

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



"Moldova is stronger in its international relations", said Andrian Candu, speaker of Moldovan parliament, at the end of the Parliament's spring session. According to him, our country is no longer so vulnerable, while the external relations are pragmatic, based on respect and cooperation. In this context, he reminded of the US Congress Resolution that the United States supports the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia and reaffirms its support for the democratically elected governments and the people of the three countries. He also spoke about creation of the Parliamentary Assembly of Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine (whose first session will take place in September in Georgia), but also about energy security, highlighting in this context the two interconnection projects: to the electricity from Romania and the Iasi-Ungheni-Chisinau gas pipeline. As for economic relations, the speaker said that, currently, more than 65% of exports go to the EU countries, as a result of which we are no longer dependent on a single market dominated by political decisions.



Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Iurie Leanca, paid an official visit to Copenhagen in August, where he reiterated the determination of our country to maintain the European integration course, and to continue and deepen the reforms in the economic, social and justice spheres. In addition, he reconfirmed Moldova's willingness to get a clear European perspective, demanding Denmark's support for this. Among the major topics discussed were the resumption of the Danish technical assistance to the Republic of Moldova, support of Chisinau's efforts to withdraw Russian troops and resolve the Transnistrian conflict, as well as provision of EU assistance for the judiciary reform. The Danish officials have shown willingness to increase European political and technical support to our country. In particular, they noted the positive impact that the EU-Moldova Association Agreement and the Free Trade Area had on the Moldovan economy and society.



The deepening and widening of political and commercial-economic dialogue with India, the initiation of cooperation partnerships in various fields, as well as the opening of a diplomatic mission to New Delhi were discussed with Indian officials by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Tudor Ulianoschi, during the working visit to India - the first visit of a high-level official from the Republic of Moldova in the last 25 years. The agenda included meetings with the Indian counterpart, Sushma Swaraj, with other officials, as well as with the leadership of Indian corporations and business representatives, etc. The sides have discussed the intensification of commercial-economic cooperation and the consolidation of bilateral legal framework, including the completion of the draft agreements on health, civil aviation, and cybernetic sector. The Republic of Moldova and India established diplomatic relations on 12 March 1992. According to the foreign office, in 2018, on the territory of the Republic of Moldova there were registered 308 Indian citizens with temporary residence permits, 277 of whom arrived here for studies.

One Independence, Several Aspirations

Sorina Ștefârță

Slowly and sometimes in an uncertain way, the Republic of Moldova has reached its 27th anniversary of Independence. This day has traditionally become a moment to take stock of successes and shortcomings. It is also a day when journalists are trying to find out, again and again, if it was good what has been done in these years and what our fateful mistakes have been. Because we all understand that what we wanted "then" is not really what we are having "now".

We understand, at the same time, that the aspirations were also different – the interviews with the protagonists of the current edition of the newsletter, Dumitru Diacov and Vasile Nedelciuc, is a confirmation to that, likewise the Independence itself has different connotations. For some it means people. For others - the chance of a successful career or maybe its end. For me, Independence has a name - Vasile Pasanici. He was chief doctor in Jora de Mijloc, and later- chief doctor of Orhei district, and then he won in an open confrontation, not on party lists, the deputy mandate in the first Parliament of the



Republic of Moldova. Above all, he was a great personality and a great friend. On 27 August 1991, although he had been fighting for over half a year a merciless cancer, he left the hospital and went to Parliament, then to the Great National Assembly Square to sign the Declaration of Independence. Then he got into the car and came to visit us in Jora de Mijloc to bring us the big news. He was so happy and so excited that we all had begun to believe he was going to live. But he died in less than two months. And that day of 27 August 1991 was the last day I saw him alive and happy to be part of making our history. In the years that followed, it wasn't just once that I was

wondering, "What would Pasanici say?". In one case or another, in one crisis or another. I'm also wondering about it now, watching the political disgrace from Orhei and Jora de Mijloc. But that we cannot know ... We can only hope that in the time of protests and parallel celebrations, there was at least one who remembered those due to whom this Independence was possible. Those who 27 years ago faced pain and came to the Great National Assembly Square to legitimize a country they wanted to be free, a country with worthy and free people.

* Please note that all articles were made by August 27.

For many years to come, both Moscow and Bucharest and other powers will be having interests here

Dumitru Diacov, honourable chairman of the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM)

Among the few politicians, if not the only one, present in almost all Moldovan Parliaments since 1994 (except for 2001-2005), Dumitru Diacov could be the chronicler of the country and, at the same time, of the Moldovan parliamentarianism. On the eve of a new Independence Day, I asked the current honourable chairman of the main ruling party how he was imagining, 27 years ago, the Republic of Moldova today and where we have stumbled - if we have - on the way to progress and development on which we embarked on August 27, 1991.

■ Mr Diacov, you have somehow reproached me at the beginning of our dialogue that our journalists are not curious enough and even superficial, otherwise they would monitor the politicians more strictly - and partly I agree with you. But neither the politicians are receptive when the journalists touch them...

■ The politicians take advantage of the fact the journalists are not curious. Besides, we still have fairly passive voters who don't want to complicate their lives, analyse and penalise the politicians. Parties propose programmes, etc., but the country is developing according to the population's choice. We've had lots of parties in the period of almost 30 years. Where are they now? When leaders disappeared, parties have disappeared too without any continuity - from Agrarians, to Braghis, Urecheanu, Snegur, Rosca and others. In this context, I am glad that PDM is among the few parties that have maintained its identity and logic, while ensuring the change of its leaders- Diacov, Lupu, and now Plahotniuc. I hope it's a beginning of a tradition: the leader is changing, while the party is continuing to exist...



