

BULLETIN
OF "CAROL I" NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

<https://buletinul.unap.ro/index.php/en/>

“Sovereign Chişinău or Abyss with NATO” Moscow and the Moldovan EU Referendum 2024

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Abstract

The Moldovan EU referendum in October 2024 proved a page-turner; the Yes votes won by a thin margin. Russia was the first to condemn the process. In this article, I apply discourse analysis to scrutinize the language of the Russian MFA through the utterance of its spokesperson, Maria Zakharova. Intermittently, securitization schemes are employed. My aim is to divulge Moscow's standpoint on Moldova via the maneuvers that Zakharova takes advantage of in her official statements. Zakharova's stratagems vary. She claims the referendum failed to meet the European norms, i.e., the EU alignment threatens core civil rights. Thereafter, Zakharova turns confrontational and views diplomacy as a conflict. This echoes Putin's views on a Chisinau with unbreakable ties with Russia; Moldova would no longer enjoy sovereignty in the EU. Once Zakharova poses diplomacy as a movement, she exhorts the Moldovans to counteract the true motive behind “the Western meddling”. It is no more, no less, than the NATO enlargement.

Keywords:

Russia; Maria Zakharova; Moldova; EU; referendum; NATO;
Discourse analysis; Securitization.

Article info

Received: 12 May 2025; Revised: 10 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Available online: 27 June 2025

Citation: Lamminparras, N. 2025. “Sovereign Chişinău or abyss with NATO”. Moscow and the Moldovan EU referendum 2024”
Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University, 14(2): 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-25-14>



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A mere week after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Moldova officially applied for EU membership. The Moldovan president, Maia Sandu, highlighted the will of the nation to “live in peace, in democracy and prosperity, as part of the free world”. Accordingly, since the folks see their future in the European Union, it constitutes “a fundamental national objective” (Sandu 2022; Sandu’s “consoling” discourse circa the outbreak of the war, see [Lamminparras 2025](#), 200–201, 203–205). While the step was warmly greeted by Brussels, Moscow’s stance proved ambivalent. Or in the words of President Putin, “the EU is not a military organization, a military-political block, unlike NATO. We have nothing against it [the EU]” (Putin 2022a). As late as September 2022, President Putin noted in passing “the historical proximity” between Russia and Moldova (Putin 2022b). The problem turned out to be the EU’s recent evolution, as insisted on by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. According to Lavrov, the discussions of an EU force, independent of the US and NATO, went on for years. However, the talks “degenerated” into cooperation with the very NATO. Now, even the non-aligned member countries are obliged to allow NATO contingents and their equipment to transit their soil ([Lavrov 2022](#); cf. Lavrov and his deputy on Russian troops in Moldova, see [Lamminparras 2024a](#), 166–168, 175, 178, 180–185). Conversely, the Moldovan National Security Strategy, at the time under review, not only condemns the Russian invasion into Ukraine, Moscow’s meddling in the Moldovan politics and the Russian troops in Transnistria, but holds both the EU and NATO as “elementary pillars of the European security” (SNN, 2–3, 5–6, §13.3; for the envisioned Western collaboration see SNN, 17–18, 24; the Strategy was adopted in mid-December 2023). Thus, the paradox began to emerge, well before the plebiscite-to-come.

As such, the legal pattern of the referendum was flat, as the factual bid projected to modify the Constitution. The preamble was to be amended with a reconfirmation of “the European identity of the people of the Republic of Moldova” and with a declaration of “the integration into the European Union” as the country’s “strategic objective”. Likewise, a new Title V was to state the legal proceedings; it stipulated the “priority” of the EU obligations over the national ones, in case of “conflicting provisions” ([Parlamentul Republicii Moldova 2024](#)). Thence, the question in the plebiscite ballots crystallized in acceptance or rejection. The options were *DA*, ‘yes’ or *NU*, ‘no’, which the voter expresses by stamping *Votat* in the adjacent empty circle.

