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COVERAGE OF THE SECOND SUMMIT OF THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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The second Summit of the European Political Community (EPC), held on June 1, 2023, in the town of Bulboaca, Republic of Moldova, became one of the most widely covered events in both local and international media. Given that the works of the EPC in Bulboaca took place amidst an ongoing war and approximately 20 km away from the Ukrainian border, the Bulboaca summit became an event that captured the attention of the entire international community, receiving an extensive coverage in both national and international media.

This article aims to study the way the works of the EPC Summit held in the Republic of Moldova have been reflected in the foreign media.

Keywords: *summit, press, platform, mass-media, problems, Republic of Moldova, Bulboaca.*

REFLECTAREA CELUI DE AL DOILEA SUMMIT AL COMUNITĂȚII POLITICE EUROPENE ÎN PRESA INTERNAȚIONALĂ

Cel de-al doilea summit al Comunității Politice Europene (CPE), desfășurat pe data de 1 iunie 2023 în localitatea Bulboaca din Republica Moldova, a devenit unul din evenimentele cele mai mediatizate atât în presa locală, cât și în cea internațională. Având în vedere că lucrările CPE de la Bulboaca s-au desfășurat în condițiile prezenței unui război activ și la o distanță de aproximativ 20 km de frontiera cu Ucraina, summitul de la Bulboaca a fost evenimentul care a atras atenția întregii comunități internaționale, fiind pe larg mediatizat atât în presa națională, cât și în cea internațională.

Prezentul articol are drept obiectiv studierea modalității de reflectare în mass-media străină a lucrărilor summitului CPE, desfășurat în Republica Moldova.

Cuvinte-cheie: *summit, presă, platformă, massmedia, probleme, Republica Moldova, Bulboaca*.

Introduction

The Summit of the European Political Community (EPC) held on June 1, 2023, in the village of Bulboaca, Republic of Moldova, has become one of the most widely covered events in both local and international media. Unlike the coverage of the Republic of Moldova obtaining its sovereignty 30 years ago, the Bulboaca Summit received extensive media attention from foreign press [1]. Over a span of 30 years, the Republic of Moldova has been in the spotlight of the entire world. While the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova on June 27, 1990, received modest coverage in the foreign press (with only the speech of Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Romulus Neagu, being broadcasted on Romanian radio and the presence of a Lithuanian delegation in Moldova on June 23, 1990, which supported and appreciated the Declaration of Sovereignty), the newspaper Krasnaia Zvezda in Moscow took a completely opposite position at that time, publishing an article on the eve of the adoption of the Declaration, referring to the events unfolding in Moldova [2], the Bulboaca Summit received extensive coverage both in the national and international media. Hundreds of foreign journalists covered the event that took place on June 1, 2023, at the Mimi Mansion in Bulboaca, Republic of Moldova, with its presence being featured in renowned international publications [3]**.** At Bulboaca, discussions took place in multiple languages, including Romanian, English, French, Ukrainian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Journalists provided live coverage of this significant event, resulting in the Republic of Moldova making headlines in the international press. Some experts consider the visit to the Republic of Moldova, especially Bulboaca, to be a significant challenge due to its proximity of only 20 kilometers from the Ukrainian border. Out of the accredited journalists at the European Political Community summit, 330 were reporters, 200 were camera operators and photographers, 60 were editors, and another hundred were part of official delegations serving as press officers [4].

The Bulboaca Summit in the foreign press

For a better understanding and to create a more comprehensive picture of the coverage of the Bulboaca event, it is necessary to provide a brief analysis of how this event was reflected in the foreign press. The opening ceremony of the European Political Community Summit was broadcasted by numerous international channels and news agencies. The largest Chinese news agency, "Xinhua News", broadcasted the entire welcoming ceremony by the President of the Republic of Moldova for the leaders of the 47 member states, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Montenegrin President Jakov Milatovic, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, President of the European Council Charles Michel, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. In this context, the statements made by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, are also noteworthy, as he emphasized that the Bulboaca Summit provides an opportunity for Europe to discuss pressing issues and strive for greater political convergence. According to the reports from "Xinhua News", some European leaders attempted to use the event to defuse regional tensions, and the Platform aims to facilitate political coordination for European countries, particularly promoting dialogue between EU member states and those outside the EU. The EPC Summit focused on security issues as well as energy, climate, and interconnectivity [5].

