

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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***Abstract:** National security represents a fundamental pillar of the rule of law, which has gone through a long path throughout history and has undergone a series of geopolitical and economic changes. After gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Moldova gradually developed its institutions in the field of national security to ensure the protection of its interests and state sovereignty. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, during the post-independence transition period, the Republic of Moldova faced significant challenges related to its national security system, including political instability, external pressures, ethnic and territorial conflicts. In this context, the creation and consolidation of institutions in the field of security has been and continues to be an important step for the Republic of Moldova in maintaining state sovereignty and democracy. Throughout its history, the Republic of Moldova has joined international organizations, which is an integral part of efforts to strengthen national security and promote the democratic values of the rule of law.*

***Keywords:** national security, sovereignty, independence, rule of law, democracy, international organizations, external pressures.*

Introduction

The consolidation of indispensable interests of the state and a democratic society, the existence of a state of security, and an adequate standard of living are objectives that can only be achieved in the presence of an appropriate national security system. Throughout its history, national security has become a key element in the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova. It forms the appropriate framework for cultural, economic, political, and social development. Geopolitical transformations and changes have compelled the state of the Republic of Moldova to create institutions and develop international relations in the field of national security to ensure state independence and democracy.

The national security of the Republic of Moldova is undergoing a complex and continuous evolution of reform, facing numerous challenges, but there are also certain benefits. The Eastern European area is becoming a crossroads for the geopolitical interests of major players, exerting pressures and offering a distinct role to external factors in managing internal security, thus influencing directions of action. The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century are largely defined by significant transformations in the national, regional, and international security sectors, as well as the generation of challenges and new threats to societies and states. Political uncertainty, regional disputes, separatist tendencies, social unrest, the spread of conventional and unconventional weapons, massive migration flows, terrorism,

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catastrophic natural phenomena, cross-border crimes, and excessive dependence on foreign energy resources constitute current risks for national and international security.

The Soviet Union's invasion generated a significant crisis in the field of security studies and discredited the classical concepts that predominated and emphasized realism, interpreting security in terms of military authority and power. Idealistic theories that emerged after the 1990s changed the way security was understood and interpreted, no longer relating it solely to military power, thus initiating a shift in this concept by expanding the scope to the social and economic sectors. This scientific initiative and the changes that occurred after the invasion of "realism" prompted national authorities and international organizations, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the United Nations, to revise their security policies adapted to new realities.

Revising the national security system holds special importance for most states due to the necessity of conforming to the flexible changes in the social, economic, and political environment, as well as to the geopolitical changes at the regional level that occurred with the end of the Cold War.

Legal Content

The starting point for the Republic of Moldova in establishing a national security system was marked by the formation of the regulatory framework and competent structures in the respective field. Thus, starting on August 27, 1994, the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and other relevant documents came into force, such as the first National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova from 1995, the National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova from 2008, followed by the adoption of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova in 2011 (Varzari, 2016: 8).

The concept of "national security" was first used by the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, at the beginning of the 20th century during a congress, where the importance of the military occupation of the Panama Canal area in the "interests of American national security" was discussed (Buzan, 2000: 24).

The history of the national security system of the Republic of Moldova has its beginnings during the reign of Stephen the Great, a voivode who left a significant mark on the country's history. The battles fought by Stephen the Great for the defense of Romanian land's independence and freedom marked constitutive elements of state security, as these battles and the ruler's bravery led to an unprecedented flourishing of Moldova. Thus, by fighting on equal terms with much stronger neighbors, Stephen the Great managed to form the country as a state with almost equal rights. "At the time of his ascension to the throne of Moldova, the country had reached a threefold dependency" on Poland, Hungary, and Turkey. Therefore, his first actions were to consolidate the northern and southern borders and to reclaim the fortresses of Hotin and Chilia. However, the eastern sector of Moldova remained less protected. The Tatars continuously invaded through the Nistru fords, plundering villages and hamlets (Zbârciog, 2017: 27).

