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FUNCȚIONAREA FRONTIEREI DE STAT A REPUBLICII MOLDOVA ÎN CONTEXTUL DEZVOLTĂRII COOPERĂRII INTERNAȚIONALE. LEGĂTURA DIALECTICĂ

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Prezentul articol rezumă analiza regimului de funcționare a frontierei de stat a Republicii Moldova interdependent de vectorii politici de dezvoltare a țării pe arena internațională. De la proclamarea independenței până în prezent, regimul de funcționare a frontierelor moldovenești a variat de la dimensiuni de fortificare a statalității până la contribuții prin participare în asigurarea securității regionale. La etapa actuală, autoritățile de frontieră preocupate de obiectivul național strategic – integrarea europeană, trebuie să se concentreze pe dezvoltarea unui nou concept modern de funcționare a frontierelor, care să ia în considerare doi parametri principali interconectați dialectic: pe de o parte, frontiera trebuie să fie cât mai deschisă posibil pentru cooperare cu comunitatea internațională și regională, iar pe de altă parte, trebuie să ofere în continuare o protecție necondiționată a intereselor naționale și a securității naționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Republica Moldova, frontieră de stat, cooperare internațională, dialectică, integrare europeană.*

FUNCTIONING OF THE STATE BORDER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. THE DIALECTIC CONNECTION

This article summarizes the analysis of the functioning regime of the state border of the Republic of Moldova interdependent with the political vectors of development of the country on the international arena. From the proclamation of independence to the present, the regime of functioning of the Moldovan bordershas varied from dimensions of statehood fortification to contributions through participation in ensuring regional security. At the present stage, border authorities concerned with the national strategic objective - European integration, must focus on developing a new modern concept of border functioning, which takes into account two main dialectically interlinked parameters: on the one hand, the border must be as open as possible for cooperation with the international and regional community, and on the other hand, it must continue to provide unconditional protection of national interests and national security.

Keywords: *Republic of Moldova, state border, international cooperation, dialectics, European integration.*

FONCTIONNEMENT DE LA FRONTIÈRE D'ÉTAT DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA DANS LE CONTEXTE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DE LA COOPÉRATION INTERNATIONALE. UNE CONNEXION DIALECTIQUE

Cet article résume l'analyse du régime de fonctionnement de la frontière étatique de la République de Moldavie, interdépendant des vecteurs politiques du développement du pays sur la scène internationale. Depuis la proclamation de l'indépendance jusqu'à aujourd'hui, le régime de fonctionnement des frontières moldaves a varié depuis le renforcement de l'État jusqu'à la contribution à la participation à la garantie de la sécurité régionale. Au stade actuel, les autorités

frontalières concernées par l'objectif stratégique national – l'intégration européenne – doivent se concentrer sur le développement d'un nouveau concept moderne de gestion des frontières, qui tienne compte de deux paramètres principaux dialectiquement interconnectés: d'une part, la frontière doit être aussi ouverte que possible à la coopération avec la communauté internationale et régionale et, d'autre part, doit continuer à assurer une protection inconditionnelle des intérêts nationaux et de la sécurité nationale.

***Mots-clés**: République de Moldova, frontière étatique, coopération internationale, dialectique, intégration européenne.*

ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНИЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ГРАНИЦЫ РЕСПУБЛИКИ МОЛДОВА В УСЛОВИЯХ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА. ДИАЛЕКТИЧЕСКАЯ СВЯЗЬ

В данной статье подведен итог анализа режима функционирования государственной границы Республики Молдова во взаимосвязи с политическими векторами развития страны на международной арене. С момента провозглашения независимости до настоящего времени режим функционирования молдавских границ варьировал от аспектов укрепления государственности до вклада через участие в обеспечении региональной безопасности. На современном этапе пограничные органы, озадаченные стратегической национальной целью – европейской интеграцией, должны сосредоточиться на разработке новой современной концепции функционирования границы, в которой должны учитываться два диалектически взаимосвязанных основных параметра: с одной стороны, граница должна быть максимально открыта для сотрудничества с международным и региональным сообществом, а с другой - продолжать обеспечивать безусловную защиту национальных интересов и национальной безопасности.

