

GEOPOLITICAL VIEWPOINTS ON ORTHODOXISM AND ITS ASPECTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: The Orthodoxy constitutes a set element in Russia's geopolitical game. Its division in orthodox people of old and new faiths demonstrates a geopolitical reform of this factor and westernization. In the Republic of Moldova different attempts are done in order to approach the Romanian population to Moscow through the orthodox creed.

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The geographic map reflects the historical evolution of the states of the world. But, the geopolitic structure of the world differs from the geographic map. Even though we find ourselves in the PTȘ era of modernism, globalization, there is a range of factors that hold the relations between the states, un-balance them, and even trigger them. During ages, there has been a segregation inside Christianity due to objective and subjective reasons. From a geopolitic viewpoint, there have been frictions too, as well as alliances in order to solve internationally apparent issues. It is difficult to territorially map out the line between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The line that territorially divides this space can be traced from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, but cannot be clearly identified in the clear demarcation of these two religions.

The countries belonging to this area integrate both Catholic and Orthodox parishioners. If we take this aspect into account, then Poland is to be divided, and not only, being extremely difficult to apply this criterion to the Carpathians. This particular aspect led to the territorial division of the Romanian territory. Russia, by self-declaring the protector of all nations, monopolized the Orthodox religion and population, and furthermore tended to divide their territory. Already, inside this religion, a segregation between the Old-Rite Orthodoxes and New-Rite Orthodoxes is present. Being a social phenomenon, it becomes a factor for numerous social, political and geopolitic processes. Religion plays a double role, on the one hand it can contribute to the making of the national identity growth of stability, reaching a civic order, and in parallel it can cause disputes inside the population of the same country, thus being an un-balance factor.

As regards the political and social-economic evolution, it is evident that the transition to the market economy will leave marks. Joining the European Union and NATO will determine the advanced reformation of this religious current. New generations have pure, pro-Europe aspirations. Even though there have been numerous drawbacks to the registration of the Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia, the start for refomation has been flagged.

Even though we are a country of Latin origin, we are the only ones to follow the old Orthodox rituals. By this, Russia is enlarging geopolitically

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through its doctrines. By not willing to modernize ourselves, we remain spiritually linked and dependant on the East and thus we are attracted within the Eastern space. Spiritually split from the rest of the country, we are being manipulated by Moscow. The Latinity of the language keeps them alert, even inside Orthodoxism. Mind that the Cyrillic alphabet brought us closer to Moscow and the Slavic-Orthodox community. By this, they tried to keep us apart from the West and to attach us to the Eastern geographic space indefinitely.

The New-Rite Orthodoxism is seen as being “westernized”, thus the almost unpredictable attitude of Russia towards this space. Nowadays, through Orthodoxy in Moldova, the communist past is brought back with the tendency to be kept alive by all means and even be re-born in the spirituality of the Moldavian society.

The geopolitic essence of the word “**orthodox**” belongs to the Eastern Christian Church, considered closest to the truth and which does not recognize anything else but the officially established policy (excerpt from the Romanian Explicative Dictionary). Religion is the foundation of the character and the spirituality of a nation. The Moldovan society is strongly tied to religion, an aspect mentioned by our forefathers.

Nicolae Iorga wrote: “The Romanian nation was born on the threshold of the Church” considering that the formation of the Romanian population coincided in time with the propagation of the Orthodox cult, and the great Eminescu considered that “the Orthodox Church is the mother of Romanians”.

In the Republic of Moldova religion manifests itself as a factor of geopolitic structure of population on this territory. Even though there are attempts to persecute the Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia, the geopolitical segregation through the demographic factor is evident: young population (young generations) following the Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia, and old population following the Metropolitan Church of Moscow. Dosoftei’s cry out: “Light comes from the East” has a geopolitic essence of religious aspect. It can be interpreted through the geopolitical reformation of the actual system. The Metropolitan Church of Moldova has advantages both from the number of parishioners and the number of churches.

Nowadays eight confessions and thirteen associations (religious societies) to 4.2 million people are registered on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, in comparison with fourteen to twenty-two million people in Romania. The large number is a result of the complicated geopolitic situation.

Based on religion, Russia has gained and maintains its right to expand politically in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Near East. Often, one’s national identity is linked to religion. Here is one of the elements that intervenes in the geospacial decomposition of the Romanian language, of the Romanians, Bulgarians and Macedonians. In Bessarabia, where one cannot be convinced of the difference between Romanian and Moldovan language, religion is used as an ultimate factor. In Moldova there are churches which are directly submitted to the Russian Metropolitan Church (for example, the church at Speia, Anenii-Noi).

