

Trump and the American Presidency

The news of the victory of Donald Trump in the just concluded presidential elections of the United States of America has left many political pundits and US election observers astounded in its wake. It was seen by many as 'a US *cloned BREXIT*' which in a sense fulfilled one of the several humorous remarks of Donald Trump in that he would pull off "Brexit times 10".

A political neophyte whose presidential ambition was seen as sinisterly from his usual trademark slurry remarks on issues of all sorts ranging from *spats of banning Muslim immigration into the USA*, to calling Mexicans "*rapists*", "*murderers*" and "*criminals*", and pledging as an electoral promise to build a wall along the US-Mexico border—a project *of which he says* would be funded by the Mexicans; his chances were written off even before the conclusion of his party's primaries. Yet after a surprise emergence at the end of the Republican primaries, Trump's presidential hopes were shoved aside as he faced a formidable and more political experienced Democratic Party Candidate in Hillary Clinton.

As the Presidential campaigns of both candidates trudged on, it was unusually besmirched by *character mudslinging* instigated by Donald Trump, instead of the usual policy debate US Presidential electioneering campaigns were noted for. In one of such instances, Trump once said Hillary Clinton 'deserves an award' for co-founding ISIS (The Islamic State). He also once remarked that Hillary has to be jailed for the scandals bothering upon her use of personal servers during her tenure as Secretary of States.

"In fact, in many respects, you know they honour President Obama, Isis is honouring President Obama. He is the founder of Isis. He is the founder of Isis. He's the founder. He founded Isis.

"And I would say the co-founder would be crooked Hillary Clinton. Co-founder. Crooked Hillary Clinton."

"This is the most heinous, the most serious thing that I've ever seen

involving justice in the United States – in the history of the United States.”

“We have a person that has committed crimes that is now running for the presidency.”...Donald Trump

For all his swirling wise cracks and politically incorrect statements, Donald Trump was seen by many as a ‘happenstance joker’ whose humour would be silenced forever at the polls. Yet his followership was astounding as though politically incorrect by candour and statements, he was seen as ‘saying the truth’ or speaking his mind unlike professional politician Hillary who was seen in some circles as a liar by her seeming politically correct statements. Never minding that some of his party men including ex-US presidents disowning him, on this presumptive feel did Trump’s campaign machination soar whilst the politically correct media postulated his Waterloo in a Napoleonic happenstance at the November 8 Polls.

Donald Trump emerged president elect of the USA to the chagrin of the politically correct camp and Democratic party supporters no thanks to his garnering of sufficient electoral college votes though losing the popular votes narrowly to Hillary Clinton.

And while the camp of the political correct world and Democratic Party Faithfuls moans, Donald Trump and an unlikely admirer in Russian President Vladimir Putin, triumph in ecstasy. The world fears the creation of a new world order shattering the current sharp and strong bipolar divide fronted by the USA and Russia at both nodes which Trump is thought to be set to *unorchestrate*. Yet for all Trump’s aggrandized speech to ‘Make America Great Again’, there will be lots of bureaucratic institutional policy bottle necks typical of the US democratic system that would hamper Trump’s electoral manifesto when he assumes presidential office.

A definitive point of note for Trump’s presidency will be the trend of the cornerstone of his foreign policy. While his cosiness with Vladimir Putin

seems to unnerve the acrimonious bipolar trend between the West and Russia through the length of Obama's presidency, he has to cautiously watch his remarks about the NATO alliance, issues bothering on Nuclear and defence deals with Iran, Japan and South Korea; and trade deals between China and the US, not forgetting his rhetoric on immigration.

In all, the Trump presidency will be eventful to watch not forgetting that his excesses could be chequered as soon as in two years' time after the US midterm congressional election. In a case where the Republican party lose majority in both houses of congress, who says impeachment cannot be a weapon?

Of a surety a new order is in the waiting to be defined by the Trump presidency. Such a one which not even Trump's current 75 active lawsuits will impede. Whether in or out of court or in the White House, Trump must govern and greet the waiting world with what he has to offer!



European Union, the Paris terrorist attacks and the refugee crisis

Last night's terrorist attacks in France left an entire country in chaos and the whole world in fear. Official sources say that 128 people were killed and

over 300 injured.

The fact that the seven strikes were coordinated shows that the authors of these horrific events were not refugees. Most probably they were French citizens with Maghreb heritage, radicalized by the Islamic State.

Until now Polish leaders said that they will refuse to accept the migrant and refugee quotas, while France is in a State of Emergency and reinstated its frontier controls. Many voices are talking about a possible EU dissolution.

The terrorist attacks left a lot of people in fear and made the refugees that are wandering on European soil even more vulnerable. Even though many people had said that refugees are leaving their countries because of terrorist attacks like those from last night, a more common opinion is that they could be terrorist and therefore should not be let into European borders.

We are living very interesting times, mostly because of unfortunate matters. The dream that once was the European Union is now turning into a nightmare for those hundreds of thousands who left Syria and Iraq behind in search for a new life.

What is your opinion about the terrorist attacks and how do you think they will affect Europe's refugee policies?

How Romanians can use the empathy revived by The Colectiv tragedy

On Friday night Romania was struck by one of its biggest tragedies in recent memory. During a rock concert at the Colectiv Night Club in Bucharest, more than 400 people, most of them young people or teenagers, were trapped by a fire caused by a pirotehnic show gone wrong. At the time of writing, 31 people are dead, tens more are in a critical condition in Romanian hospitals, others still suffered minor injuries.

The levels of empathy amongst Romanians in the wake of this tragic event are, at least in part, based on the realisation that it could have happened to any of us. It could have been us, our friends or family members that lost their lives. Any of us could decide to go to a club, with the intent of having fun, and not come home. The current generation of young Romanians has this past week found itself faced, for the first time, with terror and death and has reacted wonderfully. They have showed solidarity, respect for human life and love for other people, who in most cases, they do not even know. If there is one positive we can draw from these events it is the manifestation of a widespread respect and empathy for all the beautiful human beings, who shared with us this common and fundamental experience of being human. This is how we honour those we lost in Colectiv on Friday.