I was convinced that the Republic of Moldova would be the best and most disciplined pupil

■ Does this stage of our existence look as you imagined it 27 years ago?

■ Certainly not. I entered politics from active journalism, in a period of big turbulences, being very excited about that. In the 1994 Parliament, where I entered together with the Moldovan Democratic Agrarian Party, I was chairman of the Foreign Policy Commission and I know how hard it was, step by step, to assert ourselves as a state. We struggled to join the Council of Europe as they were telling us that probably it didn't make sense to join as an independent state, since anyway, sooner or later, we were going to unite with Romania. I have even found out an informative note in this respect.... But I was convinced that the Republic of Moldova will be the best and most disciplined pupil, that it will embrace the European idea quickly and that in a very short time we will be a country that we will all be proud of. And we succeeded at that time... Then little

time after, the traditional domestic movements started: the ruling alliance has broken down, political conflicts have started, the first sign coming in 1996 after the dispute between the three big Moldovan politicians-Snegur, Lucinschi and Sangheli, between the Presidency and the Parliament, with Petru Lucinschi having proposed to change to the presidential republic. The Venice Commission experts, whom we addressed, no longer understood what was happening with the Republic of Moldova which had been so wise until then and whose people has started to fight among themselves...

■ In fact, also today the Venice Commission doesn't quite understand what is happening to us...

■ We will get there too. But it was clear then - and I also told Mr Lucinschi about that- that Parliament was not going to change the Constitution in a way as to cut its own attributions. Unfortunately, we haven't been heard. And we could have done lots of good things together. But there were other interests - too many interests... Of course, a major contribution was made later by the major conflict, directed towards the artificial division of society, between communists and frontiers, namely between Rosca and Voronin in 2002-2003.

■ The famous and eternal national interest, which, in fact, proves to be very personal?

■ Personal or group interest. And we will get rid of them only when people, the citizens of this country, will learn to discern and punish the politicians guided by such interests that are usually disguised as national interests.

I want to be a friend of Romania...

■ ***Didn't you say that also at the time of joining the Council of Europe there was the idea of unification with Romania? Was it a realistic or a bravado thing?***

■ The problem of unification has never really been posed. We have been used to talk about unification in Chisinau, but nobody wants to know what used to be and what it is, de facto, at the moment, the mood in Bucharest. At least at that time Bucharest had no interest in developing this idea and presenting it to the Romanian society, but also to the international political class. We have discussed then numerous times this issue with our Western partners - and there was no coherence there either. That is why I think it is a rather speculative issue that prevents us from focusing on the real issues, creating false friends and false enemies. I, for example, want to be a friend of Romania, which I consider to be one of the countries closest to the Moldovan spirit. But the fact that if you say Unification is not possible, you are immediately placed in the enemy camp, is not alright.

■ ***Let's admit it was speculation then. But what about today? Sometimes it seems to me that, apart from Marian Lupu, who has discovered the scientific and political facets of a single language, the PDM manifests itself as a unionist party...***

■ PDM is not a unionist party and I don't rule out that this perception was created because we simply don't want to oppose this current, which has the right to life, or we don't hinder those who share the ideal of unification. But PDM is a pragmatic and realistic party, and that means we want to be with Romania in many beginnings and on many ways it chooses. It is dramatic that there are too many internal disputes both in Bucharest and Chisinau, which makes it hard for us to see each other and hear each other.

We risk to remain a provincial space and people - and this would be a real shame

■ ***If you were to name some of the achievements of these 27 years, what would they be?***

■ I would answer with the words of a friend who has an important role in USAID: "I was the first time in Chisinau in 1997. It was winter and I stopped at the "National" hotel. Three women in coats and felts met me. It was awfully cold. I put everything I had on and went to sleep. In the lobby only one bulb was on. It was dark all over ... Now it's not the same. You have a thousand and one progresses, only you don't notice it because of the internal problems ... You have no idea how much Moldova has developed over the years!" That's what he says to me - and every time he wants to point out that this is true for many areas. And I, even though I'm aware of the many problems we have, I tend to agree with my friend. The Republic of Moldova has advanced economically, socially and in terms of the infrastructure. It's a different country than it used to be 27 years ago. Obviously, we all want it to be better, because that's the nature of people. And precisely because this is the desire, we should all mobilize our forces. Otherwise, we risk to remain a provincial space and people. And this would be a real shame.

■ ***To what extent have the country's key institutions really become "state" in the sense of vision, action and policies developed for the benefit of the people? For, above all, the level of provincialism of a country and society depends very much on the institutions...***

■ If I say that everything is perfect I will, at best, be not understood. I am convinced, however, that within each institution in the Republic of Moldova there are people who want our country to make progress and develop - as their

status requires from them. Those who don't comply with these requirements need to understand that sooner or later they will have to respond to the society for that.

■ ***Given the perpetuation of the "tradition" of politicizing the institutions, is it correct to put all the responsibility on the shoulders of the people in the institutions?***

■ There is both white and black in everything. Politization does exist and I won't deny it, but this depends very much also on the people. Especially because we still have a lot of people who, in a way, really want politicization in order to be closer to the decision-making center and to the key people ... At the same time, I am convinced that this phenomenon doesn't bear a general character and that most civil servants are complying with the Law and the Constitution. And I would be happy, as long as I'm in politics, to be able to contribute, together with my party, to the improvement of the state of affairs. Because politicized institutions is also a burden for the ruling party.

