



Newsletter

MOLDOVA SECURITY CONFERENCE

2nd edition



ESTABLISHED GOALS

**STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC
ANALYSIS CAPABILITIES**

**INITIATING EXPERIENCE
EXCHANGE REPORTS**

**STRENGTHENING
COOPERATION WITH
ANALOGICAL STRUCTURES**

**INITIATING CAMPAIGNS TO
COMBAT DISINFORMATION**

**CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF
DISSEMINATED ANTI-
GOVERNMENT MESSAGES**

**STRENGTHENING
INTEROPERABILITY
CAPABILITIES**

Manifestations and threats of hybrid warfare

On June 12th, in Chisinau, the second edition of the Moldova Security Conference took place, with the title "Manifestations and threats of the hybrid war". More than 50 representatives of institutions with competencies in protecting democratic values, security specialists from the Republic of Moldova, Romania and other EU states, representatives of diplomatic missions, civil society and the media met to analyze the security environment in the European region, in light of the manifestations of the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation against the European countries.

For the Republic of Moldova, the year 2022 was the year of the greatest challenges to national security, a conditional fact and dependent on the destabilization of the regional and global security system. The multitude of crises faced by the Republic of Moldova was in tandem with the hybrid threats, which intensified with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. These were characterized by a series of direct and indirect actions towards national security.



GEORGE SCUTARU, NEW STRATEGY CENTER, RO

Integrated threat approach method

Nicoleta Pauliuc, senator and president of the Commission for Defense, Public Order and National Security in the Romanian Parliament mentioned that "the main objective of the hybrid war is to generate doubts in democratic societies, to tire them mentally so that in the end, to weaken the support given to the legitimate and very brave regimes in Chisinau and Kyiv". Under these conditions, it is crucial to develop a coherent strategy as well as precise mechanisms to curb anti-NATO and anti-EU propaganda. In the requirements of the exponential development of technologies and the multiplication of communication channels, exposure to propaganda and misinformation is more and more present. No state is safe from this phenomenon, but through skillfully constructed communication strategies, it can be countered and the effects greatly diminished.

In this case, an integrated threat approach is identified as the only method to deal with this hybrid war that brings multiple and overlapping crises. "The Republic of Moldova was used by Moscow as a laboratory for testing and researching the machinery of informational and psychological warfare" declared Ana Revenco, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, at the same time cataloguing social resilience as one of the pillars of resistance to threats and attacks. Complementarily, the cross-sectoral collaboration, both vertically and horizontally, between all subdivisions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs with partners in the defence and national security sector, strengthened the early reaction capacity to any challenge that could have induced a serious level of instability.

"If in Ukraine we have a conventional, kinetic war, then against the Republic of Moldova, Russia has declared a hybrid war on a large scale and the stake is as important for Moscow as the aggression against Ukraine: it is about destabilizing this country, as well as Ukraine, with effects on their security, but also on Romania's security, implicitly directed towards the subject of NATO and the EU" emphasized George Scutaru, general director of the New Strategy Center, Romania.



NICOLETA PAULIUC, PARLIAMENT, RO
ANA REVENCO, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, RM



In the Republic of Moldova, the hybrid war began with independence, through various instruments applied gradually, be it economic blackmail, political blackmail, later disinformation, or propaganda, all with a well-defined goal: anchoring the Republic of Moldova in the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. According to Alexandru Mustață, director of the Intelligence and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, "social fragmentation, ethnic, linguistic and political division, the vulnerability of the information space, disinformation" are just a few tactics of influence of the Russian Federation on the Republic of Moldova.



ALEXANDRU MUSTAȚĂ, INFORMATION AND SECURITY SERVICE, RM

Elements of hard power and soft power

However, in 2021, when the concentration of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine began, the attention of the external partners of the Republic of Moldova began to be much more focused on the area of Eastern Europe, implicitly Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. This was the beginning of the increase in the interest of external partners towards the Republic of Moldova. "With the granting of candidate country status in the summer of 2022, the Republic of Moldova began to be seen as a partner and future member of the EU, which allowed opening more doors, offering more opportunities for cooperation and assistance. At the moment, we are at the stage of increasing the revolutions in our cooperation on all levels, including those related to security and defense" pointed out Vladimir Cuc, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



VLADISLAV COJUHARI, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, RM
VLADIMIR CUC, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, RM

Hybrid war, defined as a dynamic interaction between elements of hard power (consolidation of military forces, financing of separatist movements, activities to destabilize and undermine the security of a state or regions) and soft power (maintaining an economic or energy dependency, carrying out campaigns of propaganda, disinformation and misinformation, carrying out cyber attacks, etc.), is particularly dangerous "through the ability to operate in grey areas, and the ability to exploit legal and normative ambiguities. Thus, asymmetric threats develop based on the exploitation of information, in a special way of perception, using media and social media platforms, to manipulate public opinion" explained Vladislav Cojuhari, Deputy General Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In this asymmetric war, Moldova shows political, administrative and institutional resilience, yet being one of the main targets of the hybrid aggression unleashed by the Russian Federation.