Of course, as time goes on, the Colectiv victims will become a tragic memory and for the rest of us the flow of life will continue to chart its winding course. If we are lucky we can ask ourselves what can we learn from this tragedy? Are we capable of harnessing the outpouring of solidarity we have seen this week in order to pass on the empathy imprinted in our hearts and minds as a result of this incident? Or do we grieve a while and eventually return to our usual uninterested selves?

Providing safety for young people in night clubs is just one of Romania's social problems. Does this young generation have the ability, drive and desire to do more for people that are living behind the line of poverty. Will the example of those such as the cleaning lady that died in Colectiv, leaving behind five children who are now orphans, spur us to act? Will we do more to ensure there is a future for those children whose parents are impoverished and can not send them to school? This is just one of the many social problems and responsibilities facing our generation of Romanian youth.

Due to the nature of my studies and my work as a foreign policy journalist, I am naturally drawn to those issues on which we can collectively focus our seemingly revived empathy and solidarity: one of which is the refugee crisis.

Until this unique moment, perceptions among Romanian people of refugees was

mixed at best. Even though many are aware of the Syrian, the Afghan or the Iraqi War and of the emergence of terrorism in the guise of groups such as ISIS, Romanian people largely feared the refugees. This fear took many forms, a fear of the responsibility for feeding them, housing them or more generally what to do with them. Scared by the fact that many fleeing desperate conditions are Muslim and that, in time, they could affect the religious status quo in Romania, a Orthodox country which is among the most pious in the EU. The most prominent fear, one not limited to Romania, is that amongst those human beings searching for a better life, terrorists are hiding, waiting to strike a country that is mostly peaceful.

For those who still harbour such fears, and have suffered as I and others have in the wake of the Colectiv tragedy, I have a message. Actually, it's more of a story. Imagine that somewhere close there is a country similar to 1980's Romania, where people are actively protesting and campaigning to remove a dictator. Then imagine that instead of stepping down, the dictator starts bombing the people. After four years of fighting, some of the rebels become attracted to anyone offering what look like solutions, including the illusions of extremist organizations. Others try to run away as far as they can from the conflict. Where could people who want more rights go? Russia? China? Saudi Arabia? Of course they would be primarily attracted to those prosperous and human rights loving states and transnational entities such as the EU. The EU too, however, has demonstrated its fear of them, especially the Eastern countries in the block which have had their fair share of refugees and migrants in recent history. These refugees stay on the roads, starving, exhausted and followed by the nightmare they left behind in that place they used to call home.

After the events of the past week, can we yet fathom that the refugees currently fleeing Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan have had to suffer a Colectiv type of tragedy on an almost daily basis? Whether such a tragedy as we have experienced in Romania comes in the form of a bomb sent by Assad's tanks, an execution carried out by ISIS or even a military strike by Russia or the United States, all those fleeing to the plains of Europe are victims. Victims of multiple and continuing tragedies like the one Romania suffered last

Friday.

Imagining this, I hope that we, the young people of Romania, can become more conscious of and compassionate about the suffering that these fellow human beings have and are experiencing. I sincerely hope that Romania begins to approach this issue with a kind heart and a clear mind. Whether we listen to Rammstein or Nancy Ajram, if we are Christians, Muslims, Jews or Buddhists, whether we are Romanians, Syrians, Iraqi or Kurds, we all feel pain, we all experience loss, we all love and wish to be loved, we are all human. Humanity must strive to overcome all kinds of terrorism, the first step of this struggle is to win the war against hatred and apathy. We can make a real start by remembering and promoting the sense empathy we as Romanians feel in this painful moment.

The armenian genocide question

In an address to a group of Nazi leaders and Wehrmacht Generals in 1939, the German Führer, Adolf Hitler was reported to have said:

“Who, after all, speaks today about the annihilation of the Armenians.....?”

The *Armenian question* was one of the infamous civilian butcher hallmarks of the First World War. Ever since that inglorious incident, an adequate description begs the question for that incident, as the Turkish government insists it was never genocide; whilst the Armenian government thinks otherwise. In any case, grammatical historical credence *might be* lent to the Turkish government claims, as the word ‘*genocide*’ never existed in grammatical parlance during the First World War.

The word ‘*Genocide*’ was coined by Raphael Lemkin (a Polish-Jew criminal and international law specialist), in 1944. He being a survivor of the Nazi instigated Jewish Holocaust, Lemkin coined the word to describe the Nazi policy of systematic murder and targeted annihilation committed by the German government during the Second World War.

The word '*Genocide*' is a conglomeration of the Greek word '*geno,*' meaning race or tribe and the Latin word '*cide,*' meaning killing.

On December 9, 1948 the United Nations adopted the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of *Genocide*, thus defining *Genocide* as an international crime. Signatory states were obliged to prevent and punish the perpetrators

According to the Convention, genocide is can be insinuated when

- There are mass murders of a target group(s) of people
- There is serious bodily or mental harm to the members of a group
- There is deliberate creation of such living conditions for a group that brings about its complete or partial physical extermination
- There are implementation of measures aimed at preventing birth rates within the group
- There are forcible transfers of children from one group to another

Though long subjugated under Ottoman rule since the Middle Ages, Armenians made up the chunk of the Christian population of Ottoman administered Anatolia and the Caucasus alongside the Greeks. Ever since the Ottoman conquest of Anatolia from the Byzantines and consequent fall of Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) to the Ottomans in 1453, the Ottomans who then assumed the torch bearers of the Islamic Caliphate or Sultanate sought a mutual cohesive governance of its subjugated populations who where majorly distinctively Christian and Muslim by religion. This nevertheless came with some restrictions to the once dominant Christian population as some Churches (e.g Hagia Sophia) were converted to Mosques and the *dhimmi contract* (taxable restrictive protection) was imposed on non-Muslim subjects (Jews and Christians) living within the Ottoman domain.