Among the notable battles in the history of the Moldovan state is the Battle of Podul Înalt in 1475 between the Ottoman Empire and Moldova, resulting in Stephen the Great's victory over the Ottomans. Similarly, in 1476, the Battle of Războieni (Valea Albă) took place

as a reaction to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Stephen the Great's army, which ended in Stephen's loss. Another significant battle was the Battle of Codrii Cosminului in 1479, followed by Stephen the Great's victory.

In this context, the battles fought by Stephen the Great represent a beginning that influenced the modification and development of the continuity of the national security system of the Republic of Moldova.

Another notable event that influenced the historical course of the Republic of Moldova was the declaration of independence of the Moldavian Democratic Republic in 1918, which was the main political act of the Sfatul Țării. On January 24, 1918, the Sfatul Țării, as the governing body of the republic, unanimously voted for the declaration of independence of the Moldovan Republic. This declaration is almost always conceived in relation to the declaration of Ukraine's independence on January 9, 1918. "Everyone understood that we had only one way out - once Ukraine is independent, the Moldovan Republic must also be independent, and no one can stand in the way of this tendency. It must be independent because otherwise, attempts will be made to attach it to someone else." (Țurcanu, 2018: 163-164)

The formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922 was a remarkable phenomenon from a negative perspective on the national security of today's state. This historical stage was characterized not only by the creation of collective farms and Soviet propaganda but also by famine, totalitarianism, deportations, Stalin's personality cult, gulags, World War II, communism, censorship, and many other features that negatively impacted state security. With the formation of the USSR, the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created in 1924, which later, on August 2, 1940, became the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The Transnistrian conflict exemplifies the insufficiency of resources in the national security domain during the post-independence period for conflict resolution. In this regard, even the levers of the European Union were insufficient to calm the triggered conflict. To further understand the circumstances, it is necessary to highlight the context in which the Transnistrian conflict erupted.

The Transnistrian War, also known as the War for the Defense of the Integrity and Sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova (Bălan, Ciobanu, Cojocaru, 2012: 144) or the Russian-Moldovan War, is a military conflict and currently a political conflict between the Republic of Moldova and the self-proclaimed "Transnistrian Moldovan Republic" regarding the control of Dubăsari, Slobozia, Tiraspol, Grigoriopol, Camenca, and Rîbnița districts, regions located on the left bank of the Nistru River, and Bender, a city situated on the right bank of the Nistru River. The Transnistrian conflict began on November 9, 1990, and lasted until July 21, 1992.

"Like other conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Transnistrian conflict was inspired by Russia. Initially, the conflict was used by Moscow as a lever to prevent good relations between the Republic of Moldova and Romania; over time, it became a lever in the hands of Kremlin strategists to pressure the authorities in Chișinău to keep Moldova within Russia's sphere of influence and to justify the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria. Currently, the Transnistrian conflict is seen by Moscow as the main lever capable of hindering Moldova's pro-European path and the country's modernization process." (Țăranu, Gribincea, 2014: 6)

With the end of the Transnistrian conflict, the Legal Agreement on the Principles of Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of

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Moldova was signed in Moscow in 1992. With the signing of this agreement, the process of resolving the Transnistrian disputes that arose from the armed conflict began (Gvidiani, 2020: 10). The agreement was signed in Moscow between the heads of state of the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, and it established the circumference of the Security Zone and the Joint Control Commission in a tripartite format, namely representatives from Chişinău, Tiraspol, and the Russian Federation. The city of Tighina was proclaimed a district with an increased security regime. By concluding this agreement, the representatives of the former 14th Army of the Russian Federation's Military Forces assumed the obligations to respect neutrality on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

Concurrently with the signing of the aforementioned agreement, a statement issued by Presidents Mircea Snegur and Boris Yeltsin emphasized that the districts on the left bank of the Nistru would have a special status within the Republic of Moldova, with the principle of territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova being an important pillar in the political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict (11).

