

# The Fall of Oligarch Vlad. Plahotniuc. New Hope for Moldova? Towards a Multipolar Alliance with Russia and China?

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*In June 2019, the small landlocked nation of Moldova found itself in a life or death struggle between two opposing futures: Oligarchs like the notorious Vladimir Plahotniuc had worked diligently for years to bring this nation into the hull of the collapsing NATO-EU Titanic while nationalists sought to re-align Moldova's future with the new emerging Multipolar Alliance led by China and Russia.*

The greatest moment of decision (until now) occurred in June 2019 when elections resulted in a three-way split between a pro-Russian Socialist Party, the pro-EU ACUM and another pro-western Democratic Party run by the arch Moldavian kleptocrat Vladimir Plahotniuc.

Vlad Plahotniuc: Deep State Tool and Force of Regime Change

A renowned oligarch whom by all accounts is known as the richest man in Moldova, Plahotniuc was not only a media and advertising mogul controlling the vast majority of the news, and entertainment of the small nation, but was also a power in Moldova's banking, hotel and services industry who, with the support of Victoria Nuland, took charge of the pro-EU Democratic Party from December 2016. Although his highest political office was Deputy Speaker of Parliament, it was known by all, that Plahotniuc was the [hidden hand controlling the state](#) and aspired to make that power official by becoming Prime Minister.

During the dark days of the Obama era, Plahotniuc interfaced [closely with Asif Chaudhry](#) (U.S. Ambassador to Moldova from 2008-2011) who acted as power broker and mediator during the tumultuous period of change that saw the elimination of the pro-Russian Communist Party and the rise of the pro-Euro Integration movement under the Democratic Party in the wake of the 2009 ["Twitter Revolution"](#) (sometimes called the "revolution of Twits"). This crisis saw a near color revolution as 30 000 Jacobin youth in Chisinau aspired to overthrow the government by declaring the recent elections to be fraudulent. The slogans shouted by the mob included "we want Europe", "we are Romanians" and "down with Communism". Romania had joined NATO in 2004 and the movement to absorb Moldova into Romania was supported by many in the west wishing to see NATO's unabated growth.

Beginning in April 7, 2009, these mobs took over (and set fire to) government buildings and replaced Moldovan flags with Romanian and European Union flags. While this effort was quashed by crackdowns by police, a taste of the potential for regime change was felt by all and then-President Vladimir Voronin [called it](#) a "coup d'etat".

In hindsight, we can observe the growth of the media empire under the control of Plahotniuc

and the vast investments into “democracy building” by the [National Endowment of Democracy](#) to get a sense of the causal hand behind these events, though at the time the culprits never came to light.

One thing is clear: The American State Department’s hand pervaded this story as Ambassador Chaudhry (connected closely to Victoria Nuland [according to Wikileaks emails](#)), was a major power broker and brags that his work in carrying out Moldovan democracy reforms during this time was the [most rewarding experience of his career](#).

In the wake of this attempted coup, three pro-western opposition parties created the Alliance for European Integration winning 53 seats and pushing out the Communist Party from power.

By 2014, the long-sought for EU association agreements were [signed by Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine](#) with NATO’s bureaucrats salivating at the prospect of assimilating all three. At this time, Ukraine’s pro-Russian government had just fallen to its own color revolution and the new regime of Yatseniuk [was calling for speedy NATO entry](#). Even though its 1994 Constitution prevented it, Moldova was already a part of the [NATO Partnership for Peace Program](#) and had participated in NATO’s Kosovo Force since 2014. A change in Constitution to permit for NATO entry by way of Euro integration (or total regime change) was not a huge stretch of the imagination at this point.

During this time high level Obama-era regime change agents like [Joe Biden](#) and [John McCain](#) made stops in Moldova and encouraged speedy western integration, meeting with kleptocrats like Plahotniuc and celebrating the new age of western “liberalism” that would transform the eastern bloc.

With such a powerful machine supporting them, Plahotniuc and other local Moldovan kleptocrats had every reason to feel as though they had the power of gods. The lords of high finance of London and Wall Street had ensured their unchallenged success for years, and with Moldova’s full integration into the NATO/EU cage nothing would hold them back... but with this hubris came a fair dose of sloppiness.

#### “The Theft of the Century” and Its Aftermath

Working closely with Israeli-Moldovan businessman Ilan Shor and fellow oligarchs Vyacheslav Platon and Vlad Filat, Plahotniuc carried out a blatant “theft of the century” to the tune of \$1 billion stolen from Moldova (representing 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the nation’s GDP) between 2011-2014. The model was simple and based on the use of offshore shell companies which laundered money and received fraudulent loans issued by the Moldovan Central Bank. That bank had itself taken over three major financial institutions (the Banca de Economii, Unibank and Banca Sociala) which extended fraudulent loans and businesses controlled by Ilan Shor and others within Plahotniuc’s network to the tune of \$1 billion. \$100 million were used directly by Plahotniuc to purchase, banks, businesses, hotels and other luxury real estate around Europe and Moldova.

