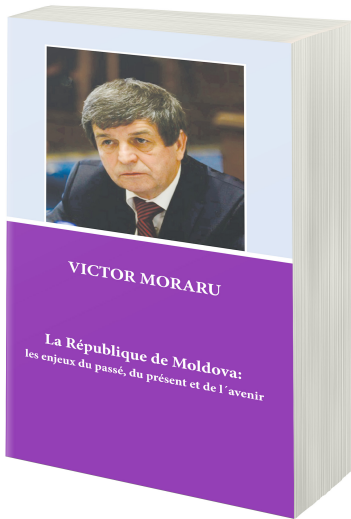


# Thinking and Building the European Future of the Republic of Moldova

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**Victor MORARU.**  
***La République de Moldova:  
les enjeux du passé, du présent  
et de l'avenir.***

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The imagological study “The Republic of Moldova: Challenges of the Past, Present and Future” (Chisinau: 2022, 200 p.) by Victor Moraru, a university professor, and substitute member of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, operates within a rather broad conceptual field, including essays on the geopolitical, historical, societal and media dimensions of the Republic of Moldova (fields in which the author is an expert). His work focuses, from an evolutionary perspective, on a country located on the border of Eastern Europe, coming out from the former Soviet space. The title seems to be in harmony with Ernest Renan’s idea of nation-building based on common glories in the past and a common will in the present. Several of the book’s topics were discussed during the annual meetings of the international colloquium titled *Penser l’Europe*, on the new project of European construction, held in Bucharest under the chairmanship of the late Eugen Simion, President of the Romanian Academy.

The fact that the Republic of Moldova is less known abroad prompted the author to publish the volume in French, thus configuring a specific way of presenting to the world a multi-dimensional overview of his country. The author starts by observing that “the case of Moldova is unique for the simple reason that this province has never existed as an independent political entity” (Moraru, p. 86). Being part of historical Romania, this area, marked by its geographical position at the confluence of major empires, has often been a victim of these circumstances. For a long time, the Republic of Moldova was on the border separating the free world from the totalitarian one.

Just as the French European Paul Valéry had counted in the interwar period on “a certain power of transformation” (“Lettre sur la société de transformation”), so the hope of change has altered the course of the Republic of Moldova, becoming a decisive vector in its trajectory.

The volume opens with a reference to a programmatic idea (we would say, in the style of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a Dream” speech, recently echoed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky): “In the beginning there was an aspiration. A rather vague and general aspiration for westernization, which developed into an argument of the incipit: ‘Being stimulated by the fundamental changes that took place in society in the late 1980s-early 1990s, this aspiration led to the discovery that democratic principles and the defense of human rights, representing values inherent in Western society, could also constitute reliable benchmarks for the countries of Eastern Europe” (Moraru, p. 7). This opening towards the West was perceived as “a relevant metamorphosis” and even as a panacea. The transformations concerned different spheres of life and involved the introduction of various innovations, such as an open political culture, multiparty politics, reorientation in the mental sphere, etc.

Through his approach, Victor Moraru identifies ways to optimize the European integration policy in Moldova (such as cooperation with NATO, which would contribute to the security and stability of the region), as well as the many obstacles that appeared on this path, such as the ineffectiveness of successive governments, a certain degree of duplicity in the state policy of the Republic of Moldova, the confrontation between “old and new” (*homo sovieticus* versus *homo europeus*), the Russian factor, the so-called Transnistrian issue, the lack of a continuous tradition of statehood, etc. Referring to various analyses of the concept of nation based on its purported geographical, territorial, administrative, financial, legal, linguistic, and spiritual unity, the author finds, like most historians and political scientists dealing with the Moldovan case, that the Republic of Moldova “does not meet all its characteristics”.<sup>1</sup> Between the concepts of resistance and project-oriented identity formation, as Yves Tardif defines them, identity construction is situated at the confluence of self-consciousness (*idem*) and recognition of the other (*ipse*), of continuity and rupture. The dialectical tension between the two tendencies (traditionalist and European, defensive and cosmopolitan), and the oscillations between the stages of isolation and integration are characteristic features of border countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Angela Demian, *La nation impossible? Construction nationale en République de Moldova, et au-delà* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006).



These factors of the national reality “tend to redefine their priorities, to reaffirm their European vocation”, which makes it possible to observe that “the Republic of Moldova remains firmly committed to the path of democratization and social reform” (Moraru, p. 70). Thus, achieving these tasks required the development of a well-defined strategy and a complex and ambitious program involving various political, economic, and social transformations related to the process of European integration, as well as the search for its own development path.

The difficult circumstances of the European option involve the process of replacing old values with the values inherent in contemporary society. The system of European values (liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, legality, human rights, etc.), which ensures the stability of democratic regimes, has become a landmark and an existential model for Moldovan society, a model which it must uphold, according to the author’s correct observation. This model could be inculcated by the consolidation of European consciousness while remaining open to the *praxis* of values. Starting from these constituent values of the European project, the author points out that European identity derives from three common principles: Christianity, humanism, and law, even though there are two Europes, each with its own history and different experiences. In order to accede to the European project, it is very important “to exploit the heritage of common history, to identify secure European landmarks, to achieve a desirable convergence, based on solid values” (Moraru, p. 102).

At the present stage, the European vector, with its values, ideals, and horizons is decisive for the country. In this vein, the author concludes that “Moldova’s European vocation is perennial and constant” (Moraru, p. 81). Integration has become, according to the author, the slogan of the day. These challenges have made Moldova change its old policy priorities and become a candidate country for accession to the European Union, with a firm commitment to the irreversibility of the country’s European course.

