


GEOPOLITICS OF ORTHODOXY AND STATE-CHURCH RELATIONSHIP IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

State and Church in Christian tradition

Priests of the first temples have organized the first Neolithic communities and facilitated the articulation of the first city-states and empires of ancient Mesopotamian. Religion and State together formed one superhuman power, and with the expansion of civilization in the Eurasian area, this mixed formula has expanded of sacred and profane which allowed ancient societies cohesion. Gradually, some kings took over some of the priests' powers and have acquired supernatural aura of the gods, which merged even more the state with religion, since political power was sanctified and the religious one was controlled by the religious head of state.

Unlike polytheistic religions of the ancient world, Christianity has made the first distinction between religious and laic power in the spirit of finding a harmony between the two, by the famous evangelical phrase: "*Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's*"¹. After several centuries of Christianity objection and persecution of the first Christians, political power brings legality in Christian Church, which is inseparable, and interprets for themselves evangelical texts



Visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Entire Russia in the Republic of Moldova, on 8-10 October 2011, has revived discussions in local public space about canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church and Moldovan-Russian ecclesiastical relations. Although the Patriarch has impressed by the depth of Christian message and avoided (as far as possible) (geo) political topics in his public interventions, the fact that he was received with military honors, and during the entire visit was accompanied by Prime Minister and Acting President of the Republic of Moldova, represents sufficient evidence for a serious debate on the relationship between the Metropolitan of Moldova and the Russian Patriarchy, in a broader context of the relationship between Church and State in contemporary Moldovan society.

while European monarchs in a miraculously become "God's anointed".

However, the ratio between the two institutions (church and state) was different in western and eastern European continent and the Great Schism (1054) of the Christian Church has only served to accentuate this difference. Pope of Rome has proclaimed himself as monarch of a territory (the pope domain) and has devoted to himself a large part of the

¹ Gospel of Matthew (22,21).

activity of political subordination of the entire European continent. Vision of *Dictatus Papae* (1075) of Gregory VII, according to which the papacy was not only the spiritual center of Christianity, but also the political center, above kings and emperors, has generated many religious wars and came into conflict with the idea of modern laic state, emancipated from any religious interference. Thus, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the French Revolution have announced the final separation of the political authority from the religious.

By contrast, Byzantine inheritance was an intimate association between the Orthodox state and Orthodox Church (Byzantine symphony) in one state-ecclesiastical body, although in practice it meant the supremacy of the laic power over the church power. A big part of Orthodox world much later came under domination of theocratic Muslim empire, while the national liberation movements of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries of Southeastern Europe have required a joint effort of political and ecclesiastical authorities for the formation of states and national autocephalous Churches. Thus, the state has never recognized his main opponent in the Orthodox Church since the Church has not ever committed in the fight for control over laic power, and in many cases supported its self-determination. As a result, it is a false trail to search the main obstacle in the Orthodox Church on the path of modernizing Eastern European states, since the church, as the state and society as a whole, only recently emerged from the shackles of a leftist and atheist totalitarianism.

Moreover, nor Western European model does not involve actual literal interpretation of the provisions of the French Revolution, as many of our people are trying to convince us, and knows the different limits of intersection

between spiritual and laic power. Studies investigating the relationship state - church, both developed in the west², and the east³, make a distinction between three models of relations between these two institutions in the European Union. The first model - *the radical separation* - is applied in France, the Netherlands and only formally, in Ireland. Radical separation, however, has known changes over these two centuries and has opened the prospect of a dialogue between Church and State. The second model – *total identification* - is applied in the UK, Denmark or Finland. The state here is one with the Church, monarchs (the first two cases) are not only heads of states but also of the Church, parliaments are supreme religious courts and the Governments financial support virtually all churches activity reported by state. Here one can fit in the case of Greece, which is an Orthodox model for identifying the state with the Church. The third model - *distinct cooperation* - is applied in Germany, Spain or Italy, where between state and church operates a system of mutual ties and obligations designed to ensure the Church's place in society and Church support for social policy of the state. However, although one gave up specifying the Christian nature of the European Union within Lisbon Treaty, which states that: "The Union respects and does not prejudice the status, under national law, that churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States benefit from"⁴.

2 Robbers G (ed.). *State and Church in the European Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005, p. 578.

3 Preda R. *Church in the state. Chances and limits of a debate*. In: *Relationship between State and Church*. Bucharest: Institute of Liberal Studies, 2001, p. 26-33.