Whether as a majority or part of an alliance, we will need a good relationship with the EU

■ ***What are the chances to repair the relationship with the EU? Was/ is it still a success?***

■ Technically, I think our situation is not bad. But when it comes to the political aspect, however, we have what we have - puzzlement, disagreements, and statements that need to be analysed and solved. That's why maybe it's better to let the specialists decide.

■ ***Are you proposing to exclude the political component of this relationship - the commitments made under the Association Agreement in the field of justice reform, fundamental rights, and financial security?***

■ This is not the case, the European orientation should remain for the Republic of Moldova. Simply, let's not forget that the country is approaching the elections and that the European Parliament will also be having elections soon. Both here and there, there is competition between parties. And some parties from Brussels of a particular orientation are closely connected with national parties. If we are to talk about the PDM, I would like that we look at things realistically and practically. We shouldn't quarrel with our colleagues in the European structures, but try to analyze what they say and, step by step, correct things so that we could move forward. We have no alternatives - PDM wants to participate in the next government...

■ ***I thought you planned to take the majority?!***

■ We don't want to be selfish. Obviously, if you are a true political actor, you want the majority, and the Democratic Party, being one of the most serious political parties of the moment, will have a major say in the next governance structure. But, whether as a majority or part of an alliance, there is no doubt that we will all need a good relationship with the European institutions. Even the socialists who are playing the "anti-European heroes" will need it.

■ ***Does the Moscow hand exist?***

■ There are so many hands! Some are tickling and others are pinching us. But there is no reason to get agitated as we should be aware of the fact that for many years to come, Moscow, Bucharest, Kiev, and the EU and the USA will have interests in this part of the world. That's why we should understand that we need to have good relations both with the Romanians, the Ukrainians, and the Americans.

■ ***All the difference is who comes with the tanks and who comes with the grants...***

■ It's true. Yet, we have to learn to respond calmly and pragmatically to this more or less visible presence. Otherwise, we will turn into a geopolitical battlefield. For years, our entire competition has been limited to who occupied the first the National Assembly Square and I am not happy about this polarization at all. We need a pro-Republic of Moldova government!

Moses has walked for 40 years in the desert ... We are going to learn also this lesson

■ ***But is there a party that says it is not pro the Republic of Moldova? President Igor Dodon considers himself the most "pro" of the "pros", for instance...***

■ We need to be pro not only in statements, but also in actions. In their turn, the actions should come as a result of an honest exercise, answering equally honestly to the question: what is best for this country and its people? I understand that maintaining the barricades means extra votes that you don't have to worry too much. But we are going to learn also this lesson. Moses has walked for 40 years in the desert...

■ ***Do you think we want everything too fast?***

■ Yes, that's probably because of the times we are living— everything is at a click distance, "here and now". But things are going to work themselves out when we will understand that nobody is going to pay our pensions, that we have to create jobs at home and not wait for gifts from either the Russians or the Americans. No one will do our job for us or unite us as people. It is us who should do it.

■ ***I wouldn't say everybody is waiting for gifts - they are all just leaving. Including from a government that, more and more, gives orders instead of listening. For in the public perception,***

in the PDM, and by ricochet all over the country, there is only one person that makes the decisions- Vlad Plahotniuc. Is the Democratic Party debating things? And how often do you come up with a critical opinion?

■ Of course, things are debated, but not so noisy and not for show as others do it. Personally, I would like to see more debates, also contradictory, both at the party and society level. And this is how the truth should be identified. But everything should have a logic. And this is what party discipline means.

■ ***What are the chances to restore the dialogue between Power and Opposition?***

■ It's inevitable. I don't know if this is going to happen until the elections, but - it is quite complicated and politics in our country is rather noisy ... In this context, I would like to mention two key ideas: 1) Governance is obliged to organize the elections in a fair manner, so that they are free, democratic and, above all, leave the door open for dialogue. Let us all sit down at the negotiation table the following day and discuss what we should do with the future of the Republic of Moldova. And 2) Opposition should come up with more concrete programmatic ideas about this future.

■ ***And finally, what is the priority for strengthening the Independence?***

■ The actual consolidation of the state - economic, justice, institutions. In addition to that, there is need for an accountable government, no matter how many mandates it intends to get. In fact, the Republic of Moldova has all the necessary components to develop as an independent state. We just have to really want that.

■ ***Thank you very much for the discussion.***

Sorina Ștefârță

Editorial

27 years of Transition, 27 years of Uncertainty

**Victoria Bucătaru, executive director,
Foreign Policy Association**

At its 27th anniversary of Independence that we are celebrating at this end of August, one of the most important questions for the Republic of Moldova remains its viability. *De jure*, we are an independent state, recognized as a full-fledged actor on the international arena. There is, *de facto*, much to do to strengthen this independence. *De jure*, we have territorial integrity, *de facto* we don't. We fought for democracy, freedom and market economy, but did we learn to appreciate them all and capitalize on these achievements?

The Republic of Moldova is known as one of the post-soviet states which, following the break-up of the USSR, on August 27, 1991, chose to align to the European values and institutions. However, the transition period has proved to be rather long - much longer, in fact, compared to other countries that seem to have had the same starting point, but have developed at a much faster pace. First of all, it is about the Baltic States which, for almost 15 years already, have been members of the European Union, but also of the North Atlantic Alliance. It is to them - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – that I will continue to refer, because they are success stories, succeeding, despite the geopolitical difficulties, to break the Soviet past and redirect to other forms of cooperation and alliances. But what prevents us from doing the same thing?