Unexpectedly, throughout the evening of October 20, 2024, the referendum turned into a thriller. Only on October 21, 2024, at 8 o’clock, the acceptance of the constitutional reform gained a majority of a few hundred ballots, and it only increased along the tabulation of diaspora votes ([Lamminparras 2024b](#)). Ultimately, of the valid ballots, 50,35 percent were cast for the constitutional amendments whilst 49,65 percent rejected the changes ([CEC 2024](#)). Substantially, this outcome reiterates the thesis of Sergeyev a decade ago: the conflict by the Dniester is not about ethnicity or nationality; rather, it is a confrontation of two larger perceptions of inheritance. While the pro-Romanian élite of Moldova stands for the Latin

roots, it simultaneously promotes the country's age-old Europeanness. Contrastively, the Russian-speakers view themselves as an inalienable part of the string of Slavic generations – or more exactly, the Russian World (Sergeyev 2015, 13).¹

It was the Russian MFA to first issue a statement on the referendum in the evening of October 21, 2024. Markedly, zero comments were voiced by President Putin. After two days, the MFA again commented on the subject, and a week later, in anticipation of the presidential run-off on November 3, 2024, the Ministry recapped its stance. Two commentaries were published after the run-off. (Zakharova 2024a; Zakharova 2024b; Zakharova 2024c; Zakharova 2024d; Zakharova 2024e.) Of all these, the latter two primarily concern the presidential run-off. The reason is plain: on October 31, 2024, the Moldovan Constitutional Court validated the results of the plebiscite (CCM 2024). Curiously, even the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation later published its assessment on the double polls in Moldova (SVR 2024).

Therefore, to track the Russian fresh stance on Moldova's EU-referendum and its Western integration, it proves imperative to explore the MFA's – or to be exact – Zakharova's utterance. Throughout this study, discourse analysis, as largely defined by Ricoeur and Fairclough, is applied to the public speeches and statements of Maria Zakharova. To a lesser extent, I employ securitization patterns to hint at the spokesperson's in-depth stimuli. The aim is to examine Zakharova's language and communication to unravel the strategic narratives and potential inconsistencies in Moscow's stance on Moldova. In addition to official claims of human rights violations, the discourse analysis reveals that Zakharova views diplomacy as a struggle and as a motion. Also, she takes advantage of "Russophobia". The core objective is to encumber Moldova's West-bound integration – a serious threat to Moldova's sovereignty. In order to avoid tautology and facilitate the audience's understanding of the events, the chapters are organized thematically. Thus, I hope to foster knowledge on the Russian present (geo)political reasoning on the Dniester region. Altogether, I tend to illuminate the complex questions that prospectively arise during Chisinau's European path; not least in attendance of the Moldovan parliamentary elections, to be held on September 28, 2025.

¹ The conflict in Southern Moldova – known as the Gagauzian conflict – evolved within a similar framework (Bejan 2022, 224–225, 229–238). However, the Gagauz stance on the EU-referendum of 2024 merits its own study.

1. Research background

In this "technical" chapter, I first define the abbreviations and acronyms utilized in my text. Then, I briefly discuss the prior research and findings on the Russian MFA's articulation regarding today's Moldova. Notably, this

article focuses on Moscow's *current political* utterance, and not on that historical one. A separate manus on Russia's views – i.e., time and again Zakharova's interpretations – on the Moldovan past is under review elsewhere. It is also worth mentioning that I observed and commented on the referendum and the elections live and proactively during the entire period from October 20 to November 4, 2024. Since the electoral processes themselves do not constitute the topic of this article, I exclude my first-hand analyses (destined for the native audience); nevertheless, some features of those may manifest here. Equally, as the primary material is presented above, I here limit myself to disclosing the method.

1.1. Abbreviations

CCM	Curtea Constituțională	Constitutional Court (MD)
CEC	Comisia Electorală Centrală	Central Election Commission (MD)
MFA		Ministry of Foreign Affairs (RU)
Parlamentul	Parlamentul Republicii Moldova	Parliament (MD)
SVR	Sluzhba vneyshney razvedki	Foreign Intelligence Service (RU)

1.2. Prior research

Noteworthily, it was the spokesperson of the MFA, Maria Zakharova, to address the Moldovan topics, not President Putin, nor the Kremlin. Overall, during the years 2022–2024, Putin less than twenty times tackled or mentioned Moldova (for Putin's Moldova-argumentation see [Lamminparras 2024c](#)). Within the MFA, it is intriguing that the very Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, remains tacit on these topics. Despite her both nationally and internationally visible position, it is somewhat strange that most of the Zakharova inquiries are produced in Russia. As most of them date to the years before the war in Ukraine, this article to a minor extent refers to updates and widens our topical knowledge, in Russia and abroad.