4 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union . Title II, Art. 17 (1).

From the “Third Rome” to “Holy Russia”: Geopolitics of Orthodoxy

The relationship between church and state in Russia has had two features that defined the distinction of these relationships not only in relation to Catholic Europe, but also in relation to the Orthodox world. On the one hand, the fact that Christianization of Russia (988) took place from top to bottom, with a mandatory initiative that came from the political authority, recorded a higher allegiance of ecclesiastical authorities towards political authorities. State involvement in ecclesiastical problems and thus subjecting the church as an institution becomes even more apparent after the 1721 reform of Peter I, when after declining the election of a new Patriarch, he has established a collective supreme administration known as the Russian Orthodox Church under the name of Holy Synod, whose members were appointed directly by the Tsar. Restoration of the Patriarchal Throne in 1917 coincided with the coming of Bolsheviks to power after the Russian Orthodox Church has known for seven decades, the saddest experience in relation to laic authorities.

On the other hand, and in conjunction with the above mentioned facts, after the fall of Constantinople (1453), considered the second Rome, and release of Russian territories from under Tatar-Mongolian occupation, Moscow (capital of the new Russian state) is auto entitling “The Third Rome”, concept used in a letter of Pskov monk Filotei by Ivan the Terrible. Since medieval man believed that the world will exist as long as

there is an empire and its loss leads to the end of the world, the fact that the world continues to exist after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, was explained by the existence of the Russian Empire. Political interpretation of this concept designed as a purely religious becomes the first geopolitical doctrine of Russian centralized state. Geopolitical doctrine that would be used to support the transformation of Russian empire and the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate (1589), whose canonical boundaries coincide with those of the Russian Empire.

Subsequently abandoned, especially after the dissolution of the patriarchal seat, the concept of the Third Rome had to be rediscovered and intensively promoted since the nineteenth century with the expansion of Russia in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe, and with the support of the Orthodox Balkans to fight the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the continued expansion of Russian state contributed to enhance the canonical territory and authority of the Russian Orthodox Church, while its authority facilitated geographical expansion and geopolitical influence of Russian Empire.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian Orthodox Church came “under the tutelage” of new Russian state, reanimating the old tradition of Caesar-Papism in the tsarist period. This has mechanically involved the rehabilitation of Orthodox dimension in Russian neo-imperial ideology, since the Church remained the only “depository”, although only spiritual, of the boundaries of the former empire. According to the Russian Orthodox Church’s status, its jurisdiction includes people of Orthodox confession living on the canonical territory (geographical area of ecclesiastical authority) of the Rus-

sian Orthodox Church: in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Estonia and on the other Orthodox people who live in other countries and who have voluntarily joined this jurisdiction⁵.

“Colored” revolutions in the post-Soviet space and implicitly, hostility wherewith Ukrainian voter received the support (too aggressive) from Moscow for V. Yanukovych’s candidacy during the presidential elections of 2004, determined Russia to more use of “soft” mechanisms in designing strategies from “near neighborhood”. Thus, along with Russian speaking community empowerment from former Soviet republics and their organization in different demanding “leagues” and “associations”, vast canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, a territory on which the last has its own reasons not to renounce, cannot be neglected in the Russian state attempts to revive the defunct Russian Soviet empire under a new formula of Eurasian Union.

The visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to Moldova is a natural pastoral visit, since the latter is, at least for now, part of the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, any visit of a Patriarch or any other high church representatives is by definition a significant moment for a society that is Christian-Orthodox for more than ninety percent. Especially since no one can deny links between the two sister Churches centuries and deep spirituality of Russian Christianity and particularly of His Holiness the Patriarch. The agenda of the visit itself and the message that Patriarch Kirill

brought in Chisinau were largely written in a custom of a pastoral visit.

During the visit, Patriarch Kirill officiated the Saint and Divine Liturgy at Metropolitan Cathedral, brought a bouquet of flowers at the monument to fallen soldiers during the Second World War and another at the monument of Stefan cel Mare, has committed small consecration of the Cathedral “Birth of Virgin Maria” in Curchi monastery and visited the pediatric department of the Oncology Hospital in Chisinau.