The opening ceremony of the second EPC Summit was broadcasted by Al Jazeera in English. Out of their 10.4 million subscribers, the event in Chișinău had 5,106 views. Special attention was given to the statements made by the President of the Republic of Moldova, M. Sandu, and the President of Ukraine, V. Zelensky, regarding Moldova's desire to join the European Union and Ukraine's aspirations to join the NATO military alliance and the EU [6].

Additionally, the Bulboaca event was broadcasted on the YouTube channel of "France 24". Out of their 5.63 million subscribers, the event in Bulboaca garnered 28,921 views [7]. The message conveyed by the leaders of the 47 member states was a message of European unity against the war in Ukraine [8]. The French channel TV5MONDE Info also broadcasted the event that took place in Bulboaca. Out of their 1.29 million subscribers, the event received 3,439 views. TV5MONDE highlighted that the leaders of the 47 states participated in this unique format against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. The news coverage on this channel discussed various moments, such as the absence of the Turkish president and the reasons behind it. The position of the United Kingdom was also not overlooked. Significant emphasis was placed on the long-term objectives of the EPC and the response of European states to the war in Ukraine. The topic of energy security and the European strategy for ensuring security were also central to the discussions [9]. Similarly, the speech of the President of the Republic of Moldova, M. Sandu, received extensive media coverage and was analyzed by international experts [10].

"In the peaceful and tranquil setting of Mimi Castle, which stands in stark contrast to the war happening at the border of the Republic of Moldova, the leaders of the states gathered to restore peace on the continent". President Sandu mentioned that by convening the second summit of the European Political Community just 20 km away from the Ukrainian border, it is an expression of solidarity towards Ukraine and its people. Ukrainians are fighting for freedom, European values, and the future of our continent. Through her speech, President M. Sandu condemned the war in Ukraine, which is the largest ongoing conflict on the European continent. The President of the Republic of Moldova also referred to the summit as a platform to find solutions that require the commitment of all to restore peace, address the consequences of the war, and protect Europe. It is a clear expression of unity, strength, and determination of the Republic of Moldova to act together as a single family that remains united, a family that works together to address common issues. A single European family in which states from both within and outside the European Union act together to deter aggression and strengthen peace on the continent [11]. Similarly, through her speech, M. Sandu addressed the strategic discussion on strengthening security on the continent, which would make it possible to address the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. President Sandu also referred to the issues of

the energy and climate crisis and discussed ways to address them, emphasizing the shift towards a cleaner and more secure pan-European energy system [12].

Similarly, the speech delivered by the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the European Political Community Summit in Moldova drew the attention of the entire world. He stated that in Moldova, there are no air raids or sirens, but not long ago, the Russians were convinced that after attacking Ukraine, they would attack Moldova as well. Zelensky further expressed that “Russia is afraid of NATO and is only trying to swallow those outside the NATO space”. Therefore, the Ukrainian President mentioned that “all European countries that share a border with Russia and do not want to be torn apart by Russia should ally themselves with the EU and NATO”. Furthermore, through his speech, the Ukrainian President emphasized that “none of us has any doubt about what the solution for Europe should be: a comprehensive defense against Russian terror” [13]. The speeches of the leaders from Chișinău and Kyiv were also broadcasted by the French channel “France Info” [14] “Monde” [15]. Similarly, these channels also broadcasted the speech of the French President, E. Macron. The statements made by the French President were reported by the majority of television and radio channels in France. This information is in accordance with the French channel “Elysee.fr” [16], the project launched in 2022 in Prague has become a reality and demonstrates its effectiveness. In addition to congratulating President Sandu on organizing the Summit, which the French President considers an organizational challenge, the project’s success is evident. Organizing the second Summit in Moldova, at the outposts of Europe, close to the Ukrainian front, is also a resounding success and a testament to the determination of European states to commit to defending peace and security in Europe, including supporting Moldova in its process of joining the EU. The opening ceremony of the second EPC Summit was broadcasted by the French channel “RFI” [17] and “Les Echos” [18].