Following the Crimean war (1853-1856) in which Western European powers (Great Britain and France) sought to contain Russian expansionist aims in the Danube, Caucasus and around the Black Sea, the European powers advocated for the abolition of the *dhimmi contract* on Christians and called for equality of all religious groups in the Ottoman empire in return for their support for

the Ottomans against the Russians. The Russian war effort in itself had a religious clout under the auspices of its expansionist aims. Seen as the protector and custodian of the Christian Orthodox religion (a successor and relic of the Byzantine Empire), the Russians had intent to liberate Christian minorities (most of whom were of the Orthodox faith) from Ottoman rule. This intent seen as *fiat compli* by the Ottomans and Russians fuelled mutual mistrust and ultimately war between both sides during the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878) and World War One (1914-1918). Following initial gains by the Russians against the Ottomans in the Caucasus from Russo-Turkish War and Ottoman loss of territory in the Balkans which forced series of population exchanges of Muslims and Greeks (most of the Muslim population Thrace and the Balkans were forced to migrate into Anatolia whilst Greeks and other Christian minorities in Anatolia moved in the opposite direction); there was a growing simmering mistrust of the Christian population of Anatolia (who at this time were majorly Armenians). It was alluded by the Ottomans that though the Armenians (who lacked a homeland) but granted equality status (though being Christians) under the 'Tanzimat' programme will still be sympathetic to the cause of the Russian enemy who where their religious brethren.

The Armenian question within the Ottoman empire was first lime lighted in a speech by Ottoman Sultan, Abul Hamid II in 1890 where he was referred to have talked about resolving the '*Armenian question*' once and for all:

"I will soon settle those Armenians...."

"I will give them a box on the ear which will make them...relinquish their revolutionary ambitions."

Upon the freedom of the Slavs and Greeks from Ottoman rule in the late 19th century, the Armenians agitated for greater freedom (or possible independence) from Ottoman rule. This resulted in killings targeting the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire during that period. Following the start of the First World War, the Ottomans who allied with the Central powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary) sought to reclaim lost territory especially in the Caucasus from the Russians who were fighting on the side of the Allies

(Great Britain, France and later the United States). Clicking on the hint of the failure of the 1915 Gallipoli campaign of the allies and heavy Russian losses and subsequent capitulation in the hand of the Germans, the Ottomans moved in a sweep to settle old scores with the Russians and other dissident groups within their already crumbling empire in a bid to bring about a *volte face* to the dwindling fortunes of the waning empire.

On April 24, 1915 several hundred Armenian intellectuals and representatives of national elite (mainly in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople) were arrested and later killed. As such, Armenians regard this act as the beginning of the '*Armenian Genocide*'; hereinafter, Armenians worldwide commemorate the '*Armenian Genocide*' on April 24 of every year. In a military onslaught against Russian territory in Caucasus (which also is the Armenian homeland), hundreds of thousands of Armenians and other non-Turkish minorities in East Anatolia (the Caucasus) were deported to '*safe zones*' in the Syrian desert and Mesopotamia in series of forced marches. As a result of this several deaths occurred in wilful murders by the Ottoman army, heat stroke, disease and other resultant deaths. It is estimated that about 1.5million people were deported in this exercise; a chunk of them being Armenian. As such, this forms the basis of the '*Armenian Genocide*' question claims by both parties alongside targeted killings of Armenian Soldiers serving with the Ottoman army at that period (60000 were reported killed). The Turkish government (successor of the Ottoman Empire) claim that not only Armenians were deported in this military exercise though it took place in the Armenian heartland which substantiates the Armenian claims of *genocide*.

After the First World War in 1918, new national borders were drawn by the Allies, and the Ottoman Empire (which was now powered by a group of army officers by the mantra of the 'Young Turks') scavenged for territory to salvage the glories of the Ottoman Empire. Midwifed by Ataturk Kemal, a new nation known as Turkey was born in 1922 from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. With borders redrawn, Anatolia (modern day Turkey) was emptied of its Christian population (Greeks had already moved out in population exchanges in the late 19th century and now Armenians most of whom were deported to their deaths had its survival residue racing across the borders to Russia and other

Countries). Not until 1991 after the collapse of the USSR did Armenia attain sovereignty once again after millennia of subjugation.

A hundred years on from that incident we can still ask:

was the Ottoman-Armenian question genocide?

Every man with knowledge can be a judge in this matter.

Regional Developments in the Battle for Syria

In an unfolding tragic tale of twists and turns, the Syrian conflict has transmuted from that of a solidarity show of support for the Arab Spring in 2011 to that of a continuous conflagrative self destruction perpetrated by a cesspool of several armed opposition factions majorly under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), several Jihadi groups notable among which are the Al Nusra Front and the Islamic State (IS); all of which though disunited on the battle front, are fighting a common cause of overthrowing the government of Bashar al-Assad.

Since 2011, when the conflict started, it was insinuated that the Syrian regime will fall, like that of Tunisia and Egypt within a couple of months. As protests against the government simmered, it was met with brute response from the security forces and that gave birth to the armed opposition mostly made up of disaffected government soldiers under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). With a resolute government not ready to stand down, the scenario turned from that of protest scenes to a full scale conflict.

As world powers (US, UK, France, China and Russia) bickered on resolutions and counter resolutions to resolve the ensuing conflict, their actions and inactions buoyed by an unstable neighbouring Iraq facing a Jihadi insurgency turned the tide of the conflict to that of an unfolding grotesque. Jihadi fighters under the platform of the Islamic State or ISIS and the Al-Nusra

front with a vision of creating an Islamic Caliphate in the entire Middle East launched cross border incursions into Syria. For the Jihadists they had two enemies; the Syrian government and the armed opposition forces. On the long run, the Islamic State (IS) gained much ground and declared a caliphate on conquered territories covering Iraq and Syria.

