



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of International Relations

**SEPARATISM IN THE POST-SOVIET GEOGRAPHY AND  
RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONISM: THE CASE OF TRANSNISTRIA**

Ivan RADU

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2019



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INTERVENTIONISM: THE CASE OF TRANSNISTRIA

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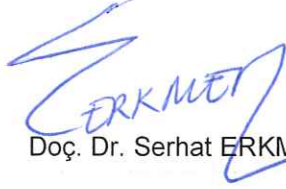
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## KABUL VE ONAY

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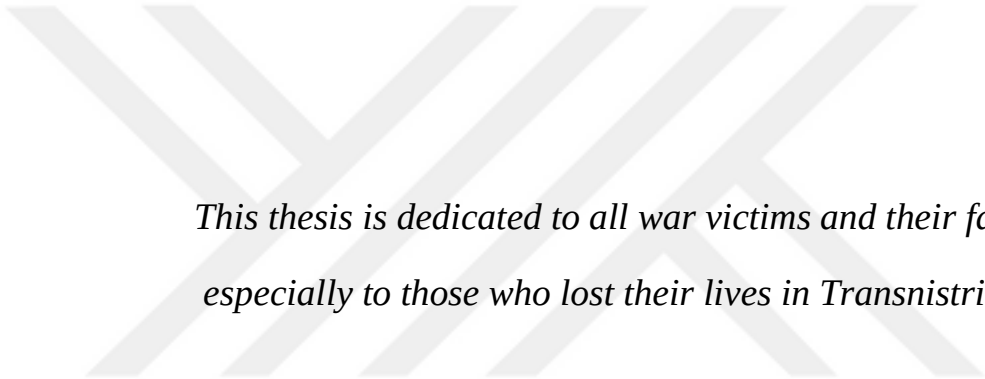


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*This thesis is dedicated to all war victims and their families,  
especially to those who lost their lives in Transnistrian war*

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Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Doç. Dr. Öğretim Üyesi, Zeynep ARKAN TUNCEL** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığımı beyan ederim.

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## ABSTRACT

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In the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a series of separatist movements emerged in the Soviet republics. Following independence, Moldova had to deal with a separatist movement in the Transnistrian region, supported by Russia. The desire not to lose control in the former Soviet area pushed Moscow to get directly involved in the Transnistrian military conflict in 1992. The Russian 14th army that secured the victory of the separatists has been maintained to this day, and after several transformations, changed its status from participant to peacekeeper. The new created separatist republic survived due to its authoritarian regime and economic interests of the Moldovan political elite in Transnistria, a territory outside of the rule of law. In addition to internal obstacles, Russian interventionism pushed by strategic interests in the region represents the main factor that has contributed to the maintenance of the conflict in the current state. Russia is driven by great power ambitions and preservation of its national security to engage in power politics in the strategic area which it calls its 'near abroad', of which Moldova is also a part. The main purpose of Russian intervention in Transnistria is not the region itself but Moldova. In order to prevent Chisinau from integrating in NATO and the European Union, which are Russia's main rivals in the region, Moscow continues to support the Transnistrian separatist regime. The most important instruments of Russian interventionism in Transnistria are: the presence of military troops, political and economic support for the separatist regime and soft power politics in Moldova and Transnistria.

### Key Words:

Moldova, Transnistria, Russia, Post-Soviet Geography, Interventionism, Separatist Regime, Conflict, OSCE, National Security, Power Politics

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|               |                                                                 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CIS:</b>   | Commonwealth of Independent States                              |
| <b>CSCE:</b>  | Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe              |
| <b>CSTO:</b>  | Collective Security Treaty Organization                         |
| <b>DCFTA:</b> | Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area                          |
| <b>DMSSR:</b> | Dniester Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic                    |
| <b>EEC:</b>   | European Energy Community                                       |
| <b>EEU:</b>   | Eurasian Economic Union                                         |
| <b>EU:</b>    | European Union                                                  |
| <b>FSB:</b>   | Federal Security Service (of the Russian Federation)            |
| <b>FSS:</b>   | Federal Security Service (of the Russian Federation)            |
| <b>GDP:</b>   | Gross Domestic Product                                          |
| <b>JCC:</b>   | Joint Control Commission (in Transnistria)                      |
| <b>KGB:</b>   | State Security Committee (of the Soviet Union)                  |
| <b>LGBTQ:</b> | lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (or questioning) |
| <b>MASSR:</b> | Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic                   |
| <b>MRT:</b>   | Moldovan Republic of Transnistria                               |
| <b>MSSR:</b>  | Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic                              |
| <b>NATO:</b>  | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                              |
| <b>NGO:</b>   | Non-governmental Organization                                   |
| <b>OGRF:</b>  | Operational Group of Russian Forces (in Transnistria)           |

|               |                                                          |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OGRT:</b>  | Operational Group of Russian Troops (in Transnistria)    |
| <b>OSCE:</b>  | Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe     |
| <b>OSTK:</b>  | United Council of Workers' Collectives (of Transnistria) |
| <b>PF:</b>    | People's Front (of the Republic of Moldova)              |
| <b>PMR:</b>   | Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic                         |
| <b>PRR:</b>   | People's Republic of Romania                             |
| <b>PSRM:</b>  | Party of the Socialists of the Republic of Moldova       |
| <b>ROC:</b>   | Russian Orthodox Church                                  |
| <b>TMR:</b>   | Transnistrian Moldovan Republic                          |
| <b>U.S. :</b> | The United States                                        |
| <b>UN:</b>    | United Nations                                           |
| <b>USSR:</b>  | The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics              |
| <b>WTO:</b>   | World Trade Organization                                 |

## INTRODUCTION

The breakup of the Soviet Union brought about major geopolitical changes. Apart from the fall of the communist regimes and realisation of the ideal of national self-determination, the collapse of the Soviet empire also had negative consequences that are still felt today. Some of the consequences with the greatest impact on the post-Soviet geography are protracted conflicts. Conflicts such as those in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova have brought instability both in the countries of origin and at the regional level. The disintegration of the USSR as well as a number of other internal and external factors led to the outbreak of the conflict between Moldova and its separatist regime Transnistria. External factors have been decisive in provoking and maintaining the conflict as it persists today. The fact that the conflict does not have ethnic or religious causes, that it took place with the involvement of Russian forces which are still in the territories of Moldova, and that Transnistria is politically, militarily and economically supported by Moscow, imply that the military conflict of 1992 was actually between Russia and Moldova. Taking into consideration that the Republic of Moldova is in the area of vital interest for the Russian Federation, a state with great power ambition that uses Transnistria as a tool for maintaining Chisinau in the sphere of Russian influence, solving this dispute seems quite difficult. Transnistrian conflict has an influence on the foreign policy of Moldova, making considerably difficult its integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

In this context, the questions of this research would be the following: What are the reasons behind Russian intervention in the Transnistrian conflict? What are the instruments that support Moscow's interventionism? And, how Kremlin's interference in Transnistrian problem affects the process of conflict resolution?

The main research methods for this thesis were historical reading, analysis of the reports and recommendations of experts in the field and reports of national and international institutions, analysis of the statistical data, examination of speeches and interviews with leaders and specialists, as well as media resources.

Accordingly, in the first chapter, the Realist school of International Relations, as the most suitable theoretical approach to interventionism in the case of the Transnistrian conflict, will be explained. The main ideas of Classical Realism and Neorealism such as international anarchy, national security and balance of power have been addressed in details. For a more detailed approach to the problem, the works of Joao Marques de Almeida and Stephen D. Krasner were studied. The perspective that these authors give on the pre-conditions and purpose of the intervention represents the theoretical basis of this study.

The second chapter explains the roots and development of the conflict in Transnistria. It addresses the issue of historical identities and the impact of Sovietisation and de-Sovietisation on the parties involved in the conflict. The role of the economic, political and military factors behind the conflict is also analysed in this chapter. This part of the research ends with the presentation of the armed conflict, the peace process and the aftermath. All these stages, it is argued, still have consequences on the conflict resolution process.

The third chapter focuses on the internal factors that maintain the conflict in its current state. The political nature of the separatist regime, its sources of income and the role of the economic and political interests of a certain part of the elite from Chisinau, which take advantage of the conflict, are analysed as important factors that contribute to the preservation of dispute.

The fourth chapter examines Russia's influence on conflict settlement. This chapter deals with the link between the interest of Moscow in the former Soviet states and its behaviour towards Transnistria, which is used as instrument of influence on Moldova's foreign policy. By maintaining its troops and organising military exercises in the Transnistrian region, Russia uses its hard power to hinder the conflict resolution process in order to ensure its influence on Moldova. The effects of Russia's soft power instruments like culture, religion, media and the NGO's also play an important role in this analysis. Another subject that is analysed is the behaviour of the Russian Federation within international structures involved in the dispute settlement process. The leverage of

Moscow on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the trilateral peacekeeping operation and the five-sided format of negotiations and its consequences are examined in detail.

This thesis argues that Russian intervention in Moldova took place in the context of Moscow's intention to protect its area of interest and increase its national power. Russian interventionism in the Transnistrian dispute creates asymmetry between Moscow and Chisinau, and with this Moldova's leverage at the negotiating table of conflict resolution is negatively affected and the results make state reintegration more difficult.



## 1. REALISM AS A THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Realism, in its various forms, represents one of the main theoretical schools in the discipline of International Relations. The subject of thesis and research question will be addressed and analysed through the general perspective of realism.

### 1.1 CLASSICAL REALISM

An introduction of the main concepts of classical realism would represent a good starting point for this research.

The main representatives of classical realism are Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, Carl Von Clausewitz and Hans J. Morgenthau. Some of their main concerns are order, justice and change at the internal and international levels.<sup>1</sup> Most realists consider effective central authority as a solution for the problem of order. What makes domestic politics more peaceful than international politics is the presence of a government that is responsible with the protection of borders and citizens, and law enforcement.<sup>2</sup> According to Mearsheimer, the international area which is a self-help system represents a “brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other”.<sup>3</sup> There are two main conditions for international actors’ survival: first, the achievement of state’s material capabilities and second, state’s participation in coalitions with other actors.<sup>4</sup> Thucydides and Morgenthau do not differentiate between international and internal politics. For classical realism, politics is the reflection of human drives and as such, is subject to the same pathologies. Realists find more variation in order and stability inside of domestic and international structures than they do between them. They explain this

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Ned Lebow, “Classical Realism”, in edition of Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith, “International Relations Theories; Discipline And Diversity”, Third edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen Van Evera, “The Hard Realities of International Politics”, *Boston Review*, Vol. 17, No. 6, November/December 1992, p.19, cited in John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions”, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1994-1995, pp. 5-49, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, “Theory of International Politics”, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, MA. , 1979, p. 118.

situation by evoking the cohesiveness of national and international societies, and the means at the hand of human drives and passions.<sup>5</sup>

In his seminal *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau presents at first a precise differentiation of international politics from domestic politics, which then becomes systematically less evident. He points out that all politics is a power struggle which is “inseparable from social life itself”.<sup>6</sup> In different states, the struggle for power is guided by laws, institutions and norms generally accepted by the society. However, at the international level, the struggle cannot be moderated in the same way.<sup>7</sup>

The main principles of realism are: 1) the presence of a negative vision on human nature; 2) the belief that conflict and war play a central role in the field of international relations; 3) the importance given to national security and state survival; 4) the lack of optimism regarding the existence of a progress in international politics.<sup>8</sup>

According to realist thought, human beings compete with each other to achieve advantage over others and to avoid domination by others. This view is universal and includes international relations with other countries. Morgenthau assumes that men are predisposed to “will to power”. This feature has more actively manifested in the political arena, particularly in international politics. Morgenthau describes politics as: “a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining, and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action”.<sup>9</sup>

All classical realists share the idea that the obtaining, maintaining and use of power represents the core interest of political activity. Therefore, the international arena is associated with power politics which is synonymous with competition, conflict and war between states. Countries confront each other routinely about fundamental issues such as defending their national interest and ensuring the state’s survival, and the protection of its people – objectives which are continuously repeated.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace”, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948, pp. 17-18, cited in Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 62.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, “Introduction to International Relations; Theories and Approaches”, Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, “Scientific Man vs. Power Politics”, Phoenix Books, Chicago, IL, 1965, p. 195, cited in Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 66.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 66.

According to realists, the international system is anarchic, which means that there is no superior authority or world government. The main actor in world politics is the state. The attributes of international arena result predominantly from the relations between states. Actors other than the state such as individuals, international organisations, non-governmental organisations are far less significant. States, though assumed to be similar in terms of motivations, are not equal and there is an international hierarchy between them. The most important actors are the great powers. For realists, international relations is an arena of competition between great powers seeking for supremacy and security and of weaker powers in the background.<sup>11</sup> At the centre of realism is national security and state survival on which the realist philosophy and foreign policy are based. The state represents the guardian of its territory, population and their *modus vivendi*. The last word in foreign policy is that of national interest.<sup>12</sup>

For modern realists at the foundation of security stands military capability and alliances. Classical realists consider military power and coalitions to be double-edged swords, which means that they can both create or annihilate war conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Speaking of the balance of power, Morgenthau describes the notion as “a general social phenomenon to be found on all levels of social interaction”.<sup>14</sup> Individuals, groups and states join forces against the actions of predators. At the international level, the balance of power might deter war when status quo powers confront their rivals, or escalate the already conflictual situation under the conditions of a lack of consistent evaluation regarding opponents’ motives, capability and firmness. Under these circumstances, states’ main purpose is to ensure a minimum of safety.<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau says that in the case when the balance of power cannot prevent war, at least it can limit its outcome and maintain the existence of states.<sup>16</sup>

Military capability and alliances are necessary in the international arena, but they cannot guarantee peace or states’ independence. Domestic and international order depends largely also on the strength of community. In the context of states and their leaders,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp. 66-67.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. ,p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, “Decline of Domestic Politics”, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1958, pp. 49, 81, cited in Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace”, op. cit. , pp. 155-159, 162-166, 172; and Hans J. Morgenthau, “Decline of Domestic Politics”, op. cit., p. 80, cited in *ibid*.

sharing a common culture, being part of the same conventions and having personal ties, limits the power race. In the absence of community, military capability and alliances cannot ensure security. In fact, they can provoke wars which were planned to be prevented. According to Morgenthau the balance of power works best when needed the least.<sup>17</sup>

Realists associate interest with power, and power with material capabilities.<sup>18</sup> According to Kenneth Waltz, “the political clout of nations correlates closely with their economic power and their military might”.<sup>19</sup> Self-interest’s primacy over moral principles represents one of the most important rules for many realists. They also regard justice as an unsafe element at the foundations of foreign policy. Justice can be used only as a justification or cover for some policies that real material interests dictate. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that justice constitutes the foundations for relationships and a sense of community. For classical realists, capabilities are only one of the sources of power and the latter is not equal to influence. Influence represents a psychological relationship based on momentary interests. Lastly, influence and security depend on community.<sup>20</sup>

For classical realists, the importance of justice is explained by two factors. It may be considered the key to influence because it creates the mechanism to ensure the way in which others comprehend and reply to you. A policy that is dictated by recognised ethical principles and in support of them produces an atmosphere of legitimacy which contributes to the adjustment of weaker actors to their subordinate position. The influence obtained through bribes or force is costly to sustain, ineffective and temporary. On the contrary, opting for justice may give rise to a community that makes possible the efficient transformation of power into influence.<sup>21</sup>

The second factor is that justice provides the basis on which actors can wisely create interests. The presence of justice creates important conditions for self-restraint which is required to act proportionally to states’ power. While weak states’ behaviour must be prudent because of external constraints, great powers’ actions are not limited in the same way and their previous achievements can make them and their leaders act in an arrogant way, which can lead to a wrong evaluation of the situation on the ground and can put at

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , pp. 64-65.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, op. cit. , p. 153.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 66-67.

risk their resources and reputation. And sometimes these miscalculations lead to disasters, as was the case regarding Athens in the Peloponnesian War, France under Napoleon's rule and Germany under the Nazi regime. Self-restraint that functions according to recognised principles of justice protects the hegemony that creates productive influence.<sup>22</sup> For classical realists, change or transformation is associated with modernisation.<sup>23</sup> Thucydides and Morgenthau had to deal with modernisation and its social, political and military consequences. For them, these consequences and modernisation itself represent a manifestation of evolving identities and discourses. Humans were never blocked by their culture, institutions or language, on the contrary, they always reproduced, changed and reinvented them.<sup>24</sup>

Morgenthau summarises his realist theory in six principles:

- Politics is heavily influenced by the eternal and static human nature that is essentially self-centred, self-regarding and self-interested.
- Politics is an independent area of action and, contrary to the dictates of liberal theory, cannot be conducted through morality.
- As self-interest is a fundamental truth of the human condition, international politics is an area where state interests are in conflict. The world and interests are in flux, and realism is a theory which adjusts to these changing political realities.
- The ethics of international relations is different from private morality. Considering that a political leader has greater responsibilities than a private person, the former, unlike the latter, is deprived of the freedom to act in the right way. The political leader is responsible for the security and prosperity of its own citizens. Therefore, he/she leader should do their best under the specific conditions of the time. This limited political choice represents the normative core of classical realist ethics.
- Realists are against the idea that some nations can enforce their ideologies on other nations and can use their capabilities in campaigns aimed to achieve this. Realists perceive this as a dangerous action that puts international peace and security at risk. In the end, this could backfire and jeopardise the initiator.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

- Statecraft is a serious and pedestrian activity which contains a deep understanding of human weaknesses. At the heart of international politics is the harsh reality of the pessimistic knowledge of humans as they are and not as we want them to be.<sup>25</sup>

The wins and failures of human beings represent the main themes of Greek tragedy and classical realism. Similar to chorus in *Antigone*, Thucydides and Morgenthau identified the remarkable capacity of men to rule nature in line with their own interests, and their tendency to ruin what has been built for many years. Classical realists look for stable orders, but do not have false hopes that the powerful will apply self-restraint. Like Aeschylus, they noticed a tight correlation between progress and conflict. According to them, destructive threats to the domestic and international order can mostly come true in the times of political, economic, social and intellectual unrest.<sup>26</sup>

## 1.2 NEOREALISM

Kenneth Waltz is in many ways the father of neorealist thinking, aimed to scientifically explain the international political system in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979). His starting point was the typical principles of classical realism such as in the form of international anarchy, under which independent states exist and operate. Yet unlike classical realists, he did not prioritise the importance of human nature and the ethics of statecraft. His point of view is to a great extent affected by economic models. Taking into account that a scientific theory of international relations aims to identify patterns of state behaviour to predict the future, for Waltz, the best theory is one that concentrates mainly on the structure of the system, on its interacting entities and on the persistence in and changes of the system. Contrary to traditional realism, where state leaders and their behaviour are in the spotlight, in neorealism, the structure of the system and the relative distribution of power within the system represent the focal point of research. Leaders are not that important since structures greatly influence their actions. Structures, on the whole, dictate the type of actions.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace", op. cit. , pp. 4-17, cited in Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , pp. 74-75.

<sup>26</sup>Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 74.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 79.

For neorealists/structural realists, states' desire for power does not exactly originate from human nature, but the structure/architecture of the international system. As the system does not have a higher authority to arbitrate great powers' actions, and there is no guarantee that an actor in the system will not attack another, it is very important for each state to maximise its power in order to protect itself from a possible attack. To sum up, great powers are imprisoned in a cage in which, to survive, they have to compete against each other for power.<sup>28</sup>

One of the main characteristics of international politics, according to Waltz, is the decentralised structure of anarchy between countries. Despite states' different cultures or ideologies, they are similar in all essential functional considerations. All states have tax systems, foreign policies, and so forth. There is a huge difference between them only in terms of their capabilities. According to Waltz, the units, which are states, of an international system are "distinguished primarily by their greater or lesser capabilities for performing similar tasks. . . the structure of a system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities across the system's units".<sup>29</sup> Put differently, with the rise and fall of great powers and as a result changes in the balance of power, international transformations take place. One typical type of this change is great power war.<sup>30</sup>

The states that are capable of causing significant changes in the structure of the international system are major powers. Despite a realised balance of power between states, in an anarchical system, the risk of war is never avoided. Waltz classifies international systems as: bipolar – which corresponds to the period of the Cold War when United States and Soviet Union were the superpowers, and multipolar that existed in ante and post-Cold War period. By comparing bipolar with multipolar systems, Waltz concludes that the former are more stable and therefore more peaceful and secure than the latter:<sup>31</sup> "With only two great powers, both can be expected to act to maintain the system".<sup>32</sup> Namely, the preservation of the system is equal to the maintenance of their status quo. According to that point of view, the Cold War represented an era of international stability and peace.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 78.

<sup>29</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, op. cit. , p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , pp. 79-80.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, op. cit. , p. 204.

<sup>33</sup>Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 80.

In neorealism, there is a recognition of the ethical dimension of international relations that is almost similar to classical realism. In this respect, Waltz's main concepts have a normative aspect. One of the concepts approached by him is state sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> "To say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems".<sup>35</sup> Sovereignty provides state with the right to decide and this condition is generally expressed by 'independence', which stipulate that a sovereign state is independent of other sovereign states.<sup>36</sup> According to Waltz, independence is when each state is officially "the equal of all the others. None is entitled to command; none is required to obey".<sup>37</sup> If independence is to be considered an 'entitlement', it would mean to accept the existence of a norm, named 'equal' state sovereignty. As Waltz believes that it is worth for states to fight for sovereignty, this results in the acknowledgment of two values: state security and survival. Yet, in contrast to classical realists, Waltz does not clearly address these values, only takes them for granted.<sup>38</sup>

Another core concept Waltz operationalises is national interest. According to him "each state plots the course it thinks will best serve its interests".<sup>39</sup> While for traditional realists the national interest is the fundamental handbook of responsible foreign policy and a moral idea that is required to be defended and promoted by state leaders, for neorealists and especially Waltz, it appears to function as a self-acting signal directing and controlling state leaders' movements. For Morgenthau, state leaders are constrained by their duty to lead their foreign policies according to the dictates of national interest, and a failure in this respect may result in their condemnation. For Waltz's neorealist theory, state leaders will always do the above-mentioned actions more or less automatically. Morgenthau perceives states as organisations ruled by leaders, promoters of successful or unsuccessful foreign policies, which depend on the quality of their decisions. On the other hand, Waltz considers states as robots that react to objective constraints and rules of the international system.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, op. cit. , p. 96.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 81,

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, op. cit. , p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, op. cit. , p. 113.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 81.

According to Waltz, those who manage the international system are great powers.<sup>41</sup> Classical realists sustain that these actors have to manage the system and when they fail to do it properly, for example, when they cannot succeed in maintaining international order, they can be criticised. Waltz understands great powers as actors with great interests in the system and for them the administration of the system is also profitable. So, it is clear that Waltz appreciates international order and that he is convinced that in bipolar systems, international order is more expected to occur than in multipolar systems.<sup>42</sup>

Another important scholar of neorealism is Mearsheimer. He supports and develops Waltz's statements regarding the stability of bipolar systems compared to multipolar systems.<sup>43</sup> These two systems are regarded to be the principal structural settlement of power that can be constituted by independent states. According to Waltz, the superiority of bipolar systems is explained by their greater international stability, peace and security.<sup>44</sup> The main reasons why bipolar systems are more stable and peaceful are:

- There are lesser great powers and intrigues among them, thus the possibility of war between great powers is lower.
- Because of the reduced number of great powers, it is simpler to manage an efficient deterrence.
- The probability of miscalculation and misadventure is lower as only two powers rule the system. In other words, the two superpowers can easier follow each other without the chaos that would take place in the case of a larger number of states specific for multipolarity. Examples of the latter system were associated with the periods before 1945 and since 1990.<sup>45</sup>

Similar to Waltz, Mearsheimer sees the behaviour of states as influenced and sometimes even decided by the anarchical structure of international relations. However, Mearsheimer defines Waltz as a 'defensive realist' – someone who expresses the idea that states must and do search for power with the purpose of ensuring their security and survival. Only, he considers that the excess of power for a state is prejudicial, as it can

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>43</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-193, cited in *ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War", in edition of S. Lynn-Jones, "The Cold War and After: Prospects for Peace", Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 141-192, p. 150.

cause threats from other states or hostile coalitions. For Waltz, it is nonsense to work at achieving extra power beyond the limit that already ensures security and survival. This is why Mearsheimer classifies Waltz's theory as 'defensive realism'. He agrees with Waltz that anarchy forces states to struggle for power. Nevertheless, he says that states look for hegemony and that they are more aggressive than they are perceived to be by Waltz. For example, the United States' objective is to dominate the whole system, because this is the only way that it can be confident that no other state or alliances of states would even dare to plan an act of war against it.<sup>46</sup>

Mearsheimer's theory, which rests on the premise that great powers "are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal", is labelled as offensive realism.<sup>47</sup> Like other realists, Mearsheimer thinks that his statement has universal application regardless of place and time. There has always been and will be conflict between nation states for power and domination in the international system. Nothing can prevent this situation. This explains the title of one of his books –*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.<sup>48</sup>

With the end of the Cold War, many scholars declared the irreversible victory of peace over power politics and the end of realism. It was even argued that economic globalisation is the beginning of the state's end. According to some Western elites, for the first time, the world of international politics was perceived as more cooperative and more hopeful. Many liberals argued that with the fall of Communism and laying the groundwork for democracy, bearing in mind that democracies do not fight each other, we had reached "the end of the history". Others stated that international institutions were consolidating their authority over great powers to make them respect the rule of law for them not to act in line with the provisions of realism.<sup>49</sup>

In the years that followed, culminating with the September 11 attacks, the hope for a more peaceful world almost disappeared and realism came into the limelight. Its revival was partly a consequence of the War in Iraq, which represented a strategic disaster for the United States and the Western coalition, and was opposed by almost every realist. For realists, globalisation and international organisations have not succeeded in weakening the

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<sup>46</sup>Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , pp. 83-84.

<sup>47</sup>John J. Mearsheimer, "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics", W.W. Norton&Company, New York, 2001, p. 29.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, op. cit. , p. 85.

<sup>49</sup>Richard Ned Lebow, in edition of Tim Dunne, et al, op. cit. , p. 91.

state. In fact, in spite of unprecedented economic integration in some regions, the state is alive and well.<sup>50</sup>

The main idea is that the world remains a dangerous place, with the level of threat depending on place and time. As states are worried about their survival, they will have to pay attention to the international balance of power. International politics is still identified with power politics. Therefore, questions like why states aspire to power, how much power is enough, or when the competition for security triggers a war must be on the agenda of scholars and policymakers. A proper analysis of these topics is vital for creating good strategies, and this way states can moderate the threats of international anarchy.<sup>51</sup>

### **1.3 INTERVENTION FROM THE BROAD REALIST PERSPECTIVE**

#### **1.3.1 A General Introduction Of Intervention**

With the end of the Cold War, the issue of intervention has been an important subject in the analysis of International Relations theory. According to Stephen D. Krasner, “more attention has been given to the conditions under which intervention should be considered legitimate”.<sup>52</sup> In the words of John Vincent, the appropriate question is not about whether to intervene, but about the type of intervention and the capacity to control it. He added that a return to the original order of sovereign states is not expected based on the rule of non-intervention, if it ever did indeed exist.<sup>53</sup>

The issue of intervention needs to be addressed through few questions. First, what are the causes that justify a military intervention? Second, who is entitled to intervene? And third, what are the political goals of intervention. This part focuses on how realism views the issue intervention and how it answers these questions.<sup>54</sup>

According to the definition proposed by Hedley Bull, intervention is “forcible interference by an outside party or parties in the sphere of jurisdiction of a sovereign

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, “Sovereignty and Intervention”, in edition of Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno, “Beyond Westphalia: State Sovereignty and International Intervention”, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 1995, p. 228.

