THE INFORMATION SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL PROCESSES

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Abstract

This article presents a review of the most important aspects of information security in the Republic of Moldova since the country managed to gain its independence. The analysed issues are related to this topic in the resizing context of the regional and global power relations and the contribution of the media information factor in ensuring national security. Along with the debate on what is required by the global information society and the information confrontations that take place in the regional geopolitical space, the key questions regarding information security are extensively analysed. In the end, the author offers some recommendations related to information security in the media, taking into account the Republic of Moldova's 2019-2024 Information security strategy.

Keywords: *information security, media, geopolitics, globalization, national security, information space.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of international relations from the beginning of the 21st century undoubtedly proves the fact that the great transformation stage which characterises the contemporary society brings us closer to a system of a multipolar world. At the same time, the image of the modern world undergoes significant changes.

The advancement of the globalisation process, known as one of the most important characteristics of modernity (RUSNAC & MORARU, 2018) and, at the same time, the promotion of a multi-aspect interaction between people and countries, materialised in numerous political, economic, scientific and cultural contracts/agreements, may lead, according to experts, to both beneficial elements and to certain unwanted consequences for the human civilisation, also including to the Republic of Moldova, as part of the global geopolitical system.

Of course, the international relations system evolved together with the assertion of the nation-state as a political actor, but also as a subject of international law. At the same time, new principles developed which represent the basis of the current global order, among which there is the preservation and the assurance of national and international security (BURIAN & NOFIT, 2015).

Anyway, the identification of the state as a reference object of national security is based on solid reasons: the state represents the most powerful type of unity within the international system, and as form of organisation it represents the universal standard of political legitimacy, with the purpose of identifying the objectives of national interests and of organising society for their implementation, because "security represents the conjugated result of the efforts of all citizens, local and central administrative and management organs, of the institutions and organisations, applying all forces and resources at the state's disposal, in order to ensure freedom and the society's right to prosper, as well as that of the nation and state" (PÂNTEA, 2002).

If, at the moment of the gaining of independence for the Republic of Moldova, one of the basic tasks was to ensure national security and "the preservation of the young state within its territorial boundaries by respecting sovereignty" (CĂLDARE, 2015), nowadays its path towards an open society and a competitive economy, especially its democratisation and European integration perspective, similar to the majority of the East-European countries, implies taking into account the dependence of the security risks and threats. The lack of security and stability still remains one of major problems in creating a

democratic society in the Republic of Moldova and this leads to the persistence of some extremely harmful social effects for the population, for the state and for the civil society on the whole (CĂLDARE, 2015). Moreover, specialists show that the Republic of Moldova lies in a three geopolitical interference region: Southeast-European, Central-European and Eurasian. This region has long been characterised by the presence of some frozen conflicts, being marked today by active conflicts and by a deterioration of the relationships between NATO and the Russian Federation. The presence of the conflict areas in the vicinity of the Republic of Moldova directly raises security issue for both the state and its citizens.

The rapid geopolitical changes that take place in the world bring new risks, threats and vulnerabilities to the Republic of Moldova and its surrounding countries, generating unpredictable effects, not only at a national and regional level, but also at a global one, if we take into account the fact that terrorism gained new dimensions, getting closer to our space.

These dangers have significantly increased in recent years. Due to the significant development of information technologies, the traditional conceptions regarding distance, space and time changed considerably, leading to the appearance of a new type of civilisation – *informational.* The essence of informational civilisation consists in the opening of some unlimited possibilities in the informational and communication fields, without taking into account the space, in the development of Internet technologies and the extension of satellite communication, in establishing and disseminating news, as well as in the implementation on a large scale of digital diplomacy. In these conditions, the global informational becomes the forefront of confronting the geopolitical interests of the centres of power of the modern world, becoming an effective tool for shaping public opinion and its orientation in the interest of certain political and economic circles. Therefore, in the assurance of information security, the Republic of Moldova should be concerned both with the development of an appropriate regulatory framework and the establishment of effective tools for monitoring and control in the field, in line with the changes taking place in the internal and global

information space, and with effective collaboration in cooperation mechanisms and formats. regional / international in the common interests of neighbouring countries, because today neither information security nor even national security can be provided individually by any state. All the more so as day by day communication becomes more and more widespread in the information society.

2. GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY

The society of the last decades of the previous century, based on "the implementation of a national informatic system", evolved towards *the information society,* which more and more influenced the system of international relations, characterised by the large application of communication-information technology.

Starting from the 1970s, the American sociologist Alvin Toffler, in his book *Future Shock*, spoke about the impact/shock of technological innovations in the socio-political, economic and cultural context, viewing it as a disorientation for the members of the society. One decade later, the same author, in the volume *The Third Wave*, an authentic manifest of technological civilisation, predicted the appearance of the era of information and of the Internet, mostly dependent on creativity, highly marked by a series of significant mutations at both society and individual level, because knowledge, and not brute force, is significant in the technological era (TOFFLER, 1996).

Alvin Toffler's predictions came true. Today, the society of the third millennium is one of the digital era, an era based on knowledge, in which the capitalisation of information resources led to the removal of spatial and temporal barriers. The technological support of the new society is built through the convergence of three sectors: information technology, communication technology and the production of digital content. Technological progress facilitated the appearance of new services and applications, which combine sound, image and text and they use all means of communication (phone, fax, television and computer) (ŞERB et al., 2013).

Anyway, from the moment when the Internet steps in, with its great advantages, people move towards an information society – a new era in the history of civilisation. Various authors present similar opinions when speaking about the ages that humanity went through: (1) stone; (2) iron; (3) agriculture; (4) industry; (5) technology; (6) knowledge. We consider that *the information era* is comprised of the era technology and the era of knowledge, where knowledge appears as "meaningful information" and "acts" (TODOROI, 2013).

Although until recently we only spoke about reforming the political field, in an attempt to preserve the global integrity of the economic-financial system, the elements that exist in the world at this moment significantly influence the geopolitical core as well as that of the global economy. In this context, a number of significant aspects in the development of information society can be highlighted as following:

- the convergence of the social-manipulative activities with cybernetic technologies that may lead to instability within the society, but without degenerating into military/armed conflicts;
- the relinquishment of the geopolitical actors when it comes to the media channels with regional or transnational coverage in favour of the space domination strategies by increasing the number of nuclei of information processes, aimed at minimizing the effects of propaganda and mass manipulation;
- the tendency of the geopolitical actors to "regionalise" information space, by establishing new and less well-known information channels, but better geographically placed and equipped in order to be easier to control. After us, this tendency will be dominant due to the conditions of the contemporary informational space;
- the active exploitation of digital communication with the purpose of developing some information operations against electoral, political or economic contestants. Such operations present danger due to the fact that they can represent sources of information wars, aimed at destroying similar technologies available to competing countries.

At the basis of information society, of its structure and dynamic, lies the production of information and not of material goods, a fact which differentiates it from the previous ones. This is a society of the individual's free activity, which, according to A. Toffler, does not require him to be present at work all the time. The principle of free activity becomes the catalyst for social development. The struggle to dominate the world is most often perceived as a fight to have monopoly over information, which became the world's most profitable human resource, capable to:

- Change/disrupt/influence economies and societies;
- Remodel/reorient/restructure the relations between states and nations;
- Redefine/decide/determine the states' strategic interests for regional dominance and for "a place under the sun";
- Confuse/divert/handle the behaviour of the nations and interstate relations.

In our opinion, due to these reasons, the activity regarding the information security of the Republic of Moldova has to be approach in the globalisation context of international relations and of forming a global informational space, in which the media plays a crucial role, both in reflecting the globalisation processes and in achieving the geopolitical goals.

In the context of the increasing geopolitical confrontations, the priorities regarding the assurance of information security in the Republic of Moldova have to be oriented towards the development and implementation of a comprising geo-information strategy for the country by integrating it in the global information infrastructure, the continuous professionalisation of the personnel involved and the improvement of the mechanism of information communication regarding external policy through multi-level counter-propaganda and the creation of civil network structures and Internet / tele-radio broadcast opportunities as instruments of foreign policy.

3. INFORMATION CONFRONTATION IN THE GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL SPACE

The terrestrial space is full of numerous communication networks. This cobweb transformed the world not into an object, but into

a subject of the political and social relationships. Due to this mankind became aware for the first time that the *geopolitical space* turned into a *global* one due to the support of new technologies.

