



President elect of Romania, Nicușor Dan, addresses supporters from the balcony of his campaign headquarters on the night of May 18, 2025.

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All eyes in Moldova on Romania's presidential election outcome

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Romania has lived and passed a dangerous test that it had not experienced for some 25 years, since the 2000 presidential elections. It has been a turning point in the history of the neighbouring country.

Given the fact that the Republic of Moldova is umbilically linked to Bucharest in terms of its economic development and European integration course, the election of a pro-European president in Romania was an important stake on the left bank of the Prut.

Some 158,000 Moldovans with dual citizenship broke the old record turnout at a Romanian poll and scored big

in the Romanian presidential race won by pro-European candidate Nicușor Dan. What's more, Romania showed that no matter how great Russia's involvement in European elections, Moscow's plans can be thwarted.

As the Republic of Moldova prepares for parliamentary elections on September 28, it is essential that the signal from Romania is a positive one, so that the pro-European forces will be able to capitalize on part of the pro-European side's score in Bucharest. The boomerang effect will also have an impact on the vote in the Republic of Moldova in what is once again shaping up to be more of a geopolitical confrontation and vote.

News in Brief

■ The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mihai Popșoi, met on May 26 with his Ukrainian counterpart, Andriy Sybiha, while the Ukrainian official was transiting through the Republic of Moldova. During their meeting, the two diplomats discussed the European integration path of both the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Andriy Sybiha stated on the X platform that he had met with Mihai Popșoi in Chișinău while on his way back to Ukraine. "I informed Mihai about the situation on the battlefield and about the latest massive airstrikes carried out by Russia against Ukraine. These brutal attacks show that Putin rejects peace efforts and seeks only war, murder, and destruction," Sybiha said.

■ Lithuania has donated 100 FPV-type drones to Moldova for airspace surveillance and to enhance the country's security, according to an announcement made by Lithuanian Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas during a joint press conference held in Chișinău with his Moldovan counterpart, Dorin Recean, as reported by IPN news agency. At the same time, the Prime Minister of Vilnius emphasized that Lithuania remains a strong supporter of Moldova's European aspirations and is ready to share its expertise and provide technical assistance to support the implementation of reforms, so that Moldova can become a member of the European Union.

■ On May 26, Prime Minister Dorin Recean condemned Tiraspol's intention to impose online censorship and total control over communications in the Transnistrian region through legislation. "The task of the Government, the task of the Republic of Moldova, is to reintegrate the Transnistrian region and to properly control the territory. Unfortunately, at this stage, there is an unconstitutional regime there, and we currently have no way to intervene to ensure that the law is upheld," Recean stated. The new law proposed by the so-called "Supreme Soviet" in Tiraspol would allow authorities to cut off internet and telephone services for individuals and legal entities in the Transnistrian region without a court order.

Romanian investment would be the strongest and most sustainable bridge across the Prut



The co-founder of the Alternativa Political Block, ex-premier Ion Chicu, gave an interview to the FES/APE Foreign Policy Bulletin in which we discussed his vision of the impact of the election of a new president in Bucharest, Nicusor Dan, on the Republic of Moldova. We discussed about the economic relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova and how we could attract Romanian investors across the Prut to Moldova. The security situation in Ukraine and the peace efforts being made in this regard was another topic of discussion. Read the full interview:

■ **How do you assess the presidential election race and especially the outcome of these elections in Romania?**

■ It was unusual, in the sense that it took a long time, but it's good that it's over and we can turn this page. I heard on the radio what president Nicusor Dan and ex-interim president Ilie Bolojan had to say during their first discussion on the economy, budget deficit, inflation, etc. Obviously, this is a very important

subject and I would venture to say that the perpetuation of the situation of uncertainty and the electoral campaign that has been going on for about a year and a half – I am thinking here of the other electoral exercises last year – have left their mark. That is why we are very pleased that the presidential elections are over and Romania is returning to a peaceful and normal life.

Priorities and strategies

■ **What do you think should be the priorities of Nicusor Dan's presidential mandate and should the European path of the Republic of Moldova, as a strategic objective of Romania, be one of them?**

■ The priorities should be the ones we started talking about, namely the economic ones. My background is in this field and I follow the developments in economic indicators, and this is worrying. I have also spoken to other business specialists in Romania who are not optimistic. It is clear that reforms and very determined action are needed to change the situation in the economy.

