

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 Mădălin Necșuțu, editor-coordinator

### TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Mădălin Necșuțu, Balkan Insight correspondent: "How foreign policy is viewed by the main electoral contestants"
2. Editorial by Victor Chirilă, Executive Director of the Association for Foreign Policy: "Give the country a good domestic policy, and you will have a suitable foreign policy"

### News in Brief:



The Deputy Director-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Katarína Matherňová, and the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, explained in a joint press conference on June 4th the conditions under which the recently promised 600 million euros by the European Commission for the economic recovery of the Republic of Moldova will reach the country. Specifically, the European official said that the allocation of money in Brussels depends on continued reforms, especially in the field of justice, the fight against corruption and progress in investigating the 2014 theft of the billion dollars, which has not been clarified yet. The two officials also explained about the areas in which this money will be invested. Thus, the largest amount will be used for infrastructure development, energy interconnection with the European space via Romania and environmental projects aimed at conserving the Dniester. These will total 230 million euros. Another 220 million euros will be invested in managing public finances, while 100 million euros will go to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and local communities. Last but not least, 25 million euros is earmarked for the education and justice system reforms.



The members of the Ialoveni Territorial Organization of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) announced on June 12th their withdrawal from the party. In a message published on a social network, they have invoked the decision of the PSRM leaders to ally with the communists in a joint electoral bloc in the early parliamentary elections of July 11th, but also expressed their disagreement with the latest decisions taken by the Socialists, which in their opinion had "a single purpose, to destroy the country's economy and create new criminal schemes." "The coalition with the party of the oligarch Shor, the creation of the electoral bloc with the one who humiliated us through aberrant and offensive statements. We do not agree with the diversionist actions of the Chicu government supported by the PSRM - Shor majority. Most of the laws were voted with a single purpose - to destroy the country's economy and to create new criminal schemes... The PSRM has become an antisocial, opportunistic party with a kleptomaniac leadership", this is how the authors have motivated their gesture of leaving the PSRM.



The Chisinau authorities have announced the opening of three polling stations in the Transnistrian separatist region, without having effective control over these polling stations. Out of the 44 stations for Moldovan citizens in Transnistria, two will be open in Bender and one in the village of Corjova. Chisinau has sent two letters - one signed by the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration, Olga Cebotari - addressing the so-called Foreign Minister of Tiraspol, Vitali Ignatiev. Another letter was signed by Ion Solonenco, head of the Chisinau delegation to the Unified Control Commission, and four other members of the Commission, to representatives of Tiraspol, Moscow, Kiev and the OSCE, calling on ensuring an adequate and legal voting framework in the July 11th parliamentary elections. The SIS has previously warned that the legal framework cannot be ensured in these sections across the Dniester.

## Foreign policy visions: Actors, chances and electoral programs for early parliamentary elections



Sursa: Chicago News

The race for the 101 parliamentary seats, which will take place on July 11<sup>th</sup>, is a quite complicated equation. There is a number of already established political actors, but also a few new parties that could be part of the future legislative configuration.

The opinion polls are showing at present an

ambiguous landscape with several possible scenarios. As before, there are two certain options - one is statist and pro-Russian and the other - pro-European. It remains to be seen who will be the actors to join the two currents in the future parliament.

According to the polls, around 6-7 political parties or blocs are credited with

real chances of crossing the electoral threshold of 5% for solo parties or 7% for blocs of two parties. While the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists (BeCS) is again marching on geopolitical messages using the Soviet myth of the "besieged city", the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) has chosen to go for anti-corruption messages.

► With such a landscape and messages as stated above, we are having, to some extent, a re-editing of last year's presidential election campaign. There are fake news techniques, black PR, and personal attacks. There is less discussion in terms of electoral programmes and more on abstract and political notions.

Populism is not missing from this landscape either. However, Moldovan citizens have become more resilient to such discourses, while the critical spirit is increasing visibly.

The opening of travel horizons after the signing of the Association Agreement and the lifting of visas in 2014, also through the prism of Romanian European citizenship, have produced a positive change in the Moldovan voters' mind. At least in the urban areas the people vote much more consciously, while the politicians who have remained anchored in populist rhetoric have got more and more to lose. Like in the presidential elections, the diaspora will be playing a special role. The stakes are particularly high, especially for the Western diaspora given its voting intention.

It remains to be seen whether the state will be able to provide the voters in diaspora with normal and decent conditions in order to exercise their constitutional right to vote. What is certain though is that any attempt to restrict this right in the diaspora will also create reverberations internally, in the sense of determining the relatives at home to vote in one way or another. Therefore, any deprivation of this right for the diaspora will be a double-edged sword for those who imagine they will be able to obstruct this right without political consequences.

**Mădălin Necșuțu**

## How foreign policy is viewed by the main electoral contestants

***Foreign policy is not among the main concerns of parties with chances to enter the future Moldovan parliament according to the most recent opinion polls. Foreign policy priorities are rather at the end of their electoral programmes and in the case of some parties, they are completely missing. We have made an analysis of the political programmes of the main political parties with chances in the coming parliamentary elections in order to have a better picture of what they offer to the voters from the foreign policy agenda perspective.***



**Mădălin Necșuțu**

### **Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)**

The Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) is militating also in these early parliamentary elections, which will take place on July 11<sup>th</sup>, for a pro-European foreign policy and a clear option of rapprochement with the European Union. The PAS foreign policy is consistent and in line with the European values.

