
Internal Fight for Power, External Forces for Development-Analyzing Moldova's Case

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Abstract

This is a theoretical article and aims to analyze in a brief manner the development situation of Republic of Moldova, a country that seeks to create the proper setting for economic growth, political agreement, respect of the human and civil rights, advancements in the relations with neighbours and the European Union. The research is a qualitative one, based on the existing statistics and tries to explain the challenges of this country since it's internal and external politics are depending on the major players from the east (like Russia, it's most powerful neighbour, Ukraine, The Caucasian countries etc.) as well as on the major player of the west (like EU or United States of America). Not being fully equipped for dealing with the negative effects of social and economic crisis, Moldova relies on European programmes that can reduce an asymmetric development caused by a political system of win-loss situation, an economic system of struggle for enterprises, a soft power not entirely established and a civil society that can be easily manipulated. The result of this research is that while the internal context is a continuous fight for power, there are external forces that want to develop this nation. One future aspect that is interesting to look up to is how can Republic of Moldova to use the know-how from the outside in order to increase the know-how from the inside.

Key words: development, power, projects, empowerment, democracy

1. Introduction

Every event can be seen from two important perspectives: inside and outside. Every historical era can be seen from at least two perspectives: how it appeared and what it caused. Republic of Moldova has started a new historical era since the year of independence, 1991, a time for big decisions:

“Since the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, the small, poor, divided, and corrupt Republic of Moldova has represented an excellent example of a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

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member trying to accommodate Russian hegemony and European hopes. During the last decade, it has experienced a temporarily pro-Moscow authoritarian regime, an enthusiastically pro-Brussels democratic ruling coalition, the total capture of the state by one of its pro-European oligarchs; the latter's cohabitation with a widely popular pro-Russian President, and a civil society-originated democratic movement that desperately tries to fight both." (Tudoroiu, 2018, p. 217).

Part of Europe by timeline and neighbor of Russia by geography, Moldova emerged from a simple territory almost forgotten by history into an important eastern partner of the European Union that seeks to increase its wellbeing. Although the foreign policy of Moldova became a pillar of the country's development, the economical background is still a challenge for the rulers. In 2018, the World Bank released a report of the general situation (see Table 1.). With almost 4 millions people, Moldova is having a 11,3 billion \$ GDP and the average for every individual is 2,734 \$. The life expectancy remains, since 2016, 73.2 years. The progress is slowly but there are also categories of people that live in poverty but one big support could come from the international organizations if projects would improve the everyday life of the citizens.

Table 1. The World Bank in Moldova Overview

MOLDOVA	2018
Population, million	3.55
GDP, current US\$ billion	11.3
GDP per capita, current US\$	2,724
Life Expectancy at birth, years (2016)	73.2

Source: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/overview>

Although this country has political, economic and military ties also with United Nations, World Bank or NATO, EU represents the big integration system, the supranational red wire that connects Moldova with other European countries. The hypothesis of this article is that Moldova has an asymmetric development due to the tension between 4 major factors: a political system of win-loss situation, an economic struggle for enterprises, a soft power not entirely established and a civil society that can easily be manipulated. There will be analyzed these factors and check the role of EU in trying to solve the issue of development.

2. Literature review

Scholars have found a proper ground for debating the problem of European enlargement and the relation between the European Union and Moldova. Henderson(Henderson, 2005, p. 2) for example, points out that the European Union first looked in its own yard, fixing its problems from inside the member countries and secondly, looked to establish more close relations with the outer countries, especially those from the east, since they were, geographically, part of Europe as continent.

Lašas (Lašas, 2010, p.1) emphasizes the fact that the eastern European countries (among them, Moldova) had to become part of Europe as Union and Atlantic as partnership simply because there was no escape from the void left behind by the Soviet Union.