If we were to talk about the impact of these presidential elections on the Republic of Moldova, we, from the Alternative Bloc, have been having lots of meetings with people. I see that there is a lot of speculation that in Europe and Romania the situation is bad, and the people's question is why we want to go there.

What I am saying is that the sooner the situation changes and the sooner things get back to normal from an investment and economic point of view, the sooner those who keep scaring people with negative developments in the European Union will run out of steam.

Unfortunately, we see that after this electoral marathon, Romanian society is very divided. That is why I believe that one of the basic tasks of the new president, but also of the authorities, is to restore social peace. I believe that around five million voted for the candidate who lost the elections, George Simion. This electorate should be persuaded to leave all their grievances behind so that the state can solve the problems it faces.

■ **How important is it for Romania to recover economically, given that about 25% of Moldova's exports go to Romanian markets?**

■ It is very important that this happens. Even geographically speaking, the Republic of Moldova is situated between two states – Ukraine, which is at war and we have nothing to expect in terms of economic opportunities and advantages now from it, and Romania.

Thus, we are opening up the world through Romania and obviously we very much hope that the situation there will recover as soon as possible, including the indicators you mentioned. Without Romanian investment, as an economist, I do not see much reason for us to be optimistic. The situation on the left bank of the Prut is no better in terms of macro-economic indicators.

If we do not have investors from Romania, I do not believe that investors from other, more distant countries will have a more developed appetite to invest in the Republic of Moldova. This is why we really want to see the country return as quickly as possible to a good situation in terms of economic and social development. Stability in Romania is very important and, as I said above, last but not least, it must serve as an example for attracting us onto the European path.

Working together for the European journey

■ **From the point of view of the aid Romania gives to the Republic of Moldova, what kind of cooperation do you think it would be good for the two countries – the Republic of Moldova and Romania – to work on? What do you see as priority projects between Bucharest and Chisinau?**

■ We appreciate all the non-reimbursable financial support that Romania has provided to the Republic of Moldova so far and is continuing to provide. However, we would like to see more openness and determination on the part of Romanian business for our country.

We are ready to create a strip of 50-60 kilometres of free economic zone, from north to south, on the banks of the Prut, for Romanian investments, without any hindrance or obstacle. We do not see any other way out of the impasse we are in. I reiterate, we are very grateful for any support, but we would like to see more determination from Romanian business in the Republic of Moldova. This would be the most solid and sustainable bridge across the Prut – investment and involvement in the economy.

■ **How important is the interconnection of the Republic of Moldova's land and energy infrastructure with the EU via Romania? What viable strategy do you see in this respect?**

■ Infrastructure is an indispensable element for economic development. The more such projects we have, the greater the opportunities for Moldova's economic development. These are broadly public investments and we very much appreciate them.

However, I believe that without private investment, corporate investment in the economy, the bridges that we build with public money remain less in demand economically and more on the spiritual side of 'flower bridges', as we often call them. That is why we would like to deepen economic relations in parallel with road infrastructure. The Republic of Moldova really does have something to offer Romanian economic agents and Romanian business here, it's just that more courage and determination are needed. Therefore, we are waiting for Romanian investors.

Business opportunities and facilities

■ **What is this opportunity you are talking about? In which areas do you think Romanian capital could penetrate and where is the development area in this segment?**

■ We are always guided by the principle that business knows best which sectors to invest in and it is not the government that should be the one to manage here. But the government does offer tax breaks. Besides, we have a tax framework with some of the lowest tax rates.

We hope that we can also restore some markets for possible investment in Moldova. We also have an underdeveloped agricultural sector which, for the time being, is content with the role of raw material supplier, which is not exactly satisfactory. I also think there is the processing industry. Processing would be a very interesting area for investors. In particular, it would also be a point of attraction for raw materials from Ukraine, because I think they will need such products there.

Transportation infrastructure is underdeveloped in the Republic of Moldova. I am also referring to air transportation. We have one overcrowded airport. This is where we are waiting for investment, because we have opportunities to offer. Here we can also talk about the investment opportunities in the airport in the northern part of the country, in Marculesti or Balti, but there are also such opportunities in the south of the country. If Romania has succeeded in building an airport in every county centre, why couldn't it do the same in the Republic of Moldova?

We have good specialists and enormous potential when it comes to digitalization, so we could offer many opportunities in the IT sector. We have a special tax regime for IT, which is attractive for a lot of companies in the world.

