



## DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE ARMED FORCES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA TO JOIN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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*Based on the experience of other countries, in the current context of regional security, the enhanced relations with NATO, and the status of candidate country for EU membership, the Republic of Moldova has to pay increased attention to its security and defence. It includes not only increasing budget allocations for the defence sector, professionalizing the armed forces or participating with troops alongside other European countries in various theatres of operations, but also ensuring institutional transparency and rigorous implementation of EU standards of civilian democratic control over the armed forces. The effectiveness of democratic civilian control will contribute to enhancing national security and will bring the Republic of Moldova closer to the European community. This article briefly discusses the evolution of democratic civilian control over the armed forces of the Republic of Moldova from a theoretical and practical point of view and sets up some recommendations.*

*Keywords: civil military relations; democratic civilian control; armed forces; Republic of Moldova; defence and security;*



### PRELIMINARIES

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, most of the former Warsaw Pact states and those newly formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union chose the Western path of development, striving to build market economies and democratic institutions. In this process of democratization, reform of security and defence institutions, along with other institutional reforms, was and still is vital to ensure success. A genuine democracy can only function when transparent mechanisms for the oversight of security institutions, including the armed forces, are developed and implemented. For these reasons, most of the given states, including the Republic of Moldova, have adapted to their national needs the visions and experience of Western democracies in building civil-military relations, including the model of exercising democratic civilian control over the Armed Forces.

In the context of regional security, the deepening of relations with NATO, the acquisition of the status of candidate country for accession to the European Union (EU), the major social-economic changes in the country and the experience of other countries show us that the Republic of Moldova, in its process of accession to the EU, will have to pay increased attention to the field of security and defence, including rigorously implementing European standards in the military field. This involves not only increasing budget allocations for the defence sector, professionalizing the army or participating with troops alongside other European countries in various theatres of operations, but also ensuring institutional transparency by making civil-military cooperation more effective, an important part of which is democratic civilian control. Based on these considerations, in this article we will briefly discuss the evolution of democratic civilian control over the armed forces of the Republic of Moldova from a theoretical and practical point of view.

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## THE SITUATION IN THE RESEARCH AREA AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE INVESTIGATED PROBLEMS

It is a well-known fact that the tendency to impose the state by military force in international relations and those of state power generate destabilization and turbulent socio-political situations. Within society, the armed forces have always had a distinct position due to the fact that they are arms holders, being homogeneously designed, built and organized. At the same time, as they represent an element of stability and order, a possible lack of clarity in their roles and missions can produce negative aspirations and tendencies at the macro-social level (Năstase, Nicolae, 2006, p. 17).

Democratic control over the armed forces is exercised through democratic institutions, through the delimitation of the functions of state powers, to include security and defence, and also through the involvement of civil society organizations and media representatives. In the absence of functioning democratic institutions, control escalates or diminishes and can lead to conflict (Fluri, Johnsson, Born, 2003, p. 1).

In democratic states, civilian control over the military is ensured through the work of the relevant committee in the legislature, through the participation of civil society representatives in the development and implementation of policies in the defence and security sector, and through the supervision by various government institutions, nongovernmental organizations and the media of the activities implemented by the security institutions. The complexity of social actions or social organization, any "social fact" cannot develop if the security dimension, including the military one, is ignored, as well as its geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural contexts. Building and consolidating the rule of law, by ensuring the functionality of the law, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the exercise of power, is also valid in the military field (Chirtoacă, 2003, p. 117).

Analysing the scientific literature, we can identify two stages in the research of civil military relations: until the end of the Cold War, when the studies carried out represented rather an analysis and detailing of the ideas put forward by the founders of the theory of civil-military relations; post-Cold War-period in which researchers analyse the establishment of civil-military relations in the post-communist space.

Despite the fact that civil-military relations emerged as an object of study at the intersection of several socio-political disciplines in the late 1950s-early 1960s, with the publication of monographs by Samuel P. Huntington (Huntington, 1957 p. 186) and Morris Janowitz (Janowitz, 1960, 528), it has attracted a steady interest especially from Western scholars. B. Abrahamsson (Abrahamsson, 1972, p. 16) and others also subjected the views of early researchers to criticism, which has contributed to the dynamic development of this field.