Even though the facts of this fraud could not long be kept secret, Plahotniuc’s control on the levers of justice (especially the Constitutional Court which is packed with his partisans) ensured that little could be done to bring the oligarch to justice.

Vlad Filat was sacrificed by his former partner in 2016 and given 3 years in prison for bribes and participation in the heist while Ilan Shor was charged with laundering and embezzlement in absentia though never saw a jail cell. In April 2017, Vyacheslav Platon was found guilty and given 18 years in prison but Plahotniuc never faced a single charge in Moldova. Things were a bit different elsewhere however and in 2017, Moscow's Basmany Court [found the oligarch guilty](#) of attempted murder.

In 2019, a Moscow court [found Plahotniuc guilty](#) of drug trafficking and money laundering and he was also charged with 28 counts of smuggling and sales of drugs (mostly hashish from North Africa)- and to these charges Plahotniuc obviously cried "Russian fantasies and fake news".

During the hot phase of blowback during 2016, Plahotniuc was a guest of the pro-NATO Atlantic Council in Washington where [he met with Victoria Nuland](#) and other members of the Obama regime change party. The 'Atlantic Council Moldova Program' was also advancing a steady stream of pro-NATO propaganda [funded by Jashi's Trans Oil Group](#) (on whose board sat former U.S. Ambassador Chaudhry).

Upon his return from America, Plahotniuc speedily moved to take full control of the Democratic Party.

In spite of his control of mass media, news of this "theft of the century" spread widely, and in an impoverished nation [ranked lowest](#) on the European Union poverty index where nearly 50% of the male population lives and works abroad as cheap labor, public tolerance for Plahotniuc's sank to new lows with a 96% disapproval rating. The Democratic Party machine fell from favor and the pro-Russian Socialist Party again took power under Igor Dodon.

President Dodon wasted no time accelerating [Moldova's observer status](#) in the Eurasian Economic Union which was made official on March 14, 2018 when Dodon called for a pro-Europe and pro-Russia policy (a blasphemy for some technocrats). At this time, Putin laid out the philosophy of EU-EAEU cooperation saying: *"The Eurasian Union will be built on universal integration principles as an integral part of a harmonious community of economies from Lisbon to Vladivostok."*

In a February 2020 interview, Dodon echoed this orientation stating: *"I believe in a big Europe, from Lisbon to Vladivostok. It was Charles de Gaulle who came up with this idea and its repeated often by various world leaders. I think this is the only solution to make Europe stronger."*

This had to be stopped.

From 2017-2019, the Plahotniuc apparatus licked its wounds, regrouped, and waited for the right moment to strike... and on June 7, 2019 that moment came.

### Plahotniuc Attacks and Trips

Three months had passed since the February 2019 elections and a government had not yet formed. The three opposing parties that each won over 20% of the votes included Plahotniuc Democratic Party, the pro-EU ACUM party of PM Maia Sandu and the Socialist Party of Igor Dodon. Sandu's role as a former World Bank executive didn't bode well, but luckily her recognition that an alliance with Plahotniuc was political suicide kept her from making a devils pact and at the last minute chose to form a coalition government with Dodon in

defense of the nation's true interests where both parties united in the common cause to flush the swamp of oligarchs.

This alliance was arranged at the same moment that Plahotniuc's [Constitutional Court deemed the February elections invalid](#) (party leaders have 3 months to shape a new government after elections). The court demanded that Dodon be deposed as President (for failing to call new elections), and the new coalition government declared null and void. Former PM Pavel Filip refused to recognize the new government calling it illegal and demanding a new election while Plahotniuc waited with bated breath for his moment to take over.

From June 7-15<sup>th</sup> a dual power struggle erupted and with the highest court in the land backing regime change, it wasn't looking good. The Democrats staged demonstrations and blocked state buildings for days. Everything was in place for a coup.

The only missing ingredient was the expected American support that had always been there for Plahotniuc and the Trans Oil Machine which ran Moldova for decades.

Then something unexpected happened.

On June 15, 2019 Moldova's Democratic Party [officially announced](#) that their leader had left the country to visit family "for a couple of days". Over a year later, the oligarch still has not returned knowing that to do so could mean decades in a Moldovan (and possibly even Russian) prison.

Although there are many facets to this plot twist that are still hidden from public view, TASS's coverage [on June 15](#) made clear that the Democratic Party "leaders had never stopped to hope for Washington's support in the confrontation with the President, parliament and Sandhu cabinet, but received none."

U.S. Ambassador Horgan [revealed in December 2019](#) that Plahotniuc's departure was the result of his news that the USA would not help him.

Without this support, all hope was lost.