There would be multiple areas where business would be interested. Obviously, I would make one point here and that is that we need to be providers of stability, guarantees and investment security. That is already left for the government or the politicians to provide. But, from an economic point of view, I can say, in full knowledge of the facts, that we are attractive to investors.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and its consequences

■ You mentioned two important words earlier – Ukraine and security. In this context, we would like to ask you how important it is for the Republic of Moldova that Romania continues its support for Ukraine, bearing in mind that Ukraine is at the moment the shield that protects the Republic of Moldova from the military danger that could come from the Russian Federation?

■ Ukraine has so far resisted aggression and attacks against it, thanks to support from the West, but also from Romania, due to its geographical position as Ukraine's neighbour.

I believe that all European states, especially our neighbours, must support Ukraine, including efforts to reach a peace. From what we see, it seems that efforts are being made to stop this war.

Perpetuation of this war will have dire consequences for decades to come. We have to understand that even when the fighting stops, other phenomena usually accompany it. I am referring here to lack of security, banditry, difficult social situations, etc. We have to manage all these situations, even after the cannons stop firing in Ukraine.

Support from partners for Ukraine is very high, but now it would be very good to support peace efforts in parallel with the military aid.

Working with Bucharest

■ What would be the electoral offer of the Alternativa bloc in the area of cooperation with Romania and

how do you assess the cooperation you currently have with Romanian politicians or parties?

■ I will give you a practical example from my relatively recent work as Prime Minister. When the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the government decision on the state assets to be privatized, the first to see this list was the Romanian Ambassador in Chisinau. This is to make our position clear.

I reiterate that, on the economic side, we rely heavily on private investment in Romania. And not only private, of course. More specifically, a free economic zone from north to south, bordering the Prut River, with multiple advantages for Chisinau.

We have always emphasized the economic side of the relationship. This is where we see the source of financing for other needs and we are very much counting on Romanian business in particular. I have had meetings and discussions with the Association of Romanian Investors in the Republic of Moldova and I am glad that in the meantime more investments have come in. I see interconnection projects on the energy dimension. This is exactly what we want. I would just like Romanian business to be present in sectors which are not necessarily energy, which are natural monopolies. So we expect Romanian business in all sectors and we must be ready to offer all the conditions for this.

■ You mentioned the strategic objectives of the Republic of Moldova and I wanted to ask you how you see a potential investment of a Romanian company, namely the one that manages the port of Constanta, in the Port of Giurgiulesti, in the context that it has already submitted the first offer to the EBRD for the privatization of this port in the Republic of Moldova?

■ I referred earlier to the potential investments that Romania could make in Moldova's "air ports". However, we are looking forward to welcoming Romanian investors in this sector too as I do not see much difference when we are also talking about a naval port, namely the port of Giurgiulesti. I hope that the Port of Constanta, which has already tendered for the Port of Giurgiulesti, will offer the best conditions for development, so that it can win this competition.

I must mention that there is much speculation about this port. Unfortunately, some politicians are somehow presenting this information that the state is selling something that is ours, which is not true and should be refuted, because this is not good [the Giurgiulesti International Freeport is owned by the EBRD through its management by the Danube Logistics company - editor's note]. We are expecting investors in all areas, including ports.

■ Thank you!

Romanian shield

Victory of the pro-European candidate in Bucharest: Ukraine keeps an ally and Moldova has a chance to continue its European journey

*Editorial signed by
Madalin Necsutu,
taken from IPG Journal*

The Romanian presidential elections were a watershed moment – not only for the country itself, but also for Europe and the region as a whole – in the context of Russia's hybrid war against democratic countries. The final winner was the independent pro-European candidate Nicusor Dan, who won 53.6% of the vote, ahead of far-right populist George Simion with 46.4%.



The battle inside Romania was not just a contest between two candidates – it was about choosing the country's direction of development at a critical moment. Romania has been maintaining its geopolitical course for a quarter of a century, since the 2000 presidential election. Back then, voters had to choose between a candidate who favoured the EU and NATO and a far-right candidate who wanted to keep Romania out of these alliances. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine prompted Romania to form a coalition government made up of the two main parties, the Social Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party. However, this 'unconventional alliance' failed to deliver effective public policies during the crisis. The managerial decisions taken within this coalition led to economic difficulties, in particular a growing budget deficit, that were not properly explained to the public, which began to perceive the government as arrogant and insolent.

