

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.

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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 development of bilateral relations in areas of common interest - this was the key topic of the recent meeting between Prime Minister Pavel Filip and US Ambassador Derek J. Hogan in Chisinau. Pavel Filip mentioned the importance of bilateral cooperation with the USA, which is a strategic partner of our country, and expressed gratitude for the constant support provided to the implementation of democratic and structural reforms and the strengthening of institutional capacities. The officials discussed also the continuation of the programme with the IMF, the local public administration reform and the expansion of the commercial-economic collaboration. To this end, in April, a mission of US businessmen interested in investing in areas such as industry, agriculture, ICT or tourism will arrive in Chisinau. At the same time, a delegation of the US Congress will pay a visit to the Republic of Moldova, in relation to which the prime minister stressed the importance of capitalizing on the strategic dialogue between Chisinau and Washington. He stressed that the Republic of Moldova still counts on the support and assistance of the United States to ensure the sustainable development of the country on the basis of Western values.



The framework for cooperation with the European Union, as well as the priorities of the internal reform agenda, require a major focus in order to ensure a real perspective of the Europeanization process of the Republic of Moldova. The tenth anniversary of the Eastern Partnership (EP) is a good opportunity to review the main outcomes and challenges and to formulate new objectives that will contribute to the improvement of the European integration and the implementation of EU standards and values. This was one of the key conclusions of the roundtable organized recently by IPRE in cooperation with the National Platform of the EP Civil Society Forum. During the event, a retrospective of the main results, as well as of the Republic of Moldova's debates within the EP, was made. The most important results are: (1) a revised and strengthened dialogue and cooperation framework with the EU through the Association Agreement; (2) over 1.5 mln. of citizens have travelled to the EU due to the liberalization of the visa regime in April 2014. (3) the economic rapprochement of the EU due to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area – the exports to the EU have increased from 53.26% in 2014 to 68.79% in 2018.



The Diplomatic Institute of the Moldovan Foreign Office launched in March its courses aiming at providing highly qualified staff for both the diplomatic service and other central public administration authorities that will promote the national interests of the Republic of Moldova in the international relations at a professional level. According to Minister Tudor Ulianoschi, the necessity to open such an institution was dictated by the Republic of Moldova's intention to promote a pro-active foreign policy, bringing as an example the deepening of diplomatic relations with countries from different regions, including opening this year of four new diplomatic missions. The key objective of the Institute consists in the professional training of first-time employees of the Moldovan Foreign Office in fields of interest such as international law, the theory and practice of diplomatic negotiations, etiquette and protocol, security issues, diplomatic and consular correspondence, European integration, Moldovan diplomacy objectives and regional cooperation. The courses aim also to improve the analytical and expertise capacities of the new generation of Moldovan diplomats.

Playing with security in a world in which nothing is safe



Sorina Ștefârță

We live in an increasingly insecure world, in times more troubled than ever ... Our Middle Ages ancestors, I am almost convinced, would have

made lots of jokes about it and would have even laughed their heads off. But, as such a polemic is unimaginable today, let's assume the statement as an axiom: an insecure world in turbulent times,

which is why security is a topical subject for all the visible and invisible governments of the planet.

It is true that every nation sees its security ►

► problems in its own way. Thus, for a country comparable to us in terms of territory, Holland - out of the 41,526 square kilometres of the kingdom, 33,881 are land, the other 7645 being water - the biggest threat (at least in spring) is that the tulips may not blossom ... I'm exaggerating, of course, even though the tulip is also a national symbol and a source of income for the Dutch, so it is really not the case to look at it. However, compared with the flowers, Moldova's "package" of worries seems bigger and heavier.

For the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, everything appears to be a source of insecurity in their own country: from the kindergartens and schools for children to pensions (and for many, it's the lack of it as pensions are very small) and the quasi-abstract character of the medical insurance; from officially good roads to the de facto full of potholes, from villages increasingly haunted by criminals of all sorts, to the eternal national question "where to keep my small savings: at the bank or in the jar?"

Against the above-mentioned background, it is natural that the real security risks - defense, economic, informational, etc. - remain somehow in the shadow of people's daily concerns. Nobody thinks of it in terms of threat that in order to cross the Nistru, you have to say you are going to a wedding or a funeral or that, as one of the protagonists of this edition of the newsletter, the media expert Dumitru Țara says, the Black Sea missiles can reach Chisinau as quickly as the news coming from there.

Because, yes, in an insecure world in troubled times, security has various aspects. About these we are inviting you to read in the following newsletter.