#### **Positioning towards the EU, NATO and the USA:**

PAS is committed to implementing the provisions of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, signed on 27 June 2014, and to reforming the state institutions in accordance with the European standards in all areas. "We will implement a positive, predictable, consistent foreign policy anchored in the European value space, focused on bringing concrete benefits to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, which would allow for economic recovery, recovery from the effects of the pandemic crisis, ensuring the rule of law, fighting corruption, sustainable development of the country and the creation of an international climate favourable to the internal transformation processes of the Republic of Moldova", reads the PAS political programme.

PAS aims at "deepening the political and sectoral dialogue with the European Union and its member states in order to strengthen the democratic, economic, climate, energy and security resilience of the Republic of Moldova."

PAS has no reference in its political programme about the North Atlantic Alliance and the cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with this military bloc. However, the PAS interim

chairperson, Igor Grosu, stated in an interview from April 2021 for the [G4Media.ro](http://G4Media.ro) that he admits the hypothesis that Russia keeps troops in Transnistria to show NATO where the border is. “Yes, I can admit such a hypothesis, because Russia reacts in a malicious way when it comes to NATO. On the other hand, we are trying to convey the message that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova do not want their country to become a territory on which the great powers delimit their influence or a grey area on the map. We want to be a just state, with a predictable policy towards our neighbours and Russia. We also understand the role that the Russian Federation is playing in the area”, said Grosu.

It is also worth mentioning here the PAS desire to relaunch the strategic dialogue of the Republic of Moldova with the USA in the area of “strengthening democracy and good governance, including the fight against corruption, energy independence, economic and financial development, and security cooperation”.

PAS also refers to the development of the diplomatic component and the political and economic relations with Great Britain, Canada, Japan, Israel, the Republic of Turkey, China, the Arab countries, but also with other global and regional actors.

#### ***Positioning towards neighbours - Romania and Ukraine:***

In the PAS foreign policy vision, *Romania* occupies an important place in terms of collaboration with Bucharest. In fact, the PAS leaders have constantly displayed a close attitude towards Romania for the Republic of Moldova, in the context in which Bucharest is the most vocal lawyer of Chisinau in Brussels and the most important trading partner of the Republic of Moldova.

While in 2016 Romania was referred to as a neighbouring state, in 2021, the PAS programme talks about “a strategic partner” which comes as a second priority, according to the interest shown towards the European Union. “Capitalizing on the Strategic Partnership with Romania for the European integration of the Republic of Moldova and deepening this special bilateral relationship, based on common values, by consolidating the bridges between the two banks of the Prut River, carrying out strategic energy interconnection and transport infrastructure projects, liberalizing the economic space, strengthening the political, security, cultural and educational dialogue”, reads the PAS programme for 2021.

*Ukraine* is the third entity mentioned in the foreign policy part of the PAS programme. The party wants to “advance the bilateral strategic partnership with Ukraine aimed at strengthening economic cooperation, environmental protection, energy, and the implementation of transport infrastructure interconnection projects, developing people-to-people contacts, combating cross-border crimes, strengthening regional security and respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries”.

However, along with Ukraine, PAS also takes into account the relations with Georgia in a trilateral format with the EU within the Eastern Partnership.

#### ***Positioning towards Russia:***

PAS advocates a balanced policy with Russia, based on a dialogue of reciprocity and openness in the Transnistrian issue, but also a return to normalcy in terms of economic exchanges disrupted by the introduction in 2013 by Moscow of an embargo on Moldovan goods.

“Promoting a positive, respectful and pragmatic political dialogue with the Russian Federation, respecting the national interests of the Republic of Moldova, the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty, the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, pursuing the objective of restoring trade and economic relations in accordance with the CIS agreements by excluding the discriminatory tariff and non-tariff barriers for the Moldovan products and protecting the Moldovan citizens’ rights”, reads the document.

#### ***Positioning in Transnistrian issue:***

The chapter entitled “Reintegration of the country” comes at the end of the political programme, but has a vision expressed consistently in resolving the Transnistrian issue. For the most part, it talks about the negotiations in the established 5 + 2 format, resolving social issues, but also addressing the political basket in the negotiations. It also mentions the need to secure the border segment with Ukraine in order to reduce corruption, smuggling and organized crime.

### ***Communists’ and Socialists’ Electoral Bloc (BeCS):***

Following the signing of the agreement and the formation of the Communists’ and Socialists’ Electoral Bloc (BeCS), the two parties - the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova and the Party of Socialists of Moldova – haven’t hurried so far to offer a joint or individual electoral programme on the foreign policy they are going to address in the future Parliament. However, both leaders of the bloc have made a series of public statements, positioning BeCS in relation to the outside world.

