

**Secularism in Republic of Moldova - Politics of Religion or Religious Politics:
Where do we Draw the Boundaries?**

Sergiu Panainte

Abstract

This paper focuses on the relationship between church and state in the Republic of Moldova, and particularly on the increasingly-blurred boundaries between the two. Given the fact that the ruling party is Communist, it seems even more inconceivable that a "union" between state and church could even be possible. The research presented here answers what is behind this sudden alliance of state and church, and which party benefits from relationship. In answering this, this paper draws on secularism theory, particularly the reasons this theory offers for why we still have modern or modernizing states where the institutions of church and state are intermixed. The findings show that the alliance between state and church in Moldova was possible after the government lost the case at the European Court of Human Rights concerning the issue of recognizing and registering the Bessarabian Orthodox Church, which was in conflict with Moldovan Orthodox Church (MOC). This event fostered an alliance between MOC and the ruling Communist party, and as a result the MOC became another tool in the political arsenal of the governing party used to win the support of the electorate by any possible means.

Key words: church-state relations, secularism, Bessarabian Metropolitanate, transition.