

Friendly communication modes of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova in the realities of fragmentation of the world communication order

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the issue of friendliness as a category for determining the current state of the communication regimes of the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation at the regional level. In the process of research, the theoretical and methodological base was involved, the basis of which was the works of representatives of political realism and social constructivism. In the course of the analysis, it was possible to identify the main components that make it possible to judge the nature of the friendliness of the two communication regimes, including: the consistency of national interests in the region; parameters of cooperation in the field of security, in the field of trade and economic cooperation, in the plane of the humanitarian direction. A separate place is occupied by the issue of settlement of Moldovan-Pridnestrovian relations, in which Russia is given the place of a guarantor of peace and security in the region. It is proved that in the socio-political discourse of Moldova, Russia is perceived as one of the main participants in the regional system of relations, in connection with which geopolitical parties were formed on the political condition of the Moldovan state, of which one part stands for the European integration of Moldova, the other for balanced relations between Moldova, the EU and Russia, giving preference to the European vector. The third forces – of the unionist persuasion are in favor of the integration of Moldova into Romania. It is determined that the degree of friendliness of the regimes is directly dependent on the gradation of the national interests of the states in the region and their connection with external actors.

Keywords: national interests, national security, Moldova, Russia, Pridnestrovie, communication regime, friendliness, political parties, actors

For citation: Roman A. TATAROV. Friendly Communication Modes of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova in the Realities of Fragmentation of the World Communication Order. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2022. No. 2(4). pp. 63-75. [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-2\(4\)-63-75](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-2(4)-63-75)

Introduction

The fragmentation of the global communication order necessitates the analysis of the friendliness of communication regimes in the new realities. The deep involvement of the Russian Federation into the regional processes taking place in the Moldovan–Pridnestrovian settlement zone, as well as the ties between Russia and Moldova established over thirty years of sovereign existence, make it possible to identify the nature of friendship between the two actors, to trace transformations, and determine the criteria for their interaction. Despite the existence of a contractual framework on good-partner relations between Moldova and Russia, nevertheless, there appear additional mechanisms that determine the nature of the friendliness of the communication regimes of the two states.

Materials and methods

Our methodological position was formed under the influence of scientists who laid the foundation for the interpretation of Communicativism in political research. The researches of M.Castels and J.Habermas [5; 6] can be characterized as focal works while in the study of the communication regime, where the problem of security occupies an important place, we preferred to rely on the approaches of B.Buzan, M.Williams, etc., developed in the theory of securitization [3; 7].

The methodological foundations of the study of communication modes were laid in the works of Russian scientists of the National Research Institute for the Development of Communication (NRIDC). In the article by V.I.Gasumyanov and V.V.Komleva, the communication regime is considered as a separate category of political science, which is understood as a controlled (with varying degrees of controllability) system of formal and informal norms, rules, traditions, actors and tools that ensure communication in a certain space [1:45]. These authors develop the concept of friendliness and analyze the parameters of the friendliness of the communication regime. NRIDC developed a methodology and published the first Rating of the Friendliness of Country Communication Regimes for 2021, where Moldova was ranked the 9th out of 14 countries. The rating is based on ten evaluation criteria and more than sixty indicators¹. In our opinion, in addition to the proposed evaluation criteria and the key factors determining the nature of friendliness, we should mention the issues connected to the comprehensive realization of the national interests, which are expressed by the matters ensuring military-political stability and security, which embrace trade and economic cooperation, and concern with the implementation of humanitarian norms. Thus, the dominant factor in building the architecture of friendship is the consistency of national interests between Moldova and Russia in the region.

1 The rating of friendliness of country communication regimes in 2021. Available: <http://nicrus.ru/rating2021>.

The empirical basis of our research was founded on the political parties' program documents, on the speeches of the National Parliament representatives, the President, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives. The research presupposed the following methods: content analysis, structural and functional method, historical method, critical discourse analysis.