True that His Holiness Patriarch met the Prime Minister Vladimir Filat and acting President Marian Lupu, the last one decorated him with the Order of the Republic (the highest distinction of the Moldavian state), however, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church mentioned that: *“The visit is not political and it has no aims of political consultations - it is intended that the spiritual life of people, regardless of political circumstances, to evolve so that the Orthodox and godly people of Moldova would be able to live in spiritual and moral basis of those principles that they absorb with breast milk each generation of Moldovans”*⁶.

Otherwise the religious dimension in geopolitics manifests itself and Moldovan political analysts in vain have sought for the “leakages of conduct” during the visit of Patriarch, although there were some insignificant, or messages brought from Kremlin. On 21 August 2010, at the monastery of Solovki (island of Solovki in the White Sea) in the conclusion of a meeting between Patriarch Kirill and a delegation of Moldovan bishops headed by Metropolitan of Chisinau and Entire Moldova Vladimir, His Holiness said:

5 Charter of Russian Christian Church. [On-line]. 2000 <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/133115.html>.

6 His Holiness Patriarch Kirill met the Acting President of the Republic of Moldova M.I. Lupu. [On-line]. 2011 <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1643766.html>.

*“We pray today for Moldova, for flowering of the Moldovan people, for the political orientation of Moldova to contribute to preserving the unity of Holy Russia”*⁷. Also on the occasion of the visit of Patriarch Kirill in Moldova, was launched the Romanian version of the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church, so that on 28 September 2011, this site appears in a press release with a title more than suggestive – The problem of the so-called metropolitan of Bessarabia⁸. Also in this context, on October 3, 2011 the Publishing of Moscow Patriarchate released a book in Romanian with sermons spoken by His Holiness having a suggestive title, that is “We are a single people in front of God”. Therefore, the visit meant only spiritual liaising between Moldovan citizens and Russian Church, to which they refer every time, that is building “Holy Russia” by the physical presence of the Patriarch: *“When people pray with the Patriarch - he said in an interview during the visit – when you see tears in their eyes – there is no need for any arguments”*⁹. Indeed, the arguments will already come from the Kremlin, whose geopolitical projects will be much easier to accomplish in a canonic area full of humbleness. Then “Holy Russia” miraculously restores in a very laic Russia, with army, tanks and natural gas.

7 His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: Moldova — an integrant part of the Holy Russia. [On-line]. 2010. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1254808.html>.

8 The problem of so-called Metropolitan of Bessarabia. Short informative notice. [On-line]. 2011. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/md/db/text/1646865.html>.

9 Interview of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and the Entire Russia for TV channels of Moldova, Romania and Russia. [On-line]. 2011. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1645119.html>.

Separation of state (Moldovan) from Church (Russian): perspectives of a modern dialog

Relations between church and state in medieval Moldova, just as in Muntenia, took existing shape in Byzantium, a close cooperation between the two institutions, inconceivable separately from one another, with a relative subordination of the Church to political authority. After the fall of Constantinople, Metropolitan of Moldova, established in year 1401 stated with and independence equal to autocephaly, not allowing any judicial interference of any outside ecclesiastical hierarchy¹⁰. The situation is different after 1812, after the annexation of territory between the Prut and Dniester by Russia, when the diocese established by Tsar Alexander I approved is lowered to the rank of Archdiocese, under the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Church. For nearly two centuries, the autochthonous Church has undergone a double domestic foreign subordination, to the Russian Church and state as part of a geopolitical project that made abuse of Orthodox Christianity. Thus, the gap between people and their own Church has experienced its extreme phase during the communist regime, which launched a terrible campaign of denationalization and de-Christianization of the native population.

Refusal of Russian Orthodox Church to recognize the Metropolitan of Bessarabia (established in 1928 and liquidated after the

10 Păcurariu M. History of Romanian Orthodox Church. Chisinau: Știința, 1993, p. 112.

re-annexation of Bessarabia by the Soviet Russia) and the establishment in 1992 of a Metropolitan Church of Moldova under the canonical jurisdiction of the Church in Moscow, has inserted a religious dimension to the geopolitical equation in which one has attached Russia, Romania and Moldova. This has not allowed that in a period when both the State and the Church claimed their own identity, being released from a totalitarian and atheist past, the existence of an organized, uniform and modern relationship of the two institutions. The fact that the state in the Republic of Moldova did not become a functional one, led by a trained and modern political class, and the Church did not become a true moral guide, with a godly clergyman, is also the consequence of this lack of synchronization. The fact is that the Moldovan society, in its daily painful existence, did not find any support needed in the state, nor in the Church.

