



# **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS FOR ASSURANCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE**

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## Introduction

The Ukrainian crisis radically influenced the way how Moldavian society analyzes the security options. This can be deduced, from the change of emphasis in the speech of the Prime Minister Iurie Leanca, the dignitary ranging from the admission of the review of the neutrality status foreseen by the Constitution, in April 2014<sup>1</sup>, up to providing assurances to Russia that the Republic of Moldova will maintain this status, in September 2014<sup>2</sup>. This oscillation reflects the state of uncertainty that persists in the Moldovan society related to the topic of securing the territory circumscribed to state borders. Naturally, the Ukrainian crisis led to a refolding reaction from the Government of the Republic of Moldova, who returned to a reactive and defensive behavior towards Russia. At the same time, such a reaction has led to the resuscitation of some pro-NATO positions, expressed during the election campaign by the liberal parties.

The discussion in question dates long ago and reflects an old cleavage of the Republic of Moldova – the followers of neutrality versus supporters of country's accession to North Atlantic Alliance. The pro-NATO position became more active since 2004 and with the appearance of the Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea. The arguments in favor of this option varies from putting in the foreground of the deficient character of the neutrality and the importance of politico-military dimension of accession to NATO<sup>3</sup> up to the institutional and reformer character of the Alliance, necessary for strengthening the democratic institutions<sup>4</sup> and up to the fatalism and irreversibility of this process, claiming that accession to NATO must necessarily occur before the process of European integration<sup>5</sup>.

The "Orthodox" vision on neutrality is however expressed by the National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova, document approved in 2008<sup>6</sup>, which states that "in accordance with art.

11 of the Constitution, the Republic of Moldova proclaims its permanent neutrality, which means that our country is not part of the military blocs and does not allow the deployment of troops or weapons of other states and other military blocs on its territory". Also in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova, adopted in 2011, among the main landmarks of the foreign policy of the State, related to ensuring the security status, is not included the idea of accession to NATO, although is explicitly mentioned the status of neutrality<sup>7</sup>.

In this paper we will debate the main trends that revolve around this major cleavage - **neutrality versus accession to NATO** - in terms of the consequences of the Ukrainian crisis on Moldova. In our opinion, in this situation the idea of neutrality increasingly loses its sense. Moreover, the disappearance of previously accepted rules turns the neutrality into an almost hollow concept. However, the paradox of security insurance makes, despite continued erosion of its contents, neutrality to remain an indispensable concept from the view of necessity to reduce the risks. Any guidance in other direction, would lead to an unjustified increase of risks and threats for the Republic of Moldova.

### I. Ukrainian crisis and its Impact on the Security System of the Republic of Moldova

#### 1. Dissolution of the European Security System following Ukrainian crisis

The Ukrainian events and the deep crisis in which entered our eastern neighbor reflect the shorting or even dissolution of the entire European Security System. This system was created by signing of the Helsinki Final Act 1975 and was further developed through a series of important documents such as the Charter of Paris for a New Europe 1990, the Lisbon Declaration 1996, and Charter for European Security 1999 etc. The basic principles of this system targets, first all, the respect for sovereign equality of States, their territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-use of force or threat of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs, respect of human rights etc.

Overall, today's European security architecture is based on three pillars: (1) NATO as a collective platform of military defense, which at the same time maintains the USA role in Europe; (2) The European Union as a structure that provides Political

1 <http://moldova24.net/premierul-leanca-nu-respinge-possibilitatea-revizuirii-statului-de-neutralitate-al-moldovei/?lang=ru>

2 <http://www.mediafax.ro/externe/iurie-leanca-asigura-rusia-ca-republica-moldova-isi-va-pastra-statutul-de-neutralitate-13231466>

3 Iulian Chifu, „Security options of the Republic of Moldova”, 'Viitorul' IDIS, 2009

4 Dumitru Minzărari, Veaceslav Ioniță, „Why do we need NATO?”, Discussion papers, 2008-2009

5 Dan Dungaci, „Geopolitics and Security in the Black Sea - Strategic options of Romania and Moldova”, in „Moldova towards democracy and stability”, Editura „Cartier”, 2008

6 <http://lex.justice.md/md/328010/>

7 <http://lex.justice.md/md/340510/>

and Economic Stability; (3) The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which should act as political and security forum. However, in principle, the "scheme" in question led to confrontation with Russia that, after the fall of the Soviet Union felt mostly excluded from the European affairs, although its role in Europe's political and economic life remains extremely important<sup>8</sup>.

The previous crises - the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia (1999), recognition of Kosovo's independence (2008), Russian - Georgian War (2008) and Kremlin's Recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia - were not able to give a fatal blow to this system, although were cracks that have substantially weakened the structure. Meanwhile, the events in Iraq, Libya and Syria, although collaterally, have led to the dissolution of the system. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the outbreak of fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk changed decisively the problem, and in fact is a proof that today the European security system has become inoperative. The experts talk about a new Cold War or *soft* Cold War between Russia and the West<sup>9</sup>.

The debate on the factors that have determined such a dramatic transformation on the old continent is one extensive. In fact, the discussion revolves around the sacramental question: Whose fault is it? Above all, we must say that there is no consensus on the trigger point of the crisis. For Westerners, the starting point, the point "zero" and the initial condition of crisis triggering is the annexation of Crimea. In their view, the European security system began to collapse even in the moment when the "little green men" of Russia stepped on Crimea territory.

According to the NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "... we live in a different world from that in which we were a month ago ... Russia's military aggression in Ukraine is a flagrant violation of international commitments of this country and is a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea by a so-called referendum organized 'with a gun to the head' is illegal and illegitimate"<sup>10</sup>.

8 Marius Laurinavičius, Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Vytautas Keršanskas, Linas Kojala, „EU AND RUSSIA RELATIONS AFTER CRIMEA: RED LINES FOR „BUSINESS AS USUAL““, June 20, 2014, accessible on <http://www.eesc.lt/uploads/news/id750/EU%20and%20Russia%20after%20Crimea.pdf>

9 <http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/new-cold-war/1894864.html>

10 <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/03/nato-secretary-general-russia-annexation-crimea-illegal-illegitimate>

According to Rasmussen, this is the most serious threat to European security and stability from the end of the Cold War, from at least three reasons: a) the unprecedented proportions of the crisis as a result of the unprecedented movement of troops; b) dispute stakes - an extremely large number of individuals is deprived of the right to choice; c) proximity to NATO borders. The Westerners also consider that this crisis does not regards only Ukraine, but is a form of "revisionism of the XXI century" - an attempt to turn the clock back, to shoot new dividing lines in Europe, to keep the spheres of influence and to legitimize the use of force in international disputes<sup>11</sup>.

All these arguments are countered by Russian diplomacy. According to Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the trigger point of the crisis was not Ukraine: "The Crisis of European Security and its entire system was not caused by Ukraine. On the contrary, the crisis in Ukraine has reflected the contradictions within the Euro-Atlantic region"<sup>12</sup>. According to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Aleksey Meshkov, the main causes consist of "OSCE inability to provide a real unit of the Euro-Atlantic area on the basis of recognition of the equal rights of all Member States. The creation of a pan-European security system was constantly undermined by unilateral actions, including NATO enlargement and layout of missile shield elements in Europe"<sup>13</sup>.

