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## IMPACTUL RĂZBOIULUI DIN UCRAINA ASUPRA DEZVOLTĂRII DEMOCRATICE A REPUBLICII MOLDOVA

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*Subiectul „intervenției militare a Federației Ruse în Ucraina” este, probabil, unul dintre cele mai dezbătute din ultima jumătate de an, iar consecințele acesteia vor avea, fără îndoială, o influență pe termen mediu și de lungă durată pentru teatrele regionale din Europa, rolurile UE și NATO, conflictele ”înghețate” pe teritoriile fostelor republici sovietice, pentru economia mondială, măsura în care SUA se vor angaja în problemele de securitate ale Europei. În ciuda celor menționate, agresiunea militară a Federației Ruse asupra Ucrainei a avut și ea efecte incerte, modificând într-un fel relațiile radicale dintre Bruxelles și Moscova și a atras atenția statelor UE asupra situației din regiune, jucând un rol important în procesul de obținere a statutului de candidat la aderarea Republicii Moldova la Uniunea Europeană.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** democrație, scenarii de război, intervenție militară, refugiați, neutralitate.

## THE IMPACT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE ON THE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

*The subject of the «military intervention of the Russian Federation in Ukraine» is possibly one of the most discussed topics over the last half-year, and its consequences will undoubtedly have medium- and long-term consequences for regional theatres in Europe, the roles of the EU and NATO, frozen conflicts in the territories of the former Soviet states, the world economy, the extent to which the US will engage in Europe's security issues. Despite the above, the military aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine also had uncertain effects, changing in a way the radical relations between Brussels and Moscow and drew the attention of the EU states to the situation in the region, playing an important role in the process of obtaining the status of candidate for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union.*

**Keywords:** democracy, war scenarios, military intervention, refugees, neutrality.

## **.L'IMPACT DE LA GUERRE EN UKRAINE SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DÉMOCRATIQUE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA**

*Le sujet «intervention militaire de la Fédération de Russie en Ukraine» est probablement l'un des sujets les plus débattus du dernier semestre, et ses conséquences auront sans aucun doute une influence à moyen et long terme sur les théâtres régionaux en Europe, les rôles de l'UE et de l'OTAN, les conflits «gelés» sur les territoires des anciennes républiques soviétiques, pour l'économie mondiale, la mesure dans laquelle les États-Unis s'engageront dans les problèmes de sécurité de l'Europe. Malgré ce qui précède, l'agression militaire de la Fédération de Russie contre l'Ukraine a également eu des effets incertains, modifiant d'une certaine manière les relations radicales entre Bruxelles et Moscou et attirant l'attention des États de l'UE sur la situation dans la région, jouant un rôle important dans le processus d'obtention du statut de candidat à l'adhésion de la République de Moldova à l'Union Européenne.*

**Mots-clés:** *démocratie, scénarios de guerre, intervention militaire, réfugiés, neutralité.*

## **ВЛИЯНИЕ ВОЙНЫ В УКРАИНЕ НА ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ РЕСПУБЛИКИ МОЛДОВА**

*Тема «военной интервенции Российской Федерации в Украину», возможно, является одной из самых обсуждаемых за последние месяцы, а ее последствия, несомненно, будут иметь среднесрочное и долгосрочное влияние для региональных театров Европы, роли ЕС и НАТО, на замороженные конфликты на территориях бывших советских республик, на мировую экономику и степень участия США в вопросах безопасности Европы. Несмотря на вышеизложенное, военная агрессия Российской Федерации против Украины также имела неоднозначные последствия, радикально изменив отношения между Брюсселем и Москвой и привлекая внимание государств ЕС к ситуации в регионе, сыграв важную роль в процессе получения Республикой Молдова статуса кандидата на вступление в Европейский Союз.*

**Ключевые слова:** *демократия, сценарии войны, военное вмешательство, беженцы, нейтралитет.*

### **Introduction**

The subject of the “military intervention of the Russian Federation in Ukraine” is possibly one of the most discussed topics during the last half of the year, and its consequences will undoubtedly have medium and long-term consequences for regional theatres in Europe, the roles of the EU and NATO, the frozen conflicts [1] on the territories of the former Soviet states, the world economy, the extent to which the US will engage in security issues of Europe. On the one hand, we are witnessing the formation of a New World order, in which the Russian Federation seeks to reaffirm itself as a Great Power, with exclusive geopolitical and geostrategic rights over the territories of the post-Soviet states, ignoring the current international order. On the other hand, this situation contributes to the initiation of dialog between the EU institutions in order to develop a

common security policy complementary to NATO, which was long neglected.