**Positioning towards the EU, NATO and the USA:**

Although known as a supporter of a “balanced policy”, which means a dual position towards the East and West, namely the EU and the USA on the one hand, and Russia on the other, Igor Dodon has resumed his geopolitical rhetoric after losing the presidential race in November 2020. “The EU ambassadors consult with the Central Election Commission (CEC) representatives, and the American ambassador Dereck Hogan meets with the prosecutor general. I haven’t seen the Russian ambassador, Oleg Vasnetsov, in the election campaign to make a tour of the state institutions dealing with the organization of elections. This means interference [in the domestic policy of the Republic of Moldova - ed.]”, said Igor Dodon in a TV show on May 16, in the context of similar accusations made by the spokesperson of the Russian foreign office Maria Zaharova.

Earlier, on May 15, Igor Dodon wrote on his Facebook page that “after the parliamentary elections, the right-wing parties, together with President Maia Sandu, intend to raise the retirement age (the IMF insists on this), liquidate the small districts and villages (such a reform has already been elaborated during the European integration alliance), completely destroy the domestic producers (the way for imported goods must be cleaned), and pass the Parliament, the Government and other state institutions under the external control of Western curators”.

Dodon has intensified the accusatory rhetoric against the West, stating that “the foreign factors, with the help of their political instruments in Chisinau, want to impose on citizens a set of anti-family, anti-Christian pseudo-values which are inappropriate for

our nation. It also seeks to liquidate the Moldovan identity, including by banning the Moldovan language. The aim is to transform our country into a colony, which will become a source of cheap labour and cheap land sold to foreigners, etc.” In this context, the members of the Republican Council were unanimous in their opinion about the need to unify the patriotic political forces capable of winning elections and ensuring a professional, responsible, experienced government in the interest of the country’s citizens and not to the benefit of foreign forces. Thus, the actions of the PSRM leadership with regard to creating an electoral bloc with other statist parties, especially with the PCRM, have been welcomed.

However, at a meeting on June 4 with George P. Kent, the US assistant secretary of state, Dodon said he wanted mutually beneficial relations with both Western and Eastern partner countries. “I have underlined the importance of a pragmatic and strategic dialogue between the Republic of Moldova and the United States, expressing the gratitude to the American partners for the enormous assistance provided to our country since independence,” Dodon wrote on his Facebook page.

As for NATO, the other leader of BeCS, former President Vladimir Voronin, came out with racist and xenophobic accusations. “Is that what you want, dear voters, when you vote for parliament? Do you want them to vote for the abolition of the country’s neutral status? And for the NATO soldiers to come here and after that have dark-skinned children, not just white-skinned? Is that what you want? And for the Romanian gendarmes to come after them?”, Voronin stated in a political show broadcast by the TVC 21 on May 14.

**Positioning towards Russia:**

Regarding Russia, here are two sides of the coin, namely BeCS’ positioning towards Russia and Russia’s positioning towards Moldova’s strongest left-wing political force. BeCS wants to develop a strategic partnership of the Republic of Moldova with the Russian Federation.

Igor Dodon has continued recently a series of actions in connection with Moscow. In fact, Igor Dodon is saying that he would try to convince Moscow to produce the Sputnik V vaccine in the Republic of Moldova, if the bloc he is representing wins the elections. “We have already the experience of several countries: Serbia, Belarus, which started producing Sputnik V. It is not a fantasy. We expect to launch the production of the vaccine in the Republic of Moldova too. We have already started the negotiations with partners in Russia. I am sure that if we win these elections, our government will soon launch the production of this serum in our country. It is very important, because the pandemic is not over yet”, said Dodon.

On the other hand, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, through the voice of the first vice-chair of the UPC-PCUS, the deputy of the Russian State Duma, Kazbek Taisaev, said that the PCRM-PSRM alliance is “a wise step meant to save Moldova”. Also, the chairperson of the PCRM, Vladimir Voronin, asked the Russian Communists to attend as observers on the voting day at the polling stations that will be opened in Russia.

Also, several Russian officials called in May on the West not to get involved in the Moldovan parliamentary elections. “The EU and US ambassadors are trying unscrupulously to exert influence on the leadership of the Republic of Moldova, but also on the Central Electoral Commission in the context

of the early parliamentary elections from July 11,” said the representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zaharova, on May 14.

### ***Positioning towards neighbours - Romania and Ukraine:***

The electoral bloc of the Communists and Socialists is a statist and sovereigntist one, and one of the main themes it militates against is a virtual union of the Republic of Moldova with Romania. Such rhetoric is common with both leaders, Dodon and Voronin.

“Romania’s ambassador to Moldova has become much more self-confident after a Romanian citizen became president and another took over the leadership of the Constitutional Court. They have become shameless and behave very naughtily. They think they are already controlling everything in this country, but they will not succeed!”, said Igor Dodon on April 21 during a TV show in Russian on a TV station in Chisinau affiliated to the Socialists.

Dodon has also stated that the Romanian ambassador Daniel Ioniță should be “taken by the hands and feet and thrown over the Prut”, following the statements by the Romanian diplomat regarding “primitive Moldovanism” which denies the historical-cultural ties between Moldovans and Romanians.

