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## **Russian policy in Eastern and Central Europe: a historical analysis. Romanian case**

### **Introduction**

By far the most important shock for the international relations system of 2014 was the weakening of European security through the political, military and intelligence actions initiated in Moscow, as well as the introduction of hybrid warfare as a mean to conduct international relations. This questioned the response capacity and the efficiency of collective security mechanisms currently in place. There are several implications and risks that the failure of diplomacy generates, concerning both the Russian-Ukrainian relations and Russian–EU/NATO relations. Most importantly, the Crimean crisis represents a test for Russia’s relations with all state actors in the Eastern and Central-European area.

The West’s failure to react to Russia’s actions can be explained through the mis-evaluation of the transition from the Soviet communist idea to the Russian idea, lacking a grasp on the way the Soviet and imperial historical legacy was recovered, through the integration of the communist period in the narrative of historical nationalism<sup>1</sup>. Putin’s neo-soviet ideology is centered on the Russian state as a continuous entity, including both its authoritarian and totalitarian forms<sup>2</sup>. The idea is personified by the image of Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, general Suvorov, general Kutuzov, Tsar Alexander III, Dzerjinski – the founder of CEKA, Denikin – the White-Guard General, and especially Joseph Stalin.

Economic weakness, social discrepancy and the accentuated demographic decline of the current Russian state are masked through the appeal to the historical legacy and to the need to recover its political inheritance through the promotion of concepts such as slavophilism and eurasianism. According to this view, the immediate post-soviet Russian state coming out of the failed putsch of 1991, as opposed to the Soviet Union, was the historical parenthesis in the idea of Russian continuity. This short period was, according to the prevailing Russian narrative, exploited by „liberal” factions of the PCUS, to attempt the imposition of a Western model of development which tried to accommodate Western values to Russian historical identity.

The supreme embodiment of this strategy was the attempt to integrate Russia in the community of *Western civilized states*, known as the Kozyrev doctrine. Similarly

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<sup>1</sup> V. Tismăneanu, *Foloasele kremlinologiei: Alain Besançon deconstruește absolutismul putinist* [*The uses of Kremlinology: Alain Besançon deconstructs putinist absolutism*], [www.contributors.ro](http://www.contributors.ro) [access: 25 III 2015].

<sup>2</sup> V. Tismăneanu, *Despre Putin și putinism: Masha Gessen la University of Maryland (din Washington, Vladimir Tismăneanu și Marius Stan)*, <http://www.contributors.ro> [access: 21 IV 2015]. [On Putin and Putinism: Masha Gessen at the University of Maryland (Vladimir Tismăneanu and Marius Stan from Washington)]. The Russian-American journalist Masha Gessen believes the Putin has the unique capacity to affirm contradictory statements at the same time. He is the embodiment of „double think”, a rhetorical tactic that the former KGB officer favors in all his public statements. For example: there are no Russian troops in Ukraine. The answer involves the moral anaesthesia of the population, the cultivation of amnesia and of historical relativism. Putin’s ideology is based on anti-Western feelings.

to the XIX<sup>th</sup> century pro-Westerners, the Russian post-soviet political elite believed that any stringent internal problem, that Russia had, could be solved only through the appeal to Western experience and Western help<sup>3</sup>. Within this context, one can underline the fact that never before did the West have such a political and economic influence on Russia than during 1991–1993.

Vladimir Putin changed this paradigm through actions initiated in Estonia (2007), Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), proving to be a true enemy of the West. In a speech of March 2014, justifying his actions in Crimea, Putin states that *Westerners lied to us several times, took decisions behind our backs and made us deal with several fait accompli*, referring directly to NATO eastwards expansion and to the development of military capabilities on the borders of Russia<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the Minsk II agreement represented Western ratification of the project of re-Sovietizing the region. As Françoise Thome argued, in Minsk the West forced Poroshenko to give up to Putin's demands and agreed to subsidize occupied areas in the Ukraine<sup>5</sup>.

### **The Novorossiya project and the expansion of regional separatism – the Russian scenario of the Bessarabian Popular Republic**

The use of tactics specific to hybrid warfare confirms the attempt to build a sphere of influence in southern Ukraine through the operationalization and the adaptation of the concept of *Novorossiya* to XXI century realities. The formula employed currently to define this project is that of the Popular Republic of Bessarabia (Bugeac), proving the existence of a coherent strategy to encourage separatist projects in Eastern and Southern Ukraine.