***Ключевые слова:** Республика Молдова, государственная граница, международное сотрудничество, диалектика, европейская интеграция.*

Introduction

The effectiveness of international cooperation and the border management regime implies interaction and dialectical interdependence between the various aspects and actors involved in these processes. From the point of view of the border management regime, the effectiveness of itsfunctioning is in a continuous dialectical relationship: on the one hand, it must facilitate the unhindered passage of people and goods, promote economic cooperation and security, positive interaction between states, on the other hand, it must ensure state sovereignty and security, managing potential risks and threats.

It is important to note that the effectiveness of international cooperation and the border operating regime can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as national policies and strategies,the security environment, the global economy and power dynamics in the international system.

In modern conditions it is impossible to ensure the efficient functioning of the state border without a well-structured horizontal and vertical system, coagulated by a clear, established and integrated policy for as long as possible. The problem of efficient border management becomes acute when conceptual visions, especially of a political nature, are variable and characteristic of relatively short periods of time. Changes require interventions in approach, shaping or reshaping the systemic environment of action, affecting the tempo and intensity of border processes, which in turn complicate or even destroy established cooperative relationships.

Thus, taking into account the specificity of the object of study, as a methodological basis for the study, we used the systemic approach and the dialectical method of scientific knowledge and, at the same time, general logical methods such as: analysis, synthesis, analogy, modeling; theoretical methods such

as: systemic, comparative, historical, etc. The principles of historicism, objectivity, comprehensiveness and concreteness comprise the essence of the work.

The actuality of the subject and its insufficient study, predetermined the desire to conduct an independent study. The integrated approach made it possible to reveal the objective essence and interconnection of facts and phenomena, directions for the establishment and operation of the state border; the study of history and its development, as well as the analysis of cause-effect relationships in these processes.

Thus, the author's methodological algorithm made it possible to resolve the contradictions between the need for a deeper study of the results of the experience of the Moldovan state in the construction and development of the system of operation of the state border and the state of scientific knowledge about the organization, forms, methods and results of the actions of the authorities with competences border in ensuring state border management to improve international and border relations and cooperation.

The functioning of the state border from the perspective of international relations of the Republic of Moldova

The regime of functioning of the state border, as a result of international and cross-border relations established and promoted by the Republic of Moldova, corresponds to several periods ofstate development, characteristic of the political regimes established in the country from independence to the present. In the context of the regime of functioning of the border, conditionallywe can divide the development of the Republic of Moldova into three periods: 1989-2001, 2001-2009 and 2009-present. Each period has left in the structures of the border authorities, as well as in the collective mind, concepts and conceptions, subdivisions and habits that explain to a large extent the logic of the reforms that have taken place for the development of its functionality.

The first period - from 1989 to 2001, took place the formation and consolidation of democratic state institutions. In the development of international cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with neighboring states, communities and international bodies, the period can be described as one of transition and stabilization. This was a period in which the Republic of Moldova pursued the objective of consolidating independence and establishing relations with neighboring countries and international communities such as the European Union and Commonwealth of Independent States.

The country went through a process of transition from a communist to a democratic system of government. During this period, significant political and economic reforms were carried out tostrengthen democratic institutions and encourage economic development. The political regimes at the helm of the newly independent state were guided by political currents oriented towards opposite poles: they campaigned for the promotion of a distinct national identity for the Republic of Moldova for international recognition of its independence and for the establishment of its borders on August 27, 1991, when the Chisinau Parliament adopted the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova. The document established the Republic of Moldova as an independent andsovereign state with internationally recognized borders and opened the door for foreign policy. The Declaration stipulates that the Republic of Moldova is an equal subject of international relations and contracts, that respects the United Nations Statute, that expresses its adherence to the principles and norms of unanimously recognized international law and its willingness to live together in peace and good understanding with all countries and peoples, that Moldova declares itself a demilitarized zone, actively contributing to the strengthening of world

peace and security, participating directly in the European process for cooperation and security, in European structures, confirms the state's intention to claim the right to establish independent links in the international arena and to promote a foreign policy free from outside interference, in particular from Moscow.