From the realistic perspective of International Relations (IR), this closeness to the EU in particular was seen as a way of securing a fragile stability in the beginning and a rise of capitalism in economy (pp.2-3). Rinnert (Rinnert, 2013, p. 2) explains how the relation between EU and Moldova started as a cooperation in order “to set priorities”, the most important things that had to be achieved for progress in Moldova and advancement for Union in the so called process of “Europeanization”(Agh , 2004; Grabbe, 2001; Sedelmeier, 2011). Republic of Moldova has received money through funds and grants during the first years of EaP and incentives to arrange legislative reforms for the possibility of joining the EU membership.

However, focusing only on the formal relations and leaving behind the informal relations (those that can translate into a development of a nation) made it harder for both sides to fulfill their goals in the right time. Wozniakowski and Matlak see the adaptation of states to the EU as process and outcome in the same time (Wozniakowski and Matlak, 2018). Moldova, that hopes to become member in the near future, has to make public policies that can be included in the standards of the European Union and make its citizens real Europeans in terms of civil rights.

Crombois concludes that the European Union can help states like Republic of Moldova if these states are committed to see EU as a transformative power, the one that keeps a closer eye to east and sets clear boundaries between the resources it has and what results are expected (Crombois, 2019, p. 92). Like other fellow nations, Republic of Moldova has a potential of political resources but lacks the stability and the determination to transform them in efficient tools.

3. Moldova’s context

When a country takes the command and becomes a regional leader, it can influence that region and the international organizations from within. When a country develops and cooperates with other countries in order to become strong in politics and economics it can gain more credibility on the political scene. But when a country is at the beginning of a real development and democracy, it has to deal with a system of strategies imposed by previously two categories of country. The case of Moldova is one example of that context. Apart from a hierarchy of relations between countries, the big drive for Moldova is getting to the round table of EU and reshapes wealth under contemporary threats such as security gaps, recessions or inefficient democracy. As Elena Korosteleva points out:

“Moldova’s journey in Europe’s direction has not been a linear progression. In order to appreciate the progress in EU–Moldova cooperation, and the difficulties both polities have encountered in establishing a firm and continuing dialogue in later years, a brief overview of their relations is offered below. The history of their relations can loosely be divided into three distinct periods: (i) the 1991–4

period associated with the troubled birth of an independent state in search of a new identity and allies; (ii) the long 1994–2009 period of oscillated Europeanization of the country; and (iii) the 2010 onwards period of developing new European allegiances and balancing old strategic alliances.” (Korosteleva, 2012, p. 105).

The regional context since 2007 has been characterized by alliances with 2 important neighbors, Romania and Ukraine and a committed cooperation regarding the Black Sea Basin (see Table 2). These elements illustrated the fact that a democratic approach is needed in the East and that the energy issue is enhancing a dialogue for further sustainability.

Table2. Types of programmes for Republic of Moldova within the European Union partnership in the region of South- East

Programmes 200-2006	Cadses		
Programmes 2007-2013	South-East Europe	Romania-Moldova- Ukraine ENPI CBC	Black Sea Basin ENPI CBC
Programmes 2014-2020	Romania-Republic of Moldova ENI CBC	INTERREG VB Danube	Black Sea Basin ENI CBC

Source: <https://www.keep.eu/nuts/searchByRegion>

4. A critical analysis

One of the first factors that reside in the asymmetric development of Moldova is the political system of win-loss situation. Any political struggle has winners and losers but once the government is settled, the role of every part becomes important in managing the public affairs. Like in a company, although argues between employers and employer may occur, the targets remain the same: taking the business to high places and creating strong professional and human system. The internal fight for power in Moldova ends up with one defeated group (that will attack consistently the leaders) and one group that will transform the governance according to only few interests. And when resources appear, there’s no surprise that some groups won’t get that resources as they planned:

“With declining productivity levels, lower external financing and existing structural deficiencies, Moldova remains highly vulnerable to shocks. Political uncertainty and vested interests undermine the reform agenda and the investment process. The large share of the state in the economy, coupled with weak institutions and governance challenges, including in the non-banking financial sector, pose additional risks.”(World Bank, 2019).