Additionally, the leader from Paris mentioned that the summit itself is a very powerful symbol that shows that no member of the European family will be abandoned, including the Republic of Moldova. According to President Macron’s statements, the summit has conditioned the strengthening of efforts for Ukraine, which has been under Russian aggression for over a year. The discussions and joint statement with President Zelensky reaffirm the support provided to Ukraine, particularly in terms of arms for defensive preparations. In this context, the Paris leader reiterated the agreement reached on May 14, 2023, which focuses on providing protection against Russian attacks with air defense equipment and commencing the training of Ukrainian combat pilots based on the needs of the Ukrainian Air Forces. As the country that initiated this movement, France, taking into account parallel consultations with the United States and other willing countries, has instructed the Defense Ministers to prepare the formal framework and training mechanism for both pilots and mechanics based on the needs expressed by the Ukrainian side. Furthermore, during the meeting with President Zelensky, security guarantee issues of NATO were extensively discussed. The organization of the summit demonstrates France’s support for the Republic of Moldova. France has also played its role in logistics and airport management, communication, and security for this summit. “Our support is expressed in a very concrete way for the benefit of the Moldovan population, in addition to everything we have done with the European Union in recent months, such as deploying the civilian CSDP mission to counter hybrid threats, adopting a European sanctions system against individuals seeking to destabilize the Republic of Moldova, or associating with the interconnectivity mechanism in Europe...” [19].

The Bulboaca Summit has also become a subject of analysis for F. Parmentier, the Secretary-General of the Center for Political Research “Sciences Po.” According to the analysis conducted by F. Parmentier, the goal of the EPC is to become an inclusive forum for security, promoting trust among its members and assisting in the prevention and management of crises. The discussions within this forum could focus on issues such as defense cooperation, counterterrorism, and border security.

Similarly, in the context of the analysis, Parmentier also referred to the possibilities of the EPC to improve transportation links and digital infrastructure by including projects for the development of transnational transport networks, providing investments in this field, and initiatives aimed at reducing the digital divide. Another important aspect mentioned by Parmentier was energy security. Through the EPC, Europeans will have the opportunity to discuss the energy transition of European states, taking into account geopolitical constraints, specifically the need to move away from Russian hydrocarbons, which were previously

abundant and affordable. Special attention was given to the Republic of Moldova. The Bulboaca Summit is crucial not only for the EPC but also for Moldova. The EPC can offer Moldova a unique opportunity to enhance its bilateral political engagement with European countries. Moldova's aspiration to join the European family requires considerable effort from the Moldovan authorities. Additionally, Parmentier referred to the Republic of Moldova as a landlocked country located between Romania and Ukraine, with a population of no more than three million people. Due to the presidential elections in November 2020, which resulted in the election of M.Sandu as president, Moldova has declared its European vector as the country's main irreversible objective.

However, according to the expert's analysis, the Republic of Moldova has been severely impacted by the war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022. From the early weeks of the conflict, Moldova had to cope with an unprecedented influx of refugees and find concrete solutions regarding access to water, housing, hygiene, and healthcare. Nearly half a million Ukrainians crossed the country, with the majority heading to European Union countries, while approximately 80,000 refugees remained on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

F. Parmentier's main focus on Moldova was the fact that, given its separatist territory on the border with Ukraine, Transnistria, where there is a Russian military presence (the 14th Army), the country should act with caution. Solidarity with Ukraine represents Moldova's stance towards Russia. Analyzing the situation in the Republic of Moldova in light of the war in Ukraine, the expert also referred to the presence of military forces in Transnistria, which, contrary to expectations, did not directly participate in the fighting during the Russian offensive in February 2022 or later. This aspect encouraged Moldovan leaders to reaffirm their desire for European integration, leading to the recognition of Moldova's candidate country status despite numerous hybrid threats. European integration is currently the main political project that unites the majority of Moldovans, even though there may be opposition to such a geopolitical orientation. F. Parmentier also mentioned the elections in Gagauzia (April-May 2023). According to the expert's opinion, the elections demonstrated that the autonomous region of Gagauzia remains "deeply attached to privileged relations with Russia" [20]. The event at Bulboaca was also covered in the pages of the French newspaper "Courrier International," [21] "Le Point" [22].