European identity is also addressed in another section, as the author considers it as a paradigm and a cultural experience based on freedom of thought and expression. The articles on developments in the media field are particularly interesting because of their correlation with the political field, “namely an increasing politicization of media content and the amplification of the proportions of political communication flows, even of the number of actors involved” (Moraru, p. 120). By accepting and embracing the role of agents of change, the media reflected the harsh confrontation of different positions and the controversial interpretations of the main issues relating to the political horizons of the country. Victor Moraru pursues a critical stance, talking about certain vulnerabilities of

Moldovan journalism, such as servility to the political elites, sensationalism and personalization of politics, a simplistic attitude, schematization in mirroring reality, conceptual scarcity of messages, instead of revealing the essence of phenomena, typical of today's society. Thus, the phenomenon of hyper-personalization of the politician was stimulated by the media, reducing all the complexity of political life to the one-dimensional figures of politicians. The author notes that this hyper-presence of the "new Olympians" and their "canonization", originating from the media, "became overwhelming" in Moldova after 1989 and defined the features that characterized the political and media process in recent years (Moraru, pp. 148-149). By way of comparison, one could quote the British journalist Bernard Ingham, who argues that the Western governments and media live in a permanent and natural state of tension, and even cannibalism. We are increasingly aware of the role of personality in politics, by virtue of the fact that political leaders become symbols of competence/incompetence, good/bad conduct, promise of the future/return to the past, etc., thus contributing to the enhancement of the meaning of political spectacle in a murky political world<sup>2</sup>.

Advocating the use of "operational, relevant and varied information" (Moraru, p. 129), the author's reflections also refer to the quality of evaluation, commentary, and interpretation of facts, events, and attitudes. He argues that nowadays the media is no longer limited to the dissemination of the message, but, on the contrary, the focus shifts towards creation, towards the construction of reality, and "towards the insistent promotion of a specific vision of this reality" (Moraru, p. 132). Elaborating on the relevant analyses of foreign scholars, Victor Moraru proposes a list of indigenous media topics, focusing on aspects of interest to manipulative technologies, such as persuasion and propaganda, symbolization and mythologization, the virtualization of characters and events, blurring their explicit and clear presentation. Following the principles of media logic (sensationalist information, personalization of politics, commercial interests), the author succeeds in elucidating, quite convincingly, the phenomenon of "the entwining of politics and the media" and "the mediatization of politics as a mode of existence" (Moraru, pp. 138-139).

Starting from his focus on monitoring the Moldovan media, the author emphasizes that history has become "a primary component of politics". Based on references to Nicolae Iorga's opinion on the necessity of history for society, to Italian political scientist Gaetano Mosca's view of the teachings of history, and in the spirit of French historian Fernand Braudel's interpretation of total history,

<sup>2</sup> Corina Barbaros, *Political Communication. Constructing Political Spectacle, Public Opinion and Public Agenda* (Iași: Adenium, 2014).



which encompasses the history of events and the history of everyday life, Victor Moraru highlights the media's "natural vocation 'to construct and interpret the immediate history, but also the history of past occurrences'". The explosion of historical issues, accompanied by the interpretation of topics previously viewed as taboo and the shaping of history from a new perspective, is at the forefront of the national press, which is increasingly involved in historical education. The decisive argument for historical continuity is the opinion that if "the teaching of history had as its objective, in the past, the formation and consolidation of a sense of national identity among citizens < ...> today, we should perhaps talk more about European identity and European citizenship" (Moraru, p. 185).

One of the articles in the book is devoted to the issue of migration, an emblematic subject for Moldova, considered the European champion in this respect. The subject is presented through the prism of its reflection in the media. Victor Moraru, who has coordinated several projects in the field of migration and currently supervises the multi-volume collection "Migration: Problems and Opportunities", launched in 2010, has formulated the title of the article in a balanced way, emphasizing not only the problematic aspects, but also the constructive elements. He asserts that the issue of migration "must be explained, regulated, and optimized" (Moraru, p. 139) by means of social mediation and integration. Elaborating on a series of factors that influence and define the current state of this new Odyssey of Moldovan citizens, the author argues for a better use of the media in the dissemination of the subject in the Western press. Highlighting the thought that "migration is almost always a drama (familywise, economic, social, political), it is necessary to conceptualize relevant solutions to optimize this process, to increase opportunities". It is necessary, the author insists, to reduce the invocation of outdated clichés and stereotypes (e.g., illegal immigrants, criminal behavior, etc.) in favor of the principles of coexistence and integration (given the need for foreign workers), based on acceptance of otherness, the viability of dialogue, and intercultural communication. A special role is reserved for the Western press. The author astutely notes that "the latter only deals to a limited extent with the problems of migrants, almost never with their culture, their context of life or their aspirations". Hence the author's conclusion: "The watchword that should accompany "migrant histories" is, first and foremost, "human dignity", regardless of the circumstances in which these histories take place" (Moraru, p. 166).

The author believes that, among the factors that could help migrants to start a new life in a new context, is the practice of religion, which "can become a key to the dynamics and strategies of migrant integration" (Moraru, p. 171). This is especially valid in the case of Moldovan citizens. By fulfilling their social function, churches

could claim the role of “bridges between different cultures”. The commendable activity of dozens of Orthodox parishes in Italy, which preserve the continuity of traditions and customs, as well as the Romanian language, within the community of Moldovan citizens, is a case in point.

Thus, Victor Moraru’s volume succeeds in proposing thoughtful and well-argued answers to the country’s uncertainties and current challenges. The author’s approach is future-oriented, being generated by the powerful and profound changes of values within Moldovan society. The new image of the country, articulated by Victor Moraru, emphasizes Moldova’s increasing regional significance and its democratic aspirations.

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