Politics remains to elites while democracy is left to the people.

The second factor is the economic system of struggle for enterprises. Companies in Moldova need to give products and services to individuals and to become more competitive in order to get on the European market. The first task is somehow accomplished although the level of wealth isn't the best one; the second task is more difficult. Playing alongside with competitors can prove to be the door to a strategic move in increasing quality and innovative acting. Or, in other cases, can prove to be the road to bankruptcy. Depending on the regional economic environment (unfortunately the eastern Europe is a poor region compared to the western Europe), the agreements with the two key players, EU and Russia and the support of international finance organizations, Moldavian enterprises can survive in the system of demand and supply: "Key long-term challenges to economic growth include population ageing, large emigration flows, and unsustainable economic growth relying on remittances-driven consumption and low levels of productivity." (World Bank, 2019).

The third major factor is the soft power of Moldova, not entirely established so it can bring incentives for good international actions. By definition, a soft power suggests a limited type of power in context of strong alliances and partnerships. Although there is a grid of power, the adjective soft indicates a long-term strategy especially designed for taking into consideration the most fragile drawbacks. Moldova can establish a soft power system in a sense of creating a smart diplomacy for Eurasia and "warm" relations with the eastern neighbors:

"Taking into account the historical context of the external environment, it should be noted that the Republic of Moldova is forced to interact with state and social systems from the same communist source in the past. Direct interaction with states such as the Republic of Hungary, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany has allowed Romania and the Baltic states to strengthen the development of democratic institutions, as their informational entropy was lower in comparison with that of the Republic of Moldova, which is currently still yet to solve its natural, historical and linguistic identity issues, and bears the geopolitical influence of both the West, and the East." (Prisac, 2015, p. 86).

Entering into the wave that promotes international exchanges within neutral coordinates means less bad interactions for Moldova. A smart strategy for Eurasia involves partnerships in fields like society, culture or entrepreneurship (e.g. increasing the quality of local brands following the example of Baltic or Caucasian countries). "Warm" relations with the Eastern is a possible tool for development: the more solid the negotiations, the more solid the results, negotiating what is sustainable for this country. Moldova is not yet a regional soft power and it seems to project herself as no defense and self-awareness of small power (in the end every country plays a part in the international system no matter how small it is).

The fourth major factor of asymmetric development is the civil society that can be easily manipulated. A civil society is one of the democracy's hearts, perhaps the most disruptive one. And democracy is thought to be one of the development's brains. The force of the people, what they ask and what they receive is measured as economic stability; trust in the citizens as mature actors in the system, careful politicians, non-governmental projects, enriched culture etc. When individuals can be

easily manipulated, there's room for "roll the dice" techniques used by other actors in their benefit suspending good actions that could have been taken before the appearance of the manipulation process: "The lack of a consolidated political consciousness and the existence of a public opinion influenced by several control parameters created a state of chaos, which, after its having gained independence, caused the amplification of informational entropy." (Prisac, 2015, p, 89).

These major factors of the asymmetric development of Republic of Moldova (the political system of win-loss situation; the economic system of struggle for enterprises; the trials for achieving the soft power status in the region and a civil society that can easily be manipulated) are reflected in the most important international indexes (see Table 3). The lower scores of press freedom, freedom, economic and business freedom show a society that is partly controlled; the corruption score is high and the perception of the citizens is that of a country where bribery is a constant coordinate. However, the score for electronic government is over 0.50 out of 1, showing that has been made progress in public policies and institutions that use digital tools to amplify the voice of the people and reduce the costs of bureaucracy.