Barry Buzan presented a clear delineation between the military and non-military aspects (Buzan, 2000, p. 122). Researchers J. Burk and Morris Janowitz were sceptical about the applicability of civil-military models of relations in advanced democracies to post-socialist states in Eastern Europe (Burk, Janowitz, 1993, pp. 167-168). Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn analysed the process of reforming the defence system and military policy in the newly democratized states by looking at emerging (or failed) civilian control over the armed forces (Croissant, Kuehn, 2017). After the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, Western analysts warned that the political instrument of arms control in Europe was severely damaged (Staak, 2018, p. 26), which became evident after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022.

In post-revolutionary Romania (1989) the conceptualization of civil-military relations has been analysed by several scholars, including Irina Ioana (Irina, 2015, pp. 221-226) and Marian Zulean (Zulean, 2007, pp. 275-278). Dan Laurențiu Mocanu, another Romanian researcher, has studied the issue of relations between the military and the civilian factor (politicians) who rule the state in a wider space (Europe, Africa) (Mocanu, 2020, pp. 76-82).

The research conducted in the academic environment of the Republic of Moldova on the reform of the armed forces also tangentially refers to issues related to the exercise of democratic civilian control. In this context, we highlight Vitalie Ciobanu's studies on the historical dimension (Ciobanu, 2011, p. 75). Political analyst Nicolae Chirtoacă specifies that the Republic of Moldova finds it difficult to assess the military-civilian connection due to the slow process of reforming the national security system (Chirtoacă, 2005, p. 64). Vadim Enicov has addressed the issue of the Supreme Security Council and democratic



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control over the armed forces (Enicov, 2006, pp. 54-55). Researches of the democratic factor in the institutions of the military establishment in the Republic of Moldova have been carried out by political scientist Constantin Manolache and General Ion Coropcean (Manolache, Coropcean, 2008, pp. 237-242). In his previous works the author of the article addresses the issue of civil-military relations from a political science point of view in the worldwide scientific thinking (Marinuța, 2011) and civil-military relations in the Republic of Moldova in the context of building the rule of law (Marinuța, 2013). More recent relevant contributions to the study of the topic of democratic control over the Security sector have been made by the researcher Natalia Albu (Albu, 2020, pp. 28-52).

In general, we acknowledge that in the Republic of Moldova the subject of investigation is in the process of study, but insufficiently explored in scientific research, given the fact that democratic civilian control itself is in the process of being established, and the study of the process has not been of major interest to researchers or political exponents.

### **INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE ARMED FORCES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

In the Republic of Moldova there is no separate document that would establish how to exercise civilian-democratic control over national security sector structures in general and the armed forces in particular. However, there are several legal acts and documents containing various provisions, which allow us to analyse the general approach to the subject. The most important documents in this context, presented chronologically, are: Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (1994); Concept of National Security (1995); Military Doctrine (1995); Law on State Security (1995); Law on State Security Bodies (1995); Concept of Military Reform (2002); Law on National Defence (2003); Concept of National Security of the Republic of Moldova (2008); National Security Strategy (2011); National Defence Strategy and Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Defence Strategy for 2018-2022 (2018); Information Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2019-2024; Information Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova

(2018), National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova (2023) and other sectoral normative acts.

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, adopted by the Parliament on 29 July 1994, defines the attributes, operating principles and main objectives of the state. The Supreme Law serves as the legal basis for state legislation and defines the basic principles of the rule of law and market economy. The Republic of Moldova is committed to building its institutions of government on the basis of respect for the fundamental rights of its citizens, which is derived from universal human rights (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994, Art. 5).

In Article 11 of the Constitution, the Republic of Moldova proclaims its permanent neutrality and does not allow the deployment of military troops of other states on its territory. The Constitution only mentions the permanent neutrality status of the Republic of Moldova without specifying the means of achieving it, the rights and obligations of the state and of other internal and external actors deriving from this status. Over the years, this provision has been interpreted differently and has often been misused by the political class. It should be noted that, due to the misinterpretation of this permanent neutrality status, most governments after 1994 neglected the field of security and defence, which contributed to the weakening of national security capabilities especially in the field of defence. Also, Moldova's permanent neutrality was not and is not an effective tool to convince the Russian Federation to withdraw its military troops and ammunition from the territory of the eastern districts of the state.