According to the “Freedom in the World 2018” rating, developed by “Freedom House”, all three Baltic States have been qualified as free, while the Republic of Moldova remains partially free with a downward trend. The same applies to the freedom of the media in the three countries, a trend that demonstrates the viability and power of the values of the European Union as a collective structure. Of course, the unsuccessful examples of Poland and Hungary at the moment could obscure the systemic stability of the European Union. But here comes a crucial element, namely, the culture and political legacy, as well as the influence that third-party actors exert within the community.



In general, political elites play a decisive role in the development, modernization and assurance of the progress of a state, being the actors that give impetus to the development of society. The so-called “new political elite”, having the support of the majority of the population, changed the Moldovan internal and external policy path towards the West. Although the train has “derailed” significantly in the past few years, the European orientation has remained - at least for the time being - the basic idea that gives us all hope for a better future.

Also, due to the unity of political elites and the unity of the society, in order to achieve the national interest, the Baltic States and other Central and Eastern European countries have succeeded in overcoming several critical situations. As far as we are concerned, we haven't had a sincere discussion about our national interest so far, which is why the geopolitical discourse and security vulnerabilities are commonplace in Moldova.

The lack of cohesion at the national level, the lack of understanding of the values of genuine democracy, and the ignorance of historical roots (history, language, traditions, and culture) are creating a vacuum which is, unfortunately, rapidly filled with sterile discourse and invented threats that are, finally, coming to life. Thus, from a Romanian state we have become a multi-ethnic state, from the Romanian language we ended up with a state or Moldovan language, and from the History of the Romanians we have been left with the History of no one.

Today, we are talking about division in society (East-West), geopolitical factors, creation of a Moldovan civic identity, but are these really the major issues that hinder the progress and development of the Republic of Moldova? Not at all, as far as I am concerned ... Moreover, the true and unifying issues are the deeply-rooted corruption, the lack of viable reforms, poor governance and non-transparent policies. Democracy and freedom imply opportunities and restrictions, benefits and responsibilities, a dignified life, but also respect for the individual, community, society and country. Only when we become aware of these simple social and political equations, will we be able to talk about viability and integrity.

Today the mood has only one name in the Republic of Moldova: Leaving

Vasile Nedelciuc, deputy in the first Parliament and one of the authors of the Declaration of Independence

Although in the people's mentality, the Independence of the Republic of Moldova was preponderantly the work of the writers, Vasile Nedelciuc, doctor of computer sciences and one of the authors of the historical act of August 27, 1991, demonstrates the contrary. Moreover, it seems that precisely the technical approach has propelled and maintained him for more than a decade in the Moldovan politics. Later, in 2001, he created "Endava" - an UK-based IT company present today in 13 countries. However, the private sector activity has not detached him completely from the social-political life. Thus, after being a founding member of the Democratic Movement of Moldova and of the Popular Front; deputy in the first democratic parliament, and later in the legislatures of 1994 and 1998, where he was chairman of the parliamentary commission for foreign relations, the head of the Moldovan delegation to PACE and vice-president of PACE, he is active also in the associative sector as a founding member of the Foreign Policy Association and its President (2010-2016). How Independence is seen by Vasile Nedelciuc you can see it in the text below.

■ **Mr. Nedelciuc, to what extent have your expectations from 27 years ago been fulfilled?**

■ Unfortunately, not even ten percent of what my colleagues and I wished when we were working on the Declaration of Independence, but also on the dozens of papers developed in 1998-1991 and through which we tried to radically change things in the



current Republic of Moldova. But I can say - contrary to the speculations subsequently made and the accusations brought to me - that in 1991, when proclaiming Independence, I was aware that we could not do the unification with Romania. And it's not because we didn't want it, but because Romania was not ready. We could not follow the model of the Baltic States - to restore the Constitution until the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact - because Romania was no longer the kingdom that we had been detached from on June 28, 1940. In addition, the political situation over the Prut after 1989, was still very troubled, and Iliescu and his team did not have the courage and determination to put this issue under discussion. Also, the Western governments didn't welcome the idea, especially Washington. Everyone understood that if they agreed to discuss the reunification, they risked triggering other major debates in the region. And the West preferred that we keep up with the others and proclaim our Independence, promising their support in this endeavour.

■ **If in this case we went in tandem with the Baltic people and other colleagues of the USSR, why didn't we come up the right way and are lagging so much behind?**

■ The idea was to proclaim Independence in order to become stronger in the face of Moscow, to consolidate our national identity, to make reforms, and to get rid of the sentiment of slavery among our people. I was convinced that my fellow citizens would wake up in five or ten years, and even if we failed to do the unification, at least, we will do our best to be as integrated as possible with Romania, and thus with Europe. We have always advocated creation of as many joint institutions and projects as possible with Romania - the free exchange of capital, jobs, diplomas, etc. - so that, when Romania is admitted to the European Union, they will take also us into account. We hoped they will understand that we are too strongly connected and that we can no longer live outside the EU. That is how we would have rapidly become EU candidates. But it wasn't to be, unfortunately.

