

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (INSTITUTIONS, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES)

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Abstract: *Strategic communication in the Republic of Moldova remains underdeveloped despite increasing urgency since 2014 due to rising hybrid threats and shifts in the global security environment. Early initiatives, such as the 2018 National Defense Strategy and the Information Security Strategy, acknowledged the importance of strategic communication. However, the absence of a centralized framework, weak inter-agency coordination, and insufficient resources have hindered its effective implementation. Recent advancements, including the establishment of the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation and dedicated StratCom units in the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Border Police, represent progress but fall short of enabling a systemic, integrated approach. Challenges such as limited training, resource constraints, and the lack of a unified national narrative persist, emphasizing the need for a shared strategic communication mindset and political commitment at all levels. The Republic of Moldova urgently needs measures to strengthen strategic communication. The creation of an integrated national plan, the development of dedicated StratCom structures at the governmental and institutional levels, and the implementation of public education programs are needed to increase national resilience in the face of information and hybrid challenges. At local level, extending the principles of strategic communication to regional and municipal administration is vital for maintaining message coherence and raising community awareness. This approach can help combat misinformation and promote a stronger security culture. In addition, media literacy programs for the public, especially in regions vulnerable to external influence, are needed to enable citizens to critically evaluate information and resist manipulation.*

Keywords: *strategic communication (StratCom), hybrid threats, disinformation, national security, information security, public resilience.*

Hybrid threats, including disinformation, cyberattacks, and external political influence, remain critical risks. Strategic communication is one of the instruments that can be used for monitoring the information environment, creating and promoting a cohesive national narrative, and fostering public resilience through education and awareness. To respond to the foreign manipulation interference and societal vulnerabilities it is crucial to

enhance cohesion by building capacity for detecting information manipulation, and promoting collaboration among government, civil society, and media. Thus, strategic communication can contribute, as well, to reduce societal divisions through clear and trustful narratives of the government.

The Republic of Moldova faces multiple hybrid threats, including a low-security culture and a vulnerable information environment marked by foreign information and manipulation interference (FIMI). These challenges are enhanced by frequent attacks from state entities targeting democratic values and national interests. Such threats are intensified using various instruments of power such as political, military, informational and economic ones, which intensify country vulnerabilities among which are unresolved conflict, centrifugal territorial tendencies, low trust in national institutions. These challenges, in turn, hinder institutional transformation and effective communication between decision makers, government and the public.

Moldovan institutions also face strategic challenges in managing communication and coordinating activities. The country's strategic communication efforts are often limited and reactive, focusing more on countering foreign narratives than on promoting its own vision on the international stage.

During periods of crisis or political instability, strategic communication frequently devolves into a confusing mix of unilateral, ad hoc, and situational public messaging dominated by political parties and actors. This lack of coherence and strategic direction weakens Moldova's ability to advocate for its interests and address both current and future challenges (Mârzac, 2024: 3).

By developing informational resilience and implementing a response mechanism to hybrid threats, Moldova can better address these challenges. Strengthening institutional coherence and adopting an integrated approach to strategic communication – with a focus on coordinated intergovernmental messaging – is important.

Addressing hybrid threats, including the strategic communication component, requires a well-coordinated and coherent strategy to counter disinformation campaigns and destabilization efforts. Through effective strategic communication processes, Moldova can enhance its ability to respond to threats and protect its national interests both domestically and internationally. It serves as a bridge connecting public institutions and diverse internal and external audiences. Moreover, strategic communication can amplify key messages about national objectives and priorities. Building social cohesion in Moldova requires coordinated governance, strategic communication, and support from civil society. Strategic communication as an instrument can ensure consistent and coordinated government messaging to shape public opinion and secure support for reforms and its actions. Effective inter-institutional communication can facilitate successful reform implementation and strengthen political credibility.

Generally, strategic communication serves as a vital tool for harmonizing government activities, effectively integrating diverse instruments of power to strategically shape influence and bolster national resilience. As a process, strategic communication can enable more effective orchestration of government activities, integrating various instruments of power to strategically influence and foster national resilience (Miroslav, 2019).

In the Republic of Moldova, strategic communication involves synchronizing actions and messages to achieve desired outcomes and promote national interests in a coherent and efficient manner. It is crucial for strategic communication to be led and coordinated at the

highest levels of government, aligned with the national security strategy, and designed to proactively promote key narratives and messages (Mârzac & Sandu, 2022: 58).

