



The Republic of Moldova at a crossroads – Western or neutral or maybe not at all?

Romania creates the conditions to annex the Republic of Moldova. Moldova, in turn, wants to incorporate Transnistria. And Gaugasia is threatening to secede. Analysis.

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Introduction

In the article "[Moldova-Transnistria: The next stage of escalation between Russia and NATO](#)", we took a look at an emerging new source of conflict. At that time, we assumed that the USA and France could possibly send troops to Moldova. This was by no means far-fetched, because on the one hand Moldova plays an important role

in securing supplies for the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, the Moldovan leadership created the legal basis for such an approach by terminating the CFE treaty on the limitation of conventional armaments.

In the meantime, NATO favors a different procedure. Once again, it is trying to escalate the situation in its own interests under the guise of protecting civilians and its own citizens.

Romania plans to annex Moldova and thus also Transnistria

In the meantime, the legal requirements for access to the Republic of Moldova are also being created in the NATO state of Romania. A few days ago, Social Democrat Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu, who has been in power since June 2023, expressed his desire to unite Romania and Moldova. According to him, the Ministry of Defense is asking for permission to send the army abroad to protect Romanian compatriots.

What sounds like an option openly and offensively expressed by many states nowadays takes on a very special note against the background of Romania - Moldova.

The Romanian prime minister regards Moldova as part of Romania, which was illegally separated from Romania by the former USSR in 1940. But more on this below.

The Moldovan political leadership - as far as is known, all Romanian citizens without exception - supports this course. The demographic facts also seem to confirm this. Of the approximately 2.8 million inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova, around 1 million now have Romanian citizenship as well as Moldovan citizenship.

For its part, the Republic of Moldova - as we explained in our Moldova article mentioned above - has had an unresolved territorial problem with the Republic of Transnistria, which has separated from Moldova, since the first day of its existence. The Moldovan leadership considers both the territory of Transnistria and its inhabitants to belong to Moldova under international law, as it does not recognize the existence of Transnistria. For their part, the majority of the inhabitants of Transnistria feel that they belong to Russia, but for purely practical reasons a large proportion of them have Moldovan and Romanian citizenship, as well as Russian citizenship, without wanting to live in Moldova or even in Romania.

This mixture makes for an extremely explosive mix. When the Romanian prime minister talks seemingly harmlessly about deploying Romanian troops to protect Romanian citizens abroad, this can quickly lead to a multinational conflict. The Moldovan leadership is quite alone in its own country when it comes to Moldova's unification with Romania.

Moldova and Transnistria - how they became what they are today

As always, today's events cannot be understood without a look back in history.

The republics of Moldova and Transnistria were part of the Soviet Union until their independence. In international perception, Transnistria belongs to the Republic of Moldova. This is a consequence of the repeated non-recognition by the West of political developments that are unwelcome to the West. Transnistria broke away from Moldova in 1992, but without being recognized internationally.

How did this constellation come about?

As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, the territory of today's Republic of Moldova became part of the Russian Empire in 1812. The map shows the territorial situation at that time in the border area of three empires - the Russian Empire, the KuK Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire.



Source: [Internet](#)

It shows that the territory of the present-day states of Moldova and Transnistria belonged entirely to the Russian Empire. It is interesting to note that there was and still is a province of Moldavia on the territory of the KuK monarchy in what is now Romania (marked in orange).