As for Ukraine, this country is present in Igor Dodon’s discourse only tangentially, being included in the rhetoric about a “possible war with Russia in which the Republic of Moldova is attracted by the West.” “The presidential institution has passed under external control and is in great danger. A major conflict may break out in the region. Look at what’s happening in Ukraine. I’m afraid Maia Sandu will lure us into a regional war. When I’m

making these statements, I’m doing this knowingly. What stops Maia Sandu from doing what Zelenski wants to do is that she has no control over the Parliament and Government. We could thaw the regional conflicts under the dictatorship of foreign experts,” Dodon said in a TV show on the national broadcaster on April 16.

### ***Positioning in the Transnistrian issue:***

The PSRM’s position has swung in recent years between federalization and special status for the Transnistrian region inside the Republic of Moldova, while Voronin-led communists rejected the idea of federalization, including Vladimir Voronin’s refusal to sign the Kozak Memorandum at the last minute in 2003, which would have been equivalent to federalization of the country.

For these elections, Igor Dodon and the Socialist Party have campaigned for the opening of as many polling stations for the voters in the Transnistrian region as possible that are mostly left-wing voters with pro-Russian visions.

## ***Our Party***

Our Party led by the mayor of Bălți, Renato Usatii, has placed the foreign policy chapter next to last – point 12 out of 13 – in its governing programme. It should be noted that its motto – “I have a dream!” - copies a famous quote from Martin Luther King Jr., the American political activist from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, known for his militancy for the rights of black people in the USA.

### ***Positioning towards the EU, NATO and the USA:***

In general, Our Party has a statist position that does not address foreign policy through the prism of

any particular foreign partnership. Renato Usatii militates for solving the domestic problems. “Foreign policy cannot be effective if the state does not have a correct domestic policy. What kind of foreign policy can a state have when the power structures are monopolized by oligarchic groups, bribery has become a universal means of solving any problem, corruption is a new form of social relations, and the government itself is the main source of lawlessness? In such a state the foreign policy is focused on lies, impotence and permanent international dependence”, specifies the programme of Our Party.

The EU is criticized in terms of previous pro-European governments and not in terms of Western democratic values and the EU-Moldova Association Agreement signed on 27 June 2014 and its commitments. “Those who support the so-called European integration believe that the rapprochement with the EU will automatically lead to the solution of the complex problems facing the Republic of Moldova at this stage. For the past five years, the current rulers have done nothing but hide behind integrationist slogans. Practice has shown that demagoguery, empty talk about Europe and reforms, in the absence of concrete results of reforming the country, not only did not improve people’s lives, but also contributed to the continuous deterioration of the situation in the country”, the programme states.

There is also no mention of NATO.

### ***Positioning towards Russia:***

There is no overt tendency regarding the pro-Russian attitude on the part of Our Party. Rather, the programme condemns everything which is centralized since Soviet times and the reporting to the Moscow command centre. “Supporters of Eurasian integration are absolutely convinced

that Moldova's rapprochement with the Customs Union and, consequently (if it occurs), with the Eurasian Union will be the beginning of changes for the long-term benefit of our country. Blind confidence in the magical power of choosing a "correct" geopolitical external path is an attempt not to take responsibility for the reforms, transformation and modernization of the Republic of Moldova. It is a rudiment of the Soviet-type behaviour, when the Chisinau leadership based on the centre located in Moscow, being guided only by instructions coming from superiors located outside the country," the document states.

However, there are also subliminal messages that are in line with the Kremlin's policies regarding the future of the Republic of Moldova, namely the decision in this sense taken through a referendum. The instrument of the referendum is often used as "the people's will" in the Russian rhetoric in the countries with ambiguities about their future. "The geopolitical vector of the Republic of Moldova should be identified and established by the citizens through a referendum. In this case, the decision in favour of one or another external vector will be accepted only if at least two thirds of the country's population opt for this path", it is shown in the programme.

#### ***Positioning towards neighbours - Romania and Ukraine:***

Regarding this issue there are a number of aspects found in the statist position. While there are some short and tangential mentions about Romania, there is no reference about Ukraine.

"Once again today we are relying on the wisdom of the 'bosses' in Brussels, Moscow, Washington or Bucharest, and we do not understand that it is only us who can bring the country back to normal, strengthen statehood,

transform Moldova into a truly democratic and prosperous state", also specifies the programme.

#### ***Positioning in the Transnistrian issue:***

There is no reference to this issue in the entire electoral programme of Our Party.

### ***Ilan Shor Party***

The Shor Party has posted on its website a short programme which contains no foreign policy aspects. The only references in this regard are related to military neutrality and preservation of the statehood of the Republic of Moldova.

