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NEWSLETTER

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

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News in Brief



President Maia Sandu announced on his Facebook account that on Friday, March 19th, the first batch of vaccines from the almost 100,000 promised doses will arrive in the Republic of Moldova by the end of March. These are offered by Romania and the EU either bilaterally or through the international COVAX platform. "Another batch of vaccines is coming today. In total, by the end of March, 46,000 doses of vaccine will arrive in the Republic of Moldova through the COVAX platform and another 50,000 from the donation offered by Romania. We thank once again the donors of COVAX and Romania for their support and solidarity in these difficult times for all", wrote Maia Sandu on her Facebook account. The President also announced that she had asked the Ministry of Health to prepare the process of distributing the vaccine to the vaccination centres as efficiently as possible in order to ensure the increase in the number of vaccinated people per day. The batch sent on Friday included 24,570 doses of Pfizer serum via COVAX.



Russia's Foreign Ministry has accused the USA and the EU of meddling in Moldova's "internal affairs". "In the best traditions of American missionaries, he (Derek Hogan -n.r.) posted on the embassy's website a sermon on democracy, pandemic, corrupt politicians and oligarchs, economic difficulties and the political crisis in the Republic of Moldova. The solution to get out of this situation, according to the ambassador, can be "courage and adherence to democratic principles", demonstrated already by the voters in Moldova and abroad in the last presidential election, offering "another historic step in the democratic development" of the country, wrote the Russian MFA in a statement issued on March 17th. The reaction comes after the American ambassador to Chisinau, Derek Hogan, published on the anticoruptie.md website an editorial in which he reaffirms the support for the creation of a democratic framework in the Republic of Moldova led by leaders without criminal problems.



On March 16th, the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, appointed Igor Grosu, the leader of her former political party, the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), as prime minister. This is the second nomination for the position of prime minister made by Maia Sandu, after last month she appointed Natalia Gavrilita, who did not receive the confidence vote of the deputies from the Chisinau Parliament. Maia Sandu made this appointment because there was no candidate to be supported by a formalized parliamentary majority, she told a news conference after consultations with the parliamentary groups. The Socialist Party reacted and nominated Moldova's ambassador to Russia, Vladimir Golovatiuc, as prime minister, after Mariana Durlășteanu had announced on the day of the Sandu-Dodon negotiations that she was resigning. Starting from his official nomination, Grosu has 15 days to form the government and develop the governing programme based on which he will ask for the confidence vote in the Parliament.

Republic of Moldova, gripped by the pandemic and early elections



Mădălin Necșuțu

One year after the official start of the pandemic, the Republic of Moldova has faced convulsions not only in the health sector, but also on the political

scene. The presidential election has turned the health crisis into a secondary issue. The authorities have functioned more in an election campaign logic in which they have constantly counted and

measured their political rating, while the concern for the people was extremely low.

This has been noticed with the partial elections in the Hincesti constituency, when

▶ the people were called to the polling stations, although Moldova was already counting its first dozen of diseases. After one year since the beginning of the pandemic, the country has more than 210,000 cases and over 4,500 deaths. This tragic balance can only be compared with other historical tragedies from the Soviet times. However, poor political management has been the only constant last year and early this year - from the suppression of freedom of expression in the case of the media which was reporting about the pandemic, the Easter holidays with a devastating effect of the virus spread to the presidential elections when the candidates travelled across the country bringing people together for election meetings. Throughout 2020 and even until present, Moldova has not concluded bilateral contracts with major world vaccine producers. Former and current interim government has not made any moves in this regard. Moreover, even in the 2021 budget no money has been allocated for vaccines. In a last effort, 60 million DML was found, but the money is not enough to vaccinate even 20% of the country's population.

The 'sarabande' of these political struggles is far from over. While one camp claims that early elections are the only solution to the reorganization of the kleptocratic political class rooted in the power of the Republic of Moldova for the last 30 years, the other camp wants to keep its caste privileges and continue to plunder the state resources, doing dirty business. The solution of the early parliamentary elections seems to be postponed at least until the middle of this summer, while the sanitary solution for resolving the health crisis is postponed for an indefinite period in a sea of uncertainty for the future of the country.

The solution is very simple, and this is triggering early parliamentary elections

Stela Jantuan, political analyst



The political crisis in the Republic of Moldova should be resolved in an intelligent way and by consensus, and early elections are the solution to set the country on a normal path. These are just some of the ideas arising from the interview with the political analyst Stela Jantuan. I have also talked with her about how the topic of coronavirus vaccines is used imagologically and what the authorities should do in this regard from the perspective of the political game. We are inviting you to read the full interview below:

■ **What would be the solutions to get out of the current political crisis that has overlapped with this pandemic period in the Republic of Moldova?**

■ I would not agree with you here that the two crises have overlapped as Moldova has been in a political crisis for several years. The crisis was artificially maintained by the former government of Vladimir Plahotniuc, when the state was controlled by a single party and, in fact, by a single person. This crisis is permanent in the

Republic of Moldova. However, it worsens and deepens from one year to another and you cannot know what it will end up with and how far it can go.

The pandemic is more of a catalyst for these processes that have been taking place in the Republic of Moldova for several years. The way out of the crisis is very simple, because until now, the political class in the Republic of Moldova used a slogan which was rather manipulative, allowing it to stay in power. Namely, the Moldovan politicians used to say we always have to choose the lesser of two evils, this paradigm being kept and used by all politicians. And why does the Republic of Moldova, in the 21st century, have to choose the lesser of two evils? The way out of this situation is on the surface. And the situation should not be used based on the old laws if we want to build something new. That is why I believe that we should get out of this vicious circle once and for all.

The solution is a very simple in our situation - triggering early elections. For

this, however, the Moldovan political class should get ready. Most of the parliamentary factions in the Parliament do not want this path.

■ **Apart from the PAS, I don't see any other parties that would be in favour of early elections. What are the reasons for that?**

■ They don't want elections, because most of them will no longer enter the Parliament and this is the result of their pseudo-political activity. Moldova has not been operating in political terms for a very long time. The Moldovan state institutions, such as the Constitutional Court, the General Prosecutor's Office, the judiciary should not be any longer part of the political game, etc. Political actors should be put behind "red lines" that they must no longer cross.