Results

Political parameters in assessing the friendliness of the communication regime of the Republic of Moldova

The problem of friendship between Russia and Moldova, which has not lost its relevance for 30 years, has now acquired new parameters related both to the fragmentation of the world communication order, expressed in the transformation of key parameters of globalization, and to the accumulated interstate contradictions. The key indicator acting as a criterion of actors' friendliness or unfriendliness, in our opinion, is the consistency of the states' national interests and the mechanisms for achieving them in a wide range of activities, including security issues, creating conditions for cooperation in the field of trade, interaction on humanitarian issues. In other words, the criteria that will determine the parameters of interaction between the communication regimes of Moldova and Russia at the present stage are: communications in the process of the Moldovan- Pridnestrovian conflict settlement; communications in the sphere of ensuring the neutral military-political status of Moldova and its aspirations towards European integration, capable of reformatting the regional political space; communications in the field of energy cooperation, trade and economic cooperation; communications on the problem of unionism in Moldova; communications on the status of the Russian language in Moldova and support for Russian-speaking citizens; communications in the field of cooperation on issues of preservation of historical memory.

The analysis of the socio-political space of the Republic of Moldova allows us to conclude that the main criteria of friendliness on the world stage are the norms of international law, among which the following are considered to be crucial: ensuring territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, respect for human rights and freedoms. The key characteristic of the Moldovan national interests at the present stage is the settlement of regional problems exclusively by peaceful means. Delivering his speech at the event dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Republic of Moldova, President Maia Sandu noted that "we will promote the policy of dialogue and peace, diplomatic solutions and peaceful compromises, guided by the interests of citizens. We will defend our national interests and values with honor and dignity"².

² Speech by the President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova. Available: <https://presedinte.md/rus/discursuri/mesajul-doamnei-maia-sandu-presedintele-republicii-moldova-cu-ocazia-aniversarii-a-30-a-a-proclamariei-independentei-republicii-moldova>.

It is important to note that the vector of friendliness of the Moldovan communication regime, in which national interests are concentrated, is the subject of discussions by various political forces. The article reveals the combination of traditional means of forming positions of political parties and mechanisms of articulation of national interests, enshrined in their program documents. This provides an opportunity for a deeper introduction of public opinion formation tools, the source of which are, on the one hand, party policy statements broadcast in print media, distributed via radio and television and virtual space sources, on the other. Nevertheless, it is hard to describe it as the complete harmony of the two sources forming communication regime discourse. This is due to the fact that national interests on the external perimeter are mainly used by political forces as the resource to construct election programs, while the access to traditional information resources is not the same for all the participants of political processes in Moldova.

The Russian factor, as one of the external sources of forming the communication regime, comes as the dominant in socio-political discourse of the Republic of Moldova. Firstly, the sovereignization of the Moldovan state began in 1990 and took place in the context of the spread of disintegration processes in the USSR. It is important to understand that this process, in fact, divided Moldovan society into two camps: the supporters and the opponents of the new course. Among the opponents of the new course was the public that opposed Moldova's secession from the USSR, proclaiming on the left bank of the Dniester River the first Pridnestrovian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the Moldavian SSR, and then the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the Soviet Union. The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic declared independence with the subsequent accession to Russia as the priority. Currently, the republic is one of the most important resources of the Russian Federation's influence on regional relations, which can be used as a mechanism for the realization of Russian national interests [4:132].

Secondly, having identified integration into the European Union as an absolute priority, the modern ruling the Action and Solidarity Party largely considers Russia's position in the region as an irritating factor that slows down the pace of Moldova's European integration. It should be noted that the national interests of Moldova, first of all, supposes the need to ensure the comprehensive security of the Moldovan state. The repeated references of Moldovan officials to the Russian peacekeeping forces as a threat to regional security and the inconsistency of their presence for the status of neutrality enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova³ indicate a low level of friendliness of Moldova's modern communication regime towards the Russian Federation.

It is typical for Moldovan political parties to use external factors, including Russian, in the formation of electoral strategies. In this regard, the political forces of Moldova can be logically divided into three branches.

