

Foreign Policy Association together with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung offer you a newsletter on foreign policy and European integration issues of the Republic of Moldova. The newsletter is part of the "Foreign Policy Dialogue" joint project.

NEWSLETTER

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

The newsletter is developed by Sorina Ștefârță, editor-coordinator

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News in Brief



The United States are supporting the reforms implemented by the Republic of Moldova and are encouraging the authorities to continue the modernization course of the country. Statements were made by American dignitaries with whom Andrian Candu spoke during his recent working visit to Washington. The Moldovan official has been assured that the USA will continue to provide support to our country in getting closer to the EU and USA. Similarly, the Friendship Group of the USA Congress House of Representatives assured the Moldovan authorities that the US Congress Resolution supporting Moldova's association with the EU, and also demanding from Russia to withdraw its troops and munitions from the Transnistrian region, has the necessary support to be voted.



Reducing corruption, investigating bank fraud, reforming justice and securing independent media remain the arrears of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU. This is the conclusion of the recent reform assessment visit to Chisinau and Kiev by the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee. The European MPs have stressed that the EU will continue to provide support to the Republic of Moldova. They also advocated increased trade, better transport connections and energy interconnections with the EU, in order to support the country's socio-economic development. The new electoral law was among the issues discussed.



"The most serious security risks in the region are generated by frozen conflicts and foreign military presence," Prime Minister Pavel Filip said at the 11th edition of the Security Forum in Kiev. The prime minister reiterated that the Republic of Moldova advocates the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory and the transformation of the current peacekeeping forces from the Nistru into a multinational civilian mission with international mandate. Elaboration and adoption of a special legal status for Transnistria with respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country remains a priority.



The Republic of Moldova and Romania are the favourite targets for Russian televisions - the tenth and third place respectively on the top of the European countries with negative coverage of Russian televisions, according to a study by Ukraine Crisis Media Center. According to the authors who monitored the main Russian TV stations between 1 July 2014 and 31 December 2017 (after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in eastern Ukraine), most European states are described by Russian television as an embodiment of absolute evil, except for Switzerland, Montenegro and Belarus. The number of negative news has increased by 87% from July 2014 to December 2017. The main negative topics used by Russian televisions are: horrors of daily life in the West, decay of Europe, terrorism, protests, refugee crisis, and sanctions against Russia. Research data show that Romania is often mentioned in topics about the Republic of Moldova.

Transnistria-2018: are we moving or ... deluding?



Sorina Ștefârță

The political spring in the Republic of Moldova this year has been marked by the Transnistrian issue. It started with Franco Frattini, the Special Representative of the Italian OSCE Chairmanship, whose statements on the (im) possibility of withdrawing Russian troops from the Transnistrian region have triggered harsh criticism by civil society experts and not only. Then Mr. Frattini was in Chisinau, he took into account the criticism (they say so) and

at least officially – has changed his position.

Following a meeting with the OSCE High Representative, Prime Minister Pavel Filip has talked about a "common optimistic message on both sides" and about a possible resumption of the negotiations in the '5 + 2' format in May. In less than a month, Chisinau and Tiraspol signed the protocol decision on neutral car plates, which gives the citizens on the left bank of the Nistru the freedom to travel abroad with their own cars - a

decision welcomed by the EU, but domestically considered by many a big failure. At its last meeting in April, the Government approved the Action Plan for the Reintegration of the Country for 2018.

So, officially it works well. Unofficially ... we may be lured by the illusion of the movement, while de facto we may stand in place, and more, we may regress. About "where we find ourselves" in the Transnistrian issue, we are inviting you to read further.

Editorial

Temporary tactics of the Transnistrian conflict

Vlad Lupan,
Ex-Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of the Republic of
Moldova to the UN



The Russian leaders' statements regarding the regret over the breakup of the USSR¹ backed by the Russian public opinion², the electoral "interventions" in the world, Crimea and Donbass, show that the strategic interests of the Russian Federation, including in terms of the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, are perceived by the Kremlin leadership as being close to those of the USSR - not in ideological terms, but in terms of influence.