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, when we talk about strategic communication, we refer to several directions of strategic communication development.

a. The sustained efforts of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to synchronize words and deeds, and to clarify how they will be perceived by all stakeholders, acting in the national security and defense sector. Considering current risks and threats as well as national interests, StratCom is the indispensable information element for national authorities and is one of the tools at the disposal of the state to achieve its objectives. The ultimate goal of strategic communication is to promote national interest and support the implementation of national policies and objectives.

b. Actions to coordinate national institutions aimed at integrating efforts among all instruments of power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic, based on the national security strategy and the assessment of risks and threats. The process of strategic communication is intended to influence, and strategic influence depends entirely on effective coordination across government and beyond to achieve national strategic objectives. Given the central influence on national strategy, a strategic communication framework is necessary (Laity, Clarke, Marzac, 2022: 8)

The Stages of Institutionalization of Strategic Communication

In the Republic of Moldova, the evolution of strategic communication can be symbolically divided into two distinct stages.

1. The Initial Phase: 2012–2023 – Defining Strategic Communication in Policy Frameworks

This period laid the groundwork for embedding strategic communication into national strategic documents and setting the stage for its further development and application.

During this foundational stage, Moldova began formalizing strategic communication as a key element of its security and defense policies. The adoption of the Information and Communication Strategy in the Field of Defense and National Security for 2012-2016 marked the first significant step in addressing security and defense issues through a structured approach to communication. The strategy was a first attempt to establish an inter-institutional communication mechanism and an information process at national level on the security and defense dimension (Marin, 2017).

This was the first attempt to set up an inter-institutional communication mechanism and informational process at national level on the security and defense dimension. At the same time, in accordance with Chapter III, para. 44 of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the Republic of Moldova recognized and assumed that strategic communication will become the indispensable informational element of the national authorities, representing one of the tools that the state has at its disposal to achieve its objectives in the sphere of security and defense (HG 257, 2018). Therefore, efforts will be directed towards the development of an effective strategic communication vision, the transformation of institutional communication structures and the development of forms of collaboration and interaction between them.

Similarly, in the Individual Action Plan of the Republic of Moldova - NATO Partnership for 2017-2019 (HG 26, 2022), in Chapter III, p. 3.1, it is stated: “Strengthening national capabilities in the field of strategic communication is a priority for the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, the national authorities will seek to further develop cooperation with the NATO Center of Excellence on Strategic Communication in Latvia (STRATCOM). The new IPAP should foresee concrete actions to institutionalize StratCom, take over best practices from NATO member and partner countries and identify responsible actors.

In the framework of the Information Security Strategy 2019-2024, to ensure the security of the information media space, Objective No. 1 plans the development of strategic communication mechanisms for the realization of the national interests of the Republic of Moldova (HG 257, 2018). This objective is to be achieved inter alia through the development of internal strategic communication policies and the connection to external strategic communication platforms of the security, defense, and public order system structures, to ensure information security and promote the national interests of the Republic of Moldova. It is an example of the application of a security sector aspect and will be implemented by the Intelligence and Security Service (Albu & Mârzac, 2021: 248).

Since 2017, with the reform of the state administrative structures, the Public Diplomacy, Strategic Communication and Interaction with the Press Service was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova (HG 697, 2017). This is the first state body directly in charge of the country’s public diplomacy, with the overall objective of promoting a positive image and perception of the Republic of Moldova abroad (Țău, 2020: 102). It is also responsible for communicating interactively with the public and promoting the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova among our citizens and foreigners. Despite the use of the concept of strategic communication in the title, the Service is focused rather on media relations

During the same period, the Strategic Communication Section (STRATCOM), a specialized structure within the General Inspectorate of Border Police, which ensures communication and public information about the activities of the institution was created. The Section contributes to the formation, promotion and maintenance of the positive image of the Inspectorate, ensures the implementation of an integrated system of internal and external communication on issues within the competence of the border authority and provides objective, coherent and comprehensive information to the society about the initiatives and achievements of the Border Police, factors that favor the creation of a correct attitude of the citizen towards the border guards (Secția comunicare strategică).

2. Second Phase 2023 – Present: The Institutionalization Phase of Strategic Communication

In response to the challenges associated with fake news, propaganda, and disinformation campaigns, the *Center for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation (Center)* was established in July 2023. The Center’s mission is to enhance efforts to combat specific actions that pose a threat to national interests.