The Bulboaca Summit also received significant attention by the "Associated Press" agency, which, out of its 2.15 million subscribers, had 4,764 views. According to the journalists' reports, Moldova's choice is symbolic. The Republic of Moldova, with a population of 2.5 million, has become the subject of massive destabilization operations by Russia. This summit is therefore a message of unity against Moscow. According to the "Associated Press" journalists, the President of the Republic of Moldova, M.Sandu, reiterated her eagerness to join the European Union, while V.Zelensky defended the necessity of his country's entry into NATO [23].

In the context of highlighting the proceedings of the Bulboaca Summit, it is noteworthy to mention the news coverage by the channel "Euronews en español" [24] and the online publication "La Moncloa" [25]. Out of the 10 thousand subscribers of "La Moncloa," the news about the event in the Republic of Moldova had 1,522 views. "La Moncloa" reported that the EPC Summit brought together the 47 European leaders in the Moldovan capital, creating a forum that promotes informal intra-European dialogue and puts all countries on an equal footing. According to the news provided by "La Moncloa", European leaders discussed connectivity, energy interconnections, transport infrastructure, and regional security. The news also covered the meeting between the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and the Ukrainian President V.Zelensky. In the news article about the second EPC Summit, Pedro Sánchez's speech was highlighted, stating that "holding the summit in Moldova is yet another example of the entire continent's commitment to the Republic of Moldova and that Moldova is at the center of the European family". The Spanish Prime Minister also praised Moldova's efforts to become a member of the European Union. The meeting in Bulboaca, according to the opinion of the Spanish Prime Minister, allows the European Political Community to send a strong message of unity in the face of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine: "Our democratic freedoms, principles, and values that underpin the European Union and the rules-based international order are being threatened by Russia's aggressive war". Sánchez emphasized that this challenge must be addressed col-

lectively and that “the European Political Community promotes what Europeans value most: dialogue and cooperation”. Furthermore, Pedro Sánchez’s statement included the commitment that Spain will host the third EPC Summit in Granada on October 5, 2023. He appreciated the importance of promoting existing initiatives that bring European citizens closer, such as the promotion of youth mobility. In this context, the Prime Minister highlighted the success of Erasmus+, which needs to be supported and further promoted, mentioning that in 2022 nearly 900 academic mobilities were carried out between Spain and countries in the Eastern Neighborhood, including the Republic of Moldova.

“La Moncloa” considers that a positive aspect of the Summit was the focus on energy and infrastructure and the projects that represent the best examples of cooperation. The Prime Minister had the opportunity to emphasize that energy interconnections contribute to the development of the European electricity market, ensuring supply and encouraging the deployment of renewable sources. In this context, he highlighted the achievement in this field, namely the development of the H2MED hydrogen corridor, which Spain, Portugal, and France will jointly develop.

Regarding transportation infrastructure, Pedro Sánchez conveyed to the other leaders the importance of commitment to efficient transport networks, a fundamental element for supporting economic growth, facilitating access to greater economic opportunities, and improving the resilience of global supply chains. Additionally, the Prime Minister highlighted proposals aimed at expanding the Mediterranean corridor from Spain to Ukraine, including recent projects to adapt rail infrastructure in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, in a complex international context, the leaders were able to focus their discussions on security, with special emphasis on hybrid threats and nuclear security in Ukraine. President Zelensky’s presence at this summit allowed the other leaders to reiterate their support for the Ukrainian people in the face of unjustified aggression from the Russian Federation and emphasize the need to work towards building a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine. President Sánchez also underscored that holding this summit in Moldova is yet another example of our entire continent’s commitment to this country and its government. “Moldova is at the center of the European family”, he said. He also praised the country’s efforts to become a member of the European Union.

This meeting, emphasized the Prime Minister, allows the European Political Community to send a strong message of unity in the face of Putin’s war of aggression against Ukraine. “Our democratic freedoms, principles, and values that underpin the European Union and the rules-based international order are threatened by Russia’s war of aggression,” he said, emphasizing that this challenge must be addressed collectively. “The European Political Community promotes what we Europeans value most: dialogue and cooperation”. Additionally, Pedro Sánchez conveyed to the President of the Republic of Moldova the commitment of Spain to host the 3rd Summit of the European Political Community in Granada on October 5th. Pedro Sánchez appreciated the importance of promoting all existing initiatives in this field that bring European citizens closer, such as promoting youth mobility. In this context, the Prime Minister reminded that Erasmus+ is a success story that needs to be further promoted and recalled that in 2022, nearly 900 exchanges were carried out between Spain and countries in the Eastern Neighborhood [26].