In the case of Republic of Moldova, a political investment would relieve the Kremlin of allegations of using threat of force. A victory of the pro-Russian forces in the 2018 parliamentary elections - whether individually or in a post-election coalition with the so-called pro-European or opportunistic forces - would re-open the way for Moldova's *transnistrianization* and create an additional presence meant to divert Ukraine's resources from Donbass to its South-West. For this reason, we note the attention given by the pro-Russian Moldovan President, Igor Dodon, to the Transnistrian conflict.

Russia managed to achieve its minimum goal and freeze this conflict to maintain the status quo. Now, in 2018, we have to remember that from the historic perspective of the Transnistrian negotiations, the debates also used to slow down before the elections. Respectively, at first glance, the circumstances are not favourable for a positive development in resolving the consequences of this "frozen" war. However, from a tactical point of view, the Republic of Moldova should at least resist until more favourable circumstances are in place - or to counteract, now that Russia is caught in several conflicts elsewhere, provided that there is indeed interest in seeing certain positive developments, even if the measures could be more of tactical nature:

1. The strategic negotiations on the status of the region, even if arranged for, will not have an adequate content now. At least for the time being, we see that the current Government has given the Transnistrian file to President Dodon and thus does not prevent the promotion of pro-Russian interests.

1 <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/5004624>

2 <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3507940>

2. The security issues in the eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova should be as important as the rights of country's citizens in that region.

a) We should abandon the tactic of unilateral concessions for the sake of the image of the Government or the hope of softening Russia - the strategic motivation of the Russian Federation, described briefly above, remains the same, regardless.

b) The negotiations of socio-economic and security baskets should be conditioned, without concessions due to individual/ business interests, including car plates.

3. Additionally, if the priority of the Republic of Moldova is to promote democracy and order via the rule of law, the negotiations over the Transnistrian conflict must proceed in accordance with European standards:

a) The idea of economic attractiveness is not enough. The Vertical of Power, which changes from day to day, cannot replace the rule of law and European democracy that leads to a welfare state.

b) A special agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine needs to be negotiated, maybe on European integration, and if necessary, it should have certain confidential clauses.

4. Furthermore, although these do not even partially cover the temporary needs, from a tactical point of view it is necessary to see, undertake and understand the following:

a) Ensure the attention of all stakeholders interested in the actions of the Government and of the President of the Republic of Moldova - Russia's "proxies" in the Transnistrian region will not want result-oriented negotiations with the Government before the elections, although they may accept such talks with Mr Dodon. A truly pro-European government cannot afford the luxury of transferring this political case almost exclusively to the President of the Republic of Moldova and should block such developments. Only if they feel that the Government is going to give in, will the Tiraspol subordinates of the Kremlin accept negotiations with the Government and praise its actions. This issue requires adequate attention of all actors to determine the direction in which the Republic of Moldova is moving.

b) Re-examine the priority of the actual field issues and of

possible “trade-offs / bargains”. If the list is not good, there is no need to negotiate what Transnistrians put on the table.

- c) Depart from the idea of “requests” addressed to the OSCE representative to introduce topics of primary interest to the Moldovan population in the negotiations. A sovereign state does not ask a mediator to introduce topics on the agenda, it addresses them directly - and asks the mediators to support such a logical agenda. The tactic of asking for support an OSCE representative with pro-Russian visions, when there is a feeling that the subject has no chance, could add to the impression that the Government conceded the Transnistrian file to the pro-Russian president Dodon.
- d) Address the Transnistrian problem from the point of view of international law. The “Promo-Lex” NGO with whom we have worked on famous cases at the European Court of Human Rights, has the necessary experience. The government does not use such successful experience yet, while the statements meant to put pressure in this regard do not materialize into results.
- e) Return to the previous and forgotten position of the Government regarding the withdrawal of Russian troops, through reverse conditioning withdrawal of Russian troops versus conflict resolution, opposite to the Russian conditioning “conflict first”. The issue of the withdrawal of the Russian troops is complicated and cannot be solved at the UN. For this reason it will deserve a separate publication under other circumstances.