There are a lot of elements that create this puzzle of insecurity in the "MD" version

Stela Jantuan, political analyst



FOTO: EUROPA LIBERA

Having been part of a political project once for four years- she has been part of the PDM's parliamentary team – and then having detached from the party for four more years, today Stela Jantuan says she cannot find herself in any of the existent parties. She has decided, at least for the moment, to stay away from politics and observe closely the political and social phenomena that take place in the Republic of Moldova. As observer she is often inconvenient given her background of historian and sociologist but also her way of calling things their name. Also with her I started the conversation by asking how safe she feels in her own country – in terms of individual, institutional, and state security.

■ Ms. Jantuan, how do you manage to live and work ... in the Republic of Moldova, where it seems the entire

country together with its people would like to leave? Do you feel safe at present, but also when you think about the future?

■ I have to admit that I have never imagined that I will feel so vulnerable in my own country. And I don't refer to "major" security issues, but to "trivial" things: health, education, everyday life. For me, the best indicator of a state's functionality is when people feel happy and comfortable in their habitat. We do not have such a feeling, unfortunately, and I think this is the result of both the policies promoted - or less promoted, or poor policies - by the decision-makers and our attitude. For we allow the decision makers not to keep their promises and treat people strictly as an electoral pool, which they remember only every four years. De facto, we are an indifferent society that has no sense of community and solidarity - and we are all suffering from that. I think it's our education or the lack of education which is the reason.

We failed, because we didn't set the development model from the start

■ Is it not too harsh, however, to accuse people of politicians' inability to govern and, at the same time, of their enormous ability to lie and steal?

■ I don't accuse anybody, but our politicians don't really have the capacity

to govern, develop policies, and propose development visions for more than four years. And my fellow citizens, in the absence of civic education and not only, don't know they can and should even hold the politicians accountable for the promises made and unrealized, and for their deeds. And this is in addition to our older and newer problems: the lack of a national identity, implicitly the sense of abandonment by the state; distortion of the such notions as patriotism, good and bad, fair and unjust; the lack of a symbolic space that would unite us around a common idea for the Republic of Moldova; the justice that only justice cannot be called. There are a lot of elements that create this puzzle of insecurity in the "MD" version. I have said it earlier that the mistake of all the governments and parliaments we've had is that they did not establish clearly, immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the development model for the Moldovan society, taking into account all our specific aspects. It was then that the social and economic model should have been established, followed by the political one, so that our country, being already independent, could turn into a real success project.

■ ***You have been in politics too, so you know that things are not happening ... why? Because they simply don't happen?! Including the country project you are talking about.***

■ In order for this to happen, broad consensus is needed which we have almost always lacked. And there is still need for education, training. Thorough and in-depth knowledge in various areas are increasingly lacking among the political class, while without it you don't have the capacity to understand how a modern state should work, how to create synergy between institutions and key sectors, how to manage social processes, to develop the right policies. For, in an

almost anecdotal way, the social policies, for example, are limited now to pensions, salaries and, more recently, Easter gifts. While the social policies should be linked to education, health care, economic processes. It's like a living organism, without which there is no movement - maybe just a Brownian one.

■ ***Today the situations are more frequent than before when people without a high-level education come to high-level politics and are even enjoying success. How do we deal with this phenomenon which, in a sense, is also a contradiction?***

■ I can only say that history is repeating itself. And usually it repeats twice: the first time - in a version of tragedy, and the second - in the form of a farce. This has also been the case in the universal and European history: generating, often artificial, economic and social crises, leading to a redeployment of markets, spheres of influence, and the restoration of world order. We all know what this has resulted into. Unfortunately, indeed, today we are witnessing similar phenomena in both Europe and the USA. The Russian Federation is trying to maintain some traditionalist positions, a kind of national patriotism with nostalgia for monarchy ... These are phenomena and realities that cannot but influence the Republic of Moldova as we don't live isolated.

We have a medieval political management - and we are not consistent

■ ***Instead, we like to say that we are a specific case....***

■ We may be specific, but that's just because, living in the 21st century, we have a political management of the Middle Age level and style. When local feudalists only responded to the ruler, and the only law was the law made only by that ruler.

Sometimes it seems to me that we went back 300 years ago...

