



REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA - UNITED STATES RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF CHISINAU'S EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: LOST OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

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The Republic of Moldova and the United States of America relationship could be analyzed as interactions between a superpower and a small state, and the U.S.' diplomacy in Chisinau has followed the same principle as for other Former Soviet States, including supporting the consolidation of democracy, promoting free trade, maintaining territorial integrity, and assuring security and peace in the region. The Republic Moldova has been of interest to Washington policy makers due to its geopolitical situation on the borders of NATO and the European Union members and strategically situated Ukraine. The depth of the relationship between the U.S. and Moldova has hinged, almost always, on a complex interplay between the activism of the other big powers in the region – European Union and Russia Federation, and the domestic factors in Chisinau.

The political-diplomatic and strategic relations

United States – Republic of Moldova relations after the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., followed the same pattern as the others Former Soviet States, and the historical Freedom Support Act¹ of 1992 provided explicitly the outline for the United State's rhetorical and financial support to the new independent states in promoting democratic reforms, transitioning to free market and assuring denuclearization and security policies. At that point the American interests in the region were in line with the new sovereign state, the Republic of Moldova's aspiration to maintain territorial integrity, institute democratic reforms, and develop international relations.

After the Republic of Moldova signed in 2014 Association Agreement and DCFTA with the European Union, the United States expressed active support for the European integration of Moldova. Although, the embezzlement of three Moldovan banks in the end of 2014 affected the economic growth and the high level of corruption diminished

¹ H.R.4547 - Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992. 102nd Congress (1991-1992).. Congress. Gov. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/102nd-congress/house-bill/4547>, accessed on June 2, 2018.

population' trust in the pro-European parties. As a result, the European Union, International Monetary Fund and World Bank have frozen their financial assistance to Moldova. The United States followed a realpolitik approach with the Republic of Moldova and continued the policy of reassuring stability, promoting good governance and encouraging economic development. In early 2016 the Moldovan parliament installed a new government, which was able to secure the support from the International Monetary Fund as a three-year plan for \$178.7 million ahead of the presidential election, and received assistance, via USID of \$27 million for improving transparency and accountability of the justice system, improving local governments' responsiveness to citizens' needs, and combating corruption.²

And yet the American officials were following the progress of democratic reforms in Moldova. The U.S. Ambassador in Moldova expressed disapproval for the decision of Moldovan legislators to change the electoral system, but did so in a mild statement. The United States left the door open for collaboration, voicing concern regarding the European future of Moldova. The American officials decided to continue collaboration with all the stakeholders of Moldova at that point.

Nevertheless, after the invalidation by the lower court and the Supreme Court of the results of Chisinau mayoral elections that had shown a victory of a pro-Western candidate, implying not very strong arguments, the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau changed the tone. The U.S. emphasized directly that the judicial independence in Moldova is at risk, and that the decision to invalidate the elections has "reinforced the public's perception of political interference in the judiciary of the Republic of Moldova."³ This indicated the change in American position regarding the head of the

² The U.S. Government and the Government of Moldova signed Agreements to Support Democratic and Economic Development of Moldova. US Embassy in Moldova. September 28, 2016. <https://md.usembassy.gov/u-s-government-government-moldova-signed-agreements-support-democratic-economic-development-moldova/>, accessed on June 3, 2018.

³ U.S. Embassy Statement/ 06.25.2018. US Embassy in Moldova. <https://md.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-statement-06-25-2018/>, accessed on June 27, 2018.

Democratic Party, billionaire oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc, known to have a significant undue influence over the judiciary in the country.

The internal party contradictions have been seen explicitly after the Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip had met with the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington. American official stated pointedly that “free and fair elections are a hallmark of a democratic government and must reflect the will of the country’s citizens without political interference.”⁴ The Moldovan authorities did not react to the American official statements, as the Supreme Court decision to uphold decision to void mayoral elections was scheduled and the decision was made late at night in the same day, after the meeting of the Moldovan Prime Minister with the U.S. Secretary of State. Yet, the American official remarks were missing from Moldovan government communiqué and from the Plahotniuc’s media coverage of the Washington’s official reaction to the events.

