



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Moldova faces the most important elections since independence



The parliamentary elections in Moldova on 28 September are not only a change of government but also a moment in which the country is **testing** its own resilience.

Since **gaining** status as a candidate for EU membership in 2022, Moldova has been trying to build functioning institutions at an accelerated pace and at least partially close the space for corruption, political manipulation, and external pressure.

During the same period, the country was **exposed** to Moscow's hybrid operations on an almost daily basis. Russian money flowed into opposition parties, media networks and digital platforms were created, and disinformation and fabricated scandals were produced, all with one goal – to undermine the European course and weaken trust in the institutions.

With the **exclusion** of parties affiliated with Ilan Shor (a businessman and politician convicted of serious financial fraud who fled to Israel and has built up a network of pro-Russian parties), the most direct channel of Russian influence in the election campaign has been eliminated, but the network built by Moscow has not disappeared.

It still works through intermediary structures, media platforms and digital campaigns.

Opinion polls **suggest** that the ruling Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS, the pro-European party of President Maia Sandu) is still in the lead, but without the guarantee of an absolute majority.

This implies that post-election combinations will determine the continuation or watering down of the reform course.

On the other side of the **spectrum** are the Socialists gathered around Igor Dodon (former President of Moldova, known for his close ties with Moscow), as well as the Alternative of Ion Ceban (Mayor of Chisinau, once a Socialist, now an advocate of a moderate, pro-European discourse) and Our Party of Renato Usatii (a populist leader with strong support in the north of the country).

Their results could determine the formation of a majority and the speed of the country's EU integration.

The battle for Moldova's European path

The energy dimension of these elections is just as important as the political one. Earlier this year, the flow of Russian gas through Ukraine was cut off, **removing** the old formula for cheap electricity from separatist Transnistria.

Moldova was forced to speed up its **connection** to the European grids. The **announced** \$130 million US investment in the high-voltage grid shows that the West sees Moldova's energy security as a key pillar of its political stability and independence, rather than an infrastructure project.

The outcome will depend on whether voters manage to focus on economics, energy and corruption rather than fabricated affairs

The campaign for these parliamentary elections was riddled with digital operations, including botnets, imitations of Western media, and aggressive messages **targeting** President Maia Sandu, who is a symbol of Moldova's European path.

The aim was to reduce voter turnout among the pro-European electorate and achieve a weak, blackmailable majority.

The state has responded with arrests and financial investigations, but the outcome will depend on whether voters manage to focus on economics, energy and corruption rather than fabricated affairs.

If the outcome remains unclear: disputes and deadlocks

These are the first parliamentary **elections** under the new electoral law from 2022. **OSCE** and **ENEMO** (European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations) have deployed observers across the country, and their assessments will be crucial to the international perception of the process.

If the observers confirm that the elections were fair and that the results reflect the will of the voters, Moldova will have a chance to show that the EU's enlargement policy is still working, even on the fringes of a region that Russia is trying to destabilise.

However, if the outcome remains unclear, months will be lost in **disputes** and deadlocks, while Moscow buys time with cheap tools – protest funding, digital campaigns and energy pressure.

Confirmation of the pro-European majority will place Moldova in an accelerated corridor towards the EU. Brussels has already signalled its willingness to open negotiation chapters and include Moldova in certain sectoral policies, especially in energy and digital market.

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This would mean that the country would gain access to European funds and protection mechanisms even before formal membership.

For an economy like Moldova's, access to European funds and markets would mean a change that could permanently determine the country's direction of development.

Otherwise, if there is a weakening of the PAS and a strengthening of pro-Russian actors, Moldova will return to the political scheme it knows well – endless **blockades**, a dysfunctional parliament and parallel networks of power that exploit any institutional weakness.

Moscow is skilled at this: it is enough to weaken the reformists but not take power itself. Such a scenario would not mean an open political return to Russia, but entry into a state of blockades and paralysed institutions, in which Moscow maintains constant instability through money, media and energy.

Institutional resilience on the periphery of the European area

The regional context should also be taken into account. There will still be war in Ukraine next year, elections are due in Romania, and the EU is trying to consolidate its internal front after years of crisis.

In such a constellation, the outcome of the elections in Moldova will not remain isolated. If Chisinau shows institutional resilience, this will be a strong argument in favour of small states on the periphery of the European area being able to withstand the pressure and join the stable system.



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If it shows weakness, it will be a reminder that the border between Europe and the Russian world remains thin and fragile.

Moscow's reaction will be predictably swift and harsh, regardless of the outcome. If the pro-European forces retain the majority, the Kremlin will continue its low-intensity operations: financing the protests, stepping up

digital campaigns and putting pressure on energy flows in Transnistria.

The goal will not be immediate destabilisation, but the constant undermining of trust and the creation of fatigue in society.

However, if pro-Russian options gain strength and enter the ruling coalition, Moscow will present this as a strategic victory and proof that the European path can be stopped.

In practice, this would mean a greater influx of Russian resources but also more insecurity, as Moldova would then enter a model of "controlled instability" in which every political process is used for blackmail and influence.

Ultimately, this vote is not a question of mandate arithmetic, but a decision on whether Moldova will remain a vulnerable periphery where Moscow maintains instability, or whether it will become part of Europe, where it determines the direction of its own policies.