

The Europeanization of Conflicts - A Possible Solution in the Transnistrian Crisis

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Abstract: The European Union tries to promote the democracy in order to achieve a security zone that would exceed the European space. In order to achieve this objective, the EU uses two main tools: Europeanization and European integration process. The term “Europeanization” is not a common one, and contains numerous ambiguities. Europeanization’s interpretation is an interactive process, initiated and shaped by the countries involved in the process of European integration. However, the dynamics of Europeanization of EU borders is different. EU proposes that through the European Neighboring Policy and the Adopted Action Plan it would become more involved in solving the conflict in Transnistria. It is to be seen which are going to be the specific effects of its actions in this region.

Keywords: European Union; Transnistria; Europeanization

1. About the Europeanization of Conflicts

EU seeks to promote democracy, in pursuit of achieving security zones that exceeds the European space. In order to achieve this objective, the EU uses two main tools: Europeanization and European integration process. The term “Europeanization” is not a common one, and contains numerous ambiguities of interpretation. Europeanization can lead to conflict resolution when several conditions are met:

- Europeanization benefits for the elites of both entities involved in the conflict must be greater than the benefits of maintaining the status quo. In most cases, however, in the periphery of Europe the elites are changing quite often and they do not represent the society as a whole.
- Europeanization should be attractive for protective state of separatist entity. The fact that Russia does not seek the EU membership it determines the impact of Europeanization on conflict resolution in Moldova.

- The benefits of Europeanization should acquire credibility and be felt within a period of time. The later the stimulants reach to the actors involved in conflict, the lesser reasons they will have to change their traditional behavior. (Youngs, 2001, p. 94) For example, easing restrictions on free movement of Moldovan citizens in the EU, would make the Republic of Moldova more attractive for Transnistria, thus messing all the plans up for the actors involved in solving the conflict, particularly business people and citizens of the secessionist entities.
- Europeanization has to encourage those actors that want a settlement, thus removing the interests that led to these unsolved conflicts. (Diez, Stetter, & Albert, April 2004) In other words, EU actions or Europeanization effects should support the actors who sustain the resolution of the conflict.
- When the resolution costs for the actors involved, are greater than the benefits obtained through Europeanization. These costs may include the loss of control over the political processes or economic activities (legal or illegal). Maintaining the status quo within the unsolved conflicts in the South Caucasus and Moldova based on hidden interests. These actors cover greatly from the benefits from smuggling, trafficking and export of illegal activities.
- When solving a conflict is perceived as an obstacle I the way of Europeanization strategies of one party involved in the conflict. If one of a party involved in conflict considers that the actions taken to Europeanization (and integration)¹ will be complicated or even prevented by a sovereignty² shared with another entity, then it can be considered as conflict resolution through federalism being less important than the benefits of Europeanization. The idea of reunification with Transnistria would complicate the situation in Moldova on its way to Europeanization.

Europeanization is an interactive process, initiated and shaped by the countries involved in the process of European integration. However, at the UE borders the dynamics of Europeanization is different. The states participate in this process have no necessary means to influence EU decisions which affect them directly or indirectly. In this context, Europeanization takes the form of EU foreign policy instrument. Europeanization is also a tool of conflict resolution. The interdependence between democracy and conflict resolution represents an important issue. Thus, Europeanization can be defined as *“a process that is*

¹ www.euborderconf.bham.ac.uk/publications

²“By the sovereignty of a state we understand its independence towards other states (external sovereignty) and independence in exercising the state power within.” (Barbulescu & Rapan, 2009, p. 693)

activated and encouraged by the European institutions, particularly the EU, by creating a link between the outcome of the conflict and a certain degree of integration into European structures of the involved parties. This connection is achieved by the inclusion in the Europeanization process of specific measures of conditioning and socializing." (Drevet, 2004, p. 118)

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) "was launched on one hand, in order to avoid creating new lines of separation between the enlarged EU and its neighbors, and on the other hand, to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security in and around the EU."¹ The main instrument through which the EU is acting in the vicinity of Eastern European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), a policy that was initiated by the largest wave of EU enlargement in 2004. Keeping the long-term action paradigm, the EU, by the European Commission has developed a plan divided into several periods, each period being allotted a certain percentage of the budget. In this context, 2007-2013, the European Neighborhood Policy was allocated 11.2 billion euros by the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument, updated version of the ENP. The bilateral dimension is explored through action plans, signed by each state. Each action plan highlights the principles and values of the EU, conditioning and addressing compliance of the EU relations with each individual basis. They are built in the motivation logic of carrot and stick type. (Naghi, 2010, p. 88)

European Neighborhood Policy objectives are to establish coherent links between the EU and the countries of eastern and south-eastern neighborhood, which can lead to an enhanced cooperation in order to create a cooperation and good neighborhood area.