In the mid- and late 2010s, Gorbacheva and Zaynullina explored Zakharova's career and manners, lexicon included. Gorbacheva and Zaynullina highlight that the spokesperson has served in her office since August 2015 and is the first woman to preside over the Department of Information and Press of the Russian MFA. In addition to the traditional channels, Zakharova is renowned for her communication in TV talk shows and on social media ([Gorbacheva 2016, 7](#); [Zaynullina 2018, 166](#)). Martynenko and Mel'nikova rather focus on Zakharova's appearance. These two juxtapose Zakharova and her Western counterpart, Jennifer Psaki ([Martynenko and Mel'nikova 2016](#)).

Zakharova's (use of) language became a topic of discussion circa 2020. Sandler differentiates the various techniques that Zakharova applies, such as graduation and reiteration. Besides that, Sandler illuminates the discursive stratagems the spokesperson utilizes, such as diplomacy as conflict or an explanatory unfolding ([Sandler 2022](#)). After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Belova-Dalton has investigated Zakharova's communication on the Crimean as well as the Donbas

conundrums (Belova-Dalton 2023). In late 2024, I explored Putin's understanding of the Russians by the Danube from the sixth to the late eighteenth century. As I analyze the Russian president's views on Chisinau's present politics, the article provides for comparison (Lamminparras 2024c). Kireyeva and Pikuleva determine that due to her vivid tongue, Zakharova has become one of the most quoted Russian diplomats. Or better said, "the main media face" of the MFA (Kireyeva and Pikuleva 2019, 21).

1.3. Discourse analysis

As for the methodology – discourse analysis –, I widely allude to Norman Fairclough's theorization on the (use of) language in a complete nexus with its social frames. Fairclough divides his idea into three levels. On the textual one, the attention is paid to solitary words and phrases. Secondly, the so-called production level includes the process of any given presentation and the resources behind it. Thirdly, on the sociocultural level, the researcher is interested in the presentation's links with the past and present. Simultaneously, the presentation further builds its social environment. (Fairclough 1992, 1, 38, 62–63.) Eskola and Ricoeur explain this interdependence in a more usual fashion. Firstly, the essence of simple words emerges from the context in which they manifest (Eskola 1996, 65, 127). Ricoeur concludes that a full maxim then refers "beyond itself", to the (linguistic) environment in question (Ricoeur 1976, 6–7, 20, 88).

Since we speak of one of the key Russian ministries, resources are readily available. Hence, I concentrate on the textual and the sociocultural levels throughout the investigation on Zakharova's referendum-related discourse. To summarize the context, as Eskola puts it, it is essential to differentiate the idioms, allusions, and omissions that Zakharova pronounces. The auxiliary questions are as follows:

- How does the spokesperson describe the Moldovan referendum?
- What kind of implications does Zakharova's voice convey?
- How does the sociopolitical environment affect her utterance?

To ensure the informativeness and the authenticity of the linguistic framework, I employ Zakharova's live discourses, held in Russian. Once set in standard Word parameters, they number a dozen pages, or 3,887 words. As discourse analytical principles prefer ample and thorough corpuses, the choice provides for an appropriate source material. The author retains solid copyrights for the translations from Russian, Romanian/Moldovan, and other tongues. To precisely trace the course of the events and to trace the point of reference of Zakharova's implications, I include data from the electoral and other local authorities.

Now, there lies a profound link to securitization schemes. By and large, Balzacq suggests that global politics is extensively conducted via language (Balzacq 2011, xiv; for the securitization schools and their disputes, see Langenohl 2019). According to Stritzel, security is often perceived as a political reading within a deliberate framework (Stritzel 2014, 16). To simplify, a so-called 'securitizing actor' summons

imagery, policy tools, and symbols to stimulate his/her 'audience' to foster concerns about a 'referent object' under threat [say the native soil or civil rights]. The securitizing actor delivers the menace – 'referent subject' – in such maneuvers that a given policy is required to impede its existence (Balzacq 2011, 3). Here, we reach 360 degrees. As the discourse analysis reveals, every text echoes its links with the past; in tandem, it generates the present. In this study, Zakharova is the obvious actor while the audience consists of journalists who attended/read each of her comments; of course, they personalize the Russian and Moldovan societies (perhaps, the Globe too). Thence, whilst I explore Zakharova's appearances, we may partially track the impetuses of her securitizing manners. Unfortunately, a distinct examination of Zakharova's securitization acts, whether in these texts or in general, is rescinded due to the limited space. Hence, I only indicate such sections that may serve as a starting point for later inquiries. Entirely, this joint approach results in an assembly of speeches, narratives, and inferences voiced by Zakharova, diligently probed, set in their adequate ties, and positioned in a thorough account.