According to Kremlin, the triple package of Western policy in Europe - NATO's successful enlargement (1), the EU enlargement and granting of Association Agreements to Eastern Europe states (2), and promotion of democracy, which led to the triggering of Kiev's Maidan (3) - put some wood on a fire just waiting to be stirred up<sup>14</sup>. In addition, Moscow does not fully support the idea that the annexation of Crimea is an action that violates the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. On the contrary, Russia considers that NATO's enlargement has created an

11 In his book „The End of Eurassia. Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization“, Dmitri Trenin said that Russia had three alternatives in the 21st century - revisionism, disintegration or creative adjustment. The annexation of Crimea involves, according to Westerners, the option for revisionism with its corollary - the restoration of the post-Soviet domination, Pan-Slavism and "the second reunification with Ukraine", the conflict with the West or multipolarity.

12 <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/751544>

13 [http://www.noi.md/md/news\\_id/52540](http://www.noi.md/md/news_id/52540)

14 John J. Mearsheimer, „Why the Ukrainian Crisis is the West fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin“, in Foreign Affairs Sept - Oct 2014

unacceptable geopolitical situation, after which the enlargement of NATO's security umbrella was made at the others expense (e.g. Russia), which is contrary to fundamental principles set out in the basic documents of the European Security System. Also, Russian diplomacy does not accept the argument whereby the annexation of Crimea is the start of the crisis. Moscow considers that the point "zero" was not in March 2014 (March 21 - the first actions of annexation), but on February 22, 2014, when the Ukrainian Parliament voted for dismissal of the President Victor Yanukovych, who fled to Kharkov. According to Moscow, Yanukovych's dismissal was unconstitutional, and being supported by the West, in fact, has not respected his commitments assumed in the negotiations of February 21.<sup>15</sup>

The issue over the importance of the Ukrainian factor for the triggering of the European security system crisis is seconded also by other several equally principled confrontations.

1. The West insists on states sovereign right to make decisions regarding their membership to customs unions and military blocs. In this context it is often invoked the Armenia's example, which was left without hindrance to join the Eurasian Economic Union. In the same manner, the Western countries insist on the sovereign right of Moldova and Ukraine to join Western blocs. Moscow rejects these arguments and considers that the States must adhere to various economic and military blocs without disturbing the balance of power, and decisions in question to be taken in a multilateral format, in order to avoid the creation of a situation where "some security is obtained at the others expense". In addition, the Russians insist on classical interpretation of the sovereignty concept, which gives priority in setting the rules of the game of strong states. Unlike Moscow, the Western countries are the advocates of a postmodern and liberal interpretation of the sovereignty concept, which allows "rabbits to sit at the same table with the lions".
2. Another issue related to the part that would bear the costs of Ukrainian crisis. The West considers that Russia's military intervention, respectively the damages caused in Eastern Ukraine, force the Kremlin to take the necessary expenses for the reconstruction of the

region. However, Moscow suggests, in turn, that currently the EU and the USA should allocate resources to improve the situation. According to Russian, their offer of \$ 15 billion, made by Viktor Yanukovych in 2013, was rejected by the current government of Kiev, which exempts the Kremlin from any financial liability towards Ukraine.

3. The role of the OSCE in the region is also heavily disputed. The Western states consider that Russia systematically violates the constitutive principles of this organization, which turns it into a dysfunctional structure, unable to perform its duties. Without denying the potential of the concerned organization, Moscow insists that OSCE was "confiscated" by the major Western countries, which use that platform to impose its will to the detriment of minority states. The Westerners deny the existence of an anti-Russia conspiracy that would imply further "damming" of Russia.
4. A crucial issue based on "conspiracy theory" refers to how the West was involved in the events in the center of Kiev, by the end of 2013 - beginning of 2014. The Westerners states that they have supported the sovereign choice of Ukrainian people. In response, Moscow is convinced that the repeated visits of Western officials and Maidan support to the detriment of the 'legitimate' President, Viktor Yanukovich was a crass example of interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, which radically changed the development vector of Ukraine.

All these issues have created a situation of deep mistrust between Russia and the USA, Russia and NATO, Russia and the EU and new lines of rupture between spaces of integration in Europe. At the macro level we can talk about some fundamental consequences on the issue of regional security.

- Took place the crisis of ideology "common spaces" which leads to blocking of the model "Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok".
- Has been reported the most serious degradation, since the end of the Cold War, of relations between the major geopolitical actors, which led to the disappearance of common platforms of discussion (G8, the NATO-Russia Council etc.), but the communication between the parties turned into a "dialogue of the deaf and dumb".
- We are witnessing the entry into collision

<sup>15</sup> SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg, Germany (6 March 2014). "Münchhausen-Check: Putin und der legitime Präsident der Ukraine". *SPIEGEL ONLINE*. Retrieved 23 October 2014.



of the two major integration projects from Europe - the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union – fact which was stimulated by mainstreaming in the region of the ideology “either, or” in detriment of the ideology “and, also”.

- Following the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, Russia hinted that is able to take strategic actions to radically change the rules of the game in the region.
- There is a progressive process of militarization in the region: Russian enter troops into the region called by them Novorossia and strengthening its military capabilities in other areas (e.g. Transnistria); at the same time, NATO begins to patrol the Baltic airspace, enters warships in the Black Sea, increases the number of military applications, and American soldiers returned to NATO borders. We follow a gradual transition from the *soft* to the *hard* approach of security.

Russia's position in this context is relatively clear. According to it, the Eastern European countries like Ukraine and Moldova must accept the status of buffer states. Russia is willing to discuss about the situation in Ukraine only after making a clear distinction between the Crimea and Sevastopol, on the one hand, and Donetsk and Luhansk, on the other hand. According to Russia, Crimean topic is closed forever - can be discussed only the status of the Southeastern regions of Ukraine. Moscow also wants the right to veto over NATO and EU' subsequent expansions. Granting a status of neutrality to Ukraine would allow Russia to have word to say in domestic politics of Kiev, which will diminish the EU's influence in the region. This rigid position generated the development of two types of alternative answers that can be given to Russia in that context.

- 1) **Policy of isolation and containment of Russia** promoted in the EU by the Baltic States, Poland, Romania and also by the USA<sup>16</sup>. The adherents of this view consider that the relationship between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union is not only one of competition between the two trading blocs, but also of rivalry between two different systems of political and economic values. The Eastern European States should be

given the perspective of joining the European Union not to create viding geopolitical spaces susceptible to be occupied by Russia. Thus, in the case of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the proponents of isolation policy insist on deepening of the European integration process of these countries, the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU being only a transitional stage. Any further discussion with Russia (e.g. cancellation of penalties) can occur only after Moscow returning to the position before the conflict – de-escalation of Ukrainian situation and liberation of Crimea.