Various experts and analysts examine several scenarios of the war in Ukraine, all reflecting an impact on European security in the medium and long term [2].

The analysis of the situation on the battlefield in Ukraine reflects that Russian forces have taken control of the regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporozhye and Herson, as well as some territories in the region of Nikolaev. Fighting continues, Ukrainian counteroffensive operations fail, and the Russian army slowly advances.

### **The context of the war in Ukraine on the evolution of democracy in the Republic of Moldova**

Despite the military intervention in Ukraine, the withdrawal of Western companies from the Russian

market and the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU, the Russian economy has shown surprising resilience and prosperity, with some exceptions. Some losses are noted, but the operative way to comply with the new requirements shows a high degree of mobility and professionalism from the current leadership in Russia.

In the current situation, the scenario of a long-term war with the breakup of Ukraine seems to be the most real, being determined by the formal and delayed support given to Ukraine by the Western states, characterized as insufficient to defeat the Russian military aggression. None of the scenarios that have been reported so far (freezing the conflict, federalization, Western armament and escalation of military confrontation, increased autonomy granted to separatists or recognition of the “people’s Republics” Donetsk and Luhansk) will be able to restore the situation before the crisis.

In the future, continued fighting will contribute to increased destruction and casualties. The arms deliveries would involve expanding the area of confrontation in Ukraine, further weakening the European economy and creating new premises for destabilizing regional security in the Black Sea area. On the other hand, the political-diplomatic negotiations will gradually legitimize the “separatist side”, which essentially means the loss of Kiev’s political, administrative and economic control over the occupied territories.

In the long run, Western states will be affected of financing the war and will try to seek through various possibilities to get Ukraine to sit down at the negotiating table, in order to identify the possibilities for improving the conflict. Otherwise, there is the risk of taxing the ruling parties in the Western states and replacing them, obviously through democratic methods, through political parties, which will stake on returning to the situation before the war in Ukraine [5].

In most of the scenarios presented, Ukraine remains the only loser, the Russian Federation will feel the effect of the trade-economic and social-humanitarian sanctions imposed until the moment when the Western states decide to restore frozen relations.

Overall, the EU’s attempts to coordinate the invasion with allies in the UN, the OSCE, NATO and the G7, as well as to impose individual and economic sanctions, have not resulted in the desired effect. At the European level, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has further affected European energy markets, causing further increases in fuel, energy and food prices, which in turn have generated a set of economic problems and challenges to regional security. As far as the Republic of Moldova is concerned, the Moldovan authorities have encountered several negative effects, among the most relevant being:

- major economic problems related to the cessation of trade links with the eastern market;

- ensuring / rethinking import logistics (imports were mainly ensured through the port of Odessa, and the rethinking of the logistics chain led to increased transport costs, which was later reflected on the final price);

- inflation up to 35%, which has led to higher prices for all imported products;

- challenges to the energy sector, which made it possible to urgently identify new possibilities for gas supply to the population;

- the flow of refugees from Ukraine (over 90 thousand Ukrainians took refuge in the Republic of Moldova);

- uncertainties regarding the possible evolutions regarding the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, if the Russian army had managed to advance toward the city of Odessa, which could immediately change the security situation of the Republic of Moldova dramatically.

Moldova is almost entirely dependent on the Russian Federation for its supply of natural gas and, indirectly, for a large proportion of its electricity supply. Moldova Gaz – 50% of which is owned by Gazprom and 13.4% by the de facto Transnistrian administration – imports approximately 2.9 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas. Out of these, 1.3bcm is consumed by right-bank Moldova for heating purposes and 1.6bcm is consumed on the left bank of the Dniester by Transnistrian heavy industry and the ‘Moldavskaya GRES’ power station (MGRES) power plant in Kuchurgan, which provides around 70% of the electricity for right-bank Moldova as well. Over the years Transnistria has racked up an astronomical debt of 7 billion USD, but right-bank Moldova also owes Gazprom around 700 million USD [6].

Despite the above, the Russian military aggression on Ukraine has also had uncertain effects, radically changing relations between Brussels and Moscow and drawing the attention of the EU states to the situation in the region, playing an important role in the process of obtaining the status of candidate for the accession of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the European Union. Today, the optics of these relations, dictated especially by the reconfiguration of the foreign policy vision toward Moscow among the most important European chancelleries, speaks to us about the declared desire of the European Union to break ties with the Russian Federation on the commercial and energy dimension, and to support states such as the Republic of Moldova in the process of accession to the EU institutions, which also implies breaking them from the area of direct influence of Russia. Forecasts for the Republic of Moldova are not happy, but the situation can advance in a positive direction, in case of implementation of robust and neutral internal and external policies.