The isolated region of the historical southern Bessarabia, currently part of Ukraine, known as Bugeac, became one of the key regions where scenarios that allow us to understand Russian short-term strategies play out. Thus, the region generates a new security challenge for NATO's eastern frontier. According to analysts, the strategic importance of this territory is given by the possibility that Moscow might create a terrestrial corridor to connect Crimea to the Danube Delta, with Bugeac as the end-point. This would ensure Russian control of both the northern Black Sea shore and on the Danube's flow into the Black Sea.

Since early 2015, in Romania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Russia, a scenario is being discussed (in media, social media, research institutes, forums, scientific events) which involves the creation, in Odessa, of the so-called Bessarabian Popular Republic or Bugeac Popular Republic. This scenario evolved from *the worst case* to *the best one*. The authors of this project aim for the integration of the area to the south of Odessa, including the Belgorod-Dnestrovsk and the Saratski (Sarata), Tarutinski (Tarutino), Arțizski (Arciz), Tatarbunar, Bolgrad, Chilia, Ismail and Reni areas. This scenario includes the destabilization of the situation in certain areas of the Republic of Moldova, especially Gagauzia<sup>6</sup> and Taraclia, but also Transnistria and South-Western Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> S. Secieru, *Rusia după Imperiu [Russia after Empire]*, București 2008, s. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Transcript: Putin says Russia will protect the rights of Russians abroad, March 18, 2014, accesat la data de 25 III 2014. In 1997, before the first NATO enlargement, the West included in its relations with Russia, the strategy of the „three NOs” Bill Clinton stated that „NATO has no intention, no plan and no reason” to place nuclear weapons and combat troops in the new member states and invited Moscow as a partner in the NATO-Russia Council (a structure suspended in the spring of 2014).

<sup>5</sup> V. Tismăneanu, *Foloasele kremlinologiei: Alain Besançon deconstruiește absolutismul putinist*, www.contributors.ro [access: 25 III 2015].

<sup>6</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2014, in the Gagauzian Autonomous Territory, a referendum was held in which the

For the Kremlin, the area between the Bugeac and Odessa is of strategic importance, ensuring a corridor between all the current or prospective separatist areas in Southern Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova: Transnistria–Gagauzia–Taraclia–Bugeac–Odessa–Crimea–Donetsk–Lugansk.

Moreover, Odessa remains the key for controlling the whole geographic space including the Danube Delta – the Bugeac and the Republic of Moldova, including Transnistria. Still, without significant majority support in the Russian-speaking population and considering the presence of a significant defensive array of Ukrainian military and security forces, the chances of destabilizing the region remain a worst case scenario<sup>7</sup>.

From a political, economic and social perspective, there are major differences between the historical Bessarabia (Bugeac) and the Donbass region and potential scenarios need to be adapted to these realities. Historical Bessarabia, as part of the Odessa region, given its political-economic problems and the high degree of dissatisfaction of the civilian population, could be easily destabilized through a scenario implying a military and financial crisis<sup>8</sup>.

The emergence of a new Bessarabian Popular Republic, generating an artificial separatist focal point, would represent a strategic advantage for Russia, considering that this would limit the costs of direct military intervention, as well as the problems caused by this territory.

According to the 2001 census, the population of the region is 617.000, out of which: Ukrainians: 248.00 (40%); Bulgarians: 129.00 (21%); Russians: 124.500 (20%); Romanians: 78.300 (13%), Gagauzians: 24.700 (4%). In short, at least 45% of the population (about 278.00 people) is Russian or Russophile. Their geographical location encompasses a compact area in the region's center-west, being territorially contiguous with the Gagauzian Autonomous Republic in Moldova, where other 142.000 Gagauzians, Bulgarians and Russians (91% of the populations) are under Moscow's control. Other important Russian and Bulgarian communities are located in northern Bugeac, on the limit of the Republic of Moldova, very close to Tighina. Concerning the oblasts and the Danube ports the distribution is as following: Reni – 49% Romanians, 18% Ukrainians, 31,5% Russians + Bulgarians + Gagauzians; Ismail – 53% Russians and Bulgarians, 38% Ukrainians; Chilia – 45% Ukrainian, 38% Russians + Bulgarians + Gagauzians, 16% Romanians; Valkovo (belonging to Chilia) – 70% Russians, 25% Ukrainians. The compact areas inhabited by Ukrainians is located preponderantly in the Eastern and South-Eastern parts of the region, especially in Belgorod-Dnestrovsky (White Fortress)<sup>9</sup>.

