

The Newsletter is based on the radio programme broadcast on December 6th, 2014, produced by the Foreign Policy Association of Moldova in partnership with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The programme is broadcast on the Radio Moldova public channel and on the Vocea Basarabiei Radio. The programme is part of the FES/APE "Foreign Policy Dialogues" Project. The content can be reproduced by mentioning the source.

NEWSLETTER

MONTHLY BULLETIN • DECEMBER 2014 • NR.9 (103)

Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

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TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

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- 2.** **Victor Chirilă**, executive director of the Foreign Policy Association: This is a bitter victory - we are not happy with the quality of the elected politicians but had no other choice
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Last period has been marked by a series of important events in the Republic of Moldova.



Moldovan parliamentary elections from November 30th were won by the pro-European coalition parties – the Liberal Democratic Party (23 seats), the Democratic Party (19 seats) and the Liberal Party (13 seats). The three parties have announced their intention to form an alliance which will have a majority of 55 seats out of 101 in the Parliament. The opposition will be formed by the Socialist Party led by Igor Dodon, with 25 seats, and the Communist Party, led by Vladimir Voronin, who has halved its presence in the new parliament, obtaining only 21 seats.



The elections were deemed free and fair by international observers. The OSCE monitoring mission concluded that the elections were generally well-organized, but the campaign was influenced by geopolitical topics. The Constitutional Court is going to validate the election results and the parliamentary mandates in the near future. The opposition parties have questioned the fairness of elections and demanded for early elections.



Russia renounces the South Stream project. The Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Moscow cannot continue the project without support from the EU and Bulgaria's permission. Russia could build a pipeline on the border between Turkey and Greece to deliver gas to Europe.



Verkhovna Rada in Kiev voted on December 2nd for the new executive. Among the 19 ministers there are three foreign citizens who have received the same day the citizenship of Ukraine through a presidential decree signed by Petro Poroshenko. The Georgian Aleksandr Kvitashvili became Minister of Health, the Lithuanian Aivaras Abramavicius – Minister of Economy and the American Natalia Iaresiko – Minister of Finance. In result of the recent parliamentary elections, over 70 percent of the MPs of the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada are pro-European.

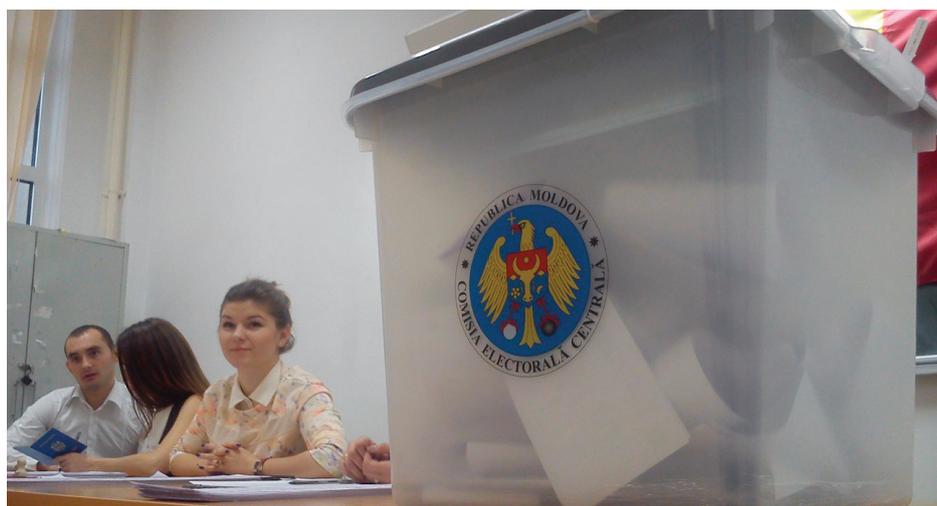


The annual Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, held on the December 4th -5th in Basel, Switzerland, adopted a statement on the need for progress in resolving the Transnistrian conflict. The declaration encourages a systematic dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol, as well as within the 5 + 2 format, in building confidence and the negotiations over the three baskets of issues - social, economic and political. It urges the parties to refrain from actions that could destabilize the situation in the region.