2. "Non-European circumstances"

It is of primary interest that Moscow challenges the entire legitimacy of the referendum. First, the electoral campaign was far from democratic, and the fundamental human rights (referent object) were violated. Here, Zakharova sharply depicts the unilateral actions taken by Chisinau's pro-European government (referent subject). One might differentiate an echo from Putin's notion of an equally one-sided campaign. According to the Russian president, the Moldovan leadership rejects its Moldovan inheritance and instead, perceives itself as Romanian. Overtly, Putin calls this "a complete forfeiture of the country's identity" (Lamminparras 2024c, 106). Just as the president's words, so does Zakharova's idiom exhibit a high-style lexicon, e.g., the jurisprudence (Gorbacheva 2016, 9).

By the Moldovan authorities, the electoral campaign was conducted through anti-democratic, totalitarian methods. -- The Moldovan leadership -- carried out repressions against opposition politicians and independent media (Zakharova 2024a).

Despite the massive repressions of the opposition and the independent media, undertaken by the authorities in Chisinau... (Zakharova 2024b). The current electoral campaign in this country is characterized by unparalleled repression. -- of political actors, independent media, opposition, social activists, and people who tend to defend the truth (Zakharova 2024c).

According to Sandler (2022, 116), Zakharova often utilizes such discursive techniques that reinforce each other, such as repetition and graduation. Seemingly, she here commences with a rather high-level allusion to the authoritarian élite of Moldova, but then three times reiterates the term 'repression'.

It is likely that after the initial reaction, which may have proved too general, Zakharova tends to further underscore the breach of basic civil rights in Moldova. Not least, because the number of strata, allegedly subjected to the oppressive measures, increases. Likewise, after the presidential run-off on November 3, 2024, Zakharova pronounced a qualitative graduation. She noted that the suppressed media was “mostly Russophone” ([Zakharova 2024d](#)). In other words, Zakharova postures the menace to have turned into an essential one. Now, it is the possibility to transmit and receive information in Russian – implying the entire Russian-speaking community in Moldova – that is at stake (the ultimate referent object?). Yet, those “defending the truth” remained opaque – they stand for the veracity of...? Generally, Zakharova portrays Moldova as a state with scarce rule of law and with restricted freedom of the media and speech. As these values are so cherished in Europe, she covertly claims the country fails to fulfil the EU membership criteria.

Amid these, the violation of fundamental rights was not limited to Moldova alone. The Moldovans residing in Russia were virtually deprived of the right to go to the polls. “The culmination of Chisinau’s anti-Russian campaign”

-- was the decision, taken under a contrived pretext, to open in Russia, where 300 to 500 thousand Moldovans live, merely two polling stations ([Zakharova 2024a](#)).

A particular cynicism is involved in the fact that those Moldovans who decided to travel to Moldova to vote were deprived of this possibility. Already by the Russian-Latvian boundary, they were pushed back under the pretext of «EU security threat» ([Zakharova 2024e](#)).

Intriguingly, here we observe Zakharova’s manner to pose diplomacy as “an artistic representation”. It is the voice ‘culmination’ that stems from this context ([Kireyeva and Pikuleva 2019](#), 24–25). To underline the inequality, Zakharova compares the procedure with those around the Globe.

The discrimination of the Moldovan voters living in Russia, by the official Chisinau, merits particular attention. -- For comparison: in Western Europe and Northern America, where likewise some 500 thousand Moldovans live, more than 200 stations were set up, while in several countries it was permitted for the Moldovan citizens to vote by mail ([Zakharova 2024d](#)).

Per se, the numbers are correct. In total, 234 polling stations operated abroad. Of these, only two stations were in Russia, both in Moscow, in the premises of the Moldovan consular service ([CEC 2024](#)). Repeatedly, with her constant reminders of this visible incongruity, Zakharova implies Moldova’s ambiguous commitment to European standards and factually hampers Chisinau’s EU path. One might, with good grounds, wonder whether a couple of polling stations, say in Saint-Petersburg, would not better have met the international norms. Had the outcome turned out the opposite or not is not relevant in this interpretation. Not even for Zakharova: in

any case, it is the core civil rights – referent object – that were severely breached, in Moldova and elsewhere.