At present on the media, one can hear the expression “the Metropolitan of the Entire Moldova”, that has a rough connotation of evident geopolitical pressure through local pro-Moscow authorities in the Republic of Moldova, but not without their involvement. At some point following the fall of the system, Russia lost its influence over the Balkan region, but it maintains itself through the influence of the spirit directly by the Metropolis of Moldova.

The year 1054 destroyed the unity of the Christian world. Geopolitically, the oikoumene of the Christian world was represented by dualism. Up to year 1453 when the Turks occupied Constantinople, this center was represented by two Christian worlds. When the fall of Constantinople occurred there was a geopolitical modification inside Orthodoxism. The West relied on rationalism whilst the East turned to mystic principles which deepened the contradictions. After the fall of Constantinople, Russia wanted to inherit not only the title of protector of all Orthodox nations but also the power of the Balkans. The Orthodox states which accepted the New-Rite were those of Latin origin. From Moscow's point of view, they are considered to be states which betrayed the interests and the position of Orthodoxism, which do not share the same ideas or share them only partially. In reality, these countries did not become enemies but the relations are distant and reserved.

The Romanian spiritual space is the one that breaks Russia's connections with the Balkans. These changes are characteristic to Bulgaria, but the common origin of the language brings them together.

From this moment on, Orthodoxism found itself with three enemies:

1. The Christian Catholic West
2. The Non-Christian Muslim world
3. The new rite Orthodox world

The post-Byzantine Orthodox world was suddenly split into several Patriarchates:

1. The Patriarchate of Alexandria of the Greek Orthodoxes
2. The Patriarchate of the Arabs in Egypt, the Patriarchate Antioch of the Arabs in Lebanon, Syria, Irak
3. The Patriarchate of Constantinople of the Romanians, Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks
4. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem following other regulations

From this moment on, the absolute unicity of the Orthodoxism was undermined. Thus, Russia declared itself as the largest Orthodox space after the fall of Constantinople, becoming the heir of the Orthodox policy. As distinctive elements of Orthodoxism, one could notice the radical difference from the Latin world and the lack of political supremacy and of Non-Christian regimes. Thus, the idea of the Russian population being the "bearer of Divinity" (bogonoset) appeared. In the 20th century in the wake of World War II, Russia also launched the idea of "narod pobedonoset".

Quoting the Russian historian V. Mavrodin: "The Russian who adheres to the Greek Orthodox Christian faith contrary to the Orthodox one is balancing with infidelity, poisoning and besmirching."

The term **Christian**, as well as the term **Orthodox**, is identified with the notion of Russian or Russian nation". (Mavrodin. "Происхождение русского народа." Л.,1978 срп.143)

The geopolitical issue during time was the relations with the Orthodox world beyond Russian borders. They came to a dilemma of disobedience from the spiritual authority of Moscow and to a negation of the existence of the "Orthodox Empire". Simultaneously the Patriarchate of Constantinople transformed itself from a totally spiritual-political doctrine into a purely religious one. Moscow considered these changes in the New-Rite Orthodox Church as being reduced and incomplete. These changes were seen as direct colaboration with the Church of Rome. This led to a confrontation. Orthodoxism lead to numerous acts of

territorial conquest by Russia. The Church was not a rival but a supporter of the State in its acts of expansion and protection of “all the Russians”, a support that convinced the State that by its actions of expansion it fulfilled a “divine mission” leading to the supremacy of the Empire. Thus came into being a “perfect cesar-papism in which the Church and the State become synonymous” and the citizen considers himself “an agent of reunification of Christianity”.

It is difficult to assess the value of the Orthodox element in the Russian geopolitical factor. Orthodoxy and Slavism were the foundation ground of the geopolitical doctrine of the Russian Empire, known as “panslavism”. Defending the values and the Orthodox nations and the gathering of the Slav population under the protection of the “bicephalous eagle” of the third Rome constituted the expected target of this doctrine. After the fall of the Soviet Union, one could notice some acts of solidarity following this principle (Yugoslavia and Armenia).

Based on religion, Russia has achieved and maintained the right to expand in the Balkans, Caucasus and Near East. Often the national identity is expressed through religion. This is one of the reasons for the geospatial disintegration of the Romanian language, the language of the Moldavians, Romanians, Bulgarians and Macedonians.