A possible escalation of military actions from Ukraine to the border with the Republic of Moldova

could generate serious consequences not only for the Moldovan economy, but also for the territorial integrity of the Moldovan state. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that “*Russia will do everything possible to defend the interests of the Russian-speaking population of Moldova*” and Russian General Rustam Minnekaev, deputy commander of Russia’s central military district [3]. Regarding the intention of the Russian state to create a land corridor to Transnistria, it is worth examining with utmost caution, on the grounds that they contradict the commitments of the Russian side to solve the Transnistrian problem, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, Article 5 of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation of 19 November 2001 states that “*each of the High Contracting Parties shall refrain from any action which would prejudice the other High Contracting Party’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The parties condemn separatism in all its forms of manifestation and pledge not to support separatist movements.*” The existence of bilateral or multilateral commitments between Russia and Ukraine did not rule out the possibility of a Russian military invasion of Ukraine in 2014 on the grounds that “*Ukraine was governed by neo-Nazis who persecuted the Russian ethnic minority*” and on February 24, 2022 for “*demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine*”.

Thus, a neglect of the interests of the Russian Federation in the region could affect the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. The future of the Republic of Moldova depends on the developments of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its capacities to balance and develop constructive and pragmatic diplomatic relations with all external factors, which show interest in the Black Sea Basin region.

If the Republic of Moldova manages *to play cards well*, it could manage to attract numerous

opportunities in the next period from all sides. By assuming the role of a neutral state, Moldova could become a solid bridge for the foreign business environment, interested in maintaining and developing the commercial-economic relations between Russia and the EU member states, following the model of relations between Russia – Hungary or Russia – Turkey [2].

At the political level, it is worth mentioning that the current ruling parties have an absolute majority following the parliamentary elections of 2021 and can ensure political stability until 2025, as well as the implementation of long-awaited deep reforms. Among the Baltic countries, the introduction of warships in the Black Sea, the increase in military applications, and American soldiers returned to NATO borders. We are pursuing a gradual transition from the soft to the difficult security approach.

In conclusion, we can emphasize that the future security strategy must aim at bringing the Republic of Moldova directly into the infrastructure of the European security system, which, in turn, is to be restructured in a complex way following the events in Ukraine. As an element of a new strategic orientation, the gradual activation of Chisinau can be used to obtain new international arrangements that guarantee the neutrality of the country or provide security guarantees, while maintaining the country's pro-European course, diplomatic activism in the current amorphous formats, such as 5+2, OSCE, OSCE, The UN, etc. This served as a reminder that one of Europe's longest protracted conflicts is by no means entirely 'frozen', that there are still Russian troops stationed on Moldova's territory and that Transnistria poses a security risk to both Moldova and Ukraine [1]. But when Russia's troops were pushed back from Mykolaiv to Kherson and a Ukrainian official even openly began to speculate that Ukraine might help Moldova take back Transnistria, the mood in Transnistria began to shift. While some

factions continued to staunchly support Moscow, others quietly began adjusting their calculations. This was further affected by both Moldova's and Ukraine's successful bids for EU candidacy status, which means Transnistria is now wedged between two EU candidate countries. The war between two of the official mediators in the conflict-settlement process known as the '5+2' also effectively put an end to that process, although nobody has yet formulated an alternative.<sup>1</sup>

Strategies to maintain the status quo no longer work, as the signing of Association agreements with the EU by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia has ruined the fragile balance in the region. Even if, for now, the activation of existing formats seems impossible, in the near future some windows of opportunity may appear, given the worsening regional situation, the economic crisis that will dramatically influence the economies of Russia, Ukraine and, as a result, the Republic of Moldova. It is clear that both the war in Ukraine and the subsequent decision of the EU to grant Moldova candidacy status have sent shockwaves through Chişinău, Comrat and Tiraspol. These two events have restored the previously fading geopolitical dimension in Moldovan domestic politics. The EU and Russia now both have a heightened interest in Moldova, while Ukraine itself also expects support for its Western neighbour. As a result, Moldova's wiggle room to remain neutral is shrinking. Ultimately, everything does depend on how the war in Ukraine plays out; if Russian troops manage to capture Odesa and link up with Transnistria, Moldova's situation will be dramatically different compared to a stalemate or even a Russian defeat. This report operates from the assumption that the trend of the last four months will

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<sup>1</sup> The 5+2 format derives its somewhat confusing name from the five participants (Chisinau and Tiraspol as the 'sides', and Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE as 'mediators'), with the EU and the United States as 'observers'.

continue and that Russian troops will not make any more significant territorial gains along Ukraine's south-western coast.