Haunted by the ripples of past military campaigns in the Middle East notably Iraq, the US and the Western powers though yearning for the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad dithered in active military support for the Syrian Opposition and with the Syrian regime finding active support from Russia, there was no blithe to the aggression of the opposition. As such, the Syrian conflict was left to run its brutal self destructive cause with the hope that the struggle would be resolved on the battle field.

The rise of the Islamic State kitted with sophisticated weaponry captured from the US kitted Iraqi army has changed the face of the conflict. With the capture of large swathes of territory across Iraq and Syria by this group, they seem poised to give a knockout blow to what is left of the regimes in Iraq and Syria and then expanding their conquest beyond. Faced with this threat and brutal executions of hostages by the Islamic state, the US together with a coalition of Western and Arab Countries have begun to take military action, launching airstrikes against IS targets. However, airstrikes alone will not wipe of the capabilities of the Islamic State and whilst the US do have a working relationship with the Iraqi government, the same cannot be said with the Syrian government.

Peace moves have seemed elusive and those arranged in Geneva (Geneva 1 and Geneva 2) between the Syrian opposition and the government ended inconclusively, voiding the wisdom of top diplomats in Koffi Annan and Lakhdar Brahimi.

Lessons learnt from the intrigues of the Arab Spring especially in Libya and the Iraqi story after the US invasion of 2003 have proved that overthrowing strong regimes to the mercies of an uncoordinated opposition don't favour the stability of the State either on the short or long run; therefore, it

might be tragic to note that at this stage of the conflict, the US is still trying to identify 'the moderate armed opposition' to kit with arms in the fight against the Islamic State.

The Syrian conflict at this stage will be best resolved by the use of force against the Islamic State and other extremist groups and political negotiation between the opposition and government. Seeing that the Syrian Opposition does not have control over the activities of the armed opposition (Free Syrian army) and that the armed Opposition in itself do have a concrete command structure, the sustenance of the regime of Bashar al-Assad becomes expedient for the survival and continuity of the Syrian state.

The Syrian people have suffered untold casualties destruction of their homeland and this has had a spiral effect on neighbouring countries. As such, the conflict should be resolved by pragmatic means at this stage forgiving past misdeeds.

Is Nigeria Tearing Itself Apart

After years of Military rule, Nigeria clawed back her path to democratic governance in 1999 and for the first time in her history, there have been three successive democratic transitions without Military intervention. Though marred by electoral irregularities, political assassination and post election violence, the Nigerian democratic model is seen as that which is growing from the nascent stage of teething pains to the part of maturity.

Based on the American Presidential system of government, the Nigerian government is tailored to the Federal System of government with a two term limit of four years each for the executive arm, and an unlimited four year term for the legislative arm. With a skewed Federal system concentrating central power on the executive, the elections for executive posts (Presidential and gubernatorial) are seen as a 'do or die' affair. The matter

is not helped with the juicy pecuniary emolument attached to political posts coupled with the power to issue contracts which is usually a drain pipe to loot public funds; politics is seen as a worthy full time career/business venture.

Another divisive factor used as a political tool is religion and ethnicity. To the North of the Niger/Benue Rivers, the population is predominantly Muslim and unified by the Hausa language; though still ethnically diverse, the influence of the defunct Sokoto Caliphate which ruled the area during pre-colonial times is still felt and that accounts for the unifying language and religion. Nevertheless, there are pockets of highland areas untouched by the Jihad thus having different ethno-religious mix up. Such areas like Jos, Southern Kaduna being religious/cultural islands (mostly Christianity) differing from their predominantly Muslim Hausa/Fulani neighbours.

South of the Niger-Benue trough to the West, the population is predominantly Yoruba and their religious leaning is a near equal balance of Christianity and Islam albeit mixed with a deep affinity for cultural and indigenous belief/bond. To the East of the Niger River, the population is predominantly of the Igbo ethnic stock and the Niger Delta is awash with an agglomeration of several ethnic leanings, though the Ijaw ethnic group is dominant. Christianity is the dominant religion in this part of the country.

Such is the diverse polarity of Nigeria's ethno-religious mix, making the ethnic/religious leaning of any political aspirant a first point of question. As such, major political parties in Nigeria are cognizant of this so if for example a political aspirant is Christian, his/her running mate must be Muslim. If He/she is from the South, the running mate must be from the North. This principle is referred to as zoning and though it is the constitutional agreement of the ruling PDP (People's Democratic Party), such norm is widely accepted in the national political consciousness as politically correct.

This has enhanced the deep mistrust along tribal and religious lines especially betwixt the North and South. The North is seen to be politically dominant having produced 8 of Nigeria's 12 rulers since independence who have

spent a combined 30yrs of 54yrs of independence in power.

Agglomerated by British colonial rule, the fault lines in Nigeria's political make up was evident during the pogrom of the Igbo's in the North after the first coup d'etat in 1966 which led to a 30month civil war. Ever since, there has been no stop to bloodletting in pockets of sporadic ethnoreligious violence in Northern cities of Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi etc each time targeting Christians and Southerners (either Christian or Muslim). It is however sad to note that after such riots, no master minder/perpetrator is brought to book. This has fuelled suspicion and mistrust conjuring insinuations that the government (at those times controlled by Northerners) were behind the violence.

With the advent of democracy in 1999, power shifted to the south as Ex-Military ruler, Gen. Obasanjo won the presidential elections. His advent to power was seen as power balance after 20 contiguous years of Military rule albeit by Northerners. He went on to rule for two terms and made attempts to push for a third term which was thwarted. The North/South ethno religious mistrust continued to fester during his rule as some governors of Northern states sued for sharia law in their domain. With the Presidency powerless to stop the trend, the entrenched mistrust cascaded into riots in Northern Christian enclaves of Jos and its environs.

Aside, ethno-religious violence, Nigeria's peace has been taunted by the rise of militancy. This is a resultant of politicians arming thugs to intimidate their opponents and then abandoning or refusing to mop up arms given to these thugs after elections. These actions fuelled the ferocity and menace of the Niger Delta militants in the Niger Delta and Boko Haram in the North East.