- 2) **Policy of coexistence or co-evolution with Russia.** The adherents of this approach consider that sanctions applied to Russia often have a counterproductive impact. As a result, without pleading to a concessions policy and permanent compromises, they are in favor of full involvement in cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union, which sends a clear signal to Moscow, namely, that the EU recognizes Russia's right to have its integration process. However, such a policy would clarify the limits of the possible extension to NATO and the EU - and if one of these two processes will continue, it will be compatible with Russia's wishes. Such an approach would create spaces of cooperation and competition between the two integration projects, which would be based on different philosophies, but with openness to dual participation and to various forms of overlapping or collaboration. And it will deflect competition from the political to economic area<sup>17</sup>.

This review is tributary to the second point of view, even if it does not clarify, often, the way how will be de-tensioned the situation in Ukraine. However, we tend to think that such an approach is the only able to provide small countries the opportunity to continue the dialogue with the major powers in the region and thus to avoid the disaster of sliding into violence which obviously, will hit primarily in those who are at the crossroads of Western and Eastern interests.

## 2. The Impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the Security of the Republic of Moldova

Francisco de Borja Lasheras has described what means for the security of the Republic of Moldova the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea:

17 Ivan Krastev și Marc Leonard, „The New European Disorder”, ECFR, noiembrie 2014

16 Marius Laurinavičius, Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Vytautas Keršanskas, Linas Kojala, „EU AND RUSSIA RELATIONS AFTER CRIMEA: RED LINES FOR „BUSINESS AS USUAL””, 20 iunie 2014, accesibil pe <http://www.eesc.lt/uploads/news/id750/EU%20and%20Russia%20after%20Crimea.pdf>

“The annexation of Crimea is the third warning (made by Russia, author’s note) for ex-Soviet states such as Moldova, which doesn’t benefit from security guarantees and which, however, tries to swing to the West”<sup>18</sup>. This vision foreboding of new hard attempts for our country, strongly opposes with the more like optimistic approach of Nicu Popescu. According to him, the EU managed to join “new win friends”, Moldova being part of a final “concentric circle of friends” along with Ukraine and Georgia, and therefore cancelled the maximalist ambitions of Russia, desirous for a bipolar Europe<sup>19</sup>. This third warning of Russia (the first two being the war in Georgia in 2008 and active discouragement of Ukraine to sign the Association Agreement with the EU before the Vilnius Summit 2013) hardly seems not to be a “last Chinese warning”<sup>20</sup>, but represents a real threat that could turn Moldova into a ground space of violent conflicts, thereby triggering the dismantling processes.

Therefore, the Ukrainian crisis and the collapse of the European security system essentially changes the way how the Republic of Moldova will understand its own security, exponentially amplifying the threats and risks. In this reading, the last great successes of Chisinau – the signing of the Association Agreement in June 2014 and obtaining the liberalized visa regime in April - can be seen not only as crucial moments of entry into a free and safer world, but also as risks that increase the country insecurity. We would also like to state that in the time of a great dependence of Moldova of the external factor, these decisions had been made being aware of the fact that any alternative solution would imply at least the same risks<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, the Ukrainian crisis has outlined a number of worrying trends for the Republic of Moldova, whose main parameters are as follows:

- **Moldova entered the geopolitical logic track of “either, or”,** being forced to choose between two divergent integration projects - either the

18 Francisco de Borja Lasheras, „European Insecurity after Crimea”, April 11 2014, available on <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/francisco-de-borja-lasheras-european-insecurity-after-crimea-343100.html>

19 Nicu Popescu, „Eurasian Union: The Real, the Imaginary and the Likely”, Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot papers, 2014

20 „The last Chinese warning” - a warning without impact, made several times, which is not credible because it is repeated and because the launcher has no resources to implement it.

21 The example of Ukrainian Maidan demonstrates that the non-signing of the Association Agreement could result in serious destabilization that would be placed the Republic of Moldova in front of more serious attempts than those that followed.

European Union or Eurasian Union. These two major projects with different ideologies and principles recede from fair competition and turned into some direct geopolitical confrontation generators, front line passing through Ukraine. Russia and the West tend to consolidate their positions in already conquered areas, and attempts to find the denominator are motivated by the desire to minimize the risks, not returning to the idea of “common spaces”.

- Moldova gradually loses the ability to influence the events taking place in its own territory and around it, entering the **sign “controlled chaos”**. The State becomes vulnerable to challenges from abroad, over which it doesn’t exercise control and can produce devastating consequences. This feeling of constant exposure to diffuse, vague, and undefined hazards can be reflected by the impact that had on Moldova’s society the events of May 2, 2014 in Odessa, which they perceived as a direct threat. Nevertheless, external actors are more and more tempted to use the tools of the “controlled chaos” for creating intrusion gaps.
- **The established regularities disappear and are devalued the entrenched negotiation formats.** Moldova is entering a period in which, without clear rules of the game, is forced to improvise. For example, the referendum on the development vector of the Republic of Moldova, held in the Administrative Territorial Unit Gagauzia on February 2, 2014 and subsequently declared unconstitutional, deformed the model of collaboration between Chisinau and Comrat. Moreover, the referendum made the Government react *ad hoc*, by actions which were frequently at the limits of the acceptable, such as the initiation of criminal cases and the detention of individuals from the region. At the same time, although stagnating and doesn’t approach the issues related to the status of Transnistria, the ‘5+2’ format is constantly challenged by some guarantees and undertakes Chisinau and Tiraspol to think about its saving (conservation), even if for the moment is sentenced to inefficiency.
- Takes place **the degradation of security soft mechanisms which**, under conditions of acute polarization of integration vectors, are seen as the main means of maintaining the balance. The Association Agreement, which is expected to strengthen the Moldovan society, has generated a deeper division of the society,

creating instability in various regions of the country - Tiraspol, Comrat, Balti, Taraclia, Ocnița etc. Also, the European Integration of Moldova - although is seen as a *soft* way of attraction, by improving living standards, of Transnistria in the legal field of Chisinau failed to reduce the tension between the two borders. Thus, according to some analyzes, the European integration enters in conflicts with the country's reintegration process. Reducing the role of the security *soft* mechanisms and return to the political-military dimension can be deduced from the decline, in public perception, of the importance of corruption factor in defining threats to the Moldova's security. The same can be found in the case of mass media influence - ceasing transmission of some TV channels is not necessarily an appropriate response to the political and military threats.

- We observe a continuous reduction of the **autonomous decision-making capacity** by the Moldovan authorities. This is noted in particular, in case of official visits of Russian politicians or when we encounter the government's inability to oppose economic embargoes. For example, the government isn't able to cope with the challenges posed by external factors such as blocking of Moldovan agricultural products export to Russia. Neither the referendums in ATU Gagauzia, despite their unconstitutionality, couldn't be thwarted. In such circumstances, there is an erosion of public confidence in government's ability to manage internal crisis, which may lead to a gradual de-legitimizing Power. An indirect indication of the inability of decision-making can be sluggishness of European reform process. Even partially, this is often caused by a high degree of corruptibility; we must admit that the reforms are not implemented due to implementation inability, to which is added the extremely high resistance to reforms.

