of arguments forming rifts, which distorts both the legislative process and the government as a whole. Currently, among the issues that divide the political ruling class, is identified the foreign policy vector.

Joining in 1992, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Soviet Union's successor structure, aimed at solving the Transnistrian conflict, which from the beginning has questioned the project of Moldovan statehood. In the years that followed, the will of the political class to move westward geopolitical vector, has resulted in failure. After the disintegration of the USSR in the early years of independence of Moldova, Moldovan political actors has never shown an interest for European integration of the country, and relations with the European Community, the present European Union, were considered to be a minor priority and therefore an active policy of rapprochement with the EU has never been developed on a long term.

The two geopolitical alternatives, the CIS and EU integration, for a long time was regarded by the political actors that can be achieved simultaneously, and Moldova can develop relationships symmetrical, which would not mutually excluded with both communities. Today,

we realize that it is a mistaken idea, such a policy is unworkable and geographical location and historical ties are not imposing arguments.

Moldova's EU integration is not a goal in itself; it seeks to move towards European values, economic, democratic and social standards. After the financial crisis in Russia (August 1998), Alliance for Democracy and Reforms (ADR), the majority in Parliament voted in 1998 a decision stipulating that orientation towards European integration is a major strategic objective of the country. In parallel, the EU is declared a strategic objective of Moldova and the Concept of Foreign Policy for the years 1998-2002 adopted by the new Government. European option has been reflected both in the state program documents: Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Moldova, adopted by country Parliament Decision from 8 February 1995, the government programs since the II Ciubuc Government, which occurs, as a result of the parliamentary elections on 22 March 1998, the establishment, on 21 April 1998, ADR, last forming a new government ruled by I. Sturza, and in the programs of several political parties that were running at that time the Moldovan political field.

This national desideratum is expressed by Strategy of the Republic of Moldova regarding the association with the European Union, signed by 23 parties on 19 June 2000, by Strategy of Moldova's integration into the European Union, drafted in 2000 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country, as well as through an appeal made by the President in June 2002, signed by a number of political parties and NGOs claiming the creation of a National Commission for European integration and elaborating a strategy for Moldova's European integration [5, 23].

Today, more and more emerges the idea of a political consensus among different political and social actors on the European choice of our state. The paradox is that the communist government, although is positioned at the left pole on the political abscissa, in the years 2001-2009 were delivered to support the European vector, and based on a pro-European platform, the Communist Party won consecutive elections from March 6, 2005, as proof bring government programs "Economic Rebirth – country rebirth", 2001-2005 "Country Modernization - people's welfare" 2005-2009 and "Progress and integration", from 2008 to 2009, but on 16 May 2008 was constituted the National Commission for European Integration (NCEI). Subsequently, in September 2003, Moldova presented to the European partners the Concept of Moldova's integration into the European Union, which welcomed the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and its wish to include the country in the stabilization and association process, comprising the Western Balkans, which culminated in signing on 22 February 2005, ENP's, EURMAP and on 24 March was adopted "The Moldovan Parliament Declaration regarding political partnership for achieving European integration objectives." Stratagem, by that time of the Communist Party, which by declaring European integration as a priority of the government assumed pro-European rhetoric and passed hostilities on the ground of opposition, proved that

the issue of European integration and the actions of the government of time, seemed to straighten trends toward the logic objectives.

Moreover, all governments programs have done, in one or another way, references to Moldova's integration into the EU, but the European vector has gained a serious amplitude, with the victory of the parliamentary opposition, following the early elections of 29 July 2009 concluding with the formation of the Alliance for European Integration and the European integration began to be regarded as the most effective way to achieve political modernization, economic and social development of the country. Important to note, that the AEI government has proposed to develop strategic partnerships with key regional and international partners, including European Union, USA, Romania, Ukraine and of course the Russian Federation. This idea was outlined in the program of work as a foreign policy objective, and in the work program of the second Government AEI is found to be entitled "European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare", although the content of a possible strategic partnership with Russian Federation still remains vague, not being defined its strategic objectives and main principles, because this is the opposite of those entered in the policy of European integration of Moldova proclaimed as a strategic priority. The negative impact on building a lasting partnership with the Russian Federation, has been shown by several actions of political actors, even during the government alliance, but also during the Communists Government, as a perfect example serving the refusal of ex-President Vladimir Voronin to sign Memorandum Kozak and notified in response with the boycott of Moldovan wines and agricultural products.