Further, the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova (PDAM) - a political party established at the helm of the country immediately after the declaration of independence, campaigned for autonomy and national sovereignty, promoting the idea of an independent Republic of Moldova. In relations with other states: the PDAM has opted to maintain strong bilateral cooperation relations and to develop them, in particular with Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet states, as well as with neighboring countries, based on existing historical and cultural ties. It should be noted that such relations have been less sustained with Romania, as they are considered risky and may instigate the cementing of independence status.

As a result, this pro-Eastern orientation stimulated membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) - a regional international organization formed by the former Soviet republics shortly after the break-up of the Soviet Union, which chose to cooperate in areas such aseconomy, security, culture, science and technology, justice and home affairs. The CIS guarantees and provides for the protection of the rights and interests of the citizens of its member states, as well as the promotion of regional peace and stability, which, in essence, does not differ from the approaches characteristic of the Soviet period based on old principles and stereotypes: Russian Federation - the main actor and coordinator of policies in the Eastern European region.

The impact of CIS membership on the functioning of Moldova's state border regime was immediate. It concerned the Community's involvement in border protection for a short period of time: the Moldovan state delegated the powers to coordinate actions on its borders with Romania (former USSR borders) to the CIS Border Guard Command, headed by General Calinicenco I., with the signing on December 30, 1991 of the Agreement of the Council of Heads of States participating in the Commonwealth of Independent States on Armed Forces and Border Guard Troops [16], then renounces this concept in June 1992 and takes over responsibility for border management and security [4]. Since June 1992, national border guard units and sub-units have been formed to protect the Moldovan-Romanian border. It should be noted that the newly-formed state borders between the former Soviet republics (including the Moldovan-Ukrainian border) were of no interest, as they were considered „internal borders", acting only as administrative boundaries.

Cooperation within the CIS on border issues continues to date with varying intensity over time. It involves participation in forums, summits and meetings of heads of border authorities and expert groups on issues related to the security of the external border of the CIS (borders which mostly coincide with the former external border of the USSR). Mostly, this form of cooperation has led to the creation of a central coordination structure (based in Moscow, Russian Federation) which aims to enhance links for the exchange of border protection experience and best practices between border authorities of CIS member states, assistance in the development and strengthening of border troops through convergence of national legislation on border issues, mutual exchange of information, cooperation in the field of military-technical policy and personnel training [15].

As far as customs cooperation is concerned, the similarity of the processes for establishing relations is pronounced. Thus, for the implementation of the Treaty establishing the CIS Economic Union, approved by the Decision of the CIS Council of Heads

of Government from September 24, 1993, the Council of Heads of Customs Services is a permanent sectoral cooperation body with the role of ensuring coordination of interaction between the customs services of the Member States in the field of customs policy, that was established on December 23, 1993.

The methods of cooperation within the Community, in particular in border-related areas, have lost their effectiveness and importance, becoming formalities which do not provide for visions adapted to current realities. Today, the pro-European agenda of the country's pro-European government is to play down and even denounce the participation of national authorities in CIS formats.

Thus, we conclude that at the early stage of statehood, the Republic of Moldova followed the path of preserving the principles of organizing the functioning of the state border, opting for the support and involvement of bodies created within the framework of cooperation on the platforms of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The year 1992 can be considered a turning point in the development of Moldova's cooperation relations on the world stage. The Republic of Moldova entered a period of complex political, economic and social problems. In January 1992, the Republic of Moldova joined the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was later transformed into the OSCE in 1995 due to the multitude of requests for mediation on sensitive cooperation issues and conflicts triggered by the break-up of the USSR. The Republic of Moldova supports the OSCE mandate which includes preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and crisis management, strengthening respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law and promoting all aspects of civil society.

In March 1992 the Republic of Moldova joined the United Nations (UN) - the most important international organization in the world. The UN mandate covers a wide range of areas such as conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance, operational activities for development, peacekeeping operations, etc. As a universal forum for debating global issues, the Republic of Moldova attaches particular importance to the role of the UN in promoting democracy and human rights, maintaining international peace and security, economic and social development, respect for the principles of international law and the rule of law.