It is also by "our" people that our European aspirations have been compromised

■ **What was the reason for that?**

■ It was because of both people and phenomena that didn't depend on us. Above all, it was Transnistria. In 1990, as one of the first Moldovan officials to visit Bucharest, I warned the post-1989 leadership of Romania - Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman - of the big

danger of splitting as the separatism was massively supported by Moscow ... But it is also true that we have never even had a parliamentary majority of true democrats. Yes, there were two governing alliances - ADR in 1998 and AIE in 2009 for two to three years. But they were made up of parties with different views regarding the key issues of the country: the relationship with Romania and, in general, the future of the Republic of Moldova. Having never had such a majority, we did not have any legislative body to draft laws in order to get rid of the syndrome of dependence on Moscow and to clearly formulate the future option to be communicate to the world, but also to take it over as a common unifying message at the Government, Parliament, and Presidency levels. De facto, all these years, the leadership of the country were either representatives of the old nomenclature or its descendants. President Timofti was an exception, but he could not do much without a loyal government and parliament. Otherwise, all those who negotiate key issues with the USA or the EU have had duplicitous messages, trying to protect their position and relationships. And the secret services have not been serving the country, but the ruling party, its main mission being to collect compromising material about the Opposition.

■ **And why did the Opposition allow for this situation?**

■ The opposition, de facto, has not advanced strong leaders. And if it did happen, the attacks would start immediately both from the Left and Right. I'm saying it from my own experience - whenever I had some success outside, at home I was harshly attacked. So, for instance, I was called a British agent by political opponents. The services have always worked with Moscow to discredit the Moldovan pro-European politics and not allow it to develop. Many parties have become Ltd es with dubious funding. The West didn't want to get involved directly, because

it had other priorities. In 2009, when they thought there was a new team with which they could turn the mountains, they invested in us, perhaps more than we deserved. But it turned out that they also like money, so they stole and thus compromised our European aspirations.

■ **Where do you think we are today?**

■ The main indicator for me and the pulse is the company I'm leading. In 2009-2010 there was a different state of mind among my employees. Today the mood has only one name: leaving. This happens despite the fact that people receive very good salaries and have very good working conditions. But they are leaving, because they don't see their and their children's future here. And the mass media is promoting nonstop nobodies, not young people who have, for instance, won the international Olympiad in mathematics and who, through their intelligence and knowledge, conquered a whole world. "Endava" is better known in the West than in the country. We are the first Moldovan company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange and we have no equals on the local market – despite that the talented young people are still leaving the country!

Competent people, fair justice and taxes distributed wisely

■ **How should the future look like, so that these young people stay at home?**

■ There are several essential elements: to have competent and honest people in power; to have a system of justice that you know will do justice in accordance with the law; and to know that if you pay taxes, they will be used wisely - for roads, schools, infrastructure, etc. And besides all this, the European perspective should be clear. Otherwise, more people are going to leave. But how can you build a future when you have such leaders as Dodon, who a few days ago, identified three big problems that made Moldova stagnate, preventing it from developing.

■ **I cannot believe it you are taking Igor Dodon's statements seriously! It is obvious that he is cheating...**

■ As long as the press, instead of boycotting it, is multiplying his statements, it is no longer a joke. And the three "problems" he listed are proof of this. The first is "the madness of the leadership that triggered the war in Transnistria." You have to be blind, stupid or simply insensitive to not see that the same scenario was used in our country and later in Georgia, Donbass and even in the Crimea. Even the Russians no longer believe in their innocence ... Another message, which is a big stupidity, refers to the "mistake" of those who were in power in 1990 to give up the enormous economic heritage left by the Soviet Union. How can a doctor in economics - for he claims to be it - a man who was also Minister of Economics to say so, when he knows well that at that time about 90% of this industry was subordinated to the Soviet Union and was serving the military system of the USSR? When they did not need the volume of the equipment, the Russians diminished the demand ... And after the borders opened and people began to import - from clothes to cars - who would have bought an "Alfa" TV or an "Aurica" washing machine? The industrial sector had to be modernised, but at that time there was no money, and later no wish was there anymore. To modernise the industry, there is also need for investment, and for educated people, the latter becoming increasingly scarce.

And, ultimately, the president's third "problem" is that we have betrayed our national identity. But the truth is we had no identity in 1990! And I'm really proud of the fact that I brought Romanian books in Moldova and that I opened the doors for the young people to go to study in Romania. Yes, we did choose the Romanian identity and the fact that today Moldova looks more European than Transnistrian is the result of that effort. Otherwise - as Mr Dodon probably wants - we would have disappeared from



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the map. But such messages as his are confusing and disappointing. And it is clear that in this country worthy people are not desirable. Dominant are the fear of competition, envy and clan.

■ ***Which clan are you part of since you are resisting with your business in this country?***

■ I was lucky – it's not my merit – to find from the start a UK investor, so I have worked exclusively for the West. We are a British company and the relationship with the Republic of Moldova is largely reduced to the payment of taxes. Millions of MDL, however. In addition, our employees spend additional millions here for homes, cars, furniture, and on keeping their parents and grandparents. That's why I sometimes wonder how long we will be talking about tomatoes and wine in this country! Agriculture is important and shouldn't be neglected, but we cannot focus on it alone in the 21st century. There are several factors that must mobilize us to think and act differently: we are in an unstable geopolitical area, the global economy is working according to rules which we cannot change, and the technologies have advanced enormously. Because we don't have natural resources, our chance is our services. And not all services, but the ones that give people jobs and competitive salaries. That is how we can achieve both well-being and dignity. With poor people it's hard to make a rich country.

■ ***By paraphrasing an old Soviet film, everything will disappear but not IT...***

■ It is certain that some professions will disappear. Classical accountants, family doctors - all will be replaced by applications. It is a reality to which we should already adapt and understand that, at the same time, the balance will be inevitably in favour of IT. With IT you can automate all other activities, produce more and more qualitatively, and protect

the environment. And I'm speaking from experience - I'm judging by us and our customers. As a result, IT needs to be an area of increasing interest, including for the young people in the Republic of Moldova. However, we continue to send our children to study Law, Economics and International Relations. What are the International Relations about?!