■ ***How real are the security threats that our politicians often speak about depending on their political interests? For it is enough to look at the media monitoring to get convinced that the most popular manipulation trick is the "national saviour" that comes to save us from internal and external "enemies".***

■ The politicians in power over the past decades have somehow accredited the idea that being a small country surrounded by hostile powers and depending on the big geopolitical actors, they should play in a chaotic manner ... I believe this is what played a trick on us: we preferred to be sneaky, stand on two boats, using the contradictions between the big players instead of developing our own way and see how we can translate it into practice, living together with both big and small powers. And by explicitly articulating our internal policies, we would have been able to set a foreign policy model that would have allowed us to be a player to be taken into account. But we are a kind of "situational" small blackmailer who, if it gets angry with the EU or the USA, it threatens to go with Russia, and if it quarrels with Moscow, it says it goes with Europe. How can one trust such a partner?!

■ ***Regarding the foreign policy and the big regional and global players, at this year's Munich Security Conference, President Igor Dodon presented his vision in this area. It's a concept that he talked about earlier - a balanced East-West policy for the Republic of Moldova. Have you seen this document, which has not been, by the way, publicly discussed at home with the experts and civil society? And how realistic is this approach?***

■ In my opinion, it is an absolutely wrong and populist path that is not going to

make our country a strong player even at a regional level. Simply, we are not the state that could secure this balance that Mr Dodon is talking about. Ukraine - yes. Republic of Moldova - no. The explanation is simple: we are not consistent. Even the foreign policy concept - a field for which stability and determination are vital and - has changed several times over the past 15 years. Each government came with its own concept which was totally in dissonance with both geopolitical and domestic realities. President Dodon is taking the same way proposing an approach which is simply of no interest to the big players. And here I am forced to get back to the idea of coherence: if a country is not coherent either internally or externally, economically or socially, what kind of balance are we talking about?!

There are certain underground stones that keep us tight in somebody's sight...

■ About the balance contained in the document presented by President Dodon...

■ I haven't seen this document, as it seems that no one in the Republic of Moldova has, except for those who participated in its development. But I understand from the press that the Stability Pact for Moldova which was drafted during President Voronin, and which I also contributed to as a Ministry of Reintegration employee, was at its core. We succeeded, thanks to that Pact, to change the attitude of the EU and the USA towards the Transnistrian conflict and to attract them as observers and thus change the negotiation format. It was a finding that weakened the position of Tiraspol and Russia. But that was about 15 years ago. Today the rules of the game have changed. The relations between the EU and the USA have changed, the European Union is building its own security identity. And there has been a lot of change over the Nistru too: the region is no longer controlled by politicians like Smirnov, but

by the business once created by him, and which eventually removed him from the equation; also the positions of the Russian Federation have weakened because it has no longer those exclusive economic and political instruments it used to have at that time. Consequently, a foreign policy document today should have resulted from these realities. But even more than that, I think we need now a social pact on the geopolitical path of the Republic of Moldova - a pact that we cannot achieve today, however, because of our divided society.

■ Perhaps the "Pro-Moldova" concept launched by PDM amid much fanfare almost half a year ago could become such a pact?

■ I think that even those who developed it forgot about it.

■ What do you think of the opinion that Tiraspol should in general be excluded from the negotiation format, since the de facto decision-maker is Russia?

■ It has always been known that the keys to solving the Transnistrian conflict are in Moscow. And as long as there is an open or frozen conflict on our territory and foreign military forces, we will remain a potential risk of insecurity. However, as I said earlier, the position of the Russian Federation today is much weaker, including because Ukraine has changed its approach. Respectively, new opportunities emerged to negotiate social, economic, and education projects. We need to make the most of this. Direct dialogue with Moscow is necessary, but we should know that Russia is no longer controlling Transnistria.

■ How much is Russia controlling the right bank of the Republic of Moldova – through both business and political factor?

■ The electoral results is an answer to that- from one year to another it is

constantly around 50/ 50 ... A part of the society has adopted this pro-Russian orientation, which they probably see as a panacea and a form of self-protection, including in the sense of ethnic security. And as long as this attitude persists in the society, the pro-Russian parties are going to have supporters. Similarly, the big business is made with Russia, and there exist also the necessary control tools, especially for the politicians who benefit from this business. And this is not necessarily on the Moldovan or Russian territory, it can also be in the EU. There are certain underground stones that keep us very seriously in somebody's sight. And that speaks volumes about the country's security level.

■ However, in 2018 several strategic documents were adopted in this respect - the National Defense Strategy, the Information Security Strategy...