We have talked a lot about a different type of politics, but in fact, all the political clichés have been followed so far. Nothing new was invented and no way out of this old political paradigm was sought, although it was very simple. In 2019, when they declared we would proceed according to the laws and rulings of the Constitutional Court, they have actually legalised the illegal actions of the Plahotniuc regime that has made up those laws and rulings of the Constitutional Court to suppress the state and capture. And how to get out of this vicious circle now when we want to act based on new policies, but according to old rules? That multitude of laws allowing the state capture should have been cancelled long time ago. Some parties may not have had political experience, but they have behaved in an old-fashioned way not even consulting the civil society experts in how to overcome this situation.

Scenarios and expectations

■ **I would like to talk about March 23rd, when three months of Ciocoi's current cabinet interim term expires. What could the Constitutional Court say after the expiry of this date?**

■ It is said each state has its own ideology. If we are talking about Republic of Moldova, there has been none for more than 30 years, although a symbolic space has been preserved. And this is the one in which certain local clichés are kept. Moldovan politicians are constantly selling illusions to the people. There is incapacity to understand the situation, to make correct analyses, to give an appropriate diagnosis to the situation and to develop a suitable strategy for this situation.

And March 23rd is also an illusion. It was from the very beginning a wrong path that the pro-European politicians took. The constitutional provisions are very clear and we should not play with the supreme law if we want the state to return to a constitutional and legal space.

After the appointment of Gavrilita and then the failure to vote her in Parliament, they had to have a clearer subsequent strategy for early elections.

If you do not follow this path, how can you avoid this constitutional norm? How can you trigger early elections if the street tool is not used or accepted? How could we have early elections outside the constitutional and legal framework? This was clear from the start - either you have a street strategy and then you can go ahead or find other solutions. Because the existing situation goes beyond the constitutional and legal framework, being an eminently political one.

In order to break this deadlock, there is need for a political approach. This is the practice of many states that have taken the democratic way to reach solutions that could bring democracy in a constitutional and legal environment.

For such a strategy you need to have allies in Parliament or among extra-parliamentarians with whom you can talk to reach a common strategy. One party by itself cannot achieve such a strategy, and in its absence, you are risking violating the constitutional and legal norms.

What will happen after March 23rd, a date that has already been imprinted in people's consciousness as a magical solution for early elections, remains to be seen. But I think it's a losing path. Without dialogue, you (as a party) cannot reach this option. And we are talking about a political solution, no matter how unpopular it may be.

From the point of view of political technologies, for example, if you project public opinion on a certain date, there must be a concrete plan. When you predispose the public to a certain idea and do not deliver as promised and expected, then you can lose your rating and popularity of the politician who knows what to do.

"The geopolitical war of vaccines", a false theme

■ **What can you tell us about the imagological confrontation between Maia Sandu and Igor Dodon on the issue of vaccines against COVID-19?**

■ I would like to tell you that this situation is also a false agenda for Moldova. On the other hand, we have Igor Dodon who took the pandemic management under his control, performing extraordinarily badly. In fact, what Igor Dodon did has led to this deplorable situation of today as Republic of Moldova, with a population of 2.5 million, could have dealt with the pandemic in a much better way. On the other hand, we have Maia Sandu who is now considering holding early elections and overcoming the pandemic crisis.

In my opinion, at present, there are two problems confronting each other. On the one hand, the number one priority is early elections, which is clear and supported by the voters, and on the other hand, the pandemic crisis should not be politicized. It should not be politicized, but it should be resolved. This confrontation between institutions does not lead to a solution and this is the essence of Moldovan politics. Politics and geopolitics are made of all the topics on the daily agenda.

For example, we have to solve the pandemic situation. Dodon and his government Chicu did not even plan in the state budget means to buy vaccines in 2021. Not even a vaccination plan was foreseen. They are saying now that no vaccine was ready back then and they are telling us stories, because all the other countries signed contracts to buy them already last year.

If Igor Dodon did not do this, from a political point of view, we should aim at vaccinating rather than setting a lockdown. Because the isolation did not solve anything in the Republic of Moldova in the absence of a clear, strict and coherent plan for applying sanitary restrictions in the country.

Why am I saying this? Because the “vaccine dispute” is a false agenda and will not bring political dividends to either Igor Dodon or Maia Sandu. The people in Moldova differ from the people in other European countries. Our people are not interested in where these vaccines will come from. What it matters to them is to get vaccinated.

However, the USA and the EU have not asked the right-wing parties to boycott the Russian vaccines, just as Russia has not asked Dodon to make a big fuss about it. This is an internal topic of the political opponents that they are using. And they are using it without talent.

■ Speaking of Russia, why do you think it did not intervene to send aid, while the USA and the EU have already done it with regard to vaccines? Didn't it want to or it couldn't?

If we really want to understand what is happening, we have to leave geopolitics and other insignificant issues aside and try to understand that Russia did not support Dodon in the presidential elections, which was very clear. The support given to him in the 2014 parliamentary and 2016 presidential elections did not follow in 2020. And it wasn't because of the pandemic.

But if you remember when Igor Dodon declared here in Moldova that he was leaving for Russia in half an hour, Dmitry Peskov, Putin's spokesman, said that Dodon had no meeting with the Russian president. The Russians did not support him or give him that USD 200 million loan. This would have been very important to Dodon at that time. Even today it is not clear what the problem was with that loan. In addition, if Russia had wanted to help Dodon, it would have made the same gesture as Romania. Moscow could send humanitarian aid in the form of 200-300.000 vaccines, but it did not, which means Russia is not interested in Igor Dodon as much as it is interested in Igor Dodon's party, maybe the only loyal left-wing party to Russia.

Russia in relation to Igor Dodon and his plans for the future

■ The analysts are increasingly discussing that Igor Dodon is no longer wanted at the helm the Socialists Party. What do you think about this hypothesis?

■ I think that Russia has already shown, when it withdrew its support for him, that Igor Dodon is no longer a desirable person for Russia to represent its interests here. But Russia has no other leader here. No matter what they say, Igor Dodon remains in his position as president of the Socialists, and the Russian Federation has no one else to talk to. And Igor Dodon is taking advantage of this situation.

The solution in this case is a political one, which is not accepted now, because some experts claim that in this case the popularity of the president will decrease. The solution to the current situation is, however, a political one.

So, the PAS has to talk to the political parties in Parliament which are somewhat ready for early elections, ie the Socialists Party as it forms now the parliamentary majority. From a political point of view, I think we need to discuss with this party, without other coalitions, how to reach early elections.

In my view, Maia Sandu is making a strategic and tactical mistake. She was somehow forced to demand the lockdown, but now the situation has changed. If not long ago this was requested by all parties in Parliament, which did not want early elections, this being brought as the main argument against elections, now Maia Sandu has spoken about early elections and March 23rd as the end of the interim term of Prime Minister Ciocoi. However, the roles have reversed now. Maia Sandu is forced to impose a lockdown in the country, and the parliamentary majority and the Government are against it.