I think the new global arrangement is just about to follow

■ ***Maybe it is exactly those who are studying international relations that are going to solve the Transnistrian conflict at some point?***

■ The Transnistrian settlement will not happen as long as the West doesn't make a new geopolitical arrangement with Russia. We have no chance to succeed without global agreements. This has always been the case of big powers, and after the collapse of the communist system an essential arrangement hasn't been made yet. It is true that, in today's international context, the question is not "if," but "when" it will be. With Trump coming, a lot of things have been overthrown - but more so economically, not geo-strategically. And I think an important geopolitical arrangement will be made, otherwise we will always live in a state of turbulence. We have no power to influence these phenomena, not even Romania can do it. However, we have to peddle as much as possible towards Romania and Europe.

■ ***Are the next parliamentary elections in a position to change the Republic of Moldova?***

■ Impossible. Rather the next election can give a totally unprepared composition to what Moldova needs. New-minded, educated and cultivated people who are not thieves and who, once on their way, will know how

to speak both with the citizens and international partners, are unlikely to come to power. The things will change only when we have credibility, when investments will come, and when companies like "Endava" will not be just one, but a hundred of them. Only then will the foreign policy of this country – if it will still be a country ... - depend not on people like Igor Dodon, but on people who are honest in their work and on their will. Otherwise, you are taking a big risk.

■ ***Risking seems to have become a lifestyle. Hasn't the government taken an enormous risk in recent months by taking decisions which have deteriorated at maximum the relations with all key development partners - from invalidating local elections to the fiscal reform that have been severely criticized by both the USA and the EU?***

■ My only explanation is that those who are playing this game in Chisinau have very good consultants, who know how the USA and the EU is going to react. For when you have Turkey with Erdogan and Ukraine with a war in the East, and when you see what is happening in Hungary and Poland, against the backdrop of more and more obvious disruptions within the European Union, you choose to focus on somewhat more important issues. And under the circumstances, I don't exclude that these consultants have told our politicians: you can go until here or there, for example, because there is no time to intervene more harshly. But they are terribly mistaken, and I think everything is just a momentary "weakness". For in the end, the Westerners - especially Americans – will take appropriate measures against those who played dishonest games. Hope to stay healthy and live better times.

■ ***Thank you for the interview and ... for Independence, as it is, for now.***

Sorina Ștefăruță

Opinion of Parties

Republic of Moldova and its 27 Years of Independence: Expectations vs. Reality

The “Opinion of Parties” column was launched in the context of the 2018 electoral year and provides the political parties and potential aspirants to the Moldovan parliament with an additional platform to make public their position on various social and political issues of major interest to citizens. This time, we have asked party representatives to take stock of the country’s 27 years of Independence, which we are celebrating at the end of August.

1. To what extent, from your point of view, today’s Republic of Moldova corresponds to the expectations we all had 27 years

We risk remaining a buffer zone between the Russian and Western world



Anatol Șalaru, executive president of the National Unity Party (PUN)

1.

Under no circumstances did the Republic of Moldova succeed in meeting the visions and expectations that we had during the National Liberation Movement and in the

ago when the country’s independence was proclaimed? Have the key institutions really become “state” in terms of vision, action and policies?

2. Where was - or perhaps where it didn’t happen - the turning point that would have propelled the country to a new level of development? Who or what is to blame for the failure? In this context, what are the most significant achievements of the 27 year-period of independence, but also the most resounding failures and challenges?
3. Based on these, what should be our ambitions for the future? How would you like to see our country on the world map? How could and should it, in fact, look?

2.

The turning point was the abandonment of the Romanian identity recovery project and the structuring of the state based on a historical and fake Moldovan identity of Soviet type. The culprits are both within and outside the Republic of Moldova. De facto, from our point of view, since its independence, the Republic of Moldova has been given the role of a buffer zone between the Russian and the Western world – this has started together with the war on the Nistru and has been continuing until today with sustained achievement efforts of the so-called Moldovan civic nation.

For us, the most important achievements are the partial recovery of national identity elements: Romanian language, Romanian history, Tricolor and the right to identify as Romanians. The results that some politicians are boasting today with - the Association Agreement with the EU or the visa liberalisation regime – is 90% credit of Romania and not of the Moldovan political class. Hence, our biggest failure is that we

first years after the independence from USSR. For us, those who were part of the National Liberation Movement and voted for the separation from the Soviet Union, Independence was only one element, an intermediate step towards correcting the historical injustice generated by the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. It was the vehicle meant to bring us back to Romania, from which we had been separated by an illegal and immoral act, that was ab initio recognized as void by all the relevant actors of international relations. The institutions that emerged on the ruins of the former Moldovan Soviet Republic have remained largely in the hands of former nomenklatura, who distributed among themselves the resources, creating a new caste that prospered on the account of the impoverished population. Thus, after 27 years of independence, the Republic of Moldova failed to build functional institutions, and I tend to believe it will not succeed, because it is an artificial state exploited by different interest groups disputing their access to resources.

couldn't realise the unification with Romania in the early 1990s, following the model of the two Germanys. When it comes to the biggest challenge, in the opinion of PUN, this is the new social experiment of transforming the Bessarabian Romanians into the so-called civic nation. In fact, it is a soft re-sovietization meant to keep us in the same buffer zone where we could live in the ever-loving arms of God, loving Russia and the EU equally and non-discriminatingly.

3.