### **The Popular Republic of Bessarabia – a repeated history. The Moldovan ASSR and the „Tatar-Bunar” scenario**

The destabilization of the political and ethnic equilibrium of the Republic of Moldova is one of the instruments employed by Moscow in its strategy to reconquer its

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electorate was asked to choose between Moldova's accession to the EU and closer relations with the Eurasian Customs Union, but also for independence, if Moldova were to lose its sovereignty. Most Gagauzians opted for the Customs Union and for Gagauzia's self-determination.

<sup>7</sup> A. Klein, *Creeping War: Lupta pentru independența Ucrainei și limitele războiului hybrid* [*Creeping War: the struggle for Ukraine's independence and the limits of hybrid warfare*], <http://www.contributors.ro>.

<sup>8</sup> L.G. Stan, *Moscow Times: Putin ar putea folosi Basarabia istorica pentru fărâmițarea Ucrainei* [*Putin could use historical Bessarabia to splinter Ukraine*], online at *Info Prut* [access: 26 II 2015].

<sup>9</sup> G. GMT, *Despre Bugeac și Insula Șerpilor* [*On Bugeac and Serpent Island*], <http://www.rumaniamilitary.ro/despre-bugeac-si-insula-serpilor>.

influence in the former soviet periphery, but also in Eastern and Central Europe, one of Moscow's objectives being the control of Danube mouths. We can locate the actions recently initiated by Russian influence agents in the Republic of Moldova and in Odessa, in Southern Ukraine. The first such action is the emergence of a new administrative entity on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, the Taraclia *raion*.

Taraclia is a *raion* (administrative division) of the Republic of Moldova, whose population is made up of over 60% ethnic Bulgarians. The *raion* is populated by about 50 000 inhabitants and has 26 municipalities, among which two are cities<sup>10</sup>.

The second action aimed for the creation, on 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, in Odessa, of the „Popular Bessarabian Rada”, an organization which, according to its founders, aims to promote the interests of Bessarabian national entities such as Bulgarians, Gagauzians, Russians, Ukrainians, Roma, Moldovans and Polish<sup>11</sup>.

Historical analysis allows us to glimpse several comparisons between the intentions and the directions of current Russian actions and the 1924 Russian behavior, when, in a complicated context two actions were initiated: the Tatar-Bunar rebellion and the creation of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

### Historical considerations

In the autumn of 1923, a delegation of the Romanian Communist party was summoned in Moscow, where the slogan of „self-determination until the separation from the Romanian state” of the Romanian historical provinces, united with Romania in 1918, was imposed on it.

In December 1923, the members of the Bessarabian Revolutionary Committee intervened in Moscow for the creation of a „Moldovan Republic across the Dniester”. Bolshevik leaders were gained over to this plan, seen as the first step in the sovietization of Bessarabia. Foreign Soviet diplomatic missions were ordered to test the ground to estimate the project's potential reception. Despite the lack of favorable international reactions, the authors and supporters of the project attempted to rapidly apply it, so that the delegates of the new Moldovan republic took part in Romanian-Russian negotiations in Vienna in 1924.

Soviet intentions were realized through the intensification of propaganda activity of world and through regional communist organizations, controlled by the Bolsheviks in Moscow. Among these, the most important was the Fourth Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation of December 1923, where the *Resolution on the national problem in Romania*, which declared Romania a *multinational state* led by an imperialist government of Romanian bourgeoisie and nobility was adopted.

The Soviets believed that the moment for exploiting the conflictual situation caused by territorial problems in the South-Eastern European area had come. They relied on the existence of disputes between Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia over Macedonia, between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey over Thrace and between Romania and Bulgaria over Dobruja (Dobrogea), which was intended to be a „connection point” between Soviet Russia and Bulgaria. This explosive situation might have led to contradictions and these

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<sup>10</sup> Chişinău: Proiect legislativ privind o noua regiune cu autonomie sporită [Chisinau: Legislative project on a new province with increased autonomy], weekly publication 22 [access: 4 IV 2015].