Table 3. The position of Republic of Moldova in the most important international indexes

Corruption Index 2018 Score 33 out of 100 -Rank 117 out of 180	Freedom House Index 2019 Score 58 out of 100 -Partly free
World Press Freedom Index 2019 Score 31,21 -Rank 91 Dropped 10 places since 2018 when it had the rank 81 out of over 150 countries	World Bank Ease of Doing Business 2018 Rank 47
E-Government Index 2018 Score 0,65 out of 1 (highest score)	Economic Freedom Index 2019 Heritage Foundation Score 59,1 Moderately free -Rank 97 out of 180 countries

Source: Transparency International (2018), Freedom House (2019), RSF(2019), World Bank (2018), United Nations Organization(2018), The Heritage Foundation(2019)

4. Discussion and proposals

The role of European Union in developing Moldova through partnerships and cross-border cooperation has proven to be suitable for helping this country to gain wealth because of its diversity, economic power and alliances with the strongest countries in the world (United States of America, China and Japan). The biggest number of projects with EU was within the cross-border cooperation (157 projects) with a budget over 2,6 billion € (see Table 4).

On the second place there are 19 interregional and transnational projects with a budget over 3,9 billion €. On the third place we have, until 2019, 1 interred cross border project with a budget over

7,8 million €. This image illustrates a progress in deepening the close relations with the European Union.

Table 4. Projects of Republic of Moldova with the European Union and their budget

Program type	Number of Projects	Aggregated Budget(€)
ENPI/ENI Cross-border	157	26092284,86
Interreg Transnational	19	39907583,53
Interreg Cross-border	1	780022,88

Source: <https://www.keep.eu/statistics?nuts=MD&l=10>

Placed in the “Europeanization” of the continent and the Asian alliance rather than being a battlefield between the West and Russia, Moldova can step out due to EU’s influence and empowerment. Europe is the external force for development of Moldova (alongside with United Nations). Tackling the previous 4 elements of the asymmetric development is a difficult task for the next decade, some possible reasons for that are going to be explored in the following paragraph.

The European Union cannot impose a certain government at Chişinău or give sanctions to certain politicians but it can deliver expertise in a democratic manner. The European Union cannot boost the profits of the Moldavian enterprises but it can involve a lot of companies in doing products and services within high standard programmes. The European Union cannot design the image of Moldova but it can make it a strong candidate for reliability in terms of sustainable political independence and leadership. Finally, the European Union cannot transform overnight the civil society in Moldova but it can give confidence to its citizens, NGO’s and group interests by creating a system of activism for activating wealth. Moldavian people want, as their European fellows, true and efficient democracy but they are faced, generally, with delays and lack of political will.

The internal fight for power isn’t what it seems in the first place. Citizens fight for their power (the democratic field), parties fight for power (to be in charge of the public resources and opportunities), companies fight to get power (the more the clients the bigger the brands), NGO’s fight for power (to achieve goals for certain categories of citizens). The main concern is to make this fight for a reasonable one for a nation as a whole, to turn these elements of fight from opposite teams to engaging teams for wealth charging.

The external forces for development are actors that influence a country’s economic and social path since cooperation resides in doing in a more efficient way a complex task. A cooperation involves working under a network of know-how (the soft power of EU) and actions (the hard power of EU): So, on the one hand, European integration can be seen as a long-term political project which would offer Moldovans and their country more opportunities and freedoms. On the other hand, increasing freedoms and building human capabilities represents the core of the human development concept itself. (United Nations Development Programme, 2012, p. xv). The Union of Europe wants a developed Moldova in its terms, so it can strengthen its borders while Russia also wants a

developed Moldova in its own terms for its own partnership. World Bank, another important actor, wants to develop Moldova in its terms while United Nations Organization wants to develop Moldova as a strong partner in Eurasia.