According to LAW No. 242 of 31-07-2023 on the Centre for Strategic Communication and Countering Disinformation, the Center operates as an autonomous national authority, independent from other public or private entities, tasked with enhancing Moldova’s resilience against hybrid threats and misinformation. The Center

addresses critical vulnerabilities in the country's information security landscape based on the principles of legality, independence, impartiality, transparency, respect for human rights and political neutrality. In response to Moldova's exposure to disinformation, social media manipulation and external attacks on democratic values, the Center aims to strengthen inter-institutional collaboration. Its mission is to combat disinformation, prevent information manipulation and mitigate actions that threaten Moldova's national security, democratic integrity, social cohesion, and European aspirations.

The Center accomplishes its mission through several critical functions designed to address the challenges of hybrid threats and disinformation:

- The Center leads the development, coordination, and implementation of interagency communication strategies. By encouraging collaboration between government institutions and stakeholders, it enhances their ability to understand and effectively apply strategic communication principles.
- To protect Moldova's information space, the Center establishes robust mechanisms to counter disinformation and prevent external interference. It also focuses on building societal resilience by educating and empowering citizens to recognize and resist manipulation.
- The Center performs continuous monitoring of the national and international information environment to identify and address emerging threats. It devises rapid response mechanisms to counter disinformation while strengthening public confidence in state institutions.
- Through training programs and the development of crisis communication materials, the Center strengthens institutional preparedness to counter hybrid threats. Its efforts ensure that stakeholders are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to maintain an informed and resilient society.

However, the Center refrains from engaging in censorship or political propaganda, or from interfering with media editorial policies. Instead, it focuses on providing strategic support and coordination, including developing communication guidelines, crisis management protocols and frameworks for collaboration between public institutions, civil society, and media organizations. The Centre can propose legal adjustments, coordinate with public institutions, establish international partnerships and organize training courses and seminars to promote its objectives. It also oversees funding and resource allocation for strategic communication initiatives, ensuring transparency and accountability. By institutionalizing strategic communication and combating misinformation, the Centre plays a key role in strengthening Moldova's national security, promoting social cohesion and supporting the country's democratic and European integration goals.

Also, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova approved the Decision on the *Concept of strategic communication and countering disinformation for 2024-2028*. This document argues the need for an institutionalized and integrated approach to strategic communication and countering disinformation in the context of the external and internal threats faced by the Republic of Moldova, especially from the Russian Federation. The vision is to "support, strengthen and contribute to the achievement of national interests that are the foundations of the idea of the Republic of Moldova as a 21st century state, a democratic, European republic, well anchored in the political, economic, social and security network of advanced democracies and developed economies, with a well-defined

national identity and international prestige to match”. The overall objectives of the concept are to develop the institutional capacities of the state and society to communicate effectively and combat disinformation. The main thematic areas addressed are: European integration, social cohesion, economic resilience, defense sector strengthening and strengthening national security in the regional context. This integrated and action-oriented approach aims at strengthening democracy, security, and socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova in the coming years. Importantly, the national security strategy and the strategic communication concept are interlinked and complement each other in achieving the security objectives of the Republic of Moldova (Mârzac & Zaharia, 2024).

Institutionalizing Strategic Communication at the Ministry of Defense

The institutionalization of strategic communication within the Ministry of Defense marks a significant step in Moldova’s efforts to modernize its defense capabilities. While Ministry employees have participated in strategic communication training programs since 2016, it was not until October 2023 that the Strategic Communication Directorate was formally established. This initiative aligns with the commitments outlined in the Defense Capability Building Initiative (DCBI) Package of the Republic of Moldova.

The newly established Directorate consists of two dedicated sections: the Planning Section and the Execution, Analysis, Monitoring, and Evaluation Section. As a specialized structure under the General Staff, the Directorate is directly subordinate to the Chief of the General Staff and Commander of the National Army. Its mission is to coordinate and implement strategic communication mechanisms that advance the Ministry’s priority of safeguarding national defense interests. The mission of the Strategic Communication Directorate is to coordinate and implement strategic communication mechanisms in order to realize the priority of national defense interests. Being a specialized structure of the General Staff, it is directly subordinated to the Chief of the General Staff of the National Army, Commander of the National Army.

The Directorate determines the conceptual framework for the development of strategic communication processes in the National Army, from the perspective of the reform and modernization of the institution, including in the context of interdependence, in a broader framework, with the implementation of strategic communication on the realization of the national interests of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the Directorate advises the Commander on countering disinformation, false news, as well as actions of manipulation of information related to the National Army.

