NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

EVOLUTION OF TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: PROSPECTS FOR ITS SOLUTION

by

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June 2004

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	**2. REPORT DATE** June 2004	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE: Evolution of Transdniestrian Conflict in the Republic of Moldova: Prospects for its Solution		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**	
6. AUTHOR(S) Vitalie Nicon Marinuta			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**	
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14. SUBJECT TERMS Bessarabia, Moldova, Moldavia, Transdniestria, Dniester, Soviet Union, Russia, USA, Ukraine, Romania, OSCE, EU, NATO, Federalism, Partition, Secession, Confederalism, Primordialism, Instrumentalism, Ethnic conflict, Conflict-Regulation.		**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 143	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UL

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EVOLUTION OF TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: PROSPECTS FOR ITS SOLUTION

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
AND CIVIL- MILITARY RELATIONS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the causes and evolution of the conflict in the Republic of Moldova and capabilities of three conflict-regulating mechanisms to facilitate the final political solution of this conflict. The leading cause of the conflict is the competition among post-Soviet politicians, fighting over the division of the Soviet state and redistribution of politico-economic benefits. In their fight for power, the elites mobilized instrumental and primordial grievances of the population, thus giving an ethnic aspect to the confrontation. As an important intervening variable for the conflict escalation into a military confrontation is Russian interest in maintaining politico-economic and military domination over the region. Over time, all ethnic causes had been eliminated, thus creating the necessary conditions for the final political settlement of the conflict. However, the status quo, created around this conflict, suits the politico-economic interests of the Transdniestrian elites, and reinforced by the Russian interest in keeping the region under its influence, is encouraging them to promote a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. In such circumstances, the final solution depends on the attitudes of the external players. However, the international players are dispersed over the methods of resolving this conflict, thus reinforcing the deadlock situation in the process of negotiation. This thesis argues that under the current circumstances, none of the conflict regulating mechanism, partition, confederation and federation will solve that particular conflict. However, the federalism has the most potential to serve as a tool for unification and conflict-resolution, but only if the international community and internal players will promote democratic values, rule of law and free marked orientation in the region; will reduce the benefits of the status quo situation and, finally, will offer substantial politico-economic and cultural autonomy combined with fair representation at the central level to the Transdniestrian region.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Nicon and Maria Marinuta,
who educated me in the spirit of devotion to the eternity of truth.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I.   INTRODUCTION

In 1990, American President George Herbert Bush declared in classical Wilsonian terms that

> a new world order… can emerge: a new era- freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. A world, were the rule of the law supplants the rule of the jungle. …A world where the strong respects the rights of the weak.[1]

At the time, considerable evidence existed, suggesting that President's Bush predictions had been correct: the end of the Cold War started a new era of international relations and was promising the development of a more secure environment. The new relations between the West and the East opened a new spectrum of cooperation and added more hope for the implementation of the collective security agreements. Some assumed that the victory of liberal beliefs would progress into "the end of history."[2]

As a result of the collapse of communism, many new independent states have been created. Most of them embraced democratic values of the West. However, the world did not become "more secure in the quest for peace" and history did not end. In addition to the spread of democratic values, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet block also brought a rise of nationalism, especially in the post–Communist countries. These nationalistic movements often gave rise to ethnic and internal disputes, thus, changing the character of violence and conflicts from mainly interstate to intrastate. For example, in 1998, only two of the major armed conflicts conducted around the world had been interstate in character.[3]

The conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova is one of the conflicts that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which has

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[1] President George Herbert Walker Bush, "Toward a New World Order" A transcript of former President George Herbert Walker Bush's address to a joint session of Congress and the nation on September 11, 1990," available at http://www.sweetliberty.org/issues/war/bushsr.htm, last accessed 03/20/04.

[2] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," The National Interest 16, (Summer 1989), 3-18.

[3] Mohammed Ayoob, "State Making, State Breaking and State Failure," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, (U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001) 127.

transformed over time and is still ongoing after more than a decade of negotiations. This thesis analyses the evolution of the Transdniestrian conflict in the last decade. The author argues that the conflict in the Transdniestrian region in the Republic of Moldova in the beginning possessed all the characteristics of an ethnic conflict, but was actually caused by the elites struggle over the future economic control of the new formed country, reinforced by the immediate cause, which is Russian inspiration to maintain political, economic and military dominance over the regions. By 1994, all the ethnic causes of this conflict had been eliminated. However, the status quo situation, created around this conflict, after the introduction of the peacekeeping forces in July 1992, benefits the Transdniestrian elites, thus encouraging them to take a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. This situation is reinforced by the disagreement of international mediators and players involved in the conflict concerning the methods of conflict-resolution. Furthermore, given the current politico-economic and social situation in the region as well as taking into consideration the positions of the players in the process of negotiation, this thesis analyses the capability of three conflict-regulating methods to solve the Transdniestrian dispute: secession, confederalism and federalism. The author argues that in the current situation, none of these mechanisms will solve the conflict in the long run without undermining Moldova's sovereignty and its democratic course of development and having a chance to escalate the conflict but not solve it. However, federal arrangements, and if necessary, conditions would be created that might be the best possible solution.

Secession, the goal of the Tiraspol administration, might be a solution that will facilitate Moldova's orientation toward the West and further democratization. However, as numerous authors indicate, secession often creates as many problems as resolving them and is firmly opposed by the international community. The author argues that the partition of Moldova would not resolve the conflict, but might escalate ethnic grievances between the nationalities within both region's parts, that the conflict might change its character from intrastate to interstate, and that it will have encouraging an effect on other secessionist movements, thus escalating the conflict. In addition, the author argues that the confederal solution is only a pretext for the Transdniestrian administration to become

recognized by the international community, and after that, to compromise the contract and secede, which will bring the same consequences as previously discussed. The third option, federalism, is currently promoted by the international community and argued by both parties in the conflict and seems to be the optimal solution to this problem. The author argues that in the current situation, the federalization of Moldova will not diminish the conflict, but will create a situation of political stagnation, democratic drawback, and further dependency from Russia, factors that might provoke further escalation of the conflict. Thus, internal actors as well as the international community first have to direct their efforts toward the creation of the necessary conditions for federal agreements to last, and after that, only to pursue a policy of federalism. Otherwise, Moldovan federalism is doomed to failure from the very beginning.

Figure 1.   The Republic of Moldova[4]

4 CIA – The World Fact book, available at http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/md.html, last accessed 05/03/2004.

A. THE NOTION OF CONFLICT AND ITS REGULATING MECHANISMS

The literature that focuses solely on the **nature** of ethnic identity cannot explain when and why identities become conflictual. Therefore, it is necessary to look to other theories to explain when and why identities will come into conflict. Thus, in order to explain ethnic and internal conflicts of the last decade, the actors and analysts turned to the primordial argument of "ancient hatreds" between hostile cultures.[5] Primordialists believe that ethnic identities have deep historical roots and almost never change over time. For example, John Stack affirms:

> For primordialists, a sense of peoplehood forms the essence of ethnic identity. Ethnicity becomes an expression of basic group identity, basic in that fundamental group attributes are passed down from one generation to the next.[6]

Thus, in the primordialists' view, the resurgence of nationalism and ethnic claims in the late 20th century is mainly because of the primal human need to belong. Horowitz defines ethnic conflict as "a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals."[7] "Without feelings of antipathy," Horowitz emphasizes, "there can be no ethnic conflict."[8] United States President George Bush, for example, believed that war in Bosnia was a result of "age-old animosities," while in 1993, President Clinton mentioned that "a generation raised in the shadow of the cold war assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom but threaten still by ancient hatreds."[9]

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[5] For more info about primordial explanation of the ethnic conflicts see Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict,* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985), Walker, Connor, "Terminological Chaos: A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group…," in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) pp. 91-115; Clifford, Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution" in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz, (New York: The Free Press, 1963) pp. 106– 157.

[6] John F. Stack, Jr., "Ethnic Mobilization in World Politics: The Primordial Perspective," in *The Primordial Challenge: Ethnicity in the Modern World*, ed. John F. Stack, Jr., (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 1-11.

[7] Donald L Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict,* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985), 95.

[8] Donald L. Horowitz, Ibid.,182.

[9] George Bush, quoted in Jack Snyder, "Nationalism and the Crisis of the Post Soviet State," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 79-101 at 79; Bill Clinton, "Bill Clinton's inauguration speech" available at http://www.bluemud.org/article/472, last accessed 04/02/04.

Fortunately, most of the events of the last decade are proving that the argument of ancient cultural hatreds is wrong. Instead, many scholars argue that ethnic conflicts are not the result of ancient hatreds, but are due to the conscious actions of the elites and groups to mobilize ethnic values in order to obtain access to political, economic and social resources.[10]   Summarizing the instrumental explanation of ethnicity, Paul Brass affirms:

> Ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and in postindustrial societies undergoing dramatic social change. This process invariably involves competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits and social status between competing elite, class, and leadership groups both within and among different ethnic categories.[11]

Indeed, instrumentalists believe that political elites are the most important driving force in shaping ethnic identities with the goal of benefiting their political and economic self-interest. Thus, in order to achieve their goal, political elites can turn to ethnical questions and trigger ethnic conflicts.

Neither primordialists, nor instrumentalists can fully explain all spectrums of internal and ethnic conflicts of the post Cold War period. They cannot explain why, in almost similar situations, violent conflicts erupted in some places but not in others. James Rule states: "We know a lot of things that are true about civil violence, but we do not know when they are going to be true."[12] Thus, besides these two main approaches, both of which stress factors internal to the groups concerned, there must be additional factors that are stimulating the violent outbreak of the ethnic or internal conflict.

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[10] In opposition to the primordial school of thoughts is instrumental and constructivist approach. For more info see Abner, Cohen, "Ethnicity and Politics," excerpt from *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) 198-201; Paul, Brass, "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity Formation," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (London: Sage Publications, 1991) 18-26; Nathan, Glazer, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. "Introduction," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 3-26; Benedict, Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.(New York: Verso, 1983) 1-36; James, Fearon, and David Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization* 54 (4) (Autumn 2000), 845-877;

[11] Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publication, 1991), 25.

[12] James B. Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 265

Scholars of ethnic and internal conflicts have identified four main sets of factors that can facilitate the spark of violence more in some regions than others: structural factors, political factors, economic/social factors, and cultural perceptual factors. (See Table 1). [13]

However, some scholars affirm that the presence of only one of these factors cannot create the necessary conditions for the spark of an ethnic war. They argue that an ethnic war might occur only if all of the factors are present. For example, Stuart J. Kaufman mentions that in order to have a civil war, there should be hostile masses, belligerent leaders and inter-ethnic security dilemmas. Furthermore, these factors should be reinforced by the presence of the necessary preconditions or proximate causes of ethnically defined grievances, negative ethnic stereotypes, and disputes over emotional symbols, mutual fears of extinction, and a de facto situation of anarchy. In addition, there should be political space and freedom for the political elites to engage in the process of "outbidding" as well as military means to enable both sides to fight.[14]

Table 1.   Underlying Causes of Ethnic and Internal Conflicts (From: Michael Brown)[15]

Structural Factors	Economic /Social Factors
Weak states	Economic problems
Intrastate security concerns	Discriminatory economic systems
Ethnic geography	Economic development and modernization
Political Factors	**Cultural/Perceptual Factors**
Discriminatory political institutions	Patterns of cultural discrimination
Exclusionary national ideologies	Problematic group histories
Intergroup politics	
Elites politics	

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[13] For detailed review of the literature on those factors see Michael E. Brown, op. cit., 214-218.

[14] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Interethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War,"

[15] Michael E. Brown, "Ethnic and Internal Conflicts: Causes and Implications," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, (U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001), 214.

In many situations, some of these proximate causes might be a cause for escalating another cause. Thus, no ethnic and internal conflicts develop following the same path.[16] Therefore, as ethnic and internal conflicts might be caused by multiple factors and they follow different development paths, there cannot be only one recipe for the process of conflict-resolution. In describing the conflict-resolution processes, scholars and analysts are mostly divided into two groups: partition theorists and theorists that promote the idea of resolving the conflicts through the methods of inclusion, not exclusion.

Some proponents of the partition theory argue that the separation of conflicting ethnicities might be the only possible long-term solution to civil wars. They acknowledge that an ethnic war cannot end without territorial partition and possible movements of the population.[17] As Donald L. Horowitz mentions,

> If the short run is so problematical, if the constraints on policy innovation are many, if even grand statements need patchwork readjustment, perhaps it is a mistake to seek accommodation among the antagonists. If it is impossible for groups to live together in a heterogeneous state, perhaps it is better for them to live apart in more than one homogeneous state, even if this necessitates population transfers. Separating the antagonists—partition—is an option increasingly recommended for consideration where groups are territorially concentrated.[18]

However, in current international affairs, partition is accepted by the international community only in a very few cases.

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[16] See Michael E. Brown, "Ethnic and Internal Conflicts: Causes and Implications," Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Interethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," International Security 21 (2) (Autumn 1996), 108-138.

[17] For more info see Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security* 20 (Spring 1996); idem, "When All Else Fails," *International Security* 23 (Fall 1998); John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera, "When Peace Means War," *New Republic* (December 1995). Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 588; Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 44–47; Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 121; and Samuel P. Huntington, "Civil Violence and the Process of Development," *Adelphi Paper* no. 83 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971).

[18] Donald L., Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 588.

Other scholars have counter-argued for the strategy of inclusion rather than exclusion. They see major possibilities in resolving ethnic and civil conflicts by promoting liberal values and democratic principles of government. These authors stress that partition does not solve the conflict. It only creates the premises for interstate conflict instead of intrastate, creates undemocratic successor states, and generates tremendous human suffering. In the era of democratic development, more and more attention has been focused on power sharing and dividing territories, while maintaining overall national integrity. As the American political scientist Samuel Huntington mentioned "…the twentieth century bias against political divorce, that is, secession, is just about as strong as the nineteenth century bias against marital divorce."[19] Nicolas Sambanis, using multiple sets of data, conducted a study aimed at verifying the possible impact of partition on war's recurrence, low-grade ethnic violence, and on political institutions of the new states. According to his data, almost all the arguments of the partition theory fail the test. The most significant finding of Sambanis is that, on average, partition does not significantly reduce the probability of a new spark of violence.[20]

In contrast, autonomy and federalism are viewed as some of the major tools of resolving ethnic and internal conflicts. Among the methods of dividing territories, federalism is the most applicable because of its "conflict-regulating effects." In fact, many scholars including Smith, Duchacek, Riker, Lijphart, Przeworski, and Sisk support the idea that federalism, as a method of ethno-territorial conflict settlement, indeed is the best method for achieving long-term successful results. In federal arrangements, the central government has specific areas of authority, the units have some degree of autonomy and both levels of government have limited coordinated powers.

As Horowitz mentions, federalism has four major positive functions. First, combined with the electoral system, it can encourage party proliferation, which also might facilitate coalition building. Second, the politics at the local level can serve as a training ground for politics at the higher level. Third, federalism disperses conflict at the

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[19] Samuel P., Huntington, "Foreword," in *Conflict Resolution in Divided Societies*, 1972; Eric Nordlinger. Occasional Papers in *International Affaires* No. 29, Harvard University, sited in Timothy D., Sisk, *Power sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic conflicts*, (USIP Press, Washington, 1996), P.1.

[20] Nicholas, Sambanis, "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic War," *World Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 4. (Jul., 2000), pp. 437-483.

center by resolving some of the issues at the regional level. Fourth, it creates difficulties for parties to achieve hegemony at the central level, and it would be difficult for any to challenge all constituent regions. Thus, devolving power enhances autonomy within one national unit; multiplies the number of power positions and thus lessens the stakes of controlling power at the center, which in turn, lessens the zero-sum nature of unitary systems. The most important fact is that in federal arrangements, neither the center nor the regions can amend the arrangement without mutual consent.[21] This fact creates possibilities for peaceful management of the ethnic disputes in the short, as well as, in the long run.

However, federalism is not an "innocent child." It also has many pitfalls that can create problems, but not solve them. Federalism creates duplication of functions, increases expenses on building state capitals, and might create conditions for civil servants to serve only in their home regions.[22] For the country that has poor economic development, these conditions are significant. In addition, the decision–making process in the federal states is slower and more complicated. Furthermore, if the politico-ideological commitment of the population and elites is not directed toward living together, but is inspired by other goals, or outside parties impose the federal solution, this federation will not last long, and in the end, might result in the escalation of conflict. Thus, for federal arrangements to work, commitment and patience are strictly necessary conditions.

Finally, as Horowitz mentions, "even in the most severely divided society, ties of blood do not lead ineluctably to rivers of blood," even though "events of the past decades have by now impressed upon even the more casual observers of world politics that ethno-nationalism constitutes a major and growing threat to the political stability of most states."[23] Scholars in many ways explain the origins of these threats and their possible solutions. Yet, no prescribed set of rules exist that can be applied to all conflicts.

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[21] Wheare, Sir Kenneth. *Modern Constitutions.* (Oxford University Press, 1964), xviii.

[22] Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 622.

[23] Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 684; and Walker. Connor, "Terminological Chaos: A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group…," in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 91.

However, as Timothy Sisk mentions, "successful conflict-regulating practices involve establishing a stable set of formal and informal rules and institutions that encourage political leaders and groups in conflict to behave moderately toward one another."[24]

In summary, ethnic identities are instrumental and are shaped by the political elites with the goal of benefiting their political and economic self-interest. Thus, in order to achieve their goal, political elites can turn to ethnic questions and trigger ethnic conflicts. However, ethnic and internal conflicts might be caused by multiple factors and they follow different development paths. Thus, there cannot be only one recipe for the process of conflict-resolution. In describing conflict-resolution processes, scholars and analysts are mostly divided into two groups: partition theorists and theorists that promote the idea of resolving the conflicts through the methods of inclusion, not exclusion. Thus, all the above-mentioned conflict-regulating mechanisms have their pros and cons. However, it seems that federalism is the most reliable mechanism, which can create the necessary conditions for interethnic cooperation, but not division. Secession does not guarantee that the conflict would not erupt again in the new formed state. Accordingly, the confederal solution is based on a contract between two parts, which can be easily reversed and serve the purpose of legalizing the secessionist movement. In that context, federalism, despite its imperfection, by promoting unity in division, might facilitate intergroup cooperation as well as maintain autonomy of each group.

B.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

What would be the best long term political solution for the conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova? To respond to this question, an analysis must include a combination of causes that provoked the conflict, the current status and interests of the parties involved in conflict regulation, and conflict regulating tools that are available from international practice. The author argues that the leading cause of the conflict is the competition among post-Soviet politicians fighting over the division of the Soviet state and redistribution of political and economic benefits. However, in their fight for power, the elites mobilized instrumental and primordial grievances of the population, thus giving an ethnic aspect to the confrontation.

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[24] Timothy Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts,* (U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C. 1996), 48.

Threatened by the nationalistic movements in Moldova and supported by the Russian nationalists and militaries, Transdniestrian elites manipulated the populations in the region toward continuous affiliation with the Soviet Union and resistance to the new changes, introduced by the new emerging elites. The new emerging indigenous elites at the same time have seen the opportunity to escape from the control of the center and direct manage the country in the different way and have seen the demands of the Transdniestrian traditional authorities for further affiliation with the Soviet Union as an attempt to maintain the old regime and old ruling elites. That fact created a security dilemma, which in the end, escalated to the point of a military confrontation. An important intervening variable for the escalation of conflict into a military confrontation is Russian interest in maintaining political, economic and military domination over the region. Their direct political, economic and military support of the Tiraspol administration encouraged the secessionist elites to take aggressive actions against the legal Moldovan government and to establish authoritarian control over the Transdniestrian region.

In addition, this thesis argues that over time all ethnic causes had been eliminated, thus creating the necessary conditions for a final political settlement of conflict. As Barbara F. Walter mentions,

> Resolving a civil war is never simply a matter of reaching a bargain and then instituting a ceasefire. To be successful, a civil war peace settlement must consolidate the previously warring factions into a single state, build a new government capable of accommodating their interests, and create a new national nonpartisan military force.[25]

However, in the case of the Moldovan conflict, the status quo created around this conflict permitted the establishment of two de facto independent states: the Republic of Moldova and the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic. This status quo situation perfectly suits the economic and political interests of the Transdniestrian elites, thus encouraging them to promote a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. Russian interests in Moldova did not decrease and, speaking in realists'

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[25] Barbara F. Walter, "Designing Transitions from Civil War," ed. Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (NY, Columbia University Press, 1999) 38-69, 43.

terms, with the extension of NATO to include Romania in April 2004, the importance of military, political and economic influence over that region became a strategic goal of the Russian Federation (RF), whose position is strictly opposed by Western powers and international organizations. Thus, a solution to this conflict, which would accommodate the major demand of all parties, is impossible in the current situation.