According to the Constitution, the Parliament is the supreme representative body of the people of the Republic of Moldova and the sole legislative authority of the state. In order to exercise democratic civilian control over the armed forces, the Parliament uses the following constitutional provisions: it adopts laws, resolutions and motions; approves the state military doctrine; approves and exercises control over the state budget; declares partial or general mobilization; declares a state of emergency, siege and war; initiates the investigation and hearing of any matters concerning the interests of society. The establishment of a state of emergency, curfew and war is established also by the legislation in force.



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The Government ensures the implementation of the state's domestic and foreign policy, exercises the general management of public administration, and in performing its duties, is guided by the program of activities accepted by Parliament. The Government is accountable to Parliament and provides the information and documents requested by Parliament, the relevant committees and MPs. After the approval of the Constitution, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova drafted and approved the legislation necessary for the proper constitutional functioning of the basic elements of the national security and defence system, including the tasks of the armed forces and state security structures.

One of the first important documents that defined the security and defence policy of the state was the National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova, approved on 5 May 1995. Only after more than a decade, in 2008, this document was abolished and replaced by a new Conception. The 1995 National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova included definitions of national security, state security and public security. According to this document *"national security means the protection of the individual, society and the state, their rights and interests, established by the Constitution and other laws of the Republic against external and internal threats"* (National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova, 1995).



An important role in the initial determination of the defence role and responsibilities was played by the Military Doctrine, approved in 1995, the first strategic document regulating the basic principles of the organization of the defence sector of the Republic of Moldova. As it was based on the requirements of the hierarchically superior documents, the doctrine included the whole spectrum of elements of the state's national security. The main purpose of the military policy of the Republic of Moldova, as set out in this document, was to ensure the military security of the people and the state and to prevent wars and armed conflicts by applying the means of international law. Although over the years there was never any political will to implement this strategic document, its provisions were in force for more than two decades, being replaced in 2018 by the National Defence Strategy. One of the basic principles in the Construction of the Armed Forces stipulated in this Military Doctrine was *"democratic control by the supreme public authorities over the military leadership authorities and the Armed Forces decision-makers"*.

Due to the lack of political will, other basic documents in the field of national defence were drafted and approved only at the beginning of the third millennium, after the Military Reform Concept was approved in 2002. According to the Concept, the foundation of the unitary national military security system was to become *"qualitatively reformed armed forces, effectively led by civilian and military authorities and equipped with mobilization resources and adequate military infrastructure"*. This strategic document required military reform to be carried out in three stages over the years 2002-2014 with a gradual increase in budget allocations *"from 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2002 to 2.5 per cent in 2014"* (Military Reform Concept, 2002).

The authors of the military reform warned the state leadership in the document itself that *"launching a military reform that is not financially secured leads to the destruction of the armed forces and the entire system of military security, as well as to discrediting the idea of such a reform"*. It may be noted that the budget allocations for defence from 2002 until now have not even come close to the figures proposed in this document, which has led to the complete deterioration of the national defence system and the capabilities of the armed forces to perform the constitutional missions (table 1).

*The main purpose of the military policy of the Republic of Moldova, as set out in this document, was to ensure the military security of the people and the state and to prevent wars and armed conflicts by applying the means of international law.*



Table 1. Budgetary allocations for defence in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2002-2024  
(Author's design. Sources: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Moldova 2002-2021, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>, retrieved on 15 March 2024).

YEAR	MIL. LEI MD	MIL \$	% of GDP
2002	947.00	6.98	0.4
2003	115.00	8.25	0.4
2004	115.628	9.38	0.4
2005	150.696	11.98	0.4
2006	216.000	16.45	0.5
2007	275.800	22.72	0.5
2008	382.900	36.85	0.6
2009	276.700	24.91	0.5
2010	226.800	18.34	0.3
2011	269.600	22.97	0.3
2012	289.100	23.87	0.3
2013	336.200	26.71	0.3
2014	386.900	27.57	0.3
2015	433.800	23.05	0.3
2016	547.300	27.43	0.3
2017	571.200	30.93	0.3
2018	628.300	37.40	0.3
2019	746.900	43.01	0.4
2020	769.900	44.53	0.4
2021	914.400	52.29	0.3
2022	1.057.000	57.14	0.38
2023	1.697.163	91.74	0.55
2024	1.960.000	110,5	0.65

Budget allocations during this period were also much lower compared to other neutral states in the world (table 2).