This situation is quite dangerous, because Igor Dodon has two important tools: the parliamentary majority and the incumbent government. Using these two tools, he can now speak exclusively of vaccination and not of “lockdown” or sanitary restrictions.

In this case, the whole initiative will be taken by this harmful parliamentary majority, which could generally disregard the idea of early elections. And then the situation is becoming unfavourable for President Maia Sandu, who has to think very carefully about how to manage this situation.

■ Is the scenario in which the Socialists could initiate the impeachment procedure against President Sandu still valid?

■ They do not need this scenario as they want to take the initiative to vaccinate. Since Maia Sandu has announced the recent decision of the Supreme Security Council and her recommendation to the Government on the lockdown the ball has been in the field of the Socialists with a parliamentary majority and government in office.

■ Thank you very much for the interview!

Madalin Necsutu

I think that no political force in the current conditions can afford to raise the tensions even higher

Cornel Ciurea, political analyst



The coronavirus pandemic overlapping with the political crisis in the Republic of Moldova has led to an alarming situation in the country. We have tried to decipher what could be some of the solutions to overcome this difficult situation, given that Moldova has neither the vaccines needed to fight the virus nor political solutions to form a government that can truly fight the pandemic that has been raging for more than a year. We have discussed about this in an interview with the political analyst, Cornel Ciurea, that you can read below.

■ **Mr. Ciurea, we are facing a difficult situation as in addition to the pandemic, Moldova has been facing a severe political crisis. What are in your opinion the solutions to the crisis?**

■ **I think that the dialogue between the political forces is important. However, it is currently blocked for reasons difficult to explain.**

Some political forces have been excessively relying on the rulings of the Constitutional Court in the hope that they will do them justice. This is despite the fact that the Constitutional Court has been repeatedly suggesting through its rulings to the political forces to accept dialogue and compromise.

So, there is a suspense now. First of all, the Presidency took a break for thinking it over, setting a deadline for March 23rd. This date seems to have been set in an arbitrary way - three months after the resignation of the Chicu government - relying somehow on an interpretation term by the Constitutional Court from 2013. But I think this break has been taken rather for meditation, for reconsidering the political position, because the pressure in society has been growing. I think that no political force, in the current conditions, can afford to raise the tension even higher, and the early elections, as a political solution, would lead to just that.

We are having a break now given primarily by the Presidency to reconsider its political stance and somehow move it from the initial position. Meanwhile, the pressures on the other side with regard to forming a new government has been on the rise, precisely because of the pandemic and the economic situation.

Vaccine dispute

■ **The two major players - Maia Sandu and Igor Dodon - have been having an imagological confrontation as to which vaccine is better and who is helping Moldova more. Maia Sandu got help from the EU and the USA, while Igor Dodon has a media empire that he is skilfully using to promote the Russian Sputnik V vaccine, which has not arrived yet. How do you see this imagological war between the two political forces?**

■ **It's a pretty complex vaccine war. The dispute is already historic: who is to blame for not having enough vaccines so far. In particular, Ms Sandu's supporters believe that the previous government, politically controlled by the Socialists, was very late in mobilizing and allocating the necessary resources to obtain these vaccines. They give the European states as an example, which I find somewhat unfair, because the EU states have had certain advantages in obtaining these vaccines.**

It is also a geopolitical confrontation in the case of the vaccines, which, I believe the Presidency is winning for the moment, because a Western-type vaccine has been brought to Moldova

- AstraZeneca. Western vaccines will also continue to be brought on the COVAX platform. Obviously, the Socialists are trying to promote the Sputnik V vaccine.

In this case, this imagological victory was somehow embodied by the bringing of the vaccines and the presence at the airport of the President of the country and the EU Ambassador, Peter Michalko. After all, the dispute is somehow settled. The first vaccine is the European one. I think that in the end we will move towards a certain compromise, an equal acceptance of all vaccines that will be registered - also Russian and Chinese - provided they are acceptable as price and relatively harmless to the population, in the sense of having no side effects. I do not think that this battle, which has had a beginning favourable to the Presidency, will continue. It will lead to peace from a war that has begun quite fiercely, it will end up with a general understanding that all vaccines are good, provided they are accessible.

■ **What has happened with the company which was supposed to bring Sputnik V in the Republic of Moldova?**

There are several explanations. First of all, there is a feeling that the offer for Sputnik vaccine is still not enough. The Russians have also failed to provide the Sputnik V vaccine to Transnistria. The reasons for this are unknown.

However, I believe that, for the time being, the Russians are not able to provide sufficient quantities of vaccine. So do the Westerners, because the amount provided so far is extremely small. You can't find vaccines on the market today. On the one hand, we have a geopolitical confrontation, but it is rather symbolic,

because the amount of vaccines brought from the West is insignificant and the victory is not final. That's why I'm saying there's no point in waging this war to the end. On the contrary, I believe that at some point, peace will be made between the political forces and we will focus on those vaccines that will be accessible.

■ **Why do you think the doctors from Gagauzia did not want to get vaccinated in the first place? Were they just victims of the misinformation of the Russian-language media or there were other reasons for that?**

■ There are several explanations here. A third element of the "vaccine war" is, of course, their effectiveness. It's a struggle for "people's minds and hearts" to convince them that the traditional Russian or the most sophisticated Western vaccines are more efficient.

I believe that, for the most part, the people of Gagauzia, Taraclia have fallen under the influence of this propaganda that Sputnik V is more effective and seemingly harmless compared to AstraZeneca, which is said to produce certain side effects.

Such fears have been fueled politically and it is also natural. The leadership of Gagauzia is geopolitically anchored and therefore its role is to promote the Russian vaccine. I believe that at the moment, all the political forces in our country, both pro-Western and pro-Russian, are involved in this geopolitical confrontation. The vaccine promotion is also one of the tools of geopolitical influence used by all political forces. It was also natural for Irina Vlah to allude to what she alluded to. I would have been surprised if she hadn't done that.

Imagological advantages for the West

■ **The EU and the USA have won the imagological war on the aid to the Republic of Moldova during the pandemic. Why didn't Russia intervene, did it not have the power to send aid to Chisinau or it didn't want to?**

I think that a very strong involvement of Russia in Chisinau was not wanted. If it was wanted to, I think Russia would have found ways to infiltrate and bring these vaccines. In general, there have been talks lately that Russia's involvement is relatively modest.

