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MOSCOW'S INTERFERENCES IN MOLDOVA'S LOCAL ELECTIONS' CAMPAIGN

Thanks to the election of the governor of Gagauzia in May, Moscow stepped up its influence in this traditionally pro-Russian Moldovan autonomous region, which has a population of roughly 140,000 inhabitants.

Against this backdrop, the Kremlin has implemented high-level political channels and deployed influence agents close to its intelligence services within the Gagauz political entities.

Thanks to this political basis, Moscow and its proxies have tried to extend their influence to the north of Moldova, namely in the framework of the November 5, 2023 local elections. With this goal in mind, the Kremlin has namely participated in the illicit funding of pro-Russian political actors.

Even though it is a local ballot, these local elections have had an impact on the political life of the country. Chisinau's outgoing mayor, Ion Ceban, whose relationship with Moscow remains ambiguous, defeated the candidate of the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS, presidential party) and won the elections during the first round. This victory made him

stronger *vis-à-vis* Maia Sandu, as the 2024 presidential election approach.

Maia Sandu, for her part, engaged in an open fight against the political and financial galaxy of pro-Russian oligarch Ilan Shor. The declaration of his party's constitutional invalidity by Moldovan courts last summer however, did not hinder Ilan Shor's influence in Moldova, where he remains one of the major drivers of the pro-Russian influence.

Ilán Shor is an Israeli-Moldovan national, in exile in Tel-Aviv since 2019. He is wanted by Chisinau authorities for embezzlement. He held ministerial responsibilities in the past, and was mayor of the town of Orhei. Close to Moscow, he uses his proxies to stir tensions between Comrat, the local capital city, and Chisinau's central government.

As the next presidential election in Moldova is planned for the autumn 2024, Moscow demonstrates its capacity to mobilize its networks to weigh in on the political life of a state which is now officially a candidate to join the European Union.

USE OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKING JIHADIST ONLINE PRESENCE AS A DRIVER OF RADICALIZATION

Caucasian and Central-Asian networks of the "Islamic State" in Europe have been increasingly integrating members of the endogenous movement, as well as jihadist profiles coming from abroad, including roughly one hundred individuals who came from Ukraine after the Russian invasion of February 2022.

They represent a pool of potential aspirants, against the backdrop of an operational new momentum of the Afghan Wilaya of the Islamic State (ISKP), which tries to activate Jihad supporters already in Europe. The presence in many European countries of profiles linked to ISKP high command and its facilitation networks is likely to transform these supporters' networks into full-fledged operational cells.

Russian-speaking jihadist networks also organize through the internet, a virtual space that encourages the

encounter of threatening actors. It represents a digital global ecosystem, which integrates both people who produce propaganda and who consume it, and who are likely to become a threat on a number of technical platforms.

Conversely to the jihadist on-line presence in other languages, which is usually organized around a central propaganda entity officially recognized by the "Islamic State", the Russian-speaking jihadist presence on-line is made up of a myriad of groups and decentralized channels. This virtual space is visited by Central-Asian and Caucasian communities linked to the "Islamic State", and is essentially made up of media groups, proactive mostly on the messaging application Telegram.

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FIGURE

ALEXSEY DYUMIN, GOVERNOR OF THE REGION OF TULA



Tula is an industrial region which has become strategic in the framework of the war in Ukraine. Located 180 km south of Moscow, this oblast hosts five companies of Russia's military and industrial complex, which represents 16% of the region's economy. Since 2016, Alexsey Dyumin has been Governor of Tula. He spent most of his career within the President's Security Service (SPB), until he became Deputy Director of this entity.

His career made a U-turn in 2014 because of his important role in the Ukrainian crisis, mainly in Crimea. Thanks to his good reputation and the fact that he is trusted by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the

Land Forces, and first Deputy to the Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces. Later, he became Vice-Minister of Defense. This political promotion happened in the framework of the generational renewal of Russia's political elites decided by the Head of State.

Alexsey Dyumin has been using his many supports among Russia's leading entities to develop his influence within the regime, as shown by the key-role he played in the negotiations with oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, during the June 2023 coup attempt.

Because of his loyalty, his good reputation, and his good work as head of Tula, Alexsey Dyumin could be entrusted with major responsibilities within the federal administration.

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