The first group of political forces consists of political parties that advocate for the European future of Moldova as part of the European Union. Currently, the largest right-wing

³ Moldovan Foreign Ministry: The withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Pridnestrovie remains a policy priority. Available: https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/12949097?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

party holding an absolute majority in the National Parliament is the Action and Solidarity Party. The repeated messages of the party representatives suggesting to minimize Russian influence in the region allow us to conclude that the communication regime of modern Moldova is unfriendly towards Russia. In general, it is worth noting that the ideas expressed by PAS representatives about the integration into the EU are supported in Moldovan society, where 65.1% of the nation are for the implementation of the priority. At the same time, the amount of the integration opponents (25.8%) shows that the level of confidence in such initiatives needs to be adjusted by the communication messages of the political elites. It is characteristic that the majority of Moldovan citizens believe that the Russian Federation should be a strategic partner in the future (32.5%)⁴.

The second branch parties consist of the left-wing parties represented by the Socialists Party and the Communists Party, represented in the Moldovan Parliament. Adhering to the course of maintaining good-partner relations in the field of trade and economic cooperation, these parties nevertheless consistently advocate the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces from Pridnestrovie after they have completed the tasks of disposing of Soviet weapons stored in warehouses in the region⁵. Given the course of the Russian leadership to maintain its influence in the region, it is not possible to talk about the friendliness of communication regimes in key areas. However, the ideology of Moldovenism, the bearers of which are left-wing parties, as a rule, during pre-election periods, activate appeals to the population, broadcasting the values of social justice, a positive attitude to the Soviet past. Thus, they attract those sympathetic with the «strategic partnership of the two states» making them loyal to their programs [2:139].

The third direction is formed by the unionist parties, which, although not represented in the National Parliament, nevertheless have a great influence on the formation of public opinion in Moldova. Unionist parties, including the Liberal Party, the National Unity Party, the Romanian People's Party, use the theses hostile to Russian national interests in the region upholding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Pridnestrovie and supporting Moldova's integration into Romania. Nevertheless, the public opinion about Moldova integration into Romania still remains quite controversial. The majority (46%) are against the union, while 41.4% support the unification⁶.

Thus, the Moldovan political discourse is dominated by the theses that largely contradict Russian national interests and can potentially be considered by Russia as the threats.

Securitization of the friendliness of the communication regimes of Russia and Moldova

When analyzing the friendliness of communication regimes, it is important to take into account the fact that national interests and national security are the dominants of

4 The Public Opinion Barometer of the Republic of Moldova. Available: <http://bop.ipp.md/ru>.

5 Igor Dodon: Russian military forces will leave Pridnestrovie. Available: <https://novostipmr.com/ru/news/20-03-02/igor-dodon-rossiyskie-voennyye-pokinut-pridnestrove>.

6 The Public Opinion Barometer of the Republic of Moldova. Available: <http://bop.ipp.md/ru>.

this process. The key area of securitization of the communication regimes of Moldova and Russia is the Moldovan- Pridnestrovian settlement.

Since signing in 1992 the Agreement “On the Principles of Peaceful Settlement of the armed conflict in the Pridnestrovian Region of the Republic of Moldova”, cooperation between the two sides began to resolve the contradictions that arose. During the settlement process some efforts to find mutually beneficial solutions for the two sides were taken: signing a Memorandum on the basics of normalization of relations between Pridnestrovie and Moldova in 1997, an unsuccessful attempt to sign the Kozak Memorandum, which would provide the federalization of Moldova, in 2003.

A problematic area in relations between the two states is the discrepancy in the content of interests with a sufficiently coordinated vision of the Moldavian-Pridnestrovian settlement form (Table 1).

Table 1. National interests of the main actors in the region

Priority	Мирное урегулирование конфликта	Peaceful settlement of the conflict through the integration of Pridnestrovie into Moldova without a special status	A form of peaceful settlement of the conflict through federalization or confederalization	Peaceful settlement of the conflict by recognizing the independence of Pridnestrovie	Further maintaining / withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Pridnestrovie
Actor					
Pridnestrovie	Vital	Secondary	Core	Vital	Further maintaining – vital
Moldova	Vital	Vital	Secondary	Secondary	Withdrawal – core
Russia	Core	Secondary	Core	Core	Further maintaining – vital

- Vital interests are the deepest interests of the state, the defense of which implies the possibility of mobilizing all available resources.
- Core interests are the significant interests of the state, which can be the subject of bargaining with other international actors to achieve vital interests.
- Secondary interests are not usually among the priorities of the state in the region, but can be realized if they are coordinate with vital interests.