This thesis also analyzes the possibility of three major conflict regulating tools, secession, federalism and confederalism, to extinguish the Transdniestrian conflict, and as a result, to increase security in the region. Currently, the unrecognized Transdniestrian government promotes the option of confederation or total secession, while the international community as well as the government of the Republic of Moldova is opting for a federal solution. However, this thesis argues that none of these mechanisms in current situation would facilitate conflict resolution at the same time maintaining Moldova's sovereignty and democratic course of development. The author argues that recognition and the secession of Transdniestria would not resolve the conflict in the region. One set of facts supporting this argument is the demographics of Transdniestria. A confederal solution might have the same outcome as secession in the end.

A federal solution might facilitate the final settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict. Federalism is the form of government most extensively accepted as a conflict-regulating tool. However, taking into consideration the deferent ideological development of the region, the economical interests of the Transdniestrian elites, the authoritarian inclination of both the Moldovan and Transdniestrian governments, and the geo-strategic interests of the Russian federation, under current conditions, a federal system of government would not be effective and would create the necessary conditions for a conflict between pro-Western democratic forces and left-wing totalitarian forces. Thus, instead of providing a solution to the conflict, it escalates it. However, in the future, this model might be the solution if the necessary conditions would be created. Thus, in order to eliminate the obstacles for final integration, the international community and internal actors have to promote democratic values in the region, the rule of law and free marked orientation reduce the benefits of the status quo situation and, finally offer substantial politico-economic and cultural autonomy combined with fair representation at the central

level to the Transdniestrian region. When aforementioned conditions are in place, the implementation of a federal solution will have a chance to act as a mechanism of unification and conflict-regulation, but not as a tool of division and conflict escalation.

Sources for this thesis include interviews with government officials and leaders of the major political parties from Moldova, members of the international and non-governmental organizations, academics and journalists conducted in Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova in January 2004; publications and documents related to current and historical development of the Republic of Moldova; and the scholarly literature on ethnicity, ethnic and internal conflicts and conflict resolution.

C. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter II discusses the historical background of the Republic of Moldova and the causes of the Transdniestrian conflict, applying an instrumental approach to the development of the conflict. The chapter mainly focuses on the causes that facilitated the spark of the conflict.

This chapter will conclude that the Transdniestrian conflict has many characteristics of an ethnic conflict. However, the main cause is the struggle between the elites, reinforced by Russian interest in dominating the region, a fact that suggests that Moscow carefully planned and managed this conflict.

Chapter III analyses the process of post conflict resolution, stressing the positions and development of internal actors after the achievement of the cease-fire agreement: the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) and the Republic of Moldova (RM). In order to demonstrate the thesis argument, the first part of the chapter discusses the cease-fire agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Russian Federation as well as the role of the peace-keeping forces in the post conflict period. The second part evaluates the path of development of Moldovan and Transdniestrian statehood. The chapter concludes by suggesting that in the current situation, the political solution to this conflict cannot be achieved only through the efforts of the internal players, thus, international involvement in that process in critical.

Chapter IV analyses the interests and positions of the United States, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Romania, the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the European Union. It argues that the permanent deadlock in the process of the negotiations of the Transdniestrian conflict is not only the result of disagreements between the internal actors, but is also caused by the attitudes and interests of the external players. This chapter concludes that the current state of affairs

between the external players does not contribute to the amelioration of the conflict-regulating climate, but diminishes even more conflict regulating functions of the available options.

In this context, Chapter V analyzes the possibility of the three main conflict-regulating mechanisms, secession, federalism and confederalism, to provide a long term solution to the Transdniestrian conflict. This chapter concludes that under current conditions, none of the aforementioned conflict-regulating mechanisms will facilitate the final settlement of the dispute. However, in the future, federalism might be the solution, if the necessary conditions could be created. Thus, in order to create a favorable environment for a federal agreement, which will unite, but not devolve, the international community and internal actors must promote democratic values in the region, the rule of law and free marked orientation, reduce the benefits of the status quo situation and, finally offer the Transdniestrian region substantial politico-economic and cultural autonomy combined with fair representation at the central level. With the aforementioned conditions in place, federalization of the Republic of Moldova will have chance to act as a mechanism of unification and conflict-regulation, but not as a tool of division and conflict escalation.

The concluding chapter summarizes the causes of the Transdniestrian conflict, its evolution and why none of the conflict regulating mechanisms of partition, confederalism and federalism would not be efficient in establishing a long term political solution to the conflict, under current conditions but would escalate it.

II. FROM MOLDAVIA TO MOLDOVA: ORIGINS AND NATURE OF THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT

> Ethnic consciousness is realized when groups feel either threatened with a loss of previously acquired privilege or conversely feel that is an opportune moment to overcome long-lasting denial of privilege… Furthermore, ethnic consciousness, being a political phenomenon, is a form of conflict. The conflict needs not be violent to be sure, though of course it often is.[26]

> Immanuel Wallerstein

The conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova is often described as those in Abkhazia, South Osetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Empirical wisdom concerning these conflicts states they were created by the reemergence of the nationalistic movements, released by the collapse of totalitarian Soviet rule. However, the nature of the Transdniestrian conflict is more complex and difficult to explain.

Opinions about the causes of the Transdniestrian conflict differ. The Transdniestrian dispute is often presented as a confrontation of the Russian speaking population against the discriminatory policies of the Moldovan government.[27] The ethnic aspect of this conflict is mainly implied because of the confrontation between Russian speaking populations from the East bank of the Dniester River with the Moldovan population from the other bank. However, it has to be mentioned that 70 percent of the Russian speaking population lives on the West bank of the Dniester River and peacefully coexists with the Moldovan majority. Officials from both Moldova and Transdniestria, and most scholars affirm that the root of the conflict was not primarily ethnic.[28] For example, Former Moldovan President Mircea Snegur maintains that the conflict was not

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[26] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Two Modes of Ethnic Consciousness: Soviet Central Asia in Transition," The *Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Edward Allworth (New York: Praeger, 1973), 168-69.

[27] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Interethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," International Security, Vol. 21, No. 2, (Autumn, 1996), 108-138;

[28] Most of the interviewed elites from Moldova expressed that view. Interviews conducted personally in Chisinau, capital city of the RM, 12 -17 January 2004.

an ethnic conflict, but was triggered by the "rebel elites" of the Transdniestrian region, supported by the Russian Federation.[29] Igor Smirnov, the president of the Transdniestrian unrecognized administration mentions that the conflict was a Moldovan aggression.[30]

This chapter argues that the competition among traditional and new emerged neo-traditional Moldovan elites is at the center of this conflict , who are fighting over the distribution of power after the dissolution of the Soviet Union as well as Russian interest in preserving Moldova under its political, economic and military influence. However, in their struggle, the elites mobilized and manipulated instrumental and primordial grievances of the population, thus giving an ethnic aspect to the confrontation.

Accordingly, in order to demonstrate the origins and nature of the Transdniestrian conflict, the first part of the chapter will analyze the historical development of Bessarabia since its first annexation by Russia in 1812 and up to 1992, when the military conflict erupted, and the role of the Transdniestrian Region in the process of Moldovan state building during Soviet times. This section will argue that after WWII, the Bessarabian population and its elites developed an affiliation with the Moldovan identity while the majority of the population and the elites from the Transdniestrian region identified themselves more with the Soviet identity. The elites in their struggle for control of the region used this factor after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The second part of the chapter analyses four underling factors of the conflict: structural, political, economic and cultural factors and their role in triggering the conflict, and argues that the conflict did have some ethnic aspects. However, it was mainly caused by the elites struggle over the future economic control of the newly formed country, reinforced by the proximate cause, which is Russian inspiration to maintain political, economic and military dominance over the region.

A.   THE FATE OF MOLDOVA: CHARACTERISTICS OF MOLDOVAN IDENTITY

Over the last two centuries, Turks, Russians, Soviets and Romanians had permanent divergences over the control of the region between the Dnester and Prut Rivers, which was called Bessarabia. That argument between the bigger powers

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[29] Author's interview with former Moldova President Mircea Snegur, in January 2004, Chisinau.

[30] Igor Smirnov, cited in Valeriu Mija, "A Solution to Moldova's Transdniestrian Conflict: Regional Complex Interdependence," Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2003, 14.

significantly influenced the demographics and development of the identity of the people of current Moldova. The population of Bessarabia, due to historical developments, was always dispersed and did not have a sense of unity of identity. However, the greatest impact, which in the end was manipulated by the elites, was the creation of two different identities in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic during Soviet times. The Transdniestrian population was more inclined toward Soviet internationalism, while the rest of Moldova identified itself with the Republic of Moldova, not the Soviet Union or Romania, a factor very well manipulated by the elites in order to secure their political and economic positions after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

1. From Principality to Province: Russian Rule in Bessarabia (1812-1918)

As a result of Russian rule over the Bessarabian territories in the 19th century, this region did not participate in the process of Romanian state and nation building, which came into being after the unification of Moldova, part of which was historically and culturally Bessarabia and Walachia, but were transformed into a periphery of the Russian empire and left underdeveloped. As a result, by the beginning of the 20th century, the titular population of Bessarabia was still viewing itself as Moldovan, while most of the minorities and inhabitants in the cities developed strong inclinations toward Russia and Russian culture.

Russia formally annexed the eastern reaches of the Moldovan Principality, the Bessarabia, region between the Prut and Dnester Rivers under the treaty of Bucharest, which was signed in 1812 between Tsar Alexander I and Sultan Mahmud II. The Russians viewed this annexation as liberating the Bessarabian Christians from Ottoman repression, and at the same time, as a reconquest of the historical Slav lands, but not the liberation of the Moldovan nation.[31] For a short period after its annexation to Russia in 1812, Bessarabia had some autonomy in governance and the Moldovan language was

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[31] Most historians believe the annexation was unlawful. The Romanian principalities of Walachia and Moldova were two sovereign states t under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, to whom they paid tribute in exchange for protection. Thus, the Turks had no right to give Bessarabia away, since it was not its territory. For more information see Nicholas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bucovina: The Soviet-Romanian Territorial Dispute*, (East European Monographs, Boulder, Columbia University Press, NY, 1982), 14; Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 19. N. V. Lashcov, Stoletie prissoedinenia Bessarabii k Rosii, 1812-1912 (Chisinau: Tipografia Bessarabskago Gubernscago Pravleniia, 1912), cited in Charles King, op. cit., 27.

used together with Russian as official languages for local administration. However, after 1828, Bessarabia lost its autonomy, and in 1854, official bilingualism was abolished. The Russian language became the only official language of the region and the Bessarabian church was subordinated to the Moscow patriarchy. In 1871, the Russian Empire changed Bessarabian status from an imperial region to a Russian province in order to make it a part of the Russian heartland itself. Thus, in that period, the political and cultural life of the Bessarabian Region was oriented toward Russification and integration into Russian imperial structures.

Bessarabia became the periphery of the Russian empire, and consequently was a place out of the reach of Russian officials. Thus, this region was left underdeveloped economically, culturally, and educationally. Counter-tsarist elements were also deported there.[32] The land remained undeveloped and Bessarabia had the highest mortality rate in Europe, which was 50 percent higher than the Russian average. In addition, it was famous for having the most corrupt governors in the Russian empire. Taking in consideration all these factors, the Russian management of Bessarabia was a disaster and did not facilitate the development of a common identity in the region.[33]

The demographic and cultural development of Bessarabia was also controversial. By the end of the 19th century, Bessarabian Romanians formed approximately 47.6 percent of the total Bessarabian population. However, most were rural and illiterate.[34] The population in the rural part of the country spoke Moldovan while Russian policies ensured that the Bessarabian towns would use Russian. As Irina Livezeanu mentions, "Pre-1918 Chisinau was a Russian cultural island between a sea of Moldovan peasants."[35] The demography of Chisinau and other towns also illustrates the impact of Russian domination over the region. By 1918, Jews and Russians dominated most of the Bessarabian towns. Over 50,000 Jews were living in Chisinau in 1897, what constituted

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[32] The famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin was one of the people sent to Bessarabia as a reprimand for his activities.

[33] Nicholas Dima, op. cit., 16.

[34] In the 19th century in Bessarabia, 84.4 percent of the rural population and 67.2 of the urban population was illiterate, which made the region a perfect place for the exile of the Russian revolutionists. For more information, see Irina Livezeanu, "Urbanization in a Low Key and Linguistic Problems in Soviet Moldavia. Part 1", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 33, no. 3, 330.

[35] Irina Livezeanu, op. cit., 330.

nearly half the total population. In addition, Russian imperial policies created a Russian-speaking elite to govern its frontier province and directed the efforts to maintain their orientation toward Russia rather than Romania, while leaving the rural population underdeveloped,[36] demonstrating that Russian policies were not interested in the development of the titular Bessarabian population and were promoting the policies of Russian affiliation of those people. This also contributed to the development of many identities in that region..

The Principalities of Walachia and Moldova, which historically included also Bessarabia, in the second part of the 19th century created the United Principalities. These Principalities later become Romanian Kingdom. In the process of state building, Wallachians and Moldovans were assimilated into a common Romanian identity and their language became the Romanian language based on the lateen alphabet, in contrast with Cyrillic, used before in Moldova, and was still used by the Bessarabian Romanians. Political elites in the new principalities started a campaign for integration of all Romanian-speaking territories, including Bessarabia, into one nation-state. After Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and its transformation into a kingdom in 1881, the dispute over the origins and destiny of all Bessarabia became even more intensive. However, because of the Russian annexation of Bessarabia, Moldovans (Bessarabian Romanians) from that region could not participate in the development of a Romanian state and Romanian identity, but had a fraternal attitude toward them.[37]

In summary, by the beginning of the 20th century, despite long Russian domination over the region, the Bessarabian population did not have a sense of unity. The titular nationality of the region, predominantly rural, maintained their historic affiliation with the Moldovan Principality, which over time, in the rest of the Moldovan Principality, evolved into a Romanian one. At the same time, the titular population of Bessarabia was living in isolation from Russian culture. General A. N. Kuropatkin, former Russian Minister of War, in 1910 concluded, "Romanian population of Bessarabia still lived in isolation and aloof from Russians and in the future, be it by peaceful means

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[36] Charles King, op. cit., 50.

[37] Charles King, op. cit., 23.

or following another war, the unification of the Romanian people would be inevitable."[38] In contrast, all other minorities were more directed toward Russian culture and language. Thus, after the collapse of the Russian empire, and Bessarabian integration in Romania, these factors played a significant role in the process of the creation of Romanian identity in the region.

2. The Bessarabians in Greater Romania

In 1917, the Russian Bolshevik revolution created opportunities for Bessarabia to forsake Russia and finally unite with the "mother-land" Romania. Taking into consideration the turmoil in Russia, the Romanian government firmly decided to retake territories unjustly annexed by the Russians in 1812 and 1878 as well as assimilate the Bessarabian Moldovans into the Romanian nation. However, by WWII, the identity of the Bessarabian population did not evolve into a Romanian identity, despite Romanian policies of Romanization, but became even more dispersed.

In late December 1917 and early January1918, the leaders of the *Sfatul Tarii*, the Moldovan Parliament at the time, asked the Romanian Government for military assistance.[39] By January 26, Romanian troops were stationed in Chisinau. Following the events in Russia, Moldavian parliamentarians realized that Russia was taking a non-democratic path of development, and therefore, proclaimed Moldavian independence on February 5, 1918. Some members of the *Sfatul Tarii* proposed unification with Romania.

With the presence of Romanian troops in the capital city of Moldavia, it was much easier for the proponents of the unification with Romania to win. However, support for the union was mixed. On March 27, 1918, the *Sfatul Ţării* declared conditional union with the Romanian Kingdom. The main concern of the Bessarabian peasants and minorities at this point was the possibility that the Romanians would stop land reforms started by the Moldavian government. Therefore, a list with fourteen conditions was attached to the declaration of unification. Among them, two of the most important conditions were the continuation of land reforms under the authority of the *Sfatul Ţării* and provincial autonomy for Bessarabia after the unification. However, on November 27, 1918, motivated by the Romanian heritage of Moldovans and the inspiration of being

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[38] Nicolas Dima, op. cit., 16.

[39] Wim P. van Meurs, op. cit., 62.

incorporated into the wider Romanian family, the deputies "renounced the previous conditions, declared union with Romania, and voted to dissolve the assembly, thus placing a definitive end to Bessarabia's brief tenure as an independent republic."[40]

During the next two decades after unification, the Romanian government made many efforts to integrate the former Russian province into the new kingdom. As one cultural activist reported in the 1920's, "That Bessarabia has remained culturally backward is our greatest advantage. …We are working in an environment in which we have to create everything but destroy very little."[41] Many social and construction projects were conducted in the region by the ministries and the army. In the 1930's, new schools, roads, bridges, airports, telephone lines and radio stations were built in Bessarabia. As a result of these efforts, the region had significantly improved between WWI and WWII. However, compared with other regions of the Romanian kingdom, Bessarabia was still culturally and economically backward. Only 13 percent of the entire population lived in the cities, while the percentage of urban Moldovans was even smaller, approximately seven percent.

As a result, the literacy rate in Bessarabia rose to nearly 30 percent, and by the end of 1930's, less than one percent of Moldovans did not consider Romanian their native language.[42] Thus, taking into consideration their percentage of the total Moldovan population, and the total percentage of the population leaving in urban areas, or 13 percent, the conclusion reached is that the process of the creation of a Romanian identity in the Bessarabian territory was slowly returning positive results.

However, the task of incorporating Bessarabia into Greater Romania proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Despite their Romanian origins, the Bessarabian population missed the most important moments of the development of the Romanian identity: the rebellion against the Ottomans in 1821, the standardization and latinization of the Romanian language and alphabet in the 1840's and 1850's, the creation of a unified Romanian state in 1859, and the achievement of independence from the Porte in

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[40] Charles King, op. cit., 35.

[41] Letter from Propagandist N. Stan to Minister of Education, April 26, 1920, ANR-DAIC, f. Ministerul Instructiunii, d 118/1920, f.53, cited in Charles King, op. cit., 46.

[42] Charles King, op. cit., 45.

1887. These facts created an attitude of superiority of Romanians over the Moldovan counterparts. In addition, the Romaniasation, which with the introduction of other norms and procedures including the reeducation of Moldovans from the accustomed Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin, created resistance from the older population in the Bessarabian villages and from the urban population. The attitude of the corrupt and irresponsible Romanian administrators and militaries reinforced this situation. In such conditions, not only did the minorities not longer feel sympathy toward the central government, but Moldovans also soon developed a sense that they had been occupied by Romanians and not united with them.[43]

By the end of the 1930's, Bessarabian elites had begun to have doubts about the righteousness of the unification and the "ability of Romanian state to reform itself – and the willingness of central authorities to respect the specific regional identity of Bessarabia," and were inclined more toward the Russian language than the Romanian.[44] That sentiment was also increased by the dominance of the Russian press over Romanian publications. In the 1930's Chisinau had only two weeklies in Romanian, but could boast five separate Russian-language dailies, which, however, was as much a result of linguistic preference as of the capital's neglect.[45]

Bessarabians and their elites were even less enthusiastic about Bolshevik collectivization and the appropriation of peasants' property implemented on the left bank of the Dniester River. Therefore, annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union in 1940 was cheered by only small portion of the population, consisting mainly of non-Moldovans. The small part of the indigenous elite created during Romanian governance took refugee in Romania or was purged by the Communist administration.[46]

In June 1941, Romanian troops, together with fascist armies, invaded the Soviet Union. Romania reannexed Bessarabia and got control over the Transdniestrian region, a

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[43] My personal conclusion, formulated after the discussion with many elderly people in my home village of Holercani on the right side of the Dniester River in Moldova.

[44] Charles King, op. cit., 48.

[45] Charles King, op. cit., 47.

[46] Personal discussions with the old villagers in the village of Holercani, situated on the right bank of the Dniester River.

territory between the Dniester and Bug Rivers.[47] Romania's goal was to regain control over Bessarabia, but it had no interest in annexing the Transdniestrian Region. However, this region greatly suffered from the German and Romanian occupation. During the occupation, over 120,000 Jews and Gypsies from Bessarabia and Bukovina, along with many others from Transdniestria, were deported or killed in that particular region, which was the greatest liquidation of Jews by non-German forces.[48] Statistical data shows that in 1930, the Jews constituted 7.2 percent of the Bessarabian population, while in 1959, their number dropped to 3.3 percent of the Moldavian population.[49] A sentiment of antipathy toward Romanians by the Transdniestrian population resulted. The traditional Russophon elites to mobilize support for violent actions during the Transdniestrian conflict would successfully use this sentiment. In August 1944, Soviet troops once again gained control over the Bessarabian territory and definitely secured its place in the Soviet Moldavia as a component part of the Soviet Union.

In summary, the 26-year period of Bessarabian development under Romanian sovereignty contributed to further deviation of the identity of the Bessarabian population. Despite the significant results achieved by the policy of Romanization, the lower status of Bessarabia in the kingdom and the irresponsible attitude of the Romanian administration in promoting reforms during the interwar period as well as the backwardness of the Bessarabian peasants significantly slowed down the process. Thus, by the end of the WWII, the Bessarabian population did not develop a unified identity. Part of the population viewed themselves as Romanians, while another part remained "the sons and grandsons of Moldovans of 1812." Significantly, by that time, Russian and Ukrainian minorities were more oriented toward Russia, thus creating an even broader spectrum for ethnic manipulations. The indigenous elites were few and most emigrated to Romania after the annexation of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union. These facts significantly improved the chances of the Soviet Union to create a Soviet Moldovan Nation, and finally, unify the identity of the region.