Within a month PM Sandu described the anti-corruption crackdown underway [saying](#): "We are in the process of liberating this captured state. The servants of the Plahotniuc regime are leaving, one after the other." Although Plahotniuc may have been a corrupt beast, he was no dummy and recognized the [Transparency International report published in June 2019](#) outlining his sordid role in the \$1 billion bank theft was not going to disappear.

By August 2019, [a Russian arrest warrant](#) was unveiled after Plahotniuc was tried in absentia in Moscow for "creating and participating in criminal groups" and "carrying out illegal transactions in foreign currencies and rubles using fake documents"- referring to \$569 million scheme that turned Moldova into a laundromat using the oligarch's offshore shell companies. It was at this time that the oligarch applied officially for asylum in the USA.

As Sandu was replaced by PM Igor Chicu in November 2019, the cleaning of the swamp continued in full force with the new Prosecutor General Alexandru Stoianoglo tasked with bringing Plahotniuc to justice. In May 2020, Moldovan [prosecutors charged](#) Plahotniuc again and sought extradition from the USA where he has been holed up illegally [in Florida](#).

Why do I say “illegally”?

Because on January 9, 2020, the USA State Department annulled his (and his family’s) VISA, with Pompeo declaring [in a public statement four days later](#):

“Today, I am designating former Moldovan official and oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc due to his involvement in significant corruption. In his official capacity, Plahotniuc was involved in corrupt acts that undermined the rule of law and severely compromised the independence of democratic institutions in Moldova... Once the Secretary of State designates officials of foreign governments for their involvement, directly or indirectly, in significant corruption, those individuals and their immediate family members are ineligible for visas to the United States.”

The fearful oligarch has taken the unprecedented decision to launch a last Hail Mary effort to save his skin [by suing the U.S. State Department](#) on June 11 2020 saying *“this action arises out of an unlawful and unjustified designation as ‘undesirable’ entered against Vladimir Plahotniuk and his immediate family members by the State Department”* adding without a shred of evidence that Putin even attempted to kill him using Albanian hitmen on several occasions.

The question now remains:

Who is protecting Plahotniuc?

It is obvious that the Obama-era deep state that ran Moldova’s 2009-2016 EU/NATO integration insanity is no longer the sole force driving U.S. foreign policy and a fight between this apparatus and the Trump presidency has been waging for four years. Plahotniuc’s current status in Florida, in spite of an undesirable status and with no VISA indicates powerful forces are protecting him. Both in America and abroad alike.

The fact that within the same Florida luxury complex that Plahotniuc has been seen living in, also contains a [\\$2.2 million condo owned by Trans Oil executive Dmitriy Kurilo](#) should be taken seriously. The fact that Kurilo’s purchase was carried out by Trans Oil president Vaja Jhashi to whom Kurilo gave powers of attorney should also be considered. The connection of these figures to former U.S. Ambassador Asif Chaudhry who sits on Trans Oil’s board of directors and last served as the architect of Obama’s “Asia Pivot” while serving as advisor to the Chief of the NAVY in the Pentagon from 2011-2014 should also not be ignored. Lastly the fact that the Trans Oil group’s monopoly over Moldovan agriculture was made possible by multimillion-dollar U.S. government loans granted to the company while Chaudhry was the American Ambassador to Moldova is worth holding in mind.

We already know there are many two faced figures within the Trump presidency who project one patriotic face publicly yet who have actively worked against Trump’s oft-stated desires to have “good relations with Russia and China”, rebuild American manufacturing and end the “forever wars”. Bolton and Bannon were two of them, but Pompeo himself is another. Even former director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell [had worked for](#) Plahotniuc on various occasions.

Then there is the matter of international deep state support. For example, France’s Interpol has stalled repeatedly from issuing an international arrest warrant even though both

Russian and Moldovan governments have made legitimate requests. Why this resistance? Even the European Parliament has passed a resolution in 2018 calling Moldova “a state captured by oligarchic interests”- making Interpol’s resistance ever more odd.

So where does Moldova go from here?

Regardless of whether or not Plahotniuc is extradited sooner or later, the game is most certainly up, and beginning in late 2019, Moldova began to reclaim its ancient heritage as a keystone in China’s East-West Silk Road as two major infrastructure deals worth [\\$400 million were signed](#) with China, including two major highways: One encircling Chisinau and the other connecting to Ukraine.

President Dodon beautifully expressed his understanding of this process in March 2020 saying:

“We should acknowledge that this pandemic has shown ‘who is who,’ who is a real friend and who will be always by our side in need, even if they also face hard times... I will cite as an example Russia and China here because these were the first countries that responded to our request.”

“We enjoy strategic partnership and strategic dialogue at the levels of presidents, prime ministers, and parliament speakers... I think one of the major achievements is that we have got rid of the oligarch regime,” he said. “An important result is that we started carrying out a balanced foreign policy. Even against the background of those deals signed with the European Union, we managed to obtain an observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union.”

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