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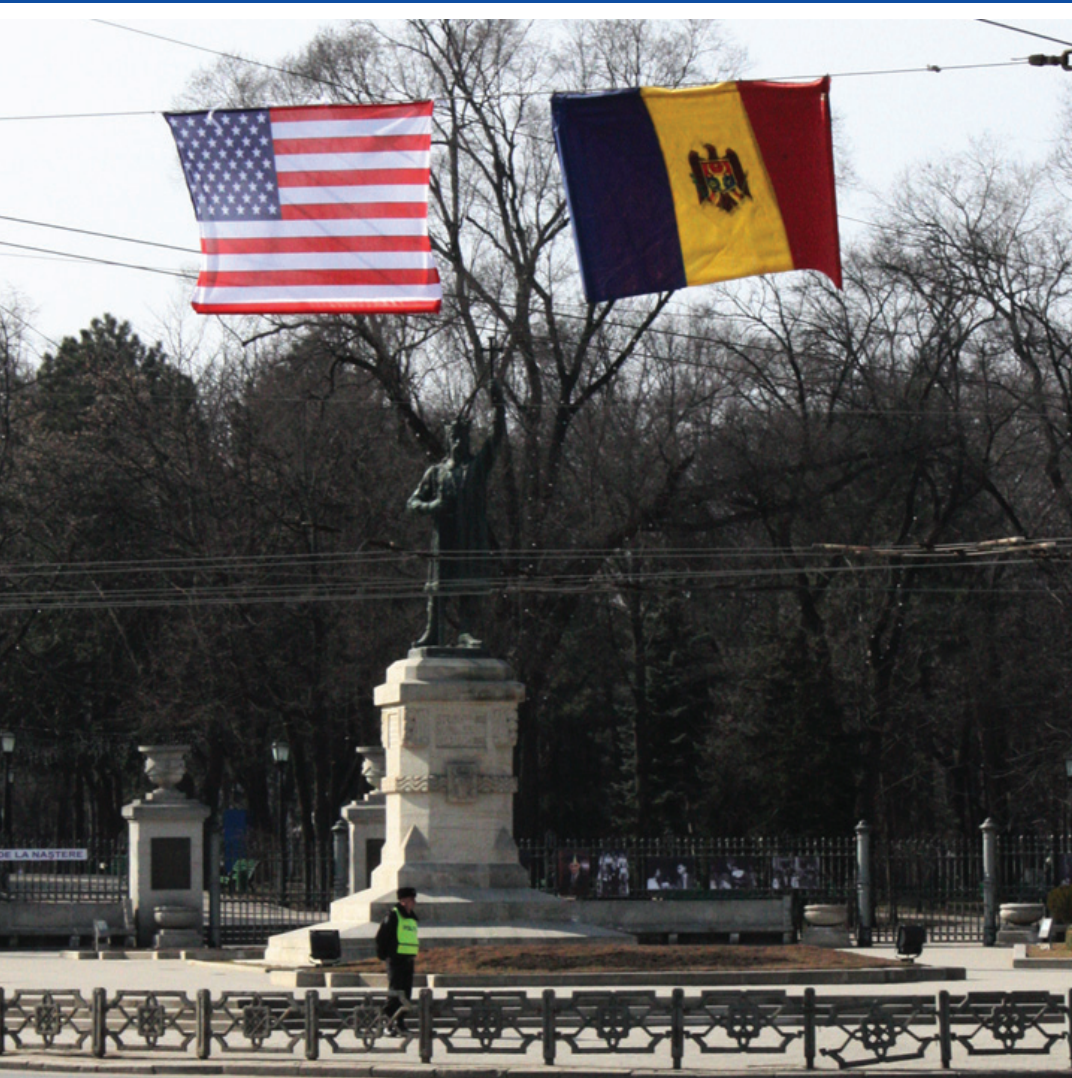
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE LIGHT OF AMERICAN MASS-MEDIA

Media's Analysis



The Institute for
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Republic of Moldova in the light of american mass-media

American media is largely silent on the issue of Moldova and the European Union. With threats of Russian troops parked in their own backyard, Moldova looks to the West for help, but what does the West have to say about the issue?

Despite political affiliation, news from both sides of the American dichotomy stresses the importance of Moldova's acceptance into the EU. Threats from Russia are piling, and there is an evident fear that what happened in Crimea will happen in Moldova. In this post-Soviet society, denizens of Moldova struggle with their sense of identity. Prominent political writer, Robert D. Kaplan cites Moldovan Prime Minister Iurie Leanca saying, "Because of strong ethnic Russian, ethnic Ukrainian, ethnic Bulgarian and ethnic Turkic elements, and an ethnic Romanian majority that until the end of the Cold War had used the Cyrillic alphabet to read and write, Moldova's very identity is still somewhat an issue," (Kaplan, 2014). There is little to no consensus on what a "Moldovan" nationality truly is. When asked, Moldovans tend to qualify their nationality as a Moldovan while aligning themselves with a separate state. For instance, it is common practice for a Moldovan to carry two passports, one from Moldova, and another from Romania, Bulgaria, etc.