<sup>53</sup> R. J. Vincent, “Nonintervention and International Order”, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, p. 389, cited in Joao Marques de Almeida, “International Political Theory and the Issue of Legitimate Intervention”, National Defence Institute, Lisboa, N. 102-2., pp. 155-170, 2002, p. 157.

<sup>54</sup> Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit. , pp. 157-158.

state”.<sup>55</sup> There are three main points in this definition. First of all, “forcible interference” indicates the use of military force by the intervener; this point is related to the type of action. The second one is about the number of external political agents involved; in this case, the intervention may be unilateral or collective. The last point represents the term sphere of jurisdiction, which, though may include external political sovereignty, or the liberty to conduct foreign policy, in the framework of this thesis refers mainly to territorial integrity and the exercise of domestic political sovereignty. Put differently, the object of intervention is the internal politics of a sovereign state.<sup>56</sup>

### 1.3.2 Realism And The Issue Of Intervention

To start with, the subject of intervention is not approached in a systematic manner by the most significant realist works. In his *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau does not really have a relevant content. Likewise, neorealist scholars such as Waltz and Gilpin disregard the matter of intervention in their important works. With the end of the Cold War, Krasner has addressed intervention from an altered neorealist point of view that can be incorporated into the broad realist tradition. Realists state that intervention is legitimate means to ensure national security and to keep the international balance of power.<sup>57</sup>

In the end, for the school of realism, it is anarchy in the international system that explains the phenomenon of intervention. The principles of self-help and non-intervention are mutually exclusive. According to Krasner, anarchy involves self-help. Considering that there is no international ‘government’, every state determines its own policy and path, and there is no pressure or limitation of the chosen options, including intervention in the internal affairs of another state. Self-help means that each state has the freedom of choice in terms of its own actions; instead, in the case of non-intervention, there are some things that a state should avoid doing.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Hedley Bull, “Introduction”, in edition of Hedley Bull, “Intervention in World Politics”, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984, pp. 1-7, cited in *ibid*, p. 158.

<sup>56</sup>Stanley Hoffman, “The problem of intervention”, in edition of Hedley Bull, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-28; and R.J. Vincent, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-13, cited in Joao Marques de Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>57</sup>Joao Marques de Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>58</sup>Stephen D. Krasner, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

Therefore, “when self-help clashes with non-intervention, self-help prevails”.<sup>59</sup> Krasner aims to prove the accuracy of this perspective and concludes that “intervention in the internal affairs of other states has been a pervasive characteristic of the sovereign state system from its very beginnings”<sup>60</sup>

Under the condition of anarchy, the concern for national security represents the first realist argument for legitimate intervention. For the sake of the defence of national security, realists ignore the non-intervention principle. The only source of national security under conditions of war that can cause military interventions is self-help.<sup>61</sup>

Michael Doyle finds that realists’ states cannot comply with the principles of sovereign equality or sovereign non-intervention when security is in danger.<sup>62</sup> Military interventions resulting from matters related to national security may be classified into two categories. Firstly, states interfere in the internal affairs of their neighbours because they fear that events within those states may represent a threat to their own security. This may take place by undermining international stability or their own domestic politics.<sup>63</sup> An example in this regard can be, according to realists, the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, according to which tolerance of religious pluralism was imposed: “The strong imposed constraints on the weak because they feared religious disorder in the center of Europe”.<sup>64</sup>

The second type of interventions that originate from national security issues is the attempts to increase national power. The occupation of Silesia by Prussia in 1740 is an example of this point. At the end of 1740, Frederick II, the King of Prussia occupied Silesia and made it part of his territories. After the initial offering of an hereditary claim to Silesia which did not resonate in Europe, the final justification of the King’s action was related to power interests, especially to obtain the status of a great power for Prussia.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, European great powers considered the military intervention of Prussia as legitimate which proved that the goal represented the extension of sovereign power.<sup>66</sup> As Lord Acton said: “Frederick was much more widely applauded for his prompt success

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 229.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp. 232-233.

<sup>61</sup> Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit. , p. 159.

<sup>62</sup> Michael W. Doyle, “Ways of War and Peace”, WW Norton, New York, 1997, p. 392, cited in ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit. , p. 159.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, op. cit. , p. 236.

<sup>65</sup> Sharon Korman, “The Right of Conquest: The Acquisition of Territory by Force in International Law and Practice”, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 70, cited in Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit, p. 159.

<sup>66</sup> Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit. , p. 159.

than detested or despised for his crime”. This case made Montesquieu affirm that “the spirit of monarchy is war and aggrandizement” and Frederick himself conclude that “the jurisprudence of sovereigns is commonly the right of the stronger”.<sup>67</sup>

The second realist argument to legitimise interference in the internal politics of sovereign states is intervention to maintain the balance of power. The preservation of a balanced distribution of power in the international arena justifies military interventions.<sup>68</sup> The historical event of the three divisions of Poland that took place in 1772, 1793 and 1795 between Russia, Austria and Prussia is considered to be an example in this regard. All these partitions involved the acquisition of territory by force by the European great powers, and were justified on the grounds of “the balance of power”.<sup>69</sup> Frederick II, the King of Prussia, stated that “the balance of power between such close neighbours had to be maintained”<sup>70</sup>. The leader of Russia, Catherine II, described the partition as a method to maintain the balance between great powers “by means of equal acquisitions.”<sup>71</sup> And Maria Theresa, Austria’s ruler, qualified the partition as a “truly noble and impressive idea to set before Europe”.<sup>72</sup> This kind of events made Wight sustain that intervention is excusable when its purpose is to maintain the balance of power.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, interventions intended to balance the power led to territorial compensations.<sup>74</sup>

In this context, there are two things worth mentioning. First, it is really difficult to distinguish between intervention to obtain national security and intervention to maintain the balance of power.<sup>75</sup> As Doyle says, “security drives states then to focus on relative capabilities and a consequent search for predominance”.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, great powers use frequently the maintenance of the balance of power as an excuse to apply their expansionist policies, usually at the expense of weaker states. Intervention mostly occurs

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<sup>67</sup>All citations from Sharon Korman, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73, cited in *ibid*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>68</sup>Joao Marques de Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>69</sup>Sharon Korman, *op. cit.*, p. 73; and Paul W. Schroeder, “The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848”, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 5-19, 46-52, 74-99, 136-150, cited in *ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> Sharon Korman, *op. cit.*, p.77, cited in Joao Marques de Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>73</sup>Martin Wight, “Power Politics”, in edition of Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, Leicester University Press, Paperback Edition, London, 1995, p. 196, cited in Joao Marques de Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>75</sup>Joao Marques de Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>76</sup>Michael W. Doyle, *op. cit.*, p. 390, cited in *ibid*.

in the context of great power and weak power relations. Once again, it is complicated to differentiate predatory from security reasons.<sup>77</sup>

In the end, we can conclude that for realism interventions are in line with an analysis of world politics which highlights the state of anarchy and the primacy of national security through obtaining power. For realists, interventions tend to be driven by security matters and the stability of the international system, identified with the existence of a balance of power between major powers. According to the broad realist school, intervention is justified when national security, especially of great powers, and the balance of power are threatened. Concerning the parts that intervene, realists tolerate the legitimacy of unilateral intervention. The objectives of intervention are assumed to be the defence of national security, the maintenance of the balance of power and the acquisition of state power.<sup>78</sup>

#### **1.4 THE LIMITS OF REALISM IN EXPLAINING THE PHENOMENON OF INTERVENTION**

Interventions have always been an attribute of the international system. The omnipresence of intervention represents problems for realism. For realists, interventions are in keeping with the understanding of international relations as an arena that is characterised by anarchy and the prominence of state power. States act in the way they prefer to act.<sup>79</sup> The widespread phenomenon of intervention in the domestic politics of other states can be well depicted in *The Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides: “In fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.”<sup>80</sup>

For realist perspective, there are also two serious issues regarding the intervention in the internal politics of other states. Firstly, intervention contradicts the ontological premise that states are independent actors. Realism affirms that even when a state's options are

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<sup>77</sup>Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, “Civil War and the Security Dilemma”, in edition of Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, “Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention”, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, p. 19, cited in Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit. , p. 160.

<sup>78</sup>Joao Marques de Almeida, op. cit. , pp. 160-161.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, op. cit. , p. 246.

<sup>80</sup>Thucydides, “The Peloponnesian Wars”, Penguin, London, 1954, p. 402 cited in ibid.

heavily influenced or constrained by the internal situation of other states, state leaders are free to decide on the best direction for their country, no matter how limited and unpopular that might be. Intervention means that some states are not autonomous entities. Contrarily, the feature of their politics may be caused by the actions of other countries. Officials or authorities in some states may be to a great extent dependent on the help of other states. In classical confrontations between self-help and non-intervention, between violating the autonomy of another country and restricting self-help, in the context of policies to follow, self-help prevails.<sup>81</sup>

Secondly, only to sustain that the strong will do what they choose to do does not explain what goals they plan to achieve. Intervention, to revise relations between subjects and citizens and to transform the character of internal regimes, has been encouraged by many factors. Central realist concerns like the stability of the international system or stability of the interveners' own regimes motivated most interventions. The conditions under which internal stability in the stronger state is jeopardised by the situation in other states is a matter of domestic not systemic factors. Conditions that threatened Russia and Austria after the Napoleonic Wars did not represent a concern for Britain, probably because of its more liberal regime and geographical isolation. The sectarian disputes of the seventeenth century posed a threat because the internal political legitimacy of all European great powers was profoundly linked to religious authority, a problem that vanished due to the spread of religious toleration. Sectarian problems that continue to be fundamental for most of the Islamic world are irrelevant for Europe and North America.<sup>82</sup>

In some situations, there is a vague or in-existent relationship between intervention and the maintenance of the territorial or political integrity of the intervener. One of the most dramatic historical examples is Britain's engagement in the abolition of slave trade. This trade did not put directly at risk the political or territorial integrity of Britain, still British authorities devoted treasure, weapons and lives to ensure its complete abolition. The US interventions in Central America and the Caribbean, Korea and Vietnam, were not too related to the security of the United States or to the integrity of the Washington polity. Excessive power was a precondition for this kind of interventions, but this does not explain the reasons why US intervened in the manner which it did.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p.247.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

Therefore, neorealism, with its supposition of homogeneity of objectives and its concentration on the distribution of power among countries must be supplemented by some analysis of the motivations of the most powerful states in the system. While power asymmetry is the required condition for intervention, it does not explain the particular methods through which some states have tried to change the internal political features of others.<sup>84</sup>



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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, pp. 247-248.

## 2. THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONFLICT IN TRANSNISTRIA

### 2.1 MOLDOVA AND TRANSNISTRIA: HISTORICAL IDENTITIES – A SHORT HISTORY OF THE REGIONS

#### 2.1.1 Moldova And Transnistria- Entities With Different Genesis

“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Leo Tolstoy, “Anna Karenina”

Moldova is at the crossroads of the Roman, Slavic, Turkish geopolitical worlds, for centuries an area of interest for different empires. As a result, during the recent history political borders changed taking some characteristics of those empires/entities.

The Moldovan territory can be divided in few regions according to the constituent nationalities, past and traditions, and also economic development.<sup>85</sup> Among them, two regions are of importance from the perspective of this study, the details of which are discussed below.

##### 2.1.1.1 Transnistria

“Transnistria is referred to in one of three principal ways:

- Stînga Nistrului (Left Bank of the Nistru, in official Moldovan sources)
- Pridnestrovskaja Moldavskaja Respublika (PMR, in Transnistrian official sources)
- Moldovan Republic of Transnistria (MRT, by European Court of Human Rights)”<sup>86</sup>

The territory of the Moldovan Republic of Transnistria is located on the east bank of the Dniester. With a 200 km length and an average width of 20 km it is a minuscule entity.<sup>87</sup> Across the Dniester river, to the west is located its former “metropolis”, Republic

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<sup>85</sup> John O’Loughlin, et al, “National Construction, Territorial Separatism and Post-Soviet Geopolitics: The Example of the Transdniester Moldovan Republic”, *Post-Soviet geography and economics*, June 1998, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Olga Savceac, “Transnistria-Moldova Conflict”, *ICE Case Studies*, Nr 182, May 2006.

<sup>87</sup> John O’Loughlin, et al, op. cit., p. 4.

of Moldova, and, beyond that, Romania, an EU country. On the east side there are Ukraine, new Russian land- Crimea, and the Black Sea.<sup>88</sup>

The recent history of the Transnistrian region mentions that around the XVth century it was part of Lithuania and then of the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth.<sup>89</sup> Then in the XVIth century, this area came under the control of the Ottomans.

After another Russian-Turkish War, in 1792 the territory was ceded to Russia.<sup>90</sup> Before the absorption by Russia, its border had a lack of lasting authority. According to the 1792 Peace Treaty of Iasi, the Russian Empire took control over the land between the Bug and the Dniester.<sup>91</sup>

In this period of time, most of the inhabitants of this region were Moldovan/Romanian and Ukrainian. In some parts of the region the population was consisting of nomadic Tatars.

Russian Empire at the end of the XVIIIth century, in order to protect its southwestern border, started the colonization of the region, whose population consisted of Ukrainian, Russian, and German people.<sup>92</sup>

The Moldovan Republic of Transnistria has its origins in the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), which was created in 1924 by Stalin within the Ukrainian republic. At the base of this creation was the hope that one day the regions lost to Romania at the end of World War I will return to Soviet Union/Russia. The first capital of MASSR was Balta, then later Tiraspol. One of the main purposes of the creation of this republic was to show that the Moldovans had their own state within the Soviet Union and that they were different from the Romanians. The dominant group in the region were Ukrainians with 48.5%, followed by the Moldovan/Romanian population with 30%.<sup>93</sup>

The territory of MASSR was composed by 14 raions (districts) with a population of 545.5 thousand people.

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<sup>88</sup> Reggie Kramer, "Transnistria Primer", Foreign Policy Research Institute, accessed on 31 December 2017 at <https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/10/transnistria-primer/>

<sup>89</sup> Christopher Linehan, "The History of Europe Podcast, A Short Look at Transnistria", accessed on 27 December 2017 at <http://thehistoryofeuropodcast.blogspot.com.tr/2012/08/a-short-look-at-transnistria.html>

<sup>90</sup> Olga Savceac, op. cit.

<sup>91</sup> John O'Loughlin, et al, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Olga Savceac, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> John O'Loughlin, et al, op. cit., p. 6.

Another reason of building this pseudo-state was to use it as a bridgehead for communist and territorial expansion towards Romania. This idea is proved by the constitution act of the republic where its eastern border was marked not on the Dniester but on the Prut river. Moreover, MASSR was the area where the ideology of moldovenism against Romanian culture was introduced through a totalitarian political regime, the details of which will be discussed below.<sup>94</sup>



Map: The region of Transnistria.<sup>95</sup>

#### 2.1.1.2 Bessarabia

The history of the Transdnestrian region cannot be discussed separately from the history of Bessarabia (historical name given to a province that is now part of the Republic of Moldova and, Northern and Southwestern Ukraine)

As an independent state and subject of International Law, the Republic of Moldova started its existence on the ruins of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic(MSSR), created on 2 August 1940 by the decision of the Supreme Soviet of USSR. The MSSR composed of two parts with different pasts – Bessarabia and Transnistria.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Oazu Nantoi, “Conflictul Transnistrean-geneza, evolutie, perspective”, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, “Destin romanesc, revista trimestriala de istorie si cultura”, Chisinau-Bucuresti, 2002, p. 48.

<sup>95</sup> Source: “De facto States in Question, Divided Moldova”, accessed on 31 May 2019 at <http://www.ut.ee/eikiberg/maps/album/transnistria/>

<sup>96</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , p. 47.

The territories of the Republic of Moldova in its current form was ceded by the Ottoman Empire to Russia after the 1806-1812 Russian-Turkish war. It is a region between the Nistru and Prut rivers called Bessarabia.<sup>97</sup> This was the eastern part of the historical province of Moldova and the name Bessarabia comes from the Wallachian dynasty of Basarab which controlled the land between the Danube, Dnestr and Black Sea, which is in the south of the region discussed. Later after the annexation, the whole region was named by Russia, Bessarabia.<sup>98</sup>

At the beginning, under special statute of 1818, Bessarabia had a wide autonomy. Initially, the official languages of the entity were Moldovan and Russian,<sup>99</sup> but this period did not last too long as in 1829 a new code was introduced by the Imperial authorities. Article 63 of the code banned the obligatory use of Moldovan (Romanian) language in public institutions. Later, a 1854 document, declared Russian as Bessarabia's official language.<sup>100</sup>

The transformation of Russia's domestic policy towards a more conservative one in the second part of the XIXth century influenced Bessarabia's status in the empire. Different from the first half of the XIXth century, during which it had relative autonomy, in 1871 Bessarabia became a Russian province (guberniia). Thus the region became part of the Russian heartland.<sup>101</sup>

After the 1812 annexation, Bulgarian, Turkish, German, and later Ukranian and Russian colonists were brought to this territory by the Tsarist administration. Already a host for different ethnicities, the area between the Prut and Dniester became more multicultural. And at the end of the XIXth century Moldovans/Romanians were about 47.6 percent of the local population.<sup>102</sup>

For a better control and integration of Bessarabia into the imperial system, starting with the end of the 1820s the Tsarist government promoted and applied a process of Russification. Russian was the official language, the Bessarabian Church was subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Moldovan customary law was

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Charles King, "The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture", Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford California, 2000, p. 21.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

abolished. At the beginning, Russification was more efficient in the provincial administration and the Church. Later these two institutions became the most important instruments of the state policy of Russification.<sup>103</sup>

From the perspective of ethnic identification, Russian authorities did not refuse to recognise that Bessarabians have a similar culture with the population over the Prut river (Romanian principalities).<sup>104</sup> More than this, even at the beginning of the XXth century, Russian ethnographers identified Moldovans (Bessarabians) and Romanians as parts of the same nation.<sup>105</sup>

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and later the Bolshevik's capture of power, Bessarabia was preparing for its independence.<sup>106</sup> Following the declaration of its autonomy and later independence, on 27 March 1918 Moldova's National Council (Sfatul Tarii) voted in favour of a union with Romania.<sup>107</sup>

After the unification, Romania did not immediately start the integration of its new territory, but chose to undertake this task gradually. The administrative incorporation of Bessarabia was ultimately concluded in 1925.<sup>108</sup>

"In 1940, the situation of Bessarabia changed. On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the famous Non-Aggression Pact and Secret Protocol, by which the latter was given the green light to reclaim its rights to Bessarabia."<sup>109</sup>

After having a favourable international political environment, and giving an ultimatum to Romania, asking for total withdrawal from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, Soviet Union occupied in 1940 these territories without fight.<sup>110</sup> Next year Romania joined Germany in its campaign against Russia. Bessarabia was the main reason Romania supported Germany in this war. In 1941 with Germany's help Romania occupied the territory between Prut and Dniestr. This control over the region was only until 1944, when Soviet Union reoccupied Bessarabia.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>107</sup> Nicolae Titulescu, "Roumania and Bessarabia", in James Knowles, "The Nineteenth Century and After", Volume 95, January-June 1924, London, p. 801.

<sup>108</sup> Marcel Mitrasca, "Moldova: a Romanian province under Russian rule, diplomatic history from the archives of the great powers", New York, 2002, p. 41.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.43.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Bessarabia, until 1812, was part of the Moldova principality, an entity which in the XIXth century uniting with Wallachia, laid the foundation of the modern state Romania. Even though it was for a long time under Russian control and was affected by colonisation and Russification, most of Bessarabia's population considered itself as part of the Romanian entity. This was even accepted by the Russians. After the 1918 unification, the ties of the Bessarabian province with its mother-land became stronger. In this interwar period its Romanian identity was consolidated.

On the other hand, though it has always had a consistent Romanian population, Transnistria was never part of any Romanian state structure.<sup>112</sup> This, together with a longer Russian domination in Transnistria compared to Bessarabia, created important differences between the two regions about identity.

### **2.1.2 The Role Of The Moldovenism Ideology, Romanophobia And Sovietization – New Identities**

#### **2.1.2.1 Transnistria**

On the territory of MASSR (Transnistria), part of the Soviet Union, was imposed the theory that Moldovans are different from Romanians. Also the Soviet authorities were promoting the idea that Moldovan is different from Romanian, and had its roots within the Slavic group of languages.<sup>113</sup>

There was even an attempt for the creation of a new Moldovan language. At the base of this project were archaic words, artificial terms with Slavic origins. So in order to support Moldovenism a new language had to be invented. At the proposal of the local intellectual elite, in MASSR, between 1932 and 1937, the Cyrillic alphabet was substituted with the Latin one. However, this adventure ended with the elimination of the initiators.<sup>114</sup>

The creation of MASSR and the Moldovenisation of its society was a project of the Soviet leadership. Moldovenisation had the following purposes: the use of the Moldovan language in the administration, increasing of the number of Moldovans in the state apparatus, attracting Moldovans in the communist structures (party, trade union etc),

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<sup>112</sup>Exception is the 1941-1944 period, when Romania as an ally of Germany against USSR, after reoccupied Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina took control over the territory between Dniester and Bug rivers. At that time those were the natural borders of Soviet Transnistria.

Stefan Cristian Ionescu, "Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization', 1940-44", *Palgrave Studies in the history of genocide*, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , p.48.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

creating suitable conditions for the locals to study in their mother language, and the progress of the Moldovan language.<sup>115</sup>

In this way, by promoting the idea that there is a distinct nation from the Romanian one with a distinct language, the legitimacy of MASSR was consolidated.<sup>116</sup>

The long-term objective of this project was the future integration of Bessarabia and Romania into communism and Soviet structures.<sup>117</sup>

An important element that increased the Romanophobia among the MASSR population was Romania's campaign in the World War II as an ally of Germany. Romania entered the war with the purpose of recapturing its lost territories from Russia. But later at the insistence of Berlin, it joined the German army beyond its initial interests, even to Stalingrad and Crimea. In this period Transnistria was under the control of Romania. The crimes and suppression against Jews and Bolsheviks were the first contact experience of the locals with the state of Romania, which increased anti-Romanian feelings.<sup>118</sup>

The ideology of Moldovenism, which promoted the idea that Moldovans and Romanians are two different ethnicities, and later the Romanophobia, promoted by the Soviet authorities or produced by historical events in Transnistria, were considerable factors that later influenced the Transnistrian conflict.

#### 2.1.2.2 MSSR (Bessarabia and Transnistria)

In 1944, after the counter offensive of the Red Army against Germany and Romania, firstly Transnistria then later Bessarabia (and Northern Bukovina) came once again under Soviet Union control. After the 1947 Treaty, the Soviet-Romanian border was once again created on the Prut River. Already established on 2 August, 1940 after the annexation from Romania, the MSSR consisted of six counties from Bessarabia and six raions from MASSR (Transnistria). What was left from Transnistria, Northern Bukovina, parts of Hotin (Northern Bessarabia), Akkerman and Ismail regions (Southern Bessarabia) became part of Ukraine (following the border settlement of November 1940). It can be

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<sup>115</sup> Argentina Gribincea, et al., "Politica de moldovenizare in R.A.S.S. Moldoveneasca", Culegere de documente si materiale, Chisinau, 2004, p.4.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , pp. 48-49.

observed that a territory which had never been part of Bessarabia was given to Moldovan SSR which was a small land on the east of the Dnestr River (modern Transnistria).<sup>119</sup>

After the re-occupation of Bessarabia (MSSR), the Soviet regime, in order to avoid any future destabilisation and to integrate faster the region into its body, started reprisals against the local population, especially the elite as it did elsewhere. Teachers, priests, civil servants, activists, were put to death immediately or deported to the far regions of Siberia and Kazakhstan. Some of these intellectuals, despite the risk of extradition, escaped to Romania. Along with these actions and through total isolation from Romania and the creation of anti-Romanian stereotypes, the Communist regime succeeded in making Bessarabians forget their recent history. This created a lack of cultural and spiritual persistence.<sup>120</sup>

Transnistria's (MASSR) Moldovenisation policies during the 1920s started to be applied also in the new republic. The language of the indigenous population was declared Moldovan which had to be different from Romanian. The alphabet was Cyrillic. Meanwhile, the Soviet education system trying to change the mentality of the locals, promoted a tough anti-Romanian Soviet-style Moldovenism. In the school books, the 1918-1940 period was described as a Romanian bourgeoisie-landlord occupation. Despite the fact that Romania was also a communist country, the access to Romanian history and literature was almost non-existent. Any cultural relations between MSSR and People's Republic of Romania (PRR) were cut.<sup>121</sup>

Under the cover of social internationalism, a heavy policy of Russification was present in MSSR. This suppressed the culture of the indigenous population even more. Russian was enforced, and became the dominant language in all the fields. In addition, the most important positions in the state apparatus were occupied by persons from other Soviet Republics, mainly Russia and from the left bank of the Dniester (Transnistria).<sup>122</sup>

Moldovan people, with a unique history and culture invented by Sovietics was created in order to make the MSSR indigenous population a compliant tool of the Soviet Communist Party, and to have justification for the occupation of Bessarabia and the existence of MSSR.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Charles King, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>120</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, *op. cit.*, p.49.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

Born in Transnistria, then applied also in Bessarabia, Moldovenism and Russification were effective in keeping the local population loyal and manipulating them.

Transnistria, a territory that was never part of Romania and one of the first “laboratories” of the Soviet social experiments, was supposed to be the bridgehead designed to facilitate the integration of Bessarabia into the Soviet structures.

## **2.2 THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND MILITARY FACTORS BEHIND THE CONFLICT**

### **2.2.1 Agrarian Moldova And Industrialised Transnistria In MSSR**

The MSSR was described and promoted by the Soviet propaganda as a prosperous plantation, a region where the peasants were happy to collect the rich crops for delivery to their brothers from the other regions of the USSR. After 1950 the Moldovan SSR started to be one of the most important agricultural areas of the Union.<sup>124</sup>

Although agriculture was the main sector of the economy, industry retained an important role in the economy of the Republic. Most of MSSR’s industrial capability was located out of Bessarabia, on the east of the Dneestr River(Transnistria). This included steel mills, power stations, machine and clothing facilities in cities like Tiraspol, Ribnita and Dubasari.<sup>125</sup> 80 percent of Transnistria’s population was employed in industry, constructions, and the service sector. One of the most significant units was the hydro-electric station of Dubasari. It was securing most of the required electrical energy of MSSR. Another important unit was the thermo-electric power station Moldavskaia, which was one of the biggest in the South West of the USSR. The siderurgical plant in Rabnita became emblematic for the Union’s metal industry. Many of the region’s enterprises were specialised in the production of elements, cutting-edge equipment and armament for the defence system.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Charles King, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>126</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, “Romanii, Basarabia si Transnistria”, ed. a II-a, Fundatia Europeana Titulescu, Centrul de Studii Strategice, Bucuresti, 2012, p. 358.

