
POLITICAL & SECURITY STATEWATCH

Monthly analytical bulletin on Moldova
issued by IDIS VIITORUL

FOCUS

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN 2007: RETROSPECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVES

■ **Domestic Policy Sector:**

“THE RESULT OF THE 2007 ELECTIONS: LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION VERSUS CENTRAL AUTHORITIES”

■ **Foreign Policy Sector:**

“A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE 2007: TRANSITION CONTINUES AS MOLDOVA MISSES VALUABLE OPPORTUNITIES”

■ **Security Policy Sector:**

“MAJOR THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: 2007”



The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDS) Viitorul is a research, education and outreach organization which activates in the field of economic analysis, governance, law, political sciences, strategic and organizational science. It was set up in June 1993 in Moldova as a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, non-political entity.

WWW.VIITORUL.ORG

■ Domestic Policy Sector

THE RESULT OF THE 2007 ELECTIONS: LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION VERSUS CENTRAL AUTHORITIES

by Ion Marandici
ionmarandici@gmail.com

Politicization of the public administration reform

Democracy advanced slowly in Moldova in 2007. International and national observers at the local elections from June 3/17 concluded this is a practice that still needs a lot of improvement in order to be qualified free and fair elections. While at the grassroots level the Party of Communists lost some of its influence gaining less mayors and councilors than in the 2003 local elections, at the intermediate sub-national level of District Councils (rayon councils) the Party of Communists lost heavily from its influence due to the coalition building. However, opinion polls showed that during 2007 the popularity of Communists Party was swinging between 48% and 44%, with Alianta Moldova Noastra (AMN) as the next party in the top of the voting intention enjoying 15-18%.

Non-Communist parties obtained a symbolic victory after three months, when in the majority of the country's district councils (21 district councils) non-Communist coalitions were formed. In 14 of the districts, the Alianta Moldova Noastra (AMN) managed to have elected the presidents of the district. This situation led to a unique situation in the recent history of the republic when at the level of district councils the power belongs to the Opposition, while the national institutions are under Communist influence. In the context of an ongoing and never-ending reform of the public administration, the central authorities dominated heavily by Communists undertook a series of measures in order to diminish the victory of the non-Communist parties in the districts. Communists try different methods in order to strangle financially the non-Communist newly elected authorities and also to damage their reputation somehow. That is why the Parliament passed this year the Law

on the State Budget that provides for fewer allocations from the state budget available for the non-Communist districts in 2008.

The most obvious example in this sense is the open confrontation course between the authorities in the capital city Chisinau (mayor and municipal council) and the Government /Presidency /Parliament on the other side. Finances granted for the capital city under the State Budget Law for 2008 are much lower than in 2007. Compared to the second greatest city – Balti, which is ruled by Communists, the capital city has got for 2008 an extraordinarily reduced amount of money. Even if the parliamentary opposition protested against the Law on the State Budget for 2008, this did not lead to a re-distribution of public finances. Under those circumstances the winner of the local elections in Chisinau, the young mayor Dorin Chirtoaca already stated that the finances reach only to cover the expenses for the projects started by the previous administration, almost nothing is left for new projects. Different views on society, Soviet past, values, ethnicity, national symbols and language this is what distinguishes the local public administration in Chisinau compared to the national Communist authorities.

Corjova, Rezina district, Buțeni, – keywords for 2007 elections

Three episodes of the 2007 elections showed that there are still many problems with the Moldovan democracy. The elections in the village Corjova turned out to be Moldova's Achilles' weak point. The legal authorities were not able to organize properly elections in this locality, because the Transnistrian militia obstructed them through violent actions. The inhabitants of the Corjova village could not elect their local authorities even if several rounds of elections were organized. Symbolic

is the fact that Corjova is the birth place of the current president Vladimir Voronin.

The newly elected counselors in the Rezina District Council could not find the formula of compromise in order to elect the President of the Council. On June 3, non-Communist parties got the majority of the seats in the District Council. Since no compromise formula was found, the inability to elect the President of the District Council lead to the dissolution of the Council and new elections. New elections took place on November 11, and the Communists gained the majority of the seats in the District Council. Taking into account that more non-Communist parties took place at the new round of elections, the outcome was surprising. The absence of independent observers in the district makes it hard to verify the declarations of several opposition representatives claiming the massive use of administrative resources by the Communists. Two explanations of the outcome at the Rezina repeated elections could be valid on the national scale too. One assumption is that the Communist constituency is more loyal and stable than the constituencies of other parties. The second assumption verified also by sociological data shows that the major non-Communist parties focus on the same electoral segment: urban, with the age of 25-50 years, with medium or high incomes and Romanian-speakers, while the Communist Party is targeting other electoral segments.

The situation in the Buteni village is another example of democratic deficit. Just before the election on June 3, the Central Electoral Commission decided to exclude from the electoral competition the representative of the AMN, Anatolie Postalache. However, the non-Communist candidate contested the decision and the lower court allowed his participation. Still under unclear circumstances, the Communists obtained in a higher court his exclusion from the competition; the decision caused great dissatisfaction in the village since the AMN candidate was the favorite. A few attempts were undertaken in order to organize elections, but all failed since the supporters of one or another candidate were blocking them. The last attempt in December led to violence between villagers.