The main element of the ENP consists of the creation and implementation of *bilateral action plans* set by the EU with each of its neighbors. Bilateral action plans represents a series of political and economic reform programs with short and medium term priorities. EU signed Action Plans with Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the eastern neighborhood. *Romania* has a natural interest in facilitating the EU's neighborhood, a common area of stability, security and progress, in deepening the relations between the EU and Eastern and Southern neighbors, based on common interests and shared values.² European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is a policy that the European Union approaches in relation to its neighbors, beyond those traditional relations of cooperation between the EU and

¹ <http://mae.ro/node/1531>

² <http://mae.ro/node/1531>

neighboring countries. Through the ENP, the EU establishes a system of building good relations with its neighbors, following an intense cooperation with neighboring countries, the enlarged EU, in order to create an area of prosperity and good neighborhood, a “ring of friends” (Protsyk, 2006, p. 754) at the borders of the Union.

The states included in the European Neighborhood Policy are:

- In East: Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus;
- In the South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan;
- In the Mediterranean: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Palestinian Authority.¹

2. Transnistria Conflict - A Frozen Conflict?

From a superficial look on the map, Transnistria may seem one of the most uninteresting regions of the European landmass. The greater may be the surprise of an unadvised person, that the separatists Russians (the proper Russians represent only the third ethnic group of the region, statistically speaking, after the Romanians / Moldovans and Ukrainians) still require joining this piece of land to the Russian Federation – although Transnistria has no direct link with Russia (among them being the Ukraine).

Why is Russia interested in maintaining control over this enclave and why so many lawmakers and Russian officials see in Transnistria² a “*region of privileged interest*” for Russia? The answer is a basic strategic consideration. Transnistria (being situated in the “coast” of Romania, Moldova and Ukraine), with Kaliningrad³ (Russian enclave that has no border with Russia, but it is also in the “coast” of Poland and Lithuania) and with the old Russian tradition Simferopol - Sevastopol⁴ (from Crimea, the peninsula where the Russian Black Sea fleet has the

¹ <http://www.primaria.md/politica-europeana-de-vecinatate-%28pev%29-x104.html>

² Transnistria - area of about 5000 km², population about 800 000 people, mostly Russian-speakers Enclave, which is part of the Russian Federation wants is - geopolitically speaking - a checkpoint on the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

³ **Kaliningrad** - the former capital (Königsberg) of East Prussia, the city was a war trophy won by the USSR in 1945. After the collapse of the USSR, the city (about 415 000 inhabitants) and surrounding region remained in the Russian federation component - although they do not have a border with it. Geopolitically speaking, the Kaliningrad offers an exit at the Baltic Sea and control over North West Poland and Lithuania.

⁴ **Sevastopol** - the main port city of the Crimean Peninsula (about 400 000 inhabitants - of the approximately three million inhabitants of the whole peninsula); it is the former Location of the

right of staying temporarily in virtue of agreements with Ukraine in 1992 and 1995)¹, they are all three, part of a security cordon useful for Russia, the from geopolitical point of view, especially under conditions in which NATO has significantly penetrated in Eastern Europe. The Transnistria alibi of the Russian rebellion was originally a linguistic one: the declaration by the Moldovan Parliament in 1990, as to establish the Romanian language as official language in Transnistria; it was rejected in the most concrete possible way. Transnistria is the first that can become a target in the war against terrorism, being a haven for illegal trade and smuggling weapons and a resting place for the mafia and terrorist groups. The business developed here feeds the terrorists' accounts on all lands. (Chifu, 2004, p. 261) Started, as in 1990, the crest of a wave of identity enthusiasm of Romanian speakers (at the level of pro-unionist elite) hard to imagine, 1991 will end in a somewhat more nuanced note. There are two reasons. On the one hand, early winter 1991-1992 on the banks of the Dniester river enemy reached the gunfire exchange rate. And in early 1992 one may speak of "with sufficient arguments about real Transnistrian conflict - between government forces in Chisinau and militias and the Transnistrian secessionists paramilitary forces, the latter being helped openly by units of Cossacks "volunteers" that come from Ukraine, the special troops of the Russian special services (it appeared Alfa and Dolphins detachments during the Cold War, as War troops of KGB), all these forces being in close and direct relation with the Russian 14th Army in the area, which had the headquarters at Tiraspol."²

Within about a year, this conflict will determine hundreds of dead and, equally serious, it will bring the creation a lasting wall between majority Romanian speakers from the right of Nistru and the majority of the Romanian speakers on the opposite bank. Naturally, this conflict held the light burning over night for the government offices in Moscow, Bucharest and Kiev. Perhaps the clearest evidence is that the citizens of the Russian Federation govern Transnistria with the support of Kremlin and Russian security services. Smirnov family - the so-called Transnistrian president Igor Smirnov, with his sons Vladimir and Oleg, heads of

Soviet fleet of the Black Sea keeping as a residence this city – filled with an entire Russian mythology, after the Crimean war (1854-1855) and especially of the Second World War. Geopolitically speaking Sevastopol is an essential point to control the Black Sea coast of southern Ukraine and Romania and Bulgaria seaside.