VALERIU PAȘA, THE COMMUNITY "WATCHDOG.MD" RM

The propagandist narrative and disinformation

At the national level, surveys show that "citizens still believe that neutrality can ensure their security", says Ion Tăbârță, executive director of the NATO Information and Documentation Center. At the same time, the subject of NATO was and is widely used in the hybrid war against the Republic of Moldova. Russian propaganda manipulates the element of "homeland defense war" that the Russian Federation is waging against NATO, using the war in Ukraine as a tool. Also, the term "Ukrainization" of the Republic of Moldova is gaining more and more shape. The approach to this narrative comes against the backdrop of a divided society, much of which has a distorted view of NATO. The concept of ensuring security is intentionally connected with the subject of neutrality.

A survey from October 2022, carried out by the Platform for Defense and Security Initiatives, together with CBS Research, shows that for citizens "NATO represents the second threat to the security of the Republic of Moldova" and that "neutrality guarantees security". This opposition is created intentionally, emphasizing the message that "it is neutrality that ensures the security of the state, and not NATO". It is too early to talk about the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the North Atlantic Alliance, a fact that must be substantiated by society's desire, or society must be correctly informed about NATO's role in the current regional and international security context.

The Russian Federation is trying to keep the Republic of Moldova in the grey zone, not to admit the consolidation of the state and to disloyalize part of the society, imposing on them propagandist narratives. "The only solution for the Republic of Moldova to maintain a stable security framework is the accession to NATO" emphasizes Valeriu Pașa, president of the "WatchDog.md" Community. The main players of the Russian Federation in its disinformation operations in the Republic of Moldova are its "local allies", who act exclusively for reasons of loyalty or for personal, material, political interests. Disinformation is nothing more than a tool to achieve some ends, and not an end per se. Among the solutions to prevent disinformation are (1) strategic communication in reducing and preventing the effects of disinformation and (2) strengthening the rule of law and independent justice. The expert claims that through bans, blocking or censorship, the expected result of eliminating disinformation is null.



ION TĂBÎRȚĂ, INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER NATO, RM



IGOR DEMCIUCIN, GENERAL PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE, RM

In the Republic of Moldova, the Russian-language press dominates the information market, promoting more than 90% pro-Russian narratives or supporting Russian narratives, regardless of the topics that are required. Dumitru Țîra, director of the Realitatea press group, claims that "political exponents, various organizations and media institutions are used to promote these narratives and create perceptions in various fields, or in various directions, even when we talk about the perception related to the great danger to NATO or the perception that neutrality is sacred." The Romanian-language press also partly supports these narratives. A solution in this sense would be the development of the capacity to monitor and support reaction tools, including training on the subject of cyber security, as well as the creation of a community of media institutions or journalists who would be tasked with informing correctly, quickly, but also to combat disinformation and propaganda.



OVIDIU RAEȚCHI, EURO-ATLANTIC RESILIENCE CENTER, RO

After the outbreak of the war against Ukraine, criminal prosecutions were launched for the crimes of sabotage, false bomb alerts, attempts to disrupt computer systems, and mass disorder. "The prosecutor's office is the nucleus that ensures the interaction of the other actors, both in the criminal prosecution and the judiciary, so as to ensure a proportional legal-criminal response to all these crimes within the hybrid war" Igor Demciucin, deputy of the General Prosecutor, pointed out.



DUMITRU ȚÎRA, PRESS GROUP "REALITATEA", RM

Moldova-security provider

Through its remarkable reaction in the conditions of extreme provocation after the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova demonstrates that it is "a supplier of security and lessons learned for the entire European Union", a qualification assigned by Ovidiu Raețchi, president of the Euro-Atlantic Center for Resilience.



On the platform of the second edition of the Moldova Security Conference, two complex analytical studies developed by the National Center for Integrated Coordination of Public Order Actions (NCICPOA) within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) were presented. Starting from the objective analysis of the risks identified in the information space and the situation at the national, regional and international levels, the NCICPOA of the MIA presented the lessons learned by the authorities from the management of the multiple crises generated by the war in Ukraine and the hybrid war, the strategic and operational conclusions, as well as a series of forecasts for the near future.

MSC 2023 participants have defined a series of goals:

- 1. CONSOLIDATION OF STRATEGIC ANALYSIS CAPABILITIES THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIALIZED CENTER;**
- 2. INITIATING EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE REPORTS, FROM EQUAL POSITIONS, WITH EU MEMBER STATES;**
- 3. CONSOLIDATION OF COOPERATION WITH ANALOGOUS STRUCTURES IN ROMANIA, ON THE LEVELS OF INTEREST (HYBRID THREATS, CROSS-BORDER CRIME, GOOD BORDER CROSSING SECURITY, ETC.);**
- 4. INITIATING CAMPAIGNS TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION, BY PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONS, INITIATIVE GROUPS AND PROJECTS SPECIALIZED IN THE FIELD;**
- 5. CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF TRENDS, ACCENTS AND DISSEMINATED ANTI-GOVERNMENT MESSAGES, IN ORDER TO TIMELY IDENTIFY THE PURSUED OBJECTIVES;**
- 6. CONSOLIDATION OF INTEROPERABILITY CAPACITIES AT THE LEVEL OF ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES, SUBORDINATE INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORITIES WITH DUTIES IN THE FIELD OF NATIONAL SECURITY.**

The second edition of the Security Forum was organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova in partnership with the New Strategy Center, Romania, with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Foundation. The first edition took place on December 15, 2022. The main topics discussed at the end of last year were the prevention and combating of transnational organized crime groups and the exacerbation of hybrid manifestations on the territory of the Republic of Moldova after February 24th, 2022.

Video
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