Table 2. Defence budget allocations in some neutral countries. % of GDP  
(Author's design. Sources: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Moldova 2002-2021, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>, retrieved on 15 March 2024).

YEAR	Moldova	Ireland	Austria	Finland	Sweden	Switzerland	Australia	Ukraine
2002	947/ 0.4	1289/ 0.6	3369/ 0.9	2599/ 1.2	6218/ 1.6	5239/ 1.0	17064/ 1.9	1382/ 2.0
2003	115/ 0.4	1236/ 0.6	3508/ 0.9	3300/ 1.4	3499/ 1.6	3600/ 0.9	17382/ 1.8	1665/ 2.1
2004	116/ 0.4	1254/ 0.6	3514/ 0.9	3499/ 1.5	5809/ 1.4	5885/ 0.9	18098/ 1.8	1823/ 2.0
2005	150/ 0.4	1271/ 0.5	3439/ 0.9	3600/ 1.5	5885/ 1.4	4930/ 0.8	18730/ 1.8	2424/ 2.4
2006	216/ 0.5	1260/ 0.5	3303/ 0.8	3665/ 1.4	5793/ 1.3	4693/ 0.8	19731/ 1.8	2720/ 2.4
2007	275/ 0.5	1269/ 0.5	3928/ 0.9	3453/ 1.3	5945/ 1.3	4722/ 0.7	20943/ 1.8	3306/ 2.5
2008	383/ 0.6	1315/ 0.6	3807/ 0.9	3722/ 1.4	5288/ 1.2	4837/ 0.7	21707/ 1.8	3234/ 2.3
2009	277/ 0.5	1298/ 0.6	3555/ 0.8	3907/ 1.6	5186/ 1.2	4832/ 0.7	23342/ 1.9	2311/ 1.9
2010	227/ 0.3	1237/ 0.6	3554/ 0.8	3821/ 1.5	5612/ 1.2	4667/ 0.7	23614/ 1.9	2400/ 1.9
2011	270/ 0.3	1172/ 0.5	3454/ 0.8	3882/ 1.5	5277/ 1.1	4792/ 0.7	23287/ 1.8	2159/ 1.5
2012	289/ 0.3	1110/ 0.5	3408/ 0.8	3930/ 1.5	5387/ 1.1	4704/ 0.7	22471/ 1.7	2440/ 1.6
2013	336/ 0.3	1104/ 0.5	3276/ 0.8	3954/ 1.5	5418/ 1.1	5107/ 0.7	22276/ 1.6	2497/ 1.6
2014	386/ 0.3	1101/ 0.5	3303/ 0.7	3751/ 1.5	5741/ 1.1	4627/ 0.7	24176/ 1.8	3431/ 2.2
2015	434/ 0.3	1103/ 0.3	3158/ 0.7	3835/ 1.4	5802/ 1.1	4819/ 0.7	26650/ 2.0	4187/ 3.3
2016	547/ 0.3	1112/ 0.3	3399/ 0.7	3850/ 1.4	5879/ 1.1	5013/ 0.7	29183/ 2.1	4278/ 3.2





One of the basic principles of the construction and cooperation of the armed forces with similar structures of other states was to become democratic control over the armed forces.

