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SECTOR SECURITY REFORM OF MOLDAVIAN STATE STRUCTURE

Summary:

In a permanent changing security environment, the Republic of Moldova, a small state situated at the Eastern flank of Europe, is struggling to find her path in between two possible strategic ways – either towards Europe, or coming back to the Russian sphere of influence. The political situation and international influence from these areas are not easing decisions of the Moldovan leaders. On one hand, there is a real and permanent political and military support being received by the Moldovan Authorities from NATO, the EU, Romania and the United States in key domains like: migration and asylum, justice, local administration, transparency and e-governance, and Sector Security Reform (SSR). On the other hand, the pressure put by Moscow on central authorities from Chisinau, as well as the anti-European measures undertaken by pro-Russian parties from Moldova, balanced all positive reactions of pro-European population and negatively influenced the political, social and cultural life of Moldavians. SSR is the most developed and supported domain that has a strong impact on the possible future position of the Republic of Moldova in Europe.

Keywords:

SSR, HLA, DCBI, National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy, Military Strategy, Military Doctrine, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Despite the fact that the country is small, poor, and situated at the Eastern flank of Europe, without a real economical strength and a well developed military power, the Republic of Moldova has a strange geostrategic importance and a kind of influence in the political-military situation in the region. She represents a piece of chess on the Russia – Europe's table of negotiations regarding the future development of the region.

She is considered as a buffer zone between NATO and Russian Federation, between Romania, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. As well as her inclusion in the Extended Black Sea Area, without having an open littoral, it shows

the strangeness of the country's geostrategic position in this part of Europe. It also highlights the struggle of some regional powers, like USA, the EU or Russia to control or, at least, influence the political and economic development of Moldova.

Not for a small importance, the Transnistrian frozen conflict, as well as the unsolved situation of Gagauzia and the so called "Balti Republic", which, in turn, request international or regional interventions, make this area a volatile one, with a flammable character if not controlled and too many actors involved.

This article is aimed to demonstrate the ambiguous and endless way of the Europeanization of Moldova, as well as the inefficient and unrealistic measures undertook by different ruling partners and political leaders after the independence and up to now. Our intent is to highlight the dual political approach during different periods of time and show the main characteristics of the Moldavian Security and Defence Policy during time.

Gaining her independence in 1991 from the former Soviet Union, the Republic of Moldova has had and continues to have a cyclical security and defence policy regarding the chosen path to follow – either towards West, or within the East. So far, there were several intents of politicians to make the country select NATO and the EU on one hand, or to become member of the Russia-led Customs Union. As the great progressive reformer Fighting Bob La Follette stated "democracy is a life... and involves constant struggle." This endless divergence of political opinions is called "the battle of vectors."¹

The 1991-1997 period was characterized by the first measures undertaken to change the former Soviet orientation to a nationalistic one, by reforming the State structures and the Armed Forces, establishing the National Defence System, approving specific national laws, and elaborating a National Security Concept, as well as the first Military Doctrine (1995)². Nevertheless, the diplomatic relations with Russia were re-established (1992).

The year of 1997 was characterized by two antagonistic political events, which had a great influence for the national security and defence policy and demonstrated the dual character of the Moldavian political class: the signature of the Strategic Partnership Memorandum with Russia and the establishment of the Partnership and Review Plan (PARP) with NATO (Moldova joined the Partnership for Peace Programme in 1994). Therefore, the 1997-2002 period can be very well described by figure no 1.

¹ V. Soloviev, *Moldova: EU Integration at all Costs*, <<https://imrussia.org/en/analysis/world/2121-moldova-eu-integration-at-all-costs>> (01.06.2017).

² T. Anton, *Evolution of the National Defence Policy and Military Reform in the Moldovan Armed Forces*, PowerPoint Presentation sustained by the Moldavian Delegation at the Romanian-Moldavian Staff Meeting at Bucharest, 04.12.2013, slide 3.

Figure 1. The Second Period of the National Defence Policy.



Source: T. Anton, *op. cit.*, slide 4.

The next period, including years of 2002-2007, started with the approval of the Military Reform Concept, followed by the adaptation of a set of national laws regarding the defence domain, in order to improve the security and defence policy. In 2004, the Moldavian Security Supreme Council (CSS) approved the Restructuring and Modernisation Concept of the National Armed Forces and in 2005 the Government issued an ordinance regarding the Armed Forces Construction and Development Plan for 2005-2008. Also, it is worth mentioning here, the next step for strengthening the cooperation with NATO was establishing the first Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) in 2006.