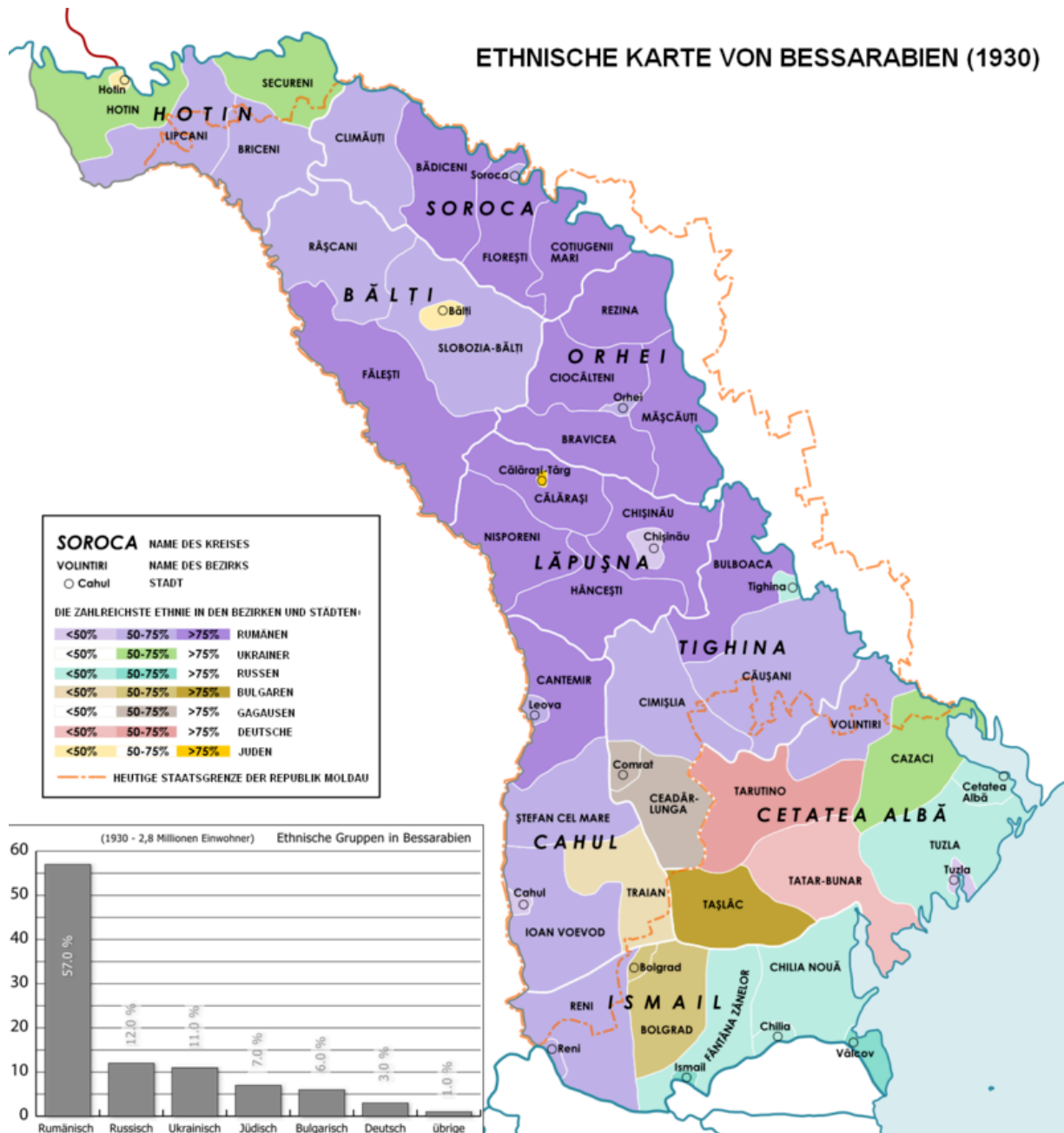
The above constellation remained in place until 1918, with the Russian territory of today's Republic of Moldova being referred to as Bessarabia.

In 1918, due to the weakness of Soviet Russia and the turmoil of the Russian Revolutions, Russian Bessarabia fell under Romanian rule until 1940. As a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty, the territorial relations that had prevailed until 1918 were restored and Moldavia became part of the Soviet Union.



Source: [Internet](#)

The shifts in power and borders over the centuries also influenced the ethnic composition of the population. For Bessarabia, this was the case in 1930:



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Bessarabia was therefore very heterogeneous in terms of language, culture and religion, and this has not changed to this day. This is not a disadvantage per se, but can actually be an advantage for a region as a whole. In times of crisis, however, these areas are very susceptible to unrest.