Immediately after joining the UN, the darkest period in Moldova's history took place - the armed conflict on the Dniester, as a result of which the separatism of the Transnistrian region became a problem that presaged the rupture in society and the continuous risk of interference in internal affairs by pro-Russian geopolitical and military interests, as well as the escalation of tensions at national and regional level.

Against the backdrop of the continuous backlash after independence due to the disintegration of society, the political class is moving towards an opening and association with the countries of the western continent, with the European Union. The country's foreign policy concept [3] has been geared towards promoting national interests, regional security and stability, rapprochement with European values and standards, resolving the Transnistrian conflict through dialogue and negotiation, strengthening economic partnerships and developing relations with major international organizations. The first important step towards the EU was the signing on November 28, 1994 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, which entered into force in July 1998, creating a framework for political dialogue, trade liberalization, approximation of legislation and cooperation in several areas [1]. In July 1995 Moldova became the first CIS country to be admitted to the Council of Europe and in October 1995 it signed the Interim Trade Agreement between the Republic of

Moldova and the European Union (entered into force on May 1, 1996), which led to a boost in trade.

It is also worth mentioning the signing on March 16, 1994, by President M. Snegur of the Framework Document of NATO's "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) program, thus laying the foundation of Moldova's relations with the North Atlantic Alliance and confirming the country's intention to move to European standards in the field of defense. For the Republic of Moldova, the PfP has meant a boost to cooperation in areas such as arms control and disarmament, civil protection, crisis prevention and resolution, joint planning and conduct of peacekeeping operations, training of personnel and other aspects of military activity. The program did not offer security guarantees to the states included in it and therefore did not make the border management process meaningful. However, the attention of international bodies on the capacities of the state authorities to ensure the national security and defense of Moldova is increasing.

The Republic of Moldova became a full member of the World Trade Organization in 2001, after 7 years of negotiations and reforms aimed at creating an outward-oriented, globally integrated economy. It has thereby undertaken to liberalize trade, including trade in goods and services. The country also becomes a full member of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, cementing progress in international cooperation and the forward-looking goal of EU membership.

The period described can be named as one of transition and significant changes in bordermanagement, marked by important events and developments in terms of regulations and control modalities at the state border of the Republic of Moldova.

The beginning of qualitative changes in the views about the border and its role in the development of cooperation relations corresponded with the national movements of breaking away from the Soviet regime and moving closer to the opposite, Romanian, pole. The rapprochement takes place against the background of findings that the majority of the population on the right bank of the Prut shares the same traditions, customs and values as those on the left bank.

The border between these two peoples, which until 1991 constituted the border between the USSR and Romania, began to become a point of political debate and national frustration with the growth of unionist movements promoting the rapprochement of the shores and the breaking of barriers between the nations-brother. The Prut „Bridge of Flowers", an event that took place on May 6, 1990, is a natural part of the context of the large-scale popular actions that took place in the Republic of Moldova in 1989-1991. In practice, the inhabitants of Romania and the Moldovan SSR on that day were allowed to cross the Prut without passports and visas from 1 pm to 7 pm. Eight crossing points were created along the border: Miorcani - Pererita, Stânca - Costești, Iași - Sculeni, Ungheni - Ungheni Bridge, Albița - Leușeni, Fălciu - Țiganca, Oancea - Cahul and Galați - Giurgiulești. The symbolic state border was no longer an impediment to social, ethnic and cultural cooperation. The event marked the „opening of a gate leading to a new path", one similar to the „breaking down of the last Berlin Wall in Europe" [14], which essentially changed the vision of the USSR's state border.

Normatively, however, the role of state borders in the period 1989-2001 did not undergo essential changes and was oriented towards ensuring the security of the post-Soviet space. The same constituted authorities responsible for securing them continued to guard the borders - a militarized form of border protection. The regime of movement across borders continued to be characteristic of the „Iron Curtain". The border with Romania continued to be an obstacle to relations with the west of the European continent.