United States traditionally tackled Moldova’s subject in context of relations with other regional powers - the European Union and the Russia Federation. Russia Federation retaliated promptly to the Moldova’s Association Agreement with the EU, implying the concern about the Russian speaking populations and using political and economic instruments to keep control over the “near abroad” territory of Moldova. After the election of the pro-Russian president of Moldova in 2016, Igor Dodon, he promoted Moldova’s status of observer with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in April 2017. Although Moldova’s status at EEU is symbolic, without the right to vote or participate in the decision-making process, and does not conflict with Moldova’s Association Agreement with the EU, this represented an important geopolitical message.

Despite the internal contradictions in Moldovan politics, the U.S. legislators continued to promote bilateral relations, and especially after the crisis in Ukraine the members of the U.S.

Congress called for a greater American effort to bolster Moldova’s sovereignty and territorial integrity against possible Russian threats. The Public Law, requiring Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to conduct a “Programming surge” in Ukraine and Moldova in order to counter “inaccuracy and inflammatory”⁵ broadcasts by Russia was adopted in 2014. In 2018, the two co-chairs of the Congressional Moldova Caucus for the 115th Congress Republican Pete Olson (TX-22) and Democrat David Price (NC-04) introduced a bipartisan House Resolution to support Moldova’s sovereignty and independence, and affirming U.S. support for territorial integrity of Moldova.⁶ The 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Republic of Moldova, constituted a good reason for the reinforcement of the bilateral diplomatic relations. Even though some events have been organized, like exhibitions in Chisinau and a reception at the Moldovan Embassy in Washington DC, the event was not widely mentioned in both countries.

During this period continued the bilateral visits of the governmental officials and political leaders of both states, confirming the importance of empowering diplomatic relations. During the 2014-2015, Chisinau became more frequent destination for the U.S., officials, due to security concern after the military conflict erupted in Ukraine. In 2014 nine and in 2015 twelve delegations from the U.S. visited Moldova, including Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland twice, and Evelin Farkas, Assistant Secretary of Defense, other governmental officials.⁷ In the next several years the intensity of visits remained on the usual level of 4-5 visits annually. From the Republic of Moldova in

5 P.L. 113-96 United States International Programming to Ukraine and Neighboring Regions, was passed by the Senate on March 27, 2014, and the House on April 1, was signed by the President on April 3. Congress. Gov. See: P.L. 113-96 “United States International Programming to Ukraine and Neighboring Regions”<https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2183/actions>, accessed June 27, 2018.

6 H.Res. 745. Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to enhanced relations with the Republic of Moldova and support for Moldova’s territorial integrity. Congress.gov. February 20, 2018. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-resolution/745/all-info>, accessed June 27, 2018.

7 United States. Ministry of Foreign Defense and European Cooperation. <http://www.mfa.gov.md/cooperare-bilaterala/>, accessed June 27, 2018.

4 Secretary Pompeo’s Meeting With Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip. U.S. Department of State. Diplomacy in Action. June 25, 2018. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/06/283490.htm>, accessed June 27, 2018.



2014 five, and 2015 three delegations visited the American capital, including the speaker of the parliament and the prime ministers at that time.

The U.S. – R.M. bilateral cooperation was, once again, reiterated during the Moldovan Speaker of the Parliament Andrian Candu visit to the U.S. in April 2018. During the meeting, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Wess Mitchell, emphasized, that “Moldova is at the forefront of geopolitical confrontation” and the U.S. will “support your country as well as your region”,⁸ indicating that the geopolitical position of Moldova and the security in the region is of interest to the U.S. The American official featured that the Moldova’s efforts to promote democratic reforms and to assure the security in the region are of the primordial importance to the United States.