[47] Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism: 1914-1945*, (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995), 396.

[48] For more information on the Holocaust in Transdniestria, see Ivan Butnaru, The Silent Holocaust: Romania and Its Jews, (New York, 1992) and Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000).

[49] Irina, Livezeanu, op. cit.

3.   Making of a Soviet Moldavian Nation

Bessarabia's unification with Romania was never recognized by the Soviet Union, becoming an issue in diplomatic relations not only between these two countries but also in European affairs. In order to gain access to Bessarabia, in 1924, the Soviet Union created the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) with a Ukrainian majority (50 percent) in the Transdniestrian region, as a component part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and promoted the idea of an independent Moldavian nation. [50] However, after WWII, the idea of a Moldovan nation was abolished and, as a result of Soviet economic and demographic policies, the identity of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) had split along the lines of dependency from and commitment to Soviet ideology.

This section argues that the political elites from the MASSR resisted the process of the development of an independent Moldovan nation since the beginning, and after WWII, it was abandoned and the policy in MSSR was mainly oriented toward the sovietisation of the region. For that purpose, the elites in Moldova were mostly Russians and Ukrainians as well as an insignificant number of Moldovans from the Transdniestrian area of the Republic. Furthermore, industrialization of Transdniestria, accompanied by demographic changes, and an agricultural orientation of the rest of Moldavia, created an economic division in the perception of Moldavian identity, a fact the elites from both sides of the Dniester River finally manipulated.

> ***a.   The Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and its Role in the Process of Formation of the Moldovan Nation***

The creation of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) reflected a new argument of the Soviet Union (SU) against Romanian integration of Bessarabia: the population of Bessarabia constituted a separate ethno-national group from the Romanians with the right of self-determination. Charles King mentions, "With the appearance of "a Moldovan nation" and the creation of its provisional homeland in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, the ethno- national

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[50] Paul E. Lydolph, *Geography of USSR* (New York, John Wiley and Sons inc., 1970) 119, cited in Nicolas Dima (1982) op. cit., 23.

identity of the Moldovans themselves became the centerpiece of Soviet propaganda efforts."[51] However, the process of nation building was a failure and only further disunited the Moldovans.

In order to give credibility to the argument of a distinct Moldavian nation from the Romanians, the Transdniestrian administrative and party elites concentrated their efforts in defining the precise identity of the Moldovans, and in formalizing their culture, especially the language.[52] Therefore, in the 1920's, the Communist party made an attempt at the Moldovanisation of the state and party apparatus in MASSR.[53] However, the same bureaucrats that created it resisted this policy. Thus, as late as 1936, most of the administration in MASSR were still non-Moldovans and were not knowledgeable about the Moldovan language.

However, the language policy of the Communist rulers was not consistent. In the beginning, in order to make the gap between Romanians and Moldavians even wider, the newly created Moldovan language was based on the Cyrillic alphabet,[54] whose goal was to represent the spoken language of the Moldovans from the Transdniestrian region and was one of the most radical attempts to create a distinctive Romanian Moldovan language. However, by 1932, the party policy changed and the attitudes toward the Moldovan language changed as well. The local party administration decided to change the language to the Latin alphabet. As Charles King argues, "the introduction of Latin alphabet in 1932 brought to a definitive end the effort to build a wholly separate Moldovan nation."[55] The primary intent of the policy was to make MASSR more attractive to the Bessarabian population and to create a positive basis for the future annexation of Bessarabia. The main component of the Moldovan language also had

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[51] Charles King, op. cit., 57.

[52] The 12th Communist Party congress had promulgated the policy of indigenization, or *korenizatsiia*, which was directed at favoring promotion into the state and party apparatus of the representatives of the non-Russian nationalities.

[53] The process of Moldovanisation presumed involvement of more Moldovans in the administration and the party apparatus, and the use of the Moldovan language in the daily business of the administration.

[54] In Moldova, it is widely believed that the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed by the Soviets in the beginning of the 20th century. However, Bessarabia and Transdniestria at the end of the 19th century were using the Cyrillic alphabet and the adoption of the Latin script in Romania after 1859 had little affected on these regions.

[55] Charles King, op. cit., 83.

shifted from the Transdniestrian dialect to the language spoken by the Moldovans in the Bessarabian area, which was the Romanian language. However, in May 1938, MASSR returned to the Cyrillic alphabet. This time the reason for changing the alphabet lay outside the MASSR itself. In that period, the Soviet government was implementing a policy of transferring all Latin-based alphabets of non-Russian populations to Cyrillic, a process that was completed by 1940. Thus, discontinuity in the language and cultural policies during the process of Soviet Moldovan Nation building negatively affected the process of the creation of a distinctive Moldovan identity in the MSSR.

In addition, by 1940, the communist party had purged almost all engineers of Moldovan identity as promoters of nationalism. The Moldovan Scientific Committee was liquidated in 1933 as a "nest of bourgeois nationalists." All the works of Leonid Madan, author of the Soviet Moldovan grammar, had been removed from the libraries by the end of 1934. By 1940, the Soviet special police on orders from the central Party leaders executed almost everyone participating in the process of cultural planning, including the First Secretaries of the local party organizations and chairs of the Central Executive Committee.[56]

Thus, the creation of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was an attempt to create a distinctive Moldovan nation in order to facilitate the annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union and the dissemination of Communist propaganda into Romanian territories. In 1940, the Soviet Union achieved its goal and annexed Bessarabia. However, a lack of continuity in the implementation of the policies, indifference of the elites to the process of nationalization of the administrative apparatus, as well as resistance from the non-Moldovan population, resulted in the failure of the Moldovanisation of MASSR and creation of separate Moldovan nation. Thus, by the end of 1940, the process of nation building was compromised and "Moldovan culture" in MSSR became no more than Romanian.[57]

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[56] Charles King, op. cit., 87- 89.

[57] Romanian and Moldovan culture do not differ at all. In the past, both had the same national heroes, distinct writers, and kings. They have similar songs, poems, tales and dances.

b. *Moldova under the Soviet Union*

With the annexation of Bessarabia, the status of MSSR changed into a full subject and became a full member of the federation-the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). [58] After WWII, the Bessarabian area of MSSR became the "fruits basket" of the Soviet Union, while the Transdniestrian region was highly industrialized and became one of the major parts of the Soviet military industry. That fact, combined with the demographic policies of the Soviet Union, created a division in the perception of their identities in these two regions. The author argues that, despite their national identity, the Transdniestrian population developed a strong affiliation with Soviet Internationalism, while Moldovans from the Bessarabian area identified themselves with MSSR, not the Soviet Union or Romania, a factor that by the elites manipulated extremely well in order to secure their political and economic positions after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

As a result of the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact, signed between the Soviet Union and Germany in August 1939, on June 20, 1940 Soviet troops annexed Bessarabia and it was automatically included in MASSR. Consequently, the population of Bessarabia underwent a new process of changing identity and attempts at assimilation. However, this time it was the process of de-Romanization combined with the process of Sovietization. Moreover, the process of the creation of a Soviet identity was more successful in the Transdniestrian region in which Moscow concentrated the industrial potential of the Republic as well as a significant part of the Soviet military industry.

Due to its late annexation to the Soviet Union, as mentioned by Leonid Brezhnev, first secretary of the Communist Party in the MSSR from July 1950 to October 1952, the Bessarabian part of the republic "had to break through to socialism by the shortest possible path," which implied fast collectivization, industrialization and

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[58] Due to the size of the territory (53,000 square kilometers), the Soviet government granted MASSR the status of a full subject of the Federation and renamed it the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). However, MSSR was given only 66.6 percent of the territory of MASSR, the regions with the greatest concentration of Moldovans. The rest of the territory, including a large population of ethnic Romanians, was incorporated into Ukraine. As a result of those border manipulations, approximately 400,000 of Russians and Ukrainians live in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova. For detailed information see Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000). See Oleg Serebrian, "Geostrategic Perspectives of the Republic of Moldova," in *National Security and Defense of the Republic of Moldova,* (Institute for Public Policy, Arc Press, Chisinau, 2002), 11-33.

internationalization.[59] Transdniestrian territories already had undergone that process and viewed by Moscow as loyal citizens of the federation, while the population from the Bessarabian part, were still to be "educated" in the spirit of collectivism.

That "shortest possible path" was very traumatic for the population of Bessarabia and resistance developed to the process of Sovietization in the Bessarabian part of MSSR. Immediately after the occupation of Bessarabia, the Soviet regime nationalized the land, enterprises and all means of production and implemented a process of Russification of the population.[60] The Russian language became the official language of the Republic. As a result, as Charles King pointed out, "by 1989 Moldovans were the third most Russified nationality in the Soviet Union; only in Ukraine and Belarus did a higher proportion of the titular nationality report Russian as their native language."[61] These facts would play a significant role in the development of the Transdniestrian conflict.

After 1950, MSSR became one of the largest agricultural centers of the Soviet Union. MSSR was only 0.2 percent of the Soviet territory. However, by the end of the 1970's, it produced 10 percent of the union's canned foods, 4.2 percent of vegetables, 12.3 percent of fruits and 8.2 percent of wines.[62] That production constituted 70 to 94 percent of the total agricultural production of Moldavia and was mainly produced in the Bessarabian area of the republic. At the same time, the Transdniestrian region was highly industrialized, and after 1945, became one of the major regions of the Soviet defense and heavy industries. Almost 100 percent of Moldova's machinery productions were exported outside the republic and most of these products were produced in Transdniestria. Some

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[59] Leonid Brezhnev, *Vospominaniia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, Isdatelistvo politiceskoi literatury, 1983) 72.

[60] Only in October 1940 did the Soviet administration nationalize approximately 500 enterprises, and in 1940 and 1941, 300,000 Moldovans from the Bessarabian area were drafted into the Soviet army or deported to the interior lands of the Soviet Union to work in factories and mines. In addition, between 1944 and 1951, 16,000 more Moldovan families were deported to the heart lands of Russia. The famine of 1946-1947, which was directly caused by the Soviet grain requisitioning campaign, caused roughly 115, 000 deaths. Most were Moldovan peasants. After the annexation of Bessarabia, most Moldovan elites did not take refugee in Romania, and the population along the border with Romania felt the pressure of permanent arrests and executions. Meanwhile, in the same period, over 13,000 Soviet 'specialists' and party activists from Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine, which started the process of Sovietisation and de- Rumanianisation, were assigned to Moldova. For more information, see Mihai Gribincea, *Basarabia in primii ani de ocupatie sovietica,1944-1950* (Cluj;Dacia, 1995) 72; and Nicolas Dima (1982) op. cit., 43.

[61] Charles King, op. cit., 115.

[62] Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Basarabiei de la inceputuri pina in 1998, 2d ed*. (Bucharest, Semne, 1998) 282.

four-fifth of the region's population was employed in the industry, construction, and the service sector.[63] Thus, as Charles King points out "the professional carriers, livelihoods, and even identities of its *[Transdniestrian]* inhabitants depended on their connection with the Soviet Center- the Communist Party, strategic industrial enterprises, and the military- not with local farmers and agricultural firms found west of the Dniester."[64] In that context, relationships with the center were of a vital importance for Transdniestria, while the rest of Moldova was not so strongly dependent on the center.

In addition, postwar deportations and socioeconomic changes, imposed by the Central Communist administration, also caused significant demographic changes especially in the Transdniestrian region, reducing the numbers of Moldovans and increasing the Russian population. In 1936, Moldovans represented 41.8 percent of the Transdniestrian population while Ukrainians constituted 28.7 percent and Russians 14.2. By 1989, the Moldovan and Ukrainian population in the region dropped to 39.9 and 28.3 percent accordingly, while the Russian population increased to 25.5. The majority of the Russian and Ukrainian population in the region were urban. In addition, most Ukrainians, as well as a large part of Moldovans from that territory, consider Russian their native language.

In summary, the Soviet development of MSSR divided the republic into an industrial Transdniestria and agricultural Bessarabia. The Transdniestrian population developed an affiliation with the Soviet not Russian identity, and their economic security mostly depended on their connection to the Soviet center. At the same time, the population in the Bessarabian area considered MSSR their motherland. During the decline of the Soviet Union, the possibility for conflict or peace under such circumstances was dependent on the course of the elites and their inspirations.

c.   *Who Is to Rule: Demography of Moldovan Elites*

All elites can be categorized in four main groups: traditional, neo-traditional, exclusivist, and integrative. This categorization can be useful in analyzing the integrative capabilities of the minority groups or the possibilities for violence and

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[63] Charles King, op. cit., 183.

[64] Charles King, op. cit., 184.

separatism of ethnic movements.[65] A clash of interests, as a result of a potential change in the status of these categories, might create ethnic or civil conflicts, a fact that played a major role in the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova. Traditionally the Russian or Ukrainian elites appointed by the imperialist or Communist center ruled Moldova. The author argues that in the late 1980,s, the process of democratization *[demokratizatsiya]* brought new opportunities for indigenous elites to change the course of history and to take control of the political and economic development of the country; the process that threatened the monopoly of power of the old Communist *nomenclatura*. The struggle between these two elites finally resulted in the open conflict.

As Philip Roeder mentioned, "a central element of the Soviet developmental strategy was the creation of political institutions that expanded the control of the regime over the process of social mobilization associated with modernization."[66] Since the very beginning of the formation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and throughout its entire history, Soviet Moldavia was traditionally dominated by the appointed Russian and Ukrainian elites or Transdniestrian bureaucrats.[67] These elites were considered more educated and loyal to the central party apparatus than Bessarabian intellectuals. In addition, after the annexation of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union in 1940, and again in 1944, most of the local intelligentsia and administrators left for Romania or were deported by the new regime, thus leaving Bessarabia practically without an intelligentsia and significant elite class. Thus, traditionally, the Russians, Ukrainians, and Moldovans from the Transdniestrian area exercised authority in MSSR.

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[65] For detailed information on the categorization of ethnic elites see Gerald Mcbeath, "Political Behavior of Ethnic Leaders," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (April 1978), 393-417.

[66] Philip Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (January 1991), 196.

[67] In 1941, not a single Bessarabian Moldavian was elected to the leading organs of the Moldavian Communist Party and MSSR administration. In addition, the first Soviet Supreme of Moldavia was partly composed of ethnic Moldavian from the Transdniestrian Region. Moldovans also were the least represented nationality at the all-Union level. The Russians and Ukrainians headed most of the industrial enterprises, while Bessarabian Moldovans were mostly in charge of collective farms. Petre Luchinskij was the first Bessarabian Moldavian to become First Secretary of the Communist Party of MSSR only in 1989, when the authority of the party was already in decline. See Wim van Meurs, op. cit., 136-137.

However, especially in the post WWII period, the Soviet regime extended its control over the subordinated Republics by politicizing the ethnicity. This policy was directed at the formation within each federal subject of the indigenous ethnic elite loyal to the regime. In the words of Philip Roeder

> the Soviet developmental strategy sought to control ethno-politics by prohibiting all but sanctioned political entrepreneurs from mobilizing their communities and by deterring these entrepreneurs from pursuing any but the regime's instrumental strategies of plan fulfillment and social transformation.[68]

The new category of elites was distinguished from the traditional because they were mainly born in the Bessarabian countryside, studied in the Chisinau University versus the Tiraspol Institute, and the majority spoke Moldovan. They had worked as *raion* and collective farm leaders and were very knowledgeable of the indigenous population.[69] This type of elites came to power as a result of the preferential policy of the 1960's. Thus, by the end of the 1980's, the Moldovans were dominating the MSSR Communist party apparatus, but were underrepresented in the leadership positions in the industrial sectors.[70] Those positions were still held by the traditional elites loyal to the Communist center: Russians, Ukrainians and Transdniestrans. Under such conditions, the conflict between the elites over the control of the economic and political assets of the Republic in the period of liberalization and democratization could easily arise, with the possibility of the involvement of the large masses of population and the escalation of violence.

The liberalization of political life in the Soviet Union contributed to the formation of the Moldovan "informal organizations," in the summer of 1988, which later contributed to the formation of the Popular Front. These organizations were mostly oriented toward cultural awareness and were first organized as opposition to the

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[68] Philip Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," op. cit., 203.

[69] The *rions* in the Soviet Union are similar to counties in the United States.

[70] By the end of the 1980's, Moldovans held 75.5 percent of the leadership positions in the MSSR Communist party, while comprising 47.8 percent of the party members and were 63.9 percent of the entire population. However, during the same period, Moldovans held less than 50 percent top-level managers positions in industry, transport, communications, and construction. See William Crowther, "Ethnicity and Participation in the Communist Party of Moldova," *Journal of the Soviet Nationalities*, No. 1 (1990), 148-49; "Iazykom tsifr," *Argumenty i facty* 1990, No.2 p. 5, cited in Charles King, op. cit., 139.

Moldovan Communist Party. In the beginning, these movements were more ethnically inclusive than exclusive. Leaders of these movements were oriented toward the mobilization of all citizens of MSSR toward democratization, restructuring and transparency. However, the introduction of the Language Law in 1989, "thus privileging the linguistic skills that urban Moldovans had maintained during their migration from the villages, held the promise of competitive advantage over urban Russians and other ethnic groups."[71] Moldovan was granted the status of a state language while Russian was the language of interethnic communication within MSSR. The Language Law also stipulated a path for the implementation of the legislation and five year period of transition. Significantly, a provision existed that the local administrations, with the approval of the Council of Ministers, could make Russian the language of the administration and industries. Thus, the workers could still use the same language and procedures as before. However, the managers and officials would have to learn the Moldovan language or lose their positions.[72]

This situation not only threatened ethnic minorities, but also the future status of the traditional elites. In addition, the most radical elements of the new emerged elites, mostly members of the Popular Front, pledged the abolition of the Soviet Federation and union with Romania, while inclusive type elites promoted a policy of more cultural and economic independence from the restructured Soviet Union or Independent Moldova. Both these inspirations threatened the lifestyle of the Transdniestrian population, which, as discussed previously, was heavily dependent on the connections with the Soviet center, and the Soviet pragmatic nomenclature, which did not want to accept any changes and were devoted to the Communist ideology. Thus, what had in early 1989 appeared to be a unified organization, gathering members of the government, workers, peasants, and intellectuals under the broad banner of reform, rapidly disintegrated into various factions with competing goals and interests.

In summary, as a result of historical developments, Soviet demographic manipulations and different approaches toward economic development of the regions of MSSR, by 1989, the Republic did not have a unified identity. Moreover, the

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[71] Charles King, op. cit., 141.

[72] Stuart J. Kaufman, op. cit., 126.

Transdniestrian population, including ethnic Moldovans, developed an affiliation with the Soviet Union and Soviet identity, while the rest of Moldavia viewed MSSR, including Transdniestria, as their motherland, not the Soviet Union or Romania. However, these divergences were not deeply rooted in the Moldavian society. Therefore, during the decline of the Soviet state, the controversy of interests, not between the ethnic communities, but between traditional and neotraditional or indigenous elites, as well as within the last, created a situation of competition over the future economic and political capital of Moldova, which in the end, resulted in a military confrontation and long lasting conflict.

B.   TO BE OR NOT TO BE: INDEPENDENCE AND CONFLICT

In the late 1980's, in the Republic of Moldova, many different political actors largely supported national renaissance: political, economic, and cultural reforms. The main reason for such widespread support was often not national sentiment of those actors but mainly a possibility to secure or increase their own political and economic security in the difficult years of transition from the authoritarian power of the Soviet government to a situation unknown to everyone. This chapter argues than when the course of the development of the Republic of Moldova took a different path from the traditional, and threatened the future economic and social situation of the traditional elites, these elites mobilized instrumental and primordial grievances of the population in order to secure their political situation and to take advantage of the opened economic opportunities after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its command economy. In response, the new nationally oriented elites viewed the demands of the old nomenclatura as a intent to reinstall the domination of the former patrons, which fact created a security dilemma, escalating to the point of military confrontation. As a proximate cause of this conflict, which had an enormous implication on its development, was the interest of the Russian Federation in maintaining Moldova under its political military and economic influence. Thus, this conflict was an ethnic conflict. However, it is mainly provoked by the competition between traditional and new-emerged elites over the future politico-economic control over the region. In support of the author's argument, this chapter discusses four underling factors of the conflict: structural, political, economic and cultural factors and their role in triggering the conflict.