I think the ambitions of the citizens - not the institutions, because they have become only a vehicle of the economic and financial class that has been dominating the Republic of Moldova ever since its appearance, 27 years ago - should be oriented towards integration with Romania. I don't believe in the Republic of Moldova as an independent state. But if this experiment which resulted from the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact continues, the Republic of Moldova is going to be a minor country and a buffer between two worlds: the Russian and the Western.

Our state can ensure neither prosperity nor freedom for its citizens



Maia Sandu, Chairwoman of the Action and Solidarity Party

1.

Unfortunately, after more than a quarter of a century of transition, most citizens of the Republic of Moldova are deeply disappointed with the situation in the country. Except for a small group of profiteers of the current regime, I don't think there is a lot of people who can say that today's reality

corresponds to the expectations they had at the proclamation of the state independence. It is true that, compared to the period until Independence, we are enjoying certain freedoms and rights, but they are also being jeopardized. It is because we have failed to build strong institutions to defend the rights and freedoms of all citizens. Likewise, we have not succeeded in building a market economy with clear rules that can provide us with sustainable and inclusive growth. Respectively, our state can provide neither prosperity nor freedom to its citizens. We have to say openly that, ever since independence, people's sense of despair hasn't been as strong as today.

2.

Things have not happened the way we wanted for a number of reasons. The Republic of Moldova didn't have institutional memory in policy making and public affairs administration. It had to build institutions, that is, the state, from scratch. This is a complicated process in itself. At the same time, it had to make the transition from one economic system to another. The social costs of this transition have proved to be enormous, which over time has weakened the people's support for reforms. Because the institutions were (and remain to be) weak, there was no one to impose the law and protect the citizens from the abuses of tricks that have massively exploited the weaknesses of the state, collected significant wealth, bypassing or violating the laws, and later used these resources to gain total control over political processes and state institutions. Of course, there are countries in the region that started after independence with the same handicaps, but they managed to do much more than we did. I am referring in particular to the Baltic States. The difference is largely due to the net superiority of the political class there and perhaps, to a certain extent, to the massive support they have received from the West in the early years of transition.

As to the achievements, we can probably mention the fact that we have managed to preserve some elements of the democratic process, compared to other countries such as Belarus, Azerbaijan, etc. It's just that the latest dramatic events are jeopardizing these achievements. Apart from the urgent and

difficult task of defending and consolidating the democratic processes, a major challenge is to convince people that they can have a good future at home.

3.

The Republic of Moldova should become a country that people don't want to leave. A country where people who respect the law feel protected. A country where the rights and freedoms of all citizens are secured by the Constitution. A country where people who work honestly can live a dignified life.

The Republic of Moldova should return to democracy and Romania



Dorin Chirtoacă, deputy chairman of Liberal Party

1.

Independence was proclaimed - from my point of view and from the point of view of those who represented the National Revival Movement and the Popular Front since 1989, including my relatives Gheorghe and Mihai Ghimpu - as a first step towards reintegration and unification with Romania. This desiderate was on the lips of all people with clear conscience. Independence meant detachment from the "Empire of Evil", as US President Ronald Reagan put it, and the direction towards progress and development, as the Baltic countries did it. But ... in these years, the state institutions have failed to become what should have been within Greater Romania - institutions of regional level. The government, from the outset, has only been a Soviet fossil.

Because of the Communist-Soviet mentality, now mingled with superficiality and complete meaninglessness, following the establishment of the Plahotniuc-Dodon regime and the decision-making at the Democratic Party or Global Business Center headquarters, the state turned into a robotic structure executing political orders that are increasingly absurd. The lack of human resources, which has always been a problem, is now more acute than ever. If we talk in medical terms, the patient is clinically dead and can survive as long as remittances come from abroad. Otherwise, the octopus is growing and strangling everything on its way, killing the patient slowly.

What we've had functional these years was the local public administration (totally deprived of resources but providing direct contact with people), civil society, the press (the ones that resisted and remained free) and the private business environment which, being obstructed, has failed to develop to the required level. Likewise, we have failed to form a strong middle class, which would have been the pillar of democracy, alongside the rule of law and respect for human rights. So, 27 years after the proclamation of Independence, the Republic of Moldova has all the features of a failed state that has derailed again in dictatorship and which is once again revealing its artificial character, the result of two other dictators' will - Stalin and Hitler through the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact from August 23, 1939.

2.

There have been several turning points: in 1991, for example, when the Baltic countries refused to join the CIS and took to the West, joining the EU even faster than Romania. We went to the CIS and we messed it up ... Then the war on the Nistru and the creation of the separatist regime have worsened the situation. In 1999-2000, a series of delayed reforms began, but they all failed because of multiple betrayals and backstage games of the same communist nomenclature. Since 2009, there has been another chance, especially after the April 7th sacrifice of the youth, but the arrogance of some, the hidden interloper interests, the greed and the theft from the three banks have overturned this opportunity. Today, no one believes in anything and everybody

is just trying to survive. Many have sold their soul for 30 pieces of silver in order not to lose their jobs. Exodus abroad is not only the choice of those who don't have a job - there are also people who have a satisfying material situation here, but still want a better future for their children than the one at home.