For Moldova, these trends increase the strategic problem of security providing, respectively rallying to one of two mentioned above alternative options - Co-evolution and coexistence with Russia and its isolation and containment. Both options are considered and there is not yet a clear-cut decision in this regard, which confirms the state of confusion in which our country is.

The trend of rallying of the Republic of Moldova to Russia's isolation policy can be deduct from

several actions taken recently by the government in Chisinau: the detention of a number of individuals from Transnistria and Gagauzia; the expulsion of some Russian citizens; the introduction at the beginning of 2014 of excise duties imposed on imports from Transnistria; the strengthening of military capabilities and increasing range of military applications (even if their goal was clearly defensive), the investigation of a obstruction campaign of pro-Russian political parties and the suspension of transmission of a Russian news channel; the refusal to open additional polling stations in Russia; the support of Ukraine in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

At the same time, Moldova often was distinguished by applying a moderation policy, trying to avoid its attraction into an antagonistic policy towards Russia. Thus, despite Russia's hostile actions - first of all, the blocking of Moldovan exports and giving up *de facto* of the Free Trade Agreement within the CIS - Chisinau has maintained constantly the desire not to admit the degeneration of the dialogue with Moscow. The Moldovan government didn't rallied to sanctions imposed by the Western countries to Russia, didn't accepted the idea of physical blockage of Transnistria, respectively to prohibit citizens from the left bank to leave the country through Chisinau Airport, but in the public discourse held in Moldova was sustained the necessity of cooperation with Russia etc.

Obviously, the Moldovan policy in relation to Russia was different from that of Ukraine, our country managed to avoid a series of excesses characteristic to the neighboring state. However, Chisinau couldn't avoid sanctions from Moscow, which was caused by the lack of interest of Russia for a positive agenda with Moldova. This situation contrasts more with the relationship between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, involving trilateral negotiations on the EU Association Agreement, and such - reflects Moscow's interest to cooperate with Kiev. Under these conditions Chisinau risks to become a "scapegoat" that the Kremlin will make it responsible for "losses" incurred by Moscow and Tiraspol in their relations with the EU. Thus, the Republic of Moldova may be subjected to a whole range of sanctions without having the opportunity to respond, because, *de facto*, the solution for these problems is at the discretion of Brussels and Moscow.

At the same time, we are witnessing to a so called paradox of the security of the Republic

of Moldova. After the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, the importance of our country has been steadily declining, the attention of international community being completely overtaken by the events from Donetsk and Luhansk. Moldova dropped considerably in the priority list of Russia and the EU. The Transnistrian issue is no longer seen as a chance of peaceful settlement, but is placed in the register of geopolitical disputes that dictates the power balance and conflict of interests. Simultaneously, even neglected, Moldova becomes for Russia a convenient polygon to apply various destructive strategies (sanctions, challenges in security, etc.), by the principle of “He that cannot beat the ass, beats the saddle” (ie EU). Thus, the low interest to Moldova does not necessarily mean its neglecting; on the contrary, it could lead to a growth of challenges to our country’s security.

In this situation, the decision makers’ aim from the Republic of Moldova must be the increase by all means, of country’s visibility and the risks approach at any possible internationally level, despite the low interest for them. However, even if they are inefficient, the negotiation existing formats should be saved and kept – to stay within the “previous undertaken commitments”, but also to avoid the appearance of an anarchic environment where “everything goes” (everything is possible). The inclusion of Transnistria in the Free Trade Area must become a priority for central authorities in order to avoid the retaliatory actions from Russia, by which Chisinau to be sanctioned for Tiraspol economic problems. Simultaneously, we must continue to implement the EU Association Agreement which, as previously stated, is primarily a geopolitical leverage by which Moscow pressure on Brussels. In addition, Moldova must to avoid the sliding into the damaging logic of the discourse of type “either, or”, trying to keep moderation and fairness in relation to both parties - Russia and the West.

## **II. Through Scenarios and Impact Thereof on the Security of the Republic of Moldova**

### **1. Brief Analysis of Risks and Vulnerabilities for Security of the Republic of Moldova in the Event of a Force-Majeure Scenario**

Within the context of Ukrainian crisis, the increasing role of politico-military dimensions of security makes us return to fundamental risks that endanger security of our own country. There are risks that affect the mere existence of the Republic of Moldova as of a state that is in a grave danger as a result of

Russia’s military actions in the region. Main spheres, wherein such risks are manifested, are related to the process of Transnistrian conflict regulation, to attempts to diminish the ‘anti-Chisinau’ sentiments in different districts of the country, and to activities for discouraging the subversive actions in the country’s home policy. Respective fears are also heightened by conversations held with various experts and analysts from the Russian Federation – conversations, in which the probability of use of some scenarios destabilising the situation in the Republic of Moldova is bleeding through.

Such scenarios may have a military character but also may comprise other *hard* elements to avoid a direct military intervention<sup>22</sup>. Probability of some force-majeure scenarios merits more thorough analysis in the event when the chance of occurrence thereof increases in proportion to Ukraine’s capacity to have the situation under control and not to allow developing the project of Novorossiia. Further, we will look over the eventual elements of some of such force-majeure scenarios that do not comprise only military scale but also imply a breadth of actions that would restrain and destabilise the Republic of Moldova in an aggressive way but without direct interventions<sup>23</sup>.

#### ***a) Manifestation of ‘Anti-Chisinau’ Sentiments in Different Districts of the Republic of Moldova – Gagauzia, Balti and Taraclia***

Realisation of the two referendums in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia on February 2, 2014 was a reason for the Moldavian society to carry on heated debates regarding the way the Centre was dealing with the regions<sup>24</sup>.

22 In the course of a conversation at the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, the experts of this renowned institute confirmed the possibility of recouring by Moscow to military or force-majeure scenarios. The basic argument was related to the fact that pre-existing game rules had disappeared after all happened in Ukraine and such a situation opened a ‘window of opportunities’ for many scenarios. In their opinion, such a ‘window opening’ was a negative phenomenon, it made possible realisation of arrangements that had been unimaginable not long before.

23 According to some security experts, there is a series of confidential analyses proving the weak capacity of the Republic of Moldova to cope with a direct military aggression.

24 There is a similar problem in Balti Municipality too. The Balti counsellors decided in summer of 2012 that they would arrange a referendum for aggrandizement of the Municipality autonomy. Plebiscite had to take place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September of 2012, however, it was not organised, since the Government came to understanding with local authorities. Balti Municipality had to receive the status of a territorial-administrative unit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> level, as well as Chisinau.



There are at least two elements that explain wide public attention to this subject. In the first case, it refers to the fact that although these plebiscites were declared unlawful by a court instance, the Comrat political elite insisted on organisation thereof, this constituting a politic affront to the central authorities. The second issue is related to a blow to the image of direction of foreign policy in the Republic of Moldova, since realisation and results of referendums showed presence of strong objections to the idea of European integration of the country.