Russia remains in the area, it has a varied arsenal of geopolitical tools and weapons, but it uses them with sufficient moderation and circumspection.

In this case, Russia did not want to push it. In fact, one of the explanations would be the discourse of President Maia Sandu that doesn't contain anti-Russian elements. Lately, when speaking about the Transnistrian conflict she hasn't mentioned the Russian danger. She is bringing somehow all topics into an anti-corruption mix, which proves that Russia does not want to push it, because it wants a functional relationship with the Presidency and I have the impression that this is being appreciated in Chisinau.

The pro-Russian forces in Moldova did not oppose in this imagological war of the vaccines that you are talking about. It was celebrated with a relative enthusiasm at the airport. No one objected, no one criticized this. For the time being, Russia prefers to have the second position in this war, observing behind the scenes the developments

of this fight and having the possibility to intervene more firmly any time, if necessary.

■ **President Maia Sandu has already announced about her position, namely that she will not accept negotiations with political parties until March 23rd at least. Would it be useful or not for the Socialists now to initiate the impeachment procedure?**

First of all, the Socialists, I suppose, are having high hopes that Maia Sandu will change her mind and start the negotiations with the parties earlier, hoping that the Socialists are quite reserved in initiating the impeachment procedure, because, from a political point of view, initiating such a procedure is burdensome. It contains latent risks for the Socialists - it is a kind of “nuclear weapon” that you use in extreme situations. I don’t think the Socialists are that desperate to do it, so I think they will prefer to access other solutions.

■ **Could the Socialists organise street protests against Maia Sandu? Would this help them or work against them?**

■ Both Maia Sandu and the Socialists are in no hurry to initiate such protests. The optimal solution for the Socialists is to bring Maia Sandu to the negotiating table. Any violent or provocative action on their part would strengthen Maia Sandu, it would create a certain fear of insecurity that would produce retaliation and adverse reactions. Because of this, despite the fact that the war is still ongoing between the Presidency and the Parliament, the parliamentary majority, I think, will not resort to visible hostile actions towards Maia Sandu for the time being. Just to give them enough room for manoeuvre to reflect quietly. They will leave her to come

by herself to the conclusion that the negotiations are preferable to adversity and war.

Opinion polls and repositioning with regard to early elections

■ **What do you think about Igor Dodon and the PSRM changing their mind from December 2020 until February 2021 regarding early elections? What happened in the meantime?**

The idea of early elections previously promoted by Igor Dodon and the Socialists was due to a certain annoyance with certain deputies who broke away from their parties turning into political tourists, this creating discontent in Parliament and a sense of acute instability. Then the situation in Parliament has stabilized. Those deputies joined several teams that have consolidated, becoming constant actors in the Parliament. And in these conditions, the fear of losing the majority is not an issue any longer, Mr Igor Dodon having now other worries. Of course, from a political point of view, his biggest worry is the rising popularity of Maia Sandu. Under these conditions, the dissolution of the Parliament would do for the Socialists and other political factions an application of the Ukrainian scenario from 2018 related to the dissolution of the Parliament. This is the political explanation.

But there is also a social and economic explanation: given the pandemic and economic crisis, as well as the resigning government, the dissolution of Parliament requires a lot of time and can cause a lot of inconveniences to the population. And this claim or this insistence of the Socialists to maintain the existing government or to establish a new one is explained by the social and political situation.

■ **How do you see this rapprochement between Igor Dodon and PSRM, and Ilan Shor and the “political tourists”? What do you think about the two forming a new government and the impact it can have on the Socialists? Will it benefit Igor Dodon in the medium to long term or not?**

■ On the one hand, there is this natural approach because Igor Dodon lost the support of the Democratic Party and in these conditions, in order to remain in Parliament, he had to consolidate his majority. The only accessible and affordable partner was the Shor Party.

Very often, the end justifies the means, so this formalized parliamentary majority was created together with what is called Shor’s “toxic parliamentary group”. On the other hand, you see that this toxicity has political effects. The Socialists don’t dare to form an official alliance with this group, having certain reservations about it. These reservations are still maintained by virtually all factions in Parliament. The Democratic Party talks about “red line” and surprisingly, also Pro Moldova talks about them, as well as the DA Platform, the “red line” meaning here the creation of a parliamentary majority with the Shor group.

The situation from an objective point of view is illogical, because it is difficult to distinguish, for example, between the Shor group and the Pro-Moldova group. Why is the Democratic Party approachable by PAS and not the Shor group? The only somewhat convincing explanation I heard is that, unlike Pavel Filip and Andrian Candu, Shor was condemned in the first instance court, which is not yet a final condemnation. The argument, from a procedural point of view, is not convincing. On the one hand, there is this restraint in

Parliament and aversion towards the Shor group, but it has no rational roots, it is rather inspired from the outside and is somehow ideologized.

Trilateral negotiations: puppets and puppeteer

■ Before we talked about the Plahotniuc-Dodon binomial, can we now talk about a Dodon-Shor-Plahotniuc trio?

Yes, they are talking now about the existence of this trio. Let's try to understand the meaning of this triangle. It is supposed that there is a dark conspiracy of occult forces in which, from a political point of view, the reins of power are in Dodon's hands, but he is secretly manipulated by the "famous puppeteers" Vladimir Plahotniuc and Ilan Shor.

Such an action seems unrealistic to me. From the point of view of political action, I do not think we can talk about the fact that Mr Dodon is controlled by Mr Plahotniuc. However, this does not mean that there can be no certain contacts within this triangle, because, for example, there are two extremely important political forces that have to be taken into account when forming a majority in Parliament - For Moldova, Pro-Moldova and the Democratic Party. The dialogue with at least Pro-Moldova and For Moldova, which contains two elements - one Shor and another Plahotniuc - can be carried out through mediation with the oligarchs who are abroad.

In order to maintain a functional relationship, the Moldovan politicians, and why not the Socialists, need to talk to those in Cyprus or Israel. There are contacts for sure. Some coordination is done, but to talk about a conspiracy or conspiracies, I don't think that's the case now.

■ The latest Public Opinion Barometer (BOP) showed a big decrease for the

PSRM and a big increase for the PAS. Moreover, there is serious competition on the left-wing for the Socialists from the Shor Party and Our Party. Could this explain the PSRM's change of mind regarding early parliamentary elections?