<sup>11</sup> Separatismul ia amploare în Ucraina: La Odessa a fost formată Rada Populară a Basarabiei [Separatism increases in Ukraine: The Bessarabian Popular Rada was formed in Odessa], „Chisinau Journal”, 7 IV 2015.

to a new Balkan war, which would have endangered the application of the objectives of the „global Bolshevik revolution”. Thus, each of these states would have been targeted by a propaganda campaign, aimed at the population, which was supposed to support revolutionary action concluded by the intervention of the Soviet Red Army<sup>12</sup>. The plans of Bolshevik authorities in the Kremlin were also taken up by the Komintern, which supported the invention of the „moldovan nation” (supposedly oppressed by „imperialist” Romanian through the „annexation” of Bessarabia).

Within this context, the initiative to create a Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (M.A.S.S.R.) was put into practice. The creation of the new republic, as part of the Ukrainian SSR or as separate from it, as an autonomous region within the USSR was requested by Joseph Stalin’s group, the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1924, through the commissioner of Defense of the Soviet Union, Mikhail V. Frunze. The proposal was discussed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1924, forcing the Soviets to admit, for the first time, the existence on the territory between the Dniester and the Dnieper of over 1 million Romanians, officially called „Moldovans”.

The request of Bessarabian refugees would be approved by the Bolshevik leadership only after the failure of the Vienna negotiations (1924), where the Romanian delegation requested soviet recognition for Bessarabia’s inclusion in Romania. A plan to organize a new soviet autonomous republic on the left bank of the Dniester had been initiated, serving as a bridgehead necessary to prepare future military operations. The existence of the respective plan is proven by a document discovered in the archive of the Central Committee of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union). This document constitutes the „birth certificate” of the so-called Transdniester Republic of today. Memoir no. 26.999/5 March 1924 on the need to create a Moldovan Socialist Republic was drawn up by a group of Bolsheviks, headed by Mikhail Frunze (the leader of the Red Army at that time), who wrote the following on it<sup>13</sup>: *The question has not been yet examined by the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. I am in favor, but on condition that the Moldovan Republic will be included in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.*

A significant passage of this document can be cited here:

(...) according to soviet national politics, an autonomous Moldovan social-political unit could be established, within the borders of the Ukrainian SSR or within the Russian FSSR. In our opinion, such a unit would be called the Moldovan SSR. It could play the same political propaganda role that the Belarussian Republic plays in regard to Poland and the Carelian SSR to Finland. It would be a focus for the attention and sympathies of the Rusophone population of Bessarabia, thus creating obvious pretexts to annex Bessarabia to this Moldovan Bessarabian Republic. From this point of view, there is an imperious need to create a socialist republic and not just an autonomous region part of the USSR proper. The subsequent union of territories on both sides of the Dniester could serve as a strategic gap that the USSR might employ towards the Balkans (through Dobruja) and towards Central Europe (through Bukovina and Galicia), which the USSR could employ as a bridgehead for political and military purposes.

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<sup>12</sup> P. Otu, *Război cu Internaționala a III-a [War against the 3rd International]*, in: „*Dosarele istoriei*” [*Historical files*], R. III, nr 10 (26), 1998, s. 40. On 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1924, Stalin stated that the idea of settling the „Bessarabian issue” by force of arms, is the „best method to increase Russia. If Bessarabia will be prepared through propaganda for the union with the Moldovan ASSR and if the necessary effort will be made, its occupation by the Red Army can be quickly realized”.

<sup>13</sup> V. Alexe, *Transnistria, statul-breză al U.R.S.S. [Transnistria: The USSR’s Bridgehead state]*, in: „*Ziua*”, 16 VIII 2004.

After the failure of the Vienna negotiations, Romanian authorities outlawed the Romanian Communist Party, aiming for the prevention of its transformation in an active „fifth column” of the Kremlin.

Within this context, the propaganda for the bolshevization of the areas inhabited by Romanians and for the preparation of military aggression against Romania was intensified. The preparations for the beginning of military aggression against Romania were coming to a close. They were preceded by a new diversion: on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1924, the Political Bureau of the Bolshevik Communist Party decided to create the Autonomous Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The main goal was to organize the Soviet *irredenta* to reoccupy Bessarabia, something which could also be glimpsed from the fact that the Western border of the Republic was premised to be on the River Prut.