Transforming the Transnistrian conflict into an electoral one in accordance with the ‘Good Cop/ Bad Cop’ formula, in which the Government is the good cop and President Dodon the bad cop, would be too simplistic and obvious to all the interested actors. There are national implications regarding the regional development model of the Republic of Moldova - Ukraine, the Black Sea region and Central and Eastern Europe - as well as strategic implications with the anti-missile shield in Romania, undermining EU and NATO as actors capable of countering Russia and offering models of free and prosperous development. Thus, it remains to be seen whether there is a real political will not only in Kremlin and its subordinates in Tiraspol to “solve” the issue of Transnistrian exports through car plates, as in Italian contentious regions, but also in Chisinau, regarding the wider settlement of the Transnistrian conflict based on the national interests of the Republic of Moldova. In talks with Russia, nobody has cancelled the zero-sum game, but it depends how this game will be played by the Republic of Moldova.

New York, 22 April 2018

Dumitru Minzarari: **“This format designed when we were alone in the face of Russia is a compromise”**



Dumitru Minzarari is PhD Candidate in Political Sciences, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, USA, where he researches issues related to security, foreign policy dynamics, transitional regimes, and formal analysis of social processes. Mr Minzarari has been Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova since December last year. Before being appointed to this position, however, he conducted together with the Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Association, Victoria Bucătaru, a study dedicated to the 25 years of the Transnistrian conflict. The paper argues and demonstrates that the conflict mechanism in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova is surprisingly similar, both conflicts being driven by the dynamics of a hybrid war. About this, but also about the need to change the approach, we have discussed in the interview below.

■ **Mr Minzarari, one of the latest studies on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, whose co-author you are, has in its title a phrase that is far from being optimistic - “the 25th year of impasse”. Why impasse?**

■ **When you have no results it is logical to change your approach. In the case of**

Transnistrian conflict, in essence, the technical approach has not changed over the past 25 years. On the contrary, it is persistently insisting on the same principle - that the two parties involved in the conflict are Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova, and Russia is just a mediator. This is an essential mistake! De facto, as I pointed out in the study, this conflict is neither

interethnic nor political. It is an interstate aggression which is presented as an internal conflict.

■ *By such statements you are questioning, directly or indirectly, the whole concept of the '5+2' format, where Russia is appearing as a mediator...*

■ The '5+2' format was one of compromise made at a time when Russia's influence was very high, while the interest of the Western partners in resolving the conflict was rather small, including in terms of possible investments. Since then - especially after Russia's aggression in Ukraine - things have evolved significantly. But we continue going that way, as if we developed a dependency that is very difficult to break ... The '5+2' format could be revived and streamlined, provided the very foundation on which it was built at the beginning of the 1990s, when we were alone in the face of Russia, is changed and modernized. Specifically, it needs to be replaced by a peacekeeping format, according to UN standards of neutrality and impartiality.

■ *A less often subject, however ... How do you explain the diminishing of the public discourse regarding the changing of the peace-making format?*

■ I think that through this type of discourse, a certain state of mind was tested in order to anticipate some possible reactions. The conclusion was that the resistance was too high, and thus it was decided to postpone such talks until more favourable conditions are created. But both the Chişinău leadership and the national and international experts understand very well that, in terms of respecting the interests of the Republic of Moldova, this conflict is impossible to be solved without changing the format imposed 25 years ago by the Russian Federation.