It is interesting to note that almost all Chisinau political analysts and editorialists supported the idea that it was Moscow that stood behind organisation of a consultative referendum regarding the vector of development of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova<sup>25</sup>. Such an attitude is easily explained, since Russia has many times impeded evolution of the Eastern Partnership, as this tool was conceived. The natural presumption is that Russia would guide these events out of the shade, if taking into account the role and influence of Moscow in Transnistrian conflict, as well as certain actions for undermining the Moldavian political stability, such as establishing one more embargo on Moldavian wines only some months before initialling the Association Agreement. Respectively, such assertions as 'Russia is a real criminal that ordered the referendum'<sup>26</sup> and 'The Comrat leaders executed an order coming from Moscow'<sup>27</sup> were the general conclusion and impression of Chisinau political comments.

However, one may identify several elements justifying such an approach, besides the clear objective of the Russian Federation to compromise the idea of the Eastern Partnership.

First of all, what is meant here are the visits that the bashcan (a.k.a. governor) of the Gagauz autonomy Mihail Formuzal regularly made to the Russian Federation – particularly, his meeting in October 2013 with the vice-Prime-minister Dmitri Rogozin known as a critic of the Chisinau foreign

policy<sup>28</sup>. Secondly, it refers to financing of the two plebiscites by a Russian millionaire originated from the autonomous region – Yuri Yakubov, who has been holding the title of the 'Citizen of Honour of Gagauzia' since November of 2012, upon initiative of the same bashcan Formuzal<sup>29</sup>. Thirdly, a remarkable fact is the presence of Roman Khudyakov, a deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, at the events dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Finally, the last argument relates to the utterances of the Russian Ambassador in the Republic of Moldova, who declared that the Russian Federation would pay a special attention to Taraclia District populated by ethnic Bulgarians and to the Gagauz autonomy<sup>30</sup>.

It shall be specified that these implications have assumed in the Republic of Moldova an aspect differing from similar manifestations in Ukraine or Armenia – the states, whereto the Kremlin leaders came with fantastic promises or exerted direct pressure on political heads thereof, in order to make them abandon the European course of their countries. As a consequence, it is hard to speak about direct involvement of Moscow in governing the events in the Gagauz autonomy. This different tactics of Russia towards the Republic of Moldova is probably explained by intransigence of the country leadership regarding the vector of foreign policy of European Union integration.

Meanwhile, the actions of Yakubov born in Ceadir-Lunga and of Khudyakov born in Tiraspol, who are both older friends of Gagauz leaders, create an impression that they did not represent the official position of Russia. In the same way, the statement of the Ambassador Mukhametshin regarding paying more attention to Russian-language speakers from Taraclia or ATU Gagauz-Yeri might be treated as a platform for cultural support of Russian-language speakers from the mentioned localities.

Thus, instability created in the south regions of Moldova was potentiated by Ukrainian events and political involvement of Russia, as well as by internal reasons. Chisinau does not manage to find a corresponding tone in conversations with the regions, does not have an analysis centre that would monitor evolutions in this area, and does prefer to act in a rather reactive way than in a proactive one, due to which reason Chisinau is rather vulnerable to the requests coming from respective

However, the understanding was not respected. In 2014, the Balti counsellors required again adopting a law, according to which Balti would obtain a special status; otherwise they menaced with organisation of a referendum for creation of the autonomy.

25 <http://www.timpul.md/articol/referendumul-gagauz-e-pe-contiina-conducerii-r--moldova-54604.html>

26 <http://ziarulnational.md/bogatu-referendumul-nepedepsit-risca-sa-provoace-o-reactie-in-lant/>

27 <http://www.moldova.org/oazu-nantoi-scenariul-pentru-referendumul-din-gagauzia-fost-scris-la-ambasadarusiei-din-chisinau/>

28 <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1722282.html>

29 <http://ziarulnational.md/ce-business-are-in-federatia-rusa-finantatorul-referendumului-din-gagauzia/>

30 <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=10619>

localities. A new stone for checking the stability in the region shall be a discussion of the Set of Laws on Special Status of the Gagauz Autonomy, which still has not been approved by the Parliament. It shall be mentioned, besides Russian involvements, the absence of an institutionalised dialogue with regions (e.g., change of the Prime-minister in Chisinau may be a subject for a dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol), frequent violation of promises made by the central authorities to the regional leaders and low involvement of the regional political elite in policy at the national level.

#### ***b) Process of Transnistrian Conflict Regulation***

The process of Transnistrian conflict regulation came to the dead-end event before commencement of hostilities at the east of Ukraine. Negotiations process was weirded to ineffectiveness by incapacity of the parties taking part in '5+2' format to open the 'third basket' dedicated to expenses related to the status of Transnistria and to security. Respectively, negotiations came down to discussion of some subjects that should not be neglected at all but that are non-politic, such as dismantling of the funicular on the Dniester River. Despite such realities, negotiations were carried on in a context, according to which maintaining the status-quo was the best way of security assurance. Although the parties had maximalism demands (Chisinau – country's reintegration into a united formula; Tiraspol – international recognition of the independence declared), they were aware of the fact that it was not realistic to promote such objectives in the present conjuncture. As time went by, war in Ukraine and destabilisation of this country showed that maintaining the status-quo became an objective that was impossible to be realised. The situation in this region began degenerating but inactions or minimum involvement and characteristics of strategies for maintaining the status-quo proved to be insufficient and counterproductive.

Such a new situation makes the status-quo become more and more unsustainable, this determining the changes in behaviour of the principal actors in this region. Tiraspol and Moscow strain after applying the conservative tactics trying to impede new evolutions in the region. Such tactics imply various menaces: expulsion of the Moldavian police forces; refuse to carry on conversations on political solutions in the '5+2' format; dispossession of the farmers from the Dniester left bank area of their

lands; attempts to organise referendums in the Dniester left bank area with regard to transfer of the villages under Chisinau jurisdiction to Tiraspol jurisdiction; and, as well, amplification of pressure on Moldavian schools with Roman script teaching in Transnistria. Moreover, Tiraspol starts increasingly expressing its desire of a 'civilised divorce' that may be either considered a real one, or construed as a signal sent to Moldova not to continue its European course. Such an unexpectedness and general non-sustainability of the status-quo makes the situation in the Security Zone more and more unstable and fragile. Unfortunately, out-of-date format of the Joint Control Commission and Joint Military Commandment is not able to cope with such a new situation in an efficient way<sup>31</sup>.

The last but not the least factor making the status-quo the most problematic one lies in the increased degree of geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the European Union and the issue, whom the final word will rest with. This antagonism greatly intensifies existing contradictions and makes them impossible to be managed in bulk by such minor actors as Chisinau and Tiraspol are.