Moldovan farm workers, in order to create the socialist agriculture, were sent to different corners of the Soviet Union. In the same way, industrial workers from Russia and Ukraine came to the MSSR, especially to the eastern side.<sup>127</sup>

“In demographic and economic terms, the MSSR gradually developed as two republics in one: a largely rural, Moldovan, and indigenous population in Bessarabia employed primarily in agriculture and light agro-industry; and a more urban, Slavic, and generally immigrant population in Transnistria working in Soviet-style heavy industry”<sup>128</sup>

The process of immigration to the East was also influenced by the militarisation of the area. Many officers of the Soviet Army, after completing the military service on the left bank of the Dniester (Transnistria), were choosing the industrial centers of the region to settle down.<sup>129</sup>

Economically, MSSR was a republic of two regions: the agricultural one-Bessarabia, and the industrial one-Transnistria. This discrepancy between them formed a basis for the later conflict.

### **2.2.2 The First Stage Of The Conflict In The Context Of Reforms and National Movements In The USSR**

After Romania was created as a socialist state, one of MASSR’s missions-exporting revolution and communist ideas over the West of the Prut river- was complete. As a result, the efforts of creating a new nation were substituted only by the idea that Moldovans and Romanians are different.<sup>130</sup> In later times, the Moldovan intellectuals would condemn the Russification of the Moldovans.

Romanian impact on the Moldovan language increased through the work of Romanian academics in the 1960s and of Western researchers in the 1970s. All this, together with the already total refusal in 1938, of the distinctive grammatical rules and methods of pronunciation between Moldovan and Romanian in the old MASSR, except the Cyrillic alphabet and some Russian technological terms, both languages started progressively to be perceived as identical. By the 1980s standart Moldovan was more Romanian than at any time before.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Charles King, op. cit. , pp. 99-100.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>129</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , p.51.

<sup>130</sup> Charles King, op. cit. , p.107.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, pp.107-108.

In the middle of the 1980s, Soviet leader Gorbachev introduced reforms (Perestroika) in all the Union. This created a great possibility for the member nations to criticise Russification policies. In 1987 various Moldovan intellectual non-state groups asked for more cultural and linguistic freedom. In the middle of 1988, these informal groups formed the Democratic Movement in Support of Restructuring to promote democratisation and to revise the discriminative policies of the Soviet regime on the Moldovan majority and some certain minorities. They put pressure on the regime for the recognition of Moldovan as the official language of the state. The Moldovan society became divided. It was a dispute between political elites and the new elites that aspired to power.<sup>132</sup> In this respect, to describe the conflict as an ethnic confrontation between the Moldovans and the 'Russian-speaking' population, would be a superficial approach.<sup>133</sup>

“In May 1989, individuals from within the Democratic Movement, Democratic League of Moldovan Students, Ecological Movement and other associations organized the People’s Front, and it quickly became the leading Moldovan opposition bloc. Its main platform was the promotion of linguistic and cultural freedom.”<sup>134</sup>

The 1989 law that made Romanian the state language with a Latin alphabet was one of the first moves that mobilised native Moldovans. Except the fact that the Cyrillic alphabet was substituted with the Latin one, Russified names reappeared with their previous denominations. On the west side of the Dniester, this procedure easily advanced, but on the east side (Transnistria) which is controlled by the Russian minority, and in the southern region of the Gagauz people which have Turkic origins, it became a source of divergence.<sup>135</sup>

According to Language Law, civil servants and those who were working in the education system, in a period of 5 years had to be proficient in both Moldovan and Russian. Under this conditions, People’s Front in order to fasten the process of national rebirth, refused the pan-reform agenda and opted for the pro-Romania one. This provoked reactions from the Russian speaking minority. The reason for reaction was the risk of losing the status quo of the privileged elite. The new policies regarding Moldovan language, represented

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<sup>132</sup>James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, “Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict”, London, 2002, pp.103-104.

<sup>133</sup> Pal Kolsto, et al, “The Dniester Conflict: Between Irredentism and Separatism”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 6, 1993 (pp. 973-1000), p. 975.

<sup>134</sup> James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, op. cit. , p. 104.

<sup>135</sup> Jeffrey Chinn, “The Politics of Language in Moldova”, p.310.

a threat at least for the Transnistrian Russian-speaking elites. They had controlled the economic and political life in Soviet Moldova. In the same way, the new Moldovan elites of the Front such as Mircea Druc, Iurie Rosca and others, used language related cultural problems to strengthen their position in the unstable Moldovan political life.<sup>136</sup>

Another decision that made the national rebirth of the Moldovans closer to its fulfilment was taken in December 1989. The Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow adopted a ruling which declared the Ribbentrop-Molotov act illegal. In Romania and Soviet Moldova, this action was interpreted as an annulment of the annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union in 1940. Under these conditions, in Romania those who supported unification, along with Bessarabia included also Transnistria in their plans for a Greater Romania. Apparently, an instinctive desire, the idea would represent an asset in the possible negotiations regarding territorial exchanges with Ukraine.<sup>137</sup>

The last events and atmosphere in Moldova were understood by Moscow as part of the big plan of declaring independence from the USSR, and later reunification with Romania. This created fears also among minority groups in Moldova. In order to oppose the People's Front the United Council of Workers' Collectives (Russian: OSTK) was constituted. Although the new organization was present on both sides of the Dniester River, it was stronger and more active in the industrialised areas of the eastern part of the republic. As a form of protest against the new Language Law, the organisation coordinated widespread demonstrations and strikes. Regardless of its name, the OSTK was not a trade union, but an organization created by the factory administration itself. The ministry of industry in Moscow directly conducted the factories situated on both banks of the Dniester. In order to maintain their privileges and power, directors had to have good relations with the centre. With the exception of cultural implications, the conflict proved to involve other types of interests.<sup>138</sup>

The perspective of the unification with Romania was one of the main justifications of the proceeding Transnistrian authorities' declaration of independence from Chisinau.<sup>139</sup>

The USSR's Supreme Soviet's law dated 26 April 1990 regarding the equal rights of the union and autonomous republics in the social-economic, administrative and cultural

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<sup>136</sup> James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>137</sup> Pal Kolsto, et al, *op. cit.*, p. 980.

<sup>138</sup> Pal Kolsto, "Nation-building in Russia and the post-Soviet States", Boulder, Colorado: Westview press 2000, (pp.138-151), p. 223.

<sup>139</sup> Pal Kolsto, et al, "The Dniester Conflict: Between Irredentism and Separatism", *op. cit.*, p. 980.

fields, created conditions for the later development of the Transnistrian region as a separate entity.<sup>140</sup>

In the years that followed, the rights and freedom given to the member republics started to open the gates for nationalism and self-determination. As a result, this produced independence movements throughout the Union, which was seen by the Soviet leaders a threat to the integrity of USSR. However, the secessionist autonomous enclaves (in this case Transnistria) of different union republics which jeopardised the integrity of the latter's territory was not perceived by nomenclature as a threat to the borders of the USSR which illustrates the double standard communication.<sup>141</sup>

The separatist entities felt drawn to Moscow's communist regime, and were acting in accordance with it. They represented a tool of pressure at the centre's disposal which it exercised on the nonconformist republics in order to bring them back under Soviet rule or, in case of independence to keep them under the Soviet Union/Russia's sphere of influence by threatening their territorial unity. This was also the case in Transnistria, where the leaders of the Slavic majority, with Moscow's support started work on the conception of an autonomous republic in this area once again. The original aim of the entity was the defence of socialism and of the Soviet mother-land.<sup>142</sup>

The first serious sign of Transnistrian separatism was registered at the 13-th session of the Tiraspol city soviet (congress). This took place on 13 September 1989, and presented to the proletariat of the Tiraspol, Bender, Rabnita, Slobozia, Camenca, Balti, Grigoriopol, and Dubasari regions (raion in Romanian/Russian) the proposition to form an autonomous republic as part of the MSSR.<sup>143</sup>

On 2 June 1990, in Parcani, Transnistria, after a Congress of the region, the decision was taken to form the "coordinating Council of the Dniestria region". The president of this organization was Igor Smirnov, director of Electromaş, an industrial plant specialised in the production of military equipment. Smirnov was a native of Russia, and came to Tiraspol (Transnistria) in 1987. With this, Transnistria created its first parallel state institutions, independent from the MSSR's central power and legislation, but subordinated to the USSR's law of self-determination and local administration.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p.346.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, pp. 348-349.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 349.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p. 350.

An important event in Moldova's legal and political life was the 23 June 1990 declaration of state sovereignty of the Moldovan republic and the evaluation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. The pact was declared as an act of aggression that resulted in the annexation of the Eastern part of Romania. Also with this document, the decision of the Soviet Union to form a Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and its incorporation into the USSR were declared as illegal. These acts represented an important basis for the possible unification of the MSSR with Romania.<sup>145</sup>

Lukianov said in 1990 that the separatism in MSSR symbolised by the declaration of Transnistrian and Gagauz republics, is directly influenced by the Declaration of Sovereignty of Moldova which did not ensure that it will continue as a part of the USSR.<sup>146</sup>

As a reaction to all these events and with Moscow's support, the Gagauz proclaimed their own autonomous republic, on 19 August 1990. Located in the south of Moldova, the new republic had its capital in Comrat.<sup>147</sup> As previously noted, the Gagauz are a Turkish-speaking group that never had any level of autonomy as part of the MSSR and USSR and thus suffered a lack of official protection for their own language and culture. Despite being of Turkic origins, most of them lack fluency in either Gagauz or Moldovan, but use Russian for daily communication.<sup>148</sup> Gagauzia, in comparison to Transnistria, is mainly rural and generally has a poor soil. It does not have a large population and important cities, which shows that it is more dependent on the Chisinau authorities.<sup>149</sup>

On 2 September 1990 in Tiraspol, the Second Extraordinary Session of the Peoples' Deputies of the Dniester Area, declared the constitution of the Dniester Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (DMSSR).<sup>150</sup> The new created republic was considered to be the successor of the MASSR of 1924, but in order to avoid any problems with Ukraine (former MASSR was part of Ukrainian SSR) and to justify the incorporation of Tighina/Bendercity (which has always belonged to Moldova between the river Prut and Dniester) DMSSR self-proclaimed as an union republic, part of the USSR and equal in

<sup>145</sup> Pal Kolsto, et al, "The Dniester Conflict: Between Irredentism and Separatism", op. cit. , p. 982.

<sup>146</sup> M. Snegur, "Memorii", vol.2, p. 835, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p.353.

<sup>147</sup> Pal Kolsto, "Nation-building in Russia and the post-Soviet States", op. cit. , p. 226.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 224.

<sup>149</sup> John O'Loughlin, et al, op. cit. , p. 21.

<sup>150</sup> Yakovlev V.N, "Besarabskii vopros i obrazovaniye Pridnestrovskoi Moldavskoi Respubliki", Tiraspoli, RIO PGKU, 1993, p. 85.

rights with the other union republics. The name of the republic contained also the word Moldavian. According to the authors, the purpose of this decision was to create sympathy among the Moldovans in the Transnistrian region and to keep them far from their brothers beyond the Dniester River, and in this way to make from this enclave a stakeholder of the Moldovenism dressed in Russian clothes.<sup>151</sup>

The proclamation of the Transnistrian Republic did not imply an immediate separation from Moldova. A referendum in March 1991 showed that around 93% of the TMR electorate voted for maintenance of the existence of the USSR. In August 1991, TMR supported the coup in Moscow. Transnistrian leaders were on the conservative side because of the shared Communist ideology yet they were hoping that being on the coup plotter's side would provide them with the support of the Communists in the fight against Moldova. The Chisinau leadership, on the other hand, gave their support to Boris Yeltsin.<sup>152</sup>

After the failure of the coup attempt on 27 August 1991, the Parliament declared the independence of Moldova according to International Law. Complete independence, excluded the immediate unification of Moldova with Romania, but at least left an open door for the future prospects of realising it.<sup>153</sup>

On 1 December 1991, on the other side of the Dniestr River, after the Dniester Republic's proclamation of independence, a referendum took place according to which 97.7% of the voters stood by the creation of the TMR. With the results of referendum, Transnistria's independence was confirmed. As no international observers were present and suspicions of fraud and intimidation persisted, the validity of the results of the referendum remained doubtful.<sup>154</sup>

In the period between 1991 and 1992 the idea of unification with Romania lost part of its popularity. One of the reasons behind this was the slow democratization of Romania. In this context, Moldovans were afraid that they would lose the freedom they had enjoyed since independence.

Regarding the economic sphere, Romania was not too attractive for the Moldovans. At that time Moldova's living standard was higher than that of its neighbouring state. In

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<sup>151</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

<sup>152</sup> John O'Loughlin, *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>153</sup> Pal Kolsto, *et al*, "The Dniester Conflict: Between Irredentism and Separatism", *op. cit.*, p.985.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

some circles, there was the fear that with unification Moldova will become again an interwar Bessarabia, a discriminated and a backward province and that serious attempts of unification would worsen the already existing ethnic tensions. In fact, as the new state was created, it had its own state institutions, member of which were afraid that in the case of unification they will lose their prestigious and well-paid jobs. So, preserving the status-quo would be in their interest.<sup>155</sup>

Despite losing influence, the People's Front (PF) was able to react to the unstable political situation by continuing to promote the unification even more. In January 1992, the first national conference on unification took place in Iasi, Romania. The PF continuously claimed that the left bank of the Dniester was integral part of Moldova. In February 1992, at its 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress, the PF adopted a resolution which condemned the separatist regime and also attacked President Snegur's incapacity to protect the integrity of the state. It also declared that the inhabitants of the Transnistria region have the same right to Romanian citizenship as those of Moldova. Yet nobody asked the residents of this region if they were interested in this.<sup>156</sup>

In the 1960s a process of soft Romanization of the "Moldovan" language started which softly paved the way for national rebirth in latter years. After Perestroika, the relative freedom offered by Moscow provided the possibility to the Soviet republics of criticizing the regime and demanding the recognition of their identity rights and self-determination. Soviet Moldova was among these republics. The spearhead of its national rebirth was the PF, a movement that influenced the political life at that time by seeking in the first instance to reform and later to unify Moldova with Romania. One of the major reforms was the Language Law, which declared Romanian as the official language of the MSSR. Transnistria, a more Sovietised and Slavic majority region started to react to and condemn these movements by organising protests, regional council meetings, referenda, and creating different organisations. The well positioned Russophone elites were afraid of losing their status and of unification with Romania. The fear of unification was exaggerated on purpose by the elites to consolidate the Transnistrian "society" against Chisinau. Moscow, in order to calm down Moldova's euphoria of national rebirth and to avoid the separation of the republic from the union, threatened it with a separatist republic

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p.986.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, pp. 986-987.

in Transnistria. The parallel institutions and illegal decisions of Tiraspol were not condemned by the Soviet leadership.

Apparently a cultural and ethnical dispute, Transnistrian case was actually a conflict of the elites. The reforms and national movement in Soviet Moldova gave birth to a new group of leaders from among the native population. The pro-self-determination and partly pro-Romania Moldovan elite group had to face the old pro-USSR/Russia, Transnistrian one. Not having the same political vectors, these two groups, with Russia's support for the separatists, made the conflict unavoidable.

### **2.2.3 The Russian Military Presence In Transnistria**

The presence of significant Russian military forces, arming and fighting technology in Transnistria has quite a long history. This is related to the strategic objectives of the USSR/Russia regarding the South and Central Europe. At the end of the Second World War, the former participant in the Southeastern and Central Europe operations, the 46th Soviet Army was withdrawn to the military district of Odessa and most of its units were placed in Transnistria. Later it became the 14th Army and had approximately 3000 officers, and tens of thousands of soldiers. This was one of the elite military bodies of the USSR during the Cold War.<sup>157</sup>

Transnistria became one of the USSR's most Sovietized areas.<sup>158</sup> As a reward for its loyalty, the Soviet Union contributed to the development of the defence and heavy industries of the region. This was reflected in the construction of a large number of steel mills, power stations, armament and advanced military equipment factories.<sup>159</sup>

After the independence of Moldova, the Russian army in Transnistria was involved in two important actions, first, the support of the separatists in Transnistrian conflict and second, the preservation of the armament deposits in Transnistria. The transformation of Transnistria into a real separatist entity took place in few stages. At the beginning, it was used as an instrument in supporting the survival of the USSR, and later with the process of disintegration of the empire, the Transnistrian regime was consolidated with the military and nationalist support of Russia, the new imperial centre and successor of the Soviet Union. As the MSSR's Soviet institutions like intelligence structures, army were

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<sup>157</sup> Charles King, *op. cit.*, p. 188, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

anticipating the risk of the dismantling of the Union and the declaration of independence of Moldova, they organised the transfer of some military forces and KGB's archives from Chisinau to Tiraspol.<sup>160</sup> The presence of the 14th Army gave confidence to the separatist forces that in case of a conflict with Moldova its troops will defend them. As a result, their separatist ideals were not limited by any possible military threat, especially under the conditions in which Moldovan forces could not be compared to the well-equipped and trained Russian army.

During the break-up of the USSR, Transnistria was an industrialised region compared to Moldova. Because of its long-time loyalty to Moscow, the Transnistrian region benefited from the center's economic support during the Soviet times. Most of Moldova's heavy industry was focused there. During the intensive Soviet industrialisation and later, many Russophone workers from different corners of the Union came to the region to find a good job. Many of them were coming for key positions in the economic and even political sphere. Also, a majority of the Transnistrian population was engaged in industry, their standard of living was a bit higher than those living on the right bank of Dniester. On the other hand, Moldova did not receive that many newcomers. The majority of its population was indigenous and Moldovan (Romanian). The region was predominantly agricultural and most of its population engaged in this economic sphere. In addition to the differences in their levels of development, these two regions have different types of elites. As Moldovan elite was from among the local population had a more pro-Moldovan SSR. On the other hand, the Transnistrian one, or an important part of it, was not born in Transnistria. This might explain their lack of attachment to Chisinau and loyalty to Moscow.

It is under these conditions that the reforms of Gorbachev and later the national movements that encompassed the MSSR started. These movements brought to power the nationalist parties in Moldova. The situation in Transnistria did not change from this point of view, but became even more conservative and reactionary to the changes that were taking place on the other side of the river. Romanian language and Latin alphabet became official but Transnistrians did not accept them. The idea of unification with Romania advanced by the nationalist PF was used by Tiraspol in their propaganda to divide the population on both sides and to promote separate political paths.

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, pp. 358-359.

In this context, Transnistria created its own governing bodies and declared its independence. This could not have been possible without the support of Russia and its military troops. Moscow was trying to use Transnistria as an obstacle to Moldova's desire for independence or at least as an enclave inside of a state that would still be dependent on Russia. Despite all these events, Moldova became independent and its authorities did not stop the democratisation and national rebirth processes. Chisinau warned Tiraspol many times to stop its separatist activities, but these warnings did not lead to concrete results. Moreover, several violent clashes between the parts took place at the end of 1991. A traditional form of war was on the eve.

## **2.3 THE CONFLICT AND PEACE AGREEMENT**

### **2.3.1 The Military Conflict**

On the eve of Moldova's becoming a United Nations member, the situation in Transnistria got worse. The armed cossacks and Transnistrian security forces took control of the police station of the Dubasari district, and took 34 policemen hostage.<sup>161</sup> This action, which had victims, took place on 1-2 March 1992 and was the beginning of the military conflict.<sup>162</sup> The Moldovan government and parliament started to take the event more seriously by adopting legal measures and warning the international public opinion.<sup>163</sup> The outbreak of the violence rendered international community sensitive to the issue. Republic of Moldova's neighbouring countries (Romania, Ukraine, Russia) thought that this could bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict.<sup>164</sup>

In the context of the CSCE Helsinki reunion, at a quadrilateral meeting on 23 March 1992, ministers of foreign affairs of Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Moldova signed a common declaration regarding the situation in Transnistria. They were for maintaining Moldova's territorial integrity, ceasefire, disarmament of illegal units, restoring the legitimate authority, minority rights protection and refugee assistance. At the same event, they agreed to form a quadrilateral mechanism for political consultation. The purpose of this

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<sup>161</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , p.58.

<sup>162</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , pp. 361-362.

<sup>163</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , p.58.

<sup>164</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 362.

body was to follow up the conflict, facilitate the dialogue between the parties and ultimately solve the dispute in a peaceful manner.<sup>165</sup>

The quadrilateral agreement seemed to have a positive effect. The first political consultation of the experts took place on 31 March-1 April 1992 in Chisinau. Among the most important principles adopted by the group were: preventing an increase in violence, non-admission in the conflict of other states' citizens, conflict resolution only through peaceful means, respecting Moldova's independence and territorial integrity. Considering that in Transnistria there were already volunteers from Russia and Ukraine supporting the separatist regime, not all of the members of this mechanism agreed to the principles. On the other hand, the Transnistrian regime used a misinformation campaign in all the media accusing Romania of army mobilisation to its border with Moldova in order to support the Moldovan regime. Even though this was denied by the Romanian authorities, the impact of the manipulation of the Transnistrian population could not be disregarded.<sup>166</sup>

Influenced by the worsening of the conflict, the foreign affairs ministers of these four countries met again on 6 April 1992 in Chisinau. They adopted a declaration which expressed their deepest concerns regarding the evolution of the events on the Eastern side of the Dniester River and its threats to the democratic development of the neighbouring states.<sup>167</sup>

On 17 April 1992, the ministers of foreign affairs approved the status of the Joint Commission. After starting its activity on the ground, the new Commission reported that the ceasefire is largely respected and that there is a movement to restart economic activities, and citizens wanted the end of military operations.<sup>168</sup> However, the leaders of the parties had a conflict of interest regarding the Transnistrian issue. The Ukrainian delegation joined the Russian delegation in supporting the separatist regime of Transnistria. Only the Romanian delegation supported Moldova. Under these conditions the negotiations proved to be difficult. In June 1992, the Moldovan legislature created good conditions to reduce the tension. The Transnistrian deputies were brought back to Moldova's Parliament. Later on 16 June 1992, the Parliament of Moldova took a decision

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, pp. 362-363.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p. 363.

<sup>167</sup> M. Snegur, op. cit. , p. 559, cited in ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , pp.363-364.

regarding the basic elements of the peaceful regulation of the military conflict and the rapprochement in the eastern part of Moldova.<sup>169</sup>

The evolution of the conflict this way was not accepted by the Russian secret service. As a result, on 19 June in the city of Tighina (on the right side of the Dniester) the police station (controlled by Chisinau) was attacked by separatists. In the resulting heavy clashes, the 14th Russian Army got directly involved in the conflict supporting the separatists.<sup>170</sup>

The indirect interference of the Russian army in the conflict on the Transnistrian side started on 19 May 1992,<sup>171</sup> The Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Pavel Graciov gave directions to the commander of the 14th Army General I. Netkaciov to complete with the reserves all the military units of the 14th Army present in Transnistria and to prepare them for the operation.<sup>172</sup> On the same day, Netkaciov started to provide Transnistrians with tanks, armoured cars, and weapons. At around 18:00, the 14th Army took control of all the districts and cities on the left side of the Dniester River.<sup>173</sup>

Two of the last quadrilateral meetings (23 May 1992 at the OSCE Conference in Lisbon and 25 June 1992 at the Black Sea basin reunion in Istanbul)<sup>174</sup> took place in the context of the involvement of the 14th Russian Army into the conflict on the Transnistrian side. So, it is possible to say that arms were preferred instead of negotiations.<sup>175</sup>

With the 14th Army's participation in the conflict, the quadrilateral negotiations system gradually decreased its activity. Moreover, Russia used the separatists' and the 14th Army leaders' voices to criticise Romania's participation in the quadrilateral negotiations.<sup>176</sup>

One of the last meetings of the quadrilateral format that took place in Moscow on 3 July 1992 was a short and a symbolic one.<sup>177</sup>

As a result of this confrontation, the Moldovan state experienced a moral, military and political defeat. The quadrilateral mechanism collapsed. Romania was excluded from the conflict resolution efforts, and the Republic of Moldova had to stand by itself against the

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<sup>169</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , pp.58-59.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>171</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p.367.

<sup>172</sup> M. Snegur, op. cit. , p. 540, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 367.

<sup>173</sup> M. Snegur, op. cit. , pp. 540, 570, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 367.

<sup>174</sup> M. Snegur, op. cit. , pp. 636-637, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 364.

<sup>175</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 364.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, pp. 364-365.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 365.

Russian Federation.<sup>178</sup> The outcome of the violent confrontations was more than 1000 dead and injured. 130.000 people took refuge in Ukraine, Russia and the western part of Moldova.<sup>179</sup>

### **2.3.2 The Peace Agreement And The Immediate Consequences Of The Conflict**

Despite the Transnistrian incitements, the top-level Moldovan- Russian talks conducted on 3 and 6 July 1992 predicted the beginning of the end of the military conflict. At the initiative of a well-known businessman in the former Soviet area (also active in Moldova), Boris Birstein, supported by the president Snegur, the vice-president Rutkoi, accompanied by the Chief of Russia's Federal Security Service, V. Barannikov and some advisors, came to Chisinau. The reason of this visit was the preparation of a Russian-Moldovan act regarding the peaceful resolution of the Transnistrian military conflict. On this occasion, details of a "Convention regarding the principles of peaceful resolution of the military conflict in the Dnestrian area of the Republic of Moldova" were agreed upon. On 21 July 1992, the prepared document, which included eight main items, was signed by the Russian President Yeltsin and the Moldovan President Snegur.<sup>180</sup>

According to the Convention's Article 1, Paragraph 1, the belligerent parts agreed on the total ceasefire and the end of any military actions against each other.<sup>181</sup> Paragraph 2 of the same article called for military disengagement and the establishment of a security area in the conflict. In order to enforce the provisions of Article 1, a Joint Control Commission is created, with its Office in Tighina (Bender). The members of the Commission were representatives of the 3 parts involved in regulation. They were the Russian Federation, the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau) and Transnistria (Tiraspol). Article 2 of the document set out to create some military forces connected to the Control Commission. They would represent the parts responsible for complying with the requirements of the Convention.<sup>182</sup>

The 4th article of the Convention mentioned that the units of the 14th Army of the Armed Forces of Russian Federation dislocated in the Republic of Moldova will strictly respect

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<sup>178</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , p.59.

<sup>179</sup> Charles King, op. cit. , p. 183, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 373.

<sup>180</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 373.

<sup>181</sup> For the full text of the Convention, see Mircea Snegur, op. cit. , pp. 657-661, cited in *ibid*.