■ Sometimes I have the impression they are directed against political opponents or citizens rather than aiming at the national security of the country. Let's take, for instance, this "blue alert code" recently announced by the Security and Information Service. What was the ground for such a decision for an indefinite period? I'm inclined to believe that the political negotiations for the establishment of the parliamentary majority are to blame as they are very bad for the ruling party. That's being the situation, I will not be surprised if a group of terrorists, with connections from Russia, of course, will appear and ACUM or PSRM will be blamed for that. As a blackmail tool, nothing more. Because "more" means more vision. Plus the ability and the courage to call things their name. If, as the current government says, Russia is our enemy no. 1, let's say this officially, as Ukraine did, for example, including through policies and strategies.

■ Thank you for the interview.

Sorina Ștefăruță

Editorial

From an uncertain zone to security generator: a long way for us to take the first step...

Victoria Bucătaru,
*Executive director, Foreign Policy
Association*

Security is a state and a necessity that concerns us all, whether we are talking about the citizens and everything the security means for them - housing, health, future, the conviction that the institutions protect them - or about the state machinery. However, in the public space of the Republic of Moldova, there is too little discussion about the concepts of national security, individual security and safety, and security culture. Even less people discuss about the reduction in the level of internal security through the increasing degradation of the democratic governance system.

In fact, most of the time, in our geographic area, we associate security with the Transnistrian issue settlement and, respectively, we perceive security threats from a rather narrow perspective, and namely from the systemic vulnerabilities generated by the frozen conflict. The Republic of Moldova, as a whole, is described, labelled, and identified as a conflict point, a conflict zone, a black hole...

Although the national security and security sector reform should be a priority for the political authorities and political elites in Chisinau, they are constantly ignoring the long-standing visions of reforming the legislative and executive structures empowered with security mandates. The sporadic initiatives, the lack of a viable interinstitutional cooperation system, and most importantly, the duality of strategic visions of security, weaken the Republic of Moldova from within and thus generate insecurity externally, which is affecting the whole region.

But not only the lack of a systemic approach by the state in the field is the problem. Although the Republic of Moldova is seen and treated by the international community as a



post-soviet state with a frozen conflict on its territory - moreover, as a state controlled by the Russian Federation - the citizens don't consider the Transnistrian settlement as a vital priority. On the contrary, this is among the last in the list of priorities and interests of the Moldovans... The explanation, of course, may lie in the inefficient communication of the authorities, generated by the desire to keep the subject as "low profile" internally or by reduced institutional capacities in this sense, "cumulated" with the general incapacity for viable functioning of the Republic of Moldova.

Likewise, a so-called "security discourse" is lacking, and a tough position that would subsequently have electoral implications is avoided by the politicians.

In the given context, if we look at the main issues preoccupying the citizens - poverty, corruption, unemployment, the future of children- the existence of a war in the region (the conflict in Ukraine) and interethnic relations (often referred to as an outbreak of instability) are not found. Such a landscape clearly denotes that there is no logical link between "chronic" insecurity and the degradation of living standards generated by democratic slippages. National security and individual security are analysed as independent concepts, the logical interdependencies being ignored. The consequences of such a percussion not only generate internal vulnerabilities, but also prevent the country from overcoming the state of transition and that of insecurity generator - a non-viable state.

A second crucial element for the security of the Republic of Moldova, but also for the building of possible development partnerships, is the security vision - which, unfortunately, is completely lacking despite the attempt to draw different perspectives by the presidential institution, on the one hand, and by the Parliament and the Government, on the other hand (potentially revised according to the post-electoral scenarios). ▶

Thus, at the recent Munich Security Conference, President Igor Dodon presented the Comprehensive Package for Moldova, which, if analysed in detail, is generating more questions than answers. De facto, the Presidential Plan is a document built on the principle of a balanced foreign policy between East and West. But is this concept compatible under the current conditions and what would be the price of such a policy? Because the idea of international recognition of the neutrality of the country is bringing back to life the discussions about the inability of the Republic of Moldova to decide its long-term strategic vision of security policies to be agreed upon by all internal actors.

In addition, the appearance of such a document during the election campaign makes us wonder why this Plan was presented in Munich just now and especially why it was not discussed in Chisinau before. Why are the issues related to the national interests of the Republic of Moldova not publicly discussed as it is naturally assumed in a democratic state, but they look for the approval of the foreign partners first? And why is the emphasis put on the position of third parties and not on the internal legitimacy?

Only when we are able to answer these questions will we be able to build a security profile for our country and will we be able to understand the vulnerabilities, but also the potential development opportunities. A development from a bankrupt, insecure state and insecurity generator to a reliable state that brings security, economic and social stability and safety to its citizens and neighbours. At least, this would be a start.