Under these circumstances, opinions on necessity to eliminate the existent formats – Joint Control Commission, Joint Military Commandment and '5+2' format, and to replace them with brand-new ones are heard in increasing frequency<sup>32</sup>. Although these attempts are a natural response to the events taking place in the region and represent a try to foresee and discourage negative scenarios, they shall be nevertheless treated with a maximum precaution. Mere dislocation of formats without clear establishment of new intermediation and negotiation formulas may turn to be an irresponsible gesture that, as a matter of fact, would lead to aggravation of the situation in the region. The problem is not just replacing the '5+2' format but making it functional through opening the 'third basket' and launching the political discussions regarding the problem of a state of the Transnistrian

31 'The reform of the peacekeeping mission in Transnistria: a premise for conflict settlement', Kiev 2014

32 Such intentions are heard from different sides. A statement of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is self-evident in this regard: 'Our partners, inclusive of Ukrainian ones, try to review the key principles of the Transnistrian regulation process'. Meanwhile, the Russian party shows the same desires too. A Russian expert uttered at a meeting with Moldavian and Transnistrian experts: 'Your behaviour is strange – you are run down by a train, you airplane is cracking up but you are all the same thinking of '5+2' format'.

region. Thus, the strategy of small steps must be abandoned to the favour of an approach that would deal directly with this range of problems without slipping over social and economic subjects in an interminable way. The Programme of 'Support to Confidence Building Measures' shall be amended to endorse only those projects that really interconnect the two Dniester banks.

It stands to reason that an important subject is related to confirmation of adherence to arrangements on conflict settlement principles agreed before and this may be also realised through a special declaration of the parties engaged in the negotiation process. Undermining of such agreements, accelerated under the circumstances of conflict and incertitude, may lead to irreversible and even explosive consequences. That is exactly why the increased degree of inner proneness to conflict of Chisinau and Tiraspol (criminal cases open on the right bank against the officials of the left bank; border problems; socio-economic prohibitions) shall serve for guarantors/mediators and observers a reason to direct their efforts to neutralisation of misunderstandings but not to feeding the spiral of revenge. Such a pragmatic dialogue would allow protecting the Republic of Moldova against the risks of repeating the Ukrainian scenario. Meanwhile, Moscow and Brussels should try to avoid a situation when escalation of Ukrainian events would reverberate through the process of Transnistrian conflict regulations, as well as through relations of interested parties both within and outside the Republic of Moldova. Further, Moscow and Brussels shall at least exert any of their efforts, so as straining of their relations concerning the Ukrainian subject would not affect in any way the Transnistrian case management.

### **c) Economic Security in Great Danger**

The economic security issue has been intensely discussed in the Republic of Moldova. There are three components drawing a special attention – financial-banking security, energy security and Russia's sanctions applied to Moldavian exports. As for the first case, there are such suppositions that the banking system has been becoming more and more dependent on by-interests having an explicit geopolitical impacts (e.g., dispossession of the state of the majority shareholding at 'Bancii de Economii')<sup>33</sup>. The former Minister of Finance Veaceslav Negruta writes in his blog: "This is a sorrowful result if BEM

as an infrastructure and system bank, is, de facto, harnessing certain geopolitical interests. We may decide on a financial paralysis upon any indication whatsoever if salaries of state employees and pensioners may be blocked by a telephone call from Moscow'. This situation might become actual, if Moscow wished to fall back on a force-majeure plan in Moldova by destabilising the situation through politico-economic means but not through military ones. Such a scenario might comprise giving bribes to politicians and officials, political and economic diversions, country's economy and policy undermining, instigation of protest moods and organisation of mass actions. Moreover, economic stability in Moldova is menaced by lei depreciation and by a risk of repeating the scenario, which the Russian rouble is going through. Even if experts do not foresee any special risks and deem that lei depreciation in relation to euro is insignificant one (4.85%) but only lei depreciation in relation to US dollar is important (16.85%), a greater disorder in the exchange market may be an element of a force-majeure scenario<sup>34</sup>.

Russia's sanctions against Moldova, announced some time after signing the EU Association Agreement, represent another element of a negative scenario that has been applied only in part till the present moment. The Rosselkhoz nadzor (Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance) announced on July 18, 2014 that it would introduce restrictions to fruit import from the Republic of Moldova. The reason invoked by Russian authorities was frequent detection of batches of contaminated vegetal products, although it was evident that such a decision was based only on political connotations<sup>35</sup>. Later, the Moscow executive bodies adopted a decision, according to which Russia was entitled to apply customs taxes to 19 categories of Moldavian products (meat, agricultural products, sugar, grain, beer, wines, furniture, etc.), despite existence of free economic zone within the CIS. Thus, the taxes for these categories of goods would be identical to those ones applied to WTO countries ('clause of the most favoured nation'), starting with September 1, 2014<sup>36</sup>.

34 [http://www.realitatea.md/bnm-explica-deprecierea-leului-moldovenesc-iata-factorul-psihiologic-i-cel-sezonier-invocat\\_13110.html](http://www.realitatea.md/bnm-explica-deprecierea-leului-moldovenesc-iata-factorul-psihiologic-i-cel-sezonier-invocat_13110.html)

35 Economic Reality. Monthly analysis of economy and policies. 'Expert Grup', August 4, 2014

36 'Annulment of 'zero taxes' for Moldavian products. Whether is Russia right or not?', Denis Cenusa, August 4, 2014, available on <http://www.expert-grup.org/ro/comentarii/item/1000-taxe-zero-rusia&category=5>

33 <http://vnegruta.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/siguranta-financiara-a-republicii-moldova-este-in-uniunea-europeana/>

Rosselkhoz nadzor's interdiction on meat export from Moldova to the Russian Federation came into force on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October of the previous year. If viewed separately, these actions are aimed only to discourage the economic reorientation of the Republic of Moldova to western markets. However, they may lead to situation destabilisation if being a part of a force-majeure scenario.

As for the energetic sphere that is the third provocation of economic security of the Republic of Moldova, there is still maintained an extremely great dependence on Russia. Iasi-Ungheni gas pipe construction has not solved this problem and there is a great scepticism concerning operability of this project<sup>37</sup>. Some assessments estimate that this project need circa 200 million euros to be operational but this money is not available now. Moreover, one shall not exclude the possibility that the Russian titan 'Gazprom' will use 'Moldova-Gaz' in its struggle against energy independence of the Republic of Moldova. It refers to the fact that national regulatory instruments bind the companies from the energy market to assure transportation and distribution of natural gases to end consumers, regardless of the supplier chosen but 'Moldova-Gaz' would be able to postpone commencement of distribution of the gas supplied from Romania<sup>38</sup>. Meanwhile, a positive tendency was pointed out too: 'Gazprom' reduced the price of its gas delivery to Moldova by 45 dollars per thousand cubic meters for the current year. This arrangement was reflected in an addendum to gas supply agreement signed in November in Chisinau by the vice-presidents of the Russian energetic complex Aleksandr Medvedev and Moldavian vice-Prime-minister Adrian Candu, the Minister of Economy. Thus, the Republic of Moldova will import Russian gases at the price of 332 dollars per thousand cubic meters in 2015. Nevertheless, it shall be noted that the respective reduction was made in an electoral context, this rising the question on availability of some backstage understandings.

#### ***d) Internal Political Stability – a Provocation for Security of the Republic of Moldova***

A force-majeure scenario may also include the elements for destabilisation of the home policy of

the Republic of Moldova. As a rule, such actions provide gradual organisation of some mass protest movements. This takes place through commencement of a range of small-scale activities that, if being considered cumulatively, reach the point of bifurcation and lead to occurrence of such events as 'colour revolutions' or the 7<sup>th</sup> April devastations. As distinguished from Ukraine, that went through two great moments of 'controlled chaos' in 2004 and 2014, Moldova seems to be more resistant to such destabilisations. So, from the point of view of intensity, the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 events (as well as 1995 and 2002 protest actions) were distinctly slighter than civil disorders in Ukraine. However, we have been constantly living, since 2005, in a fear of large-scale post-electoral destabilisations that were announced time after time either by opposition, or by authorities.