The global geopolitical space represents a field of high technology, where the majority of the significant tendencies of global geopolitics meet, in which Internet became a key-structure which edifies the global information society. This space is permanently haunted by more or less significant contradictions and information confrontations, the rhythm and intensity being influenced by the major geopolitical actors: USA, EU, Russia and China. In achieving their goals, they together with other geopolitical actors use the most sophisticated information technologies. Technologies play a double role on national security. On the one hand, they contribute to democratization, greatly reducing the intensity of the conflicts. On the other hand, information technologies represent a sort of fertile soil for the development of electronic/on-line forms of criminality and terrorism, a convenient way of initiating asymmetric threats and of exerting geopolitical influence, which may lead to new confrontations (HLIHOR, 2017).

At current stage, the order of modern life and especially its future will be determined by an increase of the impact of information and globalisation. This reality will lead to:

The "borderless" broadcast (transmission / reception) of information in / from national public spaces, which will become nuclei of the development of the global civil society;

The domination of the cybernetic space in the global communicational structure from the political, socio-economic, military, scientific-technological, commercial and educational reasonings;

The development of cross-border satellite communication which leads to the development of the global audio-visual and multimedia space;

The modernisation of the mass-media market as a component of the global information space.

The geostrategic fights, the confrontations of interests in/for the space between states, between political, economic and financial structures, take place especially within the information space. Being more and more subjected to globalisation, especially through its content, the information space also turns into a global field. In this space information confrontations are sometimes more vehement, more perfidious and more violent than those which take place on the battlefield. Even though information terrorism and information criminality represent a great danger for mankind, researchers consider that the greatest disaster is represented by the inter-state confrontations which use the information weapon (NEUNECK, 2013). However, the concept of *information war* did not appear out of the blue, but following a thorough analysis of the reality characteristic to the global geopolitical space. The earthquakes of these confrontations, in relationship to the situation/problematic, can be perceived at a global, continental or regional scale, influencing public opinion and disrupting the usual rhythm of everyday life. *The hybrid war* brings even more damage, through which some of the more important states try to dominate the smaller ones, by developing some geopolitical strategies which simultaneously apply to various media and information-psychological technologies that intoxicate and manipulate public opinion.

This phenomenon appears especially in the post-Soviet world which is subjected to information confrontations. It finds itself in a stage of contradictory and chaotic transition, with Russia that, in an attempt to keep under its influence the territories it once ruled, still cannot precisely determine what it wants to remain / become: USSR, The Community Of Independent States, The Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union or The Eurasian Union.

Due to the extension of the Internet and of the "borderless" mass-media, the control problem of information contents becomes a difficult and useless one. At the same time, the vulnerability of Internet becomes a major preoccupation of the society. No one in this world wants to give up Internet, information dependency being higher and higher. There are states which completely depend on the information provided by the elements of the cybernetic space. Blocking it for a couple of hours may lead to chaos in that particular country, also affecting the global information system (OPREA, 2007). From this perspective, it is of the utmost importance that the Republic of Moldova finds defence systems or, at least, antidots in order to keep under control attacks on the Internet network since its

vulnerability may lead to great damage for the information and knowledge society in the global context.

4. THE COUNTRY'S INFORMATION SECURITY IN THE MEDIA SPHERE

The word "security" comes from the Latin terms *securitas* and *securitatis*, which express both the lack of dangers, as well as a state of calm and peace. In Romanian this term, present in Gheorghe Şincai's *The Chronicle*, means "being far away from any danger", "being safe", "having a feeling of faith and peace due to the absence of any danger" (DAVID, 2005). The well-known interpretations of the concept refer to security as "the absence of threats when it comes to acquired values, and in a subjective manner, the absence of the fear that such values can be attacked" (LAŞAN, 2010). Modern approaches associate security with "protecting the collective identity, the national spectrum and the national cohesion" (FRUNZETI, 2006). Over the years, the concept of "security" gained different forms and meanings. Even in the virtue of the changes that took place on the international scene, together with the appearance of the new challenges to the state's security, one should still recognise the fact that it remained "an incompletely developed concept" (BUZAN, 2000). Barry Buzan, one of the most representative researchers in the field, clarifies the concept of security in international relations from the perspective of its focalisation both on the state and on the government, which deals with protecting the territory using political and military means, in the case of an invasion. In his view, the concept through which the state can define its security, is based on five sectors: military, politic, economic, environmental and societal (BUZAN, 2000). Of course, now that the information society gained legitimacy, in which information represents the most important product, these elucidations need to be completed. This is why we consider that *the information sector* is going to finds its well-deserved place alongside the other five sectors highlighted by Barry Buzan.

