MAIN CHANGES IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AFTER THE BEGINNING OF THE RUSSIAN WAR AGAINST UKRAINE,

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Republica Moldova, situată la răscrucea dintre est și vest, a avut o evoluție complexă a politicii externe. Teza analizează istoria acesteia, conceptualizând strategia de securitate și principiile ghidante. Este analizat conspetul de neutralitate în contextul instabilității regionale și războiului ruso-ucrainean. Dar și analiza aspirațiile Republicii Moldova caută sprijin UE și NATO pentru securitate și stabilitate economică, pivotând de la influența rusă către o direcție occidentală, consolidată prin statutul de candidat UE din 2022.

The Republic of Moldova, nestled at the crossroads of Eastern Europe, has experienced a complex evolution in its foreign policy landscape. This thesis delves into the historical trajectory of Moldova's foreign policy, employing a historiographical analysis to unravel its evolution. Examining the conceptual foundations of Moldova's foreign policy and security strategy, we aim to elucidate the guiding principles shaping its international engagements. The first chapter of the thesis named *"The historical overview of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova"* presents aspects related to the Historical overview and theoretical frameworks related to Moldova's foreign policy and the overall concept of foreign policy. important to mention the researchers that had important contributions in defining and analyzing the concept of foreign policy all converging on its focus on a state's conduct towards other states and the ideas presented by Charles Hermann [1] , George Modelski, and Joseph Frankel are among the most widely used in understanding foreign policy. Charles Hermann, for instance, characterizes foreign policy as "the discrete purposeful action resulting from the political-level decisions of individuals or groups. It represents the observable outcome of a political-level decision a product rather than the decision itself." [2]. This definition underscores Hermann's perspective that foreign policy essentially encapsulates the behaviour of states. Political scientists such as Andrei Tsygankov whose scholarship focuses on Russian foreign policy, identity politics, and international relations theory. His book "Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity" (2013) examines the role of national identity in shaping Russia's foreign policy behaviour, particularly in relation to its interactions with the West and its near abroad [3,4]. Among the prominent works that have contributed to this discourse, scholars from the Republic of Moldova have made notable contributions, providing nuanced perspectives on Moldova's foreign policy orientation, regional dynamics, and geopolitical challenges such as C. Budurina-Goreaci [5, p. 150-155],

Cebotari S. [6] Caldare G. [7, p. 23-45]. The concept of foreign policy is the normative base of any state. The elaboration of a conceptual base for foreign policy is crucial for understanding a nation's strategic objectives and actions on the global stage. The second chapter named *"Main Changes in the Republic of Moldova's Foreign Policy"* analyses the challenges, and debates surrounding Moldova's neutrality in the foreign policy spectrum, especially in response to regional instability and Examines the changes in the political and security landscape concerning the Transnistria region before and after the Russian-Ukrainian war. The concept of neutrality has been shaped by shifting geopolitical dynamics and the emergence of international legal principles. The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 established standards for the responsibilities and privileges of neutral nations in times of war, which played a significant role in shaping perceptions of neutrality within the framework of international law. This historical progression underscores how key historical events have consistently influenced changing interpretations of neutrality in global affairs. [8]. Throughout history, in modern times, the concept of neutrality has been frequently examined within the framework of international relations theory. Realists such as Waltz and Kenneth assert that nations tend to choose neutrality as a way to protect their national interests and sovereignty, steering clear of getting involved in conflicts that do not directly affect them. [9]

Moldova's foreign policy is at a pivotal juncture, where strategic decisions today will shape its future trajectory in the international community. The delicate balance of maintaining neutrality while actively seeking security and economic stability through integration with Western institutions illustrates the complex, often contradictory challenges Moldova faces. As it continues to navigate these turbulent waters, the support from the EU and other international partners will be crucial in ensuring that Moldova can secure a stable, prosperous future free from the shadows of overbearing neighbors.

The third chapter, named *"Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the Republic of Moldova's foreign policy and regional relations"* explores how the conflict has affected broader regional dynamics, and analyses possible future scenarios for Moldova's foreign policy, considering ongoing regional tensions and the geopolitical landscape. The Russian-Ukrainian war has profoundly impacted the Republic of Moldova, particularly influencing its foreign policy and regional relationships. Faced with escalating regional tensions and direct security threats, notably from the unresolved status of Transnistria and its proximity to the conflict zones, Moldova has been compelled to reassess its strategic orientation and alliances. The war's escalation has led to a substantial influx of refugees into Moldova, straining its resources and testing its resilience. The presence of a large number of displaced individuals raises humanitarian concerns and potential security risks, requiring vigilant management and international support. Moreover, Moldova faces the risk of hybrid threats, including misinformation and cyber-attacks, which aim to destabilize the country internally. As noted in strategic reports, these hybrid threats are often orchestrated to exploit the vulnerabilities of nations like Moldova that find themselves geographically

and politically between major powers such as the European Union and Russia. [10] Amid these geopolitical shifts, Moldova has increasingly pivoted towards the European Union and NATO, seeking enhanced security guarantees and economic stability. This strategic realignment is not merely a diplomatic shift but a crucial step towards safeguarding Moldova's future. The pursuit of EU membership, highlighted by the EU's grant of candidate status in June 2022, underscores a significant transformation in Moldova's foreign policy—from a historically pro-Russian stance towards a more Western-aligned approach. This transition is influenced by the need to counterbalance Russian influence, which remains a persistent threat, especially in energy dependencies and the political sensitivities surrounding Transnistria. As Moldova navigates this complex geopolitical landscape, the potential outcomes of the Russian-Ukrainian war will continue to shape its foreign policy decisions. A resolution favourable to Ukraine could further solidify Moldova's European integration, reducing its reliance on Russian economic and energy ties.

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