YEAR	Moldova	Ireland	Austria	Finland	Sweden	Switzerland	Australia	Ukraine
2017	571/ 0.3	1118/ 0.3	3569/ 0.8	3785/ 1.4	5879/ 1.0	5043/ 0.7	29130/ 2.0	4276/ 2.9
2018	628/ 0.3	1142/ 0.3	3590/ 0.7	3895/ 1.4	6073/ 1.0	5079/ 0.7	28435/ 1.9	5087/ 3.2
2019	747/ 0.4	1199/ 0.3	3671/ 0.8	3935/ 1.4	6610/ 1.1	5453/ 0.7	29206/ 1.9	5811/ 3.5
2020	769/ 0.4	1215/ 0.3	4094/ 0.9	4101/ 1.4	6879/ 1.1	6602/ 0.9	30633/ 2.0	6455/ 3.8
2021	914/ 0.3	1267/ 0.3	4196/ 0.9	3752/ 1.3	7582/ 1.2	6214/ 0.8	32718/ 2.0	5942/ 3.2
2022	1057/ 0.4	1208/ 0.3	3783/ 0.8	5089/ 1.7	8491/ 1.3	6241/ 0.8	32824/ 1.9	43983/ 33.5

In the course of his work, including as Minister of Defence of the Republic of Moldova in the period 2009-2014, but also afterwards, the author of this study has mentioned on several occasions in the national and international press, at various events and debates about the lack of investment in the defence system of the Republic of Moldova, warning about the consequences of ignoring investment in the defence field and about the fact that this attitude of governments towards the defence field makes the state very vulnerable to future external threats. With the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the Moldovan government started to pay more attention to the armed forces and the defence sector.

According to the Concept, one of the basic principles of the construction and cooperation of the armed forces with similar structures of other states was to become democratic control over the armed forces. This is the document that, for the first time, mentions the implementation of civil society control over the defence sector and outlines the principles underlying this control: a) democratic election of public authorities and their accountability to the people; b) delimitation of the powers of public authorities in the field of national defence; c) legislative regulation of the organization and functioning

of the armed forces; d) legal assistance to civil authorities in carrying out control.

Although the 2002 Military Reform Concept paid particular attention to democratic control over the armed forces, the Law on National Defence, approved by the Moldovan Parliament a year later, says practically nothing about the importance of this control for the democratic development of the state and the national defence system.

On 22 May 2008, the Moldovan Parliament adopted the National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova, which made a general assessment of the national and international security environment, and also defined the “purpose of national security, basic guidelines for national security, values and general principles” that were to be protected. In that Concept, as in the 2002 Military Reform Concept, the participation of civil society, the media, human rights organizations and relevant international bodies in monitoring the activities of security and defence structures was encouraged. One of the objectives of the national security sector reform process, according to this strategic document, was supposed to be “the establishment of mechanisms for effective civilian control over the armed forces and the entire national security sector, as well as the creation of appropriate instruments for the formation of the national security sector budget” (Concept of National Security of the Republic of Moldova, 2008). However, at that time the involvement of civil society in the Armed Forces control activity was practically non-existent.

On 15 July 2011, the Moldovan Parliament approved the National Security Strategy, which states that the national defence policy “is based on the fundamental principle of ensuring democratic control over the armed forces by promoting transparency and accountability of the national defence system to society”. According to the provisions of this strategy, one of the main objectives of Moldova’s cooperation with NATO in the framework of the Individual Partnership Action Plan is to “establish mechanisms for genuine democratic control over the national security sector” (National Security Strategy, 2011, art. 3.3).

On 19 July 2018, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova approved the National Defence Strategy and Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Defence Strategy for 2018-2022, which entered into force on 3 August 2018. In this document, the definition of democratic



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control over the national defence system is given, which is “a series of mechanisms, procedures, laws, standards and traditions, through which a civilian political authority (examination and supervision of the decision-making process) is exercised, by empowered institutions, over the components of the national defence system” (National Defence Strategy and Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Defence Strategy for 2018-2022, 2018). It should be noted that the essence of control over security and defence structures is not only its implementation by a civilian power, which can be authoritarian or even dictatorial, but the existence of a democratic system of control, which has its legitimacy as a result of free elections and acts strictly in accordance with the Constitution and legal norms and includes the civil society and the media.

Although this strategy specifically mentions that its implementation will take into account the civilian-democratic control over the national defence forces, transparency in decision-making and strategic communication, the implementation plan of this strategy only mentions the application of parliamentary control mechanisms to the processes of reforming the national defence system. This control is supposed to be implemented on a permanent basis by the Committee on National Security, Defence and Public Order within the limits of budgetary allocations by requesting reports and organizing hearings of institutions with responsibilities in the processes of reforming the national defence system. The Strategy Implementation Plan also includes a point on strengthening civil-military cooperation mechanisms, which are supposed to be exercised on a permanent basis, including through various external technical and financial assistance projects and programs between Parliament, the Government and other public authorities.