The Niger Delta after a long agitation for resource control has produced the Country's current president in Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and, this has helped to quell the activities of the Militants. However, with elections around the corner and the president intending to run for a second term, there have been associated exacerbated fears in the National polity viz:

1. A prominent Niger Delta militant leader, Asari Dokubo have issued a

threat that the President either wins the election or not return home as the President must exhaust all available term limit.

2. There are fears that elections may not hold in some parts of the North East where Boko Haram's activities are ferocious thus granting illegitimacy to any planned elections.
3. Security fears have made elections to be postponed from February 14th to March 28 with the intention that the army would have recaptured territories occupied by Boko Haram.
4. There are innate fears that the elections might not even hold at all with the premise that: If the army could not contain Boko Haram in the last 6 years, how would they in 6 weeks? This might cause a constitutional crisis if the transition programme is thwarted.
5. The outburst of Militants and opposition leaders threatening war or forming a parallel government casts a shadow of impending violence on the Nation.

Ultimately, the fear is this: If President Jonathan loses at the polls, the Niger Delta militants might begin violence which entails bursting oil pipelines, kidnapping of oil workers all of which will shut down oil production which is the main stay of the economy.

A win for President Jonathan might ignite post election violence in the North and with a delicate security balance unlike 2011; the security forces might have their hands full in that regard.

Every Nigerian knows what the permutations are and in the end the resilient spirit will wear on, but some lives will be lost and life will go on till another political transition period when the same cycle will be repeated.

Moldova`s path to the EU: Myth or

Reality!?

In this paper I would like to present Moldova`s path to the EU and try to respond to the paper`s question: is it a myth or a is it a reality?

In order to respond to this question I will analyse the country`s profile from three relevant perspectives. The first one is from the perspective of Romania, a country tied to Moldova because of territory, history and linguistic heritage. The second one is from Russia`s point of view since it was a territory under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The third one is from EU`s perspective.

Before starting this analysis I would like to make a brief comment in order to describe the current situation of Moldova. I had the opportunity to visit Moldova 2 years ago and I was truly surprised at the diversity of strong and very different political mentalities existing in the country.

Moldova`s history is very complex and sensitive for many people and if I would have to describe people`s mentality I would have to say that they can be divided into three categories: those who consider themselves as being Moldovans, those who consider themselves as being Romanians and lastly those who consider themselves as being Russians. This distinction is especially relevant in connection with the end of the paper. I will conclude with the results of the recent Moldovan parliamentary elections; the votes casted by people are reflections of their identity and in the case of Moldova: their ethnic identity differences.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the paper, firstly I would like to present the friendly relations between Moldova and Romania. To better understand the closeness of the two, I will start with a brief historical introduction. Moldova (Basarabia), was part of Romania untill 1812, when it became part of the Russian empire. The territory was much debated by the European powers at that time. Later on it became again part of Romania in 1918 when the unification was made and Romania became an independent country. But the situation changed in 1940, when Romania lost its territory during Second

World War. After Second World War it became part of the Soviet Union and it gained its independence in 1991 after the Soviet Union collapsed.

In this context it is important to say that currently most Moldovans also have Romanian citizenships, which were given by Romania's president Traian Basescu. An interesting fact about Moldova is the effect of Russian oppression on its language. Because of this oppression the Romanian spoken in Moldova could not develop freely and differs from that spoken in Romania; it is a more archaic form of Romanian. This difference is also expressed in Moldova's constitution, the state language is Moldovan, not Romanian.

Despite its independence Russian is a mandatory subject in Moldovan schools, it is impossible to meet a Moldovan who is not fluent in Russian. Most of them learn Romanian at school, using Romanian textbooks. Romania also supports Moldovan education by granting scholarships to students from Moldova. Looking at such strategic moves it can be said that Romania is investing a lot in Moldova, with the aim of bringing Moldova closer to Europe.

Russia's opinion on this matter is not only quite different but also very relevant. Moldovan has been part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, creating thus a powerful liaison between the two countries and their inhabitants. Moldova lost one of its territories to Russia, Transdnistria. This is an independent territory which is not recognised by the international community, except for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which were both part of Georgia, but became independent in 2008. In turn, the only country recognising the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is the Russian Federation.

Returning to Transdnistria, this territory is a territory financed by Russia. The inhabitants of the territory are pro Russians, people who do not recognise the central government in Chisinau and who refuse to join the Moldovan territory. For these reasons there is an OSCE mission now in Moldova and their mandate is focused on conflict resolution. The dispute in the region is rooted in the conflict that broke out in 1992 between the

Transdniestrian authorities and the central government in Chisinau. There were violent clashes which resulted in several hundred casualties and more than 100 000 displaced persons. In July 1992 a ceasefire was agreed and the parties to the conflict agreed to negotiate a settlement in order to end the conflict. OSCE's mission also includes other activities in the region, such as human rights issues, arms control and improving the rule of law in Moldova, supporting the election process and also developing freedom of expression. OSCE's delegations are monitoring every progress made in the region and even if the situation has improved since the international community's interference still the current situation is hampering Moldova's future European integration

Moldova has already made significant steps in its pro-European journey. I would like to start with EU's mission in Moldova and Ukraine called EUBAM and after that continue with the Association Agreement signed between Moldova' Ukraine' Georgia' with the European Union. EUBAM has its role to conduct an extensive range of activities with civil society and in particular the academic community. They don't control any part of the border. Therefore the role of the mission is to also offer technical advice to their partners in Moldova (border guard, customs services and any other relevant law enforcement agencies both of Moldova and of Ukraine). EUBAM is basically helping Moldova and Ukraine in their fight against corruption at their borders (smuggling drugs, alcohol, etc).

In addition to EUBAM's mission, Moldova took another important step with Ukraine and Georgia [on the 27th of June 2014] they signed the Association Agreement. This is surely a symbolic moment for all three countries. The Association Agreement will deepen economic and political ties with the EU in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Since the EU has expanded, these countries have become closer neighbours, reason for which their stability, security and prosperity affect the EU.