#### ***Positioning towards the EU, NATO and the USA:***

In general, the position of the leader of the Shor Party, Ilan Shor, was a conflicting one and in disagreement with the positions of the EU, especially regarding the composition of the government and the parliamentary majority. "We have decided on our own, putting the interests of Moldova and its citizens first. This is exactly what Michalko [EU Ambassador to Chisinau] does not like. He wants the country's sovereign decisions to be made in his office. That's why Michalko spits on the presumption of innocence and attacks the Shor Party. He understands that we will not act in the interests of a self-proclaimed administrator from outside, but exclusively in the citizens' interests", said Ilan Shor in a Facebook post on 19 February 2021.

"A diplomat and a thief, who did nothing in his career but what he was told, would have little to discuss. The only explanation is that the head of the EU delegation wants all Moldovan politicians to be obey him like the

current president and the puppy Juju (Pavel Filip), and he is upset that Ilan Shor and his team are not eating out of his hand", said Ilan Shor.

Marina Tauber, vice-chairperson of the Shor Party, has also criticized the EU recently. "Peter Michalko has spoken recently about one billion euros invested in the Republic of Moldova. I go to villages very often and ask people if they have seen any investment. They say no. So I'm wondering in whose pockets this billion euros invested by the EU went. We have a special respect for the European Union, but no representative of another country should interfere into the domestic affairs of a sovereign and independent state, and if an EU representative exceeds these limits, that does not mean we don't respect the European community", said Marina Tauber during the TVC 21 show "Glavnoe" at the beginning of June.

Ilan Shor did not show attitudes against the USA or NATO.

#### ***Positioning towards Russia:***

In general, the Shor Party has tried to exploit the nostalgia of its Russian-speaking voters towards the Soviet Union. The attitude was generally positive.

In its political programme, the Shor Party militates for statehood and military neutrality, two of Russia's constant positioning in the Republic of Moldova. "We are firm in terms of maintaining and unconditionally consolidating Moldovan statehood and its military neutrality," the Shor Party programme reads.

#### ***Positioning towards neighbours - Romania and Ukraine:***

The Shor Party has never shown a positive attitude towards Romania,

except in cases where Romania has sponsored a series of projects in the Orhei district.

At the beginning of June, Marina Tauber said she was grateful to the Romanian Government for the financing of multiple social projects in Orhei. "We have a very constructive dialogue with the Romanian ambassador. In Orhei there are many projects financed by Romania and we are extremely grateful to the Romanian state for the help. All our supporters have different visions, some prefer Romania, others the Russian Federation, but our goal is to improve people's lives regardless of their geopolitical preferences", she added.

There are no references to Ukraine by the party.

#### ***Positioning in the Transnistrian issue:***

Despite making reference to the military neutrality of the Republic of Moldova, the Shor Party programme does not talk about the Russian military presence in the Transnistrian region, where Russia maintains 1,500 - 2,000 soldiers who are part of the peacekeeping (with mandate) and the Operational Group of Russian forces (no mandate).

## ***Dignity and Truth Platform Party (PPDA)***

The political programme of the PPDA in the foreign policy area is oriented towards a closer relationship with the European Union and a more active collaboration in the political, economic and military areas. At the regional level, the PPDA proposes an active policy in the Black Sea and Balkan regions.

#### ***Positioning towards the EU, NATO and the USA:***

PPDA advocates a balanced foreign policy. The party wants a more active collaboration with the European Union, but also with the USA. Its vision here also includes a regional development component. "Given that the new architecture of the international order is formed based on the multipolar world concept, the Republic of Moldova is moving towards the European Union thanks to the political and economic weight of the European community, to ensure its own national interests, especially in the economic development and national security. From a political point of view, the European integration of the Republic of Moldova means the completion of reforms, democratic stability, the increase of the security level, the territorial reunification of the state", states the PPDA programme.

The PPDA wants to strengthen the relations with the United States "based on common strategic objectives at the regional and continental levels - ensuring stability and security in the South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region."

NATO is not expressly named as a military bloc in the PPDA's foreign policy vision, but it refers to an alignment of the Moldovan army to a reform policy in accordance with the European standards, implicitly the NATO ones.

#### ***Positioning towards neighbours - Romania and Ukraine:***

PPDA puts the consolidation of the strategic partnership with Romania first by deepening the political, economic, commercial, and cultural relations. Secondly, immediately after Romania, it talks about "maintaining mutually

beneficial and good neighbourly relations with Ukraine."

#### ***Positioning towards Russia:***

The relations with Russia are addressed in the fifth point of the PPDA's political programme. "Development of mutually beneficial relations with the Russian Federation based on the principles of equality and mutual respect, recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, and of bilateral cooperation in the field of regional security as well as in the trade, economic, humanitarian, and cultural areas", mentions the document.

In general, PPDA leaders did not show any special aversion towards Russia, but neither did they speak about any proximity to Russia in recent years. They have rather criticized the policies of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Moldova.

#### ***Positioning in the Transnistrian issue:***

The Transnistrian issue, namely the reintegration of the country, occupies a large space in the political programme of the PPDA and has a separate chapter spreading on one of the 51 pages of the document.

"Territorial reintegration is a real country project for the Republic of Moldova. It is a goal that must consolidate the whole society. Unfortunately, at present, the issue of the country's reunification is ignored, and the state's policies are weak, inconsistent and without any tangible results. Our vision starts from the premise that a viable solution to the Transnistrian conflict can be identified only on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, a solution being to grant a wide autonomy to the Transnistrian region.