Of course, there have been achievements in these years, for instance, free movement in Europe is felt most by people for they can travel, visit their relatives, etc. But without a real connection of the Republic of Moldova to the European economy and without ensuring the rule of law at home, all the successes don't matter. And you can see failures everywhere. There are talks about the stolen one billion dollars, but Moldova's external debt is seven billion which equals to the gross domestic product - and it's all on the citizens' shoulders. But where are the seven billion? This money was like water in the sand as we saw nothing concrete from them. And this is just one aspect ... As far as future challenges are concerned, it is just one: removing the dictatorship, restoring democracy and the rule of law, freedom and independence of the press and justice. This way we can give the citizens the hope that the Republic of Moldova can function ... Then we should build the unification with Romania based on the German model. As the Berlin Wall has fallen, so should the border on the Prut.

3.

I've mentioned it already above - the Republic of Moldova should return to democracy, otherwise it will be lost and it is going to be a hybrid of Russia, Turkmenistan and North Korea ... The situation is much more dangerous than it seems, because the institutions lack content, they have even less content than the institutions in the former USSR/ MSSR and or that of the institutions in the 1991 (though few, luckily there were at least some professionals). And even if the current nightmare is over, it will take us years and a lot of effort to get it all back. Regarding our place on the world map, I think that the Greater Romania from 1918 is exactly the country we need to have. And if Queen Maria, King Ferdinand and the Romanian people succeeded with it 100 years ago, we should also succeed in the 21st century.

We are obliged to put the Republic of Moldova on a viable democratic foundation



Andrei Năstase, chairman of the "Dignity and Truth" Platform

1.

The fact that today's Republic of Moldova does not meet the expectations that we all had during the great hopes of 1988-1991 is caused above all by the poor quality of the so-called political class from the past decades. However, the main responsibility for the current serious situation lies with the oligarchic regime that came to power in 2009 and which, since 2014, has turned into a mafia-style dictatorship under Plahotniuc. If in the first years of Independence there were also objective factors that contributed to the difficult situation of the Republic of Moldova - the economic crisis after the dissolution of the USSR, which generated the loss of more than 300,000 jobs; contraction of the total volume of the industrial production to only 20% of the 1989 level; the war in Transnistria; the economic crisis in Russia in 1998 - the economic catastrophe of recent years is exclusively the consequence of the criminal nature of the current government, which is plundering "officially" and cynically its own people.

Unlike the current government, the governments of the first decade after Independence contributed at least to the creation of the prerequisites for a European state-building: the separation from the USSR, the elaboration and the approval of a modern Constitution (except for some unfortunate provisions, including art .13); the adoption of national legislation and creation of the main state

institutions; progress in judicial reform during the 1990s; the alternation of power took place on the basis of a genuine political competition. These achievements were also appreciated by the Council of Europe, the Republic of Moldova being the first CIS state to become a member of this prestigious European organization. For a good period, the Republic of Moldova was even considered an example of functional democracy in the ex-Soviet space. All these rules functioned in one way or another until Plahotniuc entered the Moldovan politics after 2009. Since then, our country has steadily slipped into a mafia-style dictatorship. Beside the fact that the Constitution has been de facto abolished, the current regime has transformed the Republic of Moldova into a "fiscal paradise" and an offshore area, risking to become the grey area of Europe in which the dirty money of transnational criminal groups around the world will be legalized. Precisely this poses the most serious threat to the independence of the Republic of Moldova.

In this context, I believe that the biggest failure of the governments from the -1990es was that the reform of the rule of law has not been completed. Hence the capture of state institutions, the antidemocratic abuses of the government, the alarming increase in the human rights' violations, the impoverishment of the population, the degradation of the economic and social situation, the mass exodus. For this reason, strengthening the rule of law and the capacity of the institutions responsible for combating corruption, the justice reform and the

reform of the regulatory and control institutions should become priorities for strengthening the Independence, because no political and economic initiative can be seriously discussed without reforming the rule of law.

2.

The turning point, in our view, occurred in 2001, which marked the beginning of a national catastrophe. Then 2009 followed when, under the positive rhetoric of European integration, a group of mobsters entered politics and hijacked the democratic and European path of the country. This happened despite the fact that in 2009 a favourable situation was created, which could propel the Republic of Moldova towards a level of development expected by the population. For none of the previous governments benefited from a more favourable international climate, bigger political, financial and moral support from the EU institutions and Member States and the donor community! The governments, however, have created in our country an oligarchic system, which has gradually turned into an anti-European dictatorship. We are living the consequences now, in particular, in terms of demography and exodus, which are affecting the country's development prospects. Thus, despite the results achieved in the recent years - such as the visa liberalization regime and the Association Agreement with the European Union - for the most part, because of the current government, the Republic of Moldova has not been able to capitalize on all the opportunities offered in these nearly three decades.

3.

Our vision regarding the development of the Republic of Moldova is reflected in the PPDA Political Programme, but also in our country project "Republic of Moldova: a State in which You Want to Live". The basic ideas include: creating a state with modern institutions at the service of citizens, with an efficient and responsible public administration, strong legal institutions, independent and uncorrupted justice; creating favourable conditions for sustainable economic development by means of extensive anti-crisis measures; stabilizing the banking system, changing the leadership and management of state-owned enterprises intentionally bankrupt; extended confiscation of the assets of the corrupt people; the destruction of schemes that squeeze public money; smart and predictable fiscal policies; improvement of the business environment and creation of an attractive investment climate. The central idea is to change the paradigm of economic development - from a country that relies on remittances and consumption to one that develops competitive industries based on the high-quality human capital. We start from the prerequisite that we cannot have a prosperous future without an active and decisive involvement of the Diaspora in the political and economic life, and especially in the modernization process of the country. All the other elements of our initiatives - education, health, social protection and pension systems - depend decisively on whether we will be able to politically eliminate the current regime and put the Republic of Moldova on a viable democratic foundation.

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