Moreover, Moldova feels more strongly a double pressure, while the Moldovan society is hostage of a conflict absolutely foreign to the feelings and spirit of this people. On the one hand, the involvement of the Church in Russia's geopolitical projects, which puts pressure on Moldovan politics and society and also discredits the Church itself. The example when the Moldovan Metropolitan Church headed by the Bishop openly supported in the parliamentary elections in November 2010 the political party of the former Director of Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, who came from Moscow and whose main electoral message was Moldova's accession to the Customs Union Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan, is hacked in this respect. On the other hand, pressure of an atheist culture, which argues

that sin is a pluralism and requires in a variety of ways the laicization without rest and cleaning of public space of any religious presence.

The only rational solution in such a context, that would anticipate and avoid a social crisis is not just a modern state with clear and developed legislation as a result of serious discussions with all stakeholders (including church), but also a rethinking of the relationship between church, state and society. This new relationship, however, must begin with the Church's way out from under the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church. Otherwise, a new relationship between the Moldovan state and a church that is under the canonical jurisdiction of Russian, in its turn engaged in policy making of the Russian state would not be institutionalized. Ultimately, this approach is supported by the canons of the Orthodox Church, such as Apostolic Canon 34, the one expressing national principle as the basic principle of autocephaly in organizing a church: *"It is fitting that the bishops of each nation would know the first of them and count him as a leader"*¹¹. If apostolic canons now leave some place for different interpretations, we find sufficient arguments in the documents adopted by the Russian Church. Episcopal Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, gathered on August 13 to 16, 2000, approved the "Fundamentals of the social conception of the Russian Orthodox Church", which stipulates the basic principles of relations between state and church and the main social problems. In the second chapter, called "The Church and nation" it is stated that: *"... universal character of the*

11 Apud Păcurariu M. Bessarabia, aspects from history of Church and Romanian people. Iasi: Trinitas, 1993, p. 132.

Church does not mean that Christians would not have the right to national identity and national self-expression. On the contrary, the Church unites in itself the universal and national principles. Thus, although universal, Church is made up of many autocephalous national churches. Being aware that they are citizens of a heavenly homeland, Orthodox Christians should not forget their earthly homeland."¹².

From here there are only two perspectives. Transfer under the canonical jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church or the establishment of an Autocephalous Church. The first perspective, perhaps the most consistent with the canons and Orthodox tradition, is not indicated by the social and (geo) political realities at the moment. And it's not (just) about the position of the Russian Church. Moldovan society is not ready for such an approach and that would not be the case for the Church, instead of constituting a factor of social cohesion, to make a further rift within a too split society. As a result, the only perspective that is still standing is that of an Autocephalous Church. Obviously there is a risk that the Patriarchate of Moscow, which controls the region from ecclesiastical point of view, not to recognize autocephaly of Moldovan Church (in order not to remember its transfer under the canonical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Bucharest) and to declare it outside the communion. The case of the Kiev Patriarchate, of the Patriarch Filaret, who since 1992 yet unsuccessfully requires recognition of autocephaly, is illuminating in this respect. However, history shows that all churches which have declared themselves

autocephalous, hardly obtained recognition, respectively have waited decades for *Tomos* (decree) of recognition from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. In fact, even the Moscow Patriarchate has obtained recognition from the four Orthodox Patriarchates (Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem), more than a century after the Russians themselves have elected the Primate of the Church. Moreover, since neither Holy Scripture nor the Church Fathers did not establish a "theology of autocephaly", there was no unique way in history to establish a church autocephaly and as a consequence, recognition does not have to be given by the parent church. Dominant rule seems to be the one according to which autocephaly would be the expression the will of the entire community of the Orthodox Churches, based mostly on the call of the Church with the highest authority, that of Constantinople[□]. In this context it is noteworthy the section 5 of the final communiqué of the meeting of Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Primate of the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus, in September 2011, which states the necessity of all the Orthodox Churches to "... *strictly comply with their jurisdictional boundaries, as they were established by the Holy Canons and their formation Tomoses*"[□]. When the Moscow Patriarchate received recognition *Tomos* (1589), Moldovan Church was not part of the canonical territory of the Russian Church, and if its canonical boundaries have been recognized as being the same as of the Russian Empire, then Republic of Moldova is not part of such an empire. This justifies a request for recognition of the autocephaly on behalf of the oldest four Orthodox Churches, and other sister churches, with the prospect of full commu-

12 FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIAL CONCEPT of Russian Christian Church. [On-line]. 2000. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/141422.html>.

nion. Otherwise, we do not find ourselves in the title of the Primate of the Church as we pray, as it is (only) Patriarch of Moscow and Entire Russia.