Eastern orientation, requires closeness to the policies pursued by the Russian Federation, which is one of the most important and influential economic and political partners of Moldova. Moldovan-Russian relations had a sinusoidal evolution, marked by uncertainty and inconsistency, which is based on the conviction of separatism, the status of Transnistrian region, ammunition and withdrawing of Russian troops stationed in Moldova, the transformation of the Russian peacekeeping mission, the status of the Russian language.

The strategic partnership with the Russian Federation in particular is given in:

1. Moldovan-Russian relations are based on a comprehensive legal framework, consisting of a series of documents aimed at bilateral cooperation in all fields of common interest.
2. Russia is a strategic economic partner.
3. Energy dependence on Russia, which has strengthened its economic presence also in Transnistria, Russian investors took control of the most important industrial enterprises.
4. Russia is a key partner for security of internal and external stability of Moldova, with a decisive role in the Transnistrian problem, which is the greatest threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

5. The "soft power" influence of Russia in Moldova has at its disposal an appreciable set of tools to design its influence upon our country, because the Moldovan media space is largely dominated by the Russian one.

East-West dilemma is because the Moldovan political system is marked by the way parties function as electoral tools, but the political leaders represent the true identity and stimulating element. This has led, with each election cycle, significant changes in the party system and the reconfigurations of the main society's specific cleavages. In democratic regimes, features of political system prove to be sustainable, in the conditions when parties and ideologies related were established following in a rational and profound process of some social conflicts, instead in Moldovan society, it is structured around top leaders, which elections bring them to the forefront of the political scene. Actually, the electoral strategy focuses to outline the personal patterns, limiting personal stake in election reporting positive or negative images, and Moldova will have to decide for itself whether it wants to join the EU or the CIS.

The political situation in Moldova is a conclusive proof that political polarization has taken strong geopolitical overtones. The visits of foreign officials in Moldova, suggest that the major players in the region, to achieve their geopolitical goals, are ready to provide certain privileges and facilities. Moldovan society is polarized according to the preferences of accession with one of the two projects: the European Union or the Customs Union and the geopolitical situation varies from one election campaign to another, so, further we intend to analyze the parties with political influence from the Moldovan political arena. In parliamentary elections from 30 November 2014, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won most percent along with Communist Party (CPRM), the LDP supporting European integration and the CPRM, the Eurasian one. We have to mention that with the signing of an Association Agreement between Moldova and the European Union, has generated an embargo imposed by Moscow and in the same time, potential losses affecting the numerous farmers from Moldova. Supporters of the Customs Union are the Socialists' leader Igor Dodon and Renato Usatii leader of the political party entitled "Our Party".

The Liberal Party considers Moldova as part of the European cultural space. The main effort in providing a natural place in the European family is the integration into the EU and NATO. From the perspective of CPRM, the battle is between Romanism and Moldovenism. Although the CPRM declare itself for European integration, however, from the perspective of AEI, the struggle of those parties against the Communist opposition is, on the one hand, the pro-Western and, on the other hand, for orientation pro-Russian. Another party, the Democratic Party (DPM), established on the political abscissa in the center-left advocates the affirmation of Moldova as an independent, sovereign and democratic state, law-based and integrated into the united family of European democracies. Following the above, we conclude that the criterion of the parties that are located from right to left of the political spectrum does not imply a sliding scale according to their degree of "europeanism". The main effect of this phenomenon is the

ideological degradation of political parties that are transformed in electoral vehicles, losing their role of doctrine. In these circumstances, candidates do not take into the speech the programmatic characteristics of the parties, but aim to build personal disputes perpetuation of negative or positive images.