As the analysis shows, Moldova and Pridnestrovie have more vital interests in the region than Russia does. This means that Moldova is extremely dependent on external factors, mainly from Russia, which forms the specifics of the Moldovan communication regime.

Thus, it is possible to identify the underlying factors that characterize the friendliness of the communication regimes of Moldova and Russia (Table 2).

Table 2. Consistency of Russia and Moldova national interests

Priority	Territorial integrity of Moldova	Settlement of the conflict exclusively by peaceful means	Withdrawal of peacekeeping forces from Pridnestrovie	Russia is a party of the conflict	Common position on ensuring the rights of Russian-speaking citizens	Common position on the historical heritage preservation	Neutral status of Moldova
Russia	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Moldova	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

The analysis shows that there is no common position between the parties on ensuring the security architecture, but both Russia and Moldova are committed to a peaceful settlement of the relations. Nevertheless, in matters of security, the communication regimes of the two countries are prone to have an unfriendly line that does not lead to the coordination of their national interests.

Here we can observe some examples of documents that reflect the unfriendliness of the communication regimes of Moldova and Russia:

The law adopted in 2005 by the Parliament of Moldova “On the main provisions of the special legal status of settlements on the left bank of the Dniester River (Pridnestrovie)”, which granted Pridnestrovie the status of an autonomous region and assumed the democratization and demilitarization of Pridnestrovie, as well as the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region;

On May 26, 2014, the unionist-minded Liberal Party of Moldova appealed to the Constitutional Court of Moldova. They demanded to declare the presence of Russian troops in Pridnestrovie as illegal. A resolution of the Moldovan Constitutional Court adopted in 2017 declared Pridnestrovie being occupied by Russia;

Moldovan leaders repeated statements “on the complete and non-conditional withdrawal of the Russian armed forces”⁷ going against the official position of Russia;

Declaring Pridnestrovie as a zone of special strategic interests by Russia in 1996.

Additional factors that do not contribute to the friendliness of the two communication regimes are the general degradation of the relations between Russia and NATO countries, as well as the Ukrainian factor, which comes as a focal point in the modern system of international relations. The position of Chisinau, according to which the Crimea is considered to be Ukrainian territory illegally annexed⁸, as well as the participation of the official Chisinau in the Crimean Platform forum in 2021 are also among the unfriendly steps by Moldova towards Russia⁹.

⁷ The President of Moldova spoke in favor of the Russian troops withdrawal from Pridnestrovie. Available: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/792960>.

⁸ Maia Sandu called Crimea to be Ukrainian at the summit in Kiev. The Socialists are dissatisfied. Available: <https://esp.md/ru/sobytiya/2021/08/23/mayya-sandu-na-sammite-v-kieve-nazvala-krym-ukrainskim-socialisty-nedovolny>.

⁹ Russia will consider Sandu's participation in the “Crimean Platform” – Matvienko. Available: https://eurasia.expert/rossiya-uchtet-uchastie-sandu-v-krymskoy-platforme-matvienko/?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

Trade and economic relations as an indicator of the friendliness of the communication regime

Trade and economic cooperation and issues of humanitarian cooperation occupy a significant place on the bilateral agenda. Russia remains one of the most important markets for Moldovan producers, so it is very significant that the Russian leadership sometimes uses restrictive measures on the supply of Moldovan products as an instrument of influence, which can be interpreted by the Moldovan side as an unfriendly gesture.

The energy problem, led by the fact that the gas price for Moldova had been significantly increased on market conditions in 2021¹⁰, caused the energy crisis that was followed with the state of emergency in the country. In the rhetoric of the official representatives of Moscow and Chisinau here appeared some theses that posed a question whether this was a political crisis or a crisis in the sphere of business cooperation¹¹. Chisinau insisted on the geopoliticization of Moscow's decision not to extend the contract on preferential terms for Moldova due to fact that pro-European political forces, who are not on the same wave with the gas suppliers, had come to power¹². Moscow's position was that this problem is exclusively in the trade and economic plane.