The coalition government formed by the two main parties – the Social Democrats and the National Liberal Democrats – has failed to deliver effective public policies in times of crisis

Income inequality and opaque restrictions on freedom of movement have caused social tensions and created favourable conditions for populist and extremist movements to gain support among the population.

Parties such as the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) and the Youth Party (POT) embodied these extremes and received support in line with Kremlin interests in the region. Although direct links between these parties and Moscow have not been proven, Russian support through propaganda, social media or logistical assistance for election campaigns is evident. Anti-EU and anti-NATO populists have been supported

by the Kremlin, which has contributed to their rise, the spread of conspiracy theories and a wave of hatred in society, which has increased its polarization.

Romania is Kiev's indispensable ally

Romania prefers to help Ukraine in a non-public manner, in order not to favour populist parties that use this issue in their electoral rhetoric. Despite this, it remains Ukraine's key Western partner. Romania has the longest border with Ukraine, 613 kilometres, almost 100 kilometres longer than the Polish-Ukrainian border.

During the three years of total war, Romania became a vital logistical hub for the delivery of arms and other aid from the West to Ukraine. The country itself also made a significant contribution to support, especially with ammunition.

Dan acted cautiously in supporting Ukraine

While other countries in the region hesitated, Romania offered Ukraine one of its four Patriot missile defence systems, even though only two operational systems were still in service at the time. The decision sparked much controversy in Romania, but strategic necessity prevailed. The transfer became a priority for Bucharest, which was immediately exploited by pro-Russian propaganda and radical forces.

After the elections, the newly elected President Nicusor Dan expressed his willingness to continue to support Ukraine and announced his intention to increase defence spending.

Although support for Ukraine was not in his official electoral program, Dan openly declared his solidarity with Kiev – even at the risk of losing part of his electorate. His willingness to raise this sensitive issue, especially in the context of widespread populist reports that aid to Ukraine could draw Romania into a war with Russia, has proved an effective strategy.

Dan has acted cautiously on support for Ukraine. At the same time, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, shortly after his election, assured Kiev's readiness to be a good neighbour and partner of Romania. This shows the determination of both leaders to quietly but consistently counter the threat from the Kremlin.

Geostrategic stakes and disrupting Moscow's plans

Russia tried to “put” its puppet in the presidential chair in Bucharest in order to destabilize Romania, deprive Ukraine of a strategic ally and strengthen divisions in Romanian society by manipulating public opinion through social networks. But the Romanian people managed to defeat Moscow's plans.

In addition, the victory of pro-European candidate Nicusor Dan is an important signal ahead of the parliamentary elections in Moldova, which will take place in September this year.

European forces are hoping for another four-year mandate, further pro-European reforms in Chisinau and the weakening of pro-Russian political forces. It is essential that Moldova forms a parliamentary majority with a pro-European government that will cooperate effectively with President Maia Sandu.

Russia is already investing significant resources in the hybrid war against Moldova

A new four-year political cycle, marked by synergies between the president, government and parliament, will bring Moldova closer to the EU. Russia is already investing significant resources in the hybrid war against Moldova – estimated at around \$200 million for these elections – in an attempt to influence voters through a network set up in Moscow by fugitive Moldovan oligarch Ilan Shor.

The situation in Romania is stabilizing, which is not the case in Poland, another key ally of Ukraine on which much of its Western support depends. Poland's presidential election, with a runoff on June 1 between Rafal Trzaskowski and Karol Nawrocki, will be a critical moment. Should the centrist Trzaskowski defeat the nationalist Nawrocki, Ukraine will gain another reliable strategic partner associated with Romania. It is therefore essential to thwart Moscow's plans so that Kiev's powerful neighbours remain firm in their support for Ukraine.

The ideal scenario for the region is that all of Ukraine's neighbours, namely Romania, Poland and the Republic of Moldova, have pro-European governments and presidents. Such a political constellation – combined with the determination and resilience of Ukrainians on the frontline – would undoubtedly increase the chances of victory. But Russia's desire to disrupt this scenario should not be underestimated. Vigilance and coordinated action must therefore remain a top priority.