<sup>182</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , pp. 373-374.

neutrality. Furthermore, the army status, the procedure and terms of its phased withdrawal will be solved in the context of the negotiations between Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation.<sup>183</sup> The 5th Article noted that the application of any sanctions or blockades is impermissible and any obstacles for movement of goods, services and people in the conflict zone will be immediately removed. Negotiations regarding the regulation of the problems related to the return of the refugees to their homeland will be launched, providing support to the war-affected district population. All of these had to be done with Russian support.<sup>184</sup>

The signed Convention ended the military conflict and took the required steps for Transnistrian conflict settlement. Despite the critics, the native population and many politicians of the international arena welcomed the agreement between Russia and Moldova. This was a good start for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.<sup>185</sup>

Over time, the real purpose of signing the agreement of 21 July 1992 became clearer. The 14th Russian Army changed its name, but the intentions remained the same. The Transnistrian enclave started to develop as a separate state, frequently ignoring its responsibilities. Despite Moldova's military de-escalation, Transnistria, with Russia's support, continued to strengthen its political and military position.<sup>186</sup>

Transnistria, according to the 1989 census, had a population of some 546.4 thousands inhabitants. The main ethnicities were: Moldovans – 39.9%, Ukrainians – 28.3%, and Russians – 25.4%. It is possible to conclude that Russia had concerns about its minority status in the region when talking about Moldovan-Russian state relations. However, the reality was not exactly like that.<sup>187</sup> According to Jeff Chinn, the interests of Moscow in Transnistria is beyond the national camaraderie and is about keeping a strategical military position vis-a-vis Ukraine and the Balkans.<sup>188</sup> In the 1992 conflict, Kremlin proved that it can use the military power to protect its geopolitical interests in that area of Europe.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 374.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 375.

<sup>187</sup> Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, "The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Moldova", Studies, II edition, reviewed and completed, Civitas, Chisinau, 2001, p. 152.

<sup>188</sup> Jeff Chinn, "The Republic of Moldova. A look from the overseas", *Politics Arena*, I, nr. 1, July 1996, p. 30, cited in *ibid*.

<sup>189</sup> Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

## 2.4 THE AFTERMATH

“Though the treaty signed in July 1992 put an end to open hostilities, the conflict continues to simmer as a “cold war””.<sup>190</sup> After the army clashes, the Transnistrian conflict came to the attention of the conflict and post-conflict resolution specialised international organisations, mainly the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>191</sup> One year after the ceasefire, and in the context that no progress was registered by the main negotiators Russia and Ukraine (Romania was already excluded from the quadrilateral negotiation group), OSCE created a mission in Moldova, with headquarters in Chisinau (1993) and a representation Office in Tiraspol (1995).<sup>192</sup>

In addition to a mediator between Chisinau and Tiraspol, the OSCE also tried to be a mediator between the belligerent parts and the guarantors of the conflict settlement; Ukraine and the Russian Federation. After a long period of “2+3” negotiations format (Chisinau, Tiraspol and OSCE, Russia and Ukraine), starting with 2005, the EU and the United States joined the group as observers and the format became “5+2”.<sup>193</sup>

“According to the CSO Decision from 4 February 1993, the objective of the Mission is to facilitate the achievement of a lasting, comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in all its aspects [...], based on the consolidation of the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova within its current borders and reinforcement of the territorial integrity of the State along with an understanding about a special status for the Trans-Dniester region.”<sup>194</sup>

Today, the most significant specialists in the Transnistrian matter such as Vladimir Socor and Wim van Meurs argue that the OSCE Mission to Moldova has failed. According to Dan Dungaciu, there are no important differences between the situation today and the 1993 OSCE document.<sup>195</sup> All of the important OSCE documents adopted starting with Budapest meeting (1994), until the Maastricht one (2003), show the lack of a concrete

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<sup>190</sup> John O’Loughlin, et al, op. cit. , p. 22.

<sup>191</sup> Charles King, op. cit. , p. 183, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 377.

<sup>192</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 377.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> CSO Meeting (19th), 4 February 1993, Journal No. 3, Annex 3.

<sup>195</sup> Dan Dungaciu, “Moldova Ante Portas”, TRITONIC, Bucuresti, 2005, p. 192 ( see also: the Report No. 13 by the CSCE Mission to Moldova, 13.11.1993).

progress in the implementation of the Russian-Moldovan Agreement of 21 October 1994.<sup>196</sup>

As it was mentioned before, on 21 October 1994, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova signed an Agreement on the legal status and the conditions of the withdrawal of the temporary Russian troops located in the territory of Moldova. As envisaged in the agreement, the retreat of the Russian army was planned to take 3 years from the day of its entry into force. Also, we can observe a tricky formulation, as it was mentioned that the evacuation had to take place in the same time with the political regulation of the conflict and the determination of the special status of the Transnistrian region within the Republic of Moldova.<sup>197</sup>

In order to “legalise” its arsenal in the region, Moscow renamed the 14th Army in Transnistria as “the Operational Group of Russian Forces” (OGRF). Until the end of the 1990s, Russia considerably reduced its military quota to 2500 officers and soldiers, yet still remained as a power that is pulling the strings in the region.<sup>198</sup> Despite the fact that Russia has committed itself to retreat by signing different agreements, its troops continued to be there, protecting and consolidating the status quo of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic.<sup>199</sup> An example to this can be the Declaration of the OSCE Summit in Istanbul (1999) accepted by Russia, which demanded the evacuation of the army and weaponry from Moldova by the end of 2002.<sup>200</sup> Kremlin invented different excuses and did not respect its obligations. The weapons sales on the international market from the arms depots, controlled by the 14th Army and later by the OGRF, served as a source of profit for Russians and Transnistrians and supported the Transnistrian regime.<sup>201</sup>

In the December 1995 referendum in the Transnistrian region, more than 80% of the voters chose to sustain the existence of the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic as a “sovereign and independent state.” However, this did not pique many observers’ interest, as the region is seen as a quasi-totalitarian state where all the elections are just a duplicate

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<sup>196</sup> Dan Dungaciu, op. cit. , p. 192.

<sup>197</sup> Ioan Aurel Pop and Ioan Scurtu, “200 de ani din Istoria Romanilor dintre Prut si Nistru, 1812-2012”, Chisinau, 2012, p. 203.

<sup>198</sup> Charles King, op. cit. , p. 204, cited in Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 381.

<sup>199</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 381.

<sup>200</sup> The Declaration of the OSCE Summit in Istanbul, 1999, p. 50

<sup>201</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, op. cit. , p. 381.

of those in the USSR.<sup>202</sup> The 1992 war and its aftermath created a distinction between “us” and “them” (Tiraspol and Chisinau) in the mentality of the Transnistrian population, which consolidated the so called “Transnistrian identity”. This made possible the capacity of the TMR to survive.<sup>203</sup>

On 16 December 1995 a draft law on the special Status of the settlements on the left side of the Dniester (Transnistria) was presented by the Moldovan ruling party (Agrarian Democratic Party). The project mentioned a large autonomy for Transnistria within Moldova. Yet the separatist regime did not accept this and demanded “equal rights” with Moldova. The only acceptable solution for them was a confederation of two states.<sup>204</sup>

On 8 May 1997, in Moscow, a memorandum on a basis for a settlement the relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria was agreed upon. Known also as the “Primakov Plan”, the memorandum was signed on behalf of Moldova by President Lucinschi. According to the document Russia was a “guarantor”, Moldova and Transnistria were declared two parts with equal rights under a common state. Even though it was not recognised as a state, Transnistria’s status as Moldova’s equal created advantages in further negotiations formats, agreements and plans. In the project five parties involved in the negotiation process were listed as: Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, Tiraspol and Moldova. The OSCE, Russia and Ukraine were the “mediators” and “guarantors”. No Western country was included in the system. As a result, we can conclude that this project was an attempt to make Transnistria control the internal and external policy of the Republic of Moldova.<sup>205</sup>

The OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine prepared in 2002 a document named “The Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria”. Its content was an extension of the 1997 Memorandum, but the essence was the same: the main idea was that the parts are equal, and the negotiations format (3+2) was preserved. This OSCE project of “federalisation” was criticised by the Moldovan and Western governments.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Socor, “Creeping”; and Dan Ionescu, “Media in the ‘Dniester Moldovan Republic’: A Communist-Era Memento,” *Transition* 1, 19, 1995, cited in Pal Kolsto, “Nation-building in Russia and the post-Soviet States”, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with the oppositional leader Andrey Safonov in Tiraspol, May 1996, in Pal Kolsto, “Nation-building in Russia and the post-Soviet States”, op. cit., p.239.

<sup>204</sup> Ioan Aurel Pop and Ioan Scurtu, op. cit., p. 203.

<sup>205</sup> Dan Dungaciu, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

An important event and document that could change how things work was the 17 November 2003 proposal to the Moldovan part by Dmitri Kozak (also known as the Kozak plan), the Deputy Chief of Russia's President's Executive Office, of a Memorandum on the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. The document itself represented a draft of a federal Constitution, which would make Moldova dependent on Tiraspol and Moscow. The Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin was ready to sign the document, but the intense pressure of the civil society and Western diplomats made him change his mind.<sup>207</sup>

Another plan for the resolution of the crisis was created by the Ukrainian president Yushchenko (the Yushchenko Plan) in 2005, which proposed the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet elections in December 2005 to be internationally monitored. The main purpose of this plan was to have a legitimate government to later negotiate constructively with. According to this plan officially presented on 16 May 2005, Moldova was considered the only subject of International Law. Regarding Transnistria, the region obtained the right to establish foreign contacts in economy, science, technology and humanitarian affairs.<sup>208</sup> The document included a clause that offered Transnistria the right to leave the Republic of Moldova in case of unification with another state (for example, Romania) or in the situation when Moldova loses its status as a subject of International Law. The decision to leave has to be confirmed by a regional referendum.<sup>209</sup> This document, however, was not accepted by the parties.

After a long break, the dialogue between the parties was reinitiated. In October 2005 the negotiations format became 5+2. The new participants in the negotiations were the European Union (EU) and the United States. The new actors' rights and obligations in the mediation procedure were stipulated in the protocol of the OSCE Mission to Moldova. Large Russian delegations came to Chisinau and Tiraspol, but no results were noted.<sup>210</sup> After 6 years of stagnation, Evgeny Shevchyuk, the new President of Transnistria, initiated some reforms which gave hopes regarding the process of conflict resolution. The negotiation process of the 5+2 format was relaunched in November 2011. The restart of the official negotiations was made possible with the efforts of the OSCE, and with the

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid, pp. 204,206-208.

<sup>208</sup> Alexandru Buruiana, "The Transnistrian Conflict – the prospects of its resolution", *Administrarea Publică*, nr. 4, (presented on 9 December 2011), pp. 84-85.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>210</sup> Dan Dungaciu, op. cit. , p. 268.

consent of Russia, the EU and the United States.<sup>211</sup> The EU welcomed the restart of the negotiations process, and in order to strengthen the trust between Chisinau and Tiraspol, signed a funding agreement with Moldova in 2012. The non-refundable financing was mainly for the development of the civil society in Transnistria.<sup>212</sup> The 2014 Association Agreement of Moldova with the EU decreased Russian and Transnistrian interest to continue the negotiations. After a two-year break, in 2016, the OSCE, under Germany's chairmanship, made the "5+2" meeting possible again. Without political progress on the issue, in the middle of 2016, in order to resolve residents' everyday life problems, it was decided that Moldova and Transnistria would arrange direct talks on technical problems. The discussions on these problems created hopes to build confidence between Chisinau and Tiraspol.<sup>213</sup>

With Russian support, after a very long time, some agreements on technical matters were signed. In November 2017, the Prime Minister of Moldova Pavel Filip and the President of Transnistria Vadim Krasnoselsky opened a bridge to traffic which was destroyed in the 1992 war and rebuilt in 2002 yet closed until then because of Tiraspol's objections over the Dniester river. On 25 November, the same year, four agreements were signed between the representatives of the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria. According to them, farmers from seven villages located in Transnistria (on the left bank) but under Moldovan authority would have access to their lands separated by a road and controlled by Tiraspol. The Romanian language schools (misleadingly called Moldovan), subordinated to the Moldovan authorities but situated in Transnistria, would function freely using the Latin alphabet, after a long period of repression and imposition of the Cyrillic alphabet by the separatists. Also, in order for Transnistrian students to have the right to participate in different international exchange programs, their diplomas from Tiraspol University would be certified by Moldova. Another deal was the telephone connections between the parties, which would be restored and marketed by a Transnistrian mobile operator of a Moldovan concession.<sup>214</sup>

Surprisingly, in recent times, Russia supported the technical agreements between Moldova and Transnistria. It was not a secret that Kremlin's yearly support to Transnistria

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<sup>211</sup> Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-389.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>213</sup> Jakub Pienkowski, "Renewal of Negotiations on Resolving the Transnistria Conflict", no. 126 (1066), accessed on 21 March 2018 at <https://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-126-1066#>

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

is about \$1 billion. As its budget was affected by the EU and the United States sanctions, Moscow is forced to reduce its expenditures and, in this case, aid to Transnistria. As a result, Russia is now trying to sustain Tiraspol's economic independence. In the context that Transnistria's GDP has decreased considerably in recent years, the 2014 EU-Moldova agreement with its economic benefits, and the later technical agreements between Chisinau and Tiraspol could make an important contribution to the recovery of the Transnistrian economy.<sup>215</sup>

The recent events in the only official meeting place for peace dialogue, the 5+2 format, did not represent a progress in the political process of the reintegration of Transnistria into Moldova. The signed technical agreements can only increase the confidence between Moldova and Transnistria, and, with this, reduce latent hostility and risk of conflict.<sup>216</sup>

Even it is not internationally recognised, Transnistria represents a territory under Russian protection. Kremlin's plan with Transnistria is not to annex it, but to obtain the union of Moldova, under Russian control. So, Tiraspol is an instrument to put pressure on Moldova.<sup>217</sup>

Moldova (Bessarabia) and Transnistria represent different historical entities. While Bessarabia was initially part of the one of historical Romanian principalities, Moldova, and later of the Great Romania, Transnistria (except for the period of 1941-1944) did not have a common past with any of the Romanian entities mentioned above. The only thing in common between them was a significant Moldovan (Romanian) population on both sides of the Dniester and, for almost half of century, forming together the MSSR.

The affiliation with different political structures was fuelled by the ideology of Moldovenism promoted by the Soviet Union in the MASSR. The idea that Moldovans are different from Romanians and Romanophobia represented important instruments that would later on be used in Transnistrian propaganda during the conflict.

Favoured by the Soviet regime because of its loyalty and strategic position, Transnistria became a highly industrialised region. This produced a massive immigration to the region of a Russophone population which later became the elites of the MSSR and especially Transnistria. This elite did not feel attached to the Republic but to the Soviet Union. At the time of the national rebirth and self-determination of the Moldovans, Transnistrian

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

leaders were supporting the Soviet regime. Later when Romanian language and alphabet became official, with the backing of Moscow, Transnistrian Moldovan Republic was proclaimed. The purpose was to maintain Moldova under the Russian sphere of influence. The political clashes turned into a military conflict in 1992. Tiraspol regim's military forces were supported by the 14th Russian Army. Without this support, Transnistrians would have not been able to repel Moldovan troops. In July the same year a peace agreement between Moldova and Russia was signed with the assistance of the TMR leader. The fact that Russia was one of the signatories proved its direct intervention in the conflict.

With the involvement of the OSCE in the resolution of the conflict negotiations formats were created. The proposed 2+3 and 5+2 formats proved to be ineffective. One of the main reasons behind this was Russia, who had the role of both a participant and mediator in the negotiation process. Moscow was officially encouraging the conflict resolution but secretly supporting the Transnistrian regime. Different plans and projects were proposed by the negotiating states. Most of them were proposing federalisation as a solution: a solution which was always against Moldova's interests and in the last period even against Transnistria's interests to become a recognised state.

These are the factors that shaped what we have now: Transnistria, a separatist pro-Russian regime, outside of the control of Moldova, but *de jure* part of it.

Under the conditions of international anarchy and asymmetry between Russia and Moldova, the initiators and causes of the conflict came predominantly from the outside. The main objective of Russian military intervention in Transnistria was to increase its national power in Moldova.

### **3. ENDOGENOUS FACTORS THAT PREVENT THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT**

#### **3.1 TRANSNISTRIAN REGIME**

##### **3.1.1 The Character Of Political Regime**

After a short war following which Transnistria became *de facto* independent, the conflict became a frozen one. At the moment, a military conflict between the parties looks improbable. On the other hand, despite some decades of negotiations, the dispute resolution is still at its initial stage. In order to understand the evolution of the conflict and its development, we have to analyse the factors that maintain it. The internal causes which are to be discussed here also influence the features of this conflict.

The Transnistrian regime represents one of the main causes that makes the conflict an unsolved case. After the war and 21 July 1992 agreement, the Transnistrian regime already had the following assets:

- 1) Control over a territory. This was exerted through repressive means. The legal authority's institutions and opposition were eliminated by force;
- 2) Political forces ready to attack any opposition;
- 3) A censored media by which created "the face of the enemy"- the Republic of Moldova;
- 4) Well-prepared military troops, supported by the 14th Russian Army or its successor;
- 5) An efficient security service (the so-called Ministry of the State Security; a repressive body of the regime and was not controlled by any institution);
- 6) A well-developed industry (many of its industrial enterprises had close relations with Russia);
- 7) Customs offices and border guard pickets at Moldova's official border with Ukraine and along the Dniester River;
- 8) A population with a prevailing Soviet mentality;
- 9) The political, economic and military support of Russia;

10) The capacity to induce an economic blockade of the West bank (the disconnection of gas, blocking the railway, etc)

11) Many supporters, including important people from the West bank.<sup>218</sup>

Nowdays, to a large extent, the regime remained the same.

The Transnistrian regime has many practices of an intermediate one. Some of its features are: “the selective law enforcement, the arbitrary application of administrative norms and regulations, the use of state ownership as a means of exerting political influence, the politicization of government bureaucracy, and the management of state-run enterprises.”<sup>219</sup> These procedures are used by the ruling elite. Their intention is to provide the ruling class with superiority in the political field and to constrain the capacity of political opponents to compete with them, especially in the electoral process.<sup>220</sup> Accordingly, the opposition was repressed and the most preeminent critics of separatism were considered as a threat to the regime. One of the best examples is the case of the Ilascu group (all of its four members were ethnic Moldovans) which was active in criticising the regime’s separatist policies. As a result, its members were arrested in 1992 and spent from 12 to 15 years in jail. Those who were against Transnistria’s independence project faced security forces, which were famous for their intimidation techniques.<sup>221</sup> The less radical opponents, mainly from the Slavic population, had to deal with the harassment of their organisations by Transnistrian authorities. The same group accused the authorities of restricting their campaigns during elections and of electoral fraud. The latter was made possible by government interference in electoral commission’s activity.<sup>222</sup>

The interventions in the electoral process were mainly focused on blocking the participation of the candidates who represented a threat to the separatist way and the endurance of the Transnistrian regime. To some degree, in order to show some responsibility of the elites and to consolidate the “legitimacy” of the regime for the domestic and international actors, a significant level of pluralist electoral struggle was allowed.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Oazu Nantoi, in edition of Alexandru Mosanu and Cornel Cristescu, op. cit. , pp. 59-60.

<sup>219</sup> Oleh Protsyk, “Representation and Democracy in Eurasia’s Unrecognized States: The Case of Transnistria”, European Centre for Minority Issues, Working Paper #40, June 2008, p. 14.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>222</sup> Oleh Protsyk ‘s confidential interview with a Transnistrian journalist, Chisinau, 16 November 2005, in ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

If we take into consideration the following parameters regarding Transnistria's "state-building" such as defence capability and border/territory control, economic indicators, social welfare, healthcare, and education systems, and transport infrastructure, despite the fact that is not recognised as a state, the separatist regime has all the fundamental structures of a state. The quasi-institutions function and the regime continue to exist.<sup>224</sup> In the Transnistrian region, the individuals' self-perception as a "citizen of TMR" is relatively high. Civil and electoral participation of region's population in all forms of elections and in the national referenda is also relatively high. On the other hand, the parameters of participation of the inhabitants in the development of civil society institutions is low. It is important to notice that the popular support and "legitimacy" achieved by the Transnistrian authorities were mainly possible because of the functionality of its state institutions. The undoubted functionality of the regime's institutions apparently influenced the relatively high-level of nation-building in Transnistria.<sup>225</sup> The low participation of the residents in the development of civil society institutions, however, reflects an undemocratic regime in TMR. Also, according to Freedom House's political rights and civil liberties criteria, Transnistria is in the group of "not free" countries and authoritarian regimes.<sup>226</sup>

In order to evaluate the state mechanisms and its functions as the protector and provider of its citizens with services, we have to analyse the material sources that are supporting functionality.<sup>227</sup> Over time, the Transnistrian regime developed a mostly functional political system and society that made possible its legitimacy. Yet, without a sustainable economy its legitimacy could not survive.

### **3.1.2 The Sources Of Income And Sustainability Of The Transnistrian Economy**

It is argued that "the economy of breakaway Transnistria is a peculiar combination of the command-and-distribution model inherited from the USSR with elements of a free-market economy which is heavily dependent on Russian energy and financial

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<sup>224</sup> Ruslan Kermach, "The Sources of the Post-Soviet De Facto States' Sustainability: The Case of Transnistria", Ilko Kucheriv Democracy Fellowship Programme, Policy Paper, November 2016, p. 4.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>226</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2017 – Transnistria", accessed on 1 April 2018 at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/transnistria>

<sup>227</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit., p. 6.

subsidies.”<sup>228</sup> The backbone of the Transnistrian economy is represented by some large plants, which were built in the Soviet times and contribute enormously to its GDP (with more than 50%). As a result, Tiraspol’s economy depends on the conditions of these companies, which are mostly focused on exports. This means that the external economic conditions largely influence the region. It is also important to mention that Transnistria’s exports are not too diverse and this creates even more economic problems on the whole.<sup>229</sup> With a very small population and internal market, and poor natural resources, the region looks incapable of operating independently. Russia, which is the “conductor” of the regime, is interested in maintaining Transnistria’s economic dependence. The main purpose of the Russian financial aid for this “parasitic” economy is to have influence on the TMR’s relations with Moldova and to prevent their unification.<sup>230</sup>

### 3.1.2.1 Internal Sources Of Income

#### 3.1.2.1.1 The Main Economic Agents And Exports

Four huge industrial plants represent the basis of the TMR’s economy. These are: the JSC Moldova Steel Works in Ribnita (MSW Ribnita), Tirotex, the Ribnita Cement Plant and the Moldavskaya GRES power plant.<sup>231</sup>

-The Moldova Steel Works in Ribnita, privatised in 2003,<sup>232</sup> exports predominantly to the United States, Germany and Italy. The steelworks field contributes to the budget as the second most important tax payer. On the other hand, the changes in global markets and energy cost increases affect the companies in this area.<sup>233</sup>

-The textile branch is very important for the region. Tirotex, which is one of the Europe’s most important textile producers, exports mainly to countries like Austria, Germany, Italy and Greece. Sheriff group (Transnistria) is the main shareholder of Tirotex.<sup>234</sup>

-After the privatisation in 2004 of the Ribnita Cement Plant, the majority of its stocks came under the control of Metalloinvest (similar case to Ribnita steelworks).<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>228</sup>Kamil Calus, “An aided economy. The characteristics of the Transnistrian economic model”, *OSW Commentary*, Number 108, Centre For Eastern Studies, p.1, accessed on 1 April 2018 at [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_108.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_108.pdf)

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> The controlling stake is held by Metalloinvest.

<sup>233</sup>Kamil Calus, op. cit. , p. 2.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

- Privatised in 2004-2005, the Moldavskaya GRES power plant is managed by the Russian state group Inter RAO UES. The company satisfies the Transnistrian demand for energy. Only around 20% of the produced energy is used in the internal market, the rest goes to the West, the Republic of Moldova. This represents 50% of the total need of the Moldovan market.<sup>236</sup>

The Sheriff group has a significant role in the Transnistrian economy. Being the largest company in the area, the holding comprises around 10 firms and production plants from different industries. From supermarket chains, filling stations to a mobile telephone network operator, Sheriffs are present in every significant economic sector. Moreover, the holding monopolises many of these sectors. This economic entity has many contacts and partners abroad, especially in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. EU countries, Turkey and the United States are also important partners.<sup>237</sup>

The industrial legacy of the Soviet times is an important factor which contributes to the survival of the Transnistrian economy and regime itself. At least as important as industry are exports with their revenues and the permanent adaptability on different international markets. We can observe that in recent years, the region's traditional Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) markets are replaced by European ones. When talking about the economic interest and sustainability of Transnistria, the separatist regime gives less importance to its policy principles based on the traditional geopolitical direction.

#### 3.1.2.1.2 Cash Remittances

A major source of foreign currency and income for the Transnistrian economy is the cash remittances from abroad (by natural persons). In 2017, according to the Republican Bank of the TMR, \$80.97 million<sup>238</sup> flowed into Transnistria from abroad bank transfers.<sup>239</sup> Only in January-February 2018 the amount sent by natural persons was

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Approximately 10% of the Transnistria's GDP. See a report on the activity of the Ministry of Economic Development of the TMR in 2017, p. 7, accessed on 7 April 2018 at <http://mer.gospmr.org/otchet-o-deyatelnosti.html>

<sup>239</sup> With the money sent through the non-banking system, the amount that enters the region is supposed to be much higher; Pridnestrovian Republican Bank, "Международные денежные переводы физических лиц посредством электронных систем без открытия банковского счета за 2017 год", accessed on 7 April 2018 at [https://www.cbpmr.net/data/M\\_t\\_tab\\_03\\_02\\_18.pdf](https://www.cbpmr.net/data/M_t_tab_03_02_18.pdf)

almost \$13.8 million.<sup>240</sup> In February, \$6.93 million were transferred from abroad. This amount increased 1.1% compared to the previous month and 31.7% from February last year.<sup>241</sup>

Most of the money transferred in February 2018 were from the CIS countries – \$5.02 million (more than 72.4% of the total). The transfers from the EU states ( \$0.78 million) represented 11.3%, and other countries' contribution was \$1.13 million, equal to 16.3%.<sup>242</sup>

Most of the money transferred in February was received from Russia –\$4.61 million, which is equal to 66.5% of the total amount. It should also be noted that in the same period of time, important transfers were made from Israel - \$0.44 million(6.4%), the United States - \$0.26 million (3.7%), Italy and Turkey – \$0.2 million each.<sup>243</sup>

While compared to other economic agents, cash remittances have a lesser contribution to the region's budget, in the condition that there are not too many alternative sources of income, it represents a plus for the Transnistrian economy.