A dialog with the private sector could revitalize the Moldovan economy and identify new development directions in the context of regional and global dynamics. The restoration of traditional relations with Russia is vital for Moldova, as long as we depend on Russian energy resources. A possible worsening of the situation in the field of gas supply will inevitably generate the dissatisfaction of the final consumers in the Republic of Moldova. The effect of the price increases has already been felt in some European capitals. In early September 2022, in Prague and Paris, mass protests took place with the participation of approx. 70,000 people protested against the country's leadership because of existing social problems. Opinion polls conducted by "Die Welt" magazine shows that the number of those who voted in favour of the cancellation of the sanctions of the Russian Federation has reached 40%. The current situation indicates the for adequate information and communication capacities. These capabilities include both the tools for obtaining the quality of information and good management of counterintelligence, as well as the tools used for appropriate communication within the national security sector and for analysing the information used for political decision-making. The EU is already active in the media in Moldova, for example, through support for mass media and projects to improve media literacy of Moldovan citizens. It strives to counter disinformation in the EaP, including in Moldova, through the EUvsDisinfo project of its East StratCom Task Force [4]. In response to the war in Ukraine, the EU has also adopted crisis response measures to enhance cyber security and shield the country from disinformation.

A reset of the IT system in accordance with the standards and practices used in the EU will allow a

better orientation of the Republic of Moldova in the current security environment.

The vulnerabilities of strategic planning acts are among the typical weaknesses of strategic planning documents produced over the past 25 years, the following three being:

1. Excessive focus on growth. This approach has led to replacing national development with economic growth, assuming that the effects of economic growth will spread throughout society. In this context, man has been seen as a resource for accelerating economic growth and not as the main beneficiary of economic growth that is sustainable in the consumption of natural resources, including socially and geographically and equally equitable in its impact on future generations. Even in strategies where the objectives of economic growth have been complemented by those of poverty reduction, poverty reduction has been addressed more in a purely monetary way.

2. Arbitrary determination of development priorities. In many cases, the development priorities embedded in the development documents have been a reflection of the balance of formal and informal powers, institutional influences, or the need to align national policies with some current financial opportunities, rather than a result of conclusive analyses and understanding of the theory of change. As a result, priorities have often been formulated in a «dehumanized» manner (such as business development), with a strong focus on the development of the technical system and infrastructure (road and energy network development) and without showing how, in practical terms, the most disadvantaged people in society would have benefited from this progress.

3. Limited quality of data and indicators. The data used in development planning did not always provide sufficient details on the phenomena under consideration, including due to limited disaggregation.

The monitoring indicators did not always have a direct link to the problem addressed and/or did not have a constant presence in public statistical activity and sociological measurements. The objectives have often been arbitrarily set, without a clear link to the extent of the planned intervention and the available resources.

At the same time, the causes of failures are of a different nature. To a much greater extent, the impact of strategic planning documents has been limited by the overall quality of the policy framework, the institutional environment, the administrative processes and the bureaucratic routines in which strategic planning documents have been integrated. In particular:

1. Development strategies have not been successfully integrated into the core of administrative processes. Given that ownership of strategic planning documents is often limited, national policy planning and monitoring authorities have perceived reporting and monitoring of these documents as foreign elements that absorb their resources and time.

2. The uncertain role attributed to national development strategies in the general policy framework. The hierarchical relationship of national strategic planning documents with those at the level of the economic sector, public service, development region or district/city has not been clearly defined and maintained. Crucially, the link between national, regional and local policies has been very weak.

3. General shortage of financial resources. Adequate financial resources for financing development priorities have not always been provided, as well as links between strategic planning documents and national public budget components have been too weak. The transition to program-based budgetary planning is still far from complete. The problem of weak links between declared policies and the budget has been exacerbated by difficulties in transparently allocating resources to competing priorities.

4. General human resources deficit in public administration. Linked to a certain extent to the lack of financial resources, but also to the lack of motivating mechanisms for promoting and advancing career, the lack of human resources avoided institutional memory in relation to strategic planning documents, and the continuous flow of staff led to the loss of links between institutions and planning documents.

5. General weakness of the monitoring and evaluation framework. Few strategic planning documents have benefited from constant monitoring and effective mid- and end-term assessments. One of the weakest elements in this chain was the Parliament, which did not actually exercise its role of control and supervision over the executive.