With the first internal regulations of the young state, the border is assigned the role of an instru-

ment in ensuring national security. The first law on the state border, which dates back to 1994, stipulates that: guarding the state border is an inalienable constituent part of the state system of ensuring the security of the Republic of Moldova, one of the forms of armed defense of its territorial integrity, and consists in the implementation of a complex of measures that would guarantee the inviolability of the state border. The following are responsible for guarding the state border: on land and water - the Department of Border Guard Troops (the current Border Police), in the air - the air defense units of the Ministry of Defense [6]. The Border Guard Corps (now the Border Police) and the Customs Service are organs of state security [8], so the protection of the state border is a priority in the system of ensuring national security. All the efforts of the authorities are concentrated on the western border with Romania, where the infrastructure (a legacy of the old regime) allowed the deployment and action of the military border guards, and the crossing of the state border with the normal control procedures (including customs) was ensured through the established crossing points.

For border protection, 3 regimes are established, comprising special mandatory rules to be respected at the border, in the border area and at border crossing points. Border rules are established bilaterally, based on agreements with neighboring countries. They therefore specify the establishment and maintenance of cooperative relations at the level of border authorities [6]. All the rules listed were in line with and inspired by the former USSR's legislation on the state border, and compliance with them made cooperation in the border area more difficult, while at the same time jeopardizing bilateral and international relations through the restrictions imposed.

It should be pointed out that the established rules applied only at the border with Romania.

Border relations with Ukraine were characteristic of the participatory spirit of the national authorities in CIS formats.

Thus, the border regime did not differ from the regime established before independence. The border was a political-strategic line of sharing interests with neighboring countries, with a marked barrier effect, especially with Romania. The political actions taken, which concerned cooperation relations with the European Union, did not affect the established border regime.

Thus, the first period (1989-2001) was marked by Moldova's efforts to develop international cooperation with neighboring states and other international bodies in order to consolidate independence, political stabilization, economic development and improve partnership relations. The regime of functioning of the state border during this period reflected the transition of the Republic of Moldova from a constituent state of the Soviet Union to an independent country with national borders. The intended effect of the border regime was to adapt to new international security requirements and norms, as well as to manage specific challenges such as the Transnistrian conflict and cross-border crime.

The second period, 2001-2009, was one in which Moldova sought to strengthen its democratic institutions, implement reforms to make the economy more efficient and set its international direction. In terms of Moldova's cooperation relations with the European and neighboring countries, this period can be described as a period of deepening European relations and aspirations.

Against the backdrop of the communist government, which lasted the entire period, contrary to the prerogatives of deepening relations with the CIS format and the Russian Federation, the Republic of Moldova, with periodic intensifications, has focused its efforts on rapprochement withthe European Community and has strengthened cooperation with neighboring states in various fields. In this regard, it has

developed an intensive political dialogue with the EU and neighboring countries in areas such as foreign policy, security, energy, transport and environment.

The ruling Communist Party establishes the National Commission for European Integration [5] and adopts the European Integration Concept. On March 24, 2005, Moldova's integration into the EU is legally enshrined as the primary objective of domestic and foreign policy. The Declaration of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on the political partnership for the achievement of the country's European integration objectives states that Moldova's development can only be ensured by "consistently and irreversibly promoting the strategic course towards European integration". In this regard, all the signatory parties of the Declaration committed themselves to support diplomatic, legal and political efforts aimed at the implementation of the EU-Moldova Action Plan, because, in their view, it can contribute to the country's accession to the EU.

During this period, the European Union extended its borders eastwards and started accession negotiations with some Central and Eastern European countries. The Republic of Moldova has been encouraged to strengthen its relations with the EU and to align itself with European values and standards in this process. The country became part of the European Neighborhood Policy - a valuable tool for the implementation of its European integration policy, in the context of which, in 2005, it signed the Action Plan with the EU [11]. The document provided a legal and institutional framework for the development of bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields, including trade, investment, justice and home affairs. Among the priorities, the Plan also provides for the development of an efficient and comprehensive border management system on all sectors of the Moldovan border, including the Transnistrian sector, which will require a series of regulatory measures, training, equipping and modernization of the forces and means of the border authorities and the implementation of European best practices at the state borders.