In fact, PPDA advocates the evacuation of foreign troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, with direct reference to the Russian troops stationed in the Transnistrian separatist region and the demilitarization of the region. PPDA is opting for an increased role of the EU and the USA in the negotiations format with Tiraspol.

## **The unionist component - PUN and AUR parties**

### **National Unity Party (PUN)**

The National Unity Party (PUN) is a unionist party that militates for the unification of the Republic of Moldova with Romania and defines itself as a center-right party whose doctrinal and ideological framework is determined by two visions: the ideal of national reunification and the Christian-democratic doctrine. The PUN approach is rather an integrationist one.

“PUN militates for the reunification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova, the accession to NATO and the integration in the European Union”, reads the preamble of its political programme. Thus, the document sets this political desideratum as a priority followed by all the other components related to the socio-economic, education, and cultural development.

#### **Positioning towards the EU, NATO and the USA:**

In the PUN’s vision, the European values are only intertwined with the Romanian ones. “PUN militates for

the harmonization of the legislation of the Republic of Moldova with the Romanian one and with the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union, in order to facilitate the political reunification of the two Romanian states and the full integration in the Euro-Atlantic civilization space”, states the document with regard to the EU as well as to NATO.

At the military level, PUN calls for urgent reform of the defense and security systems of the Republic of Moldova by involving the support and assistance of Romania, NATO, USA and EU.

#### **Positioning towards neighbours - Romania and Ukraine:**

It should be mentioned here that the first criterion that is taken into account in the PUN political programme is the identity issue in the Republic of Moldova. “In the Republic of Moldova, the majority population consists of Romanians/ Moldovans, who are an integral part of the Romanian nation. PUN states that, for the moment, the Romanian nation is divided into two Romanian states - Romania and the Republic of Moldova, and the slogan “one nation, two Romanian states” expresses the essence of temporary geopolitical realities”, the document states.

Regarding the positioning until a virtual reunification, the relations with Romania must be privileged and constitute the foundation of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova. “The Republic of Moldova will act in unison with Romania with regard to foreign policy decisions and will act in the strict national interest of the two Romanian states”, reads the document.

Ukraine is not even mentioned in the eight-page document.

#### **Positioning towards Russia:**

The approach to the relations with Russia is rather a historical one starting from the annulment of the provisions of the Stalin-Hitler Agreement signed on 23 August 1939, which led to the outbreak of World War II and the division of several territories in Europe, including the diktat by which the Soviet Union requested and received Bessarabia, the current territory of the Republic of Moldova.

#### **Positioning in the Transnistrian issue:**

The PUN expressly calls for the withdrawal of Russian military forces from the left bank of the Dniester and for the transformation of the current peacekeeping format into an international civilian mission “by revising the 1992 Snegur-Yeltsin Agreement as a first step in promoting a lasting solution to the conflict on the left bank of the Dniester.”

### **Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)**

Like in the case of the Șor Party, AUR dedicated only one page to its electoral programme, briefly emphasizing its political objectives, and even less so to the foreign policy issues. Out of ten electoral promises, which are rather vague, nine are of social and economic nature.

The tenth point could be somewhat partially included in the foreign policy chapter. AUR demands the withdrawal of Russian occupation troops from the Transnistrian region and their replacement with UN peacekeepers. They also propose the separation of gas and electricity bills between the Transnistrian region and the rest of the Republic of Moldova, and that the Tiraspol regime pay its bill.

## Editorial

# Give the country a good domestic policy, and you will have a suitable foreign policy

**The election of Ms. Maia Sandu as President of the Republic of Moldova, by virtue of an ambitious reform programme, has given the country a chance to relaunch its relations with the neighbours and main development partners. In the months since her inauguration as head of state, Brussels, Bucharest, Berlin, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Warsaw, Vilnius, Washington and other Western capitals have continued to send Moldova messages of support, openness and readiness to help it cope with the Covid-19 pandemic, relaunch the economy, implement reforms essential to the country's modernization and move forward towards political association and economic integration with the EU.**



**Victor Chirilă,  
Executive Director of the Foreign  
Policy Association (APE)**

The Covid-19 resilience contract worth 15 million euros signed by the Republic of Moldova with the EU, hundreds of thousands of doses of anti-Covid vaccines donated to our country directly by Romania, the EU member states and Western partners through the Covax platform, and last but not least, the generous economic recovery plan in the amount of 600 million euros that is going to be allocated to the Republic of Moldova by the EU in the next 3 years, all these are concrete measures that reflect the extent of openness and opportunities offered to us today by the development partners, especially the EU and the USA.

According to the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, "Moldova is at a crossroad!" and "The EU's economic recovery plan is an unprecedented effort to help the country in its efforts to restore and stimulate the ambitious agenda of reforms in the interest of the people". The message is as clear as can be - to capitalize on this imposing assistance package, it will not be enough to display a pro-European foreign policy at a declarative level. Brussels and other European capitals will expect from us a foreign policy that is fully in line with the concrete/real implementation of key reforms to fight the high-level

corruption, depoliticize the justice system and make it efficient, ensure public administration reform and economic recovery.