Today, the Russian Federation has the largest Orthodox population in the world, and is the main force of a would-be panorthodoxy. Russia- and then the Soviet Union – was also an example for the other communist countries, regarding the approach of the religious issue. The relation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state was always a close one. The victory of the Bolsheviks led to the submission and suppression of the religious life by the atheist regime. But, following the old tradition, the religious leadership was actively used to legitimize the regime and its plans. This is the train of events when patriarch Serghii declared, in 1927 that: “the joys and sorrows of the [communist] Motherland” are those of the Russian Church. The clergy, and especially its leadership became a component of the oppressive political regime. The chance offered for a period of time, through the opening of the archives following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has given a better knowledge of this phenomenon. Constantin Harciov, the president of the Council of Religious Issues (1984-1989) has confirmed that the Russian Church was firmly controlled by the Communist Party Central Committee and by the KGB. The department of Foreign Ecclesiastical Relations of the Patriarchy had numerous KGB agents. The documents discovered in the KGB archives show that, at present, 4 of 6 permanent members of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Moscow were, until recently, KGB agents.

The subsequent evolution of the Orthodox Russian Church has followed the usual course of the events of the former communist countries: the substitution of the procommunist speech with a radical nationalist speech. Aleksii the Second, one of the guiding lights of the brejnevist ecclesiastical nomenclature (named Patriarch by mid 1990, the former Patriarch Pimen died in may 1990) continued the serghianstvo philosophy (named as such after Patriarch Serghii (dead in 1944). In december 1990, he signed the “Letter of the fifty three”, by which they suggested to Gorbaciov to “take immediate measures to prevent separatism, the subversive activities against the state, the interethnic instigations and dissensions, by using the law and the power that you were given”.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has left the Orthodox Church as one of the most consistent force in saving the empire. By mid 1992, Patriarch Aleksii

showed the following: "The known territory of the Patriarchate of Moscow is constituted not only of Russia, but also Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltic countries, Azerbaidjan, Kazakhstan and Central Asia."

Even in august 1993, Patriarch Aleksii gave president Eltin an ultimatum: either the president signs the new law voted by the Legislative to stop the activities of the foreign missionaries in Russia, or "the Russian Orthodox Church will join the opposition – that is the Red-Brown coalition". The Russian Orthodox Church has joined, de facto this coalition that was against the values promoted by the western democracies. The pressure of the Orthodox Church allowed, against the reluctance of Eltin, the passing of a conservative law, that narrows the rights of the "unrecognized" religions, by numerical limitation, and the evidence of a continuing 15 years of existence. The right winged russians were forced to acknowledge The Russian Othodox Church as an institution that can play an important part in the unity of the Soviet State. The same position had the left wing of Russia. The mass media transformed the alliances between the politicians and church into public events, giving them an even greater political impact.

The evolution of the Orthodox churches was influenced by the evolution of the Great Neighbour and by the autocephalous nature of Orthodox institutions. The return to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church became a hot topic at the end of the 80s. On June 5-6 1990, seven Orthodox bishops, over 200 priests, 500 laymen congregated in a council in Kiev where they elected Mstislav (Skripnik) as the Patriarch of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. After this, the head of the autocephalization tendency was Metropolitan Filaret – who was in close relations with the future president Kravciuk. Under the pressure of the Patriarch of Moscow, and in order to stop the tendency to autocephalization, on May 27 1990 a Synod of the Bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church chose Metropolitan Vladimir as the head of the Autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In June 1990, Filaret tried in his turn to create a new entity, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – the Patriarchate of Kiev.

Similar actions appeared in Moldova. In October 1992 at the request of Metropolitan Vladimir and the Orthodox community in Moldova, the Holy Synod of Moscow decided to name the Moldovan Bishopric an autonomous church. At this moment the Romanian Orthodox Church entered the contest. Patriarch Teoctist named a Bessarabian metropolitan in Moldova, bishop Petru of Balti serving as temporary administrator.

As a consequence the Orthodox Church of Bessarabia was split into two structures: one belonging to Russia and one to Bucharest, the latter having no legal status. Both are of Old Rite, following the Old Calendar before 1923. The large majority of Moldovan church-goers is still under the protection of Moscow but there is a slow, yet constant process of transition of the believers to the Church belonging to the Romanian authority. It is obvious that the Russian Church authorities, strongly linked to the State (remember the symbolism of the presence of the Patriarch at the ceremony of handing the suitcase with the nuclear codes to President Putin), are afraid of losing the influence over the population, realizing that when the Metropolis regains its legal status, the believers will massively turn to Romanian church.