¹ The Right of residence of the Russian fleet in the port Simferopol - Sevastopol, was extended to 2017 (sn)

² This was the period of validity of the Treaty, which entered into force after the automatic extension, every five years.

Transnistria Customs – come from Khabarovsk in far East of Siberia, near the Pacific Ocean. The Head of security apparatus of Transnistria, the General Vadim Șevțov-Antiufeev, comes also from Siberia, from Novosibirsk. Antiufeev was put under justice surveillance in Latvia and Lithuania, on charges of crimes committed there as a Soviet special force officer during the assault of OMON troops on the parliaments of the two Baltic States. In the same situation was Vladimir Goncareenko, former “Deputy Minister” of Interior in Tiraspol. (Cioroianu, 2009, p. 268)

3. How did Romania React at the Conflict with Transnistria?

In the case of Republic of Moldova, the identity of names with one of Romania's historical provinces seemed at first an advantage, sending the common origin of the Romanian people in the two states and, perhaps, to a common future. However, in the late 90s and especially after 2001, by the “*Communist Party*” and Voronin system, including the name of the state (which Romania has accepted with its recognition) helping the Romanian speakers to proceed in constructing an alleged “Moldavian identity.” The author of a reference work that treats the problem post-soviet world, says in his book that “*it is increasing in Romania, the number of people which is wondering if it was a good idea the recognition by Bucharest of East state under a name that does not fully belong.*” (Cioroianu, 2009, p. 259)

Returning to the history of the '90s, another important detail: on 5 April 1991, Romania (by its chairman) signed the Moscow Treaty of cooperation, good neighborliness and friendship with the USSR - one of the most highly contested political gestures Iliescu's administration at Bucharest. At that time, the treaty put a slab of lead over the early efforts of the minority of unionists declared in Chisinau and Bucharest: the two countries declared that they did not have territorial claims from each other (!) and committed *for 15 years* (Cioroianu, 2009) not to join the military alliance directed against one of the partners - clearly be said, Romania engaged in not joining NATO commitment (for Russia it was never the problem). Although signed by Ion Iliescu and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Treaty has never been ratified - the simple reason being that one of the two partners, the Soviet Union, would disappear as such by the “putsch” in August and dismemberment in December of that year. And yet, accidentally or not, at least two provisions of the stillborn treaty were finally observed: Romania recognized the independency of Republic of Moldova (Maftai, 2010, p. 67) (implicitly recognizing that this had no

claims on Romanian territory to become Russian, becoming again Romanian and then Soviet and then finally became Moldavian) and it took more than ten years before Romania should be invited into NATO (in 2002 - even though Russia is not the only responsible for this delay). And for that picture to be complete - and as close to reality - it must be said that not only the signals came from Moscow to temper the Romanian union impulses of the two neighboring countries. Even if they foreseen for Romania a path on an orbit as farthest from Moscow, the future Member of the European Union kept the same reluctance in supporting explicitly or implicitly the extension of Romanian border towards an area that most European chancelleries yet tacitly accepted as part of Russian influence.

Republic of Moldova has chosen the European path, which is most appropriate at this time. In order to succeed in the European approach, according to the same author, Republic of Moldova needs to meet the following two conditions: firstly the political leaders from Chisinau show intelligence, skill and determination and secondly the EU leaders, should have the capability of understanding that such a process demonstrates not only the attractiveness and desirability of the European model, but also the desire for optimal and sustainable development.

4. Conclusions

Conflict resolution in close proximity is important to the EU, both because of the negative effects they have on their neighbor states and because of security risks posed by the EU. The problems that Republic of Moldova faces, and here we refer especially to the Transnistrian conflict, represent major obstacles in the process of democratization and also sources of instability for the rest of Europe.

The EU contribution to conflict resolution in Europe has been manifested mainly under the form of economic aid. European funding represents an important support for the communities in conflict, but not the most efficient solution to conflict transformation. The EU is also involved in supporting the dialogue between the parties, but failed to eliminate boundaries between different communities in conflict.

However, the EU is not generally perceived as a major player, but rather as a "neutral benefactor." This has its advantages, but emphasizes also the limited role that the EU assumes in conflict transformation. EU is not an independent actor,

because its actions depend on local political conditions, nor has any direct impact on society.

In terms of conflict transformation, the EU role focuses primarily on ensuring the necessary conditions for cooperation at all levels and across any type of border. If this will lead to the solution or aggravation of the existing conflicts it depends on many factors that are beyond the control of the EU and even of states.

EU proposes that, through the European Neighborhood Policy and the adopted Action Plan to become more involved in solving the conflict in Transnistria. It remains to be seen which are going to be the practical effects of its actions in this region.¹ The EU can provide the necessary interstate dialogue and cooperation, a model for cross-border partnerships and economic support at the level of various communities. This organization can change the context of the interaction between the main actors involved in conflict at all levels.

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¹ Large stretch of land more or less homogeneous, in a country or on the world, presenting common features, kept the area. See (Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language - Romanian Academy Institute of Linguistics, Iorgu Jordan”, 1998, p. 909)

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