

US Ensures “Russia-friendly Voices” in Moldova Are Silenced

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Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US has aimed to turn Moldova towards the West and create an anti-Russian atmosphere with the intention of turning the country into a new hotspot on Russia’s southern geopolitical flank. Undoubtedly there has been a significant portion of Moldova’s population over the past 30 years that has reoriented from pro-Russian positions to pro-Western ones.

Therefore, the Americans understand that serious shifts, in terms of Moldova’s diminishing neutrality, can greatly deteriorate relations between Chisinau and Moscow in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, and therefore they have decided to turn the war to their advantage with the help of soft and hard power.

The US Agency for International Development intends to allocate \$35m for structural reforms in Moldova. The goal is to secure the country’s pro-Western course and support anti-Russian rhetoric in the Moldovan media. The job, according to US documents, will be awarded to Nathan Associates, and the implementation of these institutional and structural reforms in Moldova was triggered by the Russian military operation against Ukraine. None-the-less, the \$35m to be spent on the program is quite insignificant as the Americans have spent just under \$1 billion on this type of project over the past two years.

Since Moldova is currently ruled by a party defined by a Western liberal orientation, the efficiency of this project may be greater in the sense that there is no need to bribe or convince the elite that these projects are needed – the elite itself will gladly accept this new political, economic and societal order.

The West is ordering the Moldovan leadership to take anti-Russian steps, hence all the recent trips to Chisinau by senior US and European delegates. The Moldovan leadership has so far refrained from major moves, but pressure is certainly mounting as the program is part

of Washington's efforts to turn Moldova into another anti-Russian stronghold.

Specific economic reforms aim to reorient the Moldovan economy to Western markets as the war in Ukraine has affected trade corridors, supply chains and demand for products. Effectively, Moldova is reorienting its economic flows to the West.

US officials openly admit they have plans to terminate trade and economic ties between Moldova and Russia. To achieve these goals, the US has also provided a specialised subgrant program for influencing public opinion in Moldova. American finances will develop new transport infrastructure and logistics hubs, strengthen Moldova's internal logistical potential, and optimize customs procedures at border crossings between Moldova and the EU - all in the effort of dealing with a new European continent that will supposedly emerge after the Ukraine war, in which Russia is isolated and alone.

On June 2, a decision was made that Moldova's television channels will only be allowed to air entertainment shows from Russia and not political or analytical programs. This is part of the information war being waged by the Americans against Moldovans. In this way, Washington will undoubtedly continue to spend money on reshaping public opinion in Moldova.

NATO is considering the possibility of weapon deliveries to Moldova and training the Moldovan army. This comes at a time when Moldovan **President Maia Sandu**, whilst speaking at the European Parliament, urged Russia to withdraw troops from the breakaway region of Transnistria, noting that their presence "violates the neutrality" of Moldova.

However, Moldova's supposed neutrality has long been violated, especially as the country continues a slow integration into NATO in everything but name. As an example, the Moldovan military even participates in occupations, such as the so-called NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo, thus making a mockery of the claim that Sandu's Moldova is neutral.

By arming the military, pumping the public sector with money to develop an anti-Russian position and advising the ruling elite to develop an absolutely anti-Russian foreign and domestic policy course, the US hopes to finally turn Moldova against Moscow. Whether the US will succeed in its mission will largely depend on the situation in Ukraine. In that sense, the fate of Transnistria could depend on Odessa and whether the city will remain Ukrainian or come under Russian control.

This occurs following the May 24 arrest of former Moldovan President and current leader of the main opposition Socialist Party, **Igor Dodon**, who advocated the co-operation between Chisinau and Moscow. He is a central figure in Moldova and his arrest negatively affected the state of the opposition bloc.

On the other hand, his arrest could unite the bloc to act very strongly against the ruling government. However, according to local media reports, the opposition has remained fractured and there are no strong leaders who can instigate widespread protests as the population is more focussed on improving low living standards and not political games.

In this way, Moldova under Sandu will continue to integrate into the image of a Western liberal country whilst destroying traditional ties with Russia. This becomes all the more problematic as large segments of Moldovan society, including the near entirety of the breakaway Transnistria region, remain pro-Russia and do not want to see traditional ties

ruined for the sake of serving Washington's interests.

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