In terms of information security, the Republic of Moldova is a wide-open and fence-free courtyard

Dumitru Țăra, media expert



Security is no longer just army and defense, just like information security is no longer only a sophisticated computer password - although it is not the case to neglect it either... That is why, in recent years, they have been discussing about information security "as part of the package" with the development of the information society, the rise of social networks and the growing role that the machines are occupying in our lives, often replacing the people... But there is an area of information security which, in an almost definitive way, depends (yet) on the people - more precisely, on what they propose to do with other people and with their minds, through the information

they offer. It is about the media and the risks a state is subjected to if doesn't secure itself in this sense. About information security and its various aspects, we have discussed with Dumitru Țăra, media expert, manager who has managed several media projects in his life and who knows the field ... first-hand.

■ **Mr. Țăra, how safe do you feel in Moldova? And what are the security issues that matter to you as a citizen?**

■ From a physical security point of view, there is no problem. It is true that we are not in 2007-2008, when you could leave the key in the car – the small delinquency has somewhat increased - but we have lived much worse times. At the level of interaction with the institutions, I think everything is very individual and sometimes even subjective. As to the security in general ... nowhere in the world is perfect.

■ **And yet, not everywhere in the world is declared, unexpectedly, a blue level of terrorism threat as it happened in Moldova last week...**

■ In fact, this announcement should have been made in the Republic of Moldova five years ago, when the war began in Ukraine, because a war in our

immediate neighbourhood influences many things and phenomena. Or it should have been announced back in 1991, when the armed conflict in Transnistria has started, continuing to be maintained for as long as we have foreign military forces at a distance of only 60 km from Chisinau. So for us this is a constant threat and maybe its level should be not just “blue” but much higher. Getting back to Ukraine, those who believe that the war there doesn’t concern us are at least naive. Because in the Black Sea there are plenty of ships that can easily reach the Republic of Moldova - that’s not even an average distance for them ... We like to analyse what is happening in Syria, Venezuela or Iran, but we fail to see that the Black Sea is at a stone’s throw in both political and geopolitical sense. And sometimes, I think, we have a slightly uneducated and too careless society in this sense

We continue to be on an information platform of the Russian Federation

■ *Perhaps it is just “slightly” uninformed? Or it is informed in just one sense, by a single voice? For faster than any rocket, what the human mind can get is the information - false, interpretable, manipulative...*

■ It’s not for the first time that I’m saying it: regarding the media informational security, the Republic of Moldova is a wide-open and fence-free courtyard. For nearly three decades since Independence, we continue to find ourselves on the informational platform of the Russian Federation as a result of the consequences of the Soviet Union, so to speak, and we are talking very

little about it in the public space. The people don’t understand, the state has no time to think about it, while the intellectuals got tired to talk about it and finally gave up on it. We don’t have public debates on this topic, and I am surprised by those who are still wondering why we have such electoral results over the past ten years...

■ *But it’s been for two years already since we’ve stopped broadcasting news from the Russian Federation, for example. Can we say that the fence has started to be built?*

■ This is a first step that was, in general, a political action. And it wasn’t an attack but a response - a step too small, in my opinion ... I know well the experience of the Baltic countries or the actions taken by the EU and the Euro-Atlantic community in this sense. I know pretty well also the situation in the Balkans. Even the friendly states to Russia have the information space much better protected than us. Kazakhstan, for example, has excluded all foreign televisions from the advertising market in order to support their local audio-visual. Belarus has transferred all foreign televisions, including the Russian ones, only to cable and IPTV retransmission. Nowhere there is such a mixture as we have in the Republic of Moldova with local TVs based on retransmissions from Russia, Romania or other states. In addition, let’s not forget that it’s not only the news programmes, the military analysis programmes, or the political talk shows that are used as means of influence. The most powerful tool of Russia is the entertainment, the entertainment content - movies, Comedy Clubs, various applications - that “are leaking” the most impossible ideas...

■ *What does the Moldovan media market look like actually today?*

■ I’ll give you some figures. In Moldova it sells 1982 newspapers and magazines, of which almost 1,000 originate/ are imported from Russia and a little over 1,000 are in Russian. Even those coming from Ukraine or Belarus are bilingual. About 30-40 of them have propaganda or military content, or things that were banned or limited in the broadcasting area. At the television level, there are 292 foreign TV channels in the Republic of Moldova, of which 180 are from the Russian Federation and 250 are in Russian or have Russian content. Of the 59 local televisions, I think only 11 have exclusively Romanian content, while all the others have bilingual content or just Russian... Exactly these figures reinforce my conviction that we must move towards the development of the local audio-visual by switching from the current mixt to local televisions. And here I also refer to the Russian and Romanian TV stations that have failed to create local content over their 10-20 years of activity in the Republic of Moldova.