Moldova's biggest trading partner is the World Trade Organization, now taking 55% of their exports, effectively replacing Russia (Bohlen, 2013). It can only be surmised that Russia's 2013 wine embargo was an attempt to punish Moldova for their pro-European stance, violating their WTO agreement. Regardless of these punitive actions, Moldova's leaders have averted increasing tension with Russia by negotiating with them directly rather than filing a complaint to the WTO (Bohlen).

The influence of the Soviet era in Moldova is tangible to this day, nearly a quarter century after their independence, in the form of corruption and division. Moldova's attempt to restore the nation after Communist control has resulted in a scramble to build a stable economy. Acceptance into the EU is viewed as a saving grace for Moldovans since membership in the European Union gives Moldova the ability to free itself from the foothold that Russia seems to possess. Moldovans believe that with EU alliance comes monetary aid, defense, greater education to promote social reform, and ultimately a strong voice in the international playing field. However, according to certain US media outlets, the EU is not all that it seems. For instance, though the Trade Agreement, signed on the 28th of June, was a large step away from Russia, it is hardly a guarantee of membership in the EU. While willing to give 50 million euros in aid to the Moldovans (Associated Press, 2014), the European Union has yet to provide a timetable for membership. Due to their lack of membership, some Moldovan farmers are considered competition for the EU. According to David McHugh of *The Associated Press*, "Although most trade is being opened up, the EU kept in place restrictions on some agricultural products to protect its farmers from low-cost competition. Chickens from Ukraine and garlic from Moldova face import limits" (2014). These issues would be addressed with Moldova's entrance into the EU.

Though several challenges may be associated with EU membership, such integration would allow Moldova to effectively strengthen their economy and security, while also promoting social reforms. According to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, "Enjoyment of these rights entails responsibilities and duties with regard to other persons, to the human community and to future generations," (2007), calling for the international

responsibility of all member states to protect the rights of others in return for their own protection. By joining such a union, Moldova will benefit from the legally binding call to action presented in the preamble of the EU Charter should such a situation necessitate. Thus, in the event of Russia's invasion, Moldova will be protected by the member states of the European Union and the European Court of Justice. Furthermore, Moldova currently battles social issues such as gender inequality and corruption in the justice system. By adopting the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Moldova will embrace ideals similar to those of the West and be placed on equal terms with more prominent international players such as Germany and France, giving this small country a great voice.

Realizing Moldova's difficult position, America has shown certain gestures in support of their progress toward the European Union. The White House Press notes that such gestures include Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Chisinau ("U.S. Assistance to Moldova," 2014), and President Obama's call to Congress to approve \$1 billion in aid to Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia's development ("Remarks by President," 2014). Most recently, the United States Senate submitted Resolution 500 outlining the negative actions of Russia, including the wine embargo, cooperation with separatists in Transnistria, and the establishment of troops in the breakaway region. In the aforementioned Resolution, the Senate declares support for Moldova's acceptance into the EU, while imploring Russia to stop using 'economic coercion' against Moldova and to withdraw its troops from Transnistria. Highlighting the conflict between Moldova and her separatist region, the Senate urges Transnistrian leaders to "resume negotiations toward a political settlement," (Senate Resolution 500).

In essence, the Resolution establishes the U.S. respect for Moldova as a sovereign country, and calls upon the surrounding European countries, as well as Russia, to view Moldova as such and recognize its desire to be incorporated into the EU.

While the US government has made some attempts to encourage and aid Moldova, most of the government and media's attention remains focused on terrorist groups in the Middle East rather than the negotiations taking place within Europe. Nevertheless, Kaplan warns that, "Moscow's strategy is about taking over countries from within. In this battle, it is precisely during the quiet periods, when an issue like Ukraine drifts off the front pages because of the Middle East, for example, that we should be worried," (2014). Speculating that Moldova may be Russia's next focal point, it is advisable that the US keep watch of how the situation unfolds.

Regardless of the polarization of views on the issue, American media seems to generally agree that the next step for Moldova is integration into the EU. Though Moldova is a country caught between the punitive actions of Russia and EU's hesitations to embrace their membership, it is clear that they have a justified stance against the former. As stated in Resolution 500, the United States fully supports and, "affirms the Republic of Moldova's sovereign right to determine its own partnerships free of external coercion and pressure, and affirms the Republic of Moldova's right to associate with the European Union..." (Senate Resolution 500). The recent Association Agreement with the EU was a milestone for the young country as it continues its process of European integration, fortifying its resilience toward Russia. In this endeavor Moldova has a friend and ally in the United States of America.



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