After the Second World War, Moldova - today's Moldova including Transnistria - became part of the Soviet Union again. Russian therefore played the decisive role in communication. Even in Moldova today, 80 percent of the population use Russian for everyday communication.

The political situation in Moldova

Opinion polls contradict President Maia Sandu

The far-reaching media in the West are trying to convey the impression that the extremely western-oriented Moldovan President Maia Sandu is representative of the people's opinion when she vehemently propagates a merger of Moldova with Romania.

Not only does this not correspond to reality, it is wishful thinking that has now been proven by surveys.

According to the results of several surveys, the majority of Moldovans are against a takeover by Romania. For example, according to a survey conducted by the IMAS Institute for Marketing and Sociological Surveys in March 2024, only eight percent of voters would vote for a president seeking the unification of the Republic of Moldova with Romania.

According to another survey conducted in March 2024 - by the [IDIS Viitorul Institute for the Development of Social Initiatives](#) - 37.8% of citizens are in favor of unification with Romania. Fifty percent are against, the rest are undecided. European integration is supported by 54.5%.

The latter figure is mainly due to economic reasons. For as impressive as the number of Romanian passport holders in Moldova may be, the real reason for this is the associated job opportunities in the EU, which in turn does not speak for a successful economic policy on the part of the Moldovan leadership.

The following illustrates the extent to which the question of a possible unification divides the population in Moldova:

On March 18, 2024, Bloomberg ran the headline: "[Moldovan President Seeks Referendum on EU Membership in October](#)". In other words, the Moldovan president is seeking a referendum on EU membership in October. The original plan was to have the people vote on a possible unification with Romania as part of this referendum, but President Maia Sandu categorically ruled this out on April 9, 2024, as [TASS reported](#) with reference to Nokta.md.

Presidential elections in October 2024 - re-election of the incumbent not certain

Presidential elections will be held in Moldova this fall. The incumbent, who is massively supported by the West, will run again. However, her poll ratings are unconvincing and in a range that cannot rule out surprises. And this despite all the direct and indirect help from the EU and NATO. So what to do?

The only poll result that the Moldovan president can currently rely on is European integration. However, the polls also show that pragmatism prevails for the vast majority of Moldovans: Being able to work in the EU is accepted, but the desire for EU membership is only expressed by a minority.

The Moldovan leadership is now planning to combine the presidential election in the fall with a referendum on possible EU membership. A positive outcome of the EU referendum should then in turn form the basis for a merger with Romania.

Moldovan President Sandu is using her knowledge of the details of the referendum to repeatedly emphasize that only Romanian identity will pave the way for Moldova to join the EU.

Gagausia - Moldova's white elephant

Gagauzia is a small region of around 1800 square kilometers in the south of Moldova with an unusual special status. In accordance with the provisions of the Moldovan constitution, Gagauzia is responsible for political, economic and cultural issues in the interests of the population.

Gagauzia's Declaration of Independence of 1990

This special status came about as a result of the dissolution of the USSR. On August 19, 1990, the first Congress of People's Deputies from the south of the Moldavian SSR was held, at which the "Declaration of Freedom and Independence of the Gagauz People from the Republic of Moldova" was adopted and the Republic of Gagauzia was proclaimed within the USSR.

On August 21 of the same year, at an extraordinary session of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR, the decision to proclaim the Republic of Gagauzia was declared illegal and the holding of the Congress of Deputies was declared unconstitutional.

Despite this decision - which appears at least legally dubious due to the processes that had taken place at the time - Gagauzia existed for four years as an unrecognized, formally independent state.

On 23 December 1994, the Moldovan parliament passed a law on the special legal status of Gagauzia, which normalized relations between Gagauzia and Moldova. Gagauzia thus received its above-mentioned special autonomous status within the Republic of Moldova.

The head of Gagauzia heads the local government bodies, represents the region in resolving domestic and foreign policy issues of the Republic of Moldova that affect Gagauzia's interests and is a member of the Moldovan government. The last point in particular is especially explosive in the current political dispute in Moldova.