This agreement also includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which is expected to bring various economic benefits for Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Foremost it will give businesses access to the EU's

single market, which is the largest single market in the world. It will create business opportunities and it will bring higher standards of goods, better services and it will also increase competitiveness. Under this agreement the EU will work with these partner countries in order to launch the necessary reforms and aid industries in reaching the required standards.

Looking at these Association Agreements I would have to say that the EU is bringing these countries closer to the European family by helping them grow, develop, make reforms, thus removing them from Russia's sphere. In a couple of years from now I expect these countries signing Accession Treaties with the EU.

After presenting these perspectives I would also like to briefly analyse the results of the parliamentary elections in Moldova, elections which are highly important in the context of Moldova's European future. The Moldovan parliamentary elections have shown two major thinking groups in Moldova, the pro Russians and the pro Europeans. Even so, if all the pro European parties unite they will still have a majority in the Parliament and continue Moldova's path towards the European Union. So to conclude and try to answer to the rhetorical title of the paper Moldova's path to the EU- Myth or Reality, in my opinion it can become a reality. I wish Moldova good luck with its future endeavours on this matter.

Free elections or democracy?

Free elections and democracy should be part of the same story, since it is difficult to imagine one without the other. However, as a result of the latest presidency elections in Romania, I am sensing a rather bizarre change on this matter. The outcome of this vote created a powerful picture, a dangerous one in my opinion, the idea that one vote is more important than the other.

Some 25 years ago people went out to protest against a totalitarian regime, demanding a democratic change. People fought for free and fair elections, for the freedom of speech and thought, for the dream of a better life. The cold war ended with the fall of the iron curtain. But since it was war, there had to be a winner. If you ask the people "Who won this war?", many of them will probably answer "America or the USA". Some will even go further to say "Democracy won". And if you will dig a little deeper in this matter, most of them will come to the conclusion that "The western democracy defeated the eastern communism". I prefer Abraham Lincoln's definition: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." The modern definition of democracy focuses on democracy as a system of government described as a "political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections."

Yet even if we acknowledge this reasoning, it is hard to accept it. Every election will have a winner and a loser. Even so, now one wants to be on the losing side. Starting here and accepting this premise one has to find a convenient explanation. Not wanting to accept that there can be other opinions and that one might have a different point of view, we start to look for an explanation that suits us. These feelings manifest as vices like jealousy, envy, greed, vanity, arrogance or sloth. Nevertheless, there seems to be a bit of all in this particular political matter. After the first Romanian presidential election round on the 2nd of November, the voters went on barricades against each other. The differences of opinion did not escalate in a violent way, but the two sides are far from understanding and respecting each other. Rather than trying to "talk it through", the dialogue was skipped and an aggressive and defamatory discourse emerged. What has initially started under the somewhat democratic motto "if you don't vote, you don't

matter”, soon turned into “if you don’t vote like I do, you are ...something”. The simplistic arguments, “I am smart, so all those who think like me are smart as well” and “who’s not with me, is against me”, led to the one-dimensional conclusion “who’s not with me, is stupid”. A considerable number of campaigns started on TV, in the print media and especially throughout the social media, started offering the answer “why do the others vote for their guy”. Both candidates have launched several populist messages meant to win over the masses, a rather usual jugglery in the political business. But the actual problem, my concern in this matter, is caused by the fact that they went even farther, a lot farther, or at least some of the voters did. It is one thing to criticize your opponent, to even call him a liar, to appeal at one’s national sense (Ponta a true Romanian) /preconceptions (Johannis being the “good” German-Romanian) and it is entirely different when you aggressively disregard the other voters. What might seem at the beginning as a rather innocent anger and frustration can be easily turned into blind hatred. The violent campaign against the “poor and unschooled” voters, the defamation of the “blood sucking pensioner”, the division “between the enlightened Transylvanians and the unmannerly rest of the country” is not only foul, but a danger to the democratic society itself. Because your freedom “ends just where the other man’s nose begins”. All men and women are equal and have equal rights; no one is “equaler”. The idea which nourishes behind these campaigns has little to do with democracy. When YOU know what is best for your peers and you choose to help them by relieving them of their right to vote and to take their own decisions, or you question their ability to be part of the (YOUR) society and you marginalize them as a plague, well my dear companion, YOU have went too far! It is a lot easier to exclude someone for not sharing your point of view, than explaining it to him and accepting, that he is entitled to his own opinion. It is a lot easier to belong to a group, where all have one and the same opinion, than to be an outcast, a free thinker. The elections are and should be “the crown jewels” of democracy, a process which allows all citizens to participate and where none is better or worse than the other. It is one thing to question WHOM you are choosing and it is a whole different thing to questioning WHO is allowed to choose. The 2nd and final Romanian presidential election is two days away. Like in any

healthy democracy Romanians have to make a choice between two candidates and not between free elections and “a democracy”. If free elections lead to civil unrest, there is something wrong with our democracy.

There was a time, not so far ago, when some knew better, what is good for the others. Pastor Martin Niemöller expressed it best:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

The Scottish referendum: a reflection of an imperfect British model

The last is yet to be heard about the resultants of the Scottish Referendum on the question of independence from the United Kingdom. Whilst the United Kingdom survived the scare of a looming threat of an independent Scotland by a vote of 55% to 45%, the ripples generated by the simple act of balloting will continue to reverberate the island of Britain and indeed the wider World in years to come.

“If not us – then who?

If not now – then when?

Friends – we are Scotland’s independence generation.

And our time is now”... Alexander Salmond

For the first time since 1st July 1997 when the Union Jack was lowered at its Far Eastern outpost in Hong Kong, which was the United Kingdom's last colonial outpost, the waning power and influence of the once global affluent 'Great Britain' was brought to bear as a 'coup de grace' was about to be dealt to homeland Britain.