3. Western interference

At the same time, by juxtaposing the number of polling stations back home and overseas, the spokesperson initiates a confrontation. This falls in stark contrast with Sandler's thesis of Zakharova's diverse communicative resources under the circumstances of a fierce military-political and cultural-ideological contest between the Russian World and the collective West (Sandler 2022, 116). In other words, Zakharova firmly neglects her capabilities of building balance or settling. Instead, she opts for the metaphorical model of diplomacy as a struggle, if not an outright war. It is mainly the allusion to "the anti-Russian campaign" that points to this (Kireyeva and Pikuleva 2019, 22–24). Not only is the voice "campaign" associated with warfare, but the implication is that there exists a united movement with a common will (second referent subject) to combat Russia and Russianness (second referent object).

According to Robinson, before the year 2012, the Russian MFA seldom utilized the concept of "Russophobia" as an argument. Such discourse drastically augmented after 2012, that is, side by side with the conflicts in Crimea and in Donbas (Robinson 2019, 61, 64, 73; Zakharova on Crimea and Donbas see e.g. Belova-Dalton 2023, 69, 77, 80). Analogically, since the outburst of the full-fledged war in Ukraine and the subsequent isolation of Russia, one might expect this pretension to increase. However, in the case of Moldova, this kind of utterance appears minuscule; Zakharova enhances the international competition with milder locutions. For example, to the surprise of many, Zakharova thrice admits that there was a substantial interference in the Moldovan elections and the plebiscite. Though she leaves no doubt of the guilty one:

All this occurred amidst an unconcealed meddling of the West in the electoral process in Moldova (Zakharova 2024a).

-- The only thing they are right – an unprecedented meddling, truly, took place. Though, from the USA and the EU's side (Zakharova 2024b).

All this occurs along the massive meddling of the «collective West» in the internal affairs of the republic (Zakharova 2024c).

Since the verbs are in the past form, apart from the latest commentary, these lines appear to feature an explanatory nature, as described by Gorbacheva. Also, the descriptive and narrative markers – e.g., 'amidst', 'truly', and 'Though' – assist in underscoring the message. (Gorbacheva 2016, 10.) Somewhat paradoxically, the expressions still turn as acid as vivid and rather resemble accusations. Paraphrasing Sandler (2022, 116), this impression is further hardened by repetition. Moreover, the Western interference took visible forms. According to Zakharova, during their many

visits to Chisinau, the leaders of the EU-member states conducted “open agitation for Moldova’s current headship” (Zakharova 2024a), and the “emissaries” of the US and the EU brought in money (Zakharova 2024b). The spokesperson implies that the pro-Sandu and the pro-European rallies were welcomed, if not encouraged. I.e., she covertly recaps the arguments on Moldova’s one-eyed rule (referent subject again) and its failure to observe fundamental rights (referent object again). At the same time, Zakharova raises the question of where to draw the line between legitimate financing from abroad and that disguised as such. Most likely, this clandestine reference was aimed at alleviating the Moldovan President Sandu’s allegations of criminal and foreign meddling in the plebiscite (Privesc 2024a; cf. Zakharova 2024b).²

The climax of Zakharova’s quarrelsome discourse is her account of the referendum’s tabulation. Initially, she points out “the dynamics of the voting”:

With 71,25% of the ballots processed, the gap persisted: «for» – 44,68%, «against» – 55,32%. Then, it swiftly – and inexplicably to many in Moldova – started to shrink, and after the processing of 99% of the protocols, the outcome turned «for» – 50,3%, «against» – 49,7% (Zakharova 2024a).

Judging by the plain numbers, the referendum resulted in indecision. Of the valid votes, 50,35 percent were cast in favor of the constitutional changes, and 49,65 percent were against. The gap is less than eleven thousand ballots (CEC 2024). Without overtly stating it, Zakharova likens “the favorable outcome” to a conspiracy since it was “obtained by the authorities with a gap less than 1%, through a dire mobilization of votes in the overseas diaspora” (Zakharova 2024e; see also Zakharova 2024c). Again, it is the Moldovan pro-EU leaders to suppress the will of the citizens.