The notion of "information security", according to the context, presents different shades. It varies from a legislative and applicative point of view, from one country to the other, but basically it represents the conservation state for the information resources of the country, presenting two components: information-technological security (of information resources) and information-psychological security (of the individual, society and state). The latter includes mass-media, as an arena in which "at a national level and, to some extent, at an international level, the political game is being structured. It became a highly significant factor when it comes to cultural transformations, directly influencing the value system of the individuals and of social groups" (MORARU, 2001).

At current stage, the idea of information is regarded as the main factor of the modern geopolitical dynamics. Therefore, the management of the information flux becomes the main lever in asserting power in a state or in a part of the world. Therefore, researcher V. Moraru states that mass-media represents a space in which debates take place regarding the realities of the matters and the tool that has to offer legitimate power to the citizen, though which he can "contribute to the social organisation of debates and to amplifying the democratic social dialogue, therefore converting into an essential requirement of democratic evolution. The democratisation of the society goes through the plurality of communication, mass-media representing a fundamental source of public opinion" (MORARU, 2008). However, together with the society's increase of dependence on technology, in general, and on the infrastructure and the information and communication systems, in particular, the vulnerability of the population regarding all sorts of threats also increases (MORARU, 2015). Thus, along with the building of the information society, several problems related to information security arose.

The problem of the security of information space from the media perspective should not be neglected by the state that want to be independent and prosperous, including a small country such as the Republic of Moldova, situated at the borders that separate the EU and NATO and the strategic interests of Russia. Therefore, our country has to prove some concrete geopolitical, judicial and practice actions in the field of defending the information space, as one of the

basic segments of national security. All the more so that, over the years, the information security of the Republic of Moldova, meaning the issue of the protection of individuals, society and the state, their rights and interests in the information space (media, digital, cybernetic), stipulated by the Constitution and other laws of the Republic of Moldova, as well as the rights and interests related to the search, creation, reception, dispatch, distribution, processing, storage, use and protection of information, which produces effects at the level of individual and / or social consciousness, represented and still represents the "apple of discord" in the speeches of scientists, politicians and journalists. The experts who very well know the geopolitical context of the country speak about the necessity of perfecting *the information security assurance policies of the Republic of Moldova in the media sphere.* Despite all this, the security state of the country's information space is vulnerable, getting worse in the last years since the Republic of Moldova has signed the Association agreement and the Deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU, choosing the European vector as direction for its development. The approach between the Republic of Moldova and the EU is of no interest for Russia. The conception of national security which states that "the priority of Russia's foreign policy is the post-Soviet space", which, together with the Republic of Moldova, includes Ukraine, Georgia and the Baltic States.

In this context, one should be aware of the fact that the information space of our country is jeopardized by both internal and external factors, motivated by the geopolitical interests that some of the stronger countries in the region have. Even the internal factors which are dangerous for information security also present an external origin. In this regard we speak about the Eastern separatist segment of the country, where the national radio and TV shows are jammed, the newspapers from the right bank of Nistru do not reach the natives who can only view the Russian stations that broadcast in the Russian language. All these happen because a group of mercenary politicians who govern the enclave together with Russian militaries dislocated here with the pretext of "preserving peace/securing the weapons and ammunition of the Russian army",

are the ones who inspire hatred towards Romanian history, according to various experts.

The current geopolitical situation of the Republic of Moldova, where we witness a confrontation of geopolitical interests, between USA, the EU and NATO on the one side, and Russia, The Community of Independent States and the Eurasian Economic Union on the other side, requires the determination of the strategic perspectives which ensure information security in the media sphere, as a component of national security.

It is a well-known fact that at current stage the media produces information compression since news radio and television channels are interested in presenting worldwide news in real time. Some radio and television channels honestly fulfil their roles in relationship to their public, while others, pursuing geopolitical and geostrategic goals, make use of direct propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion. Taking all this into account, the security of the information space refers to protecting the state and the citizens from the noxious actions of some Russian publication, edited by the branches of the most important media institutions from Russia and from the other foreign audio-visual channels, who sometimes confuse information with propaganda and objectivity with misinformation.