The Italian news agency “Pupia News” also covered the opening ceremony of the second European Political Community Summit. According to their report, which reached 8,527 views among their 167,000 subscribers, the channel focused particularly on the statements made by Italy’s Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni [27]. The news about the second European Political Community Summit held in Moldova was reported by the news agency “Sky News.” Among their 6.39 million subscribers, the news story covering the participation of European leaders in the event in Moldova received 6,244 vies [28]. The event in the Republic of Moldova was covered by the German news agency “DG.” Among their 1.6 thousand subscribers, the Bulboaca event had 124 views. The European Political Community Summit in Chisinau was also a topic of discussion within the German political community. According to experts such as Ilke Toygür, Georgina Wright, and Milan Nič, the second EPC summit in Chisinau set the tone for the future activities of the new format. Although the EPC has not yet succeeded in promoting “strategic politics” in an extended Europe, the second EPC Summit contributed to strengthening opposition to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and served as a catalyst for the EU enlargement process [29].

The Belgian news agency "La Libre" reported the statements of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. According to the agency, Borrell emphasized that the event is an additional reason to send a strong message, particularly to Russia. Borrell also mentioned the perspective of Moldova's accession to the European Union, stating that the issue related to the Transnistrian region should not hinder the country's European path [30]. The interview given by the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a joint press conference also received attention. According to her statements, Ursula von der Leyen referred to Moldova as the "political heart of Europe". She further announced that the European Union will provide increased support to help Moldova cope with the economic pressures caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and to withstand Russia's "hybrid threats" domestically. The most significant support offered to the Republic of Moldova is the facilitation of the accession process to the European Union [31].

For journalists representing the news agency "Deutsche Welle" (DW), the choice of the Summit's venue was not accidental. The Mimi Castle, which hosted the Summit, is situated on the Chisinau-Tiraspol highway, just 30 kilometers from the Transnistrian region. The residents of this rebel region already see the difference: the "Soviet" Tiraspol across the Nistru River, which they compare to the Moldovan infrastructure, while beyond Bulboaca they can already travel on the "Euro-Moldovan" highway. According to DW journalists, all of this is meant to showcase the benefits of European integration. The decision to organize the summit in Moldova was made during the first Eastern Partnership Summit held in Prague in October last year. It was agreed that such discussions would take place twice a year, alternating between EU member states and non-EU states. A new format of cooperation for dialogue and political coordination was proposed by the French President Emmanuel Macron after Ukraine submitted its application for EU membership [32]. The German online publication "Bundesregierung" reported the statements of Olaf Scholz, in which he described the European Political Community as a new entity with the ambition to propose a new format of political cooperation in Europe. The Community distinguishes itself from other pre-existing European institutions through its main characteristic, which is flexibility. It is inspired by the G20 model, which brings together the leaders of the world's most powerful countries to discuss international issues and seek concrete solutions to major challenges [33].

The event at Bulboaca was also covered by the Swiss news portal "Swissinfo" [34] According to the reports by Swissinfo journalists, at the Bulboaca Summit, V. Zelensky emphasized that 2023 is a year for decisive decisions for Ukraine and requested a "clear invitation for membership" at the NATO summit in Vilnius in July, along with security guarantees. At the same time, Zelensky mentioned his desire to see progress on the path of his country's accession to the European Union. Kiev submitted the corresponding application last year after the onset of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. This statement was also commented on by some Swiss experts. According to their opinion, "a number of media outlets have previously reported that NATO allies are discussing the possibility of providing Ukraine with certain security guarantees, following the example of US cooperation with Israel. Representatives of NATO countries say that the doors of the Union are open for Kiev, but Ukraine's entry is difficult while the war with Russia continues".