In order to achieve something touchable and visible in the policy towards the West, the Moldavian Government asked for the USA and the UK's support³ to analyse and present proposals for the modernisation of State structures to meet European standards. Therefore, some very important changes of the Moldavian Strategic and Defence Policy took place in the 2007-2012 period, when the first Strategic Defence Review was conducted in the Armed Forces and its results were presented and approved by the CSS in 2012. In parallel, the National Security Concept was elaborated in 2008 and the first National Security Strategy was approved, by the Parliament, on 2011.

The main issue, which was never solved by all these strategic documents, is represented by the lack of political will to increase the defence budget. Having a dual approach for the national policy regarding economical and military aspects, the Moldavian political parties never agreed on the total amount of

³ The British Security and Justice Group has advised the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration on development of the Strategy of Information and Communication in the area of Security and Defence (SICASD). The same British advisory group consults the Moldovan Ministry of Defence on finalizing the Strategic Defence Review and drafting the National Military Strategy.

necessary money for the Armed Forces to reform and modernise, keeping the survival status of it. Even if a draft Military Strategy was elaborated in 2012 and reviewed in 2013, and the Romanian support⁴ was requested in this respect.

Understanding that, from the political-military point of view, a political decision to join NATO or strengthen the Strategic Partnership with Russia will never be achieved as it is stipulated by the neutrality status in the 1994 Constitution, the Moldavian Government reoriented its Strategic and Defence Policy towards the European Union (EU), by sending a non-paper to some EU Member States (2012) to seek their support for a possible European integration. This new orientation characterizes the period after 2013, when the pro-European political coalition tried to achieve two important goals from this cooperation with the EU: visa liberalisation after a real state reform and possible participation of the Republic of Moldova in the EU-led civilian and military crisis management.

Because of the EU slow reaction and in order to respond to the Moldavian Authorities' political request, the Community of Democracies (CD), led by Poland and the USA, established a Task Force for Moldova (TFM) to discuss and agree on possible mechanisms for channelling support to priority areas identified, like: judicial reform, local government, government transparency, security sector reform, and migration policies⁵.

Later same year, the EU reacted by taking over the SSR responsibility and sending an European Commission expert at the Ministry of Defence to leverage the resources and expertise of both CD and the EU to facilitate progress⁶. Also, the bilateral support provided by Romania increased accordingly.

Step-by-step, the EU took over the CD TFM's responsibility and started the preparation and negotiation for an Association Agreement with the EU, as part of the European Neighbourhood Initiative Policy (document finalised and signed in 2014). Therefore, the EU support drastically increased after 2013, consisting, especially in:

- reforming the Security and Information Service (SIS) in line with the principles of democratic governance and transparency;

⁴ Romania provides extensive support in the field of military education and training (i.e. study scholarships for students and officers, exchanges of experience, language training, participation to military exercises organised in Romania), assistance for the reform and modernisation of the military education and the human resources management system. For 2013 there are also new proposals regarding assistance at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) level on drafting defence legislation, assistance on defence planning (PPBS) with focus on strategic planning, as well as training of civilian and military personnel from Moldova in the Training Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction (CEFOR, under Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA)) for participation in civilian missions for crisis management.

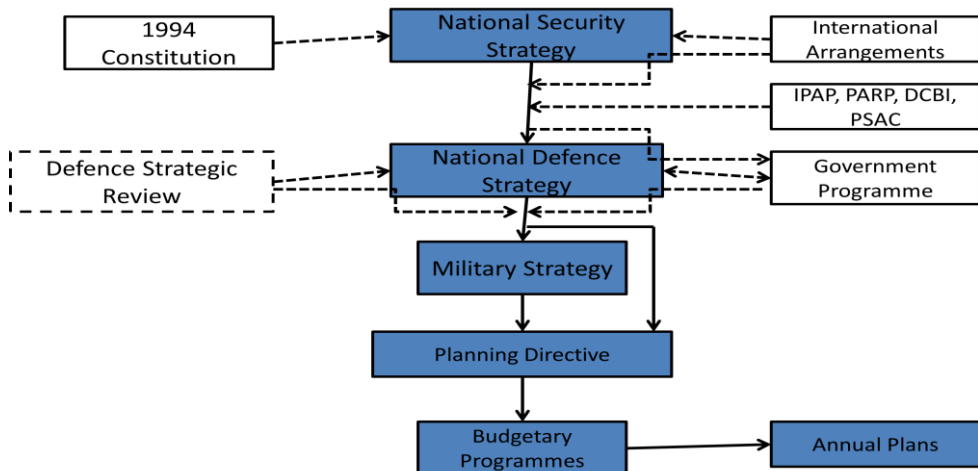
⁵ *First Meeting of the Community of Democracies Task Force for Moldova*, <http://waszyngton.msz.gov.pl/en/news/mtf_eng>, (28.04.2017).