The 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 elections were carried on in an evidently peaceful way and satisfied all the parties, except for 'Patria' Party led by Renato Usatii and eliminated from the electoral races on the homestretch. Meanwhile, Moldova emerged into a collective hysteria in November and December, and became a victim of an aggressive campaign called 'extremism fighting'.

As it was transformed into a real 'witch-hunt', this agitation continued in the spectrum of a Russia-imported terrorism and revived fears of tearing up of Moldavian State foundations from a political point of view. This campaign reached its heights on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November upon arrests of 15 members of 'Antifa' organisation considered extremist one and led by the former communist deputy Grigore Petrenco put on the 'Patria' Party list<sup>39</sup>. Actions of force authorities transformed into a real campaign of oppression of 'Patria' members suspected of subversive intentions. According to the Home Minister, they would organise a 'Bloody Maidan' in Chisinau – when the situation ran out of control, well-trained persons paid for this plan implementation, would take control over the Television Authority and, as well, over other strategic objects<sup>40</sup>.

These actions had a great impact on the society and were, as well, an eventual catalyser of pro-European

37 <http://www.energyreport.ro/index.php/2013-petrol-si-gaze/2013-stiri-petrol-si-gaze/2013-transport-si-stocare/2825-fost-sef-anre-din-republica-moldova-gazoductul-iasi-ungheni-este-doar-un-simbol-numai-in-comunism-s-a-facut-ceva-pentru-securitatea-energetica>

38 Economic Reality. Monthly analysis of economy and policies. 'Expert Grup', September 26, 2014

39 "Is there any relation between 'Patria' Party and 'Antifa' organisation, available on <http://www.europalibera.org/content/article/26715697.html>

40 "The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Police Border affirm that they have shattered an attempt of 'Bloody Revolution', available on <http://www.timpul.md/articol/mai-i-pg-afima-ca-au-dejucat-o-tentativa-de-revoluie-sangeroasa-66568.html>



voting at the 30<sup>th</sup> of November elections. However, there still persist strong doubts regarding the real dangers posed by 'Antifa' activists and regarding any relations whatsoever of such activists with 'Patria' Party. One may presuppose in this case that security issues are sometimes used in the electoral context as campaign elements offering certain advantages to some parties, in detriment to others. Such an 'instrumentalist' approach to wilful amplification of risks and dangers to the state security for the purpose of obtainment of some momental benefits is unacceptable. Moreover, it increases the condition of state insecurity due to various reasons: 1) the syndrome of 'the village that does not still believe the shepherd, who asks for help in his fight with wolves' develops in the wide public; 2) perversion of institutions empowered to assure security is produced; 3) a sentiment of disrespect of the state is cultivated in general.

Thus, actions of competent authorities aimed to political oppositionists might lead to partial delegitimation of all attempts of stopping the subversive movements. For instance, actions of obstruction in the last November of the president of the separatist Transnistrian region Evgheni Sevciuk by the Dniester war veterans, actions related to the Chisinau Airport or searches realised by the Moldavian special services in May of 2014 within the airplane of the Russian vice-Prime-minister Dmitri Rogozin may be construed as mere political PR actions but not as elements of a significant strategy for state security assurance. But if we take into account this plausible staging of 'controlled chaos' and of 'revolutionary contamination', we may be sceptical with regard to possible use of this tactics within a hypothetical force-majeure scenario.

## **2. Options for Assurance of Security of the Republic of Moldova in the Event of Application of Force-Majeure Scenarios**

In Chapter I, there has been pointed out the fact that the policy of co-evolution and of co-existence with Russia is more preferable than that one of fencing and isolation of the Eastland. If taken in its essence, this policy is not able to settle the condition of chronic insecurity of the Republic of Moldova, existence of which depends not only on internal evolutions but on external ones too. Since, if our county was a coin to exchange for great forces for many times in the past, nowadays it is split by a fundamental contradiction: the desire to become a success story through EU adherence is knocked

down by resistance of those geopolitical factors that do not permit self-realisation and complete implementation of such a desire<sup>41</sup>. But the basic pillar in assurance of the state security may come out namely of these factors of political resistance of moderation and non-aggressive cohabitation with Russia.

Unfortunately, the way the Republic of Moldova responses to outer provocations is obscure and does not coagulate into an easily understandable security policy. Of course, there is a set of moderate actions recorded by those who invite to co-existence: abstinence from application of some sanctions to Russia as a response to similar measures announced by Moscow; rejection of the idea to interdict the Moldavian citizens from Transnistria to use the Chisinau Airport; annulment of excise duties imposed on Tiraspol in 2013; repeated attempts to initiate a dialogue with Moscow regarding the EU Free Trade Area, etc. Meanwhile, some actions reveal the vindictive impulses and reflect a perpetual indecision between two extreme points of security policies of the Republic of Moldova – neutrality and non-alignment, from the one hand, and a desire to leave finally the area of Russian influence, on the other hand. Thus, being, as a matter of fact, a 'divided periphery' but objecting to the Russian idea of 'close vicinity' through approaching the EU, Moldova still does not behave as a territory of a 'common vicinity' and does not even behave as an area that benefits from 'benevolent indifference' from the part of the neighbouring states<sup>42</sup>. The Ukrainian crisis transformed Moldova into a periphery of 'exclusion and confrontation', and Transnistria – into a 'bridgehead of strategic Russian interests'<sup>43</sup>. Thus, geopolitical and exclusivist logics such as 'either... or' annuls the pacifist, neutral and compromising discourse, and makes Chisinau's actions aimed to maintenance of a constructive dialogue with Russia, to be scarcely credible. As

41 Cornel Ciurea, 'Whether the Republic of Moldova has a role to play in the regional context', Foreign Policy Bulletin, 'Viitorul' Institute for Development and Social Initiatives, page 4, No.40, November 2011

42 Bruno Coppieters 'The Idea of a Periphery in International Relations', 1998, available on <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/etni-3/coppieters1.htm>

43 Event though search of Dmitri Rogozin's airplane, expulsion from Moldova of Vasili Kashirin and of other Russian citizens, support to Ukraine within the UN framework in detriment to Russia and intention to conceal now suing of Russia with regard to economic sanctions are evident and naturally-occurring actions aimed to security assurance, these are at the same time some actions intended to maintain the conflict with Russia.

a consequence, a discussion on region securing deviates from approach to the concepts of 'weak' or 'failed' states – that preponderantly implies the internal reformation actions – and rises up to the regional level, making it possible for Moldova to be introduced in this context as a part of a divided periphery. Such an approach must emphasise security of the whole region, inclusive through realisation of certain international arrangements.