#### 3.1.2.1.3 An Illegal Source Of Income - Smuggling

The lack of a legal authority in Transnistria created good conditions for smuggling. This phenomenon has been playing a central role in the region's economy. It encompasses various activities like contraband with cigarettes and chicken, and trafficking in women (forced into prostitution).<sup>244</sup> According to Freedom House (2011), Transnistrian authorities are involved in the region's illegal activities, especially smuggling schemes. Their main purpose is to avoid Moldova and Ukraine's import taxes regimes.<sup>245</sup> Labelled by the EU as a "black hole", the region is a paradise for human and arms trafficking and the laundering of criminal finance.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Pridnestrovian Republican Bank, "Международные денежные переводы физических лиц посредством электронных систем без открытия банковского счета за январь-февраль 2018 года", accessed on 7 April 2018 at [https://www.cbpmr.net/data/M\\_t\\_tab\\_27\\_03\\_18.pdf](https://www.cbpmr.net/data/M_t_tab_27_03_18.pdf)

<sup>241</sup> Pridnestrovian Republican Bank, accessed on 7 April 2018 at [https://www.cbpmr.net/data/M\\_t\\_Country\\_27\\_03\\_18.pdf](https://www.cbpmr.net/data/M_t_Country_27_03_18.pdf)

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Adam Pasick, "The next place Russia annexes may be a smuggler's paradise", accessed on 7 April 2018 at <https://qz.com/191350/the-next-place-russia-annexes-may-be-a-smugglers-paradise/>

<sup>245</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2011", accessed on 10 April 2018 at [https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2011/transnistria#.Uy\\_ekq2Sx74](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2011/transnistria#.Uy_ekq2Sx74)

<sup>246</sup> Adam Pasick, op. cit.

In Transnistria there is more than 20.000 tonnes of Soviet-era weaponry andammunition.<sup>247</sup> An unknown number of munitions from arms depots and factories were delivered even to the forces involved in Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.<sup>248</sup>

The regime uses through different means the benefits of its status quo, in order to secure its existence and the economic profit of the Transnistrian elites.

### 3.1.2.2 External Sources

#### 3.1.2.2.1 Russia's Contribution To Transnistria's Budget

Moldovan experts have serious doubts about the functionality of Transnistria's institutions without the support of Russia. There are few channels that represent the direct or indirect support of Moscow to Tiraspol.<sup>249</sup> Since 2008, the Russian Ministry of Finance is annually funding Transnistria's budget with the so-called pension supplement for the region's retirees.<sup>250</sup> Although it is not a very significant amount of payment per person, the support represents a partial relief for the Transnistrian administration in the field of social protection.<sup>251</sup>

The second channel is very important for the survival of the TMR and represents an indirect financing of the regime through the Russian Gazprom's supply of natural gas to the Transnistrian company "TiraspolTransGaz-Transnistria". Since 2009, the gas is *de facto* gratis.<sup>252</sup> This company trades the gas to the Transnistrian population and companies under the price that is much lower than the one on the international and Republic of Moldova's market. The profit resulting from these actions (about \$270 million per year)<sup>253</sup> is transferred to a bank account used by the unrecognised TMR regime. The resources are used to a large extent to cover the huge budget deficits.<sup>254</sup>

<sup>247</sup> OSCE Mission to Moldova, "Arms control", accessed on 10 April 2018 at <https://www.osce.org/moldova/104945>

<sup>248</sup> Adam Pasick, op. cit.

<sup>249</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit. , p. 6.

<sup>250</sup> Михаил Тищенко, "По сусекам. Как Россия финансирует Приднестровье в кризис", accessed on 11 April 2018 at <https://republic.ru/posts/66931>, and Иван Тыняев, "Российская надбавка", accessed on 11 April 2018 at <http://newspmr.com/novosti-pmr/obshhestvo/11822>

<sup>251</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit. , p. 6.

<sup>252</sup> Infomarket, 06.04.2015, [http://www.infomarket.md/en/transdniester/Transnistria\\_has\\_a\\_significant\\_debt\\_for\\_the\\_Russian\\_natural\\_gas\\_in\\_the\\_short\\_term\\_and\\_in\\_10-20\\_years\\_the\\_region\\_will\\_be\\_not\\_able\\_to\\_pay\\_it\\_off-](http://www.infomarket.md/en/transdniester/Transnistria_has_a_significant_debt_for_the_Russian_natural_gas_in_the_short_term_and_in_10-20_years_the_region_will_be_not_able_to_pay_it_off-) Yevgeny Shevchiuc, cited in ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit. , p. 6.

<sup>254</sup> According to a report on the activity of the Ministry of Economic Development of the TMR, the budget deficit in 2017 was around 20%, accessed on 11 April 2018 at <http://mer.gospmr.org/otchet-o-deyatelnosti.html> ; and Kamil Calus, op. cit. , p. 4.

Moreover, the advantageous price of natural gas allows the citizens of Transnistria to save an important amount of money and creates concealed competitive advantages to local companies.<sup>255</sup> In the separatist republic, where around 1/5 of the population is engaged in industry, this is a significant aid.<sup>256</sup>

If the creation of the TMR would not have been possible without the political and military support of Moscow, without Russian economic aid its sustainability would have been a very short one.

### 3.1.2.2.2 The Support Of Moldova And The EU

To support the sustainability of its economy, the regime has no choice but to undertake foreign trade activity. Because of its non-recognised authority status, Transnistria has limited possibilities to develop legal foreign trade. As the TMR is part of the Republic of Moldova under International Law, in order to export its products abroad, the separatist regime requires Moldovan certificates of origin.<sup>257</sup>

Even though Moldova does not officially recognize Transnistria, it surprisingly made serious concessions regarding the economic operators of the separatist region.<sup>258</sup> Since 2006, Chisinau officials permit economic operators from the TMR to export their own products by using Moldovan documents following re-registration at the institutions of the competent ministry of the Republic of Moldova.<sup>259</sup> Despite the fact that these firms are registered by Moldovan authorities, their payed export taxes reach not the budget of Moldova but of the self-proclaimed Transnistrian republic. The status of an unrecognized entity has not stopped Transnistria from exporting its own goods with this contributing to the region's budget.<sup>260</sup>

In addition to the benefits regarding Transnistrian economic agent's legalisation, the region's economy took advantage of the trade agreements that Moldova has signed with the EU (DCFTA and Autonomous Trade Preferences regime) and within the World Trade

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<sup>255</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit. , p. 6.

<sup>256</sup> Statistical Service of the TMR, "Statistical Yearbook of TMR– 2017 ", Tiraspol, 2017, p. 39, accessed on 11 April 2018 at <http://mer.gospmr.org/gosudarstvennaya-sluzhba-statistiki/informacziya/ezhegodnik-gosudarstvennoj-sluzhby-statistiki/statisticheskij-ezhegodnik-2017.html> , and *ibid*.

<sup>257</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit. , p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>259</sup> Kamil Calus, op. cit. , p. 3.

<sup>260</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit. , p. 8.

Organization (WTO).<sup>261</sup> This situation contributes to the sustainability of the region's economy and political structure. Simply put, the budget of the region is completed with the income resulting from the foreign trade of the TMR's companies. With this support, all the institutions (of the defence, social systems, etc) of the separatist regime continue their existence. So, this indirect support on behalf Moldova is no less important than the Russian one.<sup>262</sup>

Furthermore, the official statistics of the TMR demonstrate that Moldova is the market for almost half of the Transnistrian products.<sup>263</sup> With this, we can conclude that even though it is not formally recognising Transnistria, Moldova, together with Russia, is one of the main supporters of the separatist regime's existence and durability.<sup>264</sup>

Due to fears of losing their power and resolution of the conflict not in the interests of the "republic", Transnistrian leadership has always used a control and repression system over the population. As a result, any opposition to the regime and idea of reconciliation with the right bank was annihilated. With all the media under the control of the regime, creating and maintaining the image of Moldova as the enemy was an easy task. The civil society is almost non-existent. All this was instrumental in the functionality of the Transnistria's institutions and political system. Quasi-functional institutions rendered the separatist regime legitimate. Transnistria is also able to have a sustainable economy with Russia and Moldova's support, which maintains the regime's legitimacy.

### 3.2 THEMOLDOVAN POLITICAL ELITE

Moldovan elites took advantage of the situation in Transnistria. Part of the elite is involved in strategic economic co-operation with Transnistrian leaders, profitable for

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<sup>261</sup>European Commission – Export Helpdesk – Free trade agreements: Moldova, accessed on 12 April 2018 at

[http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/display.htm?page=cd%2Fcd\\_Moldova.html&docType=main&languageId=en](http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/display.htm?page=cd%2Fcd_Moldova.html&docType=main&languageId=en), and Council Regulation (EC) No 55/2009 of 21 January 2009 introducing autonomous trade preferences (ATP) for the Republic of Moldova and amending Regulation (EC) No 980/2005 and Commission Decision 2005/924/EC, accessed on 12 April 2018 at [http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/display.htm?page=cd%2Fcd\\_Moldova.html&docType=main&languageId=en](http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/display.htm?page=cd%2Fcd_Moldova.html&docType=main&languageId=en)

<sup>262</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>263</sup> The Ministry of Economic Development of the TMR, "Report on the activity of the Ministry of Economic Development of the TMR in 2017", p. 12, accessed on 13 April 2018 at <http://mer.gospmr.org/otchet-o-deyatelnosti.html>

<sup>264</sup> Ruslan Kermach, op. cit., p. 8.

both of them, and the other part according to its status, interest and relations is involved in smuggling schemes.

### 3.2.1 Corruption In The Political System And Economic Interests

In 1998, GAZPROM obtained the control of the 50%+1 of the share capital of the S.A. Moldova Gaz. According to the third paragraph of the decision, an international audit organization was supposed to analyse the value of the gas complex in the Republic of Moldova in one year.<sup>265</sup> The purpose was to make possible changes of the stocks in the social capital of S.A. Moldova Gaz. According to the experts, Moldova's share had to be around 60% not 35%. Until now, Moldova's rightful part in this company is still unknown.<sup>266</sup>

In 2006, Transnistrian company "Tiraspoltransgaz" which is part of the S.A. Moldova Gaz submitted 13.53% of its stocks to be managed by GAZPROM. With this, the Russian company controlled approximately 65% of the S.A. Moldova Gaz.<sup>267</sup>

"Tiraspoltransgaz" operates in an improbable way: it retains for consuming 2/3 of the 3 billion mc of gas bought by Moldova from GAZPROM. The average price of it is \$391/1000mc. From this amount, 1 billion mc is considered as a transit tax and is sold in Transnistria for \$90/1000mc to the inhabitants, and for \$163/1000mc to the companies. Every year around \$272 million are earned in this way by the Transnistrians. The second billion is sold on the international market.<sup>268</sup> However, the revenue is not transferred to GAZPROM but reach a special bank account, which is managed in a closed manner by the "President" of the Tiraspol regime. It is believed that most of this money is used to cover the TMR's budget deficit.<sup>269</sup>

Energokapital is a Transnistrian company, which provides Kuchurgan Power Plant (TMR) with Russian natural gas. The same company sells Kuchurgan electricity to the Moldovan

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<sup>265</sup>The Government of the Republic of Moldova, "Decision Nr. 1068, regarding the creation in the gas complex of the Republic of Moldova of a Moldo-Russian public limited company", accessed on 14 April 2018 at <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=297405>

<sup>266</sup>Laurentiu Mihu, interview with Oazu Nantoi: "Federația Rusă nu are nevoie de Transnistria, ci de toată Republica Moldova", accessed on 14 April 2018 at <https://www.digi24.ro/opinii/oazu-nantoi-federatia-rusa-nu-are-nevoie-de-transnistria-ci-de-toata-republica-moldova-634853>

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup>Petrisor Peiu, "Cat de mult ar trebui sa ne intereseze Transnistria? (I)", accessed on 13 April 2018 at <http://www.ziare.com/international/transnistria/cat-de-mult-ar-trebuie-sa-ne-intereseze-transnistria-i-1445563>

<sup>269</sup> Laurentiu Mihu, interview with Oazu Nantoi, op. cit.

company Energocom, and through this reaches the end-users. According to some, Chisinau's deal with Energokapital was caused by Ukraine's problems on the domestic market, and latter its insecure export capacity related to the crisis in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.<sup>270</sup> Moreover, Transnistrians came with a better price offer.<sup>271</sup> Moldova's 80% of electricity needs are "imported". There is only one source that covers this - the Kuchurgan Power Plant (Transnistria, Russian-owned).<sup>272</sup>

If the first deal with the Transnistrian power plant had an excuse – Ukraine's export deficit - the renewal of the agreement in March 2016 was questionable. Even if at that time Ukraine was ready to export electricity to Moldova<sup>273</sup>, its Ministry of Economy, which controls Energocom, chose Energokapital. One of the main reasons was the 28 % discount which made the Ukrainian source more expensive.<sup>274</sup> It was considered by some local specialists that since the gas which is used by the power plant to produce the electricity is not repaid to Gazprom, but deemed as debt for Moldovagaz, the price was very high. A part of the media supposed at that time that Energokapital was a profitable business for both Transnistrian "President" Shevchuk and Moldova's de facto leader, businessman Plahotniuc.<sup>275</sup>

A member of the Parliamentary opposition group in Chisinau, the Socialist Bogdan Tirdea stated that Energokapital obtained the license from the Moldovan competent institutions much faster than normal in 2014. At the same meeting, the MP was also curious about the Energokapital's price offer which was 10% lower than the producer's possible offer (Kuchurgan Power Plant). In reply, at the same event, the representative of the Ministry of Economy, Valeriu Triboi declared in the Parliament that all the procedures

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<sup>270</sup>Mihai Popsoi, "Are Moldovan Consumers Financing Transnistrian Separatism?", Publication: *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 13, Issue: 78, accessed on 12 April 2018 at <https://jamestown.org/program/are-moldovan-consumers-financing-transnistrian-separatism/#.VxnBVjB97IV>

<sup>271</sup>News Finance, "Украина может вернуться на молдавский рынок электроэнергии", accessed on 13 April 2018 at <https://news.finance.ua/ru/news/-/367626/ukraina-mozhet-vernutsya-na-moldavskij-rynok-elektroenergii>

<sup>272</sup> Mihai Popsoi, op. cit.

<sup>273</sup>News Finance, op. cit.

<sup>274</sup>Infotag, "МОЛДОВА ОТКАЗАЛАСЬ ОТ ЗАКУПОК УКРАИНСКОЙ ЭЛЕКТРОЭНЕРГИИ В ПОЛЬЗУ РОССИЙСКОЙ", accessed on 13 April 2018 at [http://www.infotag.md/m9\\_economics/219482/](http://www.infotag.md/m9_economics/219482/)

<sup>275</sup>NewsMaker, "Интерес дороже денег: цена поставок электроэнергии в Молдову могла быть ниже ", accessed on 13 April 2018 at <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/interes-dorozhe-deneg-tsena-postavok-elektroenergii-v-moldovu-mogla-byt-nizhe-23420/>, cited in Mihai Popsoi, op. cit.

complied with Moldovan legislation and that this economic co-operation was in consumers' favour.<sup>276</sup>

Except these positive effects, the Moldovan authorities are aware also of their vital support, through this agreement, to the moribund Transnistrian economy. There are also views that Energokapital is a cover firm, used to obtain and transfer profits to off-shore accounts of the Moldovan and Transnistrian leaders.<sup>277</sup> According to the energy expert Sergiu Tofilat, more than 1/3 of the Transnistria's budget revenue is the product of the corrupt Moldovan leadership's treacherous system of power "import". If Chisinau stops buying TMR's energy, its budget income will decrease considerable and Transnistria will be in Moldova's hands. The separatist regime exists only as a result of receiving gratis gas and Chisinau buys Tiraspol's electricity which also contains the cost of the delivered gas.<sup>278</sup> As long as Moldovan politicians have illegal profits through intermediaries from the energy field, this situation will continue, said Tofilat and other experts.<sup>279</sup>

Ukraine's recent attempts to restart the power export to Moldova do not look as if it is having too much effect on Chisinau's authorities. The latter prefer dealing with "Energokapital", because of the "big tips".<sup>280</sup>

Moldova's dependence on Russian gas and oil, and Transnistrian electrical energy increase state's vulnerability which negatively affects its partnership with Ukraine.<sup>281</sup> In this case, Moldova is not only indirectly "financing" Transnistria, saving its economy, but is also dependent on its energy, which is a disadvantage in the process of negotiations regarding conflict resolution. The lack of desire to find an external alternative to the

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<sup>276</sup>Dezbateri Parlamentare, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova de legislatura a XX-a, Sesiunea a II-a Ordinara-Iulie 2015, Sedinta din ziua de 2 iulie 2015 (Stenograma Sumar), accessed on 13 April 2018 at <http://www.parlament.md/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KG09Lk9%2FImw%3D&tabid=128&mid=506&language=ro-RO>, cited in Mihai Popsoi, op. cit.

<sup>277</sup>PRO TV Chisinau, "Grigore Petrenco spune ca scumpirea curentului i-ar conveni lui Plahotniuc: "Vineri ANRE va majora pretul energiei electrice cu cel putin 30%'", accessed on 13 April 2018 at [http://protv.md/stiri/actualitate/grigore-petrenco-scumpirea-curentului-i-ar-conveni-lui-plahotniuc---1048321.html?fb\\_comment\\_id=692130127554247\\_692180980882495#f5bae485a0081](http://protv.md/stiri/actualitate/grigore-petrenco-scumpirea-curentului-i-ar-conveni-lui-plahotniuc---1048321.html?fb_comment_id=692130127554247_692180980882495#f5bae485a0081); and Ziarul National, "Cine sta in spatele companiei care vinde energie electrica R. Moldova? Fondatorii sunt firme off-shore", accessed on 13 April 2018 at <https://www.ziarulnational.md/investigatie-cine-sta-in-spatele-companiei-care-vinde-energie-electrica-r-moldova-fondatorii-sunt-firme-off-shore/>, cited in Mihai Popsoi, op. cit.

<sup>278</sup> Iurie Gotisan, "Economia politica a reintegrarii", IDIS "Viitorul", Chisinau 2017, p. 15.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>281</sup> Mihai Popsoi, op. cit.

Transnistrian electrical energy, proves that Moldovan elites' personal interest prevails over the conflict resolution one.

### **3.2.2 Transnistria As A Profitable Area For Smuggling**

#### **3.2.2.1 Traditional Methods Of Smuggling**

Transnistria as a black hole of Europe is for almost 30 years out of the Republic of Moldova's customs controls. After 1992, the political parties and authorities tried to send the message that they really care about the Transnistrian case and would try to solve this issue.<sup>282</sup> Despite all the "efforts" of the Moldovan politicians, the results until now are undetectable. The blame for this is put usually on Moscow and its political interests in the region. It is not difficult to realise that in addition to Russian interference, another obstacle to the resolution of the conflict is the financial interest of Tiraspol, Chisinau, Kiev and Moscow. The "black hole" is a smuggling source, which make them earn a considerable amount of money.<sup>283</sup> All the smuggling schemes are protected by the so-called customs officers, border guards, and Transnistrian police, together with representatives of the Customs Service and Ministry of Internal Affairs of Moldova.<sup>284</sup>

The smuggled commodities are produced in Transnistria and Ukraine. The most common goods are footwear, bed linen, cigarettes, meat, wheat flour, sunflower oil, mixed fodder. A part of the mentioned goods is present in the Moldovan market and others, after transiting Moldova, have as their final destination Romania.<sup>285</sup>

Many of these actions are protected by the state institutions of Moldova. With the support of some departments of the Customs Service, there are pathways controlled by the former employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In many cases, when the smugglers were randomly detained with goods by the Moldovan forces, there was no investigation and they were escorted by the Moldovan police to the Transnistrian area.<sup>286</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs and high positioned politicians know about these smuggling schemes and connections through or from Transnistria. Yet no serious measures are taken because of the fact that smuggling profits obtained by some members of the competent institutions

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<sup>282</sup> Veaceslav Balacci, "Transnistria, fața de CONTRABANDĂ a guvernanților de la Chișinău", accessed on 18 April 2018 at <https://www.timpul.md/articol/exclusiv-transnistria-tata-de-contrabanda-a-guvernantiilor-de-la-chisinau--57140.html>

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

are shared with the high positioned decision makers. The latter in turn give political support to the former. With this, every month the earnings in the order of tens of millions of euros increase the official's revenues instead of becoming part of the state budget.<sup>287</sup>

### 3.2.2.2 Duty-free Shops In Transnistria

In April 2015, Moldova's government amended the Customs Code<sup>288</sup> with four articles. Under the amendment, Duty-free shops were legalised in Transnistria. The modifications proposed by the Minister of Reintegration with the support of the Finance Minister were drawn up by a group which represented the Reintegration Office, the Ministry of Economy, the Chamber of Licensing, and Customs Service.<sup>289</sup> According to the law<sup>290</sup>, Duty-free shops are established at or near the customs of the states. As Transnistria is not a state and does not have recognised state borders, this amendment is against the provisions of the above-mentioned document. Moldova behaves as if recognises the border on the Dniester River and Transnistria's independence.<sup>291</sup>

Later, the Government asked the Parliament to take the necessary steps to abolish the above-mentioned amendments to the Customs Code. The reason behind this initiative is the involvement of the economic agent (one that ensures Duty Free activity) in cigarette smuggling. Despite the fact that the company lost its license, the illegal activities did not stop.<sup>292</sup> The Moldovan Parliament postponed the abrogation of the amendments which made possible the legalisation of the duty-free network in the separatist region. This delay, according to the economic expert Viorel Garbu, can be explained as an intention of the Chisinau authorities to support smuggling in Transnistria.<sup>293</sup> The same expert mentioned that with the continued existence of duty-free in a region not controlled by

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, Codul Vamal al Republicii Moldova (the Customs Code), Codul Nr. 1149 din 20.07.2000, publicat in Monitorul Oficial pe 01.01.2007, accessed on 18 April 2018 at <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&id=319745>

<sup>289</sup> Veaceslav Balacci, "Contrabanda prin Transnistria, legalizata de Guvernul de la Chişinău!", accessed on 18 April 2018 at <https://balacci.wordpress.com/2015/04/27/contrabanda-prin-transnistria-legalizata-de-guvernul-de-la-chisinau/>

<sup>290</sup> Ministry of Finance, ROC, "The Regulations Governing the Establishment and Management of Duty-free Shops", accessed on 18 April 2018 at <http://lawout.mof.gov.tw/EngLawContent.aspx?Type=E&id=171>

<sup>291</sup> Veaceslav Balacci, "Contrabanda prin Transnistria, legalizata de Guvernul de la Chişinău", op. cit.

<sup>292</sup> Alla Ceapai, "Protejeaza Chisinaul contrabanda prin Transnistria?", accessed on 18 April 2018 at <https://www.europalibera.org/a/27774447.html>

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

Chisinau, and where there had already been smuggling problems and legal support, Moldova is put in a position of the protector of the illegal activities in the region.<sup>294</sup>

Similar to the energy sector, this field is most probably also part of the interest of the Moldovan and Transnistrian groups. The status of the Transnistrian conflict did not represent an obstacle to the “economic co-operation” between Chisinau and Tiraspol.<sup>295</sup>

### **3.3 THE LACK OF INTEREST AND CAPACITY OF THE MOLDOVAN SOCIETY TO SOLVE THE CONFLICT**

It seems that Moldova and Transnistria may achieve the resolution of the conflict if the deadlock creates unbearable costs or if substantial internal pressure encourages a settlement. But at the moment, Chisinau and Tiraspol are satisfied with the present situation and show no signs of speeding up the conflict resolution.<sup>296</sup>

Moldovan society lacks considerable public demand for conflict settlement. In a 2017 survey, only 1.3% of participants considered dispute resolution the state’s first priority. Subjects such as public order (24%), economic development (22%), living standards (20%) and corruption (13%) were regarded as more important.<sup>297</sup>

The absence of the conflict resolution from the list of their main priorities is even more pronounced among young Moldovans. The reason is the lack of a memory of living in a united Moldova (including the Soviet Union). According to a survey that took place in 2007, 4.6% of people of 18 to 29 years thought reintegration of the country should be a priority. In 2017, the same survey showed that only 1% believed in this. However, the vast majority consider that Transnistria should integrate in the Republic of Moldova and disapprove any form of violent resolution. In other words, the people of Moldova want peaceful reintegration, but not before their priority problems are solved.<sup>298</sup>

The Moldovan authorities do not seem very enthusiastic too about solving the Transnistrian problem. In contrast to Georgia, which engaged a large number of

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Stanislav Secieru, “The Transnistrian Deadlock: Resolution Impalpable, War Improbable”, Carnegie Moscow Center, accessed on 21 September 2019 at <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/74803>

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

specialists to draft many papers and made great efforts in the case of Abkhazia conflict settlement, Moldova mobilised a small number of experts and officials working on Transnistria. Chisinau's Bureau of Integration has a small budget and does not have enough specialists. It took Bureau's officials years to prepare a strategy document on the conflict, regardless of OSCE's insistent solicitation and proposal of assistance in this regard.<sup>299</sup>

According to Oazu Nantoi, one of the main settlement obstacles is the incompetency of the Moldovan political elite. He added that the main subject of the unification efforts should be Transnistrian population not their own interests and obedience to Moscow.<sup>300</sup> At the moment, Moldovan citizens do not perceive the Transnistrian conflict as a major problem that urgently needs to be solved. This means that a significant part of the Moldovan civil society does not put pressure on the authorities to solve the dispute. Therefore, the government feels free to choose its own options and decisions, not taking into account the public opinion and sense of time. But this situation might have a negative impact on the settlement process. The low interest and capacity of engagement of the Moldovan society in the conflict resolution represents one of the causes of the nowadays status quo of Transnistria.

### **3.4 MOLDOVA, A STATE WITHOUT PROSPECT FOR TRANSNISTRIA**

Moldova, which pretends also to be the motherland of the people of Transnistria, should take care of its own image as a country and make this a priority. A good image would make Moldova a point of attraction for Transnistria. The best indicator of attractiveness for a country are the living standards of its population. Moldova is the poorest country in Europe and this means that the living standards of its population are low.<sup>301</sup> A weak, poor and dysfunctional statehood ruled by a corrupt elite hardly makes Moldova attractive for

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<sup>299</sup> Thomas de Waal, "Uncertain Ground; Engaging With Europe's De Facto States and Breakaway Territories", Carnegie Europe, Washington, 2018, p.41.

<sup>300</sup> Oazu Nantoi, "Originile si perspectivele solutionarii conflictului transnistrean" in edition of "Moldova-Transnistria: Eforturi comune pentru un viitor prosper; Procesul de Negocieri", Chisinau, 2009, p. 69.