■ For now, the Socialists are on the second place in the polls. Some surveys show a bigger or lesser decrease. For example, in the case of the BOP, I would criticise it for the fact that it does not take Usatii into account. So, it doesn't provide a clear and credible image. We all understand that, in the event of an election, Usatii will pass the parliamentary threshold. Given that the Socialists are doing poorly in the BOP, it is not clear where they will get votes from. Moreover, the Socialists cannot really decrease a lot, because they also have a limit. They cannot collapse to such an extent as there are no reasons for that. The Socialists being the dominant force on the left, it is not clear where Usatii, who is playing both on the right and left wings, will get the votes from. I don't think BOP offers a clear and credible picture of the political image at the moment, but we can admit, based on the polls, that there has been a certain decrease and the PSRM is on the second place now, after the PAS, in voters' preferences.

Obviously, this situation makes them think and stops them from their move towards early elections. The revisiting of this idea is based on rational explanations and political calculations. Among experts everyone shares the opinion that the Socialists moved to the second place now on the political scene.

Moscow is playing at two ends

■ **There are voices saying that Moscow doesn't want Igor Dodon any longer at the helm of the PSRM. The question is, are there leaders in the PSRM who could replace him? If so, who could claim this position?**

■ With regard to the hypothesis that not everyone in Moscow is happy with Dodon's position on the left wing, I would make a remark. I do not think that Moscow wants Dodon's permanent removal. I think that Moscow, in the current conditions, wants the increase of parallel political forces in the Republic of Moldova. By the way, we see it today on our political scene - in the "vaccine war" and the economic crisis. So we can admit that the political forces speaking now in favour of early elections, except for the PAS, that want to enter the Parliament - Our Party and the Civic Congress - are somehow holders of the pro-Russian flag, aspiring to the role of at least co-leader of the pro-Russian movement. They want to marginalize Dodon on the domestic political scene. And Russia is probably promoting these political projects.

■ Does the Civic Congress led by Mark Tcaciuk have a chance to cross the 6% threshold or it could enter the parliament as part of a political combination together with Renato Usatii, for instance?

■ The Civic Congress is transparent in its intentions and should be trusted. For now, the Civic Congress has no chance to pass the parliamentary threshold. It is from this position that they are shouting loudly and clearly the idea of popular protests. Because only by muddying the waters can they succeed.

By creating a situation of instability and sorting it out with the Parliament and Igor Dodon - their anger does not go equally to the Presidency and Parliament, because they hate the PSRM, but are not Maia Sandu's sympathisers either, which positions them on the left - they hope to be able to attract the electorate on their side.

■ **Attempts are being made to accredit the idea by the socialist circles and their affiliated media that**

Maia Sandu is a new Plahotniuc who does not respect the Constitution. Where does this idea come from?

■ It starts from certain reactions of Sandu who behaves in a quite authoritarian way and does not take into account the interests of other political groups, under a pretext that may be valid for the right, but which is not at all democratic. The pretext is that part of the Moldovan society is deeply corrupt, vitiated and needs to be politically removed. This is a certain political racism that divides society into “good people”, with the right to occupy positions and make political careers, and “bad people”, who must disappear from the political scene. In fact, the comparison with Plahotniuc is not a good one as Mr Plahotniuc did not have such opportunities. He was different and much more inclusive from this point of view, the key element in his case was the money, of course. Those who accepted the power of money joined the game and played, and those who didn't, left the scene. In the case of Maia Sandu, her political vision has another source, it is more restrictive, and from my point of view if it is pushed further, it will become even more dangerous.

Regarding the oligarchy in the Republic of Moldova, in general, even if Mr Plahotniuc was removed, there was a certain acceptability. Like in Romania and Ukraine, people with money were looked up with some admiration and accepted.

In Ms Sandu's case, this hatred towards a certain part of society is constant, irreconcilable, uncompromising, and if pushed further, it will create very big political problems. There is an expectation from some circles that she will be calmed down, following some discussion processes.

This is explained by Maia Sandu's inability to enter dialogue with other

political forces. Not because she wants early elections for the sake of early elections, but because a collaboration with corrupt political forces produces a total political disqualification, and for her that is totally unacceptable. This fear for “guilty contact” and “apple bite”, so to say, prevents Maia Sandu from entering a process that is natural for politics - discussions, negotiations and resolution of political issues by consensus or compromise. Because of this, her abstention is dangerous, but we can somehow understand it as it is inspired by ideological reasons. We hope that it will be overcome and will not worsen.

The Moscow cannons and the chessboard called Republic of Moldova

■ **When the tripartite negotiations between the EU-USA-Russia determined Plahotniuc to relinquish power in June 2019, Igor Dodon welcomed this intervention. Now, when the EU and the USA believe that early elections could be the solution, Dodon is launching vehement attacks, asking them not to interfere with Moldova's domestic policy. What has happened in the meantime?**

■ I have not heard statements from Washington, Moscow and the EU on the need for early elections. The EU's position, which is most often expressed by Ambassador Peter Michalko, is more or less unequivocal, it is in favour of Maia Sandu and is leaning towards early elections. This is without knowing, for example, the position of Germany, one that could be subsumed to the EU position or could be a distinct one. There are rumours that there are different points of view in Berlin. And it is normal to be so, because we are talking about respecting the principles of the rule of law, and Maia Sandu has clearly violated the Constitution here. And

there is a discussion here: some say that as long as there is no punishment, there is no violation. However, the punishment would be too difficult from a procedural point of view.

The American position is not at all clear. Ambassador Dereck Hogan's recent statements are vague. The US ambassador's article reveals in no way the idea of early elections. And not even Maia Sandu's name is mentioned, so it is a much more equivocal one.

For example, the Democratic Party has said it accepts the creation of a parliamentary majority and the creation of a government, respecting the “red lines”. It's the same point of view as Hogan's. The statements of the American ambassador could show that a majority government is wanted. The American position is expressed more finely and must be decrypted. Somehow it cannot be interpreted in a univocal way.

The Russians' position is different. We can mention a position of “two towers” in their case: one is supporting Igor Dodon and that tower is not in favour of early elections, while the other tower is supporting parallel pro-Russian political forces we have talked about - Mark Tcaciuk and Renato Usatii.

This latter approach may encourage early elections, but it is not dominant at the moment. That is why I'm saying that from the geopolitical point of view and the external factors, there is no unanimity on early elections, which makes the positions of the Socialists stronger, creating high chances for the other solution, namely creating a government to be supported both domestically and externally.

