

Editorial

The chain of abuses and... political weaknesses

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The year 2018, which is rapidly approaching its end, was marked by an unprecedented degradation of the relationship between Chisinau and Brussels. The problems have become more and they let us occasionally know about them, because the political life is not free from disturbances, temptations and trials. But the main reason for the current state of affairs is well known: the numerous antidemocratic abuses that threatened the still fragile good governance in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the East-West geopolitical controversy gained a new nuance in 2018, our country being the first to obtain the observer status within the Eurasian Union.

Therefore, Chisinau's foreign policy cannot be characterized as constant either at the level of institutions or at the level of declarations. In addition, there is a major gap in the strategic communication both inside and outside the country ... All these more or less recent developments place the Republic of Moldova in the category of fragile states, which will surely generate a re-evaluation by the Euro-Atlantic partners of the political and economic cooperation relations.

Following the invalidation of the local elections' results in Chisinau, previously considered free and fair by the international observers, the Euro-Atlantic partners raised questions about the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression, and integrity of public institutions. On 5 July 2018, the European Parliament voted the resolution on the political crisis in the Republic of Moldova following the invalidation of the local elections in Chisinau - a document which, among other things, notes the lack of progress in the investigation of the bank fraud, and thus reminds of the chain of abuses and weaknesses in the relationship between Brussels and Chisinau.

A series of other resolutions, documents and statements has followed that reconfirmed the position of the European Union as well as its decision not to provide macro-financial assistance to the Republic of Moldova until the full re-engagement of the state in the implementation of the Association Agreement. In the meantime, however ... the uncertain and even tensed relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Euro-Atlantic partners place the country in an uncertain area with an obvious trend of isolationism ...



The foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova suffers undoubtedly from these internal involutions. How the future parliamentary elections are going to influence the relations of the Republic of Moldova with the development partners remains to be seen, but it is certain that the messages sent by the ruling elites from Chisinau are neither encouraging nor provide for a favourable development based on mutual trust. However, mention should be made that the representatives of Brussels, as well as of

Washington, have repeatedly underlined the importance of conducting a free and fair electoral process. They also miss no single opportunity to highlight that the principles of the democratic system, good governance, freedom of justice and expression have to be respected.

And there is something else that should not be ignored ... The rivalry between the Presidential institution, on the one hand, and the Government and the Parliament, on the other hand, is becoming visible also externally, not just in the country. Although the head of state officially positions himself as a promoter of a balanced policy between the East and the West, it is enough to pursue his actions to convince yourself that the foreign policy orientation promoted by President Igor Dodon is eminently pro-Eastern. Dodon is the one who obtained the observer status for the Republic of Moldova within the Eurasian Union, a decision that sparked controversy in Chisinau, but also confusion in the international circles. In addition, during two years of his term, Igor Dodon had no meeting with his counterpart in Bucharest, Klaus Iohannis, but also with the one in Kiev, Petro Poroshenko. It is a clear signal of disagreement over the position of the Government in regional policy, but also a failure of Dodon's alleged political equilibrium.

A progress of Moldovan foreign policy in the year which is coming to an end is considered to be the inclusion on the UN agenda of the issue of withdrawal of the Russian military contingent from the territory of the Transnistrian region. The UN General Assembly Resolution of June 2018, as well as the mentioning of this issue in the final NATO Summit Declaration in July, reaffirms the political support of the Euro-Atlantic partners in the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. However, the basic question lies in the practical steps that can be taken to withdraw Russian troops and ammunition, and in reconfiguring the 5 + 2 negotiation format, where Russia has the status of mediator and peacekeeping mission. But here there is need for political desire and will - in Chisinau, but also in the USA or the EU.