The 2014 referendum in Gagauzia and the 2023 elections

This very far-reaching, legally established autonomy becomes particularly explosive in light of a referendum held in Gagauzia in 2014 and the events since the election of the head of Gagauzia in 2023.

In 2014, a referendum was held in Gagauzia in which the inhabitants declared that they saw their future only in an independent and sovereign Republic of Moldova. A result that stands in complete contrast to President Sandu's aspirations for EU and NATO membership and unification with Romania.

In the referendum, the Gagauzians also voted in favor of joining the Russian Customs Union, but this was prevented by the Moldovan central government. According to the Gagauz leadership, this was an obvious violation of the autonomy provisions.

This led to growing tensions between Gagauzia and the Moldovan government, which have increased significantly since President Maia Sandu took office.

Last year, the head of Gagauzia was elected. In view of the political constellation, this was an event of national significance, even though only 121,000 people live in Gagauzia.

The election was won by Yevgeniya Guzul, representing the SOR party, the main opposition party. She not only speaks Russian, but has repeatedly made it clear that she attaches great importance to Gagauzia's relations with Russia.

She repeatedly points out that not only Moldovans and Romanians live in the republic, but also Russians, Gagauzians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and dozens of other nationalities whose interests must be taken into account. In recent days, she has repeatedly called for Moldovan statehood and the special legal status of Gagauzia to be respected in the face of increasing political pressure for unification with Romania.

The head of Gagauzia made it clear that Gagauzia would declare itself independent in the event of Moldova's unification with Romania. In such a case, it would also turn to Russia for help.

The very far-reaching autonomy of Gagauzia has become a major problem for the exclusively western-oriented policy of President Maia Sandu. Gagauzia has always endeavored to maintain good neighborly relations with all states and regions. This policy explicitly includes Russia.

Political repression to secure integration into the West

To secure its path in the EU and NATO, the Moldovan leadership is obviously willing to use all available options and does not seem to shy away from repressive, unlawful action against opponents.

Unlawful non-appointment of a member of the government

On March 18, 2024, President Sandu declared that she would not sign the legally required decree appointing the head of Gagauzia as a member of the government. She justified this step by stating that Yevgeniya Guzul was allegedly working for the "criminal group SOR" and not for the people of Gagauzia and therefore against her own state.

Ban on the main opposition party

The "criminal group SOR" refers to the SOR party, which supported Yevgeniya Guzul in her election as head of Gagauzia in spring 2023. SOR, named after its founder Ilan Sor, has established itself as a serious competitor to the country's pro-European political leadership since it was founded in 2016.

Ilan Sor himself was indicted in 2015 for embezzling one billion US dollars. In 2017, he was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison, and in 2019 he left Moldova and is currently residing in Israel.

Moldova's political leadership used these circumstances to place the entire party and the people it supported, such as Yevgeniya Guzul, under general suspicion and ban the SOR party.

The ban took place on June 19, 2023, followed by the ban on the SOR parliamentary group on June 22, 2023. Furthermore, the previous SOR MPs were excluded from international and bilateral negotiation delegations. They also have no right to join other parliamentary associations.

All this also applies to party members in local self-governing bodies, including in Gagauzia.

Despite this orgy of bans, Maia Sandu does not seem to have much faith in the result achieved. On July 31, 2023, the parliament decided to ban leaders and activists of the SOR party from running in elections for three to five years.

Conclusion

Under the current circumstances, the Romanian leadership's statements about the possible deployment of Romanian troops abroad to protect Romanian citizens living or located there can only be seen as an aggravation of the situation in an already fragile region. Obviously, NATO and the EU want to build up further pressure on Russia by destabilizing the region in this way.

The actual circumstances make the Romanian prime minister's above-mentioned desire for a state merger of Romania and Moldova appear less like a union than an annexation.

If this were to happen, it would trigger a cascade of subsequent events, particularly due to the very fragile domestic political situation in Moldova.

The danger lies in the fact that the consequences are almost impossible to predict due to the complexity of the situation.

If the West is nevertheless willing to take this risk, it can be seen as a further sign of increasing Western lack of advice and conscience.

ARTICLE TAGS:

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