<sup>301</sup> The World Bank in Moldova, Country Context, Moldova – 2018, accessed on 21 September 2019 at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/overview>

Transnistrians.<sup>302</sup> Also, Tiraspol points to Chisinau's problems regarding the rule of law, and the 2014 \$1 billion bank fraud that took place in three Moldovan banks as evidence that to rejoin Moldova is not the best option. On the other hand, this situation represents an opportunity for the Transnistrian leadership to distract criticism from their own human rights and corruption problems.<sup>303</sup>

Another problem is the special status of Transnistria within Moldova. Transnistrian people have to be convinced that Chisinau's offering of a special status for their territory is credible. In 2017, Moldova's Chief Negotiator frequently declared that the plan of special status for Transnistria would be inspired by the autonomy of Gagauzia within Moldova. In 1994, Gagauz people were promised special rights under the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia, but unfortunately, the central authorities were not able to make the autonomy of Gagauzia fully functional. According to the OSCE Ambassador Michael Scanlan, the implementation of the law is in 'progress' after 24 years.<sup>304</sup> Moldova's hesitation about the situation of Gagauzia is used as an example by Tiraspol to argue that Chisinau would not respect a special status in their case too.<sup>305</sup>

Only a victory over corruption, democratisation and economic development in Moldova can serve as a point of attraction for the separatist regime of Transnistria. Such a situation could contribute to the appearance of a more democratic and open to negotiations regime in Tiraspol, and maybe to a unique chance of reintegration of Transnistria within Moldova.

### 3.5 THE FORMATION OF TRANSNISTRIAN IDENTITY

The identity of Transnistrian people consists of a complex content of mentality. In Transnistria, such mentality is developed by its leaders into myths, in which invoked the idea of an unique Transnistrian society, culturally different from the Moldovan society.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>302</sup>Stanislav Secrieru, op. cit.

<sup>303</sup>Thomas de Waal, op. cit. , p. 41.

<sup>304</sup> Stephanie Liechtenstein, interview with Michael Scanlan, "I am confident that a settlement is possible", *Security And Human Rights Monitor*, accessed on 21 September 2019 at <https://www.shrmonitor.org/transdnistrian-settlement-process/>

<sup>305</sup>Thomas de Waal, op. cit. , p. 41.

<sup>306</sup> Ala Svet, "Staging the Transnistrian Identity: A Deconstruction of the Official Holiday's Discourse", Research Project: New and Ambiguous Nation-Building Processes in South-Eastern Europe, Working Paper Series, p. 2.

The myths that unite the populations focus on groups' common destiny, emphasizing individual solidarity against a foreign force.<sup>307</sup>

Traditions are invented to shape the images of the past to the necessities of the present. Collective memory is constructed and acts like an instrument of political power. So the 1992 war is deep in the memory of the collective consciousness of the Transnistrians, a fact that promotes people's unity. The multinational population of Transnistria slowly became part of a self-consolidation process.<sup>308</sup>

Discourse of the 1992 war is present in all official holidays in Transnistria and represents an accelerant for consolidating the solidarity of people. The slogan "Our people is a winner" is frequently used in the discourse of victories over fascists in the Second World War (called in Transnistria Great Patriotic War), as well as, in the 1992 war. Commemoration of the war victims, considered as heroes, of common victory and tragedy represents the beginning of contemporary Transnistrian history. Lack of Transnistrian heroism is completed with Russian/Soviet history and heritage.<sup>309</sup>

Different ethnicities of Transnistria, Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians are united in self-determination issues. In such a society, political leaders using the holidays discourse as a catalyst of social solidarity tend to build a new identity of the 'Transnistrian people'. This identity unites Transnistrians making them dream about their own path and future. The ideological discourse of its leaders consolidates Transnistrian community, unity of the peoples, and preserve the *de facto* statehood and culture of the region.<sup>310</sup>

The consolidation of Transnistrian identity, Moldova's lack of prospect and Moldovan society's lack of interest in the conflict resolution represent factors with long term effects on the dispute settlement.

Regarding the Moldovan political elite, this has always taken advantage of Transnistria's status. Being a no-man's-land, far from the rule of law principle, the separatist regime and its representatives has represented a source of illegal income and business partners for Moldovan authorities and their subordinates. Therefore, the existing status quo of the region is more advantageous for both sides. In addition to the direct economic benefits from dubious schemes, the Moldovan elite keeps Transnistrian economy afloat by

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<sup>307</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>308</sup>Ibid, p. 7-8.

<sup>309</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>310</sup>Ibid, p.24.

importing its products, legalising its exports, and providing opportunities to export its goods on the EU market. As long as Transnistria has a sustainable economy, its leadership will not feel the necessity to step back from the already gained political position.

Factors that create internal obstacles for the conflict settlement, like Transnistrian regime, economy and identity are partially the effects of the Russian interventionism.



## **4. RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONISM AS THE MAIN OBSTACLE IN THE CONFLICT SETTLEMENT**

A very important factor in the Transnistrian conflict is the involvement of external actors or developments. These foreign elements, intentionally or not, have created conditions for the existence and perpetuation of the conflict either in a direct or indirect manner. The main international actor involved in this issue is Russia-the parent and patron of the separatist regime.

### **4.1 RUSSIA'S INTERESTS IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS AND ITS STRATEGIES OF SUPPORTING SEPARATIST REGIMES**

#### **4.1.1 Russia's Interest In The Region**

The Moscow's most significant foreign policy primacy is the post-Soviet geography. The territory of the former Soviet countries represented the first testing grounds for the Russia's information war, the utilization of trade and energy as political tools and military actions. These instruments are most productive in the former USSR states in Russia's neighbourhood who are dependent on its resources and economy, with a population influenced by the Russian state media. These states, which are very important for Russia, are labelled as "the near abroad". Their importance is based on the following aspects: emotional ties, security considerations and national prestige.<sup>311</sup>

Regarding the emotional part, Moscow's leaders of Putin's generation have never totally adjusted to the reality of the Soviet Union breakup, which coincided with the independence of the former Soviet republics. For those who were born, educated, and had a career in the Soviet Union, its collapse was never completely accepted. This attitude is the case particularly about Ukraine and Belarus, large Slavic countries, a majority of whose populations are culturally close to Russia.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Alexander Gabuev, "Russian-U.S. Flashpoints in the Post-Soviet Space: The View From Moscow", accessed on 18 April 2019 at <https://carnegie.ru/2018/02/23/russian-u.s.-flashpoints-in-post-soviet-space-view-from-moscow-pub-75631>

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

Another reason to have close relations with and influence in the region is security. Russia believes that in order to ensure its security, it needs a buffer zone. After the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, Moscow perceives the former USSR states as its new buffer zone, a security belt around Russian lands aimed to protect it from its competitors. According to Russia, the states which are part of this protection zone should coordinate and align all actions with its interests, and be part of a military bloc ruled by Moscow. These ideas influenced the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) founded in 1992. Those countries that could not be convinced to become member of this organisation had to ensure that they did not join any other military alliance or organisation. At the moment, the member states of the CSTO are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. The Baltic countries are seen as part of the West's zone of influence.<sup>313</sup>

The fear of military threats from the West to Russian security has a long history. NATO as Russia's main adversary in the time of the Cold War has a legacy that maintains Kremlin's fears active. This experience forced Russia to seek security in the area through coalitions or, in the worst case, the neutrality of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Another region, Central Asia, created less concerns for Russia in the 1990s from a security perspective. With US troops located in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Russia got worried and insisted on the removal of American military presence from that area.<sup>314</sup>

From the Russian point of view, a former Soviet republic's accession to NATO creates two main security risks. One is the reduction of the flight time for the missiles sent by NATO to attack Russian territory. The second one is the change in the equilibrium of the conventional force capacity in NATO's favour. In addition to these, the FSB perceives the former Soviet republics as an American instrument of producing instability and separatism in the Russian Federation, which can lead even to the collapse of the regime and the country through creating ethnic tensions.<sup>315</sup>

The third argument in favour of having close relations with the former Soviet zone is national prestige. Russia sees itself as one of the poles in the rising multipolar system. One of the conditions to be a global power, from Russia's perspective, is to control a

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

group of countries which forms its “sphere of privileged interests”. In order to be at the same level with China and the United States, Russia needs its own sphere of influence focused, in principle, on a security and trading organisation led by itself. In addition to the CSTO, the former Soviet republics can become candidates of the Eurasian Economic Union membership (EEU). The EEU incorporates Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. These organisations with their members provide Russia with the necessary conditions to be a great power.<sup>316</sup>

Other point of interest for Russians in the region is business, more specifically the economies of those countries used as primary overseas markets for Russian products or as a passage for Moscow’s natural resources export to Europe, common production networks linking Russia with industrial plants of the region. The interest in Russian diaspora also should be mentioned.<sup>317</sup>

Regarding the near future, Moscow will concentrate on a more intense integration within EEU. It will probably try also to persuade Uzbekistan to integrate into this organisation. Kremlin’s main priority in Eastern Europe will be to preserve Ukraine’s status as a failed country through supporting the Donetsk and Lugansk separatist republics.<sup>318</sup>

The emotional ties, security considerations and national prestige represent the main factors that determine Russia’s foreign policy in the former Soviet countries. Russia has been able to provide the security of its large multi-ethnic country border and capacity to maintain its status as a great power on international arena. These achievements were mainly the result of Russia’s military and economic cooperation with its former Soviet allies, which culminated with the creation of a buffer zone around its border. Therefore, it can be said that Kremlin’s main foreign policy objectives has been achieved. From some international actors who did not accept a military or economic alliance with Moscow, was obtained at least an assurance that they will not become members of an anti-Russia defence structure. Some of the methods used by Russia to obtain these assurances will be discussed in the following part.

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

#### **4.1.2 Russian Interventionism Manifested In The Support Of Separatism In The Region**

After the breakup of the USSR, for the newly independent states that tried to have a pro-West foreign policy and did not accept an economic or military alliance with itself, Russia, in order to maintain them under its influence, used brute force. Russia, over the last 30 years, initiated a range of conflicts in the Black Sea region in order to preserve its areas of influence, and to destabilise and constrain states like Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine from having close relations and integrating within the NATO and EU. An example is the arming and support of the pro-Moscow rebel forces, starting in the early 1990s, in the breakaway regions of Transnistria, Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. Also, in those separatist territories, Russian troops and military equipment are located. More than that, Russia started a war against Georgia in 2008 occupying Abkhazia and South Ossetia, annexed Crimea in 2014, and is now in a war in eastern Ukraine that began in 2014.<sup>319</sup>

At the moment, pro-Russian forces control approximately 20% of Georgia's land (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), around 11% of the territory of Moldova (Transnistria), and important parts of Ukraine (a piece of the Donbas region and Crimea).<sup>320</sup> According to Kavtaradze, conflicts are instruments of Russia in its attempts to destabilise Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This is because these states adhere to democratic values, the rule of law, open societies, free trade and, through this, threaten the Russian ideological narrative. He added that these states' achievements in creating open and prosperous societies weaken Russian power in other countries in the region via presenting a viable alternative.<sup>321</sup>

According to Ala Beleavschi, the Ambassador of Moldova to Canada, it is one of Russia's main purposes to render these countries weak and keep them under its control.<sup>322</sup> Russia's

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<sup>319</sup>Konstantine Kavtaradze in the Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, Stephen Fuhr, Chair, House of Commons, 42nd Parliament, 1st session, Canada, "Responding to Russian Aggression against Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the Black Sea region", December 2018, p. 13.

<sup>320</sup>Ala Beleavschi in the Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, Stephen Fuhr, Chair, House of Commons, 42nd Parliament, 1st session, Canada, "Responding to Russian Aggression against Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the Black Sea region", December 2018, p. 13.

<sup>321</sup>Konstantine Kavtaradze, op. cit. , pp. 13-14.

<sup>322</sup>Ala Beleavschi, op. cit. , p. 14.

support of the separatist regimes in the above-mentioned countries proved to be an effective tool in keeping them under its sphere of influence.

#### **4.2 MOSCOW'S INTEREST IN MAINTAINING THE TRANSNISTRIAN CONFLICT**

With the emergence of the Transnistrian problem on the international agenda, Moldova's destiny as an independent state was tied once again to Russia's political games in that region of the world.

Russia's main interests regarding Moldova and Transnistria are:

- 1) the prevention of Moldova from having close relations with the West;
- 2) maintaining its military troops in order to keep American military camps far from the Black Sea area;
- 3) the protection and support of the Russian speaking minority;
- 4) creating and maintaining a pressure point on the western border of Ukraine, especially through its military forces located in the region;
- 5) preserving the status quo of the separatist region through financial support;
- 6) drastic actions to bring Moldova, through the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union under its domination.<sup>323</sup>

According to Oazu Nantoi, the „Transnistrian conflict” is not an internal, ethnical or a religious dispute, but a confrontation between the consolidation of Moldova as a state within the borders of former SSR Moldavia and the imperial interests of Kremlin. Russian Federation has military troops in the territory of Republic of Moldova. With these forces, it defies Moldova's independence and neutrality.<sup>324</sup> Returning to the essence of the conflict, we can ascertain that Russian Federation does not need Transnistria itself, but the entire Moldova. Russia's final purpose is to transform RM in a pseudo-state, paralysed from the inside and controlled by Russia from the outside.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Iurie Gotisan, op. cit. , p.19.

<sup>324</sup> Laurentiu Mihu, interview with Oazu Nantoi, op. cit.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

The close relations of Russia with the Tiraspol administration and population, and the presence of its military in the region creates important advantages for Moscow, more than in the case of Transnistria's independence, or annexation to its territory. Russia's behaviour regarding this conflict and generally this area can be explained from the perspective of its security and economic interests.<sup>326</sup> This statement is not different from Tsygankov's conclusion that Russia's interests in the former Soviet states should be recognised. Moscow's policy abroad must be seen as an act of protecting its gained positions in the area.<sup>327</sup>

Being a border state of the EU and NATO, Moldova has a strategic position for Russia. One of Moscow's foreign policy goals is to keep the former Soviet republics under its area of control. Considering that Transnistrian territory is *de jure* part of Moldova and Russia is militarily present in the separatist region, denotes Moscow's interference in Chisinau's political life.<sup>328</sup> Even if the troops' presence is against Moldovan constitution and the local government's will, it has continued to exist for almost three decades.<sup>329</sup>

After 2009, when it decided more seriously to follow the European integration path, Moldova signed in 2014 an Association Agreement with the EU. This caused Russia's discontent and, in the aftermath, the imports of Moldovan wine and other products were banned.<sup>330</sup>

The Russian troops in Transnistria are mainly there to preclude Moldova's desires of joining the Western institutions and especially NATO.<sup>331</sup> Since it is unlikely that NATO would accept Moldova as a member with Russian military presence in its territories and an unsolved conflict on its land, this instrument of the larger strategy to maintain NATO as far as possible from the Russian border is proving to be effective.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>326</sup>Rick Lof, "Russia's Diaspora Politics and the Transnistrian Conflict, A Conflict Problematising Tool that Seeks to Preserve Russian Security and Economic Interests in Transnistria and Moldova" pp. 11-12, accessed on 22 April 2018 at

[https://www.academia.edu/29444978/Russias\\_Diaspora\\_Politics\\_and\\_the\\_Transnistrian\\_Conflict](https://www.academia.edu/29444978/Russias_Diaspora_Politics_and_the_Transnistrian_Conflict)

<sup>327</sup>Andrei P. Tsygankov, "If Not by Tanks, then by Banks? The Role of Soft Power in Putin's Foreign Policy", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 7, November 2006, pp.1079-1099, p.1080, cited in *ibid*, p.12.

<sup>328</sup>Rick Lof, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>329</sup>F. K  chler, "The Role of the European Union in Moldova's Transnistria Conflict. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society", Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2008, p. 61, cited in Matthew Crandall, "Hierarchy in Moldova-Russia Relations: The Transnistrian Effect", *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, Vol 4, Issue 1, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>330</sup> Rick Lof, *op. cit.*, p.12.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, p.13.

<sup>332</sup>Matthew Crandall, *op. cit.*, p. 8, in *ibid*.

In addition to geostrategic interests, Russia also has economic ones in the region. Transnistria possesses one of the largest ammunitions and weaponry depots in Europe. According to a 2003 Washington Post article, the Transnistrian town of Colbasna's depot contained 50.000<sup>333</sup> tons of Soviet weaponry, ammunition and equipment. Russia's interest is not only focused on this facility but the whole Transnistrian arms industry. The region's military industry's significant capability is a Soviet legacy.<sup>334</sup> Moscow's arms industry is also supplied by Tiraspol's industrial factory production. Since Transnistria is not recognised as a state and is not controlled by the Moldovan authorities, its area has been transformed into a magnet for illegality. Arms trafficking is one of the dark parts of the separatist economy.<sup>335</sup>

Russia's presence in Transnistria is one of its strategic points of maintaining its influence in the former Soviet geography and also, of preserving the balance of power in the Eastern Europe, in the context of NATO and EU enlargements.

### **4.3. INSTRUMENTS OF MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO IN TRANSNISTRIA**

For the achievement of its interests in Transnistria, the Russian Federation has few tools. One of the most important are Russian military troops located in the region.

#### **4.3.1 Russian Troops (OGRT), Military Facility And Exercises In Transnistria**

##### **4.3.1.1 Russian Troops And Military Facility**

The Russian military presence in TMR to hold Moldova in Moscow's sphere of influence and to prevent NATO's extension in the area has no legal basis. No document has been signed between the Russian Federation and Republic of Moldova to that regard.<sup>336</sup>

In the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (PMR), there is a group of approximately 1.200 soldiers of the former 14th Soviet Army, later named OGRT. Moscow justifies its military

<sup>333</sup> 20.000 tons estimated at the moment, OSCE Mission to Moldova, op. cit.

<sup>334</sup> Alex Kliment, "The Transnistrian Dilemma", SAIS Review of International Affairs, vol. 25, no. 1 2005, p. 72, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. p. 13.

<sup>335</sup> Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 13.

<sup>336</sup> R. Mihaes, "Trans Dniester Moldovan Republic", and the Separatist Regime", in edition of N. Iancu, et al, "Countering Hybrid Threats: Lessons Learned from Ukraine", Amsterdam, Berlin, Washington, DC, 2016, p. 242.

presence through security reasons, more specifically, the control over Colbasna, the former Soviet ammunition depot in Transnistria.<sup>337</sup> The military facility contains at least 100 tanks, 150 armoured vehicles, more than 200 units of artillery, 35.000 military vehicles, 130 carriages with technical equipment, 30.000 automated assault weapons, machine guns, and guns.<sup>338</sup> The depot has a great importance for the Russian Federation. It is interesting that after Moscow's final retreat of the Soviet troops from Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary in 1994, a significant part of its weaponry was transferred surprisingly to Transnistria, not Russia. This was one of the first signs that Kremlin did not have the intention to withdraw its troops and instead chose to consolidate its position in the region. At the moment, more than half of the munitions is neither usable nor transportable. "In return, the military techniques and weapons have been evacuated or destroyed."<sup>339</sup>

In Transnistria, there is also a group of 400 Russian peacekeepers, which apparently contribute to the maintenance of security in a region that had to deal with a conflict in 1992. The presence of these troops has always been a source of disagreement between Chisinau and Tiraspol. According to expert Vasiloi, Russian peacekeepers are part of the OGRT. Both groups have similar methods of training, the same logistics, and communications.<sup>340</sup>

In October 2017, Moldovan authorities tried via UN mechanisms to provoke the withdrawal of Russian troops. Even though since the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul Russia was committed to retreating its military from the TMR by 2002, nothing has been done in this regard.<sup>341</sup>

In spite of the commitment to retreat its troops, Russia choose to act according to its national interest. In a clash of self-help with international commitments and norms, self-help prevails. This once again proves the statement that international arena is dominated by anarchy.

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<sup>337</sup> Madalin Necsutu interview with Rosian Vasiloi, "Russians in Transnistria Remain Threat to Moldova", accessed on 25 April 2018 at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/russians-in-transnistria-remain-threat-to-moldova-analyst-01-31-2018>

<sup>338</sup> R. Mihaes, in edition of N. Iancu, et al, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Madalin Necsutu, interview with Rosian Vasiloi, op. cit.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

#### 4.3.1.2 Military Exercises

According to an analysis of Rosian Vasiloi, only in 2016 Russia organised 48 military exercises in the TMR. In the following year the number of military manoeuvres was between 150 and 200, Vasiloi argued.<sup>342</sup> Kremlin's military exercises, which took place together with the separatist forces, were part of the large-scale military exercises Zapad-2017(West 2017). In line with this programme, in September also in Belarus, Kaliningrad, and some other northwestern regions of the Russian Federation military exercises were carried out.<sup>343</sup> The exercises were mainly focused on practicing the elimination of an enemy. This was realized by destroying tanks and anti-aircraft weapons. A part of the exercises was also the mobilisation of the troops on the right bank (Moldovan side) of the Dniester. During these activities, new equipment was used by Russian Forces. The semi-guided anti-tank missile systems like Fagot, Maliutka, and Konkurs systems were present for the first time at the exercises that took place in Transnistria.<sup>344</sup>

In this context, Vasiloi considers Moscow's military exercises on the territory of the Tiraspol regime an element of a grand regional scheme to create an endless agitation and conflictual climate within an "enemy state". This strategy has already been encouraged by Russia's Chief of General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov. It should not be forgotten that these methods, which are called hybrid war tactics, have been used in the Crimean Peninsula. It is even possible for Russia to use the same moves in Moldova and Romania, added the specialist touch.<sup>345</sup>

The military conflict in Transnistria ended up with the settlement of Russian troops in the region. One of the first steps in the resolution of the conflict represents the withdrawal of the army. Despite the international commitments of Russia and the insistence of Moldova, the retreat has not happened yet. In addition to it being a source of insecurity, supply and strategic and economic interests for both Transnistria and Russia, the weapons storage facility in Colbasna is also an excuse for the presence of the OGRT. The military exercises come to strengthen even more the role of Russia in the region. The recent increase in the number of military manoeuvres in the PMR proves that Moscow is doing the best to maintain the status quo of the conflict in its own interests. All these military elements do

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

not only keep but also consolidate Russia's position in Transnistria and represent a considerable obstacle to the resolution of the conflict.

The presence of Russian troops and military exercises in Transnistria is the culmination of Kremlin's interventionism in Moldova. From the perspective of Russia, the demonstration of military power is a condition for a state that has great power ambitions. At the moment, the military force is one of Russia's most important instruments of defying its adversaries and consolidating its power in the near abroad.

#### 4.3.2 Political Interference Of Russia In Transnistria

Russian politics towards Tiraspol is three-dimensional. The first dimension is the fast adaptation of Transnistria to Russian legislation, norms and state institutions (for example, citizenship, the system of social benefits, pensions, etc), supporting the creation of a 'little Russia' in Moldova. The second one is the creation of a pro-Transnistria atmosphere in Moldova, that by time would result in an political environment willing to accept the *de facto* Transnistrian state. The main instruments of achieving this would be the pro-Russian politicians and media. And the last dimension is related to increasing foreign, para-diplomatic actions with the support of the Foreign Ministry of Russia.<sup>346</sup>

In the period between 2006 and 2008, the Russian government signed few agreements with the separatist regime in the field of social politics, health, pension payment, statistics, agriculture, transportation, and industrial cooperation. In 2006, Moscow ensured the cooperation between the Constitutional Court of Russia and the similar institution in Transnistria as well as increasing institutional cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce in Tiraspol and similar organisations from Russia. Moreover, the external financing of institutional development of Tiraspol's regime increased. Officially, Russia explained that the main reasons of its assistance was the improvement of the standart of living of Transnistrian people and stability of the political system both directed to ensure an advantage of the region compared to its neighbours.<sup>347</sup>

The Russian Federation intensified the policy of integrating Transnistria in its own electoral system. Since 2007, Moscow suddenly accelerated its citizenship policy in

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<sup>346</sup> Igor Munteanu, "Paravanele Externe ale Secesionismului: Paradiplomatie si Insurgenta", Policy Brief, (IDIS) "Viitorul", June 2018, p. 13.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

Transnistria and opened consulates in spite of the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova (MFAEI) to perform consular activities only at the Embassy of Russian Federation in Chisinau. In 2012, Russian officials declared that there were approximately 200.000 Russian citizens in the Transnistrian region. Chisinau continuously warned Russian diplomats not to hold elections in the separatist region without the permission of Moldovan authorities. This kind of activities violate the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Moldova in Transnistria, but the warnings were almost totally ignored.<sup>348</sup>

In 2012, Transnistria announced as official ideology of its regime – Eurasian direction. For the application of Russian legislation in the region, Tiraspol established as an intermediary target constitutional reform.<sup>349</sup>

Starting in the same year, Russia heavily invested in the support of the separatist regime and the creation of different levels of interaction and official dialogue between Moscow and Tiraspol. Dmitriy Rogozin was named the Representative of the Russian President for Transnistria.<sup>350</sup> The main reason behind these actions was the Eurasian Project aimed to reinforce the Russian control in Transnistria as reaction to EU and Chisinau's efforts to attract Tiraspol to economic integration.<sup>351</sup>

One of the best officials to promote Kremlin's policy in Transnistria was Rogozin, a politician described by Iulian Chifu as an aggressive and extremely vocal personality that did not have too many things in common with diplomacy and political negotiations.<sup>352</sup> In the case of the Transnistrian conflict, it seems that this type of politicians, on the one hand, can best promote Russian strategy and support in the separatist region, and on the other hand, have an aggressive policy towards the Moldovan government.

In the last period, through citizenship, and financial and military support, there is a serious attempt to accelerate the political, institutional and economic integration of Transnistria into the Russian Federation. The main objective of these actions is to ensure a legitimate

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid, pp. 40-41.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>351</sup> Dumitru Minzarari, "Russia's Aggressive Policies in Transnistria Reveal Severe Limitations of EU's Approach to Conflict Resolution", *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Volume: 9, Issue: 210, 15 November 2012, accessed on 23 September 2019 at <https://jamestown.org/program/russias-aggressive-policies-in-transnistria-reveal-severe-limitations-of-eus-approach-to-conflict-resolution/>

<sup>352</sup> Moldova.org, "Romanian President's adviser: 'Rogozin is a toxic politician'", accessed on 23 September 2019 at <https://www.moldova.org/en/romanian-presidents-adviser-rogozin-is-a-toxic-politician-234262-eng/>

right for Tiraspol to request external representation within the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>353</sup>

Moscow encourages the cooperation between its federal subjects and the separatist regimes sponsored by itself. Transnistria signed cooperation agreements with Volgograd, Smolensk, Celyabinsk, Krasnodar, Karelya, Tatarstan, and the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>354</sup> This type of ‘diplomacy’ supported by Russia strengthens the autonomy of Transnistria.

One of the main reasons of the frequent visits of the Russian diplomats in Transnistria is the coordination between Kremlin and Tiraspol regarding the messages and actions that Transnistrian para-diplomats have to advance to the negotiating parties involved in conflict settlement. There were many cases when Russian officials established the priorities of Transnistria at the negotiation table of the 5+2 format and some of them were implemented.<sup>355</sup>

One of the most effective forms of Russian interventionism in Transnistria is the political sphere. The classical instruments of Moscow to achieve its objectives regarding the Transnistrian Project are the rigid and aggressive Russian officials that promote Kremlin’s vision and plans in the region and “para-diplomacy”.