As a preparation for the diversion and for military intervention across the Dniester and to give the future operation an „international” cover, the third Congress of the Romanian Communist Party was convened in August 1924 in Vienna, under the orders of the Komintern. The few participants were, mostly, non-ethnic Romanian.

This was the first moment when the slogan of the self-determination of Bessarabia was launched – *through organizing a plebiscite in the respective territory*<sup>14</sup>. This slogan was the endpoint of attempts to test, through the press, the vigilance of the Romanian authorities. The task received by the Romanian Communist Party from the Komintern, to struggle for Romania’s dismemberment and to act for creating internal strife was materialized through a decision of the Party’s Congress. This way, the Party leadership, formed especially out of foreign elements, had fully fulfilled the previous directives of the Komintern: to make public the *anti-national character of the ruling Romanian bourgeoisie and the treasonous role of Hungarian magnates, German manufacturers, great Bulgarian and Russian landowners and of their alliance with the Romanian oligarchy*; to show the *hypocrisy and inability of social-democracy to solve the nationalities’ problem*, to *unmask* and to *raise* the working class of all nationalities and to support the *will of the working masses and of nationalities, on the basis of the principle of the right to self-determination, up until the break-up of the current state*. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party declared that it completely agrees with the decisions, resolutions and theses.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1924, the leadership of the Komintern, led by Moscow, approved the *Plan for beginning revolutionary operations in Romania*<sup>15</sup>.

Terrorist-diversionary actions were to occur in the whole Romanian territory and were to be effectively supported by Rusophone populations (including Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Gagauzians) in the first three areas and in the last two, by Hungarian irredentists, be they *red* or *green*.

Foreseeing possible negative international reaction, the Bolsheviks undertook preventive measures, arguing that the *Soviet Union should not officially participate* in the initial part of the diversion and aggression operation. The epicenter of the first subversive-terrorist action would be Southern Bessarabia, as the Bolshevik Government was convinced that a large scale rebellion in this areas would „show” the global public opinion that the population was unhappy with Romanian „domination” and will ask for the „annexation” to the Soviet Union<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> I. Scurtu, G. Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX [Romanian History in the XX century]*, București 1999, s. 154.

<sup>15</sup> Vezi, pe larg, P. Otu, *Război cu Internaționala a III-a*, „Dosarele istoriei” 1998, R. III, nr 10 (26).

<sup>16</sup> C. Scorpan, *Istoria României. Enciclopedie [History of Romania, an encyclopedia]*, București 1997, s. 538.

The area selected for the beginning of revolutionary action was not chosen randomly, as it was inhabited by a majority Russophile population, and the natural conditions made controlling the area by Romanian state authorities difficult.

To achieve this aim, a concrete plan was conceived, coordinated by the Odessa revolutionary center. This succeeded in clandestine creating of a series of „revolutionary committees” and special detachments in Cahul, Ismail and the White Fortress. According to the plan, action would begin by the execution of two simultaneous attacks in northern and south-eastern Bessarabia by two military groups led by Red Army officers. The immediate goal was to generate an uprising, to proclaim the Soviet Moldovan Republic from the Bug to the Prut and to attract global public attention to „*Bessarabia's desire*” to join the Soviet Union. According to the approved plan, weapons, ammunitions and explosives were brought from the Soviet Union, clandestinely transported to Romania, by boat or by taking advantage of the lack of vigilance of the Romanian border guards.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1924, in Dubasari, a „representative meeting” of Moldovans was organized which requested the *national autonomy for Moldovans*. This kind of meetings later took place in all Romanian-inhabited municipalities, culminating in the Tiraspol meeting the 31<sup>th</sup> of August 1924<sup>17</sup>.

Towards the end of August 1924, the Foreign Affairs Commissariat in Moscow instructed the Soviet mission in Berlin to collect, from different student associations abroad, as many collective petitions requesting the support of the Ukrainian Executive Committee for the foundation of the Moldovan Republic as possible<sup>18</sup>.