The main controversy, which is the main topic of the debates regarding the protection of the national information space, is of geopolitical order, inspired by the propaganda of the Russian audio-visual media, which, due to its popularity, feels at home in our information space. Our ideas are supported by numerous surveys targeting the foreign audio-visual channels which broadcast in our space. The surveys showed that 65-70% of the respondents often watch the television channels from Moscow, whereas another 10-15% watch those channels only sometimes. When it comes to the Russian radio and TV channels, we deal with the language as a bearer of geopolitical interests, with the economic or political influence of Moscow through media, the book market and business.

Understanding the significance of audio-visual in forming public opinion, especially in the context of the election campaigns, many political forces founded their own radio or

television channels or they try to control different media channels. Following the democrats, who have been promoting their political interests with the help of the radio and television channels belonging to "General Media Group", the socialists consolidated their group "Exclusive Media", gaining license for the television channel "NTV Moldova", which broadcasts the NTV shows from Russia, which was broadcasted a few years ago in Moldova by the "TV 7" channel. People from Moscow were probably upset that TV 7 stopped broadcasting their news bulletins. In the perspective of the returning of the Russian informative and analytical shows to "Prime", this channel was also taken over by media group of the socialists. In reporting the topics in the newsletters and news-analytical programs broadcast from the Russian Federation, it was attested that the following TV channels: "Prime", "TV 7", "Ren Moldova" and especially "RTR Moldova" and "Rossia 24" promoted and intensify various unconfirmed rumours, manipulating through text and images, using labels in order to discredit and to present in a negative connotation one of the parts of the conflict (the government of Ukraine), misinforming the international public opinion, including that from the Republic of Moldova, regarding the events in Ukraine through commentary and editing tricks in order to informally support the separatist forces.

Therefore, following an analysis of the monitorisation reports of the informative programs broadcasted in the Russian Federation of following TV channels "Prime", "TV 7", "RTR Moldova", "Ren Moldova" and „Rossia 24", the Audio-visual Coordinating Council of the Republic of Moldova publicly warned and imposed maximum fines on the institutions carrying out the retransmission of the first four stations mentioned above, and "the retransmission of the station Rossia 24" was stopped until January 1, 2015" (THE AUDIOVISUAL COORDINATIVE COUNCIL, 2015).

An increased attention regarding the information space of the country is offered by the fact that, in our country, the cable provider offers around 140 channels. 41 of them broadcast only in Russian, whereas 76 broadcast both in Romanian and in Russian. Therefore, it is no surprise that the polarization of the society in the Republic of Moldova is directly proportional with media manipulation, and sometimes this is its result. The cause for the manipulation of information lies behind the editorial policy of the editorship. In Moldova, many Russian newspapers occur, together with the Russian radio stations "Russkoie radio", "Avto radio", "Hit FM", "Retro FM", "Serebreanâi dojdi", "Radio na semi holmah" and many others which have no competition in the autochthonous media landscape due to the exceptional technique of their studios and the huge salaries that their reports, analysts and opinion makers earn, which are highly experienced in both informing and in manipulating and misinforming the public.

Therefore, taking into account the elements above, the endless controversial disputes regarding the safety of the information space are to be expected and they were to have logical solutions through official / legal attitudes / positions. All the more so, as the issue returned to the forefront of political / public debates after the signing of the country's EU accession documents, leading to the acceleration of the process of adopting a law in the field at the initiative of the parliamentary majority led by the PDM representatives. On December 7, 2017, the members of the parliament voted the law project on amending and supplementing the Audio-visual Code, which involves the protection of the information space and ensures a European standard for the presentation of political information.

The decree promulgating the law on the completion of the Audio-visual Code, signed by the President of the Parliament A. Candu on January 10, 2018, and the final version of the document in question were published on January 12 in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova. The purpose of the law was to combat the foreign propaganda of the rebroadcasted audio-visual channels. The interdiction refers to informative, analytical and military programs. This initiative does not refer to the closing of any television channels. Its goal is to fight against external propaganda and manipulation, which may severely prejudice information security, the state and its citizens.

This initiative of the deputies, qualified by analysts and journalists as an "anti-propaganda" law strictly refers to the limitations regarding the informative-analytical shows and it does not influence the rebroadcasting in the Republic of Moldova of entertainment programs or of other types of programs belonging to TV channels from other countries who did not ratify the European convention regarding transborder television (this international document has not yet been ratified by the Russian Federation).