Despite maintaining close politico-diplomatic relations with the U.S., Moldova did not use the full potential of possibilities to promote its national interest in the United States due to the absence of the full-time Ambassador in the most prestigious world capital. After 2015, Moldova did not have an Ambassador in Washington for two years, and in 2017 the mandate of the next Ambassador of Moldova in the U.S. lasted less than two months. One year later, in May 2018, the nomination of the new ambassador on the political party principle created doubts regarding the impartiality of new nominee.

The United States shifted its security strategy regarding the East European countries, including Moldova, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In 2014 the Strategic Dialogue U.S. – R.M. was created and marked a new institutionalization of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. New mechanisms of collaboration were created, such as regular coordination and consultation meeting between the representative of the Foreign Minister of Moldova and the U.S. Department of State – Principals Meetings; were established the

8 US reiterates support for Moldova in path toward EU and US. StrategEast. April 17, 2018. <http://strategieast.org/america-reiterates-support-for-moldova-in-path-towards-eu-and-us/>, accessed June 27, 2018.

Working Groups in the fields of energy, security and rule of law and was created Joint Trade Commission. After a period of uncertainty, following the bank scandal in Moldova and the busy schedule of the presidential elections both in the U.S. and Moldova, the Strategic Dialogue was revitalized in 2017. During the visit of the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Bridget Brink in Chisinau on June 23, 2017, the U.S.-R.M. Strategic Dialogue was re-launched.⁹ The importance of the bilateral security cooperation between the U.S. and the R.M. were reaffirmed during her next visit to Moldova in March 2018.¹⁰ The U.S. officials underlined, once again, the importance for their Moldovan counterparts to deliver reform in the justice sector, continue to fight corruption, implement the integrity law to assure regional security and cooperation. Taking in consideration the situation in the region, created by the military conflict in Ukraine and the geopolitical importance of the approaching presidential elections in Moldova at the end of 2018, the Washington officials were willing to pay closer attention to the security situation of Moldova.

The United States are promoting security capacity’ building of the Republic of Moldova by participating on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s Partnership for Peace program. The American assistance is oriented to build up the educational programs for the Moldovan military, participation in the International Military Educational and Training (IMET) program and peacekeeping missions.

The U.S. provides support for the Moldovan 22nd Peacekeeping Battalion for training and engineer missions, increasing Moldovan defense capacity and interoperability between American and Moldovan soldiers. The United States included Moldova in 2016

9 Joint Statement on Strategic Dialogue Re-launch. US Embassy in Moldova. June 23, 2017. <https://md.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-strategic-dialogue-relaunch/>, accessed June 27, 2018.

10 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of the US, visiting Chisinau: Future elections must be organized in accordance with international norms, and parties have equal access to the media. Jurnal.md. March 8 2018. <http://www.jurnal.md/ro/politic/2018/3/8/asistentul-adjunct-al-secretarului-de-stat-al-sua-in-vizita-la-chisinau-viitorul-scrutin-trebuie-organizat-in-conformitate-cu-norme-le-internationale-iar-partidele-sa-aiba-acces-egal-la-mass-media/>, accessed June 27, 2018.

in a \$63-million regional program regarding building defense capabilities against aggressive actions by Russia or from other sources. According to the Pentagon, the targeted areas include border security, air awareness and building stronger institutional oversight.

During this period, Moldova came at the forefront of geopolitical confrontation, and security and peace issues became the major concern of American officials. In the created situation, dispute the internal struggle for power and bank embezzlement in Moldova, the United States took a collaborative approach, facilitating diplomatic cooperation, providing support for the democratic reform to maintain peace and security in the region. The United States assured support for Moldova's European Union integration process, participation in international organization and fulfilling on assumed obligations. Although, the American officials are closely monitoring the political situation in the country, promoting the eradication of the intolerance of political interference in the judiciary process.

The Republic of Moldova did not use the full potential of the diplomatic relations, losing the opportunity to have a full time Ambassador in Washington D.C. The Moldovan ruling regime continues to play a dual politics game after the clear message from the American officials regarding the political interference in the election process, undermining the Moldova's hopes for a democratic future and European integration.