The EU Delegation is inaugurated in Chisinau and the EU Representative for Moldova is appointed. The immediate reaction to the border regime was the launch of the European Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) with the agreement in principle of the politicians to carry out an evaluation and analysis of the state of implementation of the State Border Guard Concept, with the elaboration of the necessary recommendations. EUBAM contributes to improving the level of trust and cooperation between the Moldovan and Ukrainian border authorities, which in this context also has an impact on the development of solutions for the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

In general, the period 2001-2009 in the development of the state border regime of the Republic of Moldova can be described as a period of reforms and adjustments in border management. This period was marked by the efforts of the Republic of Moldova to align the state border regime with international standards and to improve the efficiency of border control and security.

The eastern border with Ukraine takes on a new face by transforming it from an administrative one to one with a well-defined role of protecting national interests. The Treaty between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on the state border, which entered into force in November 2001, marks the end of the territorial delimitation negotiations and the beginning of the border demarcation process, and is the starting point for a new stage of all-round cooperation between the two countries.

The concept of the Republic of Moldova's state border security is aimed at guaranteeing the sovereignty, inviolability and territorial integrity of the state, at achieving and defending its national interests and security in its border area, at maintaining good neighborly and friendly relations with neigh-

boring states [2]. Guarding and defending the state border requires the coordination of the activities of the border authorities, other authorities of the central public administration, local public administration authorities and other subjects of state border guarding, and involves activity carried out, within the limits of competence, by adopting political, diplomatic, legal organizational, economic, border guard, reconnaissance, counterintelligence, investigative, customs, environmental protection, sanitary-epidemiological and other measures toensure the security of the country's borders. Thus, the contribution to border management becomesan obligation both for all branches and levels of state power and for society.

The EU approximation process continues with efforts to harmonize national legislation withthe EU acquis communautaire and to implement the recommendations and requirements set by the relevant European bodies. European organizations such as OSCE, Frontex Agency, EUBAM Mission are assisting national authorities in reforming the border security system.

The reform of the border security system has been taking place since 2007, which stipulatesthat border guarding remains an integral part of the state system of ensuring the security of the Republic of Moldova, one of the prerogatives and forms of national defense of the country. Bordermanagement becomes a basic concept involving the coordinated participation of state institutions, agencies, organizations and civil society in the functioning of the border. Surveillance and controlof the state border in order to combat the specific acts of cross-border crime, including illegal migration, become the basic tasks of the Border Guard Service, which is to be demilitarized and professionalized [9].

Despite the achievements mentioned above, we should mention the relatively slow pace of adjustments in the border area against the background of the EU approximation initiatives. The implementation of reforms domestically has been hampered both by the political culture and will,which has not shown consistency and full commitment to the country's orientation towards EU integration, the low level of preparedness of state institutions to carry out reforms, the limited capacity to absorb funds. In this regard, we note that the recommendations of the EUBAM missionto improve the functionality of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border are being implemented with difficulty and delay. Cooperation between the Moldovan border authority and the FRONTEX Agency, the institution responsible for managing the EU's external borders with which Moldova shares a common border to the west with Romania, began only in August 2008, when a working arrangement was signed between the two entities. This repeatedly confirms the skepticism characteristic of the period described.

Thus, we conclude that the period 2001-2009 was the next step towards strengthening Moldova's international cooperation with the EU and neighboring states, and the country strengthened its European aspirations and its commitment to European values and standards. Thecountry's interest in European integration had an impact on the regime of the functioning of the state border, which was subject to the initiation of adjustments and improvements in order to ensurean efficient, secure and compliant with international standards management of Moldova's borders. The deepening of cooperation relations between the national border authorities and similar authorities of neighboring and European countries means that both the eastern border with Ukraine and the western border with Romania are beginning to be managed on the basis of principles, methods and forms taken from the practices of European countries, corresponding to the external borders of the EU.

The period immediately following, from 2009 to the present, referring to the processes takingplace to develop the international cooperation of the Republic

of Moldova with the EU and neighboring countries, can be characterized as a period of strengthening European engagement and deepening ties in multiple areas. The Republic of Moldova has expressed its desire and determination to advance on the path of European integration with the support and assistance of the EU and other international partners.

The period was also marked by political instability and government crises. The year 2009 is seen as crucial in cementing Moldova's aspirations. The domestic changes that led to the removalof the communists from the helm of state have stimulated concrete steps towards boosting cooperation relations with the EU and neighboring countries. Afterwards, political alliances formed and disintegrated, and frequent changes of governments affected decision-making and implementation of reforms. This political instability has created an uncertain environment and made it difficult to strengthen democratic institutions.