There are however some nuances in connection with the adoption of this law, and here are some obscure interests that led to the decision. Or, "the conditioning of the informational product following the pact made by the informational sphere with the totality of the corporate, institutional, financial, industrial, political forces, - in their interests, - limits the freedom of expression and, ultimately, deprives the democratic institutions of substantiality" (MORARU, 2016).

This opinion was shared by international experts and ambassadors from various states, who are worried about "breaking the freedom of the media in the Republic of Moldova", specifying that "the fight against Russian propaganda should take place using democratic means, developing the media skill of the population" but not by "forbidding the rebroadcast of the news". The legislatives in Russia and Moldova exchanged statements regarding the documents. The State Duma of the Russian Federation, in the special statement regarding the inadmissibility of the "Russian media discrimination in Moldova", addressed to the UN, the Council of Europe and OSCE, asked to offer some appreciation to the actions of the Moldovan authorities. The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova also adopted a statement of response regarding "the attacks of the Russian Federation on information security and its offending immixtures in the political activity of the Republic of Moldova".

The law of the modification and completion of the Audio-visual code, being adopted "in great rush", also triggered some operational problems. Prior to its appearance, the journalists from Gagauzia refused to respect it, stating that their audio-visual channels function on the basis of the licenses issued by the Executive Committee of Gagauzia. Anyway, the law that we speak about is important because it served as the basis for the introduction of the *information security* notion, which refers to "the protection stage of the information resources, including a group of measures in order to ensure the protection of the people, society and state when it comes to potential misinformation attempts and/or exterior manipulative information and for not admitting the media challenges directed against the Republic of Moldova".

The debate in the public space over the notion of *information security* represented an urge to examine/approach this problem and this led to the crystallisation of the idea developed and issued on December 21, 2017 by the Parliament of the law regarding the approval of the Conception of information security in the Republic of Moldova, published in The Official Gazette on February 16, 2018. Article 3 of this documents stated that "the Government, within 6 months from the date of the law's entry into force, will develop and present for examination the Information Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova and the Action Plan for its implementation". The conception of the information security of the Republic of Moldova emphasizes that "information security represents a component of the national security system" (pct. 7) and that "it is determined by the increase of the dependency of the contemporary society on the globalisation of information systems and communication infrastructures" (pct.5). The document aims the national interests in the field of information security, including:

- ensuring respect for the rights and freedoms regarding access to information resources;
- the development of the field of information technology and electronic communications and the increase of their usage;
- ensuring protection to the information space, to the critical infrastructure and to the information regarded as state secret and to those with limited accessibility;
- prevention, detection and countering of risks and threats to information security of the Republic of Moldova, as well as protection of the national information space and society as a whole from the impact of propaganda and

media aggression from both the outside and the inside (pct. 8).

The achievement of the above-mentioned national interests in the field of information security were also reflected in other documents. On November 22, 2018, the Parliament adopted the Decision on the approval of the Information security strategy of the Republic of Moldova for the years 2019–2024 and of the Action Plan for its implementation (published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova on January 18, 2019, no. 13-21.

The Information security strategy of the Republic of Moldova for the years 2019–2024 was included in appendix 1 of the Parliament's Decision. In its introduction it specifies the fact that "information technologies contribute to essential social transformations, being a generator for the appearance and consolidation of the information society at a national, regional and international level, going beyond the legal framework of state borders or of state communications" (pct. 1) and that "the information space become a vital field of activity for the state, economy, science, society and individual" (pct. 2).

Observing that "the free circulation of information and ideas at a local, regional and global level becomes a must for the creation and promotion of an informed society" (pct. 6), the conception states that "the broadcast of information without taking into account the limits of the national borders, besides the obvious effects, may lead to an increase of influence capacity on behalf of the foreign governmental and nongovernmental actors with sufficient resources" (pct. 9).

From the previously presented aspects it is clear that the purpose of the Strategy is to legally correlate and systemically integrate the priority fields responsible for the assurance of information security at national level, based on cybernetic resilience, multimedia pluralism and institutional convergence regarding security, aimed at protecting the sovereignty and the territorial independence and integrity of the Republic of Moldova (pct.14).