Economic diplomacy between the United States and the Republic of Moldova

As a part of the bilateral relations between the United States and Moldova, economic diplomacy also plays an important role in promoting state's business interests. The trade relations between the United States and Moldova is best described as relationship between the major global economy and a small market, situated not in geographical proximity of the U.S. The economic relations include bilateral trade relations, foreign aid and direct investment. The U.S. government assists the R.M. in promoting

a functional market economy, preventing monopolization, creating new jobs and stability, overcoming corruption, and promoting economic development. The legal framework of the U.S.-R.M. bilateral economic relations includes the intergovernmental agreements, and the most-favored nation treatment since 1992. In 2012 the U.S. passed the abolition of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to Moldova, which provided appropriate conditions for permanent trade relations between the two countries.

In external trade relations with the R.M., the U.S. does not score high, as a result of geographic distance and the small size of the Moldovan market. The U.S. ranks nineteenth on the list of Moldova's export partners. The top positions are held by neighboring countries, like Romania, Russia Federation, Italy and Germany. Moldova's exports to the U.S. in 2017 scored almost \$19 million and constituted less than one percent of total exports. Moldova exports to America predominantly wine (about 76 percent of exports), nuts and dry fruits (12 percent) and textile articles (5 percent).¹¹

In the list of import partners, the U.S. scored higher, ranking fourteenth, but the impact was almost the same (1.4 percent). The value of imported goods increased slightly over the last years (\$50,7 mill in 2015; \$53,2 mill in 2016; and \$ 70,2 mill in 2017). The top import partners on the list are traditional trade partners and neighboring countries, such as Romania, Ukraine and Russia Federation. What is of interest is the position of China, also not an immediate Moldova's geographic neighbor. The emerging economic power scored in the fourth position after the immediate neighbors of Moldova, and China's contribution is ten times that of America's: exports from the U.S. – 1,4%; from China – 10,4%. The Republic of Moldova imports from the U.S. electrical equipment and machinery (22 %), automobiles and devices (19%), chemical products (14%), and medical instruments (13%). The trade balance between Moldova and the U.S. is negative and constitutes about \$51.4 million in 2017.

¹¹ External trade activity of the Republic of Moldova in 2016. National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=5908>, accessed June 27, 2018.



In developing trade relations with Moldova, the United States conditions the economic collaboration by having Moldova take steps to reform its economy, to develop the regulatory business regime, and to improve the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR). The ways to increase bilateral trade cooperation with the United States is for Moldova to further develop strong business environment, in condition of respect for rule of law, and regulatory regime that is consistent with the country's international obligations.

Although the United States is one of the world's leader in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), it does not make the top of the list of FDI for Moldova. To provide the guidelines for the American investors, the U.S., as well as international organizations, are monitoring the economic situation in the Republic of Moldova. The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs at the U.S. Department of State in Investment Climate Statement 2017 for Moldova states that "The business climate is challenging. Although the many underdeveloped sectors offer opportunities, investors should proceed with caution. While a number of large foreign companies have taken advantage of tax breaks in the country's free economic zones, foreign direct investment remains low. Finance, automotive, light industry, agriculture, food processing, wine, and real estate have historically attracted foreign investment."¹²

Taking in consideration the unstable investment climate and the confrontational political environment, not a lot of American companies are investing in Moldova. In 2016 the American FDI in Moldova constituted \$48.08 million (stock positions), and total inbound stock of FDI as % host GDP of \$53.07. In 2017 in Moldova were registered 398 enterprises with American capital, with the value of the investments in the share capital of 517 million lei, according to the official information of the State Registration Chamber. Based on the invested capital value, the U.S. ranks 6th among the

partner countries of the Republic of Moldova.¹³ Among the companies with American capital in Moldova are: Trans Oil, SUN Communications, Glass Container Company, Lear Corporation, Coca-Cola, AVON, Mary Kay, HNCH Adviser, etc. The spheres as communication, finance, automotive, light industry, food processing, wine, and real estate have historically attracted foreign investment. American companies are interested, as well, in helping Moldova to reduce the energy dependence on Russia Federation. The Frontera Resources company has pledged to search for oil and natural gas on the Prut bank.