The German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in an interview to the "Die Welt" on Sunday that Russia is trying to destabilize the situation in Eastern Europe. "Our Eastern neighbors - Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine - have taken a sovereign decision to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. And it is to these three countries that Russia creates problems," said Angela Merkel. On November 18th, the German Chancellor addressed the issue of Moldova in her phone conversation with the new president of Romania, Klaus Johannis. Congratulating him on the occasion of his victory in the presidential elections, Angela Merkel appreciated as very important the collaboration between Bucharest and Chisinau in support of Moldova's European course.

Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova – a pro-European vote and need for change



Moldovan parliamentary elections held on November 30th on a strong geopolitical background, have brought five parties in the new Parliament. The elections surprise was the high score of the Socialist Party, which in the polls was placed at the threshold limit. The socialists who had an open pro-Russian campaign in

the elections obtained the biggest number of seats in the parliament - 25. The communist party has almost halved its score compare to the previous elections, obtaining only 21 seats. After the announcement of the coalition by the pro-European parties, the Socialist and Communist Parties will form the opposition in the new parliament.

The government will be represented by the Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM), with 23 seats, the Democratic Party (PDM) with 19 seats, and the Liberal Party (PL) with 13 seats. The alliance formed by the three parties will have a majority in the next Parliament of 55 seats out of 101.

Right after the elections, the European Commission welcomed through a statement the good organization of the parliamentary elections in Moldova and expressed hope that a new functioning government and a constructive opposition will be set up soon. "Rapid reforms in key areas will be fundamental to the political association and economic integration of Moldova in the EU," the statement said.

Reactions came also from the US State Department. The institution spokeswoman, Marie Harf, described the elections as "an important milestone on the path toward democracy" and urged the politicians in Moldova to form a new government as soon as possible in order to "fight against corruption, promote reforms and find a comprehensive and

peaceful solution to the Transnistrian conflict."

The recently elected Romanian president Klaus Johannis, who had visited Chisinau during the last day of the election campaign, has welcomed the election results with a strong pro-European message. Johannis believes that the elections in Moldova have made it clear that "the electorate wants a reformist government, determined to continue the modernization effort of the Republic of Moldova in the European sense". On the other hand, Russia had no official reaction to the results of the parliamentary elections. Reactions and comments have come through mass media. Some publications with the headline "Russia lost Moldova" commented that the only way to recover Moldova is through the Transnistrian region. Depending on the circumstances and interests of Moscow, the region can either destabilize the situation or make an attempt to solve the Transnistrian problem by means of including the pro-Russian voters in the democratic space of the Republic of Moldova, which would tip the balance

toward the eastern option in the next elections.

Negotiations for a new government of the three coalition parties— PLDM, PD and PL - started only on Friday, nearly one week after the elections. The civil society warns these parties to put aside personal and group interests and attract new professional people in the government.

In an appeal of the civil society, several NGOs demanded that the negotiations be transparent and the documents of the new pro-European coalition be made public. At the same time, they urged that the positions that by their nature should not involve political loyalty but professionalism—the prosecutor general, judges and the defense minister— should not be part of the negotiations. The civil society representatives demanded also from the new coalition to assume priorities in order to ensure the European course of the country, intensify the reform efforts, particularly the judicial reform, fight against corruption and ensuring the functioning of the National Integrity Commission.

Sergiu Ostaf: We need an intelligent support from the development partners which would not preserve certain systems but support the agents of change

The experts point out that the style of governance adopted in the last four years is unacceptable and was about to lead to failure of the pro-European partries. The director of the Resource Center for Human Rights (CREDO), Sergiu Ostaf, is of the opinion that the right thing to do now is to promote new people instead of the politicians who have not delivered in the last four years.

■ **Lina Grâu:** What are the main conclusions of these elections?

■ **Sergiu Ostaf:** There are several conclusions to mention. The first is about the voters' turnout. In 2014, the voter turnout decreased by 10 percent compared to the 2010 elections. This



makes about 250-300 thousand people. Why did this happen? I believe that some of those who didn't vote were either unhappy with the political competitors or the election campaign was not attractive to them.

Secondly, if we look at the absolute number of votes for the PLDM, PDM and PL, it fell by at least 100-150 thousand, which makes about 7-8 percent of the population. We have witnessed a redistribution of the electorate preferences in favor of populist and rather radical options. For example, compared to 2010, when 10-11 thousand ballots were spoiled, this time almost 70 thousand ballots have been spoiled. Most of them could have gone to Renato Usatîi. Another

part of the electorate shifted to the Socialist leader, Igor Dodon. In October, he was credited with 8-9 % in the Public Opinion Barometer, while Usatîi – with 12%. I think that the 20 % of the socialists originate from here. If we sum up the votes that went to the communists and socialists, it is exactly what communists scored in the previous elections – 40%.