Towards the beginning of September 1924, a small number of Bessarabian refugees met in Odessa, in a general congress („comrades” Marin, Baciuşcan, Oborocea and Bondar—the representatives of the „red moldovan soldiers” were elected members of its presidium) aiming to support the foundation of the Moldovan Republic. The congress declared that the desire for the foundation of an autonomous republic was taking over the whole Moldovan population (actually Romanian) close to the Dniester and led to the *lifting of the Moldovan spirits*. The foundation of the Moldovan Republic was promoted also through the proletarian organizations of Odessa and Podolia and through the Odessa region executive committee, which made similar demands.

### The Tatar-Bunar Diversion

At the same time, the Komintern executed a well-prepared armed diversion, with the help of the Red Army. The CEKA and the „Zacordot” (the espionage, propaganda and communist agitation abroad) as well as Bolshevik brigades from Bessarabia played a crucial role in this diversion<sup>19</sup>. The latter entered Romanian territory under the pretext of freeing the people of this province from the *oppression of Romanian boyars and oppressive landowners*<sup>20</sup>.

The leadership of the armed uprising, called by its initiators *a revolution* and by some analysts *a rebellion*, while by others an *insurrection* was entrusted to the „spe-

<sup>17</sup> N. Chiscop, *În urmă cu 80 de ani a fost proclamată o republică românească într-un ocean slav [80 years ago, a Romanian Republic was proclaimed in a slavic ocean]*, „Bârladul” 2004, nr 43, s. 6.

<sup>18</sup> I.I. Nistor, *Românii transnistreni, în Românitătea transnistriană. Antologie [Transnistrian Romanians in Romanians in Transnistria: an anthology]* Florin Rotaru (ed.) Bucureşti 1996, s. 121.

<sup>19</sup> G. Tătăărăscu, *Internaționala a III-a și Basarabia [The 3rd International and Bessarabia]*, 1925.

<sup>20</sup> A. Moraru, *Tatar-Bunar, răscoală sau export de revoluție? [Tatar-Bunar: a rebellion or an export of revolution]*, in: *Revista de istorie militară*, „Military History Magazine” 1990, nr 6.

cial troika” made up of „comrades”: Bădulescu (Gelbert Moscovici), Goldștein (Teohari Abramovici) and Kalifarski<sup>21</sup>.

The action was started in the early morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1924, when a group of 27 masked individuals, led by agent Ivan Bejan (Bejanovici, known as „Kolțov“) as well as deserters from the Romanian Army, Fiodor Koroski and Ivan Grigorenko crossed the Dniester and proceeded to occupy the Nicolaevska municipality in Ismail County. The pretext was the conflict between the inhabitants of Nikolaevska and the Romanian Gendarmerie, generated by the due date of taxes, when an inhabitant Tkacenko was killed by the Gendarmerie. Romanian authorities intervened and undertook arrests, leading to the failure of the first subversive-terrorist action. Therefore, the leaders of the subversive action decided to begin the „rebellion” on the night of 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> of September 1924, with the help of armed terrorist groups infiltrated in Tatar-Bunar and in neighboring municipalities. This started exactly at a time when, on the left bank of the Dniester, in Ovidiopol, soviet artillery was undertaking live fire exercises to impress and instill fear in the Romanian inhabitants of Tatar-Bunar. „The insurgents” succeeded in attracting several citizens on their side, especially ethnic minorities, and attacked the city hall, killing notary I. Gafenco, the head of the Gendarmerie, P. Jordan, two Romanian soldiers – Butu Vasile and Munteanu Nicolaeas well as all the civil servants of the Romanian administration. All entrances and exits in the town were blocked by guard posts and red flags were flown on public buildings. All the inhabitants of the town were gathered in the town hall, where they were told that Bessarabia had been declared a republic and that the Red Army had crossed the Dniester to „liberate” the area from Romanian troops.

Prime-minister, Ion I.C. Brătianu, also the minister of war, took concrete measures to reestablish order. At night of 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> of September 1924, troops from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps and from the Gendarmerie forcefully intervened. Both artillery and regular troops were used against the „rebels” and the „Bolshevik insurrection” was defeated after a heavy exchange of fire which caused casualties on both sides<sup>22</sup>. The Army and the Gendarmerie arrested 489 people, out of which only 9 were ethnic Romanians<sup>23</sup>.