The contribution of political parties and movements to the development of international cooperation has varied according to their political agenda and orientation. Pro-European parties, such as the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), the Liberal Party (PL) and the Actionand Solidarity Party (PAS), had a strong focus on rapprochement with the European Union and promoted cooperation with European partners. These parties supported reforms to strengthen the rule of law, improve governance and promote democratic values. On the other hand, parties with a more pro-Russian orientation, such as the Party of communists (PCRM), the Party of Socialists (PSRM), took a different approach. These parties have shown interest in strengthening relations with Russia and other post-Soviet states.

However, the Republic of Moldova, assisted by international bodies, has carried out politicaland economic reforms to strengthen its institutions, improve transparency and accountability of governance and promote sustainable economic development. Reforms have focused on justice, public administration, fighting corruption and improving the business climate.

In terms of border functionality, pro-European parties have promoted measures to facilitatetrade and free movement of people with neighboring countries, and in particular with EU MemberStates. These parties supported integration into the Schengen area and promoted security and border management reforms in line with European standards. On the other hand, pro-European parties took a more conservative approach and emphasized maintaining border control, promotedcloser security cooperation with neighboring CIS countries.

However, the achievements resulting from cooperation in the international arena, from the internal reforms that have taken place, have dissolved the uncertainty related to the country's national strategic goal - integration into the European Union.

In its relations with the EU, the Republic of Moldova has expressed its desire to definitively move closer to the values promoted by the Community by signing the Association Agreement with the EU in 2014. This agreement has led to an increase in political, economic and social relations between the two parties. In this context, the border regime has a crucial role to play in facilitating trade and the free movement of persons in accordance with EU standards and practices. The facilitation of trade and the creation of a climate conducive to foreign investment is an imperative and requires the adoption of effective policies and practices at the state border of the Republic of Moldova.

It should be noted that the reforms related to the functioning of the borders will account forabout 80 percent of the actions and sub-actions of the Plans for the preparation and subsequent implementation of the pre-announced Association Agreement. The national border strategies,adopted since 2011,

transpose European legislation on the management of the EU's external borders and aim to establish the policies, principles and objectives necessary for the uniform, coherent and effective implementation of the Integrated Border Management Concept (IBM), based on the joint efforts of the authorities and institutions with responsibilities in this area. The expected added value of the actions undertaken is: development of trade and investment, facilitation and acceleration of cross-border transit, better control of illegal migration (from/through Moldova) towards the EU, promotion of tourism, reduction of fiscal and customs losses due to smuggling, ensuring a more stable and secure security environment in the region [12].

The reforms have covered all institutions in the national security system and have included a wide range of measures such as: amending the regulatory framework, professionalization and providing the authorities with the necessary to carry out their assigned powers. In particular, the border authority - the Border Police - is demilitarized and subordinated the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI), while at the same time broadening its powers and becoming the coordinating bodyresponsible for the implementation of policies in the field of borders, combating illegal migration and cross-border crime [10]. Thus, the state border, through its management, takes on a new, special- Europeanized nuance, instead of the militarized, undeniable one. The symbolism of the change inthe face of the Republic of Moldova's border with the European Union (Moldovan-Romanian border) is marked by the dismantling in 2011 of the barbed wire fence installed during the Soviet period, which meant the breaking of all barriers to communication and cooperation with the countries of the western European continent.

The new law on the state border transposes the Schengen Borders Code (Community Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders). The Act regulates the legal, organizational, administrative and other relations arising in the process of establishing, maintaining and enforcing state border regimes with the aim of determining the state border control system and the regimes set up to ensure the security of the state border on land, on water and in airspace, all in accordance with the Schengen borders [7]. So, the approach to the border is changingand involves standardizing the way it operates in line with the European acquis.