“Mr Frattini is a politician and needs success stories”

■ *Against the backdrop of your “pessimistic” study, how do you explain*

the optimism of Mr Franco Frattini who, during his visit to Chisinau at the end of March, declared that 2018 will be a historic year in the conflict settlement? Is this a sign of poor information, of manipulation or perhaps of naivety?

■ Our study is an evaluation of the mechanism behind the negotiations from the perspective of social and political research - so it has a pragmatic approach. However, Mr Frattini is, above all, a politician, and politicians need success stories and optimistic statements which would allow them to keep the dialogue, even though they understand that things may not happen exactly as they wish or perhaps nothing at all will happen ... So any chairmanship of the OSCE - including the Italian one represented by Mr Franco Frattini - is interested in showing results. It's a matter of political image. Hence Mr Frattini's attempts to push things in a direction that would generate something that resembles a result.

■ *Perhaps he hoped he would negotiate differently with the Russians...*

■ We cannot know exactly what he hoped for. But obviously the few visits to Moscow that Mr Frattini made before coming to Chisinau, could not go unnoticed. As a result, he got harsh criticism for that. As Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, it would have been logical for him to come to Chisinau first to see what our wishes and ideas are about. And only then he could go to the Russians and support these ideas. However, the statements made by Mr Frattini in Moscow were at least strange, promoting the Russian vision and model of conflict resolution. I would, however, agree with the idea that 2018 could bring some positive results, because after visiting Chisinau, Mr Frattini changed his discourse and, hopefully, also his opinion. This confirms that if it receives genuine and first-hand information, the Italian OSCE Chairmanship has the potential to objectively treat the situation and adapt its perception to our needs. But the results

will not be as important as we would like them to be. Most likely, they will occur in the area of strengthening social and economic relations between the two banks of the river. But the essence of solving this conflict - the existing political obstacles - is unlikely to be reached in 2018.

■ ***Is it correct and judicious to prioritize the socio-economic problems at the expense of political ones which, being “more difficult”, are continuously being postponed?***

■ One does not exclude the other. It is clear though that if the OSCE Chairmanship lasts just one year, one is tempted to attack the so-called “light” topics that one can present as a success. This was the case with the five protocols signed in November 2017, which the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship has attempted to present as a revolutionary success. De facto, this success is due to the Chişinău leadership, without whose political will this would not have been possible. Unfortunately, all the issues that don't deal with political obstacles remain on a floating line and prevent us from moving towards a truly viable solution. In addition, also Mr Frattini refers to Chişinău and Tiraspol as parties in the conflict, although they should talk about the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation. Only when Russia is qualified by the international community as a party to the conflict will we move forward in the conflict resolution. Because, the political costs that Russia will bear in the wake of this conflict will increase significantly and thus it will be easier to put pressure on it. As long as Tiraspol is “party” in the conflict, we will be confronted with various elements of hybrid war, similar to the ones in Ukraine. And Russia has no interest in decreasing its support for the separatist region.

„ We're like in a boat full of holes...”

■ ***To what extent the programmes aimed at confidence-building between the two banks of the Nistru, which are swallowing***

tens of millions of euros a year, have attained their goal?

■ It's like a disease that we are treating with placebo. Confidence building measures are effective in the case of interethnic or inter-religious conflicts, when the tensions between the two groups are so great that they cannot even sit at the negotiating table. And it is not our case ... In our case, the confidence-building measures are used predominantly to avoid a total freeze in the interaction between Chisinau and Tiraspol, ensuring a fragile bridge that keeps an equally fragile dialogue. And, ultimately, they are a trap that creates opportunity costs - because they ignore other mechanisms that could be more effective, and allow you to relax and not look for other solutions. In my opinion, we should come up with another approach.

What would be that?