To further promote investment opportunities, Moldovan officials should stabilize the market, create an environment free of corruption in the country and develop the investment openings offered by the trade regimes and the possibilities in the field of information technologies, as well as the prospects offered by IT parks in the country.

The United States government is the biggest individual country contributor of aid to the Republic of Moldova. The U.S. government assistance aims to help Moldova strengthen its democratic institutions, increase prosperity, secure its internationally recognized borders, and integrate with European Union and the Euro-Atlantic community.

The United States is the biggest contributor of aid as an individual government to the Moldova's development through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other agencies. The U.S. government is fifth in the list of main donors by the value of projects funded in Moldova (in \$ dollars), and it is outranked only by a group of countries or by international organizations, such as the European Union, European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and World Bank. Since 1992, the U.S. has provided the total of \$1.4 billion in assistance to Moldova.¹⁴ From 2010 to 2015 Americans offered about \$369.9 million, which

12 Investment Climate Statement 2017. Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/investmentclimatestatements/index.htm?dclid=269930&year=2017#13foreign>, accessed June 27, 2018.

13 Statistics. State Registration Chamber. <http://www.cis.gov.md/statistica>, accessed June 27, 2018.

14 Moldova. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5357.htm>, accessed June 28, 2018.

is comparable with the amount provided by the World Bank, a multinational organization. The United States is third on the list by the number of projects implemented in Moldova, realizing 82 projects from 2010 to 2015 that focused on promoting democracy, civil society, and developing the private sector and reforming the justice system.

One of the most significant American projects in Moldova was the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact project, a U.S. Government assistance grant focusing on good policies, country ownership, and results. Moldova's USID 5-year Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact project ended in 2015. The MCC was \$262 million project on development and investment in irrigation, infrastructure, high-value agriculture, and road rehabilitation. The Compact's \$111 million Road Rehabilitation Project included rebuilding 59.7 miles of a major highway in Moldova and linking an important trade market and a network in the region. The Road Rehabilitation Project included, as well, the infrastructure improvements, and was considered as one of the MCC success stories.¹⁵

During 2015-2017, the MCC and international commission monitored the sustainability of the Compact investment in the country and provided regular reports. The countries that have already successfully implemented the first program are eligible for Compact II, but they must have an average performance of a half of indicators (from total of 20), have a democratic environment, and a performance above average on the Corruption Control indicator. Moldova had above average performance scores on 12 indicators out of 20 in 2017, and was considered a country where democratic rights were respected. However, the Corruption Control indicator was below the average. In the 2017 report, Moldova's score of Corruption Control Indicator decreased since 2013 and in 2017 was -0.44 below the median.¹⁶

¹⁵ Linking Moldova to international markets. MMC. Success Stories. <https://www.mcc.gov/our-impact/story/story-090215-linking-moldova-to-international-markets>, accessed June 28, 2018.

¹⁶ Moldova FY 2017. Country Scorecard. MCC <https://www.mcc.gov/who-we-fund/scorecard/fy-2017/MD>, accessed June 27, 2018.

That makes Moldova ineligible for MCC funds for the Compact II, despite the fact that the country has successfully implemented the first Compact Program and continues to ensure the sustainability of its investments.

Ongoing United States programs in Moldova are aimed of supporting economic growth in Moldova from the perspective of DCFTA under the E.U.-R.M. AA; strengthening democracy and the rule of law, improving judicial administration, training judges, and promoting public awareness of the reforms of the justice system. The U.S. programs, as well, have the goal enhancing security, combating transnational crimes, particularly human trafficking, cybercrime, and the illicit trafficking of nuclear materials. The U.S. assistance enhances Moldova's capabilities to provide security for peacekeeping and stability operations in the region. Programs also support the professionalization of Moldova's military.