Taking into account the present situation, from the perspective of the progress recorded and of the development tendencies of information society at a national level, the current and perspective issues which generate both risks and threats to security, including hybrids, but also keeping in mind the fact that the global nature of information systems and of electronic communication networks requires a tight coordination between all the responsible institutions, both at a national and global level (pct.34), the Action plan for the implementation of the Information security strategy of the Republic of Moldova for the years 2019-2024, stipulated in appendix 2 of the Parliament's Decision, was developed on four main pillars:

- security assurance for the information-cybernetic space and the investigation of information crime;
- security assurance for the information-media space;
- consolidation of operational capacities
- streamlining the processes of internal coordination and international cooperation in the field of information security

We notice that the second pillar of the Action plan refers completely to security assurance of the information-media space, a fact which highlights the importance that authorities offer to this field, as a component part of national security, since "within the information society, estimating the power and viability of the national security system, without taking into account the information systems and management manner of information represents a major risk, because the action gravity centre tends to move from the material to the informational dimension" (pct. 18). This idea is also indicated by the goals of the second pillar: a) the development of strategic communication mechanisms in order to achieve the national interests of the Republic of Moldova; b) Civic control and the consolidation of the cooperation between the civil society and the public authorities which have to assure information security; c) Determining the legal status of various publications, press agencies and of other subjects which work in the online media space; d) The assurance financial transparency for the activity of the public administration authorities and commercial societies in the context of information security assurance. In order to achieve these objectives, several major actions have been outlined, of which we exemplify:

- the development of some internal strategic policies and connection to the external strategic communication platforms of the security system structures, public law and order in order to ensure information security and the promotion of the national interests of the Republic of Moldova;
- the development and organisation of some training courses for radiobroadcasters, service providers, opinion makers, journalists and NGOs regarding the misinformation or manipulative information techniques used in order to jeopardise the state's national security;
- the development and adjustment of the functional legal framework with the purpose of legally regulating the relations between the representatives of the media who collect and disseminate information on the Internet, society and the authorities responsible for ensuring information security, in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission and European good practice;
- the implementation of the normative framework which stipulates common intervention and management actions of the on-line and off-line space;
- the development, under the supervision of the coordinating Council for information security assurance, of the information qualification criteria as product of disinformation, manipulation or propaganda, oriented towards undermining information security, with the purpose of identifying the limited partners, the financing sources and the executors.

The allocated space for debating the issue in question is limited and we only state that on July, 19, 2018, the Parliament adopted the Decision for the approval of the National Defense Strategy and the Action Plan on the implementation of the National Defense Strategy for the years 2018–2022 (published in the Official Gazette no. 285-294 on August 3, 2018), where the problem of information security of the national space is also debated. From here we quote that: "the global distribution of power is changing both within the international communities and between the states and the non-state actors. We notice a continual change in the international security environment, with important political, economic,

military, information, social, ethnic and cultural implications". In the same chapter 9 from the National Defense Strategy we notice the fact that "due to its geographical position, the Republic of Moldova represents an integrated part of the security architecture of the Black Sea basin – an interest area for a number of strong regional or international actors. Security in the above-mentioned area is influenced by the existence of a frozen conflict axis (the regions of Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Karabakh) and by present conflicts (Ukraine)". Therefore, at point 52 of the Strategy, entitled "the implementation of unique standards regarding the protection of the information space" it is provided that "the focus shall mainly be on the prevention and counterreaction capacities of information attacks. Cybernetic defense capacities will be developed in this direction. At the same time, the institutions of national defense responsible for ensuring information security will promote policies that ensure the unique and integrated perception of the information space both at the institutional level and at the level of the whole society".

The approval of the document was preceded by harsh criticism on behalf of the socialist deputies on the grounds that "this strategy was commended by the allies of the governing party and because its purpose was to worsen relationships with the Russian Federation", as it stipulates the fact that "the presence of the Russian military contingent in the Eastern region of the Republic of Moldova, in the context of an eventual escalation of the regional situation, represents a risk to national security", as well as the fact that "foreign propaganda represents one of the most serious threats to national values and interests".