The basic functions of the Directorate are:

- Coordination and implementation of strategic communication mechanisms for the realization of priority national interests in the field of defense, continuous information of the mass media about the activity of the National Army and the General Staff and communication about its policies, communication about the training of the military, participation of the National Army in national and international peacekeeping missions.
- Strategic communication ensured at society level by developing themes and messages related to the national defense system, as well as by aligning them with the actions of the state.
- Participation in the planning, organization, and implementation of strategic communication programmes/actions, in collaboration with the structures of the

Ministry of Defense, other governmental structures, diplomatic representations, non-governmental organizations or international organizations.

- Actions of accumulating, studying, and generalizing relevant information on the defense sector and transmitting it for coordination to higher decision-makers for further dissemination to the public.
- Inclusion of themes and messages related to the defense system in explicit, reasoned, attractive and suggestive information content for further promotion in society.
- Assessment of public categories in terms of perceptions, aspirations and attitudes related to the defense sector, with a view to the further development of communication content for the adequate information of society.
- Monitorization of information flow in the Republic of Moldova and internationally and, based on the findings, development and implementation actions and response measures to prevent and combat disinformation or insufficient information of public interest relating to the defense sector.
- Use of methodologies and instructions established by the state authorities, aimed at identifying and preventing false information and risks generated by hybrid threats related to the defense sector.
- Knowledge of society's perception of the correct decision-making process, as well as public understanding of the specifics of the National Army's activity.
- Realization and management of informational content for the official pages of the Ministry of Defense in social networks, as well as other pages/accounts and groups in social networks for special activities and events conducted, to promote the image of the National Army and military career.

The activities and initiatives of this directorate are aimed at achieving the objectives set in the sphere of strategic communication: prior information of media representatives on potential movements of military technique participating in exercises, training, or specializations. Communication plans on events with prior initiation and holding on the day of the event (e.g., September 3 - National Army Day); Daily press review on national defense topics (positive, neutral, or negative news, falsehoods, misinformation, manipulation, etc.)¹.

The Directorate's development represents a foundational step toward embedding strategic communication as an integral component of Moldova's security and defense framework, ensuring a more cohesive and effective approach to addressing institutional and societal challenges.

Moreover, collaboration is a cornerstone of the Directorate's approach. It works closely with the Ministry of Defense, other governmental bodies, diplomatic missions, NGOs, and international organizations to plan, organize, and execute strategic communication programs. Additionally, the Directorate collects and analyzes relevant defense-related information, providing senior decision-makers with insights to inform public messaging.

¹ Based on the interview given by Strategic Communication Directorate major Marin Butuc on December 16, 2024.

The State of Strategic Communication in Moldova: Challenges and Pathways to Integration

Strategic communication in the Republic of Moldova is still at an early stage of development, despite important progress made in recent years. The creation of structures such as the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation and the Strategic Communication Directorate within the Ministry of Defense, strategic communication sections within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Border Police are important steps. However, these initiatives are insufficient to ensure an integrated approach at societal level and effective at national and local level.

At present, strategic communication is fragmented and lacks coherence, with many institutions approaching the process separately, without inter-institutional coordination especially in the security and defense sector. For example, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, strategic communication activities are predominantly focused on media relations and public diplomacy, without a broad integration of StratCom principles into all security and defense activities. Existing structures lack sufficient human and financial resources to implement complex strategic communication programs. StratCom staff training is still limited. The Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation is at the initial and preparatory stage in such tasks as combating disinformation by monitoring the information space, supporting efforts to promote coherent national messages. Creating a basis for developing a rapid response mechanism to information manipulation. We can attest to an institutional fragmentation, where different institutions, such as the MFA, the General Inspectorate of Border Police and the Ministry of Defense, implement elements of strategic communication, but without centralized coordination. This limits the impact of messages and leads to incoherence.

Currently, strategic communication in the Republic of Moldova faces several significant challenges, which underline the need for systemic strengthening. One of the main obstacles is the absence of a well-defined system of coordination between government institutions, which leads to a lack of coherence in the delivery of messages at a national level. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of an integrated national strategic communication plan capable of aligning the messages of all structures in the security and defense sector.