There is a growing sense of identity in the approach, whether we refer to the border with Ukraine or Romania. The same principles, processes and changes are being made with the support of the European institutions, emphasizing the intention to enhance the capacities of state authorities responsible for border protection. In contrast to previous periods, there is an increasing focus on improving interinstitutional and international cooperation relations established between national border authorities and similar authorities in neighboring and EU countries. Platforms for communication, exchange of data and information are being created, and the state border is being controlled by pooling the efforts of neighboring state authorities (concepts such as joint border patrols, joint checks at crossing points, etc.). As a result, we can conclude that the Republic of Moldova is becoming an increasingly important participant in strengthening the regional securitybelt in Eastern Europe.

The functioning of the border regime has contributed to the liberalization of the trade marketbetween the Republic of Moldova and the EU, which has led to an essential increase in the number of import/export operations of products and goods between the two parties. At the same time, it has led to the simplification of formalities to ensure the free movement of its citizens: The European Union is liberalizing the visa regime for the Republic of Moldova in 2014 and advocates the continuation and deepening of coopera-

tion. For its part, the Moldovan state is increasingly committed to pursuing policies of rapprochement and integration into the Community area, by assigning the state border the role of control and management of migration flows to Western Europe and combating criminal phenomena affecting the Union.

After the outbreak of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, the above commitments become imperative. The EU is setting up an Internal Security and Border Management Support Centre in the Republic of Moldova [13]. The Hub's priority areas of activity are aimed at mitigating risks and threats, which are jointly identified by the EU and Moldova, including trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings, illegal migration, trafficking in radioactive substances and cybercrime. The main objectives of the Chisinau Hub are to strengthen capacities in law enforcement and border management, in particular through more efficient exchange of information, analysis and international operational cooperation.

Moldova's status as a candidate country for EU membership, which it obtained in the summer of 2022, could be treated as the starting point for a new stage of relations with an impact on the state border, where its management must become fully Euro-compliant. However, the continuation of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, the geopolitical tensions in the region, and, in this regard, the persistent risk of the Transnistrian conflict thawing and the intensification of inter-ethnic tensions within the country, require the national and international authorities to focus their efforts on reducing the factors that could lead to the loss or undermining of the statehood and independence of the Moldovan state. The state border currently operates in the exclusive interest of ensuring national and regional security, and is considered the limit of decompression of risks and vulnerabilities for the European Union. The level of cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Moldova in ensuring the functioning of the border has reached unprecedented levels. One of the eloquent examples is the operational support of FRONTEX in the national territory, requested and accepted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova. The attention of the European Community awakens the sense of importance of the Moldovan state at international level in the context of the formation of a new European security belt.

However, it should be noted that the world community is undergoing a deep systemic global crisis, and the current tectonic shifts in geopolitics lead us to assume that we are witnessing the formation of a new world order, multipolar or polycentric accordingly, with its own military formations, arsenals of nuclear weapons, its own economic and information systems and a distinct culture. Under these circumstances, the fundamental changes in the world lead to the emergence of modern challenges of transnational, civilizational, cultural identification, innovative-digital, etc. aspects. They put the Republic of Moldova in front of the need for a multidimensional and comprehensive assessment of the international situation, the ongoing global and regional processes, taking into account that geostrategically, the country is at the epicenter of peripheral clashes that will inevitably lead to the creation of new inter-civilizational borders that will mark the spheres of influence.

Conclusions

Thus, based on the above analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The regime of functioning of the state border of the Republic of Moldova is dialectically interconnected with the orientation of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova, with the development of the system of international relations, which is shaped throughout the period of development of the Moldovan statehood, and the dynamism of processes and different approaches, which characterize them,

depended on a multitude of political, geopolitical, economic and security factors;

The functions of the state border have varied dialectically from state-building dimensions to participatory openness in ensuring regional security, continuously mirroring the cooperative relations established with Ukraine, Romania, the CIS and the EU. The latter has reconfigured thecountry's development vectors and relations with its neighbors. At the present stage, the interdependence of international cooperation relations and the border operating regime is becoming increasingly marked and demonstrates the focus of the state authorities' efforts on integrating the country into the political, economic and socio-cultural space of the EU. However, in the current circumstances, it is of paramount importance to develop a new modern concept of border functioning, which takes into account two main dialectically interlinked parameters: on the one hand, the border should be as open as possible for cooperation with the international and regional community, and on the other hand, it must continue to provide unconditional protection of national interests and national security.

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