■ For example, the economic interests of both Chisinau and Tiraspol have to be used to discuss the so-called political basket. The confidence-building measures allow for this basket to be ignored - on the grounds that "they" do not want to talk. They will not even discuss if you don't create the necessary motivation! The parties should be encouraged to approach their positions. If the authorities in Chisinau are interested in discussing, and Russia, through this political avatar - the Tiraspol regime - refuses to do so, costs have to be created and existing leverages have to be used. In terms of exports, for example ... Otherwise, this logic of confidence-building measures - we should keep at least this mechanism in order not to break the communication - is a suboptimal solution and creates just the illusion of normality. It's like being in a boat full of holes, with water coming in, and with us, throwing the water out of the boat without covering the holes.

How substantiated are the statements on the re-militarization in full swing of the Transnistrian region, when we are

actually expecting the withdrawal of the armament?

■ De facto, the region has never demilitarized, on the contrary, continuous efforts have been made to strengthen its military capabilities. A certain intensification took place in 2008, after the Russian-Georgian war, then the war in Ukraine led to a significant increase in the military exercises, so that last year we had one of the biggest increases in this respect - an activity per day on average. These are costly exercises from the economic point of view and it's not hard to guess where the money comes from ... If I'm to speak from the position of State Secretary in the Ministry of Defense (MA), which I've been holding since December 2017, I will say this should be a warning for us as this is a so-called "costly signal," which shows that a military training that can be used in the future is taking place. Therefore, even if the Transnistrian conflict was not traditionally the MA's competence, together with the intensification of the military exercises in the region, we are paying much more attention to the situation, because these military exercises can turn into a possible military aggression against our country. De facto, the armed forces in Transnistria exceed our military capabilities several times, and the 1 to 3 force ratio is one that allows you to start an offensive. As a result, we are constantly monitoring the state of affairs, so that we can respond.

"We need to show more creativity in relation to the OSCE"

One of Mr Frattini's widely discussed statements is about the (im) possible withdrawal of the Russian soldiers from Transnistria. Why not?

■ Also through this statement Mr. Frattini is promoting the Russian paradigm. Because they are pressed to withdraw people and evacuate the munitions, the Russians insist on the conceptual separation of the so-called peacekeeping forces, which are

part of the widespread conflict resolution mechanism and the "operative group" left here to guard the former 14th Army's munitions. It is one of their stratagems to impede the idea of changing the peace-making format. Frattini says we could only remove the contingent that watches the warehouse, not the peacekeepers. However, both of them are Russia's forces that are strengthening the conflict and influencing the negotiation mechanism, but also the Republic of Moldova. And as long as there are Russian armed forces here, no matter how they are disguised - at some point, the Russians proposed creation of an antiterrorist centre in the region under the same pretext ... - de facto we have a Russian military base in the form of ... peacekeepers. And even if one day Tiraspol wanted to negotiate with Chisinau, it would not be able to as it is extremely dependent on the Russian military force present there.

How do you see the future of the OSCE, including in relation to the Republic of Moldova?

■ The OSCE has a great potential to generate positive results, but we need to show more creativity and capitalize on the support of the USA, the EU, Canada, in order to counterbalance Russia's initiatives. For example, this can be done through various bilateral projects aimed at strengthening our military capabilities or through conducting a feasibility study on a UN Mission here. Possibilities do exist, we simply need to work harder - on foreign policy, defense and reintegration - in order to create platforms for discussion and make allies. The negotiation process reform is imperative if we want to move something between the two banks. Let's also lobby, putting thus pressure on Russia. Because, I'm repeating myself - this is not an interethnic conflict and this is a great chance for us. If we make determined and the right steps, I am convinced that in a few years things will change quite a bit. We are here and Russia is far away.

Thank you for the interview.

Sorina Ștefăruță

Opinion of Political Parties

For a peaceful solution within the Republic of Moldova

As announced in the previous issue, in 2018 we inaugurated a new heading - "Vision of Parties". We did it because it is an electoral year and this can serve as an extra platform for the potential aspirants to the Moldovan parliament to make public their position on various social and political issues of major interest to the citizens of the country. This time, we asked the representatives of four parties to tell us about their party's vision regarding the future of the Transnistrian region.