■ **Thank you!**

Mădălin Necșuțu

If Igor Grosu is not voted, the Parliament could be dissolved and after 90 days early parliamentary elections could be organized

Nicolae Osmochescu, university professor and former judge with the Constitutional Court



The former judge of the Constitutional Court (CC), Nicolae Osmochescu, told us in an interview about the legal resources behind the current political crisis and what could happen after Maia Sandu appointed the interim president of PAS, Igor Grosu as candidate for prime minister. We are inviting you to read about the interesting procedural details provided by the former judge of the Constitutional Court:

■ **After the appointment of Igor Grosu as candidate for Prime Minister by President Maia Sandu, and in case he is not voted, will there be prerequisites for early parliamentary elections?**

Of course. Mr Grosu has already been appointed and he has now 15 days to come up with the nominal composition of the government team and the governing programme. He has to present this programme and ask for the confidence vote. From a procedural point of view, if he gets the confidence vote, he will take the oath and function as a plenipotentiary government. If he does not get the confidence vote, all conditions for the dissolution of Parliament will be met. These would be the two possible scenarios.

If Mr Grosu is not voted, early elections will be held after 90 days since the dissolution of parliament. Thus, no early elections can be

held until July. This is simple mathematics.

■ **How do you see the role of the Constitutional Court today, so intensely addressed to mediate conflicts between the state institutions? What do you think about it and is it normal for the CC to be addressed that often?**

This demonstrates one fundamental thing. The main institutions and the main decision-makers are afraid of making correct, real, but tough decisions. And then the game of addressing the Constitutional Court begins – they are asked to provide their interpretation and opinion. However, the Constitution stipulates very clearly the relationship between the main branches of power - the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. We should analyse very clearly the powers of these three branches of power and decision-makers: Parliament, the Prime Minister and the President.

It remains for these constitutional rules to be applied correctly and not for politicians to try to diminish their value through different interpretations based on their own interests. They must be interpreted

in the light of the public interest, and not the party's ones. Because of this, they address the Constitutional Court on any tiny issue that the politicians either do not know how to solve or do not want to solve. And it is not natural for the Constitutional Court to interpret practically all the articles countless times, especially the basic articles of the Constitution.

■ **Do you also observe pressures from political actors on the Constitutional Court?**

■ There has always been pressure and that was very clear. However, the pressure was in the form of opinions, so to speak, informal pressure, such as criticism, and so on. Because pressing the Constitutional Court through official mechanisms is not possible, they are illegal. However, attempts have been made to influence it. Moreover, its selection, the appointment of judges is made on political grounds. It is the politicians who decide in the end. Two judges of the Court are elected by Parliament, two by the Government and two by the judiciary. And whether we like it or not, the political influence is felt.

■ **There is this opinion in the public space that Maia Sandu was abusive in relation to the rulings of the Constitutional Court and that she would remind us of how the Constitutional Court functioned in Plahotniuc's times. Do you agree with such statements?**

■ I strongly disagree with such statements, because no matter

how the actions of the current President Maia Sandu are interpreted, I would like to remind you of the actions and steps taken by the former presidents.

Starting with Lucinschi, and later Voronin, they have loudly declared that Moldova is a parliamentary republic and that we will strengthen the Parliament in all aspects. In reality, however, it was super-presidential, because they controlled everything that moved. In my opinion, the most correct in the relations with the state institutions, although not always neutral, was the president Nicolae Timofti, who strictly followed the constitutional norms. As a lawyer, he had a deep knowledge of law, including the constitutional law. He was the first lawyer by profession to become head of state.

After Timofti, Mr Dodon came as president, whose opinion has changed seven times a week. He wanted to install a vertical of power with the president as supreme player. And now he is saying that the Republic of Moldova is a parliamentary republic.

At present, Ms Maia Sandu is strictly fulfilling her competencies and attributions. She does not dictate, but she requests or recommends. In her position, she must act as coordinator and arbiter between the branches of power.

■ **How do you assess the ruling of the Constitutional Court from February 23rd regarding the repeated appointment of Natalia Gavrilita as Prime Minister?**

■ I think this was a predictable decision, but not entirely correct. The constitutional norm is clear in this respect - the President, after consulting the factions, shall propose the candidacy for Prime Minister.

It is an international practice that when a parliamentary faction holds a parliamentary majority, that unconditionally allows for the prime minister to be voted, ie it has 50 + 1 votes, the president is confident that the proposed candidate for the prime minister will have political support. However, the president, based on the spirit of the Constitution and this is the case of not only our country, but of the whole democratic world, has the discretionary right to propose a candidate that he/she trusts and with whom he/she will work constructively.

Whether we like it or not, even if it is not stipulated in the constitution, the President is part of the Executive and not of the Legislature or the judiciary.

These last two months have shown that President Maia Sandu is also consulting with civil society, although some have even accused her of abusing the consultations with civil society and so on, but this is not the case.

■ **Thank you very much!**

Madalin Necsutu

Editorial

Republic of Moldova, gripped by the pandemic and early elections

It's already been a year since the appearance of the "zero patient" in the Republic of Moldova. A woman then flew from Italy to Moldova and became - as they would stigmatize in the official statistics all the others who returned to the country from abroad - the first "import case". It happened on March 7th, when her name, including her personal data, was uttered on television by the then president Igor Dodon. The citizens were then divided into "imported" and "domestic" cases, and the messages that those who went abroad would do well to stay where so that they don't bring the disease to Moldova, were ubiquitous.

Meanwhile, Moldova has slipped from one crisis to the other over the last year. Concerned with supporting the presidential candidate Igor Dodon, the authorities have treated the pandemic as a seasonal phenomenon that should go away on its own. Although the civilized world was already signing pre-contracts on vaccines that were soon being made in all the laboratories of the world, Moldova was sinking into the slump of daily worries for the presidential elections.

Then came the game of everything or nothing together with the official approach of the September 2020 election campaign. Black PR teams closely linked to the Kremlin and Russian secret services were imported from Moscow, and propaganda machines and media mercenaries were put into operation. The cannon mouths were ready to fire the opponents. Moldova was preparing then not for a pandemic war, but for a domestic political one.



Madalin Necsutu, Balkan Insight correspondent, and G4Media to Chisinau

Between cynicism and incapacity

In the end, all these machinations did not help Igor Dodon to win the elections. He sadly lost the presidential race, but not before making one last inconvenience to those who were to come. In short, this is about leaving a "difficult legacy" to his successors in case of early elections. The political and economic analysts have called it "nuclear budget". Igor Dodon and his former councillor and prime minister, Ion Chicu, have adopted the "tactic of the budget purge". They left no money in the state treasury. Many have accused them of a premeditated tactic as in the case of Louis XV - "after us, the deluge."