The diplomatic relations between Estonia and Moldova were established on November 10, 1992. Last year, Tallinn and Chisinau celebrated 30 years since the states gained independence. "In these difficult times, when Russia continues to wage an inhumane war against Ukraine, diplomatic support for this event is invaluable. European countries will not in any way give up on Moldova. Peace and democracy will be protected. This event is important for the European path of the Republic of Moldova as well. The leaders of the member states will visit and get to know Moldova better. And for us, this is an opportunity to demonstrate that we are a peaceful country with hardworking people, dignity, and a shared commitment to European values", stated President M. Sandu as presented by the Estonian news portal "ERR.EE." [35]. It was also mentioned that Estonia has actively supported the Republic of Moldova on the international stage and on its path towards European integration over the years. However, the visits by high-ranking officials to Moldova have not been very frequent. In 2022, President Alar Karis flew to Chisinau, and in 2018, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas visited Moldova. In September 2021, according to "ERR.EE," President Kersti Kaljulaid was scheduled to visit Moldova, but ultimately the visit did not take place.

The works of the second European Political Community Summit were broadcasted by the channel “AZERTAC.” Special attention was given to the welcoming ceremony of President Ilham Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan by President Maia Sandu of the Republic of Moldova. Out of their 7,400 subscribers, on June 1, 2023, the channel had 870 views [36]. The news portal “Ekho Kavkaza” also reported on the event at Bulboaca and the security measures taken for the participants. During the European Political Community Summit on June 1-2 at the Mimi Winery Complex in the village of Bulboaca, in order to ensure aviation security, the flights of all civilian aircraft were prohibited in the entire airspace of the Republic of Moldova from June 1, 00:00 (local time) until June 2, 07:00, except for official aircraft and civilian unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). The flight ban was in effect from 00:00 on May 31 (local time) until 07:00 on June 2. The Ministry stated that airlines had already been informed about the flight prohibition in the country’s airspace. Additionally, leaving cars in the airport parking lot was also prohibited. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova also reported on the traffic restrictions and security measures taken during the days of the Summit, as mentioned in the news provided by “Ekho Kavkaza” [37].

The publication “Euroactiv” wrote that “the European Political Community Summit, hosted by the Republic of Moldova on June 1, is an opportunity for Moldova to showcase the progress it has made and its economic development.” BBC journalists referred to the statements made by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Moldova. It concerns the issue of illegal migration, which he discussed with European leaders [38]. Among the Romanian press, Digi 24 had accredited journalists at Bulboaca who provided live coverage from the event. Antena 3 reported that Moldova hosted an “unprecedented summit,” while Libertatea interviewed locals from Bulboaca to gather their opinions on the summit [39].

The works of the second EPC Summit at Bulboaca were extensively covered in the Ukrainian media. The “Гроші” project of the national Ukrainian channel “1+1” had 4.7 thousand views among their 1.9 million subscribers. According to experts from “Гроші,” the European Political Community Summit is a new element of the European diplomatic architecture, and President V. Zelensky’s participation demonstrates that the issue related to the situation in Ukraine was central to this event [40].

The Ukrainian Telegram channel “Dumskaya” not only covered the works of the event but also reported that only Russia and Belarus were not invited to the summit. This is understandable as the summit became a sign of solidarity with Ukraine and the host country, Moldova. The idea behind the European Political Community is primarily the development and improvement of cooperation between the EU and other European states [41]. In this context, the coverage of the event at Bulboaca and the speech of the Ukrainian President by the news agency “Украинские национальные новости” (Ukrainian National News) aligns with the focus on the summit and its significance for Ukraine [42].

The information about the works of the event was also covered by “Mir 24,” the television channel of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) [43]. The event that took place in the Republic of Moldova was covered by the news portal “Reuters,” which reported on the statements made by Presidents V. Zelensky and E. Macron at Bulboaca and contextualized them within the international context.

A negative stance regarding the EPC Summit at Bulboaca was held by most channels as well as some experts from the Russian Federation who asserted: “The fact that the leaders of several European states set foot on Moldovan soil does not mean that the West has taken Moldova out of the Russian civilization space. The Russian language, Transnistria, Gagauzia, Russian peacekeeping forces, energy resources, Russian markets for Moldovan products, common historical memory, and shared faith are the factors that bind Moldova to Russia”. Additionally, criticism was directed at Sandu’s leadership in Russian sources. Moreover, the Russian media depicted the Bulboaca Summit in a mocking manner. According to statements made by Shornikov, there was no remarkable attention from the Western press regarding Moldova’s summit: there’s nothing to talk about, nothing significant happened for the Western world in Chisinau. It was also mentioned that “The Sandu regime, whose stability guarantee was the European dream of Moldovans, has been shaken. Moldova is entering an electoral period, and there is a real threat that the current team will lose power. Fueled by European illusions, the Moldovan population is pushed towards making the ‘correct’ choice during future campaigns”.