Power controls the development. The actors might have the same purposes but they have to achieve them from different perspectives. Ultimately, the development strategy is a decision and taking the right decision is a matter of resources available now (or available in the near future). Some tools, political and social, work together, others work separately. The limits of real democracy are another issue that pushes the boundaries between what is desirable for the majority and how much of it is possible. The cooperation of EU with Republic of Moldova is a necessity for Moldova and a source of soft power for EU:

“The EU is Moldova’s largest trading partner and biggest investor in the country. In 2018, it accounted for 70% of its total exports and 56% of its total trade. Domestic reforms, for instance, the alignment of health and safety standards to those of the EU, will open further opportunities for trade with the EU. The EU also facilitates access to finance for Moldovan SMEs. The EU continues to attach great importance to strengthening democratic standards, the rule of law and efforts to end high-level corruption in Moldova. In 2018, as a consequence of the backsliding in democratic principles and the rule of law, the EU recalibrated its assistance to Moldova. Parliamentary elections were held in February 2019 and a peaceful transition of power took place in June 2019. Since then, the government has focused on reforms in key areas, including the justice sector, on democratic principles and anti-corruption.” (European Union External Action, 2019, p. 1).

Agreements set the rules and rules impose certain behaviors. What is foreign policy for the European Union, for Moldova could be an internal policy (see the attempts to bring it on the path of democratization and Europeanization). In this way, the order is a frame for continuing the development. On the other hand, economic and social conditions force the leadership to reconsider the dilemma of the defender (when defending a thing is causing insecurity for another thing) thus the compromises made by Moldova, in our case. From an optimistic point of view, compromise can as well be seen as adaptation.

Some proposals that can be taken into consideration are: developing the entrepreneurship among youth and women both in the country side and city through the creation of family businesses ; developing the beginning of e-literacy among all categories of people and e-debating on the ground of respect and initiative; developing agreements between MNCs that want to settle in Republic of Moldova and town halls in order to assure a fair social responsibility; increase the production of local goods and services.

5. Conclusions

Viewed from inside, Moldova is a country that struggles for a more democratic and vivid society, viewed from outside, Moldova is a player tied to more grounds, due to geography and

spheres of influence that considerably affects its society. Gaining her independence in 1991 and wanting to enter in the European family, Moldova established a relation with the actor that can help her the most. In this article we have showed 4 possible reasons that created an asymmetric development of the Republic of Moldova. First one is the political rulers that seem to struggle in finding consensus over the public interest. The divided political stage (groups that are for and against European integration, pro-Russian groups, the groups that support the union between Republic of Moldova and Romania etc.) is causing difficulties in setting the right priorities because every side has its followers and hopes for progress. The second one is the economic environment that lacks incentives for enterprises. The Moldavian market is not new to the Europeans but it can become a wealthy one if high-standards are imposed by the government and companies are given know-how, European funds and investments from multi-national corporations that will assure a fair social responsibility. The third one is the difficulty to transform Moldova into a regional soft power that connects both with the west and the east. Being in the space of transition between these coordinates, Republic of Moldova should gain from the interdependence with west and east; however the tensions make the situation hard to manage in terms of creating a stronger country status. Finally, we are talking about a civil society that can easily be manipulated and not entirely strong to negotiate with the institutional actors. We might say that the democracy is in danger while the democratic forces are expanding. This means that, despite the will of the citizens to participate to the public life, at the top of the public sphere there are parties and groups that are not committed to take responsibility for their actions.

The political class is there to learn from others and doing it in a different way but as good as others had done it. If the political leadership isn't going to solve it all, people and companies are at the forefront of making a positive impact for the society. The quality of education, products and services made in Moldova is a key step for development. Creating good relations with neighbors and the rest of the world through smart strategies is also a key. And enhancing the cooperation with the Union of Europe is the A-list key for transforming the asymmetric development of Moldova into a symmetric and fully economic, political and social growth and wealth. A further research that can be made regarding the development of Republic of Moldova in the context of cooperation with the European Union is focusing on discovering through a national survey how the citizens of the country can use the know-how from the European projects thus involving in creating the wellbeing of their society.

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