Cynically, once again, all these manoeuvres and political calculations have been put on the citizens' shoulders. Even though everyone was already starting to vaccinate their citizens at the beginning of 2021, there was no prospect of vaccine in the Moldovan hospitals, because in the last year, neither Igor Dodon nor Ion Chicu cared about this vital aspect. Politics was above all.

The imagological war of vaccines

In 2021, the political crisis has continued to overlap with the health crisis and vice versa in all sorts of sinusoidal seizures. In recent months, the transfer of geopolitical disputes has shifted to the vaccines.

The theme “West versus Russia” has also been transposed into domestic politics. Dodon has lobbied for the Russian Sputnik V vaccine, without any help from Moscow in this regard, while Maia Sandu relied on the aid provided by Romania and the EU. Romania sent the first 21,600 doses of vaccines, while the EU and the USA sent their 14,400-vaccine aid through the international platform COVAX. Instead, for almost a month, the promised 200-300,000 doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine have not appeared in Chisinau.

Alarming numbers of infections and political stutters on the rise

Instead, more than 210,000 Moldovans have already contracted COVID-19. And that’s only the official number. More than 4,400 people have lost their lives and the number is continuously going up. In addition to the health factor, those who have run the country in the last year are responsible for this situation. Dodon has denounced recently the “cynicism” of the politicians who should deal with the pandemic crisis, which sounds at least strange.

The interim prime minister Aureliu Ciocoi and the Parliament found 70 million MDL for vaccines. However, it was not until March 18th that they have started the vaccine procurement process.

Meanwhile, at the Medicines Agency, controlled by the Socialists, a mega-business with private interests and an exclusive contract are looming. Both for the Russian vaccine Sputnik V. The political analysts are looking with much concern at this issue, suspecting a new onerous business with public money and even citizens’ lives.

The pandemic spares no one, from ordinary peasants to country personalities. Even Prime Minister Ion Chicu has been in intensive care with COVID-19, but after recovering he announced he is ready to create a spoiler party on the right-wing, ready to steal votes on this segment in the

perspective of future parliamentary elections. On the other hand, Maia Sandu did not give up the idea of early elections and went on with a second “losing candidate” for prime minister in the person of the former party colleague, Igor Grosu. He said the early elections will take place somewhere in the summer, after the pandemic situation stabilizes. Instead, the Socialists see the organisation of early elections in autumn, after the crisis will have eroded politically Maia Sandu or after their provisional government will have solved part of the pandemic crisis through a massive vaccination campaign.

What is certain though is that the political nebula in Chisinau will probably continue with a new episode at the Constitutional Court, after March 23rd, when the provisional mandate of Aureliu Ciocoi at the head of the government expires. In fact, Igor Dodon has also declared that Igor Grosu will not receive the necessary votes and that the Socialists will come up with their own candidate.

As the health crisis is going from bad to worse in Moldova, it is difficult to believe that anyone will succeed in gaining political dividends. Even at the eleventh hour, the Socialists don’t seem to be reducing the engines, and neither are Maia Sandu nor PAS going to do so. That who blinks the first, may lose this battle for power. In the event of early elections, the Socialists may go into opposition again. Instead, Maia Sandu, with all the levers of power in hand - Presidency, majority in Parliament and Government – may have the unique chance to get the Republic of Moldova out of this slump from the last 30 years of Moldova’s existence and bring it to full speed on the path of European reforms.

Until then, whoever will manage better the health crisis in a practical and imagological way and carry out a fast and efficient vaccination campaign will start from the pole-position in the race for the early parliamentary elections looming more and more clearly on the horizon.

Expert opinion

After more than 25 years of constitutional development, the Moldovan political system has reached an institutional deadlock

M Maia Sandu's election as President of the Republic of Moldova with an unprecedented number of votes has caused a high-level institutional conflict between the Presidential institution and Parliament. This conflict between the two institutions has been caused by two aspects: on the one hand, the conflict (discrepancy) between political legitimacy and constitutional legality, and on the other hand, the dispute over the power of appointing the candidacy of the Prime Minister.

Ion Tabarta, political analyst, Institute for Development and Social Initiative "Viitorul"

The legal context of the political stalemate - the discrepancy between legitimacy and legality

When the Constitution was adopted on 29 July 1994, it was decided that the form of government in the Republic of Moldova should be semi-presidential (mixed), according to which the executive power was divided between the Presidency and the Government. The institutional conflicts between the Presidency and the Parliament over the control of the government has led to the constitutional amendments from 5 July 2000, according to which the powers of the head of state have been reduced. The essence of the 2000 constitutional amendments - after Moldova has become a parliamentary republic - referred to the manner of electing the head of state (art. 78), from directly by the people to indirectly by the parliament.

The election of the head of state by the parliament was a key factor in diminishing the legitimacy of the Presidency in relation to Parliament. Another important constitutional amendment made in July 2000

referred to the repeal of Article 83 of the Constitution, which provided that the President of the Republic of Moldova had the right to participate in government meetings, chairing those he/she participates in, and to consult the Cabinet of Ministers on issues of urgency or of special importance.

However, certain constitutional provisions specific to a semi-presidential republic have been retained by the head of state, among which the appointment of the candidate for the Prime Minister. In accordance with Article 98, paragraph (1) of the Constitution, the President of the Republic of Moldova, after consulting the parliamentary factions, appoints a candidate for the position of Prime Minister. Nowhere in the text of the Constitution it is stipulated that the head of state is obliged to nominate a candidate approved and accepted by the parliamentary majority.

Until the end of 2015, there were no problems between the Presidency and the Parliament in the procedure of appointing the candidacy for the Prime Minister. On 29 December 2015, in the conditions of the political crisis



regarding the investiture of a new cabinet of ministers, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling according to which, in case of establishing an absolute parliamentary majority, the President of the Republic of Moldova nominates the candidate supported by that majority. The Court has motivated its ruling on the basis of two elements: 1) the status of the head of state is inferior to the status of the parliament, because the president of the country is elected indirectly, while the parliament directly; 2) the President of the Republic of Moldova is the emanation of the parliamentary majority, which does not allow him/her to ignore the possible establishment of an absolute majority in the legislature.

It should be noted that this controversial ruling of the Constitutional Court was issued in a concrete political context for a certain person - Vladimir Plahotniuc - to be appointed as candidate for Prime Minister. Despite all this controversy, the ruling of the Constitutional Court

from 29 December 2015 was a logical decision in the direction of increasingly transforming the Republic of Moldova into a state with a form of government characteristic of a classical parliamentary republic. However, totally contrary to the logic of the ruling from 29 December 2015, the Constitutional Court, on 4 March 2016, issued another ruling by which, invoking procedural violations, declared unconstitutional the amendment made to art. 78 of the Constitution on 5 July 2000, thus returning to the initial way of electing the head of state – through the citizens' direct vote.