Another conclusion is that Usatîi's campaign was effective because of its radical populist message. He capitalized a lot on the people's discontent and had a well-thought campaign, which is a copy of the so-called Russian project "НАШИ" (OURS) – a project with specific target groups in the Russian Federation. If you look at the "НАШИ" movement which is "Our Party" in translation, we can see many similarities with Usatîi's party - it replicates the name as well as the idea of the project. In fact, it was a campaign which we didn't understand in the beginning. They had a specific target and capitalized on its disappointment in the current government. This campaign was successful and I think that PLDM and PD should learn from Usatîi's experience.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Even if less people have actually supported these parties, they can form a majority in the parliament, despite the fact that the people got disappointed in them.

■ **Sergiu Ostaf:** Arithmetically, those who voted for the European option, did not get an absolute majority and this is what we should be worried about. The final political construction policy is different though and the three pro-European parties have a comfortable majority in the Parliament -55 out of 101 seats. This was possible as a result of the redistribution of the votes of the parties which did not make it to the parliament. So, this is rather a technical victory of the pro-European parties.

I think these elections were a very strong signal in the sense that if the pro-European parties rule in the same manner in the next four years as before and have

the same strategy that they had in the period of 2010-2014, they will lose part of the electorate and such a technical victory will not be possible any more.

■ **Lina Grâu:** We have elected practically the same people and the same parties. What should the style of governance be and what should be changed so that the alliance parties don't fail in the future elections?

■ **Sergiu Ostaf:** One thing is very clear: the government should work for every segment of the society and build benefits, improve things and make tangible progress.

Let us take, for example, the small entrepreneurs. The number of small and medium entrepreneurs in the period of 2009-2014 has decreased by almost 8.7 thousand enterprises. Every small business could have probably hired one to four people, which could have made 20-50 thousand jobs. This situation has been reflected during elections in the voters' hesitation or their shift toward other parties. Thus, in this area we should build a fiscal policy and a policy of support for small businesses.

If we provide subsidies to farmers, it is the small and medium farmers that should benefit from them and not the large companies which benefit from 80% of total subsidies.

Another segment: what happened to the multiple children families? There was a 40% increase in allowances. We have nearly 100 thousand multiple children families, but the increase was not enough. They had higher expectations and they expected European standards, or at least a clear indication that we are moving towards this direction. The government did not deliver on this expectation. It has to find reserves in the state budget and raise significantly the allowances for the multiple children families. Where to get money from? I'm sure that if we streamline the public procurements and tenders, we can get 30% of the needed

financial resources. So money does exist and what we need is a policy for this category of the population.

Another reason why the support for the alliance parties has decreased is the scandals among the political leaders of the main parties. The people have expected a different behavior from the political leaders, but what they got are the same scandals as under Voronin. So there is very little difference between the previous and current government.

Now it's important to learn the lessons if we want to get back the 30, 40 or 50 thousand voters that we lost. This means that we need to allocate about 200-300 million lei for social services and thus motivate those voters to get back. Do we want to get back the big farmers? Is the Russian embargo a problem in this sense? We have to take efforts to look for other markets or invest in the processing industry and thus be able to keep the produce for a longer period and sell it later for a higher price. This way we can get back another 50 thousand votes. And if we want to get back the small farmers who sell their products in Moldova, but who have not received subsidies, we need to improve the system of subsidies and cut from the unduly big subsidies of the large producers.

So, the solution is very simple: we have to work for different groups of people and then there is a chance that in 3-4 years the voters will turn to the European parties.

■ **Lina Grâu:** There has been a lot of discussion about the irreversibility of the European integration of Moldova. Do you think that during this mandate the irreversibility can be reached? When can the European integration become final and irreversible for Moldova?

■ **Sergiu Ostaf:** I do not think this can be reached in the next four years and there are two reasons for that. The first is that Russia will have a more aggressive policy and strategy towards Moldova.