⁶ *Note on Possible Support to Moldova*, CMPD document No 77/13, 28.06.2013, Council of the EU General Secretariat, p. 5.

- supporting the Justice Sector Reform (financial and technical assistance);
- supporting the government to realize its wider reform agenda and to develop the capacities for the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, and visa liberalisation;
- supporting Confidence Building Measures in Transnistria, in order to contribute to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in this region;
- establishing an EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM Moldova and Ukraine), funded by the EU and administered by UNDP⁷, to provide on-the-job training, technical assistance and advice to the Moldovan and Ukrainian border guard and customs services, reinforce their capacity to tackle customs fraud, detect cases of smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and carry out effective border and customs controls and border surveillance.

At the same time, Moldavian Authorities asked Romanian support to establish a Joint Commission that can work in common for elaborating the main strategic documents as depicted by figure no 2 and included in the new approved National Defence Law.

Figure 2. The new approved Defence Planning System.



Source: G. Bobeica, *The Role and Place of the Future Military Strategy in the Strategic Documents Architecture of the National Defence System*, PowerPoint Presentation sustained during the Romanian Experts Visit at Chisinau, 24.05.2016, slide 14.

⁷ United Nations Development Programme.

The current status of these strategic documents is unclear and far from being finalised and approved, even if there is enough political will to create the Defence Planning System. A new National Security Strategy was elaborated by the former President, Nicolae Timofti, acknowledged by the CSS, but never approved by the Parliament before the end of 2016 elections. Therefore, despite the high work and struggle of pro-European political coalition to finalise and approve subsidiary strategic documents, the National Defence Strategy is elaborated but not discussed in the CSS and the Military Strategy is under development.

Nevertheless, there have been several events that negatively influenced the European integration of the Republic of Moldova. The Ukrainian Crisis, followed by big corruption scandals involving ruling parties or political leadership, like the former Prime-minister Vlad Filat, as well as the last year election of a pro-Russian President, Igor Dodon, have postponed the Moldavian pro-European politicians' dream to send out its EU membership application in 2015. One relevant example was the fact that five days after the Association Agreement was signed between Chisinau and Brussels, Russia imposed an embargo on Moldovan fruits, vegetables, and canned food products, exploiting the vulnerabilities in Moldova's economy.

According to an authoritative survey commissioned last year by the National Democratic Institute, only 40% Moldovans support European integration, while 44% are in favour of Eurasian integration. This ratio continues to be influenced by Kremlin's involvement and support to those Moldovan factions that oppose European integration, as well as traditional parties with ties to Russia. Not for a smaller importance, Moscow exploits divisions within Moldova's integrity, using Transnistrian and Gagauzian leaders to put political pressure on Moldova's ones to abandon the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU.

We can summarise that the European integration project of the Republic of Moldova is jeopardised by both external and internal factors. Since 2016 Presidential elections, there has been a stalemate situation, both pro-European and pro-Russian political parties waiting for the 2019 Parliamentary elections to establish a kind of majority for bringing Moldova to the West or to the East.

The proclamation of some corrupt oligarchs as being pro-Europeans formed a wrong Moldovans' perception of associating their home-grown crooked politicians with the EU with a dramatically impact of declining population support for European integration. This aspect, together with the popular voice of disaffection regarding the EU and NATO's "too little, too late" support towards Moldova's so-called pro-European government, might shift the balance to the Russian Federation and forced Moldavian policy-makers to look towards the Russia-led Customs Union.

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