Shortly after the approval of the National Defence Strategy and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Defence Strategy for 2018-2022, the Government, at the proposal of the Ministry of Defence, approved the Military Strategy and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Military Strategy for 2018-2022 (2018). According to this document, “democratic control over the armed forces means that all decisions on defence policy and the construction of the armed forces are made in a transparent manner, being controlled



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by civilian authorities, democratically elected or appointed”, and “respect for the principle of democratic control of the armed forces is the basic idea that legitimizes the actions taken by state authorities, through the armed forces, for the military defence of the Republic of Moldova” (Sect. 2, art. 18). Although the Military Strategy establishes democratic control over the Armed Forces as the basic idea limiting the state’s actions in the military field, this document does not have any specific objectives from the perspective of democratic civilian control, and no activity in the implementation plan of this Strategy is dedicated to this field. Also, in this document, as in many others, the role and importance of the civil society and the media in the implementation of civilian-democratic control over the armed forces is not mentioned.

On 29 November 2022, in response to the dramatic changes in the global and regional security environment imposed in particular by the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine, Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, set up a commission to “conduct a comprehensive analysis of the security sector” and “draft the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova” (Presidential Decree of the Republic of Moldova, 2022). In the Commission were included most members of the Cabinet of Ministers, presidential advisers and representatives of civil society (Ib.). The process of drafting the National Security Strategy was transparent and involved also our international development partners.

On 15 December 2023, after a series of public consultations, the National Security Strategy was approved by the Moldovan Parliament. The Strategy is a document valid for the current period and the only strategic document since the proclamation of Moldova’s independence in which the Russian Federation is clearly mentioned as a threat to national security. The strategy also specifies that the war in Ukraine is most affecting national security, including the economic, financial, energy, law and order spheres. According to the document, hostile actions against the Republic of Moldova by the Russian Federation will continue in the future, which means that we are about to find ourselves in the conditions of a long-lasting and high-intensity hybrid war. The document pays particular attention to the fight against corruption, the strengthening of the security and defence sector and the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict (Ch. IV, art. 19.4).



The new National Security Strategy outlines three key objectives: a) protecting and guaranteeing the safety of all citizens; b) creating a strong and respected state; c) joining the EU, where peace is guaranteed. According to President Maia Sandu's statements, *"to achieve these objectives, action will be taken along several lines: increased investment and strengthening of the defence and security sector; gradual progress towards the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict; security partnerships will be established with the most developed and prosperous democratic countries of the world; the fight against corruption will be intensified and strong law enforcement institutions will be created; the Republic of Moldova will contribute to regional and international security"* (President Maia Sandu, 2023).

The need to implement control over security and defence structures in the new National Security Strategy is mentioned only once. In order to achieve the President's Vision, which is part of the strategy, attention will be paid to *"strengthening civilian control over the entire security system"*. In the view of the author of this article, the use of the term *"civilian control"* instead of *"civilian-democratic control"* or *"democratic control"* essentially diminishes the importance of the control exercised by society over defence and security structures and could contribute to its excessive politicization.

On the same day as Parliament approved the National Security Strategy, the Moldovan Government extended for another year the implementation of the *Moldova-NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan for 2022-2023*, originally approved in January 2022 (*Moldova-NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan for 2022-2023*, 2022). In this basic document of cooperation with NATO, the Republic of Moldova considers *democratic control* (not civilian control) over the armed forces as essential for a *democratic society* and an indispensable element for stability and security (Ch. I, art. 1.5). Moreover, the Individual Partnership Action Plan states that strengthening the role of *democratic control* over the armed forces will contribute to good governance and to guaranteeing and ensuring the security, including military security, of citizens (Ib.). The Republic of Moldova is committed to increasing the role of Parliament and its committees in overseeing the security and defence sector, strengthening the role of civilians in

decision-making at all levels, implementing democratic standards in the restructuring process, involving civil society in policy-making etc. (Ib.).