It becomes plausible under these conditions to apply in the Republic of Moldova a force-majeure scenario that will not have an explicit military dimensions but will be able to contain a set of destabilising factors listed above – revival of regional separatist processes, stimulation of provocations on the Dniester, recognition of Transnistria, sending of Moldavian migrant workers back home from Russia, financial-banking system blocking and introduction of economic sanctions, cessation of gas supplies, application of 'controlled chaos' technologies, etc. Such a scenario may have a dramatic effect on the Republic of Moldova and may severely jeopardise the state security.

As encountering such provocations, the Republic of Moldova may have certain security options.

α) ***Abandonment of neutrality and adherence to the Euro-Atlantic structures alongside with European integration.*** Such a scenario accepted in the Republic of Moldova by such parties as Liberal Party and by the political analysts, who envisage a danger in fetishisation of neutrality as in result of following the non-differentiated multi-vector way<sup>44</sup>, would represent an overbid containing more risks than benefits. In the event of introduction of this programme into action, Moldova will not be able to avoid building up of a spiral of separatisms and will become a new polygon of civil confrontations. Ignoring these risks is extremely dangerous, although complete annulment of this scenario is impossible too, since it is difficult to fathom that the Republic of Moldova will stop discussions regarding enlargement of NATO, in the very near future.

β) ***Continuation of the European integration process and establishment of a moratorium on the subject of neutrality and NATO.*** This scenario also resulting from the Concept of the National Security of the Republic of Moldova<sup>45</sup>

is feasible and will not be very annoying for Moscow if Russia carries on the policy of 'returning home' in the very near future, to settle the internal problems – economic crisis, rouble devaluation, etc. Meanwhile, this scenario will perpetuate the *status-quo*. However, if developing a hypothesis that the *status-quo* cannot be maintained, this scenario has small chances to be implemented.

γ) ***Continuation of the European integration process and establishment of neutrality of the Republic of Moldova through a 'Pact of Stability' agreed by the great forces of the world.*** Such a scenario will settle the greatest part of the state security problems and will be an example of peaceful co-existence in this part of the planet. However, the chances to realise such a political project are now insignificant due to reticence of the great forces to give security guarantees and to recognise the neutrality status. However, the continuous aggravation of the regional situation within a year or two may require occurrence of such arrangements. Moldova shall also insist on realisation thereof.

δ) ***Change of Moldova's integrationist opinion through country's reorientation to the Eurasian Union.*** This political project agreed by the Party of Socialists is now minor one, although it shows increase in support thereof. Such a geopolitical 'pirouette' brings high risks, this also being confirmed by the example of Ukraine after the Vilnius Summit.

As it is a small state, the Republic of Moldova will continue to be in line with the scenario b) that requires the smallest costs and allows acting as the situation demands, without recurring to wide-scope actions. Despite this, the only way to have a rather active foreign policy is passing to gradual preparation of the scenario c). This will assure launching the initiatives within the framework of formats of existent negotiations; engagement, either partial one, of Transnistria in the actions on Association Agreement implementation; adoption of a set of laws on the Gagauz Autonomy agreed by Chisinau and Comrat; and step-by-step implementation of European reforms. But concessions shall be made under those conditions when the reform speed contradicts the political stability. Of course, a *sine qua non* condition for realisation of this scenario is improvement of the geopolitical situation in the region and re-launching of the dialogue between Moscow and occidental capitals.

44 Iulian Chifu, 'Options of Security of the Republic of Moldova', available on [http://www.cpc-ew.ro/pdfs/carte\\_202.pdf](http://www.cpc-ew.ro/pdfs/carte_202.pdf)

45 [http://nato.md/uploads/Analize%20si%20comentarii/Jurnal%20Academic/JA\\_nr\\_9.pdf](http://nato.md/uploads/Analize%20si%20comentarii/Jurnal%20Academic/JA_nr_9.pdf)

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations of this study envisage two aspects. First of all, they view the 'strategic orientation' of the Republic of Moldova – assurance of security under conditions of dissolution of the European Security System. Secondly, they are aimed to the tactics that shall be followed to implement the project on security assurance in a proper way.

An element of a new strategic orientation may undoubtedly serve the gradual intensification of Chisinau for the purpose of obtainment of new international arrangements that will guarantee country's neutrality or will offer security guarantees but will maintain at the same time the pro-European course of the country. Diplomatic activation in the presently benumbed formats, such as '5+2', OSCE, UNO, etc. is necessary for the purpose of achieving this objective. Strategies for *status-quo* maintenance already do not work, since signing the EU Association Agreements by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia ruined the fragile equilibrium in the region. Even though activation of existing formats seems impossible at this moment, certain opportunity windows may appear in the very near future with account to aggravation of regional situation, to economic crisis in Russia and Ukraine, to impossibility to preserve the situation in Donbas and Luhansk, and to need for solving the Crimea problem.

Neutrality still remains a key concept established by principal instruments envisaging the security system of the Republic of Moldova. It is true that neutrality, even when it is officially recognised, cannot stand for security solution, since observance thereof depends on direct needs of that or another major actor. However, renunciation from this concept implies more costs than maintenance thereof. Essentially, crisis in Ukraine imposed in the region the 'cost-minimisation' logics, excluding that one of 'benefit-maximisation'. Respectively, those strategic orientations that do not lead to aggravation of the situation shall be chosen as security options.

A new strategic orientation shall clarify, even partially, the role and pace of European integration of the Republic of Moldova as of a process of stability provision. But as things stand now, there is an ambiguity regarding the European integration. Although European integration processes are declared to be a priority in the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova, there is a resistance thereto both at the domestic level and in Moscow. Kremlin's

position in these processes is negative, even though it is not expressed in as trenchant way as its positions towards enlargement of NATO. This progressing antagonism of Russia towards the EU Association Agreements shall be stopped through a continuous dialogue held with Moscow.

***As for specific steps to be taken to avoid failure of exclusivist and revanchism logics, the following actions are imposed:***

- Confirmation of adherence to pre-agreed understandings regarding the principles of Transnistrian conflict settlement, through adoption of a joint Declaration signed by the participants to the '5+2' format.
- The strategy of small steps shall be abandoned in the favour of an approach that will be directly aimed to this range of problems, without interminable avoidances though social and economic subjects. The Programme of 'Support to Confidence Building Measures' shall be altered, in order to envisage only those projects that interconnect the two Dniester banks in a realistic way.
- Creation of an analysis centre that will monitor evolutions in the regions exposed to the danger of separatism. This will make Chisinau to behave in a pro-active but not in a reactive way, and, respectively, to propose the regions an agenda to be discussed, based, as a priority, on requests coming from such administrative units.
- Adoption of a set of laws on the Gagauz Autonomy, agreed both by Chisinau and Comrat. Such a set shall be developed through a broad discussion implying the international legal consultancy and borrowing of the best world practices in this sphere.
- Consolidation of the financial-banking system through precluding the attempts of hostile takeover of banks and through stabilisation of the lei exchange rate.
- Cessation of oppression and unreasonable arrests realised out of the political shade with regard to the persons, who support and promote other options than European integration; creation of political arrangements envisaging the involvement of moderate political formation into governance activities.



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