1. How would you qualify the current situation in the Transnistrian issue? Do you see developments or involutions?
2. Traditionally, in their electoral platforms, parties have a chapter – bigger or smaller, according to their priorities - dedicated to the way they see the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. What will be the focus of your party in the parliamentary campaign of autumn 2018?
3. One of the issues which has been discussed for a few years now is to replace the Russian peacekeepers with a UN Civilian Mission. What is your party's position on this subject?

For the first time, the Transnistrian region will have its deputies in the Moldovan Parliament



Marian Lupu, chairman of the parliamentary group of the Democratic Party of Moldova

1.

Evidently progress has been made on the Transnistrian issue, which we

welcome here in Chisinau. I refer in particular to the four protocols, signed in November 2017, related to the schools with teaching in the state language and Latin script, the access of farmers to their agricultural land, the apostille on the diplomas issued in the Transnistrian region and the telephone communications between the two banks of the Nistru. The things agreed that are now being put into practice benefit Moldovan citizens on both banks of the Nistru.

I would also remind about the opening of the road bridge from Gura Bicului - Bicioc, another positive signal in the relations between the two banks. On the other hand, another progress is noteworthy, namely that Moldova has now control over its entire eastern

border after the opening of the joint Moldovan-Ukrainian check point at Cuciurgan-Pervomaisk in July last year. The collaboration with the Ukrainian neighbours has improved in recent years and this is also reflected positively on the situation in the Transnistrian region. Therefore, I think we are in a favourable moment, having a basis to further build the Chisinau - Tiraspol relationship.

2.

PDM's position remains that the Transnistrian region is part of the Republic of Moldova and should be reintegrated by offering it a special status with respecting national independence and sovereignty. For us, this reintegration is a fundamental objective of the foreign policy. At the same time, we are now focusing on integrating as many local actors as possible (citizens, companies, NGOs, local administrations) into the life and economy of Moldova, as well as on creating links between the Transnistrian entities and the European Union. The Moldova - EU Association Agreement is also valid for the Transnistrian region, and the proximity of this region to the EU also has the role of approaching Tiraspol to Chisinau.

I would like to mention here something else about the Transnistrian issue and the parliamentary elections from this year. For the first time, the Transnistrian region will have its

deputies in the Moldovan Parliament. According to the new electoral legislation voted by PDM, two deputies will be elected in single-mandate constituencies over the Nistru, and this will help to strengthen the links between the two banks of the river.

3.

We support this and see it as a crucial step for the future. All foreign armed forces and ammunition from Transnistrian depots should be withdrawn from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. This would serve the cause of peace and would smooth the way toward the complete resolution of the conflict.

There are more optimistic periods followed, inevitably, by a rebound



Mihai Popușoi, deputy chairman of the Party for Action and Solidarity

1.

Unfortunately, in the Transnistrian issue, we do not have sustainable developments in the negotiation process, rather than more optimistic periods that are inevitably followed by a rebound. We all have become accustomed to these diplomatic cycles linked largely to the electoral processes on both sides of the Nistru and the

activism of the state holding the chairmanship of the OSCE. However, we cannot overlook the plans to establish joint Moldovan-Ukrainian control over the entire Transnistrian segment of the state border of the Republic of Moldova. It remains to be seen how effective this control will be in boosting the negotiation process. So far, Chisinau has not presented yet a dispute resolution project, and the small progress- whether it's about signing those sectoral protocols or opening the Gura Bâcului road bridge- seems rather reciprocal favours between the two oligarchs who are behind the Chisinau government and the separatist authorities in Tiraspol- Vlad Plahotniuc and Victor Gușan, respectively. Unfortunately, the electricity consumers on the right bank are de facto forced to subsidize the Tiraspol separatist system through non-transparent contracts with the Cuciurgan Plant. Tiraspol continues to accumulate enormous debts for the Russian gas that hang over the head of every citizen of the Republic of Moldova. Meanwhile, Transnistria has increased the number of military exercises, including some aimed at crossing the Nistru River, a defiant gesture towards Chisinau. In the issues that matter most such as the withdrawal of Russian troops according to the 1999 Istanbul commitments, the replacement of the peacekeeping mission with an international civilian mission and the negotiation of political issues between Chisinau and Tiraspol, there is no progress. Moreover, the repeated demands by Chisinau from Russia to withdraw its troops are totally ignored. At the same time, the government in Chisinau is losing the confidence of the foreign partners as long as it does not have a clear agenda regarding the Transnistrian issue.