I was speaking earlier about Usatîi's project which is actually a replication of the "НАШИ" project ("OURS") in the Russian Federation. They will intensify further these efforts and will mobilize more supporters and voters by means of their strategies. The parties in government, but also the state will probably not be able to resist that pressure, because the financial injections are enormous and the intelligence programs are very sophisticated. They are able to mobilize a large part of Moldovan citizens and influence their option without being present on the ground and without sending insurgents. They are acting through an intense propaganda which promotes authoritarian patterns aiming at dividing the society.

The irreversibility of the European integration course depends on the citizens' preferences. Now we have 50 percent of people who are pro-Europe and this is because of the adequate behavior of the Communist Party, which balances the situation contributing to the majority in favour of the European integration process. But I am convinced that the Russian Federation will have a much smarter strategy in this direction in order to determine and fragment even more the population. In this sense, in the next four years the voters' preferences might not be so clear in favour of the European option.

This is the main reason that makes me think that during this mandate we will still not reach the irreversibility of the European integration.

In terms of the functioning of the democratic institutions of justice, perhaps we can obtain bigger progress which could contribute to the irreversibility in the European way of these democratic institutions' functioning. The institutions could start functioning better.

As regards the economic element of functioning of the society, if we look at the latest report of the Competition Council and World Bank, we can see that

the most lucrative economic industries are oligopolized or heavily monopolized. This means that the prices in these areas will be exaggerated and that some political elites will continue to control the added value benefits of the society. Only a narrow circle of elites will benefit from this. And this is not the European model. This model makes Moldova more fragile and less determined about the European process. In addition, this will prevent large European investments from coming to Moldova. So, I believe that in the economic area we have the biggest problems. In addition, if you have a narrow circle of political elites, they can easily be corrupted politically by anyone. Therefore, as far as the economic dimension is concerned, in my opinion, the European integration cannot become categorically irreversible.

Irreversibility is built also through the political elites' option. I think here we have a better chance, because the Communist Party, in essence, is a pro-European party, albeit with a certain position and reservations. We all understand rationally where there is more stability and prosperity. The regional context is favorable and in the next four years it will remain positive. The Russian Federation will lose its economic influence as it is now in economic stagnation and recession.

I suppose in the future there will be a very dynamic situation. Overall, I would say I am modestly optimistic, knowing the capacity of our elites to develop and implement coherent and clear policies and the "cannibalization" that often occurs in the absence of powerful control instruments over the government. In this sense, the civil society has not grown stronger over the past four years. On the contrary, I would say it became more loyal and corporatist and that's a problem too.

■ **Lina Grău:** The votes given to the pro-European parties despite the disappointments makes us think that the society is really in favour of the European

integration. The way the current governmental parties are working for the European integration seems not to please most of the society. Is it possible for our citizens to realise and understand that certain things depend on them - as it happens in Romania, Poland, and the Baltic countries - and begin to put pressure on the government to move in the right direction?

■ **Sergiu Ostaf:** My experience shows that we must have a pact and an understanding here shared by several actors. There is need to have an opening for change also from the political elites. In my opinion, it's high time to change the political elites which have been on top over the last four years and which were involved in scandals. They should be replaced by other politicians from these parties who have demonstrated experience and capacity. New people should hold the first positions in the state in order to generate the support that could come from the civil society and professional groups.

On the other hand, it is often the case that the professional groups such as judges or prosecutors, are marked by a lot of conservatism. To break this conservatism, a change is needed there too so as people with integrity could engage with progressive elites. This way, the things could reach a critical mass and the much spoken change could become much easier. For a change to occur there, we must create systems based on professionalism. Here we need also an intelligent support from our development partners that do not conserve the systems, but support and invest in the actors of change.

I think we'll have many upheavals in the next 3-4 years. I think we should also make sacrifices in order to prove that the change is possible, including the legitimate and justified sacrifice of certain persons who are part of the problem but not of the solution. I think that in this sense, some Romanian models are suitable for us.

The second important aspect is to think of a defensive strategy against the influence of the Russian Federation. We should start reducing the influence of the Russian mass media and do it in an intelligent way. Why should we not have “Дождь TV” (Rain TV) rather than NTV or Rossia24 in Moldova? The latter are important TV stations with national coverage, but why not have Rain TV which offers another point of view?

Regarding the diversification of energy resources, concrete measures have

already been undertaken through the construction of the Iasi-Ungheni gas pipeline. We should continue the construction in order to bring the pipeline in Chisinau and thus reduce the vulnerability of this sector.