Confrontation amplifies between Opposition and the Party in Government

The confrontation between the Opposition and the governing party heightened and is likely to amplify further in 2008. Especially, the new extra-parliamentary parties are very anti-Communist. From the parties in the Parliament, the Social-Liberal Party, "Alianta Moldova Noastra" party and the Democratic Party became more critical towards the Government.

The "Cubreacov case" showed that in case of the Christian Democrats, the blackmailing strategy worked. The Prosecutor's Office announced the results of an investigation started a few years ago regarding the disappearance of Vlad Cubreacov during the mass protests organized by the Christian Democrats in 2002. According to some public declarations of the representatives of the Prosecutor's Office, the kidnapping of Vlad Cubreacov was a setup in order to attract more people to the protests. Taking into account the numerous evidences that show that the Prosecutor's Office is influenced by the Communists, one can conclude that the investigation was restarted on a political command. Another opposition leader, the "Alianta Moldova Noastra" leader, Serafim Urecheanu is investigated under accusation of fraud. The hearings in his case continue for a few years.

A few political centers and parties consolidated in 2007. Social Liberal Party (Oleg Serebrian) decided to fuse with the Democratic Party (Dumitru Diacov), while the Social Democratic Party (Eduard Musuc) decided to unite with the Party of Social Democracy (Dumitru Braghis). It is highly probable that Alianta Moldova Noastra, Liberal Party, Christian Democrats and the Party of Communists will not fuse with any other party. The newly appeared Liberal Democratic Party is likely to attract smaller parties. However, 2008 will probably be a year with more fusions since the new amendments of the Electoral Code will interdict the electoral blocks and will increase the electoral threshold to 6%. In that context, only a few parties have chances to enter the next Parliament – PCRM, AMN, PD+PSL followed

with uncertainty by Christian Democrats, Liberal Party and Social-Democrats.

An independent public audiovisual

The freedom of the press and the emerging of a strong and independent media in Moldova are still to be waited for. The public television will be further criticized if it will not revise its editorial policy and if it would not renounce to censorship-measures. Most of the independent monitoring reports concerned with the reform of the audiovisual concluded that the public television and radio are still under political influence and are biased in their presentation of the events favoring the government.

The Broadcasting Coordinating Council and the Council of Observers, the structures that should monitor and support the appearance of an independent public audiovisual are not changing the situation, state the same reports. However, at present there are more discussions on that issue in the society initiated by various NGOs and especially by the Association of the Free Electronic Press (APEL), Association of the Independent Press (API) and the Independent Journalism Center (IJC). While a few media trusts emerge, it becomes obvious that the non-Communist parties do not have access to a television or a Radio station with national coverage.

Civil Society: monitoring more than influencing

Civil society remained a feeble actor during 2007. There were a few attempts of certain civil society representatives to influence the decision makers. A declaration of protest was signed by some representatives of civil society in May in order to demand more transparency during the alleged negotiations regarding the solution of the Transnistrian conflict. Generally, the Moldovan civil society is monitoring the reforms rather than influencing them. The report of thirteen representatives of the civil society on the implementation of the EU-Moldova Action Plan, the monitoring reports on the implementation of the reform in the audiovisual elaborated by APEL experts, the periodical Euromonitor reports elaborated by

ADEPT, the future report on children's rights (Network of NGOs involved in child protection), the Trilateral Approach for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration (Institute of Public Policy), the reports on the reform of the public administration (IDIS-Viitorul) plus a series of other reports pertaining to national security strategy, economy are only some of the analytical contributions of Moldovan civil society to a better governance in Moldova.

Other civil society groups focused on street actions in order to influence the governmental decisions they deemed unjust. Protests against the law regulating the small commercial activities (Small Business Association), protests against the interdiction of broadcasting of TVR 1, Romanian public channel (Union of Journalists), protests for more rights for the journalists, protests against the illegal removal of the Christmas tree placed on the Central Square of the town are some of them. The Movement of Refugees from Transnistria picketed several governmental buildings and the Chisinau Municipal Council, while the Association for the Victims of Communist Repressions picketed the Government and the Parliament in order to determine the authorities to modify some of the provisions of a law enabling the former political detainees and deported persons to regain their property. A few NGOs protested against the taking place of the Russian Duma elections in the separatist region of Transnistria. The most active NGO in the field of street protests was the Hyde Park Association. After the Communists lost the power in Chisinau, protests became more often and are likely to happen even more often in 2008.

A few political parties protested publicly as well, probably the most active in this regard was the European Action Movement led by prof. Anatol Petrencu, followed by the Social-Democrats which protested against the new regulation regarding small commercial activities. Alianta Moldova Noastra organized a few street protests, while the Liberal Party protested against the Law regarding the double citizenship and organized a few public events. Police committed numerous abuses regarding

the protesters; the most memorable was the arresting of a few prominent members of the Liberal Party on March 27, among them was also the current Chisinau mayor, Dorin Chirtoaca.

Socio-economic situation

The social situation in the country did not improve, but contrary to the prognosis of certain economists, it also did not worsen. At the beginning of the year there were fears that the Russian economic policy towards Moldova would cause a worsening of the living standards in the country. Despite the dry weather and the poor harvest, the economic situation did not destabilize, but not as a direct result of the economic policy of the government, but rather because the level of remittances from the Moldovan migrants has reached an unprecedented level. In 2007, studies of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) showed that Moldova is on the first place in the world regarding the amount of remittances as a percent of the Gross National Product. Only at the end of 2007, inflation has risen above 10% and that was one of the reasons why an evaluation and advising mission of the IMF was present in Moldova during December. The mission representatives concluded that actually the Moldovan migrants helped a lot Moldova to fight the consequences of the dry weather this year and the external shocks.

New initiatives of privatization show that the party in Government is not guided by Communist ideology when it chooses its public policies in the economic field. After the "liberalization initiatives" the authorities realized that the losses, some enterprises bring to the state budget, should be filled up and decided to sell the shares of the state.

The last statistical data still place Moldova on the last place concerning welfare of the population. Moldova remains the poorest country in Europe and this image is likely to remain in the memory of many potential investors, which is why the Moldovan government elaborated a brand of Moldova and tries to promote the image of the country abroad. As the Transparency International Index shows, corruption is perceived as wide-

spread in Moldova. Corruption and certain declarations of the Moldovan politicians are elements that continue to damage the image of Moldova. It should not be forgotten that major donors like EU, USA or international financial institutions, like the IMF or World Bank, are offering their aid and loans on the condition that reforms ensuring good governance are undertaken.

Moldova in 2008

The confrontation between the local public administration and the central authorities is likely to increase in 2008 putting in danger the coherent implementation of the public administration reform. The ruling party shares different views regarding the national identity, national symbols, and the name of the official language compared to the Opposition parties. The elections of 2007 mobilized the Communists and the subsequent episodes in Rezina and Buteni showed that the Party of Communists is not willing to renounce easily to the political influence. Polls show that the party in government is enjoying a high popularity, which is not specific for a multi-party system.

The battle for a free and independent public media will continue, but it is highly improbable that in the pre-electoral year, the state-owned media will change its practices. At the same time, non-Communist parties will try to found their own TV and Radio stations, while the Communists already have at their disposal two private-owned TV stations and Antena C, a radio station with national coverage.

Civil society is likely to become more active in 2008 since it will be easier to get an authorization from the local non-Communist authorities in Chisinau. However, the socio-economic situation in the country will not change for the better, since the economic growth of the country is based actually on the remittances of the Moldovan migrants.

■ Foreign Policy Sector

A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE 2007: TRANSITION CONTINUES AS MOLDOVA MISSES VALUABLE OPPORTUNITIES

by Sergiu Panainte
sergiu.panainte@gmail.com

General overview

The political year 2007 has come to an end. It is time for evaluations and assessment of what has been good and what has been done wrongly by those who represent the state on the international scene. It is time for taking some rest before the new hardships of Moldovan political life will come back to the stage. It is time to learn from the lessons given by 2007 and not to make the same mistakes in 2008.

Given the fact that the outside world of Moldova revolves around its neighbors and several key international actors, one can make a virtual divide of foreign policy of Moldova according to several pillars. The first one would be the relations between Moldova and Russian Federation as the latter is the source and in the same time the key to the majority of Moldova's problems. This entails by far the Transnistrian problem and the sovereignty of the Moldovan state, the economic and energetic dependence on Russian markets, as well as oil and gas.

The second pillar would incorporate the relations between Moldova and the European Union. Already from 2003 Moldova, led by the Communist government has declared the European integration as its major priority of the foreign policy. Several steps have been made to accomplish this goal seemingly not enough to generate a full scale metamorphosis from a transitional democracy to a full-fledged democratic and modern state capable of undertaking the obligations and rights of an EU member state.

Third pillar would refer to the Moldovan-Romanian relations which have reached their highest point of tension during this year culminating by the expulsion of two Romanian diplomats who have been declared persona

non grata. These tensions have as a source the recklessness of president Voronin and his aggressive policy of romanophobia. Another reason is that Romania joined the EU from January 1, 2007 which altered the preferential relations of the western state with Moldova given the requirement to adjust to the European rules and procedures. This resulted in the cancellation of Free Trade Agreement in force between Moldova and Romania from 2001 and introduction of visa regime for Moldovan citizens. Coupled with the policy promoted by Voronin towards Romania the year 2007 is one of the most disastrous for the Moldovan-Romanian relations.

Forth pillar would be looking for the relations Moldova has with Ukraine, its eastern neighbor. Overall, these relations were missing due to the political crisis in Ukraine and the anticipated parliamentary elections at the end of September. Nevertheless, the administration of President Yushchenko is favorable to the resolution of Transnistrian problem which is a threat to Ukrainian security too and to the preservation of Moldova's sovereignty. The most of cooperation is still ongoing within the European Union Border Assistance Mission meant at improving border management and security on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, with a special emphasis on the Transnistrian segment.

The fifth pillar would be dedicated to the relations of Moldova with the outside world. Here one could mention the relations with the US who politically were missing from the region. The reasons could be different: the settlement in Iraq, ongoing American presence in Afghanistan, the struggle with Iran, etc. While projects sponsored by the US Embassy

in Moldova are still running, the US presence in political life of Moldova is unfortunately missing. This pillar refers to the relations with Commonwealth of Independent States as well. However, these relations bolster only during the CIS summits with no major follow-up.

The sixth and last pillar would consider the activity/inactivity of Moldova in international organizations and/or regional initiatives and the relations with them. One could mention first of all the United Nations and its agencies that are running different programs in Moldova. Second is the relation Moldova has with OSCE, the mediator in the Transnistrian conflict. Furthermore, it is about the relations with the Council of Europe which is still monitoring the (un)democratic process in Moldova. Then, one could mention all the regional initiatives like CEFTA, SPSEE, CPSEE, CEI, SECI, etc where Moldova is part and which represent a door to the EU. The only thing is that Moldova has to show interest and fulfill the obligations required in order to get closer to a more beneficial statute. Despite the fact that Moldova takes part in the NATO Partnership for Peace and the Individual Action Plan Moldova – NATO was signed in 2005, the relations with this organization did not progressed in any way, Moldova keeping alive its neutrality from any military bloc.

“Divide et Impera” in Russian Style

2007 was the last year of Putin presidential mandate. Russia under Putin started a process of “regaining” control on the international arena and first of all over its “near abroad”. The politics of oil and gas have been used to promote Russian interests in Europe. This was the case of Moldova too. Unlike other countries, Moldova is triple dependent on Russia – oil and gas, markets for Moldovan export and Transnistria. Putin administration has used all of these to get the expected results: Moldova shall not be a candidate for EU accession; it has to stay neutral while Russia still can keep its military forces in Transnistria and Moldovan political class shall be obedient, otherwise no progress in any of the above mentioned issues shall be probable.

During 2007 president Voronin met dozens of

times with his Russian counterpart and has been suspected of leading back-stage negotiations on the resolution of Transnistrian issue. This has been more obvious in the second part of the year when Putin’s mandate was coming to an end. In such a way Voronin was loosing the hope of fulfilling his major electoral promise – reintegration of the country. However, it could be noticed that Russia was applying the Roman principle of “divide et impera” withholding the resolution of the Transnistrian problem by promising on the one hand support to Voronin and on the other to Smirnov, but a different kind of support – to stay in power and “independent” from Chisinau, but not from Moscow whatsoever.

In order to get Voronin into compromise and hinder the process of European integration, Russia has kept its markets closed for Moldovan wines and spirits, as well as agricultural production which represent the traditional Moldovan exports to Russia. The losses were extremely high given the fact that revenues from the export of wine and agricultural products represent a considerable part of the Moldovan budget.

While Voronin never admitted the fact of having secret negotiations with Putin, he launched several initiatives to build trust between Chisinau and Tiraspol which tacitly were encouraged by Moscow. However, according to the same principle of “divide et impera” Smirnov refused any cooperation with official Chisinau and the stalemate in the negotiations on the Transnistrian problem has not been broken. This situation pleases most Russia. It keeps under control both sides of Nistru and a frozen conflict in the proximity of EU who will never accept a candidate with foreign troops on its territory and unresolved territorial issues. With the pro presidential party coming into power in Russia after parliamentary elections, no significant changes could be expected in Moldovan-Russian relations.

The Policy of Small Steps and Missed Opportunities

The course of EU-Moldova relations follows

already for the third year the provisions set up in the Action Plan. 2007 was the last year of its implementation and a crucial one for the fate of future relation with the EU. Nevertheless, this year was one of missed opportunities for both sides, but more for Moldova. Despite the small “successes” registered in late autumn regarding the signing and entering into force of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements, the last year of Action Plan implementation was a disappointment first for the Moldovan public and second, for EU institutions.

The requirements Moldova had to fulfill according to the Action Plan were not accomplished entirely. First of all Moldova has big drawbacks in the judicial system the biggest one being its dependence on the executive power. Furthermore, the free media and civil right are not respected, including the freedom of religion. It is enough to have a look at the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights in trials against the state Republic of Moldova and one would see that almost all the cases were lost by the state. After such a bad record president Voronin voiced the intention of ending Moldova’s quality of member in the Council of Europe.

Although, the last assessment of the Action Plan implementation was “positive” and the EU officials mentioned progress in the legislative base of the state, it suggested that in order for the reforms to be successful their results have to be felt by ordinary citizens, a small hint to the poverty the population is living in and the illegal immigration issues.

If fully carrying out the provisions of the Action Plan, Moldova would have been able to upgrade its contractual relations with the EU, the thing it is striving for. However, the double standards applied by Voronin administration and the ambiguity in the relations with the EU made the Union to adopt the policy of small steps towards Moldova, a tool which does not oblige to anything unless the target country starts to correspond to the European norms and values, a prerequisite for future accession.

On the other hand, in spite of the help the EU is providing in the framework of EUBAM

mission and TACIS program, its added value cannot be fully felt. The official Chisinau would like to see the EU as a full participant in the format of negotiations for the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict and a counterbalance for Russian influence in the region. Europe is not ready yet to pledge either conditional or unconditional support to the Western Newly Independent States (Moldova, Ukraine and to some extent Belarus). That is why 2007 is the year of missed opportunities on both sides. Hopefully, 2008 will change that or one should wait for the 2009 elections, if the situation will not change dramatically meanwhile.

The Fight Over Identity or the Fear of Disappearance?

The most unsuccessful vector of Moldovan Foreign Policy was the relations with Romania. The tensions have been triggered as mentioned in the overview by the accession of Romania to the EU, a thing which created the problems for the movement of Moldovan citizens to Romania as well as losing trading preferences and on the other side by heightened dislike president Voronin was showing to everything which is Romanian. Obviously this could not set a lucrative atmosphere to solve the problems sprung after Romania became an EU member.

From the beginning of the year when it was clear that Moldovan citizens will need visas to travel to Romania, president Basescu informed his counterpart that a viable solution would be the opening of two Romanian Consulates in Balti and Cahul. As nothing has been done by the Moldovan authorities to respond to this request, the Consular Section of the Romanian Embassy in Chisinau since the beginning of the year is under permanent assault, following a visa scandal in August. With the recent inauguration of a new bigger building for the Consular Section, the problem is half solved as the procedure for submitting visa applications is not decided yet.

One major source of troubles in the Moldovan-Romanian relations is president Voronin. Almost every of his public appearance contains a verbal attack addressed to Romania. He accused the

neighboring state of sponsoring illegal parties and newspapers, stealing the citizens of Moldova by granting Romanian citizenship to Moldovans, interfering in the internal affairs of the state and called Romania the last European empire who strives to occupy Republic of Moldova. There were other “diversions” like the visit of three obscure personalities from Iasi to the Moldovan Parliament and Presidency allegedly claiming their “Moldovan” identity. Voronin did not miss the opportunity to be once again ridiculous and promise the citizenship of the Republic of Moldova to 10 million of people living in the eastern part of Romania.

The question is whether Voronin is fighting for a pseudo “Moldovan” identity for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova against Romanian origins and Romanian history or is he afraid of really losing “his” citizens and the consequent erosion of the state he and his Communist comrades are trying to build. Either one or the other, Romania never submitted any territorial claims to Moldova and pledged support for the European integration of its neighbor. There is a need for a change of generations where uncompromised politicians will approach the relations between the two states from a pragmatic point of view and in the spirit of cooperation and friendship. So far, 2008 does not promise any changes in good in the relations with the western neighbor.

Common Goals, Common Interests

The relations between Moldova and Ukraine were more or less absent during 2007 due to the political crisis the eastern neighbor was undergoing. Since president Yushchenko came to power, Moldova gained hope that the resolution of Transnistrian issue gained another supporter. Being a supporter of a pro European Ukraine, Yushchenko had to show the good will to the West and the first test was namely Transnistria. However, Russia did not give up, keeping a lot of pressure on Ukraine. 2007 witnessed again how many levers Russia has to control its “near abroad” resulting in pro Russian Yanukovich becoming the Ukrainian

prime minister. The parliamentary elections had to settle once again the path Ukraine is willing to follow. By a narrow margin, the pro Western forces won the elections.

The new Ukrainian government shares the same goals Moldova does – European integration. For this purpose compliance with European norms and values is needed and as in 2004 the test remains the same – the resolution of Transnistrian conflict. In such a way, by sharing the same goals and having the same interests, the year 2008 should give a new impetus to Moldovan-Ukrainian relations. Nevertheless, Russia is keeping an eye on both Moldova and Ukraine that is why close cooperation between the latter two is crucial to overcome the big brother.

Moldova and Outside World

By definition the outside world for Moldova lies just after its borders and ends with the neighbors, Russia and the European Union. Other countries are too far and play a little role in the foreign relations of Moldova. Nevertheless, the US is by default a key player in world affairs and one with whom every state has to have amiable relations.

The US is an observer in the “5+2” format of negotiations for the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict and closely oversees the activity of OSCE mission to Moldova. However, Moldova seems to be not very important as this geostrategic region has been left to be divided between the EU and Russia, where Russia has more levers to control the situation. That is why, one could assert that the US is missing more and more from the political arena in Moldova. The EU, despite being a pole of attraction, is not doing enough to preclude Russia from dictating the rules of game in the Eastern Europe. A more visible diplomatic and political presence of the US would balance Russia and give hope to Moldova for a successful completion of the transition process.

To the outside world of Moldova one could add the CIS. This semi-dead organization is a relic of the past used by Russia to maintain

control over former Soviet republics. With a lot of initiatives launched in economic, political and security sectors, no progress has been achieved whatsoever. While the goal of European integration is conflicting with Moldovan presence in CIS, Voronin cannot and does not want to quit from this organization only because of Russia. Per se, CIS does not bring too much added value to the security or welfare of Moldova. No doubt, the friendly relations with CIS countries have to be preserved, but not to be a barrier for the European integration.

Moldova and International Organizations in 2007

International organizations (IO) represent the venue where Moldova can voice its problems and ask support for solving them. One positive aspect was that once again Moldova spoke about the need for Russian troops withdrawal from Moldova during the session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Also the Moldovan representative to UN, Alexei Tulbure has been appointed as the head of one of the Assembly's committees.

However, with regard to OSCE the situation remains unchanged and all the efforts the OSCE Mission to Moldova is undertaking are not enough to reopen the negotiations over the Transnistrian issue. Moreover, the head of OSCE Mission to Moldova has been changed; there has been the visit of Spanish foreign minister who is holding the presidency in OSCE, but again with no results for breaking the deadlock in the negotiations.

Nonetheless, in what concerns the regional cooperation, Moldova is trying to defend its interests. In 2008 it will hold the presidency in South East European Cooperation Process, a project meant to bring closer to the EU the states which aspire to become a member to this organization. Other regional initiatives represent high importance for boosting the regional cooperation. So far, with no chances of European integration, Moldova has to look forward and strive more for implementation of reforms and adoption of European norms and values.

Instead of Prognosis

The year 2008 will be politically tough. It will represent the preparation for the 2009 parliamentary elections. The Communists are trying to keep their ratings in the polls while other parties are either merging or new ones are being created. Correspondingly, the internal political life will dominate over the foreign policy. However, the relations with Russia shall be reinforced either revised after the formation of government and presidential elections in this country.

How will look the relations with the EU will be decided after a new contractual agreement will be offered to Moldova, expected in the spring of 2008, if the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement will be not extended by one more year.

The relations with Romania will follow more likely the trend they followed in 2007 as Voronin does not ease his pressure on the western neighbor.

There are no surprises. With this being said one should not expect surprises in 2008. It will be a difficult and decisive year for the future of Moldova.

■ Security Policy Sector

MAJOR THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: 2007

by Ion Marandici
ionmarandici@gmail.com

During 2007, the major security problems of Republic of Moldova were the Transnistrian conflict, the security and stability of energy supply, the food security, illegal migration and identity disputes. Implementing the Individual Partnership Action Plan should have had as results the maintaining of effective armed forces, implementing civil defense and emergency preparedness, ensuring the resilience of critical infrastructure, the adequate use of intelligence services to detect and defeat threats and espionage, protection of classified information. All these are elements of an efficient strategy to ensure the national security. However, good governance is not the best expression to describe the current situation in Moldova. The short history of the security institutions in Moldova is probably one of the explanations for the ongoing reform of the security sector.

Transnistrian conflict: a new approach?

The negotiations in the format "5+2" did not take place for almost two years. Rumors about various bilateral talks spread in the press, but were not confirmed by the authorities. Still, Moldovan officials sought alternative ways to overcome the deadlock. The launch of president Voronin's initiatives regarding the Transnistrian conflict on October 4 and October 10 could have meant a breakthrough, if the Transnistrian leadership would have reacted positively. On October 4 and October 10, in two interviews for the Russian-language press (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Izvestia*), Voronin proposed a set of confidence-building measures that would lead to a better life for the citizens from both banks of the Nistru river.

Briefly, Voronin proposed the following: the acknowledgement of the diplomas of the University of Tiraspol by the legal authorities in Chisinau, the re-launch of the Chisinau-Leuseni-

Dubasari road, the formation of an integrated railway infrastructure and a joint railway company, the use of the Gura-Bacului bridge for the reconstruction of which EU spent approx. 2 million Euros. Another proposal referred to a common television, which could be the pro-presidential NIT. Voronin proposed that the control posts along the unofficial demarcation line should be removed and the number of mixed peacekeeping points reduced. As a reward, Moldova could persuade EU to raise the visa ban imposed on the Transnistrian leadership. Probably, the most shocking for many Moldovans was the proposal of the President to disarm and more important to demilitarize both sides of the conflict as if Moldova would be in a post-conflict situation.

The Moldovan president envisaged demilitarization as a process based on the Constitutional neutrality of the country and consisting of three steps. Firstly, in the next half year, Chisinau and Tiraspol should destroy all the heavy armament, the missile systems and complex firing systems. Secondly, Chisinau and Tiraspol would build a common unified army. Thirdly, the new unified armed forces would be educated in territorial military-pedagogical facilities. During half a year, young people would study mainly peacekeeping at those centers and then would go home. President Voronin underlined that in order for these reforms to take place, the foreign international financial assistance would be necessary. The new Moldovan approach will probably fail mostly because the approach of the other side is less diplomatic and noble, but rather based on brute force. The illegal occupation of the Varnita river port and the failed elections in Corjova showed clearly that force is what finally matters in the relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol. Demilitarization is a goal stipulated also in the new draft of the political program of the Communists Party. The initiative of president Voronin regarding the de-

militarization is very suspect since according to some experts, the military forces of Moldova are less strong than the Transnistrian ones and furthermore, the only real threat posed to Moldova does not come from Ukraine or Romania, but only from the left bank of the Nistru river.

However, the “noble” initiatives were never officially presented to the Transnistrian leadership. Certain sources claim that the Transnistrian authorities received an official letter from the Moldovan Ministry of Reintegration containing a simple photocopy of the two interviews. In general, the initiatives of Voronin were received with coldness in Tiraspol. From Tiraspol, two different responses were heard. Igor Smirnov qualified the initiatives as being populist and just a PR action, while Evgheny Shevciuk, the leader of the “Obnovlenie” and the speaker of the local parliament considered them worth of taking into account. It should be mentioned that it was this year that the migration tax was abolished by the Supreme Council (local parliament) in Transnistria and that the authorities of the separatist region, also promised to abolish the import taxes for Moldovan products.

In the past, Moldovan authorities initiated several separate measures of confidence-building, but they did not represent a coherent official approach. The offering to the inhabitants from Transnistria of personal documents (IDs and passports) free of charge, gratis glasses for pensioners, the tax free registration of the Transnistrian firms at the Moldovan Chamber of Commerce, common programs to fight AIDS and tuberculosis, the support for the disabled persons in Transnistria are some of the earlier confidence-building measures. Beyond confidence building, these are measures that try to bring under the Moldovan jurisdiction persons and economic agents from the separatist region.

Such a step was a regulation approved in 2007 that would interdict since July 1, 2008, the circulation of vehicles with Transnistrian numberplates on the territory of Moldova.

During the last years, numerous car-owners from both sides were registering their vehicles in the separatist region, because the import taxes were smaller and the final price of a car lower. Vehicles with unrecognized symbols of the separatist regime were to be seen even in front of the governmental buildings. The regulation stirred a lot of discontent among the population on both sides and the authorities in Tiraspol promised to retaliate by not permitting the access of cars with Moldovan numbers on their territory.

At present, Moldovan officials negotiate with Ukraine the interdiction of those vehicles also on the Ukrainian territory.

Finally, the claims of supposed successful secret negotiations led by president Voronin with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin proved to be just rumors. The next meeting of both presidents will take place in the second half of January, after Voronin will pay a visit to Brussels and will have a meeting with the president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso. Anyway, taking into account the fact that Russia suspended its participation in the FACE Adapted Treaty, it is highly improbable that the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the separatist region will happen in the electoral year 2008. The organizing of the Duma elections and the electoral campaign in the unrecognized republic showed that Russian Federation does not respect the legal authorities of Republic of Moldova. Despite the fact, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Moldova allowed Russian Federation to open just one voting section on its territory, Moscow opened without any permission twenty-three voting sections in the separatist region. This proves the discrepancy between the discourse about the territorial integrity of Moldova and the real actions of the Russian Federation.

IPAP: between information and implementation

Although, two internal reports of IPAP implementation were already sent to NATO Headquarters, in the country the implementa-

tion of the Individual Partnership Action Plan Moldova-NATO (IPAP) signed on May 19, 2006, is much less discussed than the implementation of the European Union – Moldova Action Plan.

The implementation process is monitored by the President of the state and the Supreme Security Council. The coordination of the whole process is assured by the National Commission for Elaboration and Implementation of IPAP created on August 5, 2005 by the decree of the Moldovan President. The President of this Commission is Andrei Stratan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. Even if the implementation mechanisms were set up in 2006, much progress hasn't been made in 2007. One reason for would be the numerous engagements assumed by the Moldovan officials, secondly the lack of financial resources and thirdly the lack of political will.

During 2007, two NATO Information and Documentation Centers were opened in Moldova: Chisinau and Cahul. The opening of the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Chisinau on October 3, in the presence of NATO officials was a first step towards more discussions about Moldova's strategic choices. Both information centers, but also the next to be opened should lead to a greater visibility of NATO in Moldova. Increased visibility is needed, since the last opinion polls revealed that the population would vote against NATO in case a referendum on the issue of joining the Alliance would be organized. The most evident explanation for this attitude is the dominance of the Russian press (newspapers, TV stations) that propagates a rather negative image of NATO in Moldova. Moldova's activities in the framework of the Partnership for Peace Program with NATO and IPAP actions are insufficiently communicated to the society. Certain officials consider that a national strategy to inform the society about NATO-Moldova relations should be elaborated that would also change the stereotypes about NATO. Another action was the detachment in Brussels of a Moldovan representative, which will at-

tend the meetings of the Partnership for Peace Council (26 member states+20 partner countries). Changing of the neutrality status is not on the agenda of the governing party, because it considers neutrality as the cornerstone of the national security of the state and one of the basic principles of its foreign policy.

For 2008, the military budget will constitute approx. 222 millions lei (or 18 million US dollars) which is rather insufficient to complete the actions stipulated in the IPAP. Even if the Government approved the National Implementation Plan of IPAP, major documents in the field of security and military reform still wait to be approved or to be elaborated.

Combined with the constant lack of financial resources, this is the major delay in the implementation of the IPAP. A new Concept of National Security and a National Strategic Concept were not yet approved. The Strategic Defense Review will be conducted with the assistance and support of Great Britain. The National Military Strategy was not elaborated. After a period of intensified cooperation in 2006, when two multinational exercises took place in Moldova: Cooperative Longbow 2006 and Cooperative Lancer 2006 and when president Voronin visited NATO Headquarters in Brussels, followed a rather fade period in 2007. Still, one international exercise called Medceur 2007 took place aiming to improve the reaction of the Medical Services in a crisis situation. In 2007 ended also the activities of destruction of 1187 tones of pesticides, with the financial support of NATO Science for Peace program.

The reform of the military is in its second phase and the top administration of the National Army will be reorganized until the end of 2008 according to the provisions from the IPAP. The Military Institute will be also reformed according to NATO recommendations and with its assistance. It is not yet understood by Moldovan officials that IPAP is not only an action plan, but a transformation process in which all the state structures together with civil society representatives should be involved.

The division of competences between the Ministry of Defense and the Army Main Staff is probably the greatest accomplishment in 2007.

A factor that slowed down the implementation of the IPAP was probably the dismissal of former Ministry of Defense, Valeriu Plesca and the appointment of former Minister for Local Public Administration, Vitalie Vrabie in this office. It should be mentioned that the dismissal of Valeriu Plesca took place after an incident at the Bulboaca training facility, when by mistake a civilian was shot dead by an officer. The new minister promised to speed up the implementation of IPAP in 2008. Another important replacement took place at the top of the intelligence services, where President Vladimir Voronin appointed his former adviser Artur Resetnicov in the office of Chief of the Intelligence Services. However, it is not yet clear what would be the mission of the former presidential adviser at the top of the security services.

Energy and Food supply: serious risks in 2007

The supply with gas is another threat to the energy security of the country. The only supplier is the Russian giant "Gazprom" which is under the influence of the Russian decision makers. A recent study of the situation in the gas industry showed that Gazprom owns the major part of the distribution network on the territory of Moldova. The authors consider that the privatization of the gas distribution networks and the acquisition of the networks by Gazprom in 1998 was a strategic mistake of the political leadership at that time. They further recommended that the present contractual relationship with Gazprom should be revised as well as the evaluation of the Gazprom shares in the mixed company "Moldova Gaz".

Electricity is another type of energy resource which Moldova is buying from its neighbor Ukraine at a rather cheap price. This year, Ukrainian producers decided to increase the price for energy, which lead to a small-scale

war of declarations between Moldova and Ukraine. Ukraine threatened to stop the supply with electricity, while Moldova declared it would block the energy transportation to the Odessa region. Following this conflict, in his last appearance at the pro-governmental NIT television, on December 28, president Voronin mentioned about the opportunity for Moldova to invest in nuclear energy, in order to get cheaper energy. Among the potential investment locations he mentioned Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

The port in Giurgiulesti is already functional and this year the first cargos with oil already entered the port. Underway is the construction of the railway track Cahul-Giurgiulesti that would connect the port with national infrastructure.

Food supply and state wheat reserves were another matter of concern. It is expected that in the first months of 2008 the population will resent the impact of the dry weather in 2007. The way the authorities responded to this crisis situation demonstrated that the reaction was inadequate and in case of a greater calamity, authorities would be unprepared to react promptly.

Identity and Foreign influence

The failure to propose an identity project convenient to the majority of the population is strongly linked with the anti-Romanian declarations and actions of the current party in government. The Romanian influence is perceived by the Moldovan authorities as the greatest security challenge. Two Romanian diplomats were expelled in the last month of December accused of espionage activities, and also two Romanian Orthodox priests serving in churches in the South of Moldova were not allowed to enter Moldova. A few months before, the pro-governmental media broadcasted the declarations of an allegedly Romanian spy, Mihai Contiu living currently in Moldova and previously serving for the Romanian External Information Service (SIE) on the Moldovan territory since 2001. The converted spy described the

whole scheme of the SIE activities in Moldova. Soon afterwards, pro-governmental media was showing great concerns about the Romanian spies in Moldova. The situation resembled the situation in Belarus or Russian Federation where Western spies are regularly expelled or discovered.

How secure will be 2008?

It must be acknowledged that the activity of criminal networks decreased in Moldova during the last years. Of course, there are cases of drug or weapon trafficking, but mostly the crimes are linked with migration. After Romania joined EU, the forgery of Romanian passports and ID cards became a profitable business involving even former Security Service employees. Considering that the democratic control over the security and military sectors

is extremely weak, the risk of politicizing the intelligence services is high. While the autonomous region of Gagauzia shows more willingness to cooperate with Chisinau, the prospects of a solution for the conflict with the separatist region in the East of the country are very fade. The demilitarization of both banks of the river is unlikely to start in 2008. The implementation of IPAP will be the central agenda of reforms in the security sector in 2008 and the opening of other NATO Centers in the country will help improve NATO perception among the population. The future Bucharest NATO Summit could be an opportunity for Moldova to obtain greater financial and technical support for the IPAP implementation, but the present context of bilateral relations between Bucharest and Chisinau is not helpful in this regard.

The Bulletin is a bilingual monthly publication aiming to provide analysis on various elements of domestic and foreign policy, as well as on some issues of special interest for Moldova.

Political and Security Statewatch authors: Ion Marandici, Sergiu Panainte.

In order to subscribe to the distribution list of Political and Security Statewatch bulletin, please contact us by e-mail: ghenadie.mocanu@viitorul.org.

Coordination and distribution of the bulletin: Ghenadie Mocanu.

Contacts:

Chisinau, 10/1, Iacob Hincu Str., 2009 MD, Republic of Moldova

Tel/fax: (+ 373/22) 21 09 32; 21.36.32; 22.71.30

E-mail: idis_viitorul@mdl.net

Web: www.viitorul.org



The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDSI) “Viitorul” is a research, education and outreach organization which activates in the field of economic analysis, governance, law, political sciences, strategic and organizational science. It was set up in June 1993 in Moldova as a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, non-political entity.

The IDSI’s mission is to contribute to the growth of independent thinking environment in Moldova and in other emerging democracies; to contribute to the strengthening of the local and regional governments; to assist the expansion of the civil society in which the citizens act together to express their own interests, to exchange information and to strive for mutual goals and influence government.

IDSI is also a common platform that brings together young intellectuals who are concerned with the models of transition towards the free market and the open society. IDSI helps them to contribute with their energies, values and virtues, providing its logistic, moral and intellectual support and advices them regarding their future projects and initiatives. Consistent with this mission, IDSI has forged several linkages between the academic and policy-making environments, generating policy analysis and recommendations for various areas of public interest, creating and disseminating of the best practices, good governance and economic analysis.