2.

We will focus on bringing the two banks closer based on the shared aspirations of the citizens to live better, to enjoy rights and freedoms such as independent justice, free press, quality public services and no corruption, or we can obtain all of these through a sustained effort in the European integration process. It has become a cliché, but the country's reintegration process can become more attractive for the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region when the right bank will make progress on the good governance and well-being of the population. Meanwhile, we will promote the interpersonal contacts with our compatriots on the left bank and will focus on the importance of studying the Romanian language in order to work more efficiently and integrate easier the region. Gagauzia is not necessarily a good example in terms of linguistic integration. Only by strengthening inter-human contacts and democratizing the region, including through the press from the right bank, can we hope for progress once an opportunity window emerges in the negotiation process. Otherwise, we are running the risk of 'transnistriization' of the Republic of Moldova, which we will not admit.

3.

PAS fully supports this goal, whether it is a UN, OSCE or European Union mission. The peacekeeping mission in the current format has become an anachronistic one, and the Russian peacekeepers are rather a factor of instability than one that contributes to greater stability in the region.

The phenomenon of oligarchization and criminalization has become a reality for both banks of the Nistru



Andrei Năstase, chairman of the „Dignity and Truth” Platform

1.

The Transnistrian conflict has almost disappeared from the public agenda of the Republic of Moldova. And this is a serious problem. For the DA Platform, territorial reintegration is one of the objectives that should strengthen the entire society and political class.

Unfortunately, the government policies in this area are inconsistent and, therefore, totally ineffective. The same can be said about the performance of President Igor Dodon who is acting only for his own benefit or for the benefit of his internal and external partners. Let's not forget that Dodon was minister of economy and Zinaida Greceanii, the current chairperson of PSRM, was prime minister when Igor Dodon started the scheme by which a tax shelter became overnight our main supplier of electricity.

We are talking here of a massive economic crime when more than 20 million dollars from electricity bills paid by Moldovan consumers have reached the accounts of off-shore companies.

Currently, the phenomenon of oligarchization and criminalization has become a reality on both banks of the

Nistru. Thus, the Transnistrian issue remained at the discretion of the two oligarchs in Chisinau and Tiraspol. Both have personal interests in keeping a grey area on the left bank of the Nistru, which, in the absence of regulations, transparency and any democratic process, has become a paradise for money laundering, tax evasion and smuggling.

For the sake of the image, the so-called agreements proved to be unilateral and without benefits for the Republic of Moldova. De facto, Chisinau unjustifiably succumbed, accepting the legalization of "official" documents issued by the so-called public institutions in Transnistria. And it did not get anything instead, not even the real access of farmers in the villages on the left bank of the Nistru under the Moldovan jurisdiction to the agricultural land over the Tiraspol - Ribnita road. Otherwise, because of the economic interests of a narrow circle of profiteers, the citizens on the right bank of the Nistru continue to finance the Tiraspol regime. The populist statements made by the current government about the need to withdraw the Russian troops are nothing more than a rhetoric designed to polish the image of the oligarchic regime.

2.