We need electricity interconnection lines with Romania

Sergiu Tofilat, Deputy Chairman of the Party of Change, gave an interview to the FES/APE Foreign Policy Bulletin in which we discussed the impact of the Romanian presidential elections on the Republic of Moldova, Romania being Chisinau's main trade partner and the most vocal advocate of the Republic of Moldova in Brussels. We also discussed the implications of the outcome of the elections for the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova to be held on September 28 this year, as well as the support that the two countries are giving to Ukraine in the context of the Russian military invasion. Read the full interview:



■ How do you assess the presidential election race and especially the outcome of these elections in Romania?

■ First of all, I would like to note that Romania did not fall into the Kremlin's trap. There was an exemplary mobilization at the polls, because the citizens understood the danger, and these results are gratifying. However, the results reveal two structural problems in my view. The first problem is that a good part of society is dissatisfied with the political class – with the establishment. In this respect, we have seen the results of the candidates of governing parties. So people are dissatisfied and things are not going in the right direction.

The second problem, which in my opinion is quite serious, is that a large part of society believes in populism, conspiracy theories and lies. Or in political marketing, as one candidate puts it.

In this context, this issue needs to be tackled head on, as it may create risks in the future. There will be parliamentary elections and the results may be unpleasant. Perhaps this is where Romania could learn from Moldova's experience, because we do not have any Kremlin-backed candidates here who are very popular.

Priorities and reporting on Chisinau's European road

■ What do you think should be the priorities of Nicusor Dan's presidential mandate and should the European path of the Republic of Moldova, as a strategic objective of Romania, be one of them?

■ Romania is the main economic partner of the Republic of Moldova, if we look from the perspective of exports and trade relations. The Republic of Moldova benefits greatly from Romania's support in terms of energy security, because the Kremlin blackmailed us by disconnecting our gas and electricity supply, and Romania helped us a great deal in this respect. And we continue to count on Romania's support, but obviously we, the Republic of Moldova, must also take measures to strengthen our energy security.

Moreover, Romania is already a member of the EU and has a much better knowledge of the decision-making process and, obviously, we need Romania's experience and the support of Romanian policy makers in Moldova's accession to the European Union.

It is certainly useful to have the expertise of professionals from Romania in terms of assimilating European funds, because it is important to have competent people who can write projects, implement them, monitor and report. In this respect, we in the Republic of Moldova have a huge shortage of professionals and we obviously need to train specialists.

Collaboration opportunities

■ **From the point of view of the aid Romania gives to the Republic of Moldova, what kind of cooperation do you think would be good for the two countries – the Republic of Moldova and Romania – to work on? What do you see as priority projects between Bucharest and Chisinau?**

■ Energy security is certainly a priority area. We need electricity interconnection lines with Romania. Projects are underway. The Vulcanesti-Chisinau connection will be completed so that the line that connects us with Romania at the moment does not go first to the left bank of the Dniester and then to Chisinau. We must have a direct connection.

Then there are two more projects: a power line in the northern region, Suceava-Gadalin, and one in the center, from Chisinau to Iasi-Gutinas. These are works being carried out on both sides of the Prut on the territory of Moldova and Romania. It would be good to complete them in good time. This will strengthen Moldova's energy security. Obviously, there is also the gas supply. The Republic of Moldova imports 100% of its gas consumption and Romania has reserves in the Black Sea.

It has already been announced that our state enterprise Energocom has signed a long-term contract on gas import from Romania, but this will be undertaken from 2027 and will contribute to strengthening Moldova's energy security.

Do you see it important to have joint projects in the area of road infrastructure?

■ I think it is necessary, because economic development and the flow of goods depend on the quality of road and rail infrastructure. So, yes, investments are needed here to create corridors for a more efficient movement of goods and passenger transport, but I think the biggest problem is the rail infrastructure. Railway infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova should be a priority as it is derelict and needs investment.

■ **What would be the electoral offer of the Party of Change on the cooperation with Romania?**

■ We are part of the "Together" political bloc, and our colleagues from this political bloc have a partnership with the Romanian PNL and this must be capitalized on. We obviously need to maintain constructive bilateral relations with Romania, which is our main partner, and to see to what extent we can speed up the implementation of existing projects and what new initiatives can be implemented with Romania's support.

Support for Ukraine

■ **How important is it for the Republic of Moldova that Romania continues its support for Ukraine, taking into account that Ukraine is the shield that protects the Republic of Moldova from the military danger that could come from the Russian Federation?**

■ We in the Republic of Moldova can sleep peacefully today only thanks to the courage and resistance of the Ukrainian army, which protects us from Putin's aggression. And in this context, any support is important in order for the Ukrainian army to defeat this aggression. And we would obviously welcome it if Romania were to step up its support for Ukraine.