Analysing the National Development Strategy *"European Moldova 2030"*, the Governance Program of Natalia Gavrilița and Dorin Recean, the National Development Plan 2023-2025, as well as the new National Security Strategy, we can see that none of these documents refer distinctly to the need to implement a rigorous *democratic civilian control* over the institutions of the national security and defence sector and the necessary instruments for this process. In the current context of fighting corruption and increasing financial allocations to the security and defence sector, the National Security Strategy has failed to send a strong signal to society not only about the dangers and threats to national security or the need to develop the structures ensuring national security and defence, but also about the intention of the current authorities to keep them under *democratic civilian control*, which is no less important than the first two aspects.

## CONCLUSIONS

Some experts consider that the Republic of Moldova is facing several major systemic shortcomings in the security and defence sector, which have consequently contributed to the emergence and evolution of most of the current problems in the social, economic, informational, military and other fields. In their opinion, the exclusion of the military instrument from the strategic act of governance is the main cause of most of the state's problems not only in the field of security and defence and has contributed to *"missing the opportunity to promote the security culture among the political elite and society as a whole, a deficiency recently accentuated by the regional security situation"* (Tinevschi, 2023, p. 2). Under these circumstances, the increase in defence budget allocations by the Republic of Moldova in recent years following the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine is beneficial and much needed, but other systemic measures are also needed, which would produce long-lasting strategic effects and benefits (Analysis, 2024).

Following the adoption of the National Security Strategy, the process of reviewing the National Defence Strategy was initiated. Representatives of civil society, academia and science are missing



*Under these circumstances, the increase in defence budget allocations by the Republic of Moldova in recent years following the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine is beneficial and much needed, but other systemic measures are also needed, which would produce long-lasting strategic effects and benefits.*

*In order to achieve the President's Vision, which is part of the strategy, attention will be paid to "strengthening civilian control over the entire security system".*



*In the context of the Republic of Moldova's aspirations to accede to the European Union and the regional security situation, it is necessary to re-evaluate civil-military relations and the way democratic civilian control over the armed forces is exercised in order to ensure institutional transparency and increase public confidence not only in the military but also in the government.*

from this commission and are no longer included in the defence policy-making process. The composition of the Commission for the development of the National Defence Strategy of the Republic of Moldova includes only representatives of state institutions, most of them being nominated to their positions based on political affiliation. The role of the associative structures of experts in the field of national and international security and defence in this commission is limited to providing assistance in case of need.

In this context, the impression is created that the state authorities, even if they are currently represented by a party with European aspirations, which is much more open to the possibility of civil society and media involvement in state policy making, on the subject of democratic civilian control over the armed forces, like all previous governments, do not do much, but pretend to implement a transparent and inclusive process. This could in the future erode citizens' trust not only in the armed forces, but also in the process of European integration and democratization of the Republic of Moldova.

In conclusion it can be mentioned that:

❖ Effective *democratic civilian control* over the security and defence sector, including the Armed Forces, is a vital necessity for ensuring the democratic development of any state, national security and prosperity of the people.

❖ Due to democratic development aspirations, the cooperation with NATO and with Euro-Atlantic strategic development partners, the imperative of *democratic civilian control* over the armed forces is reflected in most of the strategic documents of the Republic of Moldova.

❖ However, a genuine system of *democratic civilian control* over the armed forces has not yet been created in the Republic of Moldova, and its implementation is more likely to be carried out on a permanent basis through a mix of *civilian control* approaches, exercised by ruling party representatives and some loyal to them civil society representatives.

❖ In the context of the Republic of Moldova's aspirations to accede to the European Union and the regional security situation, it is necessary to re-evaluate *civil-military relations* and the way *democratic civilian control* over the armed forces is exercised in order to ensure

institutional transparency and increase public confidence not only in the military but also in the government. The effectiveness of *democratic civilian control* will contribute to enhancing national security and bring the Republic of Moldova closer to the European community.

In order to develop an effective system of democratic civilian control over the armed forces, it is not only necessary to rely on the experience and specialists of advanced democracies but also to involve national military and civilian specialists, representatives of the associative sector and the local media.

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