Within state institutions, there are several shortcomings that limit the effectiveness of strategic communication, namely the insufficient number of strategic communication specialists hinders the effective management of this complex process, the lack of uniform skills among communicators makes the implementation of strategies uneven. In addition, most people involved in strategic communication have limited or insufficient education in this field and opportunities for further training are rare. In addition to staffing problems, there are structural and functional deficiencies affecting the entire process. Institutions in the Republic of Moldova fail to work together effectively and communication between them remains fragmented. There are no clear mechanisms to regulate the functioning of strategic communication within institutions. In most cases, communication is reactive rather than proactive and strategic communication responds only after situations worsen.

A critical issue is the lack of a national narrative that unifies messages and reflects the country's strategic values and objectives and the security sector's specific security sector. This lack amplifies vulnerability to misinformation and weakens public trust in the authorities. This gap is exacerbated by the inadequate link between communicators and

senior management, which results in strategic messages not being effectively supported at the decision-making level. The authorities responsible for strategic communication also lack clearly defined roles, including at government level. Another weakness is educating the public to recognize and resist disinformation. Without a broad capacity to educate and raise awareness, the public remains vulnerable to information manipulation, thus amplifying risks to national security.

In conclusion, the Republic of Moldova urgently needs measures to strengthen strategic communication. The creation of an integrated national plan, the development of dedicated StratCom structures at the governmental and institutional levels, and the implementation of public education programs are needed to increase national resilience in the face of information and hybrid challenges.

Perspectives

The development of Moldova's strategic communication can be achieved through the following actions:

- Synchronization of government messages and actions in national security and defense to promote national security interests and objectives.
- Institutional coordination and coordination with other entities for the effective use of all instruments of power, such as diplomatic, informational, military, and economic, in line with the National Security Strategy.
- Integration of a strategic communication framework into policy planning and implementation to ensure policy success and effectiveness (Mârzac & Zaharia, 2024).

Strategic communication within the security and defense sector of the Republic of Moldova must focus on key activities that align with national interests and priorities. Its primary role is to promote national objectives and facilitate the implementation of policies designed to address the country's most pressing challenges.

In dealing with evolving risks and threats, strategic communication serves as a critical informational tool for national authorities, enabling them to advance state objectives effectively. By integrating this approach, Moldova can strengthen its capacity to respond to hybrid threats, enhance public awareness, and build societal resilience. Strategic communication, therefore, is not merely a supplementary function but a vital mechanism for shaping narratives, fostering trust, and achieving national goals in an increasingly complex security landscape.

Primarily, the promotion of national interests depends on the continued efforts of state and non-state actors to coordinate messages and actions and on the ways in which these will be perceived by all stakeholders in the national security and defense sector. While strategic communication should involve public authorities, civil society, and citizens, its key role lies with the Presidency, Parliament, the Government, as well as ministries, agencies, and autonomous authorities. Externally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Moldova have this responsibility. In the absence of effective strategic communication, national interests are compromised, policy shifts lead to deviations, the population becomes vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation, and the lack of a clear international vision generates domestic skepticism, facilitating propaganda and confusion among external partners. The lack of StratCom can generate incoherence and chaos in actions and messages, with serious consequences, as

strategic communication supports the implementation of national strategies and counters conflicts, including hybrid wars, and is vital to the achievement of the political, economic, social, security, defense and security objectives of the state. Effective communication reflects and supports good governance (Mârzac, 2024: 4).

Secondly, effective coordination and delivery of appropriate messages, in line with the strategic objectives of the state and its institutions, will help align the efforts of the various national entities and strengthen cohesion across different sectors to counter disinformation. The need to achieve more effective inter-institutional coordination and coordination with the general public has been identified in the process of institutionalizing and putting StratCom principles into practice. Making this process more effective will provide a real understanding of the positions of the Republic of Moldova at both national and international levels and link communication messages to government policies, actions, challenges, and achievements.

The integration of a common strategic communication mindset at all levels of state institutions and national strategy implementation will lead to a high strategic culture that will facilitate the necessary changes in current practice. In practice this implies the creation of an interactive and self-sustainable system that enables the exchange of information and experience between different leaders, communicators, agencies, and stakeholders. In each situation, the focus of strategic communication activity will depend on the nature and focus of a crisis or strategy, the audience (publics) and the means available to influence or bring about change (Mârzac, 2024: 4).

At the same time, strategic communication is not just an add-on to a policy or strategy, but a vital component that must be aligned with strategic policy objectives. It must be integrated at the early stages of policy development to minimize the need for more aggressive action later on.