We are addressing this issue in all seriousness and are pleading for the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. At the same time, we definitely don't accept the idea of federalization of the Republic of Moldova. Our vision starts from the premise that a viable solution can be identified only on the basis of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova by granting a broader autonomy to the Transnistrian region. Promoting confidence-building policies between the two banks of the Nistru is essential. 'De-capture' of the state is

vital to provide a real chance to solve the frozen conflict on the Nistru.

Moldovan diplomacy should constantly insist on bringing the Transnistrian issue on the agenda of the European Union, the United States of America, Russia and relevant international institutions.

Priority for the DA Platform is the application of effective levers, which would provide for the interruption of the economic support of the separatist regime and would ensure maximum economic independence of Chisinau from the Transnistrian region.

To that end, we are obliged to diversify our electricity sources. The construction of the Iasi-Chisinau gas pipeline, which would cover distribution networks across the country, should be expedited. Thus, we will ensure that Tiraspol will no longer be able to blackmail us with turning off the tap of the natural gas delivery, as it did in 1991.

Mention should be made that the Cuciurgan thermal power plant belongs to the Russian concern "RAO ETS", which consumes natural gas without paying for that, burdening enormously the citizens on the right bank of the Nistru. In the same vein, it is necessary that all Moldovan economic agents in Transnistria, registered officially in the Republic of Moldova, apply the national tax legislation. According to it, the customs duties as well as the excise and VAT rates are equal for all the enterprises that carry out import/export operations and are paid to the state budget at the stage of the customs procedures.

It is imperative to counter smuggling.

Decentralization needs to be implemented in line with the European standards. If we delegated financial, administrative and political responsibilities to local authorities, if

we created conditions for strong local autonomy, the economic reasons for federalising a small country would completely disappear. It would be appropriate to offer the Transnistrian region a special status based on the Law adopted on July 22, 2005, which explicitly stipulates that Transnistria is an inalienable component of the Republic of Moldova. This can be done without federalizing the state!

3.

We are fully supporting this idea. An international mission under the aegis of the UN would bring credibility to the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. It is also necessary to evacuate the weapons from the territory of the Republic of Moldova and to promote the demilitarization and democratization of the region.

We are rejecting the idea of granting any special status to the Transnistrian region



Anatol Salaru, chairman of the National Unity Party

1.

In the opinion of the National Unity Party, the Transnistrian conflict settlement is characterised by minor and insignificant developments, which are more advantageous for the separatist structures in Tiraspol, through unilateral 'giving ins' from the Republic of Moldova that rather reinforce the so-called Transnistrian statehood. From the PUN point of view, the recent talks about granting a "special status" to the separatist region is an attempt to redefine the concept of federalization, a revival of the Kozak project, with disastrous effects for the Republic of Moldova. The National Unity Party rejects the granting of any special status to the Transnistrian region, and the autonomy granted to the districts on the left bank of the Nistru River should not exceed the level of autonomy of the other districts of the Republic of Moldova. In this context, efforts to restore confidence between the two banks of the Nistru, humanitarian aid to the population of the Transnistrian region or the infrastructure development grants provided by the development partners of the Republic of Moldova should contain clauses of non-recognition of the legality of the decisions and the competence of the separatist authorities. In the opinion of the National Unity Party, the settlement

of the Nistru conflict must be carried out in accordance with the international law, citizens' rights and freedoms, protection of the rights of national minorities, but respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

2.

The National Unity Party is promoting: demilitarization of the Transnistrian region;

- withdrawal of Russian troops from the Russian Troops Group (GOTR);
- evacuation of Russian ammunition and military equipment stationed illegally on the territory of the Republic of Moldova;
- removal of the Russian Federation's intelligence structures and other forces hostile to the Republic of Moldova stationed in the Transnistrian region;
- strengthening of confidence among the citizens of the Republic of Moldova on the left and right banks of the Nistru;
- support to Moldovans from the Transnistrian region.

3.

The National Unity Party supports the replacement of the Russian peacekeepers with a UN-mandated Civil Mission.

The opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) or of the Foreign Policy Association (APE).