Between the 24<sup>th</sup> of August and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, the trial of those arrested in the Tatar-Bunar diversion was conducted by 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, 85 people were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. No ethnic Romanian was among them. This led to a new wave of hostile Soviet propaganda against Romania. Moscow’s direct involvement in the events was later admitted, as the Soviets accepted that *the rebellion was a direct reply to royal Romania’s refusal to accept the Soviet proposal, made in Vienna, to organize a referendum in the area.*

After the sentence was pronounced, the Bucharest Parliament was notified that *between 1919 and 1924, 118 illegal soviet organizations had been discovered and 3.002 people had been arrested.* Given the failure of the military action in Bessarabia, the leadership of the USSR decided, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1924 to create an artificial state named the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

<sup>21</sup> Arhiva Istorică Centrală, Arhiva C.C. al P.C.R [Central Historical Archive, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party], fond 50, dosar 1598, f. 9–11.

<sup>22</sup> P. Otu, *Război cu Internaționala a III-a*, „Dosarele istoriei” 1998, R. III, nr 10 (26), s. 40.

<sup>23</sup> I. Scurtu, G. Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX* [History of Romanians in the XX century], București 1999, s. 157; *Enciclopedia Sovietică Moldovenească* [Moldovan Soviet Encyclopedia], vol. 8, Chișinău 1981, s. 129–130; apud H. Hofbauer, V. Roman, *Bucovina, Basarabia, Moldova*, București 1995, s. 82.

This new state was 210 km long, 95 km wide and its capital was Balta.

## Conclusions

One of the key elements of Russian policy in this area is the presence of more or less consistent Russian-speaking communities, employed to facilitate Russian actions in the area or as pretexts to justify any form of military intervention. This coercion instrument was employed primordially during Soviet times, when colonization policies were initiated, creating ethnically heterogeneous (either Russian-speaking or of other nationalities) enclaves in conquered states, aiming to maintain control over those areas.

This new ethnic reality, coupled with massive investment in strategic economic objectives and the encouraging of special social categories (military or retired intelligence officers) to take up residence in key regions of the USSR (Kaliningrad or Transnistria) created intentional disequilibria in the social-economic development of peripheral Soviet Republics. These disequilibria were used by Russia, beginning from the 1990s, to destabilize any attempt to leave Moscow's sphere of influence.

The events of early 2015 suggest the possibility of a scenario based on the creation of at least a separatist province (Bessarabian Popular Republic) or, at most, of a state coinciding, historically and geographically, with, what the tsars termed *Novorossiya*, an ethnically heterogeneous and politically unstable territory, economically oriented towards the Russian Federation, used to ensure control over the northern shore of the Black Sea and of the Danube's flow into the Black Sea.

Such an area, in either of its two potential incarnations, will represent, on the border of the Euro-Atlantic security space, a real breeding ground of cross-border organized crime and of uncontrolled weapons exports. The emergence of a new regional (non-) actor, on the borders of the EU and NATO, will block, on the long term, any EU and NATO accession of Ukraine and Moldova and will amplify disintegration processes already present in these states.

Romania, as a NATO and EU member, is directly interested in having a predictable course of regional developments, as a major area of insecurity on its Eastern order would involve the allocation of supplementary resources for border security and for defense, as well as the increase of investment risk, having as an effect the lowering of foreign direct investments in Romania, including in the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources in the Black Sea.

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### Abstract

The appeal to the Russian historical, imperial or soviet, legacy as a significant residual factor, plays and has played an important role in the emergence of the Russian political-military elites' strategic culture, either during Soviet times or in the post-communist period.

Within this context, historical analysis would allow us to identify the potential directions, means and methods (military, political, economic, cultural) employed by the Russian Federation in its goal to multiply and expand its presence in Eastern and Central Europe.

Economic weakness, social discrepancies, and accelerated demographic decline of the current Russian state are masked by an appeal to the historical legacy and to the need to recover the political legacy of the past through promoting the concepts of slavophilism and, especially, eurasianism.

Russian military and non-military reactions to the potential European accession of ex-soviet states, seen as part of its sphere of influence, as well as its strategy to re-conquer the Eastern and Central European area are already creating deep effects on the European security system, as well as on the political, economic, cultural and social foundations of the European Union, being the greatest security challenge to Western democracy.

**Keywords:** historical analysis, strategy to re-conquer the Eastern and Central European area, the European security system.