1.   Structural Factors of the Conflict

All three structural factors of the development of Transdniestrian conflict, state weakness, intrastate security concerns, and ethnic geography facilitated the eruption of conflict and highlight the elite's manipulation of this conflict. The author argues that Moldova emerged as a weak state after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which permitted traditional elites to mobilize instrumental and primordial grievances of the Transdniestrian population against national inspirations of the rest of Moldova, thus creating a security dilemma, which resulted in open confrontation and military conflict.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, in most cases, the states that emerged were *weak states.* They emerged with only basic political institutions in place. Under such conditions, power struggles between former and new elites intensify, thus increasing the independency of the regional leaders. In cases were those regional leaders can exercise control over the military assets, the conflict might easily escalate to military confrontation. In such situations, the security concerns of the groups within the state intensify, creating a *security dilemma*, which also might result in the intensification of the military preparation of the different ethnic groups. If so, *ethnic geography*, the last structural fact can play a major role in the spiral of conflict. The effect of ethnic geography depends on the distribution of ethnicities as some states are intermingled, while in others, minorities are concentrated in separate provinces or regions of the country. In that context, countries with intermingled ethnicities are less vulnerable to secessionist movements.[73]

The Republic of Moldova emerged from the Soviet Union as a very weak state. Most of the political institutions were not in place. The police forces and military units during the military confrontation were only in the beginning stages. The state authorities lacked professionalism at that level and could not exercise control over the territory under their supervision. Under such conditions, the traditional Communist elites, in the position to control the industrial sector of Moldova, mainly dislocated in the Transdniestrian region, saw their opportunity to take control of the region. With the silent support of the

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[73] Michael E. Brown, "Ethnic and Internal Conflicts: Causes and Implications," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, (U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001), 214.

Russian Federation, which had control over the military assets in the region, Transdniestrian authorities consolidated control over a significant number of these assets, and used them to trigger the conflict. Thus, after the proclamation of independence from MSSR, Transdniestrian authorities started to mobilize and arm informal military units and to take over police stations and administrative institutions along the east bank of the Dniester River. The Soviet Fourteenth Army, dislocated in the Transdniestrian region, was very significant in the future development of the conflict. Accordingly, most weapons of illegal formations and the newly formed Dniester Guard were taken from the storage areas of that army. The commandment of the Transdniestrian Army also came from the officers of the Fourteenth Army. Many officers were transferred to the Transdniestrian units. In such situations, the conflict had all the indicators of escalating into armed confrontation.

Accordingly, with the acceptance of the society of the Declaration of independence, Moldova interrupted the control from the Union Center, which threatened the Transdniestrian elites, who were strongly dependent on the center, with a loss of authority not only in the Republic of Moldova, but also in the Transdniestrian region. Thus, taking into consideration the demographics of the Transdniestrian region, the main reason for conflict implied by the Transdniestrian leaders was the protection of all Slavs against Moldovan discrimination, providing the opportunity to speculate on the ethnic grievances of the population. Interestingly, 70 percent of the Slav population of the Republic of Moldova lives in the western area and peacefully coexist with the Moldovans. Thus, if the repression of the Slavs had occurred, the conflict had to emerge or shift also to the western part of the country, but it did not, which means that despite its ethnic spillover, the real causes of the conflict are more than just ethnic confrontation.

The first serious hostilities between government forces and Transdniestrian paramilitaries took place on December 13, 1991, when Moldovan police attempted to disarm Transdniestrian irregulars. During the night of March 2, 1992, Transdniestrian paramilitaries attacked and occupied the Dubasari police station. It was evident, as

mentioned in the Moldovan Government's Declaration, that this action's goal was the further aggravation of the political situation, undermining the Republic's sovereignty and Moldova's admission to the United Nation Organization scheduled for March 2, 1992.[74]

With the introduction of the Language Law in 1989, the reforms in MSSR were seen by the Transdniestrian elites as evidence of Moldova's intention to abandon the Soviet Union and as "shifting balance of power to the Moldovan majority and away from those groups that had traditionally exercised authority,"[75] thus raising concerns about the future development of these groups. However, as mentioned in the previous section, the language law mainly affected only the managers, not the entire population. Under these circumstances, the Transdniestrian elites took steps to protect themselves, which in response, raised concerns of the Moldovan administration, who saw the demand and actions of the Transdniestrian administration as an attempt of the old Soviet regime to impose control over the country again. This elite-manipulated security dilemma resulted in the military confrontation.

Thus, Moldova during the conflict, was a weak state. The process of national independency and cultural rebirth created an intrastate security concern mainly on the side of the former elite. The actions taken by the old elites, in order to secure their status in the society, and the response from the central administration, created a security dilemma, which in the end, resulted in open military confrontation.

2.   Economic/Social Factor

The aim of Gorbaciov's economic reforms of the 1980's was to bring the Soviet economy into a new waive of economic development and modernization. However, during the late 1980's, the economic situation in the Soviet Union deteriorated, which impacted the politico-economic situation in Moldova as well. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and collapse of the centralized Soviet economy aggravated the economic situation even more. Under such conditions, Transdniestria, which heavily relied on the Soviet Center, became even more economically destabilized. In addition, Russians

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[74] Gheorge Cojocaru, op. cit, 76-112, Translation by the author.

[75] Charles King, op. cit., 186.

viewed the introduction of the language law in Moldova, establishing Moldovan as an official language of the country, as the formation of an economic system that would disadvantage them. Indeed, these facts contributed to the aggravation of the situation.

The scholars of conflict resolution identified three economic and social factors that can trigger ethnic and internal conflicts: economic problems, discriminatory economic systems, and the tribulations of economic development and modernization. The economic problems can be deeply destabilizing and can facilitate the spark of violence.[76] In the post Soviet areas, the collapse of the planed economy created a large spectrum of economic problems from inflation to the dramatically high rate of unemployment, which in many cases, triggered the conflicts. The author argues that in the Transdniestrian conflict, one of the main causes was the economic aspirations of the Transdniestrian elites.

The discriminatory economic systems also might trigger the conflict. Unfair distributions of resources and economic systems that disadvantage certain members of the society have the potential to increase the dissatisfaction of these members of society leading to the potential for escalation into a conflict. The last cause is economic development and modernization. Many authors argue that economic development and modernization create many social changes. These include migration and urbanization effects on existing family rights and existing social systems and the question of the relevance of traditional political institutions. Education and improved access to mass media raise awareness of the structure of the society and each individual's place in it, thus also creating the possibility for conflict.[77]

In the republic of Moldova, two thirds of its industrial potential is concentrated in Transdniestria and the development of Moldova cannot be efficient without the Transdniestrian Region. Thus, in these moments of turmoil, the person controlling the Transdniestria region will have the real potential to exercise influence over the entire development of Moldova. As Michael Brown argues, the economic development always benefits some individuals or groups, but those who are on top from the beginning have

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[76] For more information on that subject, see R. de A. Samarasinghe and Reed Coughlan, eds., *Economic Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict,* (London, Printer Publishers, 1991).

[77] Michael Brown, op. cit., 217.

better economic opportunities than others.[78] On the other hand, political elites from Moldova also understood that without control over the Transdniestrian region, Moldova will be an agrarian country, and moreover, will depend on the Transdniestrian administration for their connections with the CIS markets.

The peak of the conflict occurred in July 1992 when Transdniestrian forces launched an attack to seize the last remaining police station in Bender, a Moldovan city located on the west bank of the Nistru River, which is not part of any historical Transdniestrian territory. Moldova responded with a massive military attack, which included mortar attacks and dropping bombs from the airplanes. However, because of the involvement of Russian regular troops, Moldovan forces were defeated.[79] Bender is the main connecting point of all the roads and railroads as well as one of the major industrial areas of the Republic of Moldova. Thus, the separatists' successful attempt to capture that city and Moldova's massive efforts to regain it demonstrates the economic inspirations of the Transdniestrian and Moldovan elites. Indeed, the involvement of the Russian troops and defeat of the Moldovan military in the Bender operation did lead to the cease-fire and introduction of a peacekeeping contingent from the Russian Federation, the Republic of Moldova and the unrecognized Moldovan Transdniestrian Republic.

To conclude, the benefits that can be extracted from control over the economically developed and strategically positioned region of Moldova were enormous. Thus, from an economic point of view, the conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova (RM) was triggered by the elite's inspirations to take advantage of new economic opportunities while preserving or improving their old political status.

3.   Political Factors

The most important political factors in the Transdniestrian conflict are the elites' politics and intergroup politics. Change in the balance of power between the groups destabilized the situation between the groups, and the elites used that destabilization to mobilize ethnic grievances to their benefit. The author argues that in the Transdniestrian

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[78] Michael Brown, Ibid., 217.

[79] Charles King, op. cit., 194-195.

case, the most important political factor lies at the level of elite politics reinforced by the proximate cause of this conflict, which is Russian interest in maintaining political, economic and military domination over the region.

During the Soviet era, Russians were the majority in the country. This position was affiliated with certain political and economic benefits. In the Republic of Moldova, most *Russophons* traditionally living in the cities were employed in the industry and service sectors, and had more opportunities for education and employment. [80] In addition, the cultural development of Moldova was mainly oriented toward Russification. In that context, the changes of the late 1980s, which culminated in the proclamation of independence and the rebirth of nationalistic inspirations, suddenly transformed the status of Russians and Russofons from a majority into a minority, thus also threatening their political and economic benefits from the old system and creating premises for conflict.

The elite politics is basically characterized by the relations and interests between the traditional conservative old style Soviet elite and the neo-traditional or "pragmatic" elite, who emerged particularly during the Gorbachov era. The neo-traditional elite are characterized by its inclination to compromises, understanding of new realities, and openness to the West, democratic development and the free market. However, they lacked experience, competence, and sometimes determination to confront the other type of elites. In contrast, the old conservative members of the Soviet nomenclatura could not see their future without a totalitarian political regime. Thus, it was not capable of compromising and was firmly in favor of the old Communist ideology and perception of the world.[81] In that context, in the Transdniestrian conflict, the traditional elites, who were losing power over the region, triggered the instrumental and ethnic grievances of the population in order to secure their life style, and at the same time, to challenge Moldova's orientation. However, these grievances were not deeply entrenched, and even more, have arisen mostly because of the propaganda, heavily implied by the Tiraspol administration,

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[80] The term Russofons is used primarily for other non titular nationalities mainly using Russian as its primary language of communication. In MSSR, minorities were, in most of cases, using Russian as their language of communication, thus Russofons are much more that just Russians and can also include representatives of the titular nationality.

[81] Hryhory, Perepelitsya, "The Influence of Regional Factors on Possible Scenarios of Development of Moldovan-Transdniestrian-Ukrainian Relations," in *New Borders in South Eastern Europe: The Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Romania*, ed Institute for Public Policy, (Chisinau, Stiinta, 2002), 279.

and as soon as the cease-fire was achieved, the relationship between the populations of the two Dniester sides returned to normal. Thus, the Transdniestrian conflict is an internal elite driven conflict, which involved the confrontation of the civilian leaders over the future orientation of the RM and distribution of political and economic power in the newly emerged state.

Russian interest in maintaining its influence over Moldova was a proximate cause of this conflict, more fully discussed in Chapter IV. However, the distant powers can facilitate the conflict only when the premises for conflict already exist in the target country.[82] As was discussed previously, internal factors that triggered the conflict were more than enough. However, Russian support of the Transdniestrian elites and of the perception that this conflict is a "war for protection of all Slavs" contributed to its aggravation and transformation into an armed confrontation. Russian interest after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was to maintain the former Soviet Republics under its political, military and economic influence. The geographic and economic situation of the Transdniestrian region made it a "key" to the development of Moldova. Thus, by destabilizing Transdniestria and exercising control over the administration of that region, Russia could exercise enormous influence on the political decisions of Moldova, a fact supported by the development of Moldova in the post-conflict period. In that context, the Russian military, political and economic support of the Transdniestrian separatist authorities and its interests "weigh more" as a result of the ethnic causes of this conflict.

Thus, intergroup politics did provide leverage for the initiation of an ethnic conflict. However, the cornerstone was the struggle between traditional elites, supported by Russian interests of maintaining dominance over the region, and "pragmatic," nationally oriented elites over the future political and economic control of the region.

4. Cultural/Perceptual Factor

Two main cultural factors that can trigger conflict were identified: cultural discrimination against minorities and group histories and group perceptions. In the Transdniestrian case, both factors play a role. However, they were not the main causes of the conflict.[83]

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[82] Michael Brown, op. cit., 219.

[83] Michael Brown, op. cit., 218.

In the late 1980's and beginning of the 1990's, the Republic of Moldova underwent a process of national rebirth. However, rapid Romanization of Moldovan society was the negative aspect of that process contributing to the escalation of the conflict. With the proclamation of the Moldovan language, written with the Latin script, similar to Romanian, as the official language, the Chisinau administration practically limited the possibilities of the Russian speaking minorities, especially in the Transdniestrian region, to participate in the cultural and information environment of the RM. The local councils of the Transdniestrian region strongly resisted the Language Law. They voted that the law would not apply in the region. Since that moment, the Transdniestrian leaders started their preparation for secession. In January 1990, the United Council of Work Collectives (OSTK) healed a referendum on Transdniestrian autonomy. Ninety six percent of the voters favored Transdniestrian autonomy within MSSR, and if necessary, separation in the future. However, as Kaufman mentions, "the Tiraspol press was telling voters that the alternatives to independence was to submit to a 'new inquisition' by Moldovan authorities, and eventually to be swallowed up in an extremely nationalistic Romania."[84] Thus, the introduction of the Language Law, reinforced by the false interpretation of it by the Tiraspol authorities, in fact increased the hostile attitude of the Transdniestrian Russian speaking portion of the population toward the RM and served as one of the causes of conflict.

Historically, Moldovan identity was not united. However, most of the time, Moldova was dominated by the Russians and Russofons elites, and the Russian speaking population had more social and economic benefits. In that context, even though Moldova was fourth most Russified republic in the Soviet Union, the Moldovan perception of Russians as dominators was apparent. At the same time, Moldova's inspirations toward the rebirth of its Romanian nature and the fast development of the cultural and political rapprochement with Romania, with the help of the elites, awoke Transdniestrian historical grievances toward Romania, which were especially reinforced by the events during WWII, discussed in the previous subchapter. Tiraspol elites, by controlling the media in the region, created the image of Moldova as a Romanian aggressor and

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[84] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Interethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," International Security, Vol. 21, No. 2, (Autumn, 1996), 128.

mobilized the historical grievances of the Transdniestrian population. In response, despite the warm attitude of the Moldovans toward the Russian speaking population, Transdniestrian hostilities triggered Moldova's perceptions of secular domination by Russia and was viewed as one more attempt to undermine Moldova's independence and reinstall Russian control, thus creating a security dilemma.

Thus, from the cultural perceptional factor, this conflict can be characterized as an ethnic conflict. However, note that the grievances were not rooted in Moldovan society and were mostly created by Transdniestrian propaganda. One fact that is more favorable is the involvement of different nationalities on both sides of the conflict and attitudes of the simple people involved in the conflict, who did not want to fight.[85] In fact, the ethnic aspect of this conflict is more tactical, applied by the Transdniestrian elites to achieve their goal of control of the Transdniestrian region, resulting in the possibility to extract political and economic benefits, as well as control over the future development of Moldova.

In conclusion, the historical development of Bessarabia and Transdniestria, as well as their interaction since the first annexation of Bessarabia by Russia in 1812 and up to 1992, when the military conflict erupted in the region, suggests that Russian and Romanian policies of the Russification and Romanization of Bessarabia, as well as the Soviet policy of Moldovanisation and later Sovietization, did not create a unified Moldovan identity, a factor, which in late the 1980's, contributed to the emergence of an armed confrontation in the region. However, by analyzing the underling factors that triggered this conflict, the structural, economic, political and cultural factors, it is obvious that the conflict was an ethnic in nature, but was mainly caused by the elites struggle over the future economic control of the new formed country, reinforced by the proximate cause, which is Russian aspirations to maintain political, economic and military dominance over the regions. These causes and aspirations of the elites from both areas, as well as permanent Russian interest in maintaining its dominance over the region in the

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[85] In June-July 1992, I was personally involved in these events. I noticed situations where the conflicting parties would shoot at each other during the night, but with precaution, and in the mornings, would ask each other if everything was OK, and on some occasions, would even play soccer against each other.

end, will contribute to the prolongation of the political settlement of conflict and create a deadlock situation, difficult to resolve even after a decade of permanent negotiations. This situation will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

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III.   POST- CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT: POSITIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL ACTORS

> Resolving a civil war is never simply a matter of reaching a bargain and then instituting a ceasefire. To be successful, a civil war peace settlement must consolidate the previously warring factions into a single state, build a new government capable of accommodating their interests, and create a new national nonpartisan military force.[86]
>
> <div align="right">Barbara F. Walter</div>

> Distant powers and the international community in general are not as helpless as the conventional wisdom might lead as to believe. To the contrary, they mark moments when distant international powers can use their leverage and influence the course of events.[87]
>
> <div align="right">Michael Brown</div>

Chapter III analyses the process of the post- conflict resolution procedures during the last decade, stressing the positions and development of the internal actors: the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) and the Republic of Moldova (RM).

The military defeat of Moldova in Bender and the involvement of the Russian troops in the conflict, forced the Moldovan government to search for support to stop the violence. As a result, many attempts were made at the national and international level to find a plausible solution to this conflict. However, most of the proposals, which assumed international involvement, were opposed by the Russian federation, a fact that in the end led to the acceptance of the Russian plan for settlement of the dispute. The Moldova and Russian Federation signed "Convention regarding the principles of a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova," in July 1992, which led to the cease-fire between the conflicting parties and the introduction of peacekeeping forces.

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[86] Barbara F. Walter, "Designing Transitions from Civil War," ed. Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (NY, Columbia University Press, 1999) 38-69, 43.

[87] Michael Brown, op. cit., 223.

According to Nicole Ball[88], in the countries that have emerged from the conflict based on a negotiated settlement, two stages of the peace process can be identified: cessation of conflict and peace building. Each of these two stages also has other two component steps. The aim of the first stage is to stop the fighting and direct the conflict through political channels. Its phases comprise negotiations and the formal cessation of hostilities. The peacebuilding phase is also composed of two steps: transition and consolidation. Thus, Ball argues that

> on strengthening political institutions, consolidating internal security, and revitalizing the economy and society. The major objectives during the transition phase are to establish a government with a sufficient degree of legitimacy to operate effectively and to implement key reforms mandated by the peace accords. The first major objective during the consolidation phase is to continue the reforms.[89]

However, for the aforementioned process to start, it is first necessary for all parties in the conflict to be wiling to reevaluate their attitudes toward the conflict. According to Saadia Touval and William Zartman, two conditions are very encouraging in such a process: mutually hurting stalemates and crises bounded by a deadline.[90] As the authors point out:

> a mutually hurting stalemate begins when one side realizes that it is unable to achieve its aims, resolve the problem, or win the conflict by itself; the stalemate is completed when the other side reaches a similar conclusion.[91]

The cease-fire agreement between the Transdniestria authorities and the administration of Republic of Moldova was signed more than a decade ago. However, the peacebuilding process did not move forward very much, and it is still at the start of the transitional phase.

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[88] For more information on these two phases, see Nicole Ball, "The Challenge of Rebuilding War-Torn Societies," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict,*(U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001), 719-726.

[89] Nicole Ball, Ibid., 722.

[90] Saadia Touval and William Zartman, "International Mediation in the Post-Cold war Era," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict, (*U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001), 434.

[91] Saadia Touval and William Zartman, Ibid., 434.

This chapter argues that the aforementioned Convention was not a negotiated settlement of the conflict but strengthened the capitulation of the Republic of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova accepted a special status as a Transdniestrian region, allowing TMR to maintain its own militaries, accepted the presence of the Russian Federation military forces on its territory for an unlimited period of time, and excluded Romania, its natural ally, from the peace process and was practically left alone to confront political, military and economic pressures from the Russian Federation. In addition, the introduction of the peacekeeping forces, despite their contribution to the cease-fire and normalization of the situation on both sides of the Dniester River, created a status quo situation, which benefits the Transdniestrian authorities. As a result, post-conflict negotiations are characterized by Moldova's promotion of the policy of inclusion in an attempt to regain the lost territory, and Transdniestrian unwillingness to surrender anything achieved by military means, thus favoring the secession, or at least confederal arrangements, between the two subjects of international law. In such situations, the involvement of the international community is very important.

The chapter will conclude that Transdniestrian illegal administration, which is still composed of the same leadership that started the conflict, has built a de facto independent authoritarian state based on old Soviet ideology and developed economic and social interests in preserving the conflict. The status quo situation, created around this conflict, perfectly suits the aforementioned interests, thus encouraging them to promote a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. In contrast, Moldova underwent several changes in the administration and practically eliminated all the causes that triggered the conflict. However, it could not demonstrate the superiority of the democratic development, thus losing the support of the population. Under such conditions, a political solution to the conflict is difficult to achieve. As a result of the failure of locally driven conflict-resolution process, international involvement becomes even more important and is the only path to follow.

A.   POLITICAL AND MILITARY DEFEAT OF MOLDOVA

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, on July 21, 1992, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation signed the "Convention regarding the principles of a

peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova," which conducted the cease-fire between the conflicting parties and the introduction of peacekeeping forces. This chapter argues that this Convention was not a negotiated settlement of the conflict but the straight capitulation of the Republic of Moldova. In addition, the introduction of the three-lateral peacekeeping forces, from Russia, Moldova and the Transdniestrian region, despite their contribution to the cease-fire and normalization of the situation on the both sides of the Dniester River, created a status quo situation, which benefits Transdniestrian authorities.

This section will conclude that because of the Russian interest in maintaining dominance over the region, and the international environment at the time, the Republic of Moldova was forced to accept the Russian proposal of settlement of the conflict, it was mainly a capitulation, and not a negotiated settlement. In addition, the operational characteristics and composition of the peacekeeping forces, as well as the partial attitude of the Russian forces created a status quo situation, which benefited the Transdniestrian authorities, but undermined the process of negotiation.

1. Cease-Fire Agreement or Capitulation?

Moldovan intentions to stop the violent conflict in the Transdniestrian region by peaceful means started before a major military confrontation erupted. On March 23, 1992, during the CSCE Conference in Helsinki, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Ukraine Romania and Moldova agreed to form a quadripartite forum for the settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict. The Forum issued a declaration that stipulated the main principles of the conflict settlement: 1) unconditional respect of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Moldova; 2) conflict resolution should be exclusively by political means; 3) right of the constitutional organs of the Republic of Moldova to intervene in order to maintain legal order in accordance with the norms of international law; 4) inadmissibility of military intervention and other involvement in the conflict by any foreign powers.[92] The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova welcomed the formation of the forum and agreed to all its stipulations. In

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[92] Gheorge Cojocaru, *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova (The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Moldova)* (Civitas, Chisinau, 2001), 79.

addition, the Parliament sent a request to the Unified Military Commend of the CIS to withdraw the Fourteenth Soviet Army from the territory of the independent Republic of Moldova, which at the time, was under its command.

In April 1992, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Moldova signed five important documents, in Chisinau, the capital city of Moldova, which once again were directed to stop the military confrontation between the conflicting parties. In addition, they formed a Mixed Quadripartite Commission for the settlement of the disputes and rejected the proposal of the Russian Federation to give the Fourteenth Army the status of a peacekeeping force, because of the involvement of some elements of that Army in the military conflict. However, the unwillingness of the Transdniestrian unauthorized government considerably reduced their efficacy, reinforced by the open support from the military commandment of the Fourteenth Army, to solve the conflict by peaceful means.

On June 15, 1992, during the Quadripartite Commission's meeting in Tiraspol, the capital city of the Transdniestrian region, another accord was signed that stipulated the same basic principles of a peaceful resolution of the military conflict. Significantly, the chiefs of public administrations of most of the east *raions* and major cities (Tiraspol, Ribnita, Dubasari and Bender) have also signed this accord, thus expressing the willingness of the Transdniestrian population to restore peace. Besides, this document stipulated the need to form a new Government of reconciliation, based on the proportional representation of all nationalities in all government institutions. The accord was ratified by the Moldovan Parliament on June 16 and was a real chance for a political and military solution to the conflict.[93] However, the central Transdniestrian separatist administration rejected this accord, demonstrating the unwillingness of the Transdniestrian authorities to resolve the conflict by peaceful means.

Furthermore, on June 19, Transdniestrian Forces, using armored vehicles from Russian army depots, stormed the last remaining area loyal to the Chisinau government police station in Bender. As Bender was a strategic military and economic point, the

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[93] Gheorge Cojocaru, op. cit., 92-93.

Moldovan government attempted to regain control over the territory and retaliate.[94] However, the open intervention of the Fourteenth Russian Army, alongside Transdniestrian paramilitaries and Cossacks units from Russia, resulted in the defeat of Moldovan units and their retreat from the city.[95] The Moldovan defeat in Bender marked the highest point of the conflict and secured official involvement of the Russian Federation in the dispute.[96]

In the spring of 1992, the Russian Federation applied many available means to maintain Moldova under its sphere of influence. It was exercising pressure on the Moldovan government to sign the CIS accord, mainly dominated by the Russian interest in the former Soviet Union Republics. Russian officials imposed an economic blockade on the Republic of Moldova and threatened military intervention, indicating that Russia was, in fact, involved in the Transdniestrian conflict and not interested in its solution, but only on its terms.

During the reunion of the top officials of CIS in Moscow on July 6, 1992, a proposal was introduced for international forces to stop the violence in the Republic of Moldova. A new attempt to identify possible solutions to the Transdniestrian conflict was made during the CSCE reunion in Helsinki on July 9-10, 1992. Bulgarian President Jelio Jelev proposed a project, which attempted to find a plausible solution to the conflict in Moldova, under the lead of the CSCE. However, the Russian Federation again firmly opposed that project , which proposed finding a solution, limiting participation only to the CIS countries, thus excluding Romania and Bulgaria from the peace-resolution process, and was not endorsed by the CSCE. The Russian delegation blocked the

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[94] The city of Bender is situated on the west bank of the Dniester River and also is one of the major, if not only military but economic point. Most of the rail and road transportation connecting Moldova with the rest of the Soviet Union goes through this city. Losing Bender would mean total dependence on the Transdniestrian authorities for a connection to major Russian markets.

[95] The Fourteenth Soviet Army was unilaterally transferred by the Russian Federation under their jurisdiction in April 1992. However, by this time, many personnel and military equipment had already been transferred to the Transdniestrian guard. In addition, during the conflict, Transdniestrian paramilitaries were supported by the Cossacks volunteers from the Russian Federation that came to fight for the "protection of Russians".

[96] Charles King, op. cit., 194.

adoption of an official document on this issue. It was evident that Russian Federation had special interest in this conflict and did not want involvement of the international community.[97]

In addition to the given circumstances, the Transdniestrian conflict, developed at the same time while the United Nation's capacity to undertake new peacekeeping missions ha been taxed to the limit, the Republic of Moldova was not was of the main interests of the United States, and the OSCE did not have the necessary mechanisms to undertake such a mission. However, even if the necessary political weal would have been for international intervention, the Russian Federation, which had veto power in both the UN and CSCE, would have categorically opposed it. These conditions at the international level limited Moldova's chances to obtain international involvement, thus increasing the chances of the Russian plans.[98]

As a result, Russian diplomacy prevailed and, on July 21, 1992, Russian president Boris Yeltsin and Moldovan president Mircea Snegur, with the participation of Igor Smirnov, leader of the separatist region of Transdniestria, signed the "Convention regarding the principles of peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova." In accordance with the aforementioned Convention, the parties, the Republic of Moldova and Russian Federation, agreed to take all necessary actions to broker a cease-fire and not take any other military actions against the other party, to withdraw military and paramilitary units as well as military equipment, and to create a security zone. The boundaries of the security zone had to be established by the Joint Control Commission (JCC), which would assume control over the implementation of the Convention and had to be created from representatives of the three parties involved in the conflict resolution, the Russian

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[97] In addition to the facts mentioned in the paragraph, Byelorussian President St. Shushkhevici proposed that the Moldovan Parliament asks Romania, Bulgaria, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Byelorussia to create and send military forces, in order to facilitate the disengagement of the parties in the Transdniestrian conflict. All heads of states accepted that proposal, including Moldovan President Mircea Snegur. However, later, none of the aforementioned countries, besides Romania and Russian Federation, responded to the invitation from the Moldovan Parliament. Meanwhile, the Russian Federation did not accept the presence of the Romanian peacekeepers. See Gheorge Cojocaru, op. cit., 106-108.

[98] For a more detailed explanation, see Kevin P. O' Prey, "Keeping the Peace in the Borderlands of Russia," in William J. Durch ed., UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1996), 410.

Federation, the Republic of Moldova, and the separatist forces of the Transdniestrian region. The JCC was delegated responsibility to form a peacekeeping contingent and to coordinate all necessary measures, including the activities of the military observers. Consensus was also required for all JCC decisions.[99]

In summary, the aforementioned Convention was not a negotiated compromise between Transdniestria and Moldova, but was an act of capitulation of Moldova to Russia. As Richard Betts mentions "there are two ways to stop a war: either one side imposes its will after defeating the other on the battlefield, or both sides accept a negotiated compromise."[100] Signing the aforementioned Convention suggests a negotiated compromise. Neither side *de jure* has won. The Transdniestrian separatists did not achieve their goal of separation and the Moldovan legal authorities did not reestablish legal control over the territories east of the Dniester River. However, *de facto* Transdniestrian separatist authorities with support from the Russian Federation have won the war. They achieved recognition of special status within Moldova and total control over the captured territories. Moreover, by signing this Convention, the Republic of Moldova accepted the special status of the Transdniestrian region and its military formations, the presence of the military forces of the Russian Federation on the territory for an unlimited period of time, and excluded Romania, its natural ally from the peace process and practically was left alone to confront political, military and economic pressures from the Russian Federation. Practically, the Republic of Moldova, because of the direct involvement of the Russian Federation in internal affairs, did not negotiate a compromise but lost the war against Transdniestrian separatism and was forced to capitulate, reinforced by the structure and operational characteristics of the peacekeeping mission, and discussed in the next section. However, despite all strategic disadvantages leading to the signing of the aforementioned Convention for the Republic of Moldova, it did contribute to the end of violence, the improvement of the political climate, and overall, to the return to a peaceful environment.

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99 Gheorge Cojocaru, op. cit., 106-108; Ion Constantin, "Peace Consolidation Mission Moldova"-Parties and Interests," http://www.azi.md/investigation?ID=25351, last accessed 02/15/2004.

100 Richard Betts, "The Delusion of Impartial Intervention," Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, (U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001), 287.

2.   Peacekeeping as a Shield for Transdniestrian State Building

The conventional wisdom is that peacekeeping creates better conditions for negotiation and reconciliation between the disputants.[101] Another approach is that peacekeeping operations actually inhibit negotiations or lead to their stagnation. Peacekeeping, according to this approach, removes the necessity for immediate political resolution, thus removing some of the incentives for negotiations or concessions.[102] Thus, in some cases, decreasing the level of hostility creates difficulties in achieving a final resolution to the conflict.[103] The author argues that the Moldovan peacekeeping operation is an example that mostly fits the second approach. It contributed to the normalization of life on both sides of the Dniester River, and at the same time, created a status quo situation, which is still preferred by the Transdniestrian administration and serves as a shield for its state building.

With the introduction of the peacekeeping forces, the conflicting parties took significant steps in withdrawing their personnel and military equipment from the occupied position. Life on both sides of the river began to return to normal as the parties unblocked the roads, conducted a significant campaign to clear the minefields and to confiscate illegally possessed weapons. Some refugees returned to their homes. Since 1992, the cease fire was never broken, and none of the incidents were related to the conflict. As a result, the economic development of both regions improved in comparison to the period of conflict. Peacekeeping forces were involved in many of the aforementioned processes. Thus, the introduction of peacekeeping forces overall contributed to the normalization of the situation in the region.

Neutrality and operational characteristics are two of the most important conditions for successful peacekeeping missions. Paul F. Diehl mentions three major means of neutrality: 1) the troops cannot be drawn from states that have an interest in the conflict at

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[101] In support of this argument, see Augustus Richard Norton and Thomas Weiss, "Rethinking Peacekeeping," in Indar Jit Rikhye and Kjell Skjelsbaek, eds., *The United Nations and Peacekeeping: Results, Limitations, and Prospects- The Lessons of 40 Years of Experience* (New York, St. Martin's, 1991), 22-31.

[102] Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 102-105.

[103] For this argument, see Donald Wittman, "How a War Ends: A Rational Model Approach," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 23, (1979), 143-163.

hand; 2) peacekeeping forces should not rely on personnel from the major power states, especially the superpowers; and 3) neutrality in composition is suppose to guarantee neutrality in behavior- that the peacekeeping force will not favor one protagonist over another.[104] The same author points out that command, control, and coordination of the peacekeeping mission also significantly contributes to its overall success.[105] If these conditions are not respected, the peacekeeping operation, he argues, cannot be successful and mostly does not contribute to the final solution of the conflict, but creates a status quo situation that might be preferred by one or both of the parties.

In the case of the peacekeeping operation in Moldova, none of these means of neutrality and operational control were respected. The military formations from both parties in the conflict were transformed into peacekeepers and involved in the decision-making process, the Russian federation was interested in the conflict, and the Russian troops favored Transdniestrians over the Moldovans. This combination of factors created a status quo situation, which was a good alternative for the Transdniestrian administration to seriously negotiate or renew fighting.

The peacekeeping contingents from the Russian Federation, the Republic of Moldova and the separatist Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) had been deployed in the security zone during July 31- August 4, 1992.[106] Peacekeeping troops from the Russian Federation and TMR were on the left bank of the river and the Russian Federation and Republic of Moldova were on the right bank.[107] Thus, no Moldovan

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[104] Paul F. Diehl, International Peacekeeping (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 64-65.

[105] Paul F. Diehl, Ibid., 67.

[106] The Joint Control Commission (JCC) established a security zone that was 225 km in length and 12 to 20 km wide. A total of 32 peacekeeping posts were established along the Dniester River in the Central and South Sectors (15 check-points on the left bank of the river and 17 on the right), The numerical force composition of the peace contingent, a Joint Military Commend, and General Staff was established in order to deal with the military aspects of the mission. In addition, the JCC agreed on the numerical force composition of the peacekeeping contingents. It was agreed that the total strength of the contingent would be 4,300 of the active militaries and 800 personnel from the reserve component: Six battalions from the Russian Federation, three battalions from the Republic of Moldova, and three battalions from the separatist authorities of Tiraspol. In the same period,, the JCC created a Joint Military Commend and General Staff in order to deal with the military aspects of the mission. In addition, on August 3, 1992, in order to facilitate control and observation of the peace process, the JCC authorized the presence of 30 military observers in the Security Zone and each party had 10 observers. Since November 1998, 10 Ukrainian observers have also been in the Security Zone, based on the personal knowledge of the author.

[107] Ion Constantin, op. cit., 2.

troops were allowed on the left side of the Dniester River, a fact that from the very beginning created the necessary conditions for the Tiraspol authorities to build their political and military potential separately from the central Moldovan government.

As mentioned previously, the JCC was also created from the representatives of Moldova, TMR and the Russian Federation. The decisions are taken by consensus. Thus, it is obvious that their interests guide the conflicting parties, a fact that, in most of the cases, creates a dead lock situation in the decision-making process. As a result, as Gheorghe Roman, the Moldovan co-chairman of the Joint Control Commission mentioned in July 2000

> contrary to its status, the peacekeeping contingent did not exert a real control in the security zone. Neither the peacekeepers nor the JCC holds accurate information regarding Tiraspol paramilitary forces in the security zone, the number of or armament available.[108]

Thus, the operational control of the peacekeeping forces is also contributing to the creation of the status quo situation, which benefits the Transdniestrian administration.

As mentioned previously as well, the main component of the peacekeeping forces was from the Russian Federation, which was directly involved in the conflict with evident interests in it. Taking into consideration that the other two contingents are from conflicting parties, the role of the Russian contingent becomes even more important as its neutrality is the main factor of the peace process. However, Russian activities in that operation are anything but neutral as they permanently ignore Transdniestrian violations of the truce agreement, support the Transdniestrian administration, and occasionally interfere with the OSCE Observer Mission's efforts to investigate Transdniestrian behavior.[109] Shortly after the introduction of the peacekeeping forces, the Transdniestrian separatist government, with a silent blessing of the Russian troops, peacekeepers as well as the leadership of the Fourteenth Army started to form more military formations in the

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[108] "Chisinau JCC Co-Chairman Calls for Reorganization of Peacekeeping Forces in Transnistria," BASA-PRESS, (July 26, 2000), http://www.azi.md/news?ID=3378, last accessed 03/20/04.

[109] By the end of 1994, Tiraspol illegal authorities concentrated in the Security Zone besides authorized formations, three motorized rifle brigades, a frontier detachment and several Cossacks detachments with a total strength over 3,500 personnel, See Kevin P. O' Prey, "Keeping the Peace in the Borderlands of Russia," Ibid., 441

Security Zone, thus consolidating their positions against a constitutional government of Moldova.[110] Thus, that conclusion may be that Russian peacekeeping forces served as a shield for Transdniestrian state building.

Furthermore, by the end of 1994, the Russian Federation, contrary to the "Convention regarding the principles of a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova," signed on July 21, 1992, unilaterally withdrew four of the six peacekeeping battalions leaving a military contingent of only 650 personnel in that area. Official explanation for the downsizing of the Russian peacekeeping contingent was a lack of financial resources to support it.[111] However, by that time, the Transdniestrian Armed Forces were based on the strength of Moldova's government forces. The Republic of Moldova protested the unilateral actions of the Russian Federations fearful "that it was losing an important buffer between its military and the superior Transdniestrian forces, which appeared poised to occupy the positions vacated by the departing Russian units."[112] Currently, all parties reduced their peacekeeping forces to the strength of 450-500 personnel. Consequently, the Transdniestrian separatist authorities and Moldova's constitutional government withdrew all their armored personnel carriers (APC), leaving only Russian APCs in the peacekeeping contingent.[113] On the other hand, Transdniestrian non-peacekeeping forces are still located in the Security Zone. These facts once again demonstrate Russian support for Transdniestrian authorities.

In summary, the cease-fire agreement in July 1992 was an act of capitulation of the Republic of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova at the time accepted the only available solution because of Russian interference in the peace settlement process and unwillingness of the international community to challenge Russian dominance. However, it has to be acknowledged that the introduction of the peacekeeping forces facilitated the implementation of the cease-fire agreement and made a significant contribution to the

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[110] Ion Constantin, op. cit., 2.

[111] See "Stanovlienie i razvitie Prednestrovskoi Moldavskoi Respubliky v mirnoe vremia: 1993-1994 qodi," available at http://www.olvia.idknet.com/confl1993-94.htm, last accessed 05/04/04.

[112] Kevin P. O' Prey, "Keeping the Peace in the Borderlands of Russia," op. cit., 441.

[113] The last APCs have been withdrawn from the Security Zone under the OSCE and JCC control in July 2003.

process of stopping the violence in the region. However, the composition, stationing and partial attitude of the Russian contingent also facilitated the process of legalization and strengthening of the administrative institutions and military capabilities of the illegal separatist government. These facts suggest, as Mihai Gribincea, a political annalist from Moldova, mentions, that "With the introduction of Russian peacekeeping forces, Transdniestrian separatist authorities achieved in peaceful manner what they failed to achieve during the armed conflict in the summer of 1992."[114] The status quo situation, created by the signing of this accord, perfectly suits Transdniestrian authorities as it entails no bloodshed, and at the same time, there is no need to offer concessions that affect their interests. Thus, the process of negotiation of a political settlement of the conflict during the last decade was permanently influenced by the Transdniestrian illegal authorities' unwillingness to relinquish anything they believe was achieved by military means and their satisfaction with the status quo, created as a result of the cease fire and the introduction of the peacekeeping forces and Moldova's attempts to regain lost grounds by promoting the policy of inclusion, a process discussed in the next section.

B.   DEVELOPMENT OF TWO DE FACTO INDEPENDENT STATES

The peace-negotiation process between Moldova's government and Tiraspol's authorities in the post-conflict period hardly achieved any significant results. This section argues that in the last decade, the peace-resolution process did not advance very much. Despite the recognition of Moldova, including Transdniestria, as one state, these two regions developed into two de facto separate states, and, at the same time transforming the conflict into an politico-economic one, that mostly benefits the Transdniestrian elites. The Republic of Moldova took a democratic and free market oriented path of development and constantly promotes a course of inclusion with substantial autonomy for the Transdniestrian region, but preserving the unity of the state, because Moldova is not in the position to renounce 11 percent of its territory where 2/3 of its industrial potential is concentrated. However, the economic and political situation, especially after the elections of the Communist majority in 2001, does not facilitate the creation of the necessary conditions to attract the support of Transdniestrian population toward

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114 Mihai Gribincea, *Trupele Ruse în Republica Moldova. Factor Stabilizator sau sursă de pericol?,* (Russian Troops in the Republic of Moldova: Stability Factor or Source of threat?), Chişinău, CIVITAS 1998, 75, translation by the author.

integration. In contrast, Transdniestria evolved into an authoritarian, Soviet-style enclave, with a command economy, which mostly benefits only the elites economically and socially. The Transdniestrian administration, the same as during the military confrontation, is satisfied with the created status quo and is in the position of maintaining the current situation.

This subchapter concludes that the initial causes perceived by the Transdniestrian authorities for their secessionist demands are solved. However, during the last decade, conflict between the central Moldovan administration and Tiraspol authorities has evolved into an politico-economic one that serves the interests of the ruling elites mostly from the Transdniestrian region and the expansionist interests of RF. The Transdniestrian illegal administration, still composed of the same leadership that started the conflict, have built a de facto independent authoritarian state based on old Soviet ideology and encouraged by the attitudes of the external players, promotes a radical position toward the process of negotiations and demands independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. However, in contrast, Moldova underwent several changes in the administration and practically eliminated all the causes that triggered the conflict. However, it could not demonstrate the superiority of the democratic development, thus losing the population's support. Under such conditions, the political solution to the conflict is difficult to achieve and might be possible only with the strong implication of the external actors.

1.   Moldova's Position in the Process of Negotiation

The political and economic development of the Republic of Moldova in the last decade is controversial. The conflict in the Transdniestrian region affects this controversy as well as the process of the final settlement of the conflict.

This section argues that despite many political changes, in the post-conflict period, Moldova promoted a policy of inclusion, offering the Transdniestrian region significant autonomy, while preserving the integrity of the state, as stipulated in the July 1992 "Convention regarding the principles of a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova." The main reason for maintaining the course of state integrity is the economic and geographic position of the Transdniestrian region and its importance for Moldovan development. This section will

conclude that in the last decade, Moldova realized that it cannot deal with the problem the same way as during the conflict and changed its attitudes toward the Transdniestrian region, promoting a policy of inclusion, a democratic path of development and a free market economy. However, the difficulties in the political and economic development of Moldova, as well as the resistance of the Transdniestrian administration contributed to the stagnation of the negotiation process. In addition, the economic and political reforms in the RM did not facilitate the creation of the necessary conditions to attract the support of the Transdniestrian population toward integration, a condition strictly required for the final solution of this conflict.

During the last decade, in order to find a plausible solution to the conflict on its territory, the Chisinau administration eliminated the causes that the Transdniestrian administration presumed triggered the conflict, such as changing the language law in 1994, assuring its independent course of development, rather than integration in Romania, joining the CIS community, and agreeing to synchronize the withdrawal of Russian ammunition by offering Transdniestria an autonomous status. Second, Moldova has undergone significant changes in leadership, thus replacing the hardliners with more moderate leaders. Third, it offered the Transdniestrian region possibilities for economic development by providing it custom seals for external economic activities as part of the RM. Next, in 1997, Moldova accepted the notion of the "equality of parties" in the process of negotiations on the formation of a "common state."[115] Lastly, but not least, the Chisinau administration agreed to the federal construction of the future state. All these facts demonstrate Moldova's intention to achieve a final solution to the Transdniestrian conflict through peaceful means.

By 1994, all of the "causes" of the Transdniestrian conflict were mainly resolved. The Moldovan Constitution, adopted in July 1994, clearly stated the development of the independent state of the Republic of Moldova within its Post- Soviet borders and gave the Transdniestrian region the status of an autonomous region with large political, cultural, and economic privileges. In addition, the constitution stipulated Moldova's course of development as a sovereign and independent state, thus eliminating the fears of

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[115] Igor Botan, "Federalization of the Republic of Moldova-Points of View," MOLDOVA AZI, INVESTIGATIONS, July 28, 2003, http://www.azi.md/news?ID=25123, last accessed 03/20/2004.

integration in Romania. The orientation of the population in the western part of Moldova was also in the support of the independent course of development. One of the surveys conducted in 1992 showed that "less that 10 percent of ethnic Moldovan population supported union with Romania in the short or long term, and when given a choice between the ethnic tags " Romanian" and " Moldovan," some 87 percent of Moldovan-language speakers chose the later."[116] This situation has not changed since then.

Furthermore, in April 1994, the Moldovan Parliament ratified the CIS membership, thus remaining under Russia's sphere of influence. The language law was also changed and the language tests for state employees were suspended. Thus, after 1994, the Republic of Moldova became a de facto bilingual state. Many students from the Transdniestrian region are currently studying in Chisinau and other cities on the right bank of the Dniester River. Finally, in1994, Moldova's administration agreed to synchronize the evacuation of Russian ammunition and troops by offering Transdniestria an autonomous status, thus enhancing Transdniestrian security concerns. In that context, if the conflict was of ethnic origin, these changes should have ended the confrontations between the Transdniestrian and Moldovan administrations and facilitated the final political settlement of the conflict. However, this is not the case.

In the immediate post-conflict period, most of the Moldovan pan-Romanian oriented politicians resigned and were replaced with more neutral politicians. For example, in July 1992, Andrei Sanghely was named Prime Minister and enjoyed substantial support from both ethnic-Moldovans as well as other minorities, including the Russians. Furthermore, since independence, the Republic of Moldova almost every year had major election, such as the presidential elections in 1991, parliamentary elections in1994, local elections in 1995, presidential elections in 1996, parliamentary elections in 1998, local elections in 1998, presidential elections in 2000, parliamentary and presidential elections in 2001, and local elections in 2002. This series of elections resulted in a complete change of the Moldovan leadership in existence since the beginning of the conflict. In addition, in the 2001 parliamentary elections, the Communist

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[116] William Crowther, "The Politics of Ethnic Confrontation in Moldova," paper presented at Woodrow Wilson Center Conference on "High Conflict/Low Conflict: Six Studies," Washington, June 28-30, 1993, cited in Charles King, op. cit., 159.

party won the majority and was willing to take any steps necessary to solve the Transdniestrian conflict. In April 2001, during his first official visit to Moscow, Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin stressed the readiness of ruling party even to change the constitution in order to solve the conflict. However, the only condition, he mentioned, was that the problem should be solved in the framework of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Moldova.[117] These facts once again demonstrated Moldova's readiness to negotiate the final settlement of the conflict, and created its necessary preconditions.

In order to facilitate the economic development of the Transdniestrian region and thus, move forward, the process of negotiations, Moldova's authorities offered Transdniestria the possibility of external economic activities as part of the RM. Thus, in 1997, the Chisinau authorities offered custom seals for external economic activities in hope that the Transdniestrian administration will be more flexible in the process of negotiation. However, this action did not change Tiraspol's position, and as a result, in 2002, Moldova changed custom seals and implemented more actions, directed toward the limitations of the economic possibilities of Transdniestrian enterprises. However, the fact that the Moldovan government offered its customs seals demonstrates, once again, its positive attitude toward the process of negotiations and its willingness to offer Transdniestria considerable autonomy.

In 1997, Moldova took one more step in assuring its readiness to negotiate and to solve the conflict in the shortest possible terms, but at the same time, provided more grounds for resistance to the process of the Transdniestrian administration. "Memorandum on the settlement of the conflict," which was endorsed by the Transdniestrian illegal authorities and Moldovan administration with the assistance of the OSCE in July 1996, introduced the new pattern of relationships between the conflicting parties. The memorandum stated that the parties would "continue the establishment between them of "state-legal relations," statement interpreted by TMR as establishing state-to-state relations. However, the provision that the parties would "build their relations in the framework of a "common state" caused more controversies. Former

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117 William Crowther, op. cit., 159.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Evgenii Primakov, defines the notion of a "common state as a "form of federation with different levels of independence for its constituent parts, and a different scale of delegation of authorities to the Center."[118]   Transdniestrian authorities interpreted that statement to be an equal partnership between the two states. First, the Moldovan government rejected that document, but in May 1997, the newly elected President, Petru Lucinschii, signed the Memorandum with an added annex that explained all the stipulations. The Transdniestrian authorities never acknowledged this annex.[119] Thus, Moldova accepted the notion of the "equality of parties" in the process of negotiations on the formation of a "common state," a fact that once again weakened the Moldovan position but created insights for the Transdniestrian administration to maintain their position in the negotiations.

One more argument in favor of Moldova's position of inclusion is the endorsement by the Chisinau administration of the federal concept of a future state. During the last decade, Moldova was in position to offer Transdniestria significant political, economic, and cultural autonomy, but in the framework of a unitary state. Considering that the Transdniestrian region is de facto an independent state, "granting substantial autonomy to Transdniestria without giving it an incentive to participate in politics at the center would ensure continued separation."[120] Thus, after 2002, Moldova endorsed OSCE's idea of a settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict through the federalization of the Republic, thus offering Transdniestria even more possibilities for self-control. However, Moldova is promoting a plan of an asymmetrical federation, where Transdniestria will, to some extent, depend on the center, a position not shared by the Tiraspol administration.

All the aforementioned facts demonstrate Moldova's position of inclusion of the Transdniestrian region versus its separation. They demonstrate that the presumed causes of the Transdniestrian conflict were solved long ago, thus creating the necessary

[118] See Boris Parakhonsky, "International Cooperation in CEI Area and the Impact of External Factors on the Situation in the Carpathian - Danubean Region," in *New Borders in South Eastern Europe: The Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Romania*, ed. Institute for Public Policy, (Chisinau, Stiinta, 2002), 29.

[119] Steven Roper, op. cit., 12.

[120] ICG Europe Report #147, "Moldova: No Quick Fix," Chisinau/Brussels, August 2003, 15.

conditions for a political solution to the Transdniestrian conflict. However, the political and economic development of the Republic of Moldova during the last decade failed to demonstrate the superiority of the democratic system and free market economy over the centralized authoritarian type of development of Transdniestria, which significantly affected Moldova's ability to attract the Transdniestrian population to integration instead of separation.

However, the question remains, why did Moldova tries so hard to reintegrate the Transdniestrian region? The answer is the geographic and economic importance of that region for Moldova's development. The Republic of Moldova is under the Russian economic sphere of influence. Most of Moldova's exports and imports are going to and from the Russian Federation. All roads, gas pipelines, and most of the electricity lines connecting Moldova with the rest of the CIS countries, pass through Transdniestrian region. Furthermore, if the Republic of Moldova pursues the policy of integration in the EU, it must develop its infrastructure, an impossible process without the implication of the Transdniestrian region. In addition, the western part of Moldova is mostly agrarian, while the Transdniestrian region is highly industrialized as 2/3 of Moldova's industrial potential is concentrated in that region. As shown in Table 2, most of the industrial products of Moldova in 1991 were manufactured in the Transdniestrian region.

Table 2   Transdniestria in the Moldovan Economy, 1991:Regional production as a percentage of the national total (From Charles King)[121]

Large electrical machines	100.0 %
Power transformers	100.0
Gas containers	100.0
Cotton textiles	96.6
Electric energy	87.5
Cement	58.1
Low- horsepower electric engines	55.8
Sheet metal	23.5
Agricultural products	13.1

The aforementioned facts demonstrate the vital significance of the Transdniestrian region for the economic development of the Republic of Moldova. This fact also is

[121] Charles King, op.cit., 115.

understood by the Tiraspol administration and Moscow, and is played against Moldova. Thus, taking into consideration these actions implemented by Moldova's administration and the economic significance of the Transdniestrian region for Moldova, it is possible to conclude that over time the conflict had gained a more politico-economic aspect.

As mentioned previously, during the last decade, Moldova underwent many political changes. Thus, most of the acute economic and political problems were unaddressed, since many political leaders would not risk their political lives by implementing those reforms. As a result, Moldova now is the poorest country in Europe, Albania having overtaken it in 2000. The Republic of Moldova also has the only Communist government left in Europe. The democratic opposition is dispersed and disunited. The Republic of Moldova in 2003 was rated by the Freedom House organization as a "partly free" country with an overall tendency for political rights to decline.[122] Moldova is also one of the most corrupt countries in the world.[123] In 2001, 34.9 percent of the Transdniestrian population considered itself first and foremost, citizens of Transdniestria, 13.9 percent inhabitants of their locality, and only 4.4 percent citizens of Moldova.[124] The conclusion drawn is that population of the Transdniestrian region does not have insight into reuniting with Moldova, a factor that demonstrates that Moldova failed to attract the sympathy of the Transdniestrian inhabitants, which plays a significant role in the peacebuilding process.

Moldova's discontinuity in its political orientation is another cause contributing to the deadlock of the negotiation process. As mentioned previously, the Republic of Moldova is a member of the CIS, and, moreover, the Communist administration promotes the idea of joining the Russia-Belarus Union. Over time, the Communist majority of the Moldovan government also signaled their intention for European integration, declaring that integration in the European community is of vital interest to the

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[122] Table of Independent Countries – 2003, Freedom House, available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2003/table.pdf, last accessed 04/17/04.

[123] According to the 2003 data on Corruption International, Moldova is the 102nd country among 133 countries surveyed, with smaller numbers representing a lower level of corruption. For more information, see "Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index-2003," available at http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2003/cpi2003.en.html, last accessed 04/17/04.

[124] Kulik, Vitaly, op. cit., 268

republic.[125] These two different orientations create confusion over the intent for the future development of Moldova. As Adrian Nastase, Romanian Prime-Minister characterized this situation: "The situation in Chisinau is very difficult, because, besides Transdniestrian problem there is a problem of political identity and an internal battle between political forces over the future orientation of the Republic of Moldova."[126] Thus, Moldovan foreign policy lacks continuity in its political and economic orientation. The Transdniestrian administration uses these facts, which from the beginning, was oriented toward Soviet integration and afterwards Russian integration, to undermine the process of negotiations.
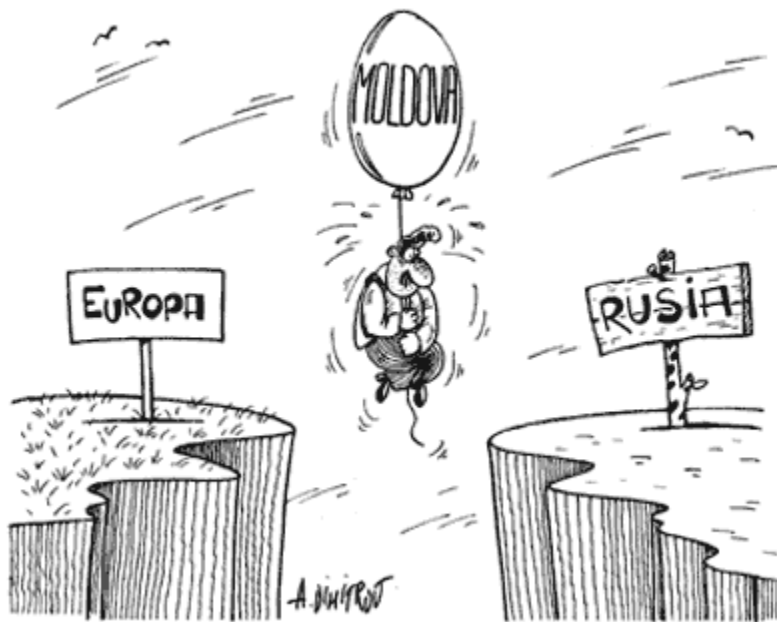
Figure 2.   "Moldova's Dilemma" (From A. Dimitrov)[127]

In summary, in the past decade, the Chisinau administration, understanding the significance of the Transdniestrian region for the development of Moldova, took many

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[125] "Presedintele Parlamentului moldovean a reiterat optiunea guvernarii pentru aderarea la Uniunea Rusia- belorus," BASSA-PRESS, Aril, 3, 2003, available http://www.azi.md/news?ID=23538, last accessed 05/06/04; "Liderii celor trei fractii palamentare au semnat o declaratie comuna privind aderarea Moldovei la Uniunea Europeana," INFOTAG, November,14, 2003 available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=26647, last accessed 05/06/04.

[126] "Romainia, ca si Ucraina sau Rusia, are multe interese in Republica Moldova…," FLUX, December1, 2003, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=26873, last accessed 05/07/04.

[127] A. Dimitrov, "Moldova's Dilemma," Cartoon. Association for Participatory Democracy, available at http://e-democracy.md/en/cartoons/0002/, last accessed 05/06/04.

steps to negotiate a political resolution to the conflict, and agreed to synchronize the Russian ammunition withdrawal by offering Transdniestria autonomous status in 1994, changed the language law in 1994, offered Transdniestria custom seals for external economic activities as part of the RM in 1996, in 1997, accepted the notion of the "equality of parties" in the process of negotiations on the formation of a "common state,"[128] and agreed to the federal construction of the future state. However, the political and economic failure of Moldova's development does not provide a good example of the superiority of democratic development for the Transdniestrian population, which resulted in the failure to attract the sympathy of the Transdniestrian population toward integration. In addition, the Transdniestrian authorities were unwilling to cooperate. Thus, despite political instability in the Republic of Moldova after independence, overall, the policy toward the peaceful solution of the Transdniestrian conflict was constantly inclusive and directed at granting a high level of autonomy to Transdniestria within the borders of the integral Republic of Moldova. Contrarily, Transdniestrian policy represents the opposite case.

2.   Consolidation of Transdniestrian Statehood

In order to achieve a political solution to any conflict, both parties should be willing to cooperate and make compromises, which will benefit both parties in the dispute and eliminate the zero sum game of the confrontation. This section argues that in contrast to Moldova's position in the process of negotiation, Transdniestrian authorities are not cooperative and are satisfied with the current status quo situation. Over time, the Transdniestrian elites consolidated political and economical power and developed economic interests in preserving the conflict. Thus, even if the starting causes of the conflict were eliminated long ago, Tiraspol authorities are unwilling to renounce anything they believe was achieved by military means. In addition, they still promote the image of the Moldovan government as an aggressor, thus maintaining the suspicion of the Transdniestrian population toward the intents of Moldova, a fact that also serves the interests of preserving the conflict.

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[128] Igor Botan, "Federalization of the Republic of Moldova-Points of View," MOLDOVA AZI, INVESTIGATIONS, July 28, 2003, http://www.azi.md/news?ID=25123, last accessed 03/20/2004.

This section will conclude that, during the last decade, the Transdniestrian illegal administration, still composed of the same leadership that started the conflict, have built a de facto independent authoritarian state based on old Soviet ideology and developed economic and social interests in preserving the conflict. The status quo situation, created around this conflict, perfectly suits the aforementioned interests, thus encouraging them to promote a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government.

As mentioned in the previous section, the introduction of peacekeeping forces instead of facilitating the achievement of a political settlement of conflict, created the necessary conditions for the Transdniestrian authorities to strengthen existing institutions and to build new ones, which encourage the Tiraspol administration to resist the final settlement of the conflict. This process was accomplished de facto by September 1994, when the Tiraspol administration announced the introduction of TMR proper currency.[129] However, the accomplishment of the last step of state building resulted when Transdniestria adopted its constitution on December 24, 1995. By this time, the unrecognized Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic had all the attributes of an independent state since it exercised total control over its territory, had established legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government, created a national bank and introduced its own currency, developed an armed forces and police units, introduced customs and border troops, and established state symbols. TMR only locked the seat in the UNO. Furthermore, as Vitaly Kulik argues, by 2002 "compared to Transdniestria, the process of state construction is significantly slowed down in Moldova, related to the change of state administration."[130] Under such conditions, the status quo became a desirable alternative to serious negotiation. Thus, it is not surprising that the negotiation processes is so slow, and practically to date, did not produce any significant political results.

In contrast to Moldovan development, since the military confrontation in 1992, the Transdniestrian leadership did not suffer any significant changes. The same leaders that mobilized the population for military confrontations in order to maintain their

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[129] "Appearing and Development of the Transdniestrian Republic in Peace Time:1993-1994," OLVIA PRESS, available at http://www.olvia.idknet.com/APPEARING%20AND%20DEVELOPMENT.htm, last accessed 05/06/04.

[130] Vitaly Kulik, op. cit., 268.

political and economic status after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, for the last decade, are in the position of power and of negotiating a peaceful settlement to the conflict. In addition, TMR did not embrace the democratic changes and the free market economy. For the last decade, political freedoms have been suppressed and there is only one significant party. Free press and the freedom of speech are absent in the region. As Charles King mentions: "Visitors frequently characterized DMR (TMR) as living museum, were public murals and placards still praised the achievements of the Soviet Union and urged the workers of the world to unite."[131]

Transdniestria's economic system is still based on the Soviet type model. However, the entrepreneurial activities are mostly concentrated in the hands of Smirnov and his allies. Transdniestria also became a haven for weapons smuggling and illegal entrepreneurs. As Hryhory Perepelitsa, from Ukrainian National Institute for Strategic Studies argues, "In conditions when Chisinau has the legal right to supervise legal export of production from Transdniestria, smuggling in this republic became state business."[132] As many analysts demonstrate, the two sons of Igor Smirnov are in charge of that process. In addition, Transdniestrian leadership did not implement the process of privatization of the state enterprises, but managed to preserve and even to improve the existing economic-industrial complex of the TMR, thus increasing their possibility to extract resources for state building. As a result, since 1996, the GDP per capita in Transdniestria was always 1.5-2 times higher than in Moldova.[133] However, the living conditions of the population are even worse than in the rest of Moldova and the state debt to Russia is almost two times larger than the debt of Moldova. These facts suggest that Transdniestrian authorities are extracting economic benefits mostly for themselves and the current situation of the conflict is benefiting the Transdniestrian elites. Thus, the conflict changed its aspect and became more a politico-economic dispute.

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[131] Charles King, op. cit., 208.

[132] Hryhory Perepelitsa, op. cit.,

[133] Vitaly Kulik, op. cit., 268.

In addition, in order to preserve their power, the Transdniestrian authorities are not only building the state institutions but are also creating Transdniestria's own identity.[134] Furthermore, until now, Transdniestrian propaganda (ideological education) is oriented toward the creation of a Moldovan image as aggressors and even fascists. The Transdniestrian administration is suppressing central Moldovan channels and newspapers by any means possible, as well creating unfavorable conditions for schooling in Romanian. Thus, it is possible to conclude that Tiraspol authorities are interested in the maintenance of tensions between the Transdniestrian and Moldovan population, a fact that permits them to manipulate their population much easier.

The Transdniestrian government sees the presence of the Russian militaries as vital to their security. In 1994, when the Russian and Moldovan Presidents agreed to a three-year timeframe for the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops and ammunitions from the territory of Moldova, the Transdniestrian authorities protested that decision and nationalized all the military arsenals of the Fourteenth Russian Army.[135] The Transdniestrian authorities also asserted pressure on the Russian Federation to withdraw from the 1999 Istanbul commitments, where Russia agreed to withdraw its military arsenal and personnel from the Republic of Moldova by 2002. The author believes that this result from the benefits they receive from the partial attitude of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. In the opinion of the Transdniestrian administration, the introduction of a multinational contingent with the participation of the EU would only escalate the conflict. In that contest, as mentioned previously, Moldovan statements about European integration are creating the necessary foundation for Transdniestrian resistance to the unification process.

In summary, the Convention signed in July 1992, despite its contribution to the normalization of the situation on the Dniester River, overall, did not facilitate the final solution of the conflict. The Republic of Moldova accepted the only solution available at the time because of Russian interference in the peace settlement process and

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[134] In 1991, most of the Transdniestrian population considered themselves citizens of the Soviet Union. In 2001, 34.9 percent of the Transdniestrian population considered themselves first and foremost citizens of Transdniestria, 13.9 percent considered themselves inhabitants of their locality, and only 4.4 percent consider themselves citizens of Moldova. Vitaly Kulik, op. cit., 268.

[135] Steven Roper, op. cit.

unwillingness of the international community to challenge Russian dominance. The ceasefire agreement and introduction of the peacekeeping forces in the Republic of Moldova did not solve the conflict, but contributed to the creation of a status quo situation, that benefited Transdniestrian development as an independent state and as a result, negatively influenced the negotiating process. The Transdniestrian illegal administration, still composed of the same leadership that started the conflict, has built a de facto independent authoritarian state based on old Soviet ideology and developed economic and social interests in preserving the conflict. The status quo situation, created around this conflict, perfectly suits the aforementioned interests, thus encouraging them to promote a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. In contrast, Moldova underwent several changes in administration, and practically eliminated all the causes that triggered the conflict, but however, could not demonstrate the superiority of the democratic development, thus losing the support of the population. Thus, over time, the Transdniestrian conflict evolved into a politico-economic confrontation between the elites of both sides. Under such conditions, a political solution to the conflict is difficult to achieve. As a result of the failure of the locally driven conflict-resolution process, international involvement becomes even more important and is the only path to follow.

IV. POST- CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT: POSITIONS AND INTEREST OF EXTERNAL ACTORS

Only the local actors are capable of creating the institutions and inclusive habits of governance that inhibit civil wars. But it is external parties that typically have the capacity to shape, directly or indirectly, the environment in which these dramas play out and - once a conflict spiral has begun - to influence the options available and the choices made by local actors.[136]

Chester Crocker

Most International interventions since the end of the Cold War were not driven by the material interests of the outside powers but by their moral interests: securing peace and Justice. Peace and justice, however, are not natural allies, unless right just happens to coincide with might.[137]

Richard Betts

When outside parties do not agree in their analyses of a conflict or what should be done to move a peace process forward, the effect can all too easily be to confuse the parties or, worse, encourage them to engage in maneuvering, shop for the most sympathetic outsiders, or simply play for time.[138]

Chester Crocker

In the post Soviet era, external players, although they did not create the conflicts, have played a major role in the course and resolution of conflicts.[139] In that context, Chapter IV analyses the process of post conflict resolution, stressing the positions and interests of external actors: the Russian Federation (RF), Ukraine, Romania, the United States (US), the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union (EU).

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[136] Chester A. Crocker, "Intervention: toward Best Practices and a Holistic View," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., _Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict,_(U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001) 238,

[137] Richard Betts, "The Dissolution of Impartial Intervention" in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Olster Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., _Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict_, (U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington, 2001), 293.

[138] Chester Crocker, "Intervention: Toward Best Practices and a Holistic View," op. cit., 243.

[139] Kevin P. O' Prey, "Keeping the Peace in the Borderlands of Russia," op. cit., 409.

From the very beginning of the conflict, all of the aforementioned countries and organizations generally support Moldova's territorial integrity and peaceful solution of the conflict. Transdniestrian independence is not officially recognized by any of the previously mentioned actors, and secession as a solution to this conflict is strongly opposed by all, including the conflict actors. However, their personal interests dictate the level of involvement of those actors and their commitment to the peace process, which explains why international actors do not agree on the methods for resolving this conflict. Disagreement between international mediators and guarantors on the methods of a solution to the Transdniestrian conflict is also one of the reasons why it is currently impossible to solve this conflict and might be prolonged for many years in the future.

In that context, this chapter argues that the permanent deadlock in the process of the negotiations of the Transdniestrian conflict is not only the result of disagreements between internal actors, but also is caused by the attitudes and interests of the external players. The author argues that the Russian Federation is interested in maintaining the conflict as it is, or its solution should provide maintenance of Moldova under the Russian sphere of influence, thus Russians view the presence of military forces in the region as a tool of exercising that influence. Ukraine is becoming an important player, because it is one of the guarantors of the negotiation process. Taking into consideration its orientation toward Russia, the author argues that the Ukrainian role in the negotiation process is subordinated to Russian interests. Romania was a very active supporter of independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. However, in 1992, it was excluded from the negotiation process. The author argues that, in the last decade, Romania concentrated its efforts in the direction of integration in NATO and EU. That fact, as well as the hostile attitude of Chisinau after the election of the Communist majority in 2001, determines Romania's lack of involvement in the negotiation process.

Accordingly, the Republic of Moldova is not one of the main areas of interest of the western powers, thus limiting their implication in the conflict only indirectly through the OSCE and at the same time, trying not to disrupt their relations with Russia. However, the biggest concern of the United States and EU is the presence of a large arsenal of Russian weapons and ammunitions in the Transdniestrian region and its great potential of being smuggled to terrorist organizations and into the areas of conflict around

the world. Both the United States and EU hold firm on this issue: Russia must to withdraw or destroy its military arsenal in Moldova and Russian troops must leave that neutral country. The OSCE is the main representative of Western interests in the process of negotiations. However, because of its weaknesses and Russian influence in the organization, it is not effective in promoting the peace process. However, if strongly supported by the western powers and organizations, in the future, it might be a decisive player in that process. With the latest expansion of NATO and future expansion of the European Union, the Western powers as well as the Russian Federation have increased their concerns about the status of Russian troops in the Transdniestrian region and the status of the Transdniestrian conflict. This fact will contribute to the intensification of the negotiation process and changes in attitudes of many external players toward this conflict.

A.   RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND ITS INTERESTS

The Russian Federation was always interested in that region. As argued in Chapter II, since 1812, Moldova was under the control of Russia. Thus, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia follows a course that maintained their influence in the post Soviet regions. Taking into account Russia's weakness compared with the West, it is forced to cooperate with western organizations such as NATO and EU. However, concerning the CIS countries, including Moldova, Russia supports the process of maintenance of stability in the former European post-Soviet space, but based on exclusive Russian political, economic and military domination.

This subchapter argues that Russia's position in the process of negotiation is based on its interests in dominating the region. It views Transdniestria as a "key" to maintaining Moldova under its influence. However, despite evident support for the secessionist authorities, the Russian Federation did not recognize Transdniestria Moldovan Republic as independent, but was in favor of a special status for TMR in the integral Republic of Moldova and does not support the option of partition as method of resolving this conflict.[140] Thus, by supporting the Transdniestrian authorities, Russia

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[140] One of the main reasons for non-recognition of TMR independence by the Russian Federation, despite the pressures from the radical nationalists in the Duma and in the military, was a possible effect that recognition would have on some regions inside the Russian Federation (Chechnya, Dagestan). In addition, the Transdniestrian unrecognized administration openly supported the putschists in August 1991 and during the events in October 1993.

encourages the status quo situation, and at the same time, assures control over the political and economic development of Moldova. The status quo situation gives Russia legitimacy in maintaining a military presence in the region, a factor, combined with the expansion of NATO and EU, becomes much more important not only for Moldova's-Russia relations, but also on the international level. Thus, the final settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict is not in the interests of the Russian Federation.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, RF developed an economic interest in the RM. The economical development of the Republic of Moldova during the last decade is mainly oriented toward Russian markets and dependent on RF imports, especially energy. In the period from 1993 to 2003, Russia has the lead in investing in the statutory capital of Moldovan enterprises.[141] Moldova's dependency on Russian energy is evident. Over a half of Moldova's energy resources are imported from Russia. *"Gazprom,"* the Russian Oil Company, has a controlling share in the Moldovan energy company "Moldova-GAZ." Out of more than a billion USD of foreign debt, more than half the debt is to *"Gazprom."*[142] The Transdniestrian region is almost in the same situation. Thus, the economic development of Moldova in the last decade created a situation of dependency on the RF and ensured a place for Moldova in the Russian economic sphere of influence.

In addition, the economic domination of the Russian Federation over the Moldovan economy creates favorable conditions for exercising influence over the political decisions of the Moldovan Government. During the military confrontation between Moldova's central government and the Transdniestrian authorities in 1992, Russia, in order to soften Moldova's position, imposed an economic blockade. Since then, whenever Moldova tries to implement policies contrary to the Russian interests, Russia threatens Moldova by raising oil and gas prices or with disconnection from energy resources and thus creating a dependency situation on Moscow for Moldova's political development.

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[141] In the period 1993-2003, the Russian Federation invested than 156 mil. dollars in Moldovan enterprises more representing 36 percent of total investments.

[142] Vitaly Kulik, "Settlement of the Transdniestrian Conflict as a Way to the Creation of the Regional Stability Zone in Eastern Europe." in *New Borders in South Eastern Europe: The Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Romania*, ed Institute for Public Policy, (Chisinau, Stiinta, 2002), 266.

The constitution of the Republic of Moldova asserts that it is a neutral state. In that context, the presence of foreign militaries on its soil is prohibited. However, until now, Russia still has large quantities of ammunitions and military equipment in the Transdniestrian region of Moldova. In addition to the peacekeeping forces, Russia also has an insignificant number of military personnel, who are responsible for protecting military storages. Therefore, the RM, with the support of the international community, permanently declares the need to withdraw completely the Russian military presence from the region. Thus, in August 1994, the Russian and Moldovan Presidents agreed to a three-year period for the complete withdrawal of the Fourteenth Army. The treaty signed by the prime-ministers of aforementioned countries with the participation of the representatives from TMR, acknowledged the temporal status of the Russian troops.[143] Soon afterwards, the Russian president, challenged by the militaries and ultranationalists from the Duma, "began backing away from the 1994 agreement," but by May 1995, the Fourteenth Army has been downsized to a division and renamed the "Operational Group of Russian Forces."[144]

However, as Boris Parakhonsky from the Ukrainian National Institute of Strategic studies mentions, "The maintenance of the military presence in the Transdniestrian conflict zone is viewed by Russia as a sort of pressure leverage not only in the process of peaceful settlement, but also in the internal process in Moldova, in its foreign policy and in general development of the political and economic situation beyond Russia's borders."[145] Under pressure from the international community, the RF in November 1999, during the OSCE Summit in Istanbul, agreed to withdraw their military presence in

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[143] Gheorghe Cojocaru, op. cit., 139.

[144] The main figure in the military opposition was General Alexander Lebed', Commander of the Fourteenth Army. He believed that the Russian Amy should stay in the region. Lebed had significant authority in military circles as well as with Transdniestrian Authorities. He was named an honored citizen of the Bender city, and for a short period of time, even held a seat in the Transdniestrian Parliament. Due to the confrontations with President Yeltsin, he resigned in June 1995 and started a political career. In 1996, he ran for President of RF and won 15 percent of the electorate's vote. For more information, see P. O' Prey, op. cit., 439-440 and 462-463.

[145] Boris, Parakhonsky, "International Cooperation in CEI Area and the Impact of External Factors on the Situation in the Carpathian - Dannubian Region," in *New Borders in South Eastern Europe: The Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Romania*, ed., Institute for Public Policy, (Chisinau, Stiinta, 2002), 28.

Moldova until the end of 2002.[146] However, in the fall of 2002, RF declared that it cannot respect the assumed obligations, because of the uncooperative attitude of the Transdniestrian administration. At the ministerial OSCE Meeting in Porto, the terms of Russian withdrawal were extended until December 31, 2003. By the end of 2003, the RF once again did not fulfill its obligations. This time the RF made it clear that it does not have any intention to withdraw unconditionally its military presence from the region and it does not accept any terms. Additionally, by this time, the RF, instead of withdrawing from the region illegally transferred large quantities of heavy weapons, ammunitions as well as personnel to the Transdniestrian Armed Forces, de facto building a loyal Army.[147] The aforementioned facts demonstrate that the RF prefers the current status quo situation over the final solution, which would not satisfy their military, political and economic interests.

With the expansion of NATO in April 2004 to include Romania as a full member of the organization, and the planned enlargement of the EU in 2007, thinking in realist terms, the new frontier between the West and East would be the frontier of Moldova and Romania. Under such conditions, the presence of Russian troops in Moldova enhances the strategic meaning for Russian security, at the same time, raising concerns of the western organizations. Thus, the aforementioned facts, once again demonstrate that Russia's position on the Transdniestrian conflict will still be directed by the possibility of maintaining its military presence in the region, a fact that cannot be accepted by the RM and the international community.

Taking into account the aforementioned interests of the Russian Federation, despite official Russian support for Chisinau, at the same time, encourages the Transdniestrian leaders to maintain their uncooperative attitude toward the process of negotiations, thus preserving their influence and military presence in the region. In that context, after the cease-fire agreement, achieved in 1992, Russia equipped and trained the

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[146] "Istanbul Summit Declaration," available at http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/istadecl99e.htm, last accessed 05/05/04.

[147] Vladimir Socor, "Dela Istambul 1999 la Istambul 2004," Radio Free Europe, April, 23, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/comment?ID=28909, last accessed 05/05/04 (MOLD)

military forces of TMR,[148] provided financial and technical support, and encouraged its leadership to pursue secessionist policies.[149] Recently, on May 17 2004, the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Vladimir Isacov, responsible for the evacuation of the military arsenal from Moldova, visited the Republic of Moldova, without even informing the Chisinau authorities of the purpose of his visit.[150] These facts demonstrate Russian interests in preserving the current status of the conflict and their support of the Transdniestrian administration.

In summary, Russian involvement in the process of negotiation is driven not by the intent of promoting justice and peace, but by the personal interests of maintaining politico-economical control over the region. Therefore, the status of the Russian troops in the Republic of Moldova is a very important politico-economic tool in achieving Russian goals. In addition, with the latest expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russian military presence in the Transdniestrian region is not only a significant factor of Russian politico-economic interests but also an important security factor. Thus, the final solution to the Transdniestrian conflict does not serve Russian interests since it eliminates the need to maintain its military presence in the region. Accordingly, the presence of the Russian military contingent in the region is the cornerstone for Russian acceptance of any solution to the conflict. Under such conditions, the attitudes of Ukraine and Romania toward the conflict in Moldova and their relations with Russia are significantly important.

B.   ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS OF THE NEIGHBORING STATES OF UKRAINE AND ROMANIA

Romania and Ukraine are two neighbors of the Republic of Moldova and very important strategic partners. Since the very beginning of the Transdniestrian conflict,

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[148] In 1993, some of the authors colleagues from the Russian airborne academy had been assigned to train Transdniestrian special battalion "Dniestr." From a conversation with them, the author concluded that they were not the only ones and this battalion was not the only one that had Russian instructors.

[149] In the last decade, Transdniestrian president Igor Smirnov, was decorated with two Russian orthodox distinctions, the medal of "Victorious Saint George" and "Pitter the Great", which were blessed by the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia and approved by the Russian government. In April 2004, Igor Smirnov received one more distinction, "Russian Slava", for personal contributions to the process of a peaceful resolution of the Transdniestrian conflict. In addition, he was introduced in the book of Russian remarkable persons. See "Russia is Openly Encouraging Igor Smirnov," TIMPUL, available at http://www.timpul.md/Article.asp?idIssue=28&idRubric=513&idArticle=1268, last accessed 05/17/04. (Mold)

[150] "The Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation is in Moldova without Having Any Intention to Meet with Moldovan Authorities," FLUX, May 18, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=29126, last accessed 05/18/04.

both countries were involved in the negotiation process. The first attempts to stop the violence on the Dniester River were made in the quadripartite forum of Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova. However, after the July 1992 cease-fire agreement between Russia and the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Romania were practically excluded from the negotiations. However, Ukraine was again invited to participate as a guarantor of negotiations in 1995, while Romania still only influences the conflict indirectly through international organizations.

1.   Ukrainian Position and Perspectives

Ukraine, as a neighbor of Moldova has security, economic and ethnic ties with the latter. Ukrainians in the Republic of Moldova are the second largest minority comprising 13.8 percent of the total population. Their representation in the Transdniestrian region is even higher (28.3 percent), thus increasing the role of Ukraine in the socio-economic and political development of both Moldova and Transdniestria. As a result, the idea of uniting Transdniestria to Ukraine becomes increasingly popular among Transdniestrian Ukrainians.[151] The aforementioned factor also was one of the causes why, in 1995, both conflicting parties invited Ukraine to participate in the peace process and it became one of the guarantors of the negotiations. In addition, there were some proposals for replacing the Moldovan and Transdniestrian contingency of the peacekeeping forces with one from Ukraine.

In addition, economic exchanges between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are permanently increasing. In 1996, Ukraine signed a free trade agreement with Moldova, a factor that stipulated the economic exchange between these two countries. In 2000, the amount of foreign trade turnover between Ukraine and Moldova (including Transdniestria) increased by 43.4 percent in 1999 and placed Moldova second after Russia regarding the export of Ukrainian goods. In addition, many large enterprises from both parts of Moldova maintain close economic relations with firms from Ukraine.[152] However, this economic exchange might be even greater, if the conflict between

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[151] Vitaly Kulic, op. cit., 268.

[152] For more information, see Vitaly Kulic, op. cit., 269.

Transdniestria and Moldova would be resolved. In such a situation, Ukraine is interested in a peaceful settlement to the Transdniestrian conflict, which might resolve the customs issues and increase the flow of goods.

At the same time, Ukraine has security concerns over the contraband passing through the country from the Transdniestrian region, thus negatively influencing its economy as well as increasing the criminal climate in Ukraine. In 2001, one third of the confiscated firearms in Ukraine originated in the Transdniestrian region and 83 percent of the total volume of narcotic row material apprehended by the Ukrainian customs and border troops occurred at the Ukrainian-Moldovan border on the Transdniestrian controlled sector.[153] In addition, of the annually 1 million tons of mineral oil used by Moldova, almost half is imported illegally through Ukraine and Transdniestrian territories, thus neither Ukraine nor Moldova benefit from the taxation of these products. Thus, these interests of national security are also influencing Ukrainian position in the negotiations.

However, Ukraine places a much higher priority on its relations with Russia than with Moldova.[154] Under such conditions, Ukrainian administration has the tendency to support the Russian course of a political settlement of the conflict, and as a result, will also take a favorable attitude toward Transdniestria, indicating that Ukraine is losing its capabilities as an independent guarantor of the conflict-regulating process, thus making Russia the most powerful player in that process.

2. Romanian Position and Perspectives

As discussed in Chapter II, Romania has tight historical relations with the Republic of Moldova.[155] Taking into consideration the historical development, traditions, demography of the population, national values, and language, the Republic of Moldova might be considered a second Romanian state, thus a more direct implication of Romania

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[153] Hryhory Perepelitsya, "The Influence of Regional Factors on Possible Scenarios of Development of Moldovan-Transdniestrian-Ukrainian Relations," in *New Borders in South Eastern Europe: The Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Romania*, ed Institute for Public Policy, (Chisinau, Stiinta, 2002), 279

[154] In September 2003, Ukraine, Russia, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan created a new economic union. Ukraine signed that accord with some amendments that some stipulations of the accord are contradict the constitution. In May 2004, the presidents of the aforementioned countries will meet in Kiev to analyze "what was achieved and what has to be done." See INTERFAX, available at http://www.interfax.kiev.ua/eng/go.cgi?31,20040423008, last accessed 05/07/03.

[155] For more information, see Chapter II of the thesis.

in the process of a political settlement of this conflict is expected.[156] However, Romania in the last decade, directed its policy toward integration into NATO and EU, and involvement in the conflict did not benefit these aspirations of the Bucharest administration, thus determining its policy of influencing the process of negotiations only indirectly through the international and regional organizations.

In 1991, when the Republic of Moldova proclaimed its independence, Romania was the first country to recognize its independence. It also made many appeals at the international level in favor of international recognition of the new establish country. At the same time, Romania was actively involved in the process of initiating negotiations over the cease-fire agreement between the Transdniestrian authorities and Moldovan political elites. Romania was also one of the countries ready to send peacekeeping forces to stop the violence. However, at the same time, it was viewed by the Transdniestrian administration as a potential aggressor. As a result, the same as Ukraine, after the July 1992 Peace Accord, Romania was excluded from the negotiation process.[157] Thus, since 1992, Romania participates actively in the cultural development of Moldova, but does influence directly neither the political development, nor the process of the final settlement of the conflict.

There are two main reasons for such an attitude on the part of the Romanian administration. First, the Bucharest administration is pursuing the course of integration in NATO and EU and second, Moldova's administration does not want closer political support from Romania.

After 1992, the relationship between the Romanian and Moldovan governments range from very warm to the point of almost interrupting the state of affairs. Traditionally, the governments had a very good relationship, especially in the economic sphere, education and culture, health protection, and protection of common historical places. To show the special status of the relationship between those two countries, in 2000, the Presidents of Moldova and Romania decorated each other with the highest

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156 "Presedintele Ion Iliescu a declarat ca Romainia nu are pretenzii teritoriale sin u se amesteca in treburile interne ale Republicii Moldova," INFOTAG, April 24, 2002, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=18790, last accessed 05/07/04.

157 Gheorghe Cojocaru, op. cit., 76-110.

distinctions of their states.[158] These relations deteriorated dramatically with the election of the Communist majority in the Moldovan Parliament. In 2002, Moldovan authorities accused Romania of interference in its internal affairs and declared some Romanian diplomats persona non grata.[159] In response, Bucharest denied all the accusations and reaffirmed their willingness to cooperate. However, they also accused Moldovan Communist authorities of violating human rights and liberties, and stopping the logical development of the country toward democracy and rule of law, and expelled one of the Moldovan diplomats.[160] This conflict escalated to the point that the Counsel of Europe had to discuss it.[161] Thus, despite the similar origins of the Romanians and Moldovans, their relations in the political sphere are instable and are mostly hostile to each other, triggered by the attitudes of the Russia oriented Communist majority, which came to Moldova because of 1992 Parliamentary elections.

The second explanation of Romania's attitude toward the RM and the conflict in the Transdniestrian region is its political course of development. In the last decade, Romania directed its foreign policy more toward NATO and EU integration. As a result, in April 2004, Romania was accepted as a full member in NATO and is scheduled to join the European Union in 2007. In order to be accepted into the EU, Romania must meet some criteria and undergo some changes in its political and economic development. In order to meet these criteria, Romania does not promote an aggressive policy of integration with Moldova, a fact feared by the Transdniestrian population. It builds its relations with Moldova mostly in accordance with its course of integration into the EU.

However, in the future, Romania might play a more significant role in the development of both the RM and the peace settlement process. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the RM declared European integration its strategic goal. In the case of a

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[158] "Republica Moldova si Romania au declarat cite un diplomat "persona non grata cite" cite un diplomat din ambasadele din Chisinau si Bucuresti," INFOTAG, March 14, 2002, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=18175, last accessed 05/07/04.

[159] Ibid.

[160] "Presedintele Ion Iliescu a declarat ca Romainia nu are pretenzii teritoriale sin u se amesteca in treburile interne ale Republicii Moldova," INFOTAG, April 24, 2002, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=18790, last accessed 05/07/04.

[161] "Vladimir Filipov: Consiliul Europei nu-si va asuma rolul de mediator direct intre Romania si Republica Moldova," FLUX, October 15, 2003, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=26207, last accessed 05/07/04.

serious orientation of the Republic of Moldova toward the European Union, Romania would be the connecting bridge, at the same time, if not thinking in realist terms, the new frontier between the West and East would be the frontier of Moldova and Romania. Thus, Romanian policy would be directed not only by its own interests and aspirations, but also by the interests of NATO and the European Union, organizations that until now, had minor involvement in the solution of this conflict.

In summary, Ukraine is becoming an important player in Russian interests, at the same time, preserving its economic interests. Due to its economic and security interest as well as trust from both parties in the conflict, Ukraine can be involved even more in the process of negotiation as well as peacekeeping operations in the region. However, the introduction of Ukrainian peacekeepers will not significantly change the situation, because of the political orientation of Ukraine toward Russia, thus supporting its course of settlement of this conflict. Romanian foreign policy is directed toward integration with the European Union and NATO, thus their attitudes toward the settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict is directed by these aspirations. In addition, neither Moldova nor Transdniestria wants Romania's involvement in the process of negotiations. However, with the acceptance of Romania in NATO and the EU, it can play a significant role in the process, but again indirectly only through these organizations.

C.   THE UNITED STATES, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THEIR INTERESTS

This subchapter argues that the U.S. interests in the Transdniestrian conflict are mostly related to the establishment of effective control over the large Russian military arsenal, concentrated on the left bank of the Dniester River and the withdrawal of the Russian military presence from the region, thus diminishing Russian military dominance over Moldova. The author also argues that EU involvement in the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict mainly derives from security concerns, and will increase with the expansion of the Union to include Romania.

1.   The United States and its Perspectives

U.S. interest in the Transdniestrian conflict is primarily related to the presence of the Russian arsenal in the region. After the terrorists attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, the Bush administration increased its interest and involvement in the

former Soviet regions directly related to the war on terrorism and countries of the "axis of evil". Thus, with the conflict in Balkans and involvement in the building of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United Stats is not very interested in the development of the Transdniestrian conflict. Nevertheless, because of the large quantity of ammunitions in the Transdniestrian region, with the real potential of being smuggled to support terrorist organizations, the United States would still be involved in the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict, only indirectly through OSCE, and may change its attitudes if evidence of the supply of weapons from Transdniestria to the terrorist organizations surfaced.

The United States recognized the Republic of Moldova on December 26, 1991 only after Russian recognition. Since the United States contributed significantly to the politico-economic development of Moldova, the former is the second investor in Moldova's enterprises after the Russian Federation.[162] In the political sphere, the United States supports the liberal values of the democratic development, development of a civil society and Moldovan inspirations toward European integration.[163] However, all these actions are nothing more than what the U.S. government is doing worldwide.

The region was never one of the priority regions on the U.S.'s administration list, and its interest in resolving the Transdniestrian conflict mostly results from the presence of the Fourteenth Russian Army in the region and from the large quantity of ammunition.[164] As mentioned in previous chapters, the Russian Federation has more than 30,000 tons of ammunition and a large number of military equipment in the Transdniestrian region. These ammunitions and weapons are constantly smuggled into conflict territories and could possibly end up in the hands of terrorist organizations. In

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[162] "Rusia se situaza pe primul loc dupa volumul sumar al investitiilor in capitalul statutar al intreprinderilor din Moldova," Interlic News Agency, April 28, 1992, available at http://www.interlic.md/page2.php?rubr=1015247074&id=1083155219&lang=, last accessed 05/25/04.

[163] "Un official de la Departamentu de Stat al SUA se afla in vizita la Chisinau," BASSA-PRESS, April, 23, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=28787, last accessed 05/05/04; "Asistentul Secretarului de stat american a declarat ca SUA sustin aspiratiile proeuropene ale Republicii Moldova," BASSA-PRESS, June 26, 2003, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=24638, last accessed 05/05/04.

[164] In accordance with the OSCE data, presented by BASSA-PRESS, in September 2003, the Russian Federation still had over 30,000 tons of ammunitions and 2000 soldiers in the Transdniestrian region. Russian officials are blaming the Transdniestrian administration for blocking the process. See "SUA se arata ingrijorate cu lipsa de progress in procesul de retragere a trupelor Ruse din Transnistria," BASSA-PRESS, September, 26, 2003 available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=25964, last accessed 05/05/04.

that context, the United States supported the OSCE Istanbul and Porto resolutions that stipulated the unconditional withdrawal of the Russian troops and ammunitions from the Transdniestrian region, and was willing to provide extensive technical and financial support for the transportation and destruction of the afore mentioned arsenal.[165]

In addition, the United States actively supported the OSCE plan of the federalization of the Republic of Moldova as a real possible solution to the Transdniestrian conflict and to the final withdrawal of the Russian military presence from the region. Thus, in a declaration made in September 2003 by Douglas Davidson, the vice-chief of the American mission to the OSCE in Vienna, he mentioned that the United States and EU pay attention to the Transdniestrian conflict and will continue to make a real contribution to the peaceful resolution of that dispute.[166] The U.S. and EU reaction to the Russian plan of federalization, developed unilaterally in November 2003, evidence their intentions. The goal of that plan was to transform the Republic of Moldova into a Russian protectorate and guarantee the presence of the Russian military in the region for at least 30 more years. Both administrations supported the OSCE critical position toward the plan, which contributed to the Moldovan administration's rejection of that plan at the last moment.[167]

In summary, the U.S. support of the political and economic development of Moldova is significant. However, Transdniestrian conflict interests is only in the context of establishing control over the weapons proliferation from the military arsenal in TMR and of minimizing Russian military dominance over the region.

2.   The European Union and Its Perspectives

In the last decade, the European Union built its relationship with the Republic of Moldova in a framework of support for the democratic development and transition to a

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[165] "SUA si-a reconfirmat intentia de a acorda sprijin politic si financiar Moldovei in evacuarea trupelor Rusesti…," INFOTAG, March 16, 2000, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=8699, last accessed 05/05/04; "SUA se arata ingrijorate cu lipsa de progress in procesul de retragere a trupelor Ruse din Transnistria," BASSA-PRESS, September, 26, 2003 available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=25964, last accessed 05/05/04.

[166] "SUA se arata ingrijorate cu lipsa de progress in procesul de retragere a trupelor Ruse din Transnistria," BASSA-PRESS, September 26, 2003 available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=25964, last accessed 05/05/04.

[167] "SUA si Uniunea Europeana au sustinut rezervele OSCE in ceia ce priveste planul rusesc de reglamentare transnistreana," BASSA-PRESS, November 28, 2003, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=26852, last accessed 05/05/04.

market economy. Its involvement in the Transdniestrian conflict was insignificant and is mainly based on security concerns. Due to its controversial policies and pro-Russian economic and political orientation, Moldova's integration into the EU would not occur soon. However, with the planned expansion of the Union, to include Romania, the EU must engage more actively in the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict, which will become a matter of the Union's security.

Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and European Union started in 1994 with the signing of the Partnership and cooperation agreement (PSA). Moldova's Concept of Foreign Policy interprets the PSA as the first step toward European integration.[168] The main mechanism of cooperation between the EU and the RM is through the Technical Assistance Program (TACIS). This program contributed to the democratic development and transition to a market economy of the Republic of Moldova and helped to build confidence in the civil society. After 1998, TACIS expanded its range of activities to include the initiation of dialog and cooperation between TMR and RM authorities. As a result of these activities, in 1999, most of the bridges across the Dniester River, which had been destroyed during the military confrontation, were restored. These facts demonstrate that the EU had been involved in the process of the development of the Republic of Moldova, but did not participate actively in the process of the political settlement of the dispute.

Until now, Moldova was located a considerable distance from the EU. Taking into consideration the peaceful environment in the region, EU security was not threatened by this conflict. Conflicts in the Balkans were more violent, closer, and more of a threat to the Union. With the planed expansion of the EU, to include Romania, its concerns about security at the border increased, thus giving the Transdniestrian conflict more priority within the organization. Taking in account the character of the Transdniestrian administration, discussed in Chapter III, these concerns are justified. As a result, in the beginning of 2003, EU member countries, supported by the United States as well as a candidate for EU admission, imposed a travel ban on the Transdniestrian leader Igor

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[168] Oleg Serebrian, "An Assessment of the Present status of the Republic of Moldova's Accession to the European Union," in *The Republic of Moldova and European Integration,* (Cartier, Chisinau, 2002), 233.

Smirnov and his two sons. That fact partially facilitated the process of the withdrawal of Russian ammunitions from the Transdniestrian region during the first half of 2003. This ban was further expanded in 2004. [169] In addition, the European Union is considering the possibilities of participating in the peacekeeping operation in Moldova. Thus, in the last decade, despite EU involvement in the promotion of democratic principles of government and a free market economy in the RM, had very little interest in the Transdniestrian conflict. In the future, driven by security concerns, increased by the process of expansion, the EU will be involved more actively in the process of political resolution of the conflict in the Republic of Moldova.

In summary, the United States' interest in the Transdniestrian conflict is mainly related to the presence of the Russian arsenal in the region. Its efforts in that region are directed toward the nonproliferation of weapons from the Transdniestrian region and the total withdrawal of the Russian troops from Moldova, thus eliminating the military dominance of the RF over the region. However, because U.S. interests are not at stake in that region, the United States will not become directly involved in this conflict, but will act indirectly through the OSCE. EU involvement in the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict is mainly based on the security concerns. With the extension of the organization, the EU would be interested in resolving the conflict on their border, thus preserving their security. In that context, the EU can become directly involved in the process of negotiations, and in the future can participate in the peacekeeping mission in Moldova, thus acting as a counterbalance to the Russian presence.

D. INVOLVEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The role of the OSCE in the process of negotiations is very important, mainly because it is the only Western organization directly involved in the peace-negotiation process, and under whose umbrella these negotiations are taking place. Thus, most efforts of the Western democracies are channeled through the OSCE. The major success of the

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[169] "European Union Reconfirm the Ban on Travel Imposed One Year Ago on Transdniestrian Leadership," BASSA-PRESS, February 24, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=27990, last accessed 05/20/04.

OSCE in the process of negotiation is its capability to bring the parties to the negotiation table. However, most of the agreements achieved by the conflicting parties under OSCE mediation had not been implemented.

This section argues that the OSCE is trying to build a compromise suitable to all parties. However, the success of OSCE activities and initiatives in the Transdniestrian conflict regulating process is limited to actions that are not contrary to the general direction of the Russian policy in the region, thus diminishing its credibility and efficiency. The main explanations are the OSCE's three weak points that minimize its conflict-regulating capabilities: this organization's decisions made by consensus, no reinforcement capabilities and limited financial resources.

The OSCE mission in the Republic of Moldova was established on February 4, 1993 and started its activities in April of the same year. On April 13, 1995, the mission opened a branch office in Tiraspol.[170] The main objectives of the mission are "to facilitate the achievement of a lasting political settlement of the conflict, assist parties in consolidating the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova along with an understanding about a special status for the Transdniestrian region, and ensure transparency of the removal and destruction of Russian ammunition and armaments."[171] Currently, "the definition of the status of the Transdniestrian region remains the most important and challenging task for OSCE mission in Moldova."[172]

However, the OSCE cannot fulfill its mandate without serving the interests of the Russian Federation at the same time. As mentioned in the beginning of Chapter I, one of the weaknesses of the OSCE is that the decisions in the organization are made by consensus. Since the very beginning of the conflict, the Republic of Moldova repeatedly declared itself in favor of conducting the peacekeeping mission under the OSCE mandate. The first attempt was made during the OSCE Summit in Helsinki on 9-10 July 1992. The Moldovan request for OSCE peacekeeping forces was strongly opposed by the representatives of the Russian Federation, opting in favor of CIS forces. As a result,

170 "OSCE Mission to Moldova: Overview," available at http://www.osce.org/moldova/overview/, last accessed 05/12/04.

171 "Mandate," available at http://www.osce.org/moldova/mandate/, last accessed 05/12/04.

172 OSCE Mission in Moldova, available at http://www.osce.org/moldova/overview/, last accessed 05/12/05.

the OSCE summit in Helsinki refused the Moldovan request, and on July 21, 1992, the Moldovan government had to accept the Russian proposal of the so-called CIS peacekeeping forces, who were Russian, Moldovan, and from the unrecognized Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic.[173] Another attempt was made in September 1995 at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. However, once again, the OSCE did not endorse the Moldovan request.[174] These facts suggest that the OSCE practice of making decisions by consensus gives the Russian Federation advantage to influence the decisions taken by that Organization, a fact that diminishes the OSCE conflict regulating capabilities and increases Russia's dominance over the negotiation process.

Along those lines, the position of the OSCE was always supporting the integrity of the Republic of Moldova and the vast autonomy for the Transdniestrian region. However, in July 2002, in Kiev, the mediators, Ukraine and Russia, with help from the OSCE, have proposed a document that stipulated a new approach to conflict resolution. Article 1 of this document mentioned the Republic of Moldova as a democratic, federal state, with the rule of law and a republican form of governance. The proposed document was mainly adapted from the Russian Constitution and provoked strong opposition from Moldovan civil society and political parties. In addition, the Transdniestrian authorities opposed it. As a result of negotiations, by December 2002, the mediators, including the OSCE, proposed a Declaration of Intentions, which already stipulated not the OSCE's proposal, but the Transdniestrian version of the "common state," one built on a contractual basis, thus implying more the concept of a confederation rather than a federation. This time, the Moldovan delegation refused to sign the Declaration. The motivation was that Transdniestria could later withdraw from any contract reached between the two sides and become independent.[175] By the end of 2002, the Kiev document lost its relevance and became one more document in the negotiation process. Thus, by signing the December Declaration of Intentions in support of a contractual

173 Kevin O'Prey, op. cit., 438.

174 Ion Constantin, "Peace Consolidation Mission Moldova"- Parties and Interests," August 15, 2003, available at http:// www.azi.md/investigation?ID=25351, last accessed 05/12/04.

175 Interviews conducted by the author with officials from the Moldovan government in January 2004, in Chisinau.

federation, the OSCE digressed from its own plan, undermined Moldova's integrity, and as a result, lost Moldova's credibility. This fact, once again, suggests OSCE domination by the RF and its weakness in the process of negotiation.

The Second weakness of the OSCE affecting the final settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict is its incapability to reinforce its own decisions. As described previously, at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit, Russia accepted unconditionally to complete withdrawal of its military arsenal, equipment and troops by the end of 2002. The results of that summit were very significant for the future settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict. However, soon afterwards, Russian officials declared that the withdrawal of Russian militaries from the region should be synchronized with the final political settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict, a fact that raised concerns from the Moldovan government. Furthermore, at the 2002 OSCE Ministerial in Porto, this line was extended to the end of 2003 and already not "unconditional withdrawal," but if "provided necessary conditions are in place."[176] One year later, at the Ministerial Meeting in Maastricht in December 2003, because of the position of the Russian delegation, the OSCE already failed to produce any statement regarding the timing of the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Transdniestrian region. In this context, the OSCE does not possess the required potential to reinforce its own decisions, giving the parties the necessary insights to ignore the decisions of that Organization and only to comply with the decisions serving their interests. This fact is widely used by the Russian Federation in the process of resolving the Transdniestrian conflict and the withdrawal of the military presence from the region.

However, despite its weaknesses, the OSCE might also very well serve as a mechanism to promote western interests in the region and to influence the Russian plans of resolving the dispute strictly on their terms and interests. In November 2003, prior to the Maastricht Ministerial Meeting, the Russian Federation developed and proposed their plan for a solution to the Transdniestrian conflict without informing the OSCE. If implemented, the Russian Federation would achieve their desired goal of justifying a

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[176] OSCE, "Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council 6-7 December 2002, Statements by the Ministerial Council," available at http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/mcs/10porto02e.pdf, last accessed 05/12/04.

long term presence of Russian troops in the region, and at the same time, possibly saving their image on the international level for not honoring their international commitments to withdraw their military arsenal and troops from the region by the end of 2003. That plan was heavily criticized by Moldovan civil society and opposition parties as well as by western analysts. It was also rejected by the OSCE, which had U.S. and EU support.[177] As a result, as mentioned previously, the Moldovan President, pressured by the OSCE and civil society, at the last moment refused to sign the already agreed upon document. The afore-mentioned case demonstrates two facts. The first is that it demonstrates the Russian negligent attitude toward the OSCE, and second, if backed by the strong support of the western countries and organizations, the OSCE can act as an effective and powerful player in the negotiation process.

In conclusion, the role of external actors in the process of a political settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict is crucial. However, during the last decade, driven by personal interests and non-interest, these players, the same as the internal actors, could not come to an agreement on the final solution to the conflict. The position of western actors is constructed based on their interest in the withdrawal of the Russian military presence from the region. In contrast, the Russian Federation has historically dominated militarily and economically the region and wants to maintain that dominance in the future. In that context, a military presence is one of the major factors in achieving that goal. Speaking in realist terms, with the expansion of NATO and the future expansion of the EU, military and economic dominance over the region is becoming a strategic issue for the Russian Federation, while raising concerns of the Western powers. Thus, taking into consideration the current situation, the future solution of the Transdniestrian conflict is controversial and difficult to achieve. Thus, all the options currently discussed by the internal and external players, separation, a contractual federation and a federation, are not going to solve the conflict, but will create more possibilities for the escalation of violence and would undermine Moldova's democratic orientation, sovereignty and independence, facts discussed in the next chapter.

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[177] "Organizatia pentru Securitate si Cooperare in Europa respinge planul rusesc de federalizare a Republicii Moldova," FLUX, November 25, 2003, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=26798, last accessed 06/06/04.

V. "CIVILIZED DIVORCE" OR "HAPPY MARRIAGE"-INPOSSIBLE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT

> …the twentieth century bias against political divorce, that is, secession, is just about as strong as the nineteenth