What started as a union of Anglo-Saxons and Normans in what is now called England, ended up enveloping the Welsh in the 13th Century, and, in series of wars and finally in political agreements, the Gaels, Picts and Celts which make up what is now called Scotland were brought into the 'Union' first by the Union of Crowns in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland became King

James I of England following the death of heirless Queen Elizabeth I of England. Thus, the seat of the Scottish Monarchy moved from Holyrood in Edinburgh to Buckingham Palace in London and finally in 1707 after a crippling bankrupting feat Scotland attained in trying to colonize the Isthmus of Panama in the Americas, the Scots looked South of their border to the English for economic salvation; and as such, after series of parliamentary debates, the 'ACT OF UNION' was born 1st May 1707 when England and Scotland came under one political government—effectively uniting the entire Island of Britain under one political and Monarchical Government

ACT OF UNION, 1707

I. That the two Kingdoms of England and Scotland shall upon the First day of May which will be in the year One thousand seven hundred and seven, and forever after, be united into one Kingdom by the name of Great Britain; and that the Ensigns Armorial of the said United Kingdom be such as Her Majesty shall appoint, and the Crosses of St. George and St. Andrew be conjoined in such manner as her Majesty shall think fit, and used in all Flags, Banners, Standards and Ensigns both at Sea and Land.

III. 'That the United Kingdom of Great Britain be represented by One and the same Parliament, to be stiled, the Parliament of Great Britain.'

With such 'Unity' the United Kingdom of Great Britain wittingly sought to

build an Empire thus colonizing about 1/4th of the Earth's population. At the Zenith of this attainment, the British Empire was in the words of George Macartney referred as "this vast empire on which the sun never sets, and whose bounds nature has not yet ascertained."

Over three quarters of North America in what is now known as Canada and the United States of America to patches of land in South America, the West Indies (Caribbean Islands), the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Singapore), Australia and patches of Chinese territory; the 'British were famed as Colonial Masters and Master of the Seas! And not even Africa was left out of the British Colonial zest, for they effectively subjugated the choicest of territorial lands and largest number of peoples under their control in territories now known as Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya (All economic and regional powerhouses) not to talk of the Sudans (North and South), Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, Gambia, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

'the wind of change is blowing through this continent; and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact, we must all accept it as a fact'... Harold Macmillan (British Prime Minister from 1957-1963)

The 20th Century brought a significant 'wind of change' to the British Empire. Actively fighting off two World Wars, the homeland British war economy faced near economic crippling terms and coupled with the signing of 'Atlantic Charter' with the United States which guaranteed the right to self determination of subjugated peoples, the British Empire began to defoliate rapidly for the first time since 1776 when the United States sued for Independence of London.

Starting from the British Isles, the Catholic Irish got Ireland off Westminster's control and then the floodgates of independence opened in British colonies in Asia and Africa culminating with the return of Hong Kong to China –Britain's last colonial outpost in the Far East in 1997.

Coincidentally, 1997 saw the British Labour Party consolidating power in

Westminster and that came with the promise of devolution of powers to the constituent Non-English entities making up the United Kingdom. Ultimately, that set the tone for a series of intrigues that set the stage for this Scottish referendum question;

SHOULD SCOTLAND BECOME AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY?

Whilst the 'No' votes helped to pass a volte-face to the 'Yes' separatist agitation, that simple act of ballot has posed several teasers for the British and indeed other countries of the free world in the following:

In an era of 'International Unionism' as seen in the formation of strong Continental Organizations such as the EU, NATO, AU etc; where smaller individual countries seemingly do not have a voice; is there really a need for emergence of new Nations who will in turn have to vie to join these continental bodies who advocate loose economic and border controls?

Though England has roughly 85% of the UK population and significantly projects the UK's global influence, Scotland holds a significant portion UK's defence capabilities in military industries and the UK's Nuclear Weapon deterrents. What would have become of the UK's military capability in the wake of a Scottish independence?

The UK prides itself as a model of Parliamentary democracy and have exported this to several nation including India (the World's largest democracy), Australia amongst others. The Scottish agitation has once again raised the once forgotten 'West Lothian Question'. If Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (all making up 15% of the UK population) have separate parliaments and administrations independent of Westminster and yet have representatives there to vote on issues relating to England only, what about having a separate English parliament? Is the prided British governance model in any way effective? Isn't it time for the UK to adopt the USA model of a 'Federal system of Government'?

With the ease at reaching a decision for the Scottish referendum, what will become of other separatist agitations in Spain (Catalonia), France (Basque,

Corsica, Catalonia), Moldova (Transnistria), Turkey (Kurdistan) etc, and even other colonial aggregated Countries in Africa where separatist agitations are rife?

For over 400 years, the British have prided themselves in setting the pace in terms of industrial and political revolution and have given the world their language– English Language. With the latest Scottish referendum and issues bordering on it, the British have once again aroused separatist agitation levels around the world. The British model is not perfect after all. Is it?

The resonance of World War I: 1914 and a century after

When the days of rejoicing are over,
When the flags are stowed safely away,
They will dream of another wild 'War to End Wars'
And another wild Armistice day.

But the boys who were killed in the trenches,
Who fought with no rage and no rant,
We left them stretched out on their pallets of mud
Low down with the worm and the ant.

(Robert Graves (1895 – 1985) – British poet and novelist. *Beyond Giving*,
"Armistice Day, 1918")

Just over a hundred years ago, the armies of the World's Great powers were arrayed against each other to do battle in what was latter called 'the great war' or The First World War– The War to end all Wars!

Enticed by a rise in industrialization, the race for sophisticated armament of the day and the penchant for global influence in colonial empires amongst the great powers (Germany, Great Britain, France, Russia and Austria-Hungary); the conflict was sparked by the assassination of Austrian Crown

Prince Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28th June 1914, thus igniting the gun powder in the Balkan Peninsula that ultimately conflagrated Europe and the wider World in a gruesome conflict otherwise called the first World War.