To be effective and authentic at the national level, strategic communication must not only represent government policy but also include a national narrative that is understood and accepted by society. Moldova currently lacks a widely distributed and promoted strategic narrative. In the current security environment, Moldova's strategic narrative should focus on the commitment to ensure the country's stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity in the face of various threats and challenges.

Strategic communication can thus become a powerful instrument of power, used to shape attitudes and behavior, to listen to and understand the public, and to coordinate messages between the government and its partners, ensuring effective integration of information with other instruments of national power.

The process of strategic communication aims to influence, and strategic influence depends entirely on effective coordination within and outside government, different state institutions to achieve national strategic objectives. Given the importance of National Strategy, there is a need for a strategic communication framework to be present in strategic planning and policy preparation and implementation (<https://infocenter.md/prezentarea-studiului-politica-de-securitate-nationala-a-republicii-moldova>).

Thirdly, the development of programs and activities that deliberately aim to communicate and engage with the public, including those implemented by professionals in public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations is necessary. Strategic communication is a two-way process, conveying the reactions and views of the different audiences involved in the communication process. Audience feedback should be used to

regularly adjust policy and strategy. Therefore, strategic communication should not be limited only to media messages, it must contribute to the development of a communication campaign aimed at behavioral or social changes in the target audiences.

Strategic communication of the Republic of Moldova will be effective only when national interests are clearly defined, messages are coherent and supported by concrete actions, audiences are well defined, and efforts are systematically coordinated, integrating the views of those affected by public policies (Mârzac & Zaharia, 2024).

There is a need to identify and coordinate all governmental instruments (political leaders, decision-makers, strategic actors, communicators, implementing actors, official diplomacy, public affairs, media operations, public-private partnership, military diplomacy, internal communication, interdepartmental public relations) as well as societal instruments (media, NGOs, private communication entities, academia, cultural institutions, business, public figures, influential authors, scientists, etc.).

At international level, strategic communication is important for promoting the positive image of the Republic of Moldova and its interests and national values, strengthening the support of partners for foreign policy objectives, and ensuring a positive image of the Republic of Moldova in the world. Through effective and coordinated communication, the state can gain the support of its partners and strengthen international relations to its benefit. Effective communication will help strengthen regional and global partnerships, allowing Moldova to play an active role in international organizations such as the European Union, NATO, or the UN, and to be perceived as a dependable partner. Thus, well-defined strategic messages can attract the political and financial support needed to achieve national objectives, including European integration and aspects related to regional security.

In addition to the political and diplomatic dimension, strategic communication should play a significant role in promoting the country's economic attractiveness. A stable and reliable state image can attract foreign investors and trading partners, creating new opportunities for economic development.

The implementation of StratCom in the defense and security sector of the Republic of Moldova will improve the effectiveness and transparency of its communication as it seeks to explain its activities and challenges to different stakeholders.

However, effective StratCom is not a panacea; it cannot replace effective work or lack of coherence between statements and actions of the government, institutions, or organizations. Strategic communication in the sector of national security must support the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy, other important security policies. StratCom contributes to maintaining, protecting, and realizing national interests and objectives, in times of peace, crisis or conflict. At the same time, strategic communication should not be a supplement to strategy, but a vital component that must be aligned with strategic policy objectives. It must be integrated at the earliest stages of policy development to minimize the need for more aggressive action later. To be effective and authentic at the national level, strategic communication must not only represent government policy but also include a national narrative that is understood and accepted by society. Thus, strategic communication can become a powerful instrument of power, used to shape attitudes and behaviors, to listen to and understand the public, and to coordinate messages between the government and its partners.

For strategic communication to serve as an effective tool, it must be institutionalized at all levels of government in Moldova. At the national level, this implies the creation of a centralized mechanism to coordinate efforts among government institutions, ensuring a unified approach to strategic messaging.

At local level, extending the principles of strategic communication to regional and municipal administration is vital for maintaining message coherence and raising community awareness. This approach can help combat misinformation and promote a stronger security culture. In addition, media literacy programs for the public, especially in regions vulnerable to external influence, are needed to enable citizens to critically evaluate information and resist manipulation. At both national and local levels strategic communication is critical for fostering a cohesive narrative, enhancing inter-institutional coordination, and building societal resilience against information threats. Only through a comprehensive, integrated, and well-planned strategy can Moldova transform strategic communication into a powerful tool for safeguarding national security and strengthening public trust.

Adopting a comprehensive StratCom approach across all levels of governance will improve communication transparency, explain national challenges to stakeholders, and align messages with broader national interests.

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