But, I repeat, this takes a collective effort by all developed states to support Ukraine and to put pressure on the Kremlin administration to stop this aggression. It is not easy, but through joint efforts I believe we have a chance of success.

■ **How do you see the possibility of Moldova, together with Romania, taking part in the reconstruction of Ukraine and what kind of potential would this mean from an economic perspective?**

■ The Republic of Moldova is Ukraine's neighbour and certainly a good part of the flow of raw materials, construction materials, equipment, assistance, will pass through the Republic of Moldova. This requires logistics, developed infrastructure, qualified staff to be able to manage this whole process and, why not, to do our bit to help rebuild Ukraine.

So, through the Republic of Moldova there will be a large transit of assistance for the rebuilding of Ukraine and we have to be ready for this process. I am not sure that we can manage with our own forces and that is why, yes, here we can probably count on support from Romania, from the European Union.

Moldovan citizens with the right to vote have said very clearly: we need Bucharest and Bucharest needs us



We spoke to two Romanian analysts, Mihai Isac and Angela Gramada, director of the think-tank Experts for Security and Global Affairs (ESGA), about what the priorities should be for the new Romanian President Nicusor Dan's term in office, especially when it comes to Moldova and Ukraine. We also discussed the implications of the Romanian presidential elections for Moldova, which is also preparing for parliamentary elections this autumn. Read the interviews below:

Angela Gramada, Director of Experts for Security and Global Affairs (ESGA)

■ **What do you see as the first measures that the new President of Romania, Nicusor Dan, should take as head of state? What are the priorities for his mandate?**

■ I think that internally he has two priorities. The first concerns how he will manage the talks with political parties on the formation of a new government. I don't think it will be an easy task knowing how the factions of the various parties that crossed the electoral threshold in November 2024 are positioning themselves and knowing what the priorities of these political parties were with regard to the presidential elections, that is, how they supported one or another candidate.

It is not necessarily the problem with Nicusor Dan, the problem is with these political parties that have a fairly long history in the political life in Bucharest, but now seem to have gone into a tailspin in the sense that they can no longer manage the relationship with the voters, with those who give them this support or part of their sovereignty.

The second big challenge will be how to manage the social and economic situation in the country, because here we know very well that there are certain problems and difficulties. There is a loss of confidence in the ability of the relevant institutions in Romania to cope with crises, especially the economic crisis.

This was also mentioned by Nicusor Dan in several public debates on various TV channels. The new president realizes very well that it will be a challenge for him to convince the political parties that Romania needs stability, a government that will face these crises and challenges together with him.

The President's mandate is not equal to that of a Prime Minister, but he can still influence certain trends or discussions if he is a good mediator between these two priorities. So political stability, in one form or another, and the management of socio-economic issues will be the biggest challenges.

The package also includes justice, home affairs, central and local administration, i.e. the reforms that Dan announced in the election campaign that he would try to propose and promote. But the two mentioned earlier remain the priorities of his presidential term regarding the domestic situation, i.e. the internal affairs of the state.

Implications for the Republic of Moldova

■ **How do you see the relationship with the Republic of Moldova and especially what kind of signal is the presidential election won by a pro-European candidate giving in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in Chisinau due this autumn?**

■ The impact I think can also be seen from the way Russia reacted after the announcement of the first results on election night, when the spokeswoman of the Russian Foreign Ministry said that Romanian democracy is a quagmire and we should get out of it ourselves.

In fact, we would be happy if the Russian Federation doesn't help us get out of this quagmire, as it is already doing. This is also Bucharest's signal that we can get out of the mire without being assisted, as Russia has been trying to do for the last six months.

On the other hand, I would not look at the message sent by Bucharest, but the message sent by the Republic of Moldova through the vote it gave. The 88% of the vote given to Nicusor Dan in the Republic of Moldova was also a demonstration of the fact that we are part of a common past and present, with the same history, identity and language. At the same time, it was also a message in which the Republic of Moldova, that is to say the Moldovan citizens with the right to vote, said very clearly that we need Bucharest and Bucharest needs us, that is to say, we can help each other and we must not give up on each other. It is true that other political forces have tried to convey a different kind of message, a rather aggressive one, and I am referring here to the threat of withdrawing citizenship. This has not only happened in the Republic of Moldova, but also in other Member States of the European Union, where Moldovans with the right to vote in the Romanian elections voted against an aggressive discourse, a discourse which reverted to the rhetoric of historical injustice and which basically showed that there is a Romania which, regardless of the realities, can resort to some very ugly measures, messages which divide rather than unite, and which point the finger at citizens who have had a different historical course.