“Our ghosts will wander through Vienna, stroll around the palaces and scare the masters.”..... anonymous Serbian writer

It indeed happened that the World Powers lined themselves in series of infectious alliances that obliged them to go to war even when their respective countries were not directly under attack. And so after the June assassination, and a diplomatic moribund July, War was contiguously declared from the first day of August as Germany declared war On Russia, and on France by 3rd August. Great Britain declared war against Germany on August 4 as Austria-Hungary declared war against Russia on August 5; Serbia against Germany on August 6; Montenegro against Austria-Hungary on August 7 and against Germany on August 12; France and Great Britain against Austria-Hungary on August 10 and on August 12, respectively; Japan against Germany on August 23; Austria-Hungary against Japan on August 25 and against Belgium on August 28.

‘The lamps are going out over all Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.’.....

(Edward Grey (1862 – 1933), British statesman)

Although almost all the belligerent nations were European and the major battle fields were in Europe, the war transcended from being a European one to a global one as the colonial powers moved to seize colonial territory from their enemies. As such, Africans had the War experience as Great Britain fought and seized German colonial territory in West Africa (Togo and Cameroun), East Africa (Tanzania) and South Africa (Namibia); whilst a combined British, French and Japanese effort annexed all German interests in the Far East and South Pacific. With the United States entering the War on the side of the Allies on 6th April 1917 after 3 years of conflict, the War

truly assumed its status as a 'World War'— as it had effectively engaged all the continents.

'In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place.'...

(John McCrae (1872 – 1918), Canadian poet and physician.)

From initial skirmishes at Liege to the serial battles at Mons, Marne, Ypres, Somme, Verdun, Gallipoli, Jutland, Basra, Asiago, Isonzo, Brusilov, Tannenberg and the Masurian lakes countless souls perished in astonishing industrial scale.

'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.'.....

(Laurence Binyon (1869 – 1943) – British poet and art historian; In response to the slaughter of World War I. Poems for the Fallen, "For the Fallen")

The War finally came to an end on the 11th hour of 11th November 1918 with the signing of the Armistice agreement and capitulation of the foremost Central Power belligerent in Germany not after some indelible marks have been imprinted in history by the effect of the War; Viz:

Unlike other Wars before this, any conflict between global powers or their client states will automatically spiral effect in dragging nations across continents to a multi-faceting conflict whose resultant will surpass the initial conflicting terms.

With the Use of Chlorine gas by the belligerents, ammunitions will now be classified as 'conventional' and 'Un conventional' (Weapons of Mass Destruction) weapons. Civilian centres such as Villages, Towns and Cities will now serve as battle grounds thus effectively negating the notion that wars are to be fought at some distant fields. The advent of the bombs, rapid

firing machine guns and chemical weapons meant that thousands of Soldiers could be mowed down in minutes as seen in the battles of Marne and Ypres. Indeed a Millions of souls could perish in seconds after these weapons were improved on much later after that war.

Regardless of the Military might of the belligerent, wars cannot be independently fought without considering attendant and after effects of conflicting interests and ideologies which will ultimately engage non-belligerent nations in subtle or active Warfare.

It's a hundred years spanning ten decades of historical epochs since the First World War was ignited; however, a century on, the world still stands a risk of being dragged to a war of contiguous effect as it was a hundred years ago viz; Like pre-1914, the World's powers are now aligned in seeming loose alliance of East and Western bloc ideology as fronted by Russia and the United States.

As seen in the Balkans in pre-1914 of a perfected disdain for occupying forces, the Nations of the Middle East have taken this stance in open disdain for Western Military presence in their lands. Like 1914, the Middle East is serving a simmering 'Balkan effect' in global politics.

As it was in 1914 when the War was forcefully promulgated upon Africa due to colonial subjugation; though now independent, African Nations will once again be dragged into a conflict involving the Great Powers as their territories will serve as Military bases for these powers. The US already has an 'African Command' AFRICOM bases in Djibouti as the French Military has a ubiquitous presence in almost all its former African colonies. China has so far been only economically present in Africa but one cannot ignore the trade in Chinese and Russian arms by some African countries. They too might come calling for higher military commitment in the event of a conflict.

The resultant of the First World War did not entirely spell doom and gloom for the World as it ensured:

Nationalistic consciousness in colonized territories. That in a sense brought

about the emergence of all Nation States as seen on today's maps.

It brought about the awareness for international cooperation and collaboration amongst the Nations of the World. Though eventually moribund and toothless in effect, the 'League of Nations' formed after the First World War was a model precursor to the United Nations and its numerous under-agencies which has in some ways helped mitigate dire consequences of pertinent global issues.

Like Pre-1914 as seen today, Nations of the World do not foresee a large scale global conflict due to:

- * Economic and social ties and interdependence.

- * Mutually assured destruction due to the sophistication of modern arms.

Nevertheless, we might be fooled into a state of 'false global security' by not taking into account the simmering events of the Israeli-Arab conflict, the wider Middle East conflict from the Arab spring, the Ukrainian tensions and pockets of conflicts around Africa—all of which ironically were creations from the aftermath of the First World War as seen in:

The Arab revolt against Ottoman rule in 1916

The Balfour declaration of 1917 announcing Jewish rights to Palestine

The emergence of a bipolar world with from the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917

The awakening of Nationalism, creation of borders by colonial powers with no respect for historical ties and cultures of peoples of the dominated lands as seen in Africa and the Middle East (The Sykes and Picot agreement). As such, agitations for a redrawing of National 'colonial borders' could simmer into some sort of global conflict.

'Six million young men lie in premature graves, and four old men sit in Paris partitioning the earth.'...

(Anonymous)

Referral to the Paris Peace Conference following World War I, attended by the leaders of France, Britain, Italy, and the United States.

Yes peace was proclaimed in 1918 after the War that was said to end all Wars and a treaty was signed in Versailles in 1919. But several wars involving Great powers as a resultant of their actions and deeds from the aftermath of the First World War have been fought. There was even a Second World War! And today several global conflicts threatening to drag numerous Nations to battle looms. Is 2014 not just a Hundred years back?

'This is not peace: it is an armistice for twenty years.'.....

(Ferdinand Foch (1851 – 1929); French soldier, 1919. Remark at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles)