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NEWSLETTER

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Foreign Policy Synthesis and Debates

EDITION TOPICS:

1. The President **Nicolae Timofti**, during a speech held in the plenary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, said that the objective of the Republic of Moldova is the integration in the European Union.
2. The experience of cooperation of the neutral states from the Western Europe with North-Atlantic Alliance brought to the attention of the Moldovan authorities by the NATO ambassadors five neutral countries. Interviews with the Austrian ambassador to NATO, **Karl Schramek**, Swedish Ambassador to NATO, **Veronika Wand-Danielsson**, and Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to NATO, **Mihai Gribincea**.

Nicolae Timofti: The objective of the Republic of Moldova is the EU integration



■ **Lina Grau:** In the autumn session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), held in the ending week in Strasbourg, the parliamentarians from member states of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution on the situation in the Russian Federation, requiring Moscow for better adherence to democracy and human rights. Among the unfulfilled commitments of Russia, PACE emphasized the fact of not withdrawing the troops from the Republic of Moldova. The Parliamentary Assembly criticized Russian authorities for opening polling stations in several breakaway regions, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova, without the express consent of the authorities in Tbilisi and Chisinau, which is preceded by a mass issuing of Russian passports to the population in these areas. Such actions, says PACE resolution, violates the territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova.

The President of the Republic of Moldova, Nicolae Timofti, greeted the resolution adopted by PACE, in a speech which was held in Strasbourg before the plenary meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly. The President of the Republic of Moldova spoke about the progress in reforms and towards European integration that has been registered by Chisinau over the past three years since the governance of AEI (Alliance of European Integration). We offer a selection of the most important ideas presented by Nicolae Timofti to the parliamentarians from member states of the Council of Europe:

■ **Nicolae Timofti:** We are a small country with limited natural resources but with people determined to build a modern, democratic and prosperous society. After three years of democratic governance I have firm belief that the European course, which is the choice of Moldovan people, is irreversible.

I can assert today that, after a relatively short period of time, the changes in our country have become visible. Today we focus on judicial reform, expansion of business opportunities and combating corruption. We wish to bring to an end these important reforms for Moldova's welfare.

Our vision is that the Republic of Moldova will become in the future a part of European Union, which will provide a better environment for our citizens and contribute to regional and international efforts to ensure security and to build a solid foundation for prosperity and confidence.

After identifying and recognizing the deficiencies in the judicial system, we considered necessary to develop and adopt a Strategy for Reformation of the Judicial Sector for the period 2011-2016. The overall objective of

the reform is that justice should be accessible, effective, independent, transparent, professional and responsible with the citizens, meet European standards, ensure rule of law and restore society's trust in the justice. There are applied the best efforts on reformation of the public prosecutor's office and prosecuting agencies, including reformation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and, implicitly, the police.

In the last three years the freedom of expression, which is first of all a realization of the citizens of Moldova, has improved considerably, a fact recognized by the civil society and international organizations. The current government has aimed from the start to place the human rights in the center of national policies. On the other hand, in this respect there is a great reserve regarding the opportunity to ensure respect for human rights and the pursuit of democratic transformations in the eastern part of our country. Perpetuation of the Transnistrian conflict undermines our national security and territorial integrity, hampers economic development and divides society.

The Transnistrian region will benefit from a special status within the Republic of Moldova, which will give them a high level of autonomy. The key objective of the negotiations in the format 5+2 is the development of a special status, which should generate a reasonable compromise based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. We count on the OSCE, Russian Federation, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States that will join the efforts to identify a final solution to the conflict and Moldova's reintegration.

Equally important is to reiterate that Russian troops stationed in the Republic of Moldova without the consent of the host state and contrary to constitutional provisions and international commitments should be eventually withdrawn. We welcome PACE resolution on the Report on honoring the obligations and commitments assumed by Russian Federation, especially the subject regarding the necessity of withdrawing Russian troops and ammunition from the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

The Republic of Moldova is advancing towards European integration, by continuing the negotiations on the Association Agreement and by launching, at the beginning of this year, of the negotiations to create the Free Trade Area. We set jointly with the European Union an agenda of intense negotiations and will make concerted efforts to meet the timetable and to achieve this ambitious goal to complete negotiations by the next summit of the Eastern Partnership in the next year.

We are aware that we will have a better European perspective if we successfully fulfill the commitments set on the stage of joining the Council of Europe. The priority of our country in the cooperation with the Council of Europe was and still is the finalization of monitoring of the Republic of Moldova by the Council of Europe and the transition to the stage of post-monitoring. I assure you that it is time for this step and for identification of arguments and evidences to support this goal.

■ **Lina Grau:** The President Nicolae Timofti was asked by a Russian deputy about the adoption of the law banning communist symbols, which is

unjustified according to his opinion, and the impact of this law on the Transnistrian resolution. The President said that he would answer to this question in his mother tongue - in Romanian.

■ **Nicolae Timofti:** At the moment when the law was promulgated, I thought a lot and I asked myself a question - what is the difference between fascism and communism symbolic, as under these signs millions of people died – both under fascism and under the sign of the hammer and sickle of communism. If someone tells me what is the difference between the death of these people, then maybe I would take another decision. But today I decided that this law is fair and necessary.

Cooperation of the neutral countries with NATO - mutual benefit and political dialogue

■ **Lina Grau:** A group of ambassadors from five Western European countries, which are neutral or non-aligned to NATO, visited Moldova to meet with its authorities and to share their experience of cooperation with NATO. The visit was organized by the Mission of the Republic of Moldova to NATO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moldova and the Center for Information and Documentation of NATO in Chisinau. From the group of Western European partners of NATO, the so called WEP 5 Group, are the ambassadors of neutral countries to NATO: Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Ireland and Sweden. The Ambassadors of these five countries meet regularly to discuss informally and to coordinate the initiatives and the common positions on foreign policy and cooperation with North-Atlantic Alliance. The five ambassadors met with Moldovan authorities, and also wanted to discuss with the students and the community of experts from Chisinau.

The President Nicolae Timofti, in the discussion with the European Ambassadors, insisted that Moldova will not join the North-Atlantic Alliance, but will continue to cooperate with it in several areas, such as the removal of the natural disasters. Nicolae Timofti said that the good relations with NATO will not lead to worsening the relations with the Russian Federation.

The Parliament Speaker, Marian Lupu, noted that Moldova's status of neutrality brings a number of advantages, including in the effort to solve the Transnistrian crisis. Moreover, he was sure that the neutrality will not slow Moldova's efforts in European integration. Marian Lupu said that the Republic of Moldova will continue to work with NATO to the extent permitted by law.

Austrian Ambassador to NATO: EU integration does not require adherence to NATO

■ **Lina Grau:** I asked the Austrian ambassador to NATO, Karl Schramek, which would be the experience of neutral countries and non-aligned countries in cooperation with North-Atlantic Alliance, experience that could be of use to the Republic of Moldova.

■ **Karl Schramek:** Austria was in a difficult situation after the second world war. We were an occupied country and we had to make belief to be credible for all the occupying forces, especially, of course for the Soviet Union, to be credible concerning our future status of permanent neutrality. When that was really clear, we got our state Treaty which guaranteed this state permanent neutrality. In connection with neutrality, the notion of credibility is something very



important. But a credible neutrality policy is closely related to an active policy making. That is what we, Austrians, try actively to do, by what we understand to be active neutrality.

■ **Lina Grau:** I asked the Austrian ambassador to NATO if before joining the European Union a state should be mandatory a member of North-Atlantic Alliance. We know that this was the path followed by the so-called new state members which joined the EU in the last decade.

■ **Karl Schramek:** I can assure you that there are absolutely no links. And to say that EU membership depends on NATO membership is simply nonsense because NATO membership is one thing and EU membership is another

thing. NATO membership reduces more or less your military capabilities and your ideological readiness to join a military alliance with the article five of NATO obligations. EU membership means overtaking the whole so called Aquis Communautaire which is the whole complex of rights and laws, and also social architecture of all the member countries of EU, that is quite an endeavor which has not only be done and initiated by government but also it has to be supported by the whole population.

■ **Lina Grau:** I asked Karl Schramek what would be the advantages for the Republic of Moldova if it decides to cooperate more with NATO. What could the Republic of Moldova provide to NATO and what could it get in return?

■ **Karl Schramek:** Such cooperation can give you security, political cooperation, it can give your army and arm forces the possibility to exchange with other armies which is very important for international operations. In these operations it is important to be able to communicate, to make informational and personal exchange. These things are a certain precondition for a force to be effective internationally.

In turn the Republic of Moldova can give to NATO additional political element and expertise about the security situation in the region.

Swedish Ambassador to NATO: The dialogue with NATO is important for Moldova



■ **Lina Grau:** Also, I have talked with Swedish Ambassador to NATO Veronika Wand-Danielsson. I asked her why the five ambassadors of neutral and non-aligned countries decided to visit the Republic of Moldova.

■ **Veronika Wand-Danielsson:** I am the Swedish ambassador to NATO, I have already heard, from my Swedish colleagues, a lot about Moldova's progress in the European integration process. The Republic of Moldova has done a very good job.

At the same time, the Republic of Moldova has a very good ambassador to NATO, a partner in the Partnership for Peace framework. When we were visited by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Popov, half a year ago, he came with the suggestion to invite the representatives

of the countries that have no NATO membership but are strong partners in Euro-Atlantic process to come to Moldova and to explain how we work, how we view our NATO cooperation. Some of us are very neutral countries and have neutrality as a basis of the security policy.

Sweden has evolved further and it is firmly anchored in the EU security framework but still this is accompanied with the strong Euro-Atlantic ties. I come to Chisinau to explain how we view these things and this cooperation. Sweden has certain main interest in aspects of capability, crisis management and political dialog.

■ **Lina Grau:** I asked the Ambassador of Sweden to NATO if the status of misaligned country is not an impediment

for Sweden to cooperate with the Alliance?

■ **Veronika Wand-Danielsson:** We gave up neutrality when we became members of EU in 1995. So, today Sweden is not a neutral country but it is military misaligned. Our government has decided to be totally united with the EU, so to abandon neutrality, but not join NATO, only to work as partners. NATO is very open and said “yes, an active partnership is possible.”

■ **Lina Grau:** At the meeting of the ambassadors of neutral countries to NATO with students from the Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences (FRISPA), one ambassador said that NATO is not only a military organization but also a political one. I asked the opinion of the Ambassador of Sweden regarding the way that Moldovan authorities should work with NATO.

■ **Veronika Wand-Danielsson:** You can have an active partnership. The political dialogue with the alliance is important for the Republic of Moldova, especially since you can meet with the representatives of countries that you do not meet in EU structures, such as U.S. or Turkey.

From the point of view of military interoperability, if you have neutrality as the basis for your security doctrine, enshrined in the Constitution, it is important to have soldiers who are effectively capable to do their job. NATO provides trainings, exercises which makes sure that the Moldovan military is in good shape. So, both the political dialogue and military interoperability training is important.

Also, Moldova’s contributions to NATO-led missions can be important for countries like Kosovo and Afghanistan. Like I said earlier, Afghanistan needs trainers and Moldova has good expertise

in certain areas where you have added value required there, so it can come with. This added value motivates other countries to see the Republic of Moldova among participants in these operations.

■ **Lina Grau:** I asked Veronika Wand-Danielsson if the European integration process requires NATO membership for aspiring countries.

■ **Veronika Wand-Danielsson:** Each country decides for itself. We became EU member without becoming members of NATO. So, there was no link between these two processes. The new Member States of Central and Eastern Europe, like the Baltics, Poland and Romania have chosen a different path - it was their choice to have security first and then economic development. I think they chose this path because it is easier; NATO membership primarily involves a political decision. While EU membership is a long, very heavy legalistic oriented process, changing the law, adapting to EU legislation takes longer. For NATO membership is needed that the country to share their values - because it is not only a military organization but also collaboration based on values - and if the Alliance feels that a country is military ready and it enhances security and stability, then the country can apply for membership.

So, each country chooses different ways. Some join only NATO, others first join NATO, as now Croatia and Albania, while they are continuing the European integration process. In your case, I heard that your country’s leadership are engaged in the Eastern Partnership process and thus prepares for European integration process. Sounds like a very good choice. We, Sweden, as European partners, are extremely supportive for this way.



Mihai Gribincea: Active cooperation with NATO will not prejudice the neutrality of the Republic of Moldova

■ **Lina Grau:** Moldovan Ambassador to NATO Mihai Gribincea, also considers that an active cooperation with NATO will not provide the status of neutrality of the Republic of Moldova, but on the contrary, will enhance Chisinau’s image as a credible and reliable partner for the West. I asked Mihai Gribincea about the purpose of the visit in Chisinau of those five neutral or non-aligned states ambassadors to NATO and the message they came with.

■ **Mihai Gribincea:** Ambassadors' visit to Chisinau is an initiative of the NATO mission in Moldova which was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it has a more educational purpose. It was necessary to invite these ambassadors to Moldova for sharing the experience of their countries, which are neutral or non-aligned, in terms of cooperation with NATO.

This need is due to the fact that in the Republic of Moldova the concept of neutrality is often misunderstood. A lot of people understand neutrality as an obstacle in cooperation with NATO. However, the experience of these countries shows very clearly that you can be neutral and to contribute to international security, to cooperate with NATO, bring your contribution, take advantage of the benefits offered by NATO to its partners regarding international security.

So, if we refer specifically to these five countries, it is enough to say that each of these countries contribute with troops to NATO - ISAF, Kosovo operations. For example, the largest military contingent in Kosovo is from Austria – there are more than 700 Austrian troops in Kosovo and Austria is a neutral country, just as it is the Republic of Moldova. Austria's neutrality is recognized but the neutrality of the Republic of Moldova is neither recognized nor respected by some countries. And when I speak that it is not recognized, I mean the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria.

■ **Lina Grau:** What should Republic of Moldova learn from the experience of these five neutral and non-aligned countries to NATO? We know that Moldova does not participate in any operations and, beyond that, has some projects of collaboration with NATO from which hopes to get some money, such as for using pesticides.

■ **Mihai Gribincea:** Primarily, cooperation with NATO does not necessarily mean participation in operations. Obviously, it is very good for

the Republic of Moldova to participate in the operations, because this participation provides, depending on troops that participate, an opportunity to gain experience, to be military compatible to NATO's standards with Alliance. But there are areas in which Republic of Moldova could collaborate successfully.

A very solid argument for this cooperation is the need of cyber defense. An important argument, including for public opinion, for those who still regard NATO through the prism of Soviet propaganda, still pay tribute to Soviet propaganda regarding Alliance.

What does cyber defense mean? There is a worldwide global network and it is enough to have a crack somewhere in the network and then the entire network becomes vulnerable and falling apart. But NATO countries are concerned, as the states that are not members of the Alliance, to meet some rigors in terms of cyber defense. NATO is interested that its partners achieve some minimum standards of security in cyber defense, so that the territory of some partners will not be used for cyber war by other states. That basically corresponds to the interests of the Republic of Moldova. Moldova is now increasingly computerized and becomes part of the global computer network, and is keen to raise the level of protection in terms of cyber defense. For this purpose, in 2010 there was created a center of cyber defense near the Government Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova. So, this cooperation in cyber defense meets both NATO's interests and the interests of the Republic of Moldova. It would be a mutually beneficial cooperation.

■ **Lina Grau:** What would be other areas where Moldova and NATO could cooperate in joint projects?

■ **Mihai Gribincea:** For example, the project on destruction of pesticides. The third phase of the project is not over yet, in Moldova there are 2000 tons of pesticides, but the project implemented

by NATO states the destruction of only 1269 tons. So, even if NATO project will be completed, however, there will remain stocks of pesticides that endanger the market and the health of Moldova's people. So, an area that should be proposed is the destruction of pesticides.

But there are many other possibilities for cooperation in science. Moldovan scientists, in collaboration with the scientists from other countries, can participate in research or projects in relevant areas of either nanotechnology or cyber defense. So, there are many areas and depends on the imagination and interest of Moldovan scientists. For example, one of our intentions is that in the near future to invite an expert from NATO that is dealing with science projects, which will come to Chisinau and explain, during the seminars with interested scientists, how to apply for projects. In order to submit the proposals there are certain requirements to be met. I hope that after such an exercise, the number of science projects, which will involve scientists from Moldova, will increase. There can be projects in areas like counterterrorism, combating trafficking in nuclear substances - remember that a year or two ago there was a case of smuggling nuclear substances. So, there are areas, it only depends on how much we are interested in this and on our perseverance.