The ruling of the Constitutional Court from 4 March 2016 meant a “sudden return” to a semi-presidential republic. At the same time, this decision cancelled the main arguments of the Constitutional Court from 29 December 2015, by which the head of state was obliged to appoint the candidate of the parliamentary majority as Prime Minister.

The Court's ruling from 4 March 2016 returned to the recognition of the legitimacy of the head of state and its equalization with the legitimacy of the parliament. Together with the return to the direct election of the head of state, it was logical for the President to be “given back” his/her duties “cut” on 5 July 2000 and 29 December 2015, which the Constitutional Court did not do, also for political reasons. Moreover, the Constitutional Court ruled on 17 October 2017, that the President of the Republic of Moldova may be temporarily suspended, establishing an interim position allowing the Speaker of Parliament or the Prime Minister to temporarily exercise the constitutional duties of the Head of State.

At this moment, after more than 25 years of legal development, it is obvious that the Moldovan political system has entered an institutional deadlock.

This situation has been caused by the politically influenced conjunctural rulings of the Constitutional Court, which produced a discrepancy between political legitimacy and constitutional legality.

Procedural and political disputes on the issue of early parliamentary elections

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the Parliament can be dissolved under two legal conditions - *non-functional parliament* for 3 months (art. 85 para. (1)) and the *impossibility of forming the government* under the following conditions: 1) over a period of 3 months (art. 85 para. (1)) and 2) within 45 days since the first request of the candidate and only after the rejection of at least two investiture requests (art.85 para. (2)).

However, in practice, within the constitutional limits of this article, it is very difficult to reach the dissolution of Parliament and organization of early elections. In order for a legislature to cease to function prematurely, it must be very dispersed, impossible to form certain majorities or, on the contrary, have a consensus of the parliamentary majority that must simulate the investiture procedure of a new government.

In the political and legal conditions for the government formation, the actions of the head of state become proactive in determining the evolution of the political stages, which can lead either to the election of a new cabinet of ministers or to the meeting of conditions for the parliament dissolution.

In accordance with the constitutional provisions (art. 98 para. (1), but also with the rulings of the Constitution Court from 29.12.2015 and 06.08.2020, at the first stage the president should hold consultations with the parliamentary

factions, after which, at the next stage, he/she appoints the candidate for the Prime Minister.

During the consultations with the head of state on 28 December 2020, all parliamentary factions spoke in favour of early parliamentary elections (except for the “Shor” Party, which spoke in favour was for inauguration of a government), without nominating a candidate for the prime minister. Following these consultations, the presidency, supported by the PAS, did not develop a well-established strategy that would lead to the proposed goal - early parliamentary elections. Initially, the Parliament self-dissolution scenario was followed. The PAS deputies addressed the Constitutional Court in order to clarify the possibility of dissolving the parliament through adoption by the parliament of a decision in this respect with a qualified majority of two thirds of the votes.

The answer of the Constitutional Court was that the Parliament can be dissolved only under the conditions set by art.85 of the Constitution. As a result, President Maia Sandu appointed Natalia Gavrilita as prime minister. The constitutional framework of the Republic of Moldova created a paradoxical situation in the Moldovan parliament on February 11th. The candidate for prime minister asked the deputies not to vote for her in order to pave the way for early parliamentary elections.

During the debates in the plenary regarding the investiture of Gavrilita, the president of the Socialists, Igor Dodon, wanting to prove to the head of state that the real political power in the Republic of Moldova belongs to the Parliament led by the PSRM, has announced the existence of a candidacy for prime minister (Mariana Durleşteanu) supported by 54 deputies. It should be mentioned here that after the presidential elections it became

clear that, in reality, most parliamentary parties do not want early parliamentary elections.

In reply, President Maia Sandu did not accept the candidacy proposed by the Dodon-Șor-Plahotniuc triumvirate (which gathered the signatures of the 54 deputies) and on the same day she has repeatedly nominated Natalia Gavrilita as candidate for the position of prime minister. In turn, the Socialists have challenged President Sandu's decree with the Constitutional Court on the grounds that the president's actions are unconstitutional. On February 23rd, the Court ruled the presidential decree unconstitutional, thus returning the political-legal situation to that from February 11th, when Gavrilita's candidacy was not voted in the Parliament.

Following the ruling of the Constitutional Court from February 23rd, there has been a political suspense for several weeks as President Maia Sandu said she would no longer appoint a candidate for the prime minister and would wait until March 23rd, when it will be three months since the resignation of the Chicu government, after which she will address the Constitutional Court with the notification regarding the possibility of issuing the decree for the dissolution of the Parliament.

Earlier, at the time of Natalia Gavrilita's repeated appointment, President

Sandu stated that she would follow the scenario of either early parliamentary elections or the presidential impeachment referendum. This uncompromising approach of President Sandu with regard to appointment of a new candidate for the prime minister has stirred a wave of harsh criticism from other political parties, the president being accused of premeditated violation of the Constitution. At the same time, the parliamentary factions have stated that they will not initiate the president impeachment procedure.

Subsequently, after consultations with various groups of society, President Sandu reconsidered her decision to wait until March 23rd without taking any further action regarding the appointment of a candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

On March 16th, after a new round of consultations with parliamentary factions, the President of the Republic of Moldova nominated Igor Grosu as a candidate for prime minister. Unlike the decree on repeated appointment of Gavrilita, the decree on Grosu's appointment is perfectly constitutional, because during the president's consultations with the parliamentary factions, the candidate of the formalized parliamentary Durlesteanu has announced the withdrawal of her candidacy for the position of prime minister. At the same time, President

Sandu has followed the constitutional procedures regarding the consultation of parliamentary factions and the appointment of the candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

Conclusions

At the beginning of 2021, an almost total political and legal uncertainty was created in the Republic of Moldova with regard to the establishment of a government and early parliamentary elections.

For the time being, there is no predictability regarding the outcome of this blockade, the certainty being only one - the political actors will continue addressing the Constitutional Court in order to resolve this complicated political and legal situation.

The Moldovan political system has reached this situation due to the political actors who have changed the Constitution out of circumstantial opportunism, depending on the political context, and the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova has been involved in political games, issuing rulings in accordance with the interests of political forces in power. Once this crisis is overcome, there is need for an impartial constitutional resetting of the political system in order not to perpetuate such institutional deadlocks in the future.

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