Another important area where progress is needed is the integration of national minorities. This requires long-term solutions and cannot be solved in 3 to 4 years. We should start working with the young generations. For example, the children who are now in the seventh-

eighth grades will be eligible to vote in 3-4 years. They should be helped to integrate by means of facilitation of the linguistic skills.

So, we should build defensive strategies on every segment and dimension. This requires an intellectual effort. I am optimistic in that sense, but life won't be easy and simple in the coming years.

Victor Chirilă: This is a bitter victory - we are not happy with the quality of the elected politicians but had no other choice

■ **Lina Grău:** What are in your opinion the main conclusions of these elections ?

■ **Victor Chirilă:** The main conclusion is that the pro-European parties have managed to form a parliamentary majority, which allows them to form the next government. Of course, there are serious concerns as to the capacity of the alliance to come up with real changes in Moldova and live up to our expectations, because, in the end, we have elected the same people who have compromised themselves a lot over the last years. They have a lot of personal shortcomings – they care primarily about their economic or group interests and less about the interests of the state; they talk a lot, but it is very clear that their actions do not match the promises they have done so far.

It is a bitter victory for many – even if we voted for them, we are not happy with the quality of the elected politicians, but unfortunately, had no other choice.

We are concerned, however, about another trend that has become apparent during the elections - that a good part of our society has serious concerns about the pro-European development vector of Moldova. If we sum up the percentage of all the pro-Eastern parties, we can see



that they are the majority in the country. Just not all the parties were able to pass the threshold and this is what saved Moldova. For how long – we still have to see. If the new pro-European government is not able to change the realities in Moldova and get closer to the citizens and inspire confidence in the future of the country, I think these elections might be the last chance given to them, and the next elections could be a total disaster for the future of Moldova. I hope very much this will not happen.

I hope very much that in the coming years new politicians will appear who will be more credible when they talk about European integration and who will act accordingly. I hope that new civic and -why not- political movements will appear which will inspire the society and mobilize it to face the challenges in the coming years.

The difficulties are related primarily with the regional context, but also with the implementation of the Association Agreement. The latter envisages structural changes, which will ultimately require the mobilization of the citizens, institutions and of the financial resources available in Moldova. The resources are scarce, but it is important that they not be wasted in vain.

That's why I said that we won- those who voted for the European integration- but we are risking to face the same problems if our politicians don't learn the lessons from the past experience.

■ **Lina Grău:** Mr. Chirilă, some Russian media had headlines saying that “Russia lost Moldova”. Do you really think Russia lost Moldova as a result of these elections?

■ **Victor Chirilă:** I think Russia has lost the battle, but Moldova still continues fighting

for its independence and realization as a state and democratic society. And from this point of view, I think that what we achieved on November 30th, was by a painful and tough decision which was a chance given not only to the pro-European politicians, but also to us, which is about dealing with the existent pressure coming from the East as well as from within the country. The society has had enough of current realities. It wants a change and understands that change can only occur if you change political leaders.

Unfortunately, the elections results have shown that our citizens do not always choose the right leaders and are tempted to vote for some very dubious ones - those who make big promises but who have no will and capacity to realize them.

Lina Grău: They keep talking about the point of irreversibility in the process

of Moldova's European integration. Do you think that during this mandate it is possible to reach the point where the European integration will be a victory won? What style of governance should the politicians adopt in order to get there?

Victor Chirila: I believe that only when we become members of the EU we can say that Moldova has reached the point of no return in the process of the European integration. Until then it is a long and difficult way ahead, as the geopolitical context of the Republic of Moldova is getting worse. We can expect bitterness in the confrontation between East and West and may have a replay of the Cold War, which will certainly be detrimental to the internal stability and security of the Republic of Moldova. Or, in this case, we will always fear for the future and balance

between East or West, in order to solve our problems.

Obviously, the society is tempted to choose the easiest way which in the opinion of many peoples this is the Eastern way, because in that case there is no need to make painful reforms, the gas will be cheaper and we will have free access to the market of the Russian Federation. To get there you need only to be loyal to the Russians -you don't need to fight against corruption or implement reforms. It is a damaging temptation to us. But I very much hope that we will have a smart political class in the coming years, strong and visionary politicians ready to sacrifice for real changes in Moldova and for the ideals of the European integration. Those politicians will be above the petty interests of small groups currently dominating the economic and political scene of the Republic of Moldova.