■ *Georgia and Ukraine are proof to the fact that stopping rebroadcasting is not a drama*

■ *Speaking about stopping the re-broadcasting, you said earlier in an article that it should be gradual, not radical, so that the Government can think over the steps. We know it very well that nothing is more sustainable in this world than the transition...*

■ I used to say that, but today I’m in favour of a more drastic solution - for example, starting with 1 January 2020, there should be no rebroadcasting. I



mean, anyway, there is a six or eight-month period in which televisions can transform or create their content. Otherwise, we will continue to complain instead of looking for solutions. We have the model of Georgia and Ukraine where this happened overnight because of the war. In Ukraine, which closed 83 TVs of Russian origin, the TV content became more qualitative than that of Russian TVs. They found *reality show* solutions, they started producing almost 100 movies and TV series a year, so these industries have naturally grown. For the Republic of Moldova, the optimal solution would be a gradual one, but no more than one year or two.

■ **How do you imagine politicians will accept this for it depends only on them... How would President Dodon, for example, give up on the Russian content that his TV stations are rebroadcasting from his holding which can ensure him political rating?**

■ I believe there are enough qualified people to create local content on the President's three TV channels. Besides, I'm convinced that if this question aroused, they would think and come to the conclusion that they cannot keep three televisions – so they may leave only two. As to the content – certain shows, movies, etc. - they will be able to buy it and not rebroadcast. It is a technical trick in essence, because if we evaluated all the editorial concepts of the Moldovan televisions today, we would find out that no one is rebroadcasting; but if we do a technical audit and assessment, we'll see that there is a receiving antenna...

■ **How is the informational security outside the TV area ensured - if it is ensured –which is, however, better**

regulated than the print or online media?

■ In fact, the audio-visual is the only regulated type of media. At the same time, I would argue against the strict regulation of *the online*. However, the online media institutions should be brought into a legal space, being obliged to register. This would solve quickly also the problem of anonymous news sites. Those that do not comply should be closed. Technically, this is very simple as *MoldData* is a state institution... Otherwise, with regard to the online- as in the case of the audio-visual or written press- all the legal and deontological norms concerning journalism should apply. The freedom of speech and such notions as honour, dignity, Administrative Code or Criminal Code should apply as well.

In some cases, the state should have a tougher intervention

■ **So, the information security depends also on the quality of journalism?**

■ Our media tends to turn into a scandal. The culture, deontology, and education seem to be less important for the sake of audiences. It's no longer exciting or profitable to do analyses, to say real and serious things. But the role of the press, apart from the informative one, is also educational. Therefore, the problem number one today is the professional training of journalists: those who come to the editorial staff should have a mentor; there is need for institutions of continuous education; training should be much more applied and more thematic. Because today I cannot even name three economic or foreign policy journalists, to whom I can refer and with whom I can discuss

seriously. They all *copy-paste* from the communiques, very few speak foreign languages. We have media that is a true *Moldova planet* ... This vicious circle can be broken, for example, by creating a centre of excellence for continuous training and education of journalists based on an individual approach. I am convinced there would be opening from both donors and the state. Only nobody is starting this engine.

■ **By the way, you were one of the members of the Working Group on Media Legislation set up at the initiative of the former speaker of Parliament. To what extent did this group respond to the challenges of information security?**

■ First of all, I have to say that on certain segments the Group has been very serious, as well as the four quite important documents that have been adopted: the Audio-visual Media Service Code, the National Concept on Media Development, the Law on Attraction of Foreign Investments in the area of film production and of other audio-visual products, and the Information Security Concept, which later became the Information Security Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation. So, I think the year 2018 was a good one in the area of information security regulation. We will see what happens next, because the main implementer of the Information Security Strategy is the Information and Security Service, its first implementation report being due only on 30 March 2020... It is true that out of the 26 objectives set out in the Action Plan of the Strategy, 9 include the active involvement of the civil society and media. And I hope that when the new Parliament becomes functional, the idea of this

working group will get back. Also the donors will accept to make an effort in this regard. Regarding the media sector it was probably the first time that everyone was invited at the discussion table and despite the heated discussions we have achieved certain results. However, the problems have not been exhausted yet. For example, in the area of propaganda some media institutions have found the solution of taking over the video by creating an allegedly local news, but using the information broadcast in Russia. We still have some shows that, at least theoretically, are at odds with the Audiovisual Code...