Further, the new dialogue between Church and state should be based on a certain division of areas and mutual non-interference, an accurate indication of their own identities within a partnership essential for the entire society. Building a Church separately from the state but organically integrated with its own people, one cannot allow an excessive opulence of the clergy against the backdrop of a precarious existence of this people. Thus, the Church should be first interested in social projects developed in Moldova, participating together with the state to achieve them, and why not, maintaining (if possible) hospitals and social establishments. Even since from the moment of constituting the Church, in the Pentecost day, the Christians inside it “... *were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their goods and assets and shared them to everyone, according to everyone’s needs*”¹³. However, this social activism of the Church, having as a base a social doctrine, does not necessarily have to lead to its transformation into a philanthropic organization. The Church has to remain, first of all, a human-divine institution, bearing holiness and praying for the salvation of people and keeping a perspective of *a beyond*.

The principle of laic state, therefore, does not have to be understood as a total exclusion of religion from society or not recognizing the right of the Church to take action or decisions on matters of major importance

for society, while this right is recognized for certain non-governmental organizations. Also, the laicization of the Church must not mean deprivation of the right to critically evaluate the actions of political authorities, especially when they threaten the Christian and citizens freedoms. All these are steps aimed at eventually finding a proper balance between a European model and the Orthodox specific, between own tradition and openness to the world towards twenty-first century.

Conclusions

Our ancestors were Christians in the apostolic period, consequence of certain spiritual feelings and of preaching of the Gospel by Apostle St. Andrew in the northern Black Sea. Thus, our people was formed as a people in the bosom of Christianity, and Orthodoxy, which at Western rationalism, inherited from the Latin world, added Eastern mysticism and spirituality, was one of the defining ingredients that individualized it in relation to other European people and nations. In this context, a separation without a rest of church from the state after a Dutch model, for example, and a total elimination of the majority religion in society or leaving the church caught in geopolitical equations can become risky. Only a Church organically integrated with its own people, able to enter into dialogue with (post) modern person, as well as a balance between tradition and modernity, can set the basis of an adequate and lasting model of state-church relations in a society shaped in the spirit of Orthodoxy.

13 Deeds of Saint Apostle (2, 44-45).



www.viitorul.org

IDIS „Viitorul” is a research, training and public initiative institution, which works in several areas related to economic analysis, governance, political research, strategic planning and knowledge management. IDIS serves as a joint platform bringing together young intellectuals concerned with the success of the transition towards market economy and an open society in Republic of Moldova. The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) „Viitorul” is the legal successor of Fundatia Viitorul (Viitorul Foundation) and, overall, preserves the traditions, objectives and principles of the foundation among which: building democratic institutions and developing a spirit of effective responsibility among policy makers, civil servants and citizens of our country, strengthening civil society and criticism, promoting the freedoms and values of an open, modern and pro-European society.

10/1 Iacob Hincu str., Chisinau
MD-2005 Republic of Moldova
373 / 22 221844 tel
373 / 22 245714 fax
office@viitorul.org
www.viitorul.org



The Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) is a German political, socio-democratic foundation which aims at promoting the principles and fundamental rules of democracy, peace, international understanding and cooperation. FES fulfills its mandate in the spirit of social democracy devoting itself to public debates and finding social-democratic solutions to current and future issues of the society in a transparent manner.

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation launched its cooperation with Republic of Moldova in 1994 through its Regional Office in Kiev, and since October 2002, there is a resident office of the Foundation in Chisinau.

Tel.: +373 22 885830
E-mail: fes@fes.md

This publication is produced with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The opinions expressed here are the opinions of the authors. Neither the management of IDIS „Viitorul”, nor the Administrative Board of the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives „Viitorul” and Friedrich Ebert Foundation are liable for the estimations and opinions revealed by this publication.

For more information on this publication or about the subscription for publications issued by IDIS, please contact directly the Mass Media and Public Relation Service of „Viitorul”. Contact person: Laura Bohantov - laura.bohantov@viitorul.org.