Vasile Nedelciuc: The elections have a clear pro-European option, but the people are expecting now a better life

■ **Lina Grău:** What is in your opinion the significance of these elections?

■ **Vasile Nedelciuc:** This year's elections were an important milestone for our future destiny for several reasons. First, because of Russia's aggression towards Ukraine and its clear position as regards the Eastern European area in the sense of keeping it under its control. It was important that the Moldovan voters confirm that the European course has real popular support and that we can transform the society.

So even if a comfortable majority was not able to be formed, however, most voters said "Yes!" to those who were in power and who somehow approved the European course of development for our country. They voted for them even if most of the population is not pleased



with this alliance and it is not happy with the way the political games evolved in Moldova. However, being aware of

what is happening in Ukraine and of the importance of our European course, people still preferred to support the former - or current - government, and this is a lot. While the population expresses dissatisfaction with the government and criticized severely the ruling parties in the elections campaign, it still voted for the parties of this alliance, which is an indication that they are still in favour of the European course.

Secondly, the elections were important for the international institutions, particularly the EU, to have an indication regarding our orientation as it cannot wait for decades until the country makes a decision in this sense. The structure of European institutions has been constantly changing in recent decades. Perhaps the European Union wants to complete the reconstruction of the European House

and launch a long-term development project. That is why it is important that the countries aspiring to EU make a quick and clear decision as to their foreign policy vector, so that the architects of the European Union are aware of Moldova's will in order to see to what extent they can involve Moldova in the future changes unless Moldovans prefer, like Kazakhs and Byelorussians, to "dance" together with Russia.

Thirdly, the world is undergoing fundamental changes: we see significant changes everywhere and we see the international community's concerns regarding the way some powers express their eagerness to maintain their spheres of influence. And in this ever changing world Moldova should find its place. It took us too long to realize the transition from communism to democracy, to set the priorities and to make a choice.

And I think that the Westerners understand why the way towards democracy in Moldova is so long. Romania, however, being a EU and NATO member is becoming increasingly important for the regional security arrangements and I think that Romania's voice cannot be neglected in NATO and the EU. Romania supports them a lot and it is in its interest that Moldova becomes part of the EU, therefore its demarche cannot remain unanswered. Nobody wants to have direct borders with Russia which is grasped by the debauchery "Putinism." Therefore countries prefer to stay away from Russia. Countries like Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, even Bulgaria are good examples in this sense. And it should be clear why such countries want us to be part of EU.

That is why these elections were an important milestone. Personally, I am somewhat disappointed with the way the political parties worked in the rural areas as they were not intelligent and convincing enough and therefore very many voters haven't participated in the elections. They could not adjust their

electoral message in a way as to leave room for creation of a coalition after elections and were not clear enough as to what their plans were. I'm afraid they will not be able to form a government of credible and experienced people. And, because it is the government which is in charge of the foreign policy, provides contacts and develops the economy, if we promoted experienced people in the government and let them deal with the Westerners, we would give them an additional argument that we must be accepted in the EU and that we need to be supported.

■ **Lina Grău:** You have also mentioned that these elections have brought practically the same people and the same parties that have been in power in the last four to five years. How should this governance mechanism function so as the European idea is supported by more people?

■ **Vasile Nedelciuc:** Unfortunately, in politics there are interest groups and people who want to gain more and more power - this is just the nature of politics. But there exist different politicians in other countries and we need such politicians in Moldova who see beyond the horizon and understand that we should put an end to our past; and that we need to make big transformations and that no single party can make these transformation by itself; that there is need for solidarity and cooperation with others; that in Moldova we will have to govern through alliances for many years ahead. That is why the politicians should act in such a way as to make the virtues and possibilities of their partners more efficient. I would like to see, though it is almost impossible in Moldova, such politicians who can renounce their personal interests and promote experienced people in the government.

What we need badly in Moldova are trained and responsible people who can make the change. If we put in place a well-established and functioning

economy and had fair justice institutions and mass media that signals everything that's happening, I would no longer fear if today left-wing parties came to power and tomorrow – right wing parties – as this would be in the order of things. But in a broken country, where the people are being fooled, having no access to information and not understanding what is happening, and when cunning politicians abuse of power, it is difficult to convince people that a different style of government is possible. Thus the entire society can become victim for decades of the authority of such groups of politicians.