It was not fair of these political forces to use the message of Romanian citizenship as a scarecrow. This was the message which the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova with the right to vote sent to a certain political force in Bucharest.

Moldovans also said that when we talk about European integration we are not only talking about a process, a procedure, but also about a reunification that everyone trumpets, but too few try to achieve through concrete measures.

I also appreciated the message of Nicusor Dan, who already after his clear victory, mentioned that he will remain a partner for the Republic of Moldova and for its European path.

This was important, but I hope he will not limit himself to just visiting the Republic of Moldova during election campaigns and that he will discover something more than just Chisinau and its surroundings. I expect much more action from him.

Support for Ukraine

■ **How do you see the relationship between Bucharest and Kiev evolving in this perspective of the election of a new president?**

■ If you look at Nicusor Dan's program for his presidential term, you will notice that Ukraine is not mentioned there. Instead, it mentions the strategic partnership with the United States, the relationship with the European Union, the number one strategic priority being the Republic of Moldova.

Ukraine was somehow omitted. However, in his speeches in public debates, Dan has mentioned several times that Romania must stand by Ukraine and that we must do our utmost to continue to preserve security in the region, including by increasing defence spending to 3.5% of GDP.

So, from this perspective, we can say that Romania's assistance to Ukraine will continue. We have also seen the message from Volodimir Zelenski, who thanked Romania once again for all that it has done, although he chose not to make his support public.

The new president also spoke about Kiev's openness to work on the problems, i.e. to find a solution to them and not to keep them in order to get votes at certain electoral moments.

I believe that there will be continuity, but a lot also depends on the people with whom the new President of Romania will surround himself, the security and defence advisors. But I hope he will choose what is best for Romania.

Mihai Isac, political and security analyst

■ **What are the priorities you see at the beginning of this presidential term for the Republic of Moldova?**

■ Romania's priority is to ensure political and economic stability. To this end, Nicusor Dan has already announced that he will start negotiations with pro-European parties in an attempt to establish a coalition of national unity to form a cordon sanitaire around the so-called sovereigntist parties in the Bucharest Parliament, in order to ensure a stable majority.

Some of the parties – Union Save Romania (USR), the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) – have signaled that they are ready to take part in the talks. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) has not yet had a clear position on the matter. The Social Democratic Party's approach to these negotiations will determine whether or not they will have the desired outcome.

Nicusor Dan wants to avoid early parliamentary elections. These early parliamentary elections could be used by the

so-called sovereigntist parties to try to take revenge. We could then have a parliament dominated by sovereigntist forces, which, in alliance with certain elements from the Social Democratic Party, could even form a coalition.

Mr. Ilie Bolojan [President of the Senate] is, so far, the name being discussed for the post of Prime Minister, but, as I was saying, it matters a lot what PSD will decide in the coming period.

There will be a few weeks of “long knives” in all parties, including USR, PSD, PNL, because of the internal war for leadership positions in these parties.

In this context, Nicusor Dan has the difficult task of ensuring a stable government. A stable government is necessary to be able to turn Romania's economic situation around. There are serious budget and investment problems. Important projects have been suspended, such as the construction of highways to the Republic of Moldova. It remains to be seen whether Nicusor Dan will be able to choose his collaborators wisely to implement his strategy.

The fact that Nicusor Dan doesn't have a strong party behind him is a handicap at the moment and there will most likely be attempts by PNL or USR to attract the current president to their side in order to become a presidential party and to use the image of saviour that Nicusor Dan has at the moment.

Vital ally for the Republic of Moldova

■ **Bearing in mind that Romania is the main economic partner of the Republic of Moldova, what would a recovery of Romania's economy mean for the neighbouring country and how do you see this aspect?**

■ A strong Romania is a reliable ally of the Republic of Moldova. Any economic growth in Romania has immediate and beneficial consequences for the Republic of Moldova. We are talking here about an increase in Romania's capacity to support the neighbouring country, an increase in the investment capacity of Romanian business circles wishing to become involved in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, a stable economy means a stable political environment, which would make it easier for Romanian state institutions to become more involved in supporting the Republic of Moldova. Of course, this has taken place and will take place within the limits imposed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, without violating the neutrality of this state.