By an act of the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church the Metropolis of Bessarabia was reactivated on December 19 1992. The Russian Church reacted violently to the initiative of the Romanian Church to recover its confessional space. At that time all the authorities of the Republic of Moldova

condemned the re-activation of the Metropolis of Bessarabia. At that moment they considered the appearance of the Metropolis of Bessarabia as being "subversive and harmful". The government refused to take into consideration the functionality status of the Romanian Metropolis that is not even legislated although having more than 400.000 church-goers and 150 parishes.

After many trials against the government initiated by the representatives of the Metropolis, in August 1997, the High Court of the Republic of Moldova ruled in favor of the Metropolis of Bessarabia, yet the government filed an appeal at the Supreme Court of the Republic. Metropolitan Vladimir threatened with a civil war if the Metropolis of Bessarabia would gain a legal status. The representative in charge with defending the Metropolis, deputy of the Popular Front Vlad Cubreacov, now the vice-president of the Popular Party, managed to internationalize the matter at Strasbourg by seconding a motion named after him, by which the government of the Republic of Moldova is summoned to recognize the Metropolis of Bessarabia.

For the moment, the trial is still on but it doesn't have the chance to develop until the Metropolis of Bessarabia gains a legal status. The help coming from the Patriarchate of Romania is limited by the laws of the Republic of Moldova which will have to take into consideration the final decision of Strasbourg regarding the legalization of the Metropolis.

On November 10 1999, the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg formally announced the Government of the Republic of Moldova about the file no. 45701/99.

As a result, it is obvious that Russia had and still has a great political and confessional influence on the satellite countries. We have to understand that in order to achieve the goal of joining the European Union, we firstly and mostly must reach our ethnic confessional and geopolitic maturity.

Starting with 15th century the geopolitic of Orthodoxism is synonymous with „the geopolitic of Russia”. This term was an inspiration for the expression „states from the neighbouring borders”. After the 15th century the political degradation of the Otoman Empire and the fight for national freedom of the Balkanic nations started which was in favour of Russia supporting the needs of the Orthodoxes. But Russia had to face a political-ideologic opposition from the Great Greece, the Great Bulgaria, Great Romania, Great Serbia where the nations started to claim the territories they lived on as compact population. Russia did not like it.

Towards 1913, Greece doubled its territory but the geopolitical interests of other Orthodox nations were taken into account too, as the Greeks claimed Macedonia and Frachia which in their turn claimed Bulgaria and Serbia.

The creation of Yugoslavia in 1920 with the direct support of Russia included not only Orthodox territories, but also Catholic, Croatians, Slovenians, Muslims, Bosniaks and Albanese.

The creation of Romania was not greeted by Russia because the links with the Latin world were persistent. Orthodoxism interpreted this unity with the Latin world as an full annexation to the Church of Vatican whose purpose was to politically and spiritually influence the East. That is why Russia asked for favours by supporting Romania in its anti Turk and Greek Fanariots movement in exchange for its supremacy over a Bessarabia populated by Romanians. Moscow considers the Romanian Orthodoxism to be a component of Latin culture and a link with Rome, while the Romanian nationalism is seen as antiGreek.

In 1970 the Bulgarian eczarhat came into being and the Orthodoxes in the Balkans loyal to Moscow united into a geopolitic block. In parallel with the geopolitical independence, was launched the idea of „Great Bulgaria” bringing together all the population living in this area or the idea of „Bulgaria - three seas” that implied the unification of Macedonia, Frachia and Constantinople. At some point during ages, the Bulgarian Orthodoxism deviated from Moscow which was seen as a pro West attitude, even though there were no ethnical disputes.

Albania summons four confessions: Sunni-Albanians, Bektashi Albanians, Catholic Albanians. Albania came into being because of the Orthodox factor through the Orthodox Bishop Fan Holic subject of Moscow and having a direct support. At present a distinctive dualism exists in this country mainly the presence of the geopolitical interests of the Byzantine Orthodoxes and the Patriarchate of Russia.

One of the fundamental particularities of the Balkanic Orthodoxes is the existence of two geopolitical contradictions regarding the religious aspect, turning to the geopolitic of Russia and the idea of „Russia – the third Rome” targeting the Catholic world, antiTurks and against the Orthodoxes who weaken Moscow's influence on the Balkans. Secondly, although being Orthodoxes , they feel for Rome and the Catholic world. And thirdly it is clear to Moscow the strengthening of the Turkish and the Anglo-Saxon influence which breaks this area away from the Patriarchate of Moscow.

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