The European Union, being interested in securing its own borders, offered support to the Republic of Moldova in managing the negative phenomena affecting its national security caused by the lack of state border control in the eastern districts, which stimulates smuggling, human trafficking, drugs, weapons, materials and nuclear technologies, money laundering, terrorism financing, illegal migration, etc. The mechanisms for restoring its territorial integrity must consolidate the country's security, its constitutional system, and its affirmation at the regional and international levels as a state participating in crisis management and a security guarantor (Ciobanu, 2021: 9-10).

The Transnistrian conflict has been and continues to be a challenge for the security zone of the Republic of Moldova, necessitating the Republic of Moldova to be prepared defensively and militarily for any danger that could threaten the state's national security.

Terrorism is another phenomenon that persists in the world, and in some states, it even reaches significant proportions. Often, for some governments, organizations, or individuals, terrorism is an instrument for achieving political or other plans. Whatever the method and means of manifesting terrorism, it directly threatens the national security of any state without exceptions. Thus, it is necessary to always show readiness in the field of security to avoid such a phenomenon.

Considering the peak reached by terrorism, it becomes a problem not only at the state level but a subject that concerns the entire international society. For combating this phenomenon, international cooperation is necessary. The establishment of the United Nations after World War II opened a new stage in the historical course of international relations of interaction and cooperation. In this context, on December 18, 1972, through resolution 3034, a specialized committee was created to counteract international terrorism.

The International Civil Aviation Organization played a crucial role in combating terrorism, particularly regarding any form of aerial piracy. In the context of curbing terrorism, many organizations were established, among which are the TREVI Group founded in Rome in 1976 and the Vienna Club from 1976.

The Europol Convention is a document signed in 1995 in Brussels, aimed at improving collaboration between representative authorities of the member states in countering and curbing terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, and other international criminal activities.

Terrorism constitutes a risk to state security, and in this sense, "the government is the main authority responsible for organizing the activity of combating terrorism and ensuring it with the necessary forces, means, and resources. The coordination of the activities of the authorities involved in combating terrorism is carried out by the Supreme Security Council of the Republic of Moldova." (Balan, Beșleagă, 2002: 73-74)

In the Republic of Moldova, the authorities exercising activities to counteract terrorism and ensure national security are: the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Protection and Guard Service, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Customs Service, etc.

According to Law No. 619 of 31-10-1995 (8) regarding state security bodies, the responsibilities of the bodies ensuring security in the Republic of Moldova are:

- defending the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova,
- ensuring state border security,
- defending the constitutional regime, the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of individuals.

Conclusions

The security sector of the Republic of Moldova has experienced a prolonged period of stagnation and difficulties caused by a multitude of political, economic, and geopolitical factors. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 actually triggered a reform of Moldova's security policy. Despite being on the path of transformation, the country faced a series of disagreements among key security institutions. In the Republic of Moldova, there is no single consolidated military institution capable of promoting its own position. The Ministry of Defense is essentially a politically marginalized institution. Additionally, Moldova does not have a strong defense sector that could stimulate investments in the Armed Forces. Even the small part of the defense capability remaining from the Soviet Union's industrial complex is located in Transnistria, and consequently, Moldovan authorities have had no control over it since the beginning of the conflict in 1992. The political apparatus of the Republic of Moldova has long distanced itself from the defense sector. The authorities have been content with a passive security policy based on the principles of neutrality, as it did not require any particular effort to implement. This situation is particularly dangerous given the "frozen conflict" in Transnistria, which remains one of the main security challenges for the Republic of Moldova to this day.

Considering the historical development errors that have disrupted the normal course of national security, there is a need to implement new strategies and mechanisms that would allow the improvement and mitigation of potential risks in the security sector. Permanent international cooperation and collaboration are key elements in achieving the proposed goals, which would allow significant improvement in the field of national security.

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