Humanitarian problems of the friendliness of the communication regime of Moldova

The sphere of ensuring the special status of the Russian language in Moldova remains problematic. After the declaration of independence, Moldova began to use the Moldovan (Romanian) language with Latin graphics as the state language. This decision largely ignored the interests of Russian-speaking citizens, which was one of the reasons for the start of the protest movement in Pridnestrovie. Currently, Russian remains the language of international communication.

The problem of preserving historical heritage is also among the urgent ones. The Moldovan leadership made decisions that caused outrage in Russia. In particular, back in 2010, there was signed a decree that recognized June 28, 1940 as the day of the Soviet occupation, together with the repeated attempts by unionists to cancel Victory Day in Moldova and the acts of Soviet military graves desecration – all this was perceived in Russia as an act of unfriendliness and generally worsened the relations between the two countries.

The functioning of the Russian media in Moldova also remains quite problematic. Having refused to broadcast Russian federal channels, the Moldovan leadership blocked some Internet resources (such as Sputnik), which caused a rather painful reaction of Moscow.

¹⁰ The fruits of short-sightedness: how Moldova tries to overcome the energy crisis. Available: <https://russian.rt.com/ussr/article/958059-moldaviya-gaz-cena-protesty>.

¹¹ Moldova-Russia gas dispute: Geopolitics or business? What is important to know. Available: <https://www.dw.com/ru/gazovyj-spor-moldovy-i-rossii-geopolitika-ili-biznes/a-59649994>.

¹² «Because PAS has a different orientation»: Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament Igor Grosso believes that Russia is deliberately creating problems for our country, and no one is to blame for the increase in prices and tariffs. Available: <https://www.kp.md/online/news/4622503/>.

Discussion

The presented analysis makes it possible to identify the specifics of the friendly communication regime of Moldova in relation to Russia, which is directly dependent on the nature of the implementation of the two actors' national interests. The practical content and approaches to the realization of these interests are often transformed under the influence of the changes of political elites, which could be observed after the elections in Moldova in 2020–2021.

The problem of restricting access to information supplied by the Russian media in Moldova is currently most relevant. In the nearest future, it is unlikely to expect a dialogue between Moscow and Chisinau on these issues. It is obvious that the media regulation, including restrictions on the work of separate sources, will continue in Moldova.

The dialogue on ensuring conditions for the support of the Russian language in the region is also likely to continue. Obviously, this remains one of the promising areas of bilateral cooperation.

Thus, the range of research on the communication regime of Moldova in relation to Russia will only expand, bringing to the fore the initiatives of the political forces of the two states on further cooperation.

Conclusions

The most important factor in the friendliness of country communication regimes is the realization of national interests, or rather, their consistency in the process of intercountry interactions in different directions. Recently, the communication regimes of countries have been transformed under the influence of foreign policy priorities of the states and the situational international environment.

The analysis shows that at the present stage the level of friendliness of the communication regime of Moldova in relation to Russia is quite low. It is quite obvious that the compatibility of the implementation of the national interests of Moldova and Russia is forming some contradictions in the region.

Despite the focus of both states on the peaceful settlement of the Moldovan-Pridnestrovian conflict (which can be considered as one of the most important points, where the interests adjoin) and besides trade and economic cooperation, there are some prerequisites for the friendly relations degradation between the two countries, which are increasingly manifested in many other areas of the bilateral agenda, including prohibitions and restrictions on those Information channels contrary to the official course in Chisinau, as well as in the discourse of the political authorities of Moldova and in the socio-political media. Under the circumstances, it is not necessary to expect that the communication regime of Moldova will become more friendly. It is likely that the stagnation of bilateral cooperation in the field of security will continue to remain relevant on the bilateral agenda,

which will also not contribute to the establishment of a friendly communication regime.

Against this background, it is important for the political forces of Moldova and Russia to preserve the rational basis of relations and the previously established formats of cooperation in the field of science and education, the established format of interaction in the Joint Control Commission, membership in the internationally recognized format of the Moldovan- Pridnestrovian settlement "5+2", as well as the other platforms of bilateral interaction.

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Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Submitted: March 20, 2022. Approved after peer reviewing: March 29, 2022. Accepted for publication: March 1, 2022. Published: 27.06.2022.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.