#### **4.3.3 The Russian Influence On Moldovan Elite And Its Role In The Transnistrian Issue**

The Party of the Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) is an important parliamentary party in the Moldovan legislative. PSRM, which is also the party of the President Igor Dodon, is pro-Russian.<sup>356</sup> Ideologically, President’s party is centrist, but geopolitically speaking it is part of Russia’s integrationist projects. The financial situation of the PSRM, which allegedly has capital inflows from Russia, is relatively good. According to some sources, socialists also have the financial support of the Transnistrian economic agents.<sup>357</sup> Igor Dodon is the devotee of the notion of the federalisation of

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<sup>353</sup> Igor Munteanu, op. cit. , p. 48.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>356</sup> Iurie Gotisan, op. cit. , p. 14.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

Transnistria.<sup>358</sup> His behaviour regarding Tiraspol and his regular visit in the region support the previous statement.<sup>359</sup>

At the end of 2016, Vadim Krasnoselsky became the new President of Transnistria. Igor Dodon congratulated the new leader of the separatist regime. According to the Transnistrian expert Oazu Nantoi, this is in defiance of the Constitution and represents a total disrespect of the victims of the 1992 war. Following Dodon, Irina Vlah, the governor of Gagauzia, also congratulated the Transnistrian president. Among other things, Irina Vlah became governor in 2012 with the support of PSRM and Russian propaganda forces. The congratulations list was completed by the Archbishop Sava of Tiraspol and Dubasari, member of the Archbishop of Moldova. At the end, it can be considered that Dodon and Vlah's actions were directed by Kremlin.<sup>360</sup>

At the same time, a paradoxical situation is that when the pro-Russian president Dodon became the leader of the state, Moldovan-Russian relations worsened. Igor Dodon, Russian and Transnistrian officials talk more often about the risk of the restart of the Transnistrian war. Except them, nobody else sees any kind of risk of this happening. The President is trying to create the image that other actors are interested in the escalation of the conflict but he is the protector of the status quo.<sup>361</sup>

On 21 July 2017, the Moldovan legislative voted in favour of a declaration in which they asked Russia to retreat its military forces from Moldova. Dodon said that this declaration is an incitement and its purpose is to negatively affect Moldova-Russia relations.<sup>362</sup>

On 23 August, in the same year, the Republic of Moldova addressed the UN with the request to take into consideration the withdrawal of the former 14th Russian Army troops (OGRT, except the peacekeepers) from Transnistria and to put it on the agenda of the next General Assembly session. Transnistrian leader, Krasnoselsky criticised the initiative, saying that withdrawal is a certain path to war. Yet, he added, the region is ready for any action. Dodon's reaction was not surprising, he criticised the initiative, and

<sup>358</sup> Stiri, "PSRM sustine federalizarea Republicii Moldova", accessed on 18 April 2018 at <https://stiri.md/articole/politica/psrm-sustine-federalizarea-republicii-moldova>

<sup>359</sup> Iurie Gotisan, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>360</sup> Laurentiu Mihu, interview with Oazu Nantoi, op. cit.

<sup>361</sup> Vitalie Călugăreanu, "Moldova, statul in care presedintele incita la razboi si isi numeste cetatenii "lepadaturi" si "paraziti"", accessed on 19 April 2018 at <http://www.dw.com/ro/opinie-moldova-statul-%C3%AEn-care-pre%C8%99edintele-incit%C4%83-la-r%C4%83zboi-%C8%99i-%C3%AE%C8%99i-nume%C8%99te-cet%C4%83%C8%9Benii-lep%C4%83d%C4%83turi-%C8%99i-parazi%C8%9Bi/a-40345944>

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

more than this, cursed the involvement of the Western “puppeteers”.<sup>363</sup> Despite the fact that the request was regarding only the OGRT, and it is unlikely that the President does not make the difference between these troops and a peacekeeping mission, Dodon implied that Chisinau asked for UN’s participation in the retreat of the peacekeepers, not of the military. He added, this situation proves that the officials do not comprehend anything on the matter or they have the intention to provoke Russia.<sup>364</sup>

The statements and actions of the Moldovan President are similar to a Russian Federation governor responsible for Moldova. He is behaving not as a president of an independent state, but as a subordinate of Moscow which has as his main purpose bringing the country under Russian control.<sup>365</sup>

There is the probability that the Russian Federation would use Igor Dodon as an agent which can influence the 5+2 format and to promote and even impose a special legal status for the Transnistrian region. The word „federation” would not be used though, through this status, Russia would have all the instruments to maintain Moldova in its sphere of influence. In case it works, this solution would become a standard used by Russia with respect to the Donetsk and Lugansk separatist regimes in Ukraine.<sup>366</sup>

In a more or less active form, the pro-Russian elites were always existent in Moldova. With Russian support, these parties, groups, or individuals promote Moscow’s interest in their motherland.

#### **4.3.4 Trade As An Instrument Of Influence**

Moldova is highly sensitive to any variation in trade flows with its main partners. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia has traditionally ranked as one of Moldova’s key trading partners.<sup>367</sup>

Both Moldova and Russia belong to a free trade area within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). About 75% of imports from the Russian Federation consist of mineral fuels, particularly natural gas.<sup>368</sup> The Russian market has always represented an

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<sup>363</sup>Ibid.

<sup>364</sup>Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup>Laurentiu Mihiu, interview with Oazu Nantoi, op. cit.

<sup>367</sup>Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>368</sup> Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Moldova, 2017, cited in Kamil Calus, et al, “Interdependencies of Eastern Partnership Countries with the EU and Russia: Three Case Studies”, *EU-STRAT*, Working PaperNo.10, April 2018, p. 13.

important destination for Moldovan fruits (60-70% of the country's production, above all apples) and preserved food, and wine (30% of Moldova's wine production). On average, Russia's part in Moldova's exports has traditionally accounted for 50%. An important detail is that more than half of Moldovan exports to Russia are actually re-exports.<sup>369</sup> This indicates that Moldova is used as an intermediary state for third country companies trading with Russia.<sup>370</sup>

Moldova's trade interdependency with Russia has reached high sensitivity at different points in time. Three turning points can be identified in this respect. The first turning point is a result of Russia's economic crisis (external impact), but the second and third ones originate from Moscow's policies. In the 1990s, as a consequence of the Soviet legacy, Moldova was closely interdependent with Russia. The Russian financial crisis of 1998 threatened Moldovan economy and was the first warning of the necessity to explore other markets. In 2006, a second turning point came in the form of a Russian embargo on Moldovan wine. The official reason for the enforcement of the embargo was the alleged low quality of Moldovan wine. In reality, this was a political decision by Kremlin that was meant to punish Moldova for its policy towards Transnistria. A consequence of this embargo was the rapid increase of Moldovan exports to the EU markets. The third significant moment that took place in 2013 and continues to this day was the introduction by Russia of multiple trade bans and the cancelation of trade preferences in retaliation to the EU-Moldova Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). These measures did not have fruitful effects from Moscow's perspective, as Russia's share in Moldovan trade became modest (imports 14% and exports 12%) and stronger links between Chisinau and the EU have been created.<sup>371</sup>

Political goals have always been behind Russia's embargoes on Moldova, including those related to the Transnistrian conflict. Although in the last period they are no longer a serious threat to Moldova's economy and political choices, embargoes remain an instrument that is still applied by Kremlin to obtain the maximum possible advantage in its relations with Chisinau.

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<sup>369</sup> Ana Popa, "Moldova and Russia: between trade relations and economic dependence", Expert-Grup, Chisinau, April 2015, p. 8.

<sup>370</sup> Kamil Calus, et al, "Interdependencies of Eastern Partnership Countries with the EU and Russia: Three Case Studies", op. cit. , p. 13.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid, pp. 15-16.

### 4.3.5 Energy Security As An Instrument Of Influence

After independence, Moldova's energy industry, which was established in the Soviet times, was taken over by newly established constitutional authorities. This included the whole gas transportation ramification, transit and distribution of gas, together with the electric power plants of the sovereign territory of Moldova. As a consequence of privatisation, Gazprom JSC come into possession of 50% of Moldovagaz JSC's shares.<sup>372</sup> Given that the Moldovan state controls only 35% of shares and with this had a relatively small influence within the company, Gazprom was in control of the decisions taken by Moldovagaz.<sup>373</sup> This ownership transfer, which was evaluated as fraudulent<sup>374</sup>, had a major impact on state's energy security. Via Moldovagaz, Chisinau became even more dependent on Moscow as the only provider of energy resources. This is explained by the fact that Moldovagaz had a monopoly on gas supplies from Russia to Moldova.<sup>375</sup> Moldovagaz founded Moldovatransgaz, the state's only transmission system operator<sup>376</sup> and it controls approximately 70% of the distribution system.<sup>377</sup> This situation created political dependence on the Russian Federation. As a result, the intervention of foreign actors in the decision-making process has developed as a common practice in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>378</sup> Russia's control over the whole of gas supplies and half of the transmission network created conditions for Moscow to pull the strings in Moldova.<sup>379</sup> For at least 25 years, Russia has frequently taken advantage of Moldova's energy dependence to put pressure on Chisinau with the aim of influencing its policy options

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<sup>372</sup>Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>373</sup> Denis Cenuşa, "Moldova. Pulling the Strings: Russia's Control over Moldova's Energy Sector", in edition of Expert Forum, "Energy, Russian Influence, and Democratic Backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe; A comparative assessment and case studies from Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Romania", *National Endowment for Democracy*, pp. 48-63, May 2017, p. 53;

<sup>374</sup> Victor Parlicov, et al, "Energy and Politics: The Price for Impunity in Moldova", IDIS "Viitorul", Policy Paper, April 2017, p. 7, accessed on 4 September 2019 at <http://www.viitorul.org/files/Policy%20Paper%202017%20-%20Impunitate%20si%20intelegeri%20rentiere%20sectorul%20energetic%20ENG%20II.pdf>

<sup>375</sup>Kamil Calus, et al, "Interdependencies of Eastern Partnership Countries with the EU and Russia: Three Case Studies", op. cit. , p. 21.

<sup>376</sup> IDNO, accessed on 4 September 2019 at <https://idno.md/companie?idno=1003607010109/societatea-cu-r%C4%83spundere-limitat%C4%83-moldovatransgaz>

<sup>377</sup> Ana Otilia Nutu and Denis Cenuşa, "Extinderea gazoductului Iasi-Ungheni spre Chisinau: Provocari si Oportunitati", Centrul Analitic Independent Expert-Grup and Expert-Forum, February 2016, p. 6, accessed on 4 September 2019 at [https://expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Extinderea\\_gazoductului\\_Iasi-Ungheni\\_spre\\_Chisinau.pdf](https://expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Extinderea_gazoductului_Iasi-Ungheni_spre_Chisinau.pdf)

<sup>378</sup> Victor Parlicov, et al, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>379</sup> Denis Cenuşa, "Pulling the Strings: Russia's Control over Moldova's Energy Sector", op. cit, p. 48.

according to its own interest. In recent years, the main object of these actions has been the subversion of further integration between Moldova and the EU, particularly in the area of energy. In 2011, a long-term gas supply contract for Chisinau expired and until 2017 Russia constantly refused to sign a new long-term contract. As a result, Moldova purchased gas on the basis of yearly short-term annexes. To sign a new contract, Moscow conditioned Chisinau to abandon the implementation of the EU's third energy package, which the latter agreed to achieve in May 2010 when it became a member of the European Energy Community. This situation increased Moldova's vulnerability to Kremlin's requirements and pressure.<sup>380</sup> According to the stipulations of the third energy package, the production, sale and distribution of gas should be executed by different enterprises.<sup>381</sup> Thus, if these rules were to be implemented, the Moldovan national gas operator would be divided in two distinct companies and an independent gas transmission operator would be established. These actions could deprive Russian Federation of its monopoly. Surprisingly, in December 2016, Gazprom gave its consent to extend the current contract by three years. This decision strengthens Moldovan President Dodon's position. It is probable that Russia will continue to pressure Moldova to give up the third energy package that Chisinau has committed to implement by 1 January 2020. This date coincides with the termination of the new gas contract. Finally, the maintenance of advantageous gas prices for Moldova diminishes the motivation of Moldovan political elites to become independent from Gazprom and prevents the further development of gas cooperation with Romania.<sup>382</sup>

Moldova's dependency on Russian gas shows its vulnerability as a state and creates greater asymmetry between Chisinau and Moscow at the negotiating table of the Transnistrian conflict resolution.

Energy resources is one of the Kremlin's most efficient tools in advancing its interests and acquisition of power.

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<sup>380</sup> Kamil Calus, et al, "Interdependencies of Eastern Partnership Countries with the EU and Russia: Three Case Studies", op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>381</sup> Ruslan Surugiu, "Third Energy Package and its Impact on the Energy Sector of the Republic of Moldova", Expert Grup, Chisinau, 2012, in ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Kamil Calus, et al, "Interdependencies of Eastern Partnership Countries with the EU and Russia: Three Case Studies", op. cit., p. 22.

#### 4.3.6. Soft Power As An Instrument Of Russian Intervention In Moldova

##### 4.3.6.1. The Role Of Media

One of Moscow's most important political instruments of influence in Moldova is media. Especially for the wealthy and entertaining Russian TV Channels is easy to enter not the very developed Moldovan TV market and to have high ratings there for more than 26 years. Due to the fact that Russian media is politicized and well controlled by the state apparatus, Moldovan audience is vulnerable to Russian propaganda. All these in the conditions in which the mainly watched programmes and shows are not the political ones. On the other hand, political shows are also popular. The image of the "reality" in the world presented through these channels perfectly suits the interests of Moscow. There are few important targets of Russian propaganda machine. First of all is the promotion of a negative image of the EU and NATO. Another important goal is the spread of nostalgia for USSR and admiration for Russian rebirth. The third goal is to create a public distrust in democracy and Moldovan state.<sup>383</sup>

Russian media is able not only to create instant political preferences, but also to model Moldovan citizens' identity in order to keep their country in the area of Moscow's interests. Speaking about identity, conservative values like disrespect for human and particularly LGBTQ rights, are promoted. These ideas are also shared by the Russian Orthodox Church. It is not a secret that the latter goes hand in hand with Russian state.<sup>384</sup> Although has been dealing with a Russian supported Transnistria, and a pro-Russian Gagauzia for almost 3 decades, Moldova only lately made a law that would diminish Kremlin's propaganda.<sup>385</sup> But experts consider that this project offers the opportunity for broadcasters to act according to the new rules and continue to spread propaganda. The latter would be presented as local production, not as foreign one.<sup>386</sup>

At the centre of Russian propaganda is the president - Vladimir Putin. He is the most popular foreign leader in Moldova. Russian president is even more appreciated than the

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<sup>383</sup> Mihai Popsoi, "Republic of Moldova", in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, "Propaganda made-to-measure: how our vulnerabilities facilitate Russian influence, A study of Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova", Bucharest, February 2018, pp. 207-208.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid, p. 208.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid, p. 209.

<sup>386</sup> Independent, "Proiectul PD de lupta cu propaganda e o bula de sapun. Va avea un efect limitat", accessed on 27 April 2018 at <http://independent.md/studiu-proiectul-pd-de-lupta-cu-propaganda-e-o-bula-de-sapun-va-avea-un-efect-limitat/>

local politicians.<sup>387</sup> He is viewed as a powerful leader which subordinates the state institutions and civil society. This can be considered a victory of the Moscow's media over Moldovan citizens.<sup>388</sup>

#### 4.3.6.2. Russian NGOs

In addition to the media, Moscow-sponsored NGOs have an active role in Moldovan society. One of the most active organisations is the Izborsk Club, an ultra-conservative association who promote Putin's agenda. The Moldovan branch of the club opened in 2016 promotes: Orthodox religion as a feature of the Moldovan collective identity; Moldova is part of the Eastern civilization; at the base of the country's constitution and foreign policy is the idea that Moldova is a permanent neutral state; Chisinau has to stop being a colony of the West and choose an independent way; Moldova necessitate a conservative intellectual and spiritual revolution; the only way for Moldova to maintain an independent policy is to have a strategic partnership with Russian Federation.<sup>389</sup>

According to the group, one of its greatest success is the election of the pro-Russian Igor Dodon (also member of the organisation) as the president of the country.<sup>390</sup>

Another significant Russian supported NGO is the Byzantine Club, which is represented by conservative intellectuals, with the main idea that Russia is the successor of the great Byzantine civilization. One of the most active pro-Moscow group in Moldova is the League of Russian Youth. They are preeminent critics of the EU/NATO-Moldova close relations.<sup>391</sup>

These groups, financially and ideologically supported by Kremlin, are meant to contribute to the consolidation of Russian interests in Moldova. NGO's objectives such as the increase of number of pro-Russian electorate and the support of Russia oriented governments can create conditions for a political atmosphere favourable to Moscow's strategies in Transnistria.

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<sup>387</sup> Institutul de Politici Publice, <http://ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=820>, cited in Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, op. cit. , p. 209.

<sup>388</sup> Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, op. cit. , p. 209.

<sup>389</sup> Iurie Rosca, "Clubul Izborsk în Moldova ca platformă pentru elaborarea Ideii Naționale", accessed on 27 April 2018 at <https://sputnik.md/editorialist/20160404/5720169.html>, cited in ibid, p. 210.

<sup>390</sup> Mianews.ru, <https://mianews.ru/en/2016/11/21/a-member-of-the-izborsk-club-became-the-president-of-moldova-this-was-stated-by-the-firstdeputy-chairman-of-the-izborsk-club/>, cited in Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, op. cit. , p. 210.

<sup>391</sup> Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, op. cit. , pp. 210-211.

#### 4.3.6.3. The Role Of Religion

“According to the 2014 census, over 96% of Moldovans identify as Orthodox Christians. Use of religious groups for political ends or weaponization of religion has been an increasingly prominent tactic in the Kremlin’s arsenal.”<sup>392</sup> Moldova’s Orthodox world is ruled by 2 institutions: the Moldovan Orthodox Church, subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Bessarabian Orthodox Church (a much smaller one), subordinated to the Romanian Orthodox Church. This relation between the Moldovan and Russian Orthodox Church is marked by Moscow’s propaganda policies and influence.<sup>393</sup> The Moldovan Orthodox Church, a politically active institution has been organising multiple protests against the anti-discrimination bill. This bill provides LGBTQ people with protection in the matter of employment discrimination, and its conservation represents a significant responsibility of the Moldovan government in achieving the compulsory objectives of the Association Agreement Action Plan with the European Union.<sup>394</sup> Even that a version of the bill, called law on Ensuring Equality, adopted in 2013 contributed to the conclusion and ratification by Moldova of the Association Agreement with the EU, the main pro-Russian groups, at the top with President Dodon and his Socialist colleagues, promised to invalidate the law when they will be in power. In the context of a lack of majority in Parliament to make that change possible, Dodon compensated by awarding the churchmen state distinctions for their serve on the matter.<sup>395</sup> One of the recipients is the Bishop of Bălți and Făleşti, an outstanding conservative religious figure that was active in the presidential campaign supporting Igor Dodon and criticizing his opponent – an unmarried woman for not being suitable for this function.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, “Church Pressures Moldova’s Government To Repeal Antidiscrimination Laws”, accessed on 28 April 2018 at <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-gay-church-rights-discrimination-laws/25024061.htm> , cited in *ibid*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>395</sup> PRO TV Chisinau, “Igor Dodon a decorat cu distinctii de stat 16 preoti. Printre acestia si episcopul Marchel care a criticat-o public pe Maia Sandu in plina campanie electorala”, accessed on 29 April 2018 at <http://protv.md/stiri/politic/igor-dodon-a-decorat-cu-distinctii-de-stat-16-preoti-printre-acestia---1951281.html> , cited in Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, *op. cit.* , p. 212.

<sup>396</sup> *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, “Russia Scores Symbolic Victory in Moldova’s Presidential Election”, Volume: 13, Issue: 182, <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-scores-symbolic-victory-moldovas-presidential-election/>, cited in Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, *op. cit.* , p. 212.

As mentioned before, the mainly negative approach regarding the LGBTQ community represents a permanent weak point of the Moldovan society exposed to the internal and external forces that tend to prevent the EU integration of Moldova.<sup>397</sup> The conservatism of the Moldovan society on LGBTQ matter is well reflected in a sociological study of 2014.<sup>398</sup> “An astounding 90% of respondents would not accept a homosexual as their neighbour, while 86% would not want an LGBTQ educator in their children’s classroom. About 70% still associate homosexuality with illness, perversion and sin. About 57% believe it must be punished.”<sup>399</sup>

To decrease this exposure, local media and civil society need to stay together for more tolerance regarding LGBTQ. As the Russian controlled-media represents a source of problems by itself, the main responsibility is in the hands of the still fragile civil society.<sup>400</sup>

The impact of Russia’s soft power in Moldova is considerable and is reflected mostly in strong pro-Russian groups and organisations that are also part of the Moldovan civil society. Kremlin’s official ideology applied with classical hard power is supported by a very efficient propaganda manifested in soft power instruments such as media, church and NGO’s. This creates a favourable climate to adjust Moldova’s official policy regarding Transnistria to Russia’s official one.

#### **4.3.7 Soft Power Politics As An Instrument Of Intervention In Transnistria**

After the dismantling of the USSR, the protection of millions of compatriot Russians living abroad became immediately one of the main preferences of the Russian foreign policy makers. Russian population became a strong diaspora and one of the predominant minorities in the former Soviet states.<sup>401</sup>

“For the Russian authorities, the term "Russian compatriot" implies any person, regardless of nationality, who comes from the previously united Russian state, speaks Russian, and identifies him/herself with Russia. More precise definitions include: having

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<sup>397</sup> Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, op. cit. , p. 212.

<sup>398</sup> Institutul de Politici Publice, Moldova, “Fenomenul Discriminării în Moldova: Percepțiile Populației”, 2015, <https://www.soros.md/files/publications/documents/Raport%20Nediscriminare%20analiza%20comparata.pdf>, cited in ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Mihai Popsoi, in edition of Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, op. cit. , p. 212.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 6.

a loyal attitude towards Russia, maintaining contacts with Russia, and preserving spiritual, cultural, and, especially, religious ties with Russia.”<sup>402</sup>

Except some unclear policies and institutions regarding diaspora, at the time of President Yeltsin (in 1990s), Russians abroad could not be supported in a proper way. The main reason was Russia’s fragile transition economy and the absence of serious material resources necessary to assist Russian minority abroad.<sup>403</sup>

Starting with Putin administration the approach regarding diaspora started to change. As Moscow’s claim to be again a world power became obvious, it was figured out that Russian minority from abroad was a source of influence and as a result could represent an important instrument of soft power. Furthermore, Kremlin had to prove that is able to take care of its overseas Russian fellows.<sup>404</sup> Russian diaspora can be used as an instrument of Moscow to preserve its domination in the former USSR region.<sup>405</sup> More than a target of the Russian policy, the role of the Russian minority abroad is seen as a tool of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. In particular, Russia’s diaspora policy, in its neighbourhood became indispensable from government’s foreign policy at the time of Vladimir Putin.<sup>406</sup> This strategy is present in the Transnistrian conflict too, where Russia gives support to its compatriots in order to achieve its own interests in the area. This is well reflected by maintaining the conflict in a frozen condition, and by sustaining the split between the Russian minorities and the non-Russian groups in Transnistria and Moldova.<sup>407</sup>

“Russian authorities are increasingly demonstrating their readiness to employ soft power to achieve foreign policy objectives”<sup>408</sup> This logic is applicable in the case of Russian diaspora in Transnistria. There Russia’s soft power is manifested through financial investment, socially oriented market economy values, compatriot policies, culture and religion.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Artem Kureev, “Russian Diaspora: A tool of soft power?”, *Russia Direct*, 11 November 2015, accessed on 14 December 2018 at <https://russia-direct.org/opinion/russian-diaspora-tool-soft-power>

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Vera Zakem, et al, “Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia’s Strategy, Tactics, and influence in the former Soviet Union”, p. ii, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 7.

<sup>406</sup> Vera Zakem, et al, op. cit. , p. i, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 7.

<sup>407</sup> Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 7.

<sup>408</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, op. cit. , p. 1084.

<sup>409</sup> Rebecca Chamberlain-Creangă and Lyndon Allin, “Acquiring Assets, Debts and Citizens - Russia and the Micro– Foundations of Transnistria’s Stalelated Conflict”, p. 332, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 8.

#### 4.3.7.1 Economic Interdependence

Transnistria's economic dependence on Russia represents one of the most important instruments of Kremlin's soft power. Region's budgetary deficiency can be explained by its Soviet large-scale industry not adapted to the new reality after the collapse of USSR, its very high level of foreign trade in GDP and major labour migration to Russian Federation.<sup>410</sup> From the social and economic point of view Transnistria is quite integrated into Russia. Except for the work purpose there are many Transnistrians going there to study. Another factor of interdependence is Russian passport; more than 200.000 Transnistrians have it, and as a result a large part of them benefit from Moscow's pensions. Apart from this, important enterprises in the separatist region have as shareholders or owners in the form of Russian companies. Region's vulnerability is also reflected by the total dependence on Russian gas and to a lesser extent subsidies and loans.<sup>411</sup>

The supply of free Russian gas by Kremlin to Transnistrian compatriots represents an instrument of increasing the separation of the region from Moldova. Russian authorities have never insisted in making Tiraspol pay its gas consumption debts. And this situation is in favour of Moscow as ensures a stronger influence over Transnistria and Moldova.<sup>412</sup> The 2000s privatizations in the industrial field out of the control of Chisinau, allowed important Russian business groups to take over significant parts of the Transnistrian industry. Fields like steel, cement, and hydro-electronic are possessed by Russians that generally have strong connections with Kremlin.<sup>413</sup>

Work force migration to Russia, pensions, loans, investments and free gas represent very important economic soft power tools that maintains Transnistria, Moscow oriented and from Moldova more separated.

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<sup>410</sup> Margarita M. Balmaceda, "Privatization and elite defection in de facto states: The case of Transnistria, 1991–2012", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Volume 46, Nr 4, December 2013, USA, p. 447.

<sup>411</sup> Pål Kolstø, "Transnistria is a Bridge too far for Russia", *Open Democracy*, accessed on 20 February 2019 at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/p%C3%A5l-kolst%C3%B8/transnistria-is-bridge-too-far-for-russia>

<sup>412</sup> Rebecca Chamberlain-Creangă and Lyndon Allin, op. cit. , p. 332, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 9.

<sup>413</sup> Rebecca Chamberlain-Creangă and Lyndon Allin, op. cit. , p. 333, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 9.

#### 4.3.7.2 The Instrument Of Culture

Another important soft power instrument of Russia in Transnistria is culture.

“Russian diaspora politics in the field of cultural values has also been quite obvious and many-sided in Transnistria. In the course of time, Russia has developed several channels and strategies to influence compatriots abroad, mainly by promoting Russian culture, language and increasingly identity.”<sup>414</sup> Examples of these channels are: rossotrudnichestvo – a state organisation focused on international development and responsible also for supporting fellow nationals abroad, Russian world – partly state foundation, promoter of Russian language and culture, Russian house – a system of more than 50 Russophone centres meant to link the overseas compatriots with their homeland, and dealing with passport related procedures. Most of them at the beginning out of the state control, these organisations later developed into Kremlin’s propaganda promoters.<sup>415</sup>

The well-known Russian Institute for Strategic Studies is active in Transnistria through participating in roundtables, TV programs, etc. At these activities its members promote the ideas that Transnistria is part of the “Russian world”, European integration have negative effects on Moldova and Transnistria, Moldova will join Romania in a common state, etc.<sup>416</sup>

This kind of debates does not represent different points of views or critics, all of them can be considered as part of the same system-Kremlin propaganda.