Summarizing, we notice the fact that the protection of national interests is one of the main functions of every state. In the same order of ideas, the Republic of Moldova, since it obtained its independence, adopted laws, legal and normative acts, set up relevant institutions and bodies with the active involvement of civil society, all organizationally integrated in the information protection system, as a component part of national security. This is how the necessary legal-normative framework was created and, at the moment, it is comprised of approximately 20

laws, 80 Government decisions, 70 approved conceptual documents referring to the information systems of public authorities, 20 regulating documents with general character and 75 documents with individual character issued by the National Agency for Regulation in Electronic Communications and Information Technology

The above-mentioned documents also present some problems due to the rash with which they were developed and adopted. Therefore, the Republic of Moldova is the only East-European country to adopt such a law referring to the completion of the Audio-visual code despite the fact that it was criticised by national and international organisations that recommended "to avoid any attempt to forbid propaganda through legislation". At present, many experts in the field consider that the law did not generate the expected result, since the media organisations which rebroadcasted the content produced in the Russian Federation used subterfuges: they stopped broadcasting the content which might have led to fines, they "changed and wrapped it" into something that they later on called "proper content". This is why the representatives of the development partners claimed that it is more important to fight against internal propaganda and not to allow such laws to become fighting instruments against the media which does not respect some "political patterns".

We tried to find in the Conception of information security of the Republic of Moldova some concrete provisions referring to the media field. The analysis proved however that, among the 20 "basic goals of information security" (pct. 12), half are dedicated to the development of: response capacities in the event of threats; capacities / mechanisms for preventing ... and responding to / countering actions / inactions, "which threaten the legal interests of the person, society and the state"; strategic communication mechanisms; national information infrastructure; the staff training system in the field; information and cyber resilience capabilities; information security culture. Another part of the objectives refers to monitoring / control of the information field, while the media, regarded as "an information weapon", is not included / mentioned in any of the objectives. We wonder

if, at present moment, we are still able to develop, in the field of information security, the craved "capacities and mechanisms", highlighting the role of the media and multimedia channels.

The other imperfections, which still exist in these documents, represent especially a tribute paid to the group interests of the top echelons of power, where for years there have been geopolitical struggles between the parties that frequently succeed each other in governing the vector of the country's development. The stagnation of the justice reform, corruption, the domination of the oligarchic clans in the vital sectors of the national economy and of the socio-political life, also present some negative repercussions for the fate of the country. The representatives of the branches of power in the state, eager to stay "forever" in the government pyramid, often indulge in confrontations of geopolitical and group interests. Confirmations in this regard are also found in the context of the promulgation of the laws we are referring to. Following the President's repeated refusal to signal them, due to ideological and geopolitical reasons, The Constitutional Court suspended him, the legislative documents being promulgated by the President of the Parliament, who exercised the interim more than once.

Of course, the other problems of the legislative field regarding information security be will firstly dealt with by the lawmakers. But, in our opinion, at present time, not even the best-adopted law in the field, can ensure success because in order to achieve this goal we have to have a high civic-culture society. Mass-media should also channel its energy and activity towards this goal. This work should start as it is invoked by the information society. A select civic culture should also characterise lawmakers, who should be more laborious and to manifest more responsibilities when it comes to establishing and adopting laws, including in the fields of information security and mass-media.

Anyway, based on examining the documents adopted regarding the assurance of information security, we may state that the Republic of Moldova, took into account the advantages and disadvantages of modern information and communication technologies, remaining supportive of the development of a set of

international legal and ethical standards designed to ensure full compliance with the relevant provisions. These aspects, as well as others, connected to the national security in the media sphere due to the outbreak of information wars in our country was largely discussed during a scientific conference with international participation entitled "Regional security problems in the context of hybrid challenges", organised two years ago at the Institute of Legal and Political Research of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, the Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Moldova and the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in the Republic of Moldova.

It should be noted that in order to face the challenges, the Republic of Moldova benefits from the support of the European Union which, for the next few years, increased its budget to combat propaganda and misinformation, with a separate focus on Eastern Partnership Member States. The government, public authorities, state institutions and civil society have to follow, not only to determine, but also to manifest the strategic vision which ensures a safe information space for all subjects in the Republic of Moldova, by harmonising the legal framework and its implementation.

In the modern conditions of a borderless Internet and mass-media, information becomes an influencing tool for all the processes that take place within the society, creating development opportunities for a change of information and opinion among citizens from different places in the world. Acting without the smell of gunpowder, information weapons, including the media, can be used actively, as appropriate, in peacetime. In this context, the media product has to be able to access the market not according to the country of origin, but according to respecting professional ethical standards and journalistic objectivity, where the undemocratic intentions of politicians to limit access to information and free speech would not find their place. This is the only way in which the strategy of information security in the media sphere can express itself as an important component of national security.

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