We realize that Moldovan political parties promote European integration without having a proper, structured, coherent and without an internal consensus in the party project. It is also noted an obvious gap between the programmatic and practical actions of the parties, between their often outdated and anachronistic programs, and the pro-European statements of the Political Parties leaders. To synchronize their message and action some parties have to update their programs to new realities.

Therefore, the right-wing parties, the center-right, center and center-left, although aware the importance of European integration, their political programs are generally declarative; they show too abstract the European future. Although democratic practice provides many examples when different tensions and incompatibilities have generated political crisis extremely serious, triggered by certain internal mechanisms, parliamentary strike, resignation in block, collapse of the government through vote of no confidence, by increasing the number of political parties and perpetuation of outdated structures, rigid and extremist, Moldovan political class must realize that the country's problems cannot be more managed orienting itself to follow the old principles, to distort the geopolitical orientation of Moldova.

Political environment in Moldova remains divided in front of the European option, some parties campaigning for EU and NATO membership, others only to the EU, a third group considers that Moldova could be part of the CIS and the European Union simultaneously. Other lines separate the parties by their attitude towards historical heritage and civilization guidelines to be followed, policy towards private property, foreign investment, the role of the state, economic, social, and cultural policies and other issues of a huge importance. Systemic differences approach has a negative impact upon the national cohesion in front of an strategic objective, and Moldovan society is not very different from the situation from 1991. The political class has created a real competition between these geostrategic projects: European Union-Customs Union is limited to electoral interest for a short time manipulating essentially with the idea of joining one or another structure, deeply dividing society and preparing for parliamentary elections: some anticipated, others ordinary.

Political parties as an exponent of power-opposition relations in the light of geopolitical orientation of Moldova suppose the influence of opposition on the political process, which can be positive and contribute to the development of the political system by increasing constructiveness and its openness, but also to serve as source of destabilization of the political situation. However, the lack of effective mechanisms for including opposition political process places it in the zone of conventional political behavior, which can lead to instability of political

development, but in condition of the maximum aggravation of the situation, may lead to collapse of the entire system.

Currently outlines several power poles that due to personal ambitions of political leaders could compromise the European vector of Moldova. The events in such a course, with such scenarios, the dissolution of parliament, early elections, vote of no confidence after failed monthly-attempts to inauguration of a new government, due to lack of quorum in parliament, etc., deepened and more political crisis, because the background disappointment to pro-European parties, and essentially the behavior and strategies of political parties, we might have a return of pro-Russian parties, which certainly will try to approach Moldova guidance toward Eastern, thing that has begun to be outlined by the parliamentary elections in 2014, November 30.

In conclusion, we note that the success of the processes of transformation and consolidation of Moldovan society depends on the efforts and willpower both by the opposition, and power. For that reason it is necessary to start from the premise that the fundamental institution of the state is Citizen, President must be also a mediator between the powers of the state and political parties, but voter should understand the importance to declare him as a part of the European family. Power-opposition relationship, acquires new amplitude in the democratic crisis case, because the political construction feels unsecure in regarding its authority bases and instable interests, but the opposition will never allow overcoming democratic rules and could claim a deficit of democracy.

Because of the above to find existence, it is strictly necessary that government and the opposition to seek for new communication tools, to find the solution against the elections boycott that seems to be a common and usual thing in our days. The current political situation in Moldova is under geopolitical turbulence, so that the whole European course is fluctuating. European Union, because of internal crisis, is unable to manage the crisis happened at the border of the country emerging toward a European course. We realize how fragile foreign policy is, based on geopolitical orientations of Moldovan political parties. Moldovan political class, both representatives of the power, as well as the opposition, must be totally informed with the cause, which means undertaking deep investigations to understand the characteristics of political phenomenon; to be preventive, forward-looking and, as far as possible, ante factum; to provide solutions; to be more defined in actions; to include taking risks and therefore bear the consequences of their failure.

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