Russia’s diaspora politics manifested through tools like Russian language, media sources, and citizenship, creates a cultural separation between Moldova and Transnistria and considerably slows down the there-integration process in the conflict resolution context. A very efficient instrument is Russia’s citizenship policy in conflict areas like Abkhazia, South-Ossetia and in our case - Transnistria. With an easy procedure of offering citizenship to its compatriots, Moscow ensures an extra asset in maintaining the soft power in the region.<sup>417</sup> As Russian citizenship gives extra opportunities to the

<sup>414</sup> Vera Zakem, et al, op. cit. , pag. 40, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 10.

<sup>415</sup> Ariel Cohen, “Ideology and Soft Power in Contemporary Russia”, in edition of Stephen Blank, “Perspectives on Russian foreign policy”, SSI US Army War College, pp. 202-203 in Rick Lof, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>416</sup> Mid PMR, “Программа ‘Публичная дипломатия’”, accessed on 24 February 2019 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYIL5UHb3Gw>

<sup>417</sup> Rebecca Chamberlain-Creangă and Lyndon Allin, op. cit. , p. 339, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 10.

Transnistrian population this policy has been well-received by the locals.<sup>418</sup> Also, the significant number of Russian citizens makes Kremlin have a consolidated power of control in the area.<sup>419</sup>

Media is considered to be Russia's most substantial method of interaction with the world.<sup>420</sup> Russian authorities use media as an instrument of disinformation, especially among its citizens. Moscow's propaganda is spread even by the Russian state media networks, such as Russia Today and Sputnik. In this regard, it is also important to mention the Russian or foreign private media sources and of course the cyberattacks.<sup>421</sup>

An example of the effect of Kremlin's instrument of culture in Transnistria is the closing in July 2004 of the few Romanian language schools.<sup>422</sup> According to the results of a 2006 plebiscite, 97% of the participants voted for the independence of Transnistria and afterwards, its unification with Russia. This situation proved that Transnistrian population is pro-Russian. First of all, this instrument has been used by Moscow not in order to back up its compatriots, but to create an uncomfortable dynamic between Chisinau and Tiraspol and to consolidate its influence on the resolution of the conflict.<sup>423</sup>

The influence of Russian culture supported by Kremlin's propaganda makes it a really strong instrument of attraction for Transnistria.

#### 4.3.7.3 The Role Of Church

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is acting abroad as an extension of Moscow's political influence. Similar to the Russian World organisation, it is promoting the idea that Russians living abroad should focus on Russian values more than before. Furthermore, the ROC is trying to promote the idea that Russian compatriots living abroad should avoid adopting the culture and political beliefs of the host country.<sup>424</sup> In 2006, before becoming the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Bishop Kirill declared that all the Russians living abroad "should oppose Western civilization in its

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<sup>418</sup> Rick Lof, op. cit. , pp.10-11.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>420</sup> Ariel Cohen, in edition of Stephen Blank, op. cit. , p. 204, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 11.

<sup>421</sup> Vera Zakem, et al, op. cit. , p. ii, cited in Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 11.

<sup>422</sup> Steven D. Roper, "The politicization of education: Identity formation in Moldova and Transnistria", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, no. 38, Department of Political Science, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL 61920, USA, 2005, p. 503.

<sup>423</sup> Rick Lof, op. cit. , p. 11.

<sup>424</sup> Andis Kudors, "'Russian World'—Russia's Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policy," *Russian Analytical Digest*, Vol. 81, No. 10, 16.06.2010, pp. 2- 3, in Ariel Cohen, op. cit. , p. 203.

assertion of the universality of the Western tradition.”<sup>425</sup> These promoted ideas are part of the Kremlin’s “compatriots’ policy” meant to keep Russian expats under its control.<sup>426</sup> In the territory of Transnistria, plenty of orthodox traditions exist. This area was part of the Christian Kievan Rus, Galicia-Volyn principality and the Russian Empire. Especially, in the second part of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century, in the region a productive church building process was registered. These developments are related to the occurrence of the first orthodox churches on the left side of the Dniester river.<sup>427</sup>

Church is the only internationally recognized institution in Transnistria, and was created in line with orthodox principles. The Diocese of Tiraspol and Dubassari is member of the Bishop of Moldova, and represents an intriguing case when we approach its nature, goal and capacity for its political tool. According to the representatives of the Diocese, the institution was formed at the solicitation of the Tiraspol administration, with the consent of the Russian Orthodox Church, latter having also under its jurisdiction the Bishop of Moldova.<sup>428</sup>

The situation of the Diocese and its interaction with the Bishop of Moldova was described by A.M., a Transnistrian journalist:

“The Diocese of Tiraspol and Dubasari is considered to have a special position in the component of the Metropolis of Chisinau, in the big picture it is connected to political aspects, everything is inter-connected, starting with the fact that Transnistria is de facto a different region from the Republic of Moldova, de facto not controlled by it, implicitly the Diocese of Tiraspol and Dubasari has some differences in its functionality. Practically, there is a formal relation of subordination to the Metropolis of Moldova, but on the other hand there is a direct contact with the Russian Federation, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC),

<sup>425</sup> Andis Kudors, op. cit. , p. 3, cited in Ariel Cohen, op. cit. , p. 203.

<sup>426</sup> Ariel Cohen, op. cit. , p. 203.

<sup>427</sup> Tiraspol-Dubassari Diocese of the Moldova Metropolitan Church, Moscow Patriarchy, Russian Orthodox Church, “ИСТОРИЯ”, accessed on 1 April 2019 at <http://www.diocese-tiras.org/page.php?id=1>

<sup>428</sup> Tatiana Cojocari, “ ‘We think in Russian, dream in Russian’. Debunking the project of reintegration of Transnistria”, accessed on 1 April 2019 at <https://larics.ro/we-think-in-russian-dream-in-russian-debunking-the-project-of-reintegration-of-transnistria/?lang=en>

with the central headquarters in Moscow, meaning that there are all these aspects, but somehow the tendency is growing”.<sup>429</sup>

The visit of the Russian Patriarch Kirill in Tiraspol is an evident example of direct contact between the Transnistrian and Russian churches and influence of the latter on the separatist region. On 9 September 2013, Kirill addressed the Transnistrian population on the A.V. Suvorov square. In his honor, the date of his visit was declared as a rest day and tens of thousands of people could come together in the square. The event was broadcasted live by the Transnistrian television. When addressed to the crowd, Kirill used the term ‘Transnistrian people’ and mentioned the common historical and orthodox legacy of Transnistria and Russia. The common legacy of Suvorov and victory in the Second World War was due not only to the human sacrifice but also to belief in God and this faith should persist in spite of all social, economic and political issues existent in the region.<sup>430</sup>

Although its role might be underrated, the church proved to be an important instrument of Moscow, along with Russian officials, in the Transnistrian issue. Its main message is that the common past, traditions and faith unites Tiraspol with Moscow, and that in spite of the social and economic problems of the region, hope for Transnistria comes from the east, namely Russian Federation.

Although, Russia does not have an attractive economy or a common border with Transnistria, the elements of the Russian soft power such as economic interdependence, culture and church created a symbiosis which has been a very efficient instrument, along with the Russian 14th Army, in keeping Transnistria under Russian influence.

#### **4.3.8 The Influence Of Russia On The International Structures Responsible For The Conflict Resolution**

In addition to the classical methods of interventionism and obtaining benefits in the Transnistrian case such as the use of force, pressure, threat, bans or propaganda, Russia uses the instrument of influence on some key international bodies engaged in the conflict resolution.

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Russian Orthodox Church, “Святейший Патриарх Кирилл: Жителей Приднестровья крепко соединяет православная вера”, accessed on 1 April 2019 at <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3220274.html>

#### 4.3.8.1 The Interference In The Peacekeeping Mission And Negotiation Format

At the beginning, Russia enforced two ways of preserving the status quo and preventing the progress in the Transnistrian matter. One of these is the unique format of the peacekeeping operation, imposed by the 21 July 1992 Peace Agreement. The second one is the five-sided format of the Permanent Meeting for political issues within the negotiations process of the Transnistrian settlement, formalised in February 2002.<sup>431</sup>

The peacekeeping operation is unique because of its structure, consisting of Russian and Moldovan military forces, and Transnistrian regime's paramilitary forces. The Joint Control Commission (JCC) is responsible for peace and order in the Security Area. All the JCC decisions are taken by consensus, which means that for almost 30 years, Moldova has been facing the joint position of the Russian military officers from Russia and of the Russians from the 'Transnistrian Republic'. Regarding the five-sided negotiation format of the conflict settlement, Russian Federation plays there the immaculate role of a mediator in the dispute between Moldova and the pro-Russian Transnistria.<sup>432</sup>

The double role played by Russia, on the one hand, of a peacekeeper, despite the fact that it was participant in the conflict, who prevents serious progress in the Security Zone of the Peacekeeping Mission, and on the other hand, of a mediator in the five-sided negotiations format, is meant to present Moscow officially as an actor interested in the resolution of the conflict according to Moldova's interests, while in reality it is focused on achieving its own interests according to its foreign policy agenda.

#### 4.3.8.2 The Role Of The OSCE In Russian Strategies On Transnistria

The only international institution involved in the negotiation process of the Transnistrian conflict resolution is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In spite of the appearances, the OSCE has some problems about professionally exercising its function.

Because of the veto power of Russia, the OSCE is unable to carry out its own decisions or resolutions. To disguise this situation, it is necessary to create different theories that have nothing to do with resolutions. This is the case of the resolution of the Istanbul Summit. Its provisions were not mandatory and represent a value only from the political

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<sup>431</sup> Laurentiu Mihu, interview with Oazu Nantoi, op. cit.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

point of view. The document lacks legal consequences, and because of Russia's opposition, the OSCE, long time ago, rejected its application. In other words, these actions were used to cover the inner fragility of the OSCE and its weakness towards the veto right of Russia.<sup>433</sup>

Regarding the withdrawal of the Russian troops, Vladimir Socor said that the OSCE does not possess any political or other type of leverage in order to sustain this operation. More than that, this organization even rejected its basic obligations, which it had respected for many years, namely to monitor the illegal military exercises of the Russian troops in Transnistria. Although in the recent years, Russia increased the number of its military exercises, the OSCE did not take any measures. At the beginning, the organisation criticised these military exercises considering them illegal and dangerous, but later it turned a blind eye to this situation.<sup>434</sup>

The rationale of the OSCE is that any official status offered to the Transnistrian region should be founded on the principle of mutual agreement between Chisinau and Tiraspol. In other words, Transnistria which is not internationally recognised, should be treated at the dispute resolution negotiations as even to Moldova, based on the principle of equal actors. This idea advanced by the OSCE and seems to have Russian origins, is successful applied and represents a threat to the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.<sup>435</sup>

The OSCE does not look to have its own vision or strategy. The organisation's main interest is to maintain its own institutions and bureaucracy, by swaying back and forth between Russia and the West.<sup>436</sup>

For years, inside the OSCE a system of passive cooperation with the Russian Federation seems to be consolidated. It is passive because the organisation covers its strong dependence on Russia, which obstructs its internal activity. The structures of the OSCE disguise this situation for their own financing, interest, namely for their own survival. According to Socor, if it is requested by Russia for its own interests, the OSCE is ready to continuously put pressure on a weak state like Moldova. There are two periods when

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<sup>433</sup>Valentina Ursu, interview with Vladimir Socor, "В ОБСЕ давно уже сложилась внутренняя система пассивного сообщничества с Россией", accessed on 12 April 2019 at <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/interview-vladimir-socor-moldova-osce-frattini-putin-transnistria-diplomacy/29098907.html>

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

the organisation put pressure on Chisinau: 2002-2005 and 2016-until now. The last period coincided with the OSCE chairmanship of Germany.<sup>437</sup>

Vladimir Socor also affirmed that as Moldova and Transnistria are offered equal status, the visit of Franco Frattini, the special representative of the OSCE in Tiraspol would not represent a surprise.<sup>438</sup>

The vulnerability to the veto exercise of Russia, the lack of political instruments able to make Russia respect its commitment to withdraw its army, the avoidance to monitor the maneuvers of Russian troops in Transnistria, the advance of the principle of equal actors for both conflicting parties, the pressure on Moldova, represent proofs of the passive cooperation between the OSCE and Russia. This situation creates serious problems and disadvantages for Moldova as a participant in the process of the conflict resolution and also indicates that the OSCE often acts as an unofficial ally of Moscow in protecting its interests in the region.

Russia Federation uses its influence on international actors, in this case the OSCE, which already had institutional and functional problems and plays a double role, of a saboteur in the Security Zone and in the same time, of a mediator in the five-sided negotiation format, to defend its interests in Transnistria.

Russia's policies to protect its interests and increase national power are not realised only through inter-state but also state - international institutions relations. International organisations, officially engaged in implementing and monitoring international practice based on the principles of international law, cannot be totally independent from the states. Moreover, some of them, because of their financial dependence on some state actors, transform themselves in instruments of the patron state. Therefore, the following conclusions are required: anarchy dominates the international politics and states remain the main actors.

In the condition of international anarchy, Moscow's hard power and soft power politics in Moldova and Transnistria creates an enormous asymmetry between Moscow and Chisinau regarding the independence of a state to create and put into practice its own policies according to its national interest. Also, this imbalance of power creates conditions for even more frequent violations of Moldovan state's sovereignty by Russia. In the case

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid

of Transnistrian dispute where Russian interventionism creates asymmetry, Moldova's leverage at the negotiating table of the conflict resolution is negatively affected and the results make the reintegration of Moldova more difficult.

## CONCLUSION

Moldova (Bessarabia) and Transnistria represent different historical entities. While the former was part of the historical principality of Moldova and later of Great Romania, the latter has never belonged (except for a short period between 1941 and 1944) to any Romanian Principality. The only things that these two regions have in common were a significant Moldovan (Romanian) population and for almost half of century, a common past under the MSSR. The ideology of Moldovenism imposed by the Soviet Union in Transnistria in the interwar period, at the time when Bessarabia was integrated into Romania, consisted of the thesis that Moldovans are different from Romanians and Romanophobia, which represented an important instrument that stimulated the separatist movements in later years.

During the Soviet period, due to its loyalty and strategic position, Transnistria was favoured by the Communist regime and transformed into a highly industrialised region. This created conditions for a massive immigration of a Russophone population to the region which latter became the elite of the MSSR and especially Transnistria. This elite did not feel attached to republic but to the Soviet Union. During Perestroika, at the time of national rebirth and self-determination of Moldovans in the USSR, Transnistrian leaders were supporting the Soviet regime. Later, when the Romanian language and alphabet became official in the MSSR, the conservative and Russophone Transnistria, supported by Moscow, proclaimed its independence under the name of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR). The fear of a union with Romania caused by the national liberation movement in Moldova and Romanophobia and of loss of its social status, created conditions for the pro-Soviet/Russian elite in Transnistria to use a successful anti-Moldova propaganda in a territory where the largest nationality was paradoxically Moldovan/Romanian. This type of behaviour and action on the part of Tiraspol would have been almost impossible without the support and guarantee of Moscow, which was trying in this way to maintain Russian influence over Moldova.

The political confrontations between Chisinau and Tiraspol turned into a military conflict in March 1992. The regime of Tiraspol was militarily supported by the 14<sup>th</sup> Russian Army. Without this support, Transnistrians would not have been able to repel Moldovan

troops. After the defeat of Chisinau, in July 1992, a peace agreement was signed between Moldova and Russia in the presence of the TMR leader. The fact that Russia was one of the signatories of this agreement demonstrated its direct involvement in the conflict.

With the involvement of the OSCE in the resolution of the conflict, negotiation formats were created. The 2+3 and then the 5+2 negotiation format proved to be ineffective. One of the main reasons was Russia, who had the role of both participant and mediator in the negotiation process. Officially, it was supporting the conflict resolution while secretly assisting the separatist regime. Among the conflict settlement solutions proposed by the negotiators, was the plan of federalising Moldova, a solution that has always been against Moldova's interests and, in the most recent period, even against Transnistria's interests to become a recognised state.

In order to consolidate its power and defend its de facto independence, the leadership of the breakaway region has always imposed an authoritarian regime over the Transnistrian population. Thus, any opposition to the authorities and ideas of reconciliation with the Chisinau were annihilated. This was an easy task for a political system that controlled all the media to create and maintain an enemy image of Moldova. The civil society is almost non-existent there. All these created proper conditions for the consolidation and functionality of the Transnistrian institutions and political system. The quite functional institutions established there conferred separatist regime a sense of legitimacy. At the same time, Transnistria's existence is ensured by a sustainable economy. The financing from Russia, free utilisation of Russian gas at the expense of Chisinau, benefits of the DCFTA's applicability on its territory with the support of the EU and Moldova ensure Tiraspol's sustainability which contributes to the maintenance of its legitimacy.

Another factor that more or less directly supports the Transnistrian regime is a certain part of the Moldovan elite. Among them, there is a group of pro-Russian elite that has always existed after the independence of Moldova. With Russian support, these parties, groups, or individuals promote Moscow's interest in their own country. This also applies to the case of Transnistria. There are many examples in which key Moldovan leaders or parties promoted the Moldova federalisation plan as solution to the conflict, which is not in country's national interest, or that in other cases opposed the internationalisation of the

conflict. This kind of actions can influence the public opinion in Moldova which can bring a pro-Russian government to power that may result in the implementation of the federalisation plan.

The state of conflict in Transnistria created advantages for some members of the elite. Without international recognition and in the absence of the rule of law on its territory, Transnistria is the perfect place for illegal businesses, where representatives of the separatist regime and their partners, Moldovan officials, reap the economic benefits of dubious schemes. Therefore, the present status quo in the region is profitable for both sides. The Moldovan elite also keeps Transnistrian economy afloat by 'importing' its products, legalising its exports, and providing opportunities to export its goods to the EU market. As long as Transnistria will have a sustainable economy, its leadership will not feel the need to step back from the already gained political positions.

At the moment, Moldovan citizens do not perceive the Transnistrian conflict as a major problem that urgently needs to be solved. The low interest and capacity of engagement of the Moldovan society in the Transnistrian case represents another obstacle for conflict resolution. As regards Transnistrian people, only a victory over corruption, democratisation and economic development in Moldova can serve as a point of attraction for the separatist regime. Such a situation could contribute to the appearance of a more democratic and open to negotiations regime in Tiraspol, and maybe to a unique chance of reintegration of Transnistria with Moldova.

A new identity based on myths, holiday discourses and victory in the 1992 war, is in process in Transnistria. The consolidation of Transnistrian identity represents a factor with long term effects on the dispute settlement.

Russia's intervention in this conflict and support for Transnistria should be seen through a broader perspective. The former Soviet states represent for Russia a strategic area of primary importance. By controlling its near neighbourhood, Russia maintains its great power status. Regarding the Transnistrian conflict, Russia's main political interest lies not in the separatist region itself but in Moldova. Kremlin's military and armament deposit in Transnistria, under the cover of maintaining peace, are meant to discourage a possible approach of Moldova to NATO or any other military organisation and vice versa.

One of the conditions for conflict resolution is the demilitarisation of Transnistria. However, Russia does not accept this as it is against its strategic interests.

The presence of Russian troops and military exercises in Transnistria is the culmination of Kremlin's interventionism in Moldova. From the perspective of Russia, the demonstration of military power is a condition for a state that has great power ambitions. At the moment, the military force is one of Russia's most important instruments of defying its adversaries and consolidating its power in the near abroad.

One of the most effective forms of Russian interventionism in Transnistria is the political sphere. The classical instruments of Moscow to achieve the objective of Transnistria's integration into Euroasian project are the rigid and aggressive Russian officials that promote Kremlin's vision and plans in the region and 'para-diplomacy'.

Economic pressure on Chisinau represents a clear form of Russian interference in the internal affairs of another state. Behind Russia's embargoes on Moldova have always been political goals, including those related to the Transnistrian conflict. Although in the last period they are no longer a serious threat to Moldova's economy and political choices, embargoes remain an instrument that is still applied by Kremlin to obtain the maximum possible advantages in its relations with Chisinau.

Moldova's dependency on Russian gas shows its vulnerability as a state and creates greater asymmetry between Chisinau and Moscow at the negotiating table of the Transnistrian conflict resolution. Energy resources is one of the Kremlin's most efficient tools in advancing its interests and acquisition of influence and power.

Other Russian instruments of support for the Tiraspol regime are economic benefits and soft power politics. The economic assistance of Russia consists mainly of financing pensions and the free use of Russian gas. By means of media, culture, religion and the NGO's, Russian propaganda is very efficient in manipulating Transnistrians against Moldova, the EU and the Western civilisation as a whole. Not at the same level, but Russia's soft power influence is active in Moldova too. The principal effect of these methods, both in Transnistria and Moldova is that an important part of population considers that they belong to the Russian culture and oppose European integration. All these instruments are focused on the creation of a favourable climate designed to maintain

the conflict resolution at its current stage and over time to impose a federalisation plan. A federation in which one of the subjects, Tiraspol, is controlled by Moscow and through exercising its veto right could block the political direction of Chisinau towards EU is not a viable solution for Moldova.

The Russian Federation's influence on the resolution process is reflected not only in direct instruments in the form of support to the separatist regime and pressure on Moldova, but also via international actors, negotiation formats, and the peacekeeping mission. The OSCE's powerlessness regarding the exercise of Russia's veto right within the organisation's decisions, the lack of political instruments to incite the withdrawal of the Russian army from the conflict zone, the avoidance from monitoring the manoeuvres of the Russian troops in Transnistria, and the promotion of the principle of equal actors for both conflicting parties demonstrate its passive cooperation with Russia. This situation proves that the OSCE is an unofficial ally of Moscow on this matter and this creates serious problems in the negotiation process of conflict resolution. A duplicitous game is played by Russia in the conflict resolution process consisting of two roles: first, of a saboteur in the Security Zone of the peacekeeping mission and second, of a mediator in the 5+2 negotiation format.

Russia's policies to protect its interests and increase national power are not realised only through inter-state but also state - international institution relations. International organisations, officially engaged in implementing and monitoring international practice based on the principles of international law, cannot be totally independent from the states. Moreover, some of them, because of their financial dependence on some state actors, transform themselves in instruments of the patron state. Therefore, the following conclusions can be drawn: anarchy dominates the international politics and states remain the main actors.

In the condition of international anarchy, Moscow's hard power and soft power politics in Moldova and Transnistria creates an enormous asymmetry between Moscow and Chisinau regarding the independence of a state to create and put into practice its own policies according to its national interest. This imbalance of power also creates conditions for even more frequent interventions of Russia in Moldova's internal affairs.

Russian intervention in Moldova took place in the context of Moscow's intention to protect its area of interest and increase its national power. Russian interventionism in the Transnistrian dispute creates asymmetry between Moscow and Chisinau, and with this Moldova's leverage at the negotiating table of conflict resolution is negatively affected and the results make state reintegration more difficult.

In the case that anarchy and power asymmetry were prerequisites of Russian intervention in Moldova and that Baltic states were also part of the Soviet Union and located in a strategic area, one question comes to mind: why did Moscow not intervene there? In addition to classical realist conditions and reasons of intervention, what are the other justifications behind these actions? A further Realist research on this topic may be required to shed light on these connected questions.



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## APPENDIX 1. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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|  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b><br/> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b><br/> <b>TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KOMİSYON MUAFİYETİ FORMU</b> </div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b><br><b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b><br><b>ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Tarih: 18/09/2019                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Tez Başlığı: Sovyet Sonrası Coğrafyada Arrılıkçılık ve Rus Müdahaleciliği: Transdnyester Örneği</p> <p>Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmam:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,</li> <li>2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmaması gerektirmemektedir.</li> <li>3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.</li> <li>4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, mülakat, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.</li> </ol> <p>Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kurul/Komisyon'dan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">03.10.2019<br/><i>[Signature]</i></p> <p>Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tarih ve İmza</p> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Adı Soyadı:</b> İvan</p> <p><b>Öğrenci No:</b> Radu</p> <p><b>Anabilim Dalı:</b> Uluslararası İlişkiler</p> <p><b>Programı:</b> Uluslararası İlişkiler Tezli Yüksek Lisans</p> <p><b>Statüsü:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yüksek Lisans <input type="checkbox"/> Doktora <input type="checkbox"/> Bütünleşik Doktora</p> </div> |
| <p><b>DANIŞMAN GÖRÜŞÜ VE ONAYI</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>[Signature]</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Doç. Dr. Zeynep Arkan Tuncel</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Unvan, Ad Soyad, İmza)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Detaylı Bilgi: <a href="http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr">http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr</a></p> <p>Telefon: 0-312-2976860      Faks: 0-3122992147      E-posta: <a href="mailto:sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr">sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">  <b>HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY</b><br/> <b>GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES</b> </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

# ETHICS COMMISSION FORM FOR THESIS

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Date: 18/09/2019

Thesis Title: Separatism in Post-Soviet Geography and Russian Interventionism: The Case of Transnistria

My thesis work related to the title above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, interview, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board/Commission for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

03.10.2019

OK

Date and Signature

Name Surname: Ivan

Student No: Radu

Department: International Relations

Program: International Relations MA programme

Status: ☒ MA ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Combined MA/ Ph.D.

## ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Approved

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Arkan

Tuncel

(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

## APPENDIX 2. THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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|  <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; text-align: left;"> <b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b><br/> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b><br/> <b>YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU</b> </div>                                                                                                           |
| <b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b><br><b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b><br><b>ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Tarih: 01/10/2019                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Tez Başlığı: <b>SEPARATISM IN THE POST-SOVIET GEOGRAPHY AND RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONISM: THE CASE OF TRANSNISTRIA</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen ve Danışmanlığında hazırlanan tez çalışmasının a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 136 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 01/10/2019 tarihinde Tuzituz adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezin benzerlik oranı % 10 'dur.                                                              |
| Uygulanan filtrelemeler: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- <input type="checkbox"/> Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç</li> <li>2- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kaynakça hariç</li> <li>3- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alıntılar hariç</li> <li>4- <input type="checkbox"/> Alıntılar dâhil</li> <li>5- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç</li> </ul>      |
| Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmasının herhangi bir intihal içermediğini, aksi takdirde tespit edileceği mabtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim. |
| <b>TEZ DANIŞMANI:</b><br><br>AD/SOYAD: Zeynep Arkan Tuncel<br>ÜNVAN: Doçent Doktor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| İMZA:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 03.10.2019<br>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>TEZİ HAZIRLAYAN ÖĞRENCİ BİLGİLERİ:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Adı Soyadı: İvan RADII                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Öğrenci No: N11229035                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Anabilim Dalı: Uluslararası İlişkiler                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Programı: Uluslararası İlişkiler Tezi Yüksek Lisans Programı                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