So I urge politicians to understand that their names will probably go down in history. They might get condemned by history for being coward, greedy, and thinking only about their pockets.

In recent decades there have been many in power. The country was led by agrarians, communists, then by a democratic government and none of them was able to make a substantive transformation. All those who were in power have constantly failed to promote and bring to the forefront highly trained people. Look what happened in Poland, the Baltic States, but also in the Saakashvili's Georgia. They have always had prime ministers, foreign ministers, and presidents of very high quality who have left traces in history. People are still making reference to them today. In Moldova, what can you say today, for example, about Tarlev? ...

We did not have on top good foreign ministers, prime ministers, presidents. Instead we have always chosen kolkhoz presidents, former central committee secretaries who followed family interests and we have always dealt with half measures in order not to upset Ciulica or Bulica ... If talented and critical people appeared, they hated them and did everything to destroy them ... That was a typical soviet behavior. That's why we did not succeed.



The politicians must finally do this. The EU is expecting this from us and also Romania makes it clear to us... We need something else. Who will be the partner of Johannis? Do we have such people in Chisinau? Do we have people who can discuss the issues with the European Union? We do have such people but very few. That is why we need to promote educated and experienced people, including those who live in the Western countries. Why haven't we brought so far people from abroad? Look what they did in Estonia – they have an exceptional president whom they brought from the USA or Canada. This is not possible in Moldova - only a small circle of people sees itself in power; they barricaded themselves and would not let other people to govern...

■ **Lina Grâu:** How do you explain the spectacular rise of the Socialists in the elections, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the dramatic decline of the communists?

■ **Vasile Nedelciuc:** To me, there is nothing spectacular, everything is very clear. If you sum up the votes of Dodon, Voronin and of the Communist Reformist Party, you'll obtain the percentage that the communists had four or five years ago. This shows that significant changes in the structure of the electorate did not occur. This is actually the handicap and misfortune of Moldova - that since 1990 there has never been a stable and democratic majority following the elections.

No change has been produced in the people's mentality and thoughts. The fact that many of the active and dynamic people who contributed to the

independence of our country are abroad and do not participate actively in the political life, being not able to participate in the changes, is part of the reason that we have an old electorate anchored in the past.

So, the socialists, being a direct emanation of the FSB, and of the Moscow regime - which one does not even hide it - simply took the communists' electorate. Moscow not being satisfied with the way Voronin makes politics, has decided to have a more reliable political partner. The Russians have simply created a party of their own through which to destabilize the situation, draw attention to some things and hide others. Dodon is an exclusively Moscow creature and we will have him until people mature and understand that we should vote for values represented by educated and experienced people.

■ **Lina Grâu:** They have discussed a lot about the irreversibility of the European integration process of Moldova. Do you think the point of no return can be reached during the current mandate?

■ **Vasile Nedelciuc:** There is no guarantee that this mandate will ensure the irreversibility of the European course and the impossibility to return to the old regime of obedience to Moscow. But it is a very important mandate for in these four years many things can be done that will significantly hamper the return to the old regime. It is sure that Moscow will continue to strongly promote its interests and try to destabilize the situation in the region. Moscow, contrary to its propaganda that it has only peace interest, it actually does its utmost to

provoke instability in the region so that the West, including the investors, loses interest in this region and that they remain the main economic and political actors. Russian needs a buffer zone around, to be sure that in the event of international regional conflicts, whatever happens, it will not occur on its territory.

And the four years of the new government does not guarantee in any way that we will manage to build our protection in order to avoid such risks. However, during these four years we can strengthen the relations with the EU and with the major partners such as the USA and other Western countries, in order to develop the economy and attract important investors in Moldova. They will have a say in the event something happens in our country. The investors will knock on doors of the western governments asking for protection.

In addition to this we will get a greater support from the population and this is the most important. If people see that the things are changing for the better and that they can trust politicians - as all of them have children, grandchildren, and dream about a quiet old age - they will support the politicians and thus prevent the Moscow games from being successful.

It is also important that in the next four years we rethink the relationship with Ukraine. Together with Romania and Ukraine we can make regional arrangements that we couldn't even think about in the past and thus try to compensate as much as possible for the old problems and find new horizons for the future.