6. Impairment of the relevance of strategic planning. Planning documents that aim at long horizons and cover several electoral cycles inevitably loses relevance as new development realities materialize and the government changes. Reviving them means updating the provisions/priorities and adapting to new risks and opportunities.

The weakness of the monitoring and strategic evaluation framework has made this impossible in the Republic of Moldova. The current problem is the war in Ukraine and the threats to the security of the Republic of Moldova and the European one.

One of the worst scenarios for the Republic of Moldova, as a result of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, would be the invasion of the territory on the right bank of the Dniester. Once Russia has brutally violated international law and law, by military attack on Ukraine nothing could prevent them from violating the same international law in the case of the Republic of Moldova.

There would be a lot of pretexts, from a military provocation in Transnistria to an urgent call by an invented committee of Russian citizens living in the Republic of Moldova, to defend their rights violated by the so-called Romanian nationalists. The war in

Ukraine has first and foremost exposed Moldovan political and domestic vulnerabilities [7, p. 8-9]. While the Gavrilița government has nominally stuck to Moldova's constitutional position of neutrality and understandably tried to stay out of the war, it has strong sympathies for Ukraine's government and is under pressure to help Kyiv and align with EU foreign policy – including on sanctions. As a result, it faces difficulties in its complex relationship with Moscow, which could make use of several of Moldova's longstanding vulnerabilities to pressure the government – or even try to topple it, if it deems it advantageous or necessary. First and foremost, among these vulnerabilities is Moldova's double reliance on Russian energy: directly through its dependency on Russian gas for heating, and indirectly through its imports of cheap electricity from Transnistria.

Another equally bad scenario would be the implementation of the Novorossiia project, in which separatist Transnistria would join Ukrainian territory occupied by Russian military forces. Under these circumstances, imposing a kind of Kozac memorandum on Chisinau as a solution to the Transnistrian conflict would be only a short-term problem and without the right of appeal [8].

In the scenario of avoiding the military conflict and resorting to the diplomatic solution, the Republic of Moldova risks becoming part of the bonus obtained by Russia following the compromise between the negotiating parties. Putin has made clear his priorities by calling for control over historic Russia. Finland, Poland, the Baltic republics were also incorporated into the Tatar Empire, but by promoting separate national identity policies, these countries gained the right to separate from historical Russia. Instead, the Republic of Moldova, promoting at state policy level the Moldovan identity different from the Romanian one, inextricably linked to the imperial practices of alienating Moldovans east of the Prut from the entire

area of its national becoming, remains captive to the Russian world and the Russian geopolitical area. Nor is the firm attachment to the idea of European integration of the Republic of Moldova, [7] in the absence of a clear prospect of EU membership, a guarantee of its separation from historical Russia and Moscow's revisionist claims. Such a guarantee can only be the official position of the Republic of Moldova in the region in terms of its membership in the Romanian historical, cultural and identity space, by definition different from the Russian one. Only such an approach by the Moldovan government to the natural place of the Republic of Moldova in the European Civilization Concert would offer opportunities to resist the discussion table in the face of Moscow's geopolitical revisionism.

### **Conclusions**

The events in Ukraine and the deep crisis reflect the weak position or even the dissolution of the entire European security system.

Broadly speaking, today's European security architecture is based on three pillars:

1. NATO, as a collective defence platform, which maintains at the same time the role of the US in Europe;
2. The European Union as a structure ensuring political and economic stability;
3. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which must act as a political and security forum.

The crisis of the ideology of “common spaces” would lead to the blocking of the “Lisbon greater Europe” model in Vladivostok since the end of the Cold War, the disadvantage of the relations between the main geopolitical actors was the worst, which led to the disappearance of the common platforms of discussions (G8, NATO-Russia Council, etc.), and the communication between the parties turned into a «dialog between the two sides with the deaf».



We are witnessing the collision of the two major integration projects in Europe - the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union - which was stimulated by the improvisation of the ideology «either or» at the expense of the ideology «and» in the region.

Russia has made it clear that it is capable of taking strategic measures to radically change the rules of the game in the region. Russia introduces troops to the region called Novorossiia and strengthens its military capabilities in other areas (e.g. Transnistria). At the same time, NATO is beginning to patrol NATO airspace between the Baltic countries, the introduction of warships in the Black Sea, the increase in the number of military applications, and American soldiers have returned to NATO's borders. We are pursuing a gradual transition from the soft to the difficult security approach.

In conclusion, we can emphasize that the future security strategy must aim at bringing the Republic of Moldova directly into the infrastructure of the European security system, which, in turn, is to be restructured in a complex way following the events in Ukraine.

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