Furthermore, Shornikov also stated, "The fact that Sandu is a fervent supporter of European integration is unlikely to be questioned in Moldova. However, the path to the European Union comes at a high cost for Moldovans. Instead of improving legal standards and raising the standard of living, there is an impoverishment of the population, and the authorities' arbitrariness is no longer as appealing. In two years, the number of supporters of European integration has decreased from 68% to 35%. The failure of the Sandu team is not yet evident, and there is time to improve the situation. The recent loss in Gagauzia shows that the regime is not viable" [44].

As stated to the TASS news agency, Kirill Logvinov, the interim permanent representative of Russia to the EU, on the eve of the European Political Community (EPC) summit, asserted that, "...it will be a new attempt by Brussels to form an anti-Russian coalition and persuade other countries to join sanctions against Russia. Considering Brussels' anti-Russian nature, one cannot expect anything other than another attempt by the ENP to impose its own 'worldview'... The emergence of the new format was dictated by the crisis in both the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership program (the EU initiative aimed at bringing Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine closer). However, while previously the EU and member states were united by the awareness of the benefits of economic integration, today the EU only sees benefits in forming an anti-Russian coalition. Certainly, the forum's activity can only be affected by the fact that, since the first summit in October 2022, its organizer, the European Union, through its actions, has further contributed to the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict. The EU believes that relations with Russia are 'harming the national interests' of third countries or that the EU will only be 'friendly' with those who, along with it, have stood on the 'right side of history'. The meeting in Chisinau is also an opportunity for Brussels to continue convincing others of the necessity of respecting illegitimate unilateral sanctions. However, there are no objective reasons for countries genuinely striving to maintain their foreign policy independence to get involved in the confrontation between the West and Russia" [45].

According to the journalists of the newspaper "Московский Комсомолец" (Moskovsky Komsomolets), the EPC Summit, which concluded in Moldova, did not produce any concrete outcomes, as expected. In fact, no one had anticipated significant success, except perhaps Sandu and Zelensky. The former hoped for Moldova to receive a green light from the EU, while the latter came for financial and military aid. Several heads of state explicitly suggested that Moldova's path to the EU would be very long. None of the European leaders promised anything specific to Chisinau. However, the Moldovan authorities had hoped so much that the Summit could at least agree on starting negotiations for the country's accession to the EU. Sandu spoke with such confidence that the country could become an EU member by 2030. But no promising things happened. Europe is quite satisfied with the current state of affairs: Moldova, impoverished as a source of cheap labor and a market for low-quality goods dumping. No one wants to "raise" the living standards of the population to their own level. This is not the "accursed USSR" that reconstructed industry, science, and culture for you free of charge [46].

The news portal "Gazeta.Ru" mentioned that the opposition party in Moldova, "Shor," and other anti-government forces, united in the "Mișcarea pentru Popor" (Movement for the People), issued a resolution following the results of the recent protests in Chisinau. In the resolution, they promised to block the roads in the Moldovan capital on the day of the Summit there. In the Russian press, statements from the opponents were reported as follows: "We plan to block traffic on many transport arteries to express our civil position to representatives of other countries. The actions of the authorities during the crisis and the lack of funds in the budget are like a celebration during the plague," as stated in the resolution of the Movement for the People [47].

Conclusions

Although the EPC is an organization created at the initiative of French President E. Macron on May 9, 2022, it represents a platform that offers cooperation to all European states that share the same democratic values. It is a platform that provides an opportunity for all states to discuss the most pressing issues concerning European security and peace, energy security, ecological and social problems etc. All these aspects demonstrate the relevance and power of this format. Analyzing the second Summit of the European Politi-

cal Community, held on June 1, 2023, in Bulboaca, Republic of Moldova, it is worth mentioning that it took place amidst an ongoing war on Moldova's border, a war triggered by the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine. The choice of holding the EPC Summit in Bulboaca is not random. This decision is symbolic and represents the unity and consolidation of European states against the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

Although only a part of the information sources that covered and reflected the works of the second EPC Summit has been analyzed, it is evident that, three decades after gaining independence, the Republic of Moldova has become a subject of discussion for international experts and has been at the center of attention for the entire international community.

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