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, the Moldovan citizens will choose political parties that will either capitalize or miss this unique chance to get the country out of the current development impasse and relaunch cooperation with our strategic partners. According to recent public opinion polls, eight political parties have a real chance of gaining access to the next parliament: the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists (BeCS), the Dignity and Truth Platform Party (PPDA), Our Party, the Ilan Shor Party, the National Unity Party (PUN) and the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). Most of these political parties promise positive, balanced, pragmatic, realistic and mutually beneficial foreign policies.

### **Development visions and partnerships**

**The Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)** is committed to promoting a "positive, predictable, and consistent foreign policy anchored in the European value space"; to "deepening the political and sectoral dialogue with the EU and its Member States"; to "capitalizing on the strategic partnership with Romania"; to "advancing the strategic partnership with Ukraine"; to "promoting a positive, respectful and pragmatic political dialogue with the Russian Federation, respecting the national interests of the Republic of Moldova."

**The Communists and Socialists (BeCS)** promise "the development of a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation"; "Strategic and pragmatic dialogue with the USA" and "mutually beneficial relations with Western and Eastern partner countries". However, after the defeat suffered in the 2020 presidential election, Igor Dodon, the Socialist leader, gave up balanced foreign policy between

East and West, multiplying his verbal attacks on the EU and the USA that he accuses of interfering with the domestic affairs of the Republic of Moldova and imposing anti-Christian and anti-family pseudo-values inappropriate to Moldovans. In this context, he threatened to expel certain Western ambassadors after the elections. In turn, the communist leader, Vladimir Voronin, returned to the old ghosts, threatening the Moldovan citizens with the arrival of NATO soldiers who will “remove the neutrality status of the country”, bring together with them “Romanian gendarmes”, and Moldovans will have “children with dark skin, not just white” ...

**The Dignity and Truth Platform Party (PPDA)** is committed to promoting a “balanced foreign policy” focused on the European integration of the Republic of Moldova, which means completing reforms, democratic stability, increasing security and reunifying the country; strengthening relations with the United States “based on common strategic objectives at regional and continental level”; strengthening the strategic partnership with Romania; and maintaining mutually beneficial relations with Ukraine. In relation to Russia, PPDA is committed to developing “mutually beneficial relations based on the principles of equality and mutual respect, recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova” and advocates evacuation of foreign troops from the country.

**Our Party** avoids any clear positioning on foreign policy, opts for more autonomy/ independence in relation to Moscow, Brussels, Washington and Bucharest, creating the impression of a sovereigntist/ statist approach. However, the party is campaigning to normalize relations with the Russian Federation, as it is the main gas supplier, and in the near future there will be no serious alternatives to Russian energy supplies. At the same time, it is sceptical of the importance of Western or Eastern integration processes for the country’s development; is of the opinion that the geopolitical vector of the Republic of Moldova should be decided by the citizens in a referendum, and the decision in favour of one vector or another should be binding only if it is supported by at least two-thirds of the country’s population.

**The Ilan Shor Party** lacks any coherent vision of foreign policy. It advocates the consolidation of Moldovan statehood and respect for the military neutrality of the Republic of Moldova, but completely ignores the Russian military presence in the Transnistrian region. The leaders of this party are in a permanent confrontation with the EU policies demanding that Ilan Shor be investigated and convicted for his role in the 2014 bank fraud. The anti-EU hostility of the Shor Party fully manifested itself in December 2020, when the MPs of this party voted together with the Socialist Party for a package of controversial laws that have hampered relations with the EU and the international financial institutions.

**The National Unity Party (PUN)** militates for the reunification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova, the integration into the European Union and the accession to NATO, all perceived as a “simultaneous and organic process”; privileged relations with Romania until the political reunification of the two Romanian states; strategic partnerships with the USA and the European Union member states; pragmatic and economically advantageous relations with all the world’s major economies; bringing back the secessionist territory from the left bank of the Dniester in the realm of constitutionality by changing the negotiation format of and including Romania as a participant in this format, and recognizing that Russia committed in 1992 an act of aggression; revision of the 1992 Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Russia, and the change of the peacekeeping mission format from a military into an international civilian one.

**The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)** is of the opinion that the unification between Romania and the Republic of Moldova is a certainty of the future, but until the conditions of a pro-Union parliamentary majority are met, the Alliance for the Union of Romanians aims at achieving economic objectives to make life better. Point no. 10 and the last of its political agenda stipulates only “the withdrawal of Russian occupation troops from the Transnistrian region and their replacement by UN peacekeepers; and the separation of the gas and electricity bills between the Transnistrian region and the rest of the Republic of Moldova”.

However, the real value of foreign policy promises made by political parties should be tested by correlating them with domestic policy commitments and actions. Only in this way will we be able to avoid the effect of crooked mirrors and understand how realistic, pragmatic, positive, advantageous and effective the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova will be after the July 11<sup>th</sup> parliamentary elections.