These investments not only assure stability and prosperity in Moldova, but also enhance American interests. With cost-effective projects, a lean staff, and an evidence-based approach, those projects are investment, as well, for the American people.

Public Diplomacy Between the United States and the Republic of Moldova

After the Russian annexation of Crimea, the confrontation between the West and Russia in informational space became real, with Russia apparently "winning the informational war".¹⁷ The Kremlin's propaganda reached beyond a national audience extending to global level, promoting disinformation, rumors, and propaganda. In this heated situation, the United States message of Donald Trump new presidential administration "America first" did not, furthermore, sound very engaging for international audience. Although, as credibility of the leadership of the United States wanes in different parts of the globe, public diplomacy, the trust in American ideas, culture and

¹⁷ Russia is winning the informational war. Literary Hub. April 3, 2018. <https://lithub.com/russia-is-winning-the-information-war/>, accessed June 27, 2018.



people – as sometimes referred as “soft power”, are highly appreciated around the world. American cultural, academic and people-to-people programs and initiatives are trustable and contribute to dissemination of democratic values and freedom and help people achieve their goals of prosperity and free societies global wide.

The United States public diplomacy programs in Moldova involve information activities regarding the U.S. and its foreign policy; there are also academic exchange programs, linguistic schedules; cultural and music diplomacy, and people-to-people agendas.¹⁸ The U.S. Embassy in Moldova sponsors the Speakers Program, organizes the annual American Film Festival in different cities, Art at the Embassy exhibitions, and other events. To build bridges of understanding between Americans and Moldovans, the American Corners are funded in four major Moldovan cities, which are organizing informational, cultural and artistic activities. The American Resource Center (ARC) in Chisinau provides information about politics, history, economy and democratic traditions of the United States.

The U.S. media office of the Public Affairs Section offer grants for Moldovan journalists, works with media on different training for reporters and journalists’ participation in exchange programs in the U.S. to help Moldova’s effort to secure its informational space against Russian media threats of propaganda and disinformation. Programs such as America Film Showcase, Informational Cinema, Media Co-op Program, and Television Content Fund are providing grants for the Moldovan media and journalists to expand local capacity for high-quality media production and to allow develop national sustainable media.

Effective public diplomacy includes not only communication, but also establishing long-lasting relationships and creating trust among people of different countries. Exchange programs build durable connections over many years through scholarships; one or two year

programs exchanges, trainings, seminars, and conferences. The major U.S. exchange programs in Moldova are Fulbright, Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship, and the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (Global UGRAD). These programs are very popular and competitive in Moldova, attracting highly qualified candidates. Since Moldova joined the Fulbright program, the flagship of international exchange programs, from 1993 to 2016, a total of 93 scholars and 17 students from Moldova benefitted; and 81 scholars and 41 students from America came to Moldova. The brightest students and scholars from Moldova are selected to participate in this exchange, but despite the high prestige of the program, the numbers remain insignificant.

Often, after participation in the American programs people are more involved in community and volunteer work, and become active members of the civil society. The participants of the American programs are usually speaking about the increasing believe in their personal possibilities of achieving the proposed goals and to contributing to the common good in the society. The American programs alumni are usually becoming the opinion leaders that can influence the positive change in their communities.

One of the major goals of many U.S. Public Diplomacy programs is the dissemination of English language, as part of the English Language Fellow Program, the English Language Specialist Program, and the E-Teacher Scholarship Program. English language programs are integral part of Peace Corps Program, as well. Since the program’s inception in 1993, almost 1,000 American volunteers have served in Moldova. The members of the Peace Corp groups are well received in local communities and the program became well known in the country.