■ **Can you give an example of such?...**

■ There is a military programme on one of the televisions. On others, certain news and talk shows from Russia are used to produce local news. We have *Sputnik* which produces radio shows that it places at several local radio stations for a fee. And here I think the state should have a tougher intervention.

■ **To what extent does the Moldovan politics affect the information security?**

■ The political class today is the best-selling commodity. This is confirmed by the four surveys I am currently studying for a research.

We entered a very poor-quality media supermarket

■ **Will we ever be able to say in today's globalized world that we have managed to completely eliminate the threat of information attacks and that we have fully ensured the information**

security? If not, how can we at least mitigate these risks? What long or short-term policies do we lack?

■ Compared with the Baltic States when it comes to the information security, Moldova is at the level of -7, -8. I mean, we can say that we have not even started a serious process yet... We live with certain habits, we are talking about a tolerant society, when in fact, as I was saying above, we are more of an ignorant society as a result of disinformation which is proliferated by both foreign and local media. To diminish these risks, as a first step, we should start talking about it. Is that a threat? If it is, why is it a threat? If there is no threat, why? Nobody can say it today openly and bring arguments which Russian media institutions promote propaganda and disinformation. Who are the politicians dealing with this and who are the so-called experts? We have tens and hundreds of experts ... I have personally counted 150. And what are the topics? For the problem is not necessarily that we are indifferent. The flow of information, propaganda and misinformation is simply so big that we are wallowing in the mud, thinking it's normal as we've already got used to it. And we're used to it just because the media works like a supermarket: what you put on the shelf, that's what people buy. And we entered a very poor-quality supermarket. The offer is big, diverse, but it's getting worse.

■ **It seems we are in a vicious circle, especially because the political factor likes this bad merchandise on the shelves that we are all consuming...**

■ Yes, but the mere fact that we are complaining is not going to change things. We as a society should say

it bluntly that we want something else. Personally, I will come up with some suggestions in the study which is part of the policy evaluation in the field of promoting media freedom and pluralism, which I'm carrying out together with several colleagues on the initiative of the Government. It is an extremely complex study, which will also contain a matrix with recommendations that address absolutely all aspects of the media. Starting from education, we continue with the continuous training, the deontology, the sufficiency or the insufficiency of the media effort, the civil society and the state, the normative framework, the economic framework, the development, the information security ... We have to create, once and for all, the mechanisms in mass media that could work in unison with the effort of the media, civil society and society as a whole, and of the state within certain limits of action. Today, all the mechanisms have derailed, because there is no consensus. They are all pulling in different directions and there is no one to do the work. That's why I'm getting back to the idea of re-launching the Working Group, which was a solution to the many problems. I know the donors' effort are not unlimited, but I am confident that when the state, the civil society, the media say: "We have this priority, please help us," they will respond. It's like in the Bible: "Everyone who asks, receives." It is important to know what we want, what the priorities are and show cohesion.

■ **We thank you for the interview and hope to find the answer.**

Sorina Ștefârță

Looking from the outside

A more assertive EU in a volatile world

Helga Maria Schmid

The predictions made last year with regard to the growing importance of great power rivalries still rings in our ears. What is more, our strategic environment grows ever more unpredictable. Today, major powers openly challenge the rules based international order and seek to promote alternative visions of a world divided into spheres of influence. Geopolitical rivalry stokes tensions and raise the alarm bell of a new “proliferation age” that risk escalating into inadvertent military confrontation. Climate change is becoming an existential threat while cyberspace and disinformation campaigns are the new weapons of the 21st century.

Together and only if we remain united

For the European Union, the answer is clear: these challenges can only be tackled through a multilateral approach. Together we have the tools and the political weight to shape the future global order if we stay united. This is why instead of retreating from international cooperation and global partnerships, the EU is stepping up its commitment to address global challenges together with its partners: this is true for the Paris agreement on climate change, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on non-proliferation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the EU's strategy for connectivity between Asia and Europe or the reform of the WTO.

While these agreements are - in essence - hard to reach, we are convinced they are the best way to ensure a more peaceful,



Helga Maria Schmid is Secretary General of the European External Action Service, and the article below was written for “The Security Time” on the eve of the Munich Security Conference this year. We are republishing it as a further proof that the world of today is interconnected, the globalization has removed both physical and mental borders, and that the big challenges are more than common so they concern us all.

prosperous and secure world environment. Even more so when it is clear that no single country can address these challenges alone. I am convinced this approach is the right one and the fact that demand for European action from our partners has never been so high speaks for itself.