Thus, out of the eight parties mentioned above, only in the case of the PAS, PPDA and PUN parties can we say that the promises with regard to foreign policy reflect the commitments made domestically in terms of concrete reforms. The European integration and the full implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU are at the heart of their political programmes, making them potential partners in a possible governing alliance. Despite certain differences of perspective regarding a possible re-Union with Romania, NATO membership, the objectives officially promoted by the PUN, all three parties still have realistic approaches, militating, first of all, for strategic partnerships with Romania and the USA, close relations with Ukraine, continuation/ development of the partnership with the North Atlantic Alliance, pragmatic relations of mutual respect with the Russian Federation and political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, relying on support and coordination with the EU and the USA.

## Soviet type and populist agendas

**The Communists and Socialists (BeCS)**, in turn, propose a domestic agenda out of mothballs of the Soviet industrial age. The implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU is not among their primary objectives. Fighting high-level corruption, reforming the judiciary, relaunching the economy affected by the Covid-19 pandemic are not among their priorities. The emphasis is on the country's industrialization, ignoring key issues for the modern economy such as digitalization or the ecological transition. Also, the question of who will pay the bill for the re-industrialization of the Republic of Moldova according to an outdated model, especially in the conditions of ignoring the European agenda, remains shrouded in mystery. More than likely, Dodon's socialists and Voronin's communists will call on Russia and, in particular, China to finance their projects. As it is well known, unlike the EU and the USA, neither Russia nor China provides democratic, good governance or transparency conditions, and the feasibility of proposed projects is often ignored by the Russian and Chinese creditors.

**Our Party's** internal commitments, on the other hand, abound in promises that would resonate with the European agenda of the Republic of Moldova, such as justice system reform, prosecutor's office reform, fighting against corruption, de-bureaucratization, de-oligarchization, de-regulation, creating conditions for loyal and free competition in all economic sectors, creating conditions for protecting the rights of local and foreign investors, reforming Moldova's banking sector, eliminating torture and other inhuman and degrading punishment or treatment, free access to justice and the right to a fair trial, etc. These promises, however, are not seen in the light of the commitments made by the Republic of Moldova under the Association Agreement with the EU, which is practically ignored by Our Party. However, there are a number of promises that could create tensions in Moldova's relations with development partners, such as: 1) the use of part of Moldova's foreign exchange reserves as direct investments in Moldova's strategic industries; 2) organization of the referendum on "non-recognition by the people of the Republic of Moldova of the bad loan debts (which were stolen by the government and which had no positive effects, etc.); 3) declaring a state of emergency, which will ensure the blocking of all laws and regulations in force regarding judges and the judiciary.

Domestically, the commitments of **the Ilan Shor Party** are contrary to the European agenda and the commitments assumed by the Republic of Moldova within the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The party advocates a decisive role for the state in key sectors of the economy, such as infrastructure, transport, communications, energy, housing and utilities, social trade, pharmaceuticals, ecology; ensuring energy security and reduction of energy tariffs for the population. The party also proposes to nationalize the energy companies owned by foreign enterprises; and to return to the death penalty for particularly dangerous criminals. Such a domestic policy will impede the relations of the Republic. Moldova with its main EU partners, USA, Council of Europe, and the international financial institutions.

Among the domestic policy promises formulated by **the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)** are, in particular: 1) confiscation of the assets of those who commit acts of corruption; 2) European prosecutor; 3) supporting Moldovan farmers with a fixed annual subsidy per hectare in amount of 2,500 MDL; 4) supporting local authorities through a National Investment Programme (PNI) of 100 million euros per year, through which to provide financial support for road modernization, construction of water provision and sewerage systems and rehabilitation of educational buildings; 5) the Iași-Ungheni-Chisinau-Tiraspol-Odesa highway, starting the design of the "Ștefan cel Mare" highway - Bălți-Chișinău-Cahul-Galați; 6) construction of a gas power plant in collaboration with ROMGAZ near Chisinau in order to capitalize on the Romanian cheap gas, etc ... All these promises are achievable only with the financial and technical assistance of the EU and Romania, which is conditioned by implementation of the reforms set out in the European agenda and the Association Agreement. Therefore, AUR will have to state much more clearly and unambiguously its attitude towards the Association Agreement, ignored in its electoral programme.

In conclusion, the success and credibility of the future foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova will depend not so much on the foreign policy promises made by the parties, but on the quality of domestic policies promoted by the future governing alliance that will be decided by Moldovans on July 11<sup>th</sup>.

In other words, paraphrasing the famous Romanian diplomat, Nicolae Titulescu, *"Give the country a good domestic policy, and you will have a suitable foreign policy."*

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



**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.



**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)** is a German social democratic political foundation, whose purpose is to promote the principles and foundations of democracy, peace, international understanding and cooperation. FES fulfils its mandate in the spirit of social democracy, dedicating itself to the public debate and finding in a transparent manner, social democratic solutions to current and future problems of the society. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has been active in the Republic of Moldova since October 2002.