The preservation of historical and cultural buildings of foreign countries is the part of American public diplomacy programs, as well. The Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) project helps preserve the cultural heritage by restoring historical buildings, preserving museum collections and

¹⁸ Diplomacy in Action. U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/>, accessed June 28, 2018.

improving storage conditions for archives and manuscripts. Since its start in 2001, the U.S. Government has awarded cultural preservation grants to seven projects in Moldova, including in 2016 and 2017 \$150,000 and \$200,000 grants respectively for preventive conservation, and restoration of the 17th-Century Church of the Assumption in Causeni; and \$55,350 grant to the Librarians League of Moldova to treat and restore Bessarabian Charters housed at the National Library of Moldova.

Other American program, which does not have the same status as those described previously, is the Summer Work & Travel (SWT) program, established in Moldova in 2000. Although the program does not include social and health insurance, travel cost, and employs the youth at the minimum wages, it became very popular in Moldova. Nevertheless, the Program was criticized that became a gateway for illegal immigration in the U.S., as some SWP participants overstay their visas. After 2012, the SWT had undergone some modification and they are trying to bring the program back to its core cultural purposes.¹⁹

The United State public diplomacy promotes American foreign policy and advances its national interest enhances its national security by strengthening the relationship between citizens of the United States and people abroad. The U.S. is developing a variety of educational and cultural programs in Moldova, but they have limited capacity to include large number of citizens, are often limited to educated audience and people from urban areas. The citizenry of the country, in the most part, are not familiar with American public diplomacy programs and could not appreciate their benefits.

In the context of ongoing informational warfare of the Russian Federation, imposing considerable informational threat to the media space in Moldova, the United States public diplomacy efforts have limited reach. There is a noticeable absence in Moldova of a professional, high quality Western media, which would

19 State Department Revises Foreign Student Job Program After Abuse Complaints. The New York Times. May 4, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/05/us/politics/us-revises-foreign-student-job-program.html>, accessed June 27, 2018.

inform and update the citizens of Moldova regarding liberal values and principles, helping to promote democratic reforms and civil rights.

Moldovan Diaspora in the United States and Popular Diplomacy

The United States is a “land of opportunity” for Moldovan migrants. America is the third most popular country of destination for the Moldovans decided to emigrate. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 42,403 members of Moldovan diaspora in the U.S in 2016.²⁰ Moldovan diaspora actively supports the economy of their homeland, by financially assisting their families in Moldova. According to World Bank data, Moldova is among the world top recipient country of remittances, with these remittances comprising 26 percent of its GDP in 2014. In 2016 the Moldovan diaspora send the total of \$750,390 million in remittances to Moldova, or about 21.7 percent of country’s GDP.²¹ The remittance flow from the United States to Moldova accounted for about \$91,000 million in 2016, being among the top six countries that send remittances to Moldova.

Moldovan diaspora is actively involved in homeland politics, as well, by voting in parliamentary and presidential elections. An analysis of votes in the Moldovan Parliamentary elections in 2014 indicate that the share of votes from abroad is not considerable - only 4.5 percent. The members of the Moldovan diaspora from U.S. did not significantly contribute to the 2014 elections; their share was only 0.14 percent. In the Presidential elections of 2016 the share of diaspora’s participation was doubled in comparison with 2014. Moldovan diaspora showed active involvement in the organizing the elections, mobilizing themselves and collectively traveling the distance, sometimes significant, to the polling stations. The diaspora counted for about 9 percent of the overall votes.

20 Source: United States Census Bureau. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_B05006&prodType=table

21 Personal Remittances, paid (current US\$) World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BM.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=MD>



The results indicate that the Moldovan citizens from abroad had different preferences than did voters living in Moldova. The members of the diaspora voted by the overwhelming majority (86.1 percent) for the pro-European liberal candidate Maia Sandu. If it had been up to the diaspora, the other candidate would have been the head of the state.

The next parliamentary elections planned for February 2019 will be held according to the new mixed electoral system and will allocate the uninominal constituencies to diasporas from different part of the world. The diaspora members from the Western countries did not support this controversial decision, although are assumed to actively participate in the elections.