Positive signal

■ **What does the election of a new president here in Bucharest mean for the vote in Moldova's parliamentary elections this autumn? Is this a positive signal for pro-European forces?**

■ Yes, it is a positive signal for pro-European forces. The election of Nicusor Dan as President of Romania is a defeat for the Russian Federation in the long hybrid war which it has waged against the democracies of the European Union and its partner states.

The election of Nicusor Dan as the new President of Romania should not be used by the current leadership in Chisinau to stop the effort to make reforms in the idea that Nicusor Dan's victory automatically ensures the victory of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) in the autumn parliamentary elections in Moldova.

The political class in Chisinau needs to bury the hatchet and really take steps to create a pro-European pole in these parliamentary elections. Even if Nicusor Dan's victory puts a stop for the time being to the Russian Federation's efforts in Romania, the approaching parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova will lead to an intensification of Moscow's efforts to halt Chisinau's European course.

■ **What does the election of Nicusor Dan mean for Ukraine and the support that Ukraine needs in these difficult times of war, bearing in mind that Romania is one of the main logistical routes for aid to Ukraine?**

■ After the usual visit that President Nicusor Dan will certainly make to Chisinau in the immediate future, we expect that one of his next visits will be to Kiev. Nicusor Dan has distinguished himself as a supporter of Ukraine.

It is important to understand that Romania's support for Ukraine will intensify both bilaterally and at the level of the European institutions. At the same time, we must look with understanding at the fact that Nicusor Dan also needs some time to settle into his new role and to select the team that will manage these difficult dossiers.

But Nicusor Dan has an important support at the European Union level, including from French President Emmanuel Macron, and this will allow Romania to play an important role in the architecture of relations between Ukraine and the EU bloc.

Euro-Atlantic cooperation

■ **How do you see the relationship with the European Union and the USA that the new presidential administration in Bucharest wants to have? How will the new president relate to Romania's two strategic allies?**

■ The election of Nicusor Dan as Romania's new President and the current unofficial political crisis caused by Prime Minister Ciolacu's decision to resign and the steps to nominate a new prime minister offer some breathing space to Bucharest, which could find new ways to convince the European Union to allow the implementation of certain derogations from EU rules to allow the absorption of more EU funds.

It is a clear signal to partner states that Romania remains firmly anchored in the Euro-Atlantic area. At the same time, however, this image of Nicusor Dan as the saviour of democracy in Romania may turn against him and against Romania if this state does not know how to manage relations with political parties well.

At the moment, Romania is enjoying some breathing space and EU partner states have clearly demonstrated their willingness to participate in Romania's economic recovery.

Regarding the relationship between Romania and the United States, at the moment, it is on stand-by. Fortunately, we have seen that the pro-American discourse has been monopolized by George Simion, and when I refer to the pro-American discourse, I am actually referring to the pro-Trump discourse, but surely, with the support of the decision-makers at European Union level, a way will be found for the Nicusor Dan administration, cemented by the clear victory in the presidential elections, to enter into direct relations with the Trump administration.

Given the transactional way in which Donald Trump understands how to implement US foreign policy, it is good that Nicusor Dan and the people around him take some lessons in the art of lobbying.

■ **What is the lesson for Chisinau, ahead of the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova this autumn, that Romania nevertheless resisted the populism and disunity promoted and encouraged by Russia during the Romanian presidential campaign?**

■ Such an episode has already taken place in the Republic of Moldova and I am referring here to the fact that last autumn, a very large number of people voted for Maia Sandu, who responded to the Russian Federation's attempts to hijack the presidential elections and the referendum on European integration.

At the same time, we have to understand that what happened on November 3, 2024 in the Republic of Moldova or what happened on May 18, 2025 in Romania will not necessarily happen in the elections on September 28 in the Republic of Moldova. The authorities in Chisinau need to bury the hatchet and hold clear talks with pro-European political players in the Republic of Moldova.

One of the important lessons from all these experiences for the Republic of Moldova must be law enforcement. The fact that clear electoral legislation was applied in Romania, which prevented or at least limited Russian influence, was clearly seen even during the day of the presidential election itself. The Romanian authorities have complained of cyber-attacks affecting the electoral infrastructure of the Romanian state.

■ **Thank you!**

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