Whilst we need to figure out the plotters from the astute implication, Zakharova leaves no uncertainty over the real name of this phenomenon. Following her deduction, it constituted a premeditated “falsification” (Zakharova 2024a, 2024b). To enforce the claim, Zakharova now transitions to describe diplomacy as “propulsion” or “route” (see Kireyeva and Pikuleva 2019, 22–23). The likely aims of this choice are to warn the Moldovans and to exhort them to counteract the country’s current course. Again, the similarity with Putin’s assessments on Moldova’s political life is eye-catching. A mere year afore, Putin three times encouraged the Moldovans to impede the country’s EU alignment. Rigorously, Putin advised not to vote for “those who aspire to relinquish a significant portion of their sovereignty to other countries”; it shall end in the loss of self-determination (Lamminparras 2024c, 107–108, 111–112). Whether

² It is of a major interest that Sandu’s main opponent, the pro-Eastern ex-state attorney Alexandr Stoianoglo, immediately emulated the allegations. Also, he was the first to blame Sandu’s government for the repressive measures. (Privesc 2024b.) I warmly encourage my fellow academicians to delve into Stoianoglo’s political views and discourse during 2024, to speak nothing about his career as State Attorney.

this is yet realized or not represents a question itself. In contrast to the president, Zakharova explicitly stated the final objective of the rigged referendum. That is, to turn Moldova into “a Russophobic NATO appendage”, without sovereignty (Zakharova 2024a).

Conclusions

There’s no suspicion over Moscow’s expertise in the field of public communication, as embodied in Maria Zakharova. Her position as the prime commentator of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is founded on her capability to perform in multiple channels, TV shows, and social media. Her idiom flexibly varies from one register to another, and from a daily to a specific lexicon. In addition, the discourse on the Moldovan EU referendum demonstrated she is able to navigate between a readily confirmatory strategy and a confrontational one. Eruditely, she inserts securitization schemes within these stratagems.

Zakharova, in her guise, Russia, condemns the referendum as profoundly illegitimate. The basic civil rights (referent object) were violated, both in Moldova and overseas. The spokesperson underscores the repression of the opposition, unnamed dissenting individuals, the independent media, etc. There is no doubt over who undertakes these oppressive measures – the Moldovan pro-Western élite (referent subject). I.e., the very same circles that, with an equally unilateral push, promote a Romanian–not–Moldovan identity, as Putin in 2023 blamed. By this time, Moscow had become increasingly aware of the EU’s alleged evolution toward an instrument to advance NATO’s foothold. Later, Zakharova mentions that the repressed news agencies predominantly consisted of Russian-language media. Thus, what is in danger is a whole Russian-speaking community (the true referent object?). Logically, Moldova’s decision to open a mere two polling stations in Russia, where 300 to 500 thousand kinsmen have their residence, constituted the “culmination of Chisinau’s anti-Russian campaign”. With these claims, Moscow seeks to hinder Chisinau’s EU integration. As Moldova purposefully breaches fundamental freedoms, it does not comply with European standards.

Here, Zakharova applies two distinct yet concomitant strategies. The voice ‘culmination’ emerges from her view on diplomacy as an artistic performance, whereas the term ‘campaign’ indicates diplomacy as a conflict, if not sheer warfare. Through these choices, Zakharova proceeds to the confrontational approach. It is the alleged “Russophobia” that implies a larger entity (the genuine referent subject?) to combat Russia and its core beliefs, with Moldova as one of its tools. For example, the slightly bitter judgment of the polling stations opened in the Americas and Europe mainly confirms the rift. For a comparable number of Moldovan expatriates, there were more than 200 stations. Nonetheless, as it was precisely these diaspora votes that finally turned decisive, with a margin of less than 0,4 percent, Zakharova

insinuates an orchestrated voting in the West. Moreover, the representatives of the US and the EU publicly advocated the cause of the incumbent President Maia Sandu and her government, to speak nothing about the Western financing. Besides its concrete reference, the latter argument serves as a reply to Maia Sandu's allegations of foreign and hostile interference.

To summarize, Zakharova passes to perceive diplomacy as a yet ongoing move or path. Unlike in the case of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine since 2014, she utilizes milder accusations. In this respect, it seems that the spokesperson, – or accurately, Moscow – benignly relates to the Moldovan ordinary people. Just as Putin exhorts these to hamper the country's EU path, Zakharova infers that the Moldovans, especially those residing within the republic, are victims of a deception. To deepen these preliminary findings, I propose a separate investigation and/or comparison, both in the case of this topic and of Zakharova's (further) securitization maneuvers. Not least because by associating the true scope of the "Western meddling" with Chisinau's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, Zakharova in fact urges the local people to cherish a sovereign Moldova – or to perish with NATO.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my gratitude to Professor Emeritus Timo Vihavainen for methodological guidance.

FUNDING INFORMATION

N/A

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the internet.

DECLARATION on AI use (if applicable)

N/A