At every given opportunity, the need to define common answers to common problems is not only highlighted but translated into action. The European

Union is therefore investing in broader international cooperation and partnerships above all with NATO, the UN, and regional organisations such as the Africa Union and ASEAN. Our trilateral EU-AU-UN cooperation on common challenges such as migration illustrates how multilateral solutions can contribute to greater safety, stability and prosperity.

For instance, as the UN IPCC Special Report on Global Warming warned us recently, there is an urgent need to act on climate change. This is the logic for the EU's tireless efforts to reach a successful outcome at COP 24 in Katowice. The EU will lead by example by turning its own ambitious commitments for 2030 into concrete action. This was made clear at the high-level event on Climate and Security hosted by the EU last June.

The EU is strengthening the international security in its neighbourhood and beyond

In the security sector, the European Union continues to assert its role as a security provider. Not only it is working internally to intensify joint efforts to effectively fight terrorism, hatred and violent extremism, the Union is engaged on the ground with 16 crisis management missions i.e. nearly 4000 men and women. From building capacities in Mali, Niger and Central African Republic, to supporting security sector reform in Iraq, fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia or preventing a resurgence of violence in Georgia, the Union continues to strengthen international security in its neighbourhood and beyond. This is complemented by continued engagement in more than 40 mediation activities across the world, from Colombia to Yemen and Philippines,

and underpinned by financial assistance as the EU remains the lead donor for development and humanitarian aid.

As Europe is taking more responsibility for its own security, the debate on European strategic autonomy has moved to the fore and not without controversy. However, at its heart is a simple reasoning: when needed, Europeans need to be able to protect and defend European interests and values and have the capacity to act. We want to be able to cooperate with third countries on our own terms.

In this respect, we stepped up the development of joint military capabilities through our “Permanent Structured Cooperation” (PESCO), we will increase joint investments through the European Defence Fund, we are streamlining military command structures (MPCC), and we agreed a Compact to strengthen our civilian crisis management. As such these initiatives also contribute to strengthen NATO’s European pillar and contribution to collective defence.

Greater responsibility also includes beefing up our own resilience and capacity in energy, space, infrastructure and other critical sectors. We Europeans cannot accept interference and destabilization through hybrid and cyber-attacks, hence our on-going focus on reinforcing cybersecurity capacities, improving the protection of data and containing

disinformation through the recently adopted Action Plan on Disinformation.

Security means also economy, technology, and innovation

We also need to be extra vigilant to preserve achievements on non-proliferation, such as the INF treaty or the nuclear deal with Iran, as the stakes for our own security are simply too high. The starting point cannot be to dismantle the current architecture and start from scratch. We Europeans are working at all levels to promote the universalisation and implementation of existing agreements, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. We are also pushing for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to come into force which could play an important role as we work towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the DPRK.

Taking greater responsibility does not stop at defence issues. Security today is also about economic security. This notion includes the strategic importance of the Euro and the need to ensure that the single currency can play its full role on the international scene. Promoting the Euro’s international role is part of Europe’s commitment to an open, multilateral and rules-based global economy. The

extra-territorial effects of sanctions also challenge the Union’s capacity to follow through on our own political commitments. In this context we are developing mechanisms that will assist, protect and reassure economic actors to pursue legitimate business abroad.

As Europeans we cannot afford to waste time or to be less innovative than others. We need to modernise our approaches and engage more actively with new actors at the intersection of technology and foreign and security policy. This is why the High Representative launched the Global Tech panel, with the CEO of major Tech companies, in order to help ensure that international ethics and rules can keep pace with human ingenuity. To harness these opportunities, we also must take the security implications seriously, hence the recent European Commission Communication on Artificial Intelligence.

All in all, supporting rules-based multilateralism and greater European strategic autonomy are not contradictory objectives. If we strengthen our resilience in the face of new risks, the European Union will play its part in reinvigorating the multilateral order and be reckoned as an assertive actor in a volatile world.

(This article originally appeared in the newspaper “The Security Times”)

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Foreign Policy Association (APE) is a non-governmental organization committed to supporting the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union and facilitating the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in the context of the country Europeanization. APE was established in fall 2003 by a group of well-known experts, public personalities and former senior officials and diplomats, all of them reunited by their commitment to contribute with their expertise and experience to formulating and promoting by the Republic of Moldova of a coherent, credible and efficient foreign policy.



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