■ **Lina Grau:** If all of you mentioned this delicate issue of Moldova's neutrality that is violated by a state with troops on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, I would like to ask you to what extent and in what way Chisinau can count on the support of Western partners, on NATO's support in this dialogue with the Russian Federation?

■ **Mihai Gribincea:** Republic of Moldova, from the beginning of its cooperation with NATO, had strong political support from the Alliance. Almost in all NATO's summits there was a paragraph in the final declaration in which NATO has expressed its support for the territorial integrity of the Republic of

Moldova and in some cases requested the implementation of the Istanbul agreements on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. So, politically, there is a permanent support of Chisinau regarding the topics of vital interest for the security of the Republic of Moldova.

Regarding neutrality, the visit of the Ambassadors to Chisinau aims to demonstrate that the neutrality itself can be varied. As Switzerland's neutrality, Austria's neutrality and Sweden's non-alignment have certain features. Furthermore, Sweden considers that, currently, the status of neutrality for Sweden no longer meets the national interests. Since joining the European Union, when politically had to be on EU side and to share EU policy, Sweden considered that it cannot have a neutral statute, totally neutral, classic. Therefore, neutrality is different from country to country.

The Republic of Moldova has to find its model of neutrality. In my opinion, it is important that Republic of Moldova decides what kind of neutrality status wishes. Chisinau should be the one to decide what kind of neutral country we are - are we a country with permanent neutrality or not, with military neutrality or not. This decision must be one assumed by the Republic of Moldova and not one imposed from outside.

In this case, there is a hope that the neutrality of Moldova will contribute to speeding up the Transnistrian resolution. It is known that, in Transnistria, NATO and the West is viewed differently than the right bank of the river Nistru. So, obviously neutrality can play a positive role in the Transnistrian resolution.

If we make analogies with Austria or Switzerland, the Swiss Ambassador

said publicly here in Chisinau, that he considers that if Switzerland was not a neutral country, it would not exist as a state, because in history Switzerland would have always been an exchange currency between the great powers which were fighting. So, neutrality can have positive effects for the Republic of Moldova, but it is important that neutrality decision to be taken by the Republic of Moldova, by the Moldovan people.

■ **Lina Grau:** In reference to the attitude towards NATO, the level of mentality, you mentioned, at the beginning of our discussion, that to some extent we are the hostages of the vision from the soviet period, under which NATO would be an aggressor, an enemy. Why perpetuate this picture?

■ **Mihai Gribincea:** I would say that we pay tribute to the soviet propaganda, which lasted for decades, in which NATO was presented as an aggressive military bloc, as a policeman of the world and so on. The second reason is that, unfortunately, Republic of Moldova continues to be in the Russian information space, so the influence of Russian media on the Moldova's population is very high and we all know that some TV channels in Russia still continues to regard NATO the same as in soviet times. So, there is still an anti-NATO propaganda.

Another issue is that people are not informed properly that NATO has changed a lot in the last 10-15 years. The today North-Atlantic Alliance is not like the one that was during the period of cold war. But I want to say that this is a problem not only for Moldova. The fact that NATO has changed is not understood even in many countries that are members of the Alliance. Perhaps this is a mission of the public diplomacy department

of NATO, but people are not informed properly about the changing nature of the Alliance in recent years.

If you remember the Soviet period, many Moldovans, according to some data, up to 12,000 soldiers had fight in Afghanistan and more than 300 soldiers died there. And obviously, if you multiply this number with family members, all of these things have an echo in society. And it takes time for the image of NATO to change in the Republic of Moldova. And I hope that the visits to the Republic of Moldova, such as that of the ambassadors of the neutral or non-aligned countries, including our interview, will help to change the perception of NATO.

■ **Lina Grau:** What should Chisinau do to expend the relations with the Alliance and make them warmer and more useful for the Republic of Moldova?

■ **Mihai Gribincea:** I emphasized in some interviews that we are doing small steps, but important, in terms of deepening our relations with NATO. There is an action plan IPAP between the Republic of Moldova and NATO. We must do our homework and implement what is written in the individual Plan of cooperation with NATO.

The political dialogue is at a very good level. Recently, the Deputy Foreign Minister - Andrei Popov was at NATO, and made a presentation regarding IPAP implementation, also held meetings with two Deputy Secretaries of NATO. So, I think that is a very important level of dialogue. We agreed on specific measures that will result from these meetings, it remains only to implement them.