The political experience of diaspora members in the U.S., where civil rights and human rights are respected, where free market rules are regulating the economic development are influencing the political views of the diaspora members. The voting behavior of members of diaspora from the U.S. can be characterized as pro-democratic and oriented to the free market. Also, the Moldovan diaspora in the U.S. is contributing economically to the development of the homeland, as remittances constitute a considerable part of Moldovan economy. The phenomenon of diaspora is relatively new in the relationship between the U.S. and Moldova, and the role of diaspora is yet to be established as a promoter of interest of the homeland in the country of destination.

The Future United States – Republic of Moldova Bilateral Cooperation

The Republic of Moldova bilateral relations with the United States are an important factor in promoting the democratic reform, the eradication of rampant corruption and the development of free market in Moldova. The United States expresses interest in maintaining peace and security in the Republic of Moldova, situated in the direct vicinity of the European Union and NATO, at the borderline of the geopolitical confrontation, and representing astrategic geopolitical territory. Providing

security and peace in Moldova are not only the internal issues, but also important factors in the development of regional cooperation, and the issue of interest of the United States.

The Republic of Moldova on several occasions missed the opportunity to promote the national interest in the Washington D.C. Failing in the past to have a full time ambassador in the U.S. for two year did not permit Moldova to use potential of the diplomatic relations. And ignoring the strong message coming from the American officials after the invalidation of Chisinau' mayoral elections by the ruling regime in Moldova undermines the Moldova's citizenry hope for the democratic reforms and European integration. The Moldovan governmental structures, civil society and citizens should use in full capacity the possibilities open for cooperation with the United States in the frameworks of political, diplomatic and economic programs to advance democratic transformation of the country.

The cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Moldova should further follow the pattern of promoting the democratic transformation in Moldova, advancing the principles of freedom and eradicating the corruption, and endorsing Moldova's implementation of its Association Agreement with the European Union, which will assure the security and peace in the region. Only when the Moldovan governmental structures and civil society will work together to overcome the immediate political interests and geopolitical discrepancies and coordinate their efforts, the Republic of Moldova will advance in promoting democratic reform and foster national interest.

The economic aid and foreign direct investment, as well as trade relations with Moldova are conditioned by the United States, that Moldova should take concrete steps to reform its economy, to develop the regulatory business regime, and to improve the protection of intellectual property rights. The international organizations and institutions should coordinate their effort for better monitoring the implementation of external aid programs and joint projects in Moldova. The economic

bilateral cooperation, the investment strategies and trade relations should be based on national interest, mutual benefit, and pragmatism, and advance the economic interest of both countries.

The public diplomacy is an important part of the United States and the Republic of Moldova bilateral cooperation and cultural and academic exchange programs create long-lasting personal connections. The governmental officials and the members of academic communities in both countries should further develop mutual understanding, build people-to-people collaboration and strengthen the relationship between the citizens of different societies. The educational and cultural cooperation should be based on the spirit of exploring the cultural traditions and history of other countries and promote long-term relations on the personal level.

Bilateral cooperation between two governments, civil societies, experts and foreign partners could ensure freedom of expression, media independence and audience protection against manipulation, counterfeiting news and propaganda. The new, innovative, sustainable media projects promoting Western values and ideas are vital for Moldovan society and would be an adequate support in combating Russian media manipulation and disinformation.

The United States support for democratic transformation of Moldovan society will continue in the eve of parliamentary elections scheduled for February 2019, as the stakes are high and the major political forces in the country- the Party of Socialists and the Democratic Party are in full preparation for the election. The two major players are promoting the geopolitical rhetoric, distracting the audience from the real problems of combating corruption, implementing real democratic reform, creating competitive and free market and combatting propaganda and manipulation in the media space.

Moldova's democratic leaders and civil society efforts coupled with efficient support from the Western governments and civil societies would implement the democratic reforms, overcome rampant corruption, and

promote sustainable economic development. Fruitful bilateral political, diplomatic, strategic and cultural cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Moldova on the principle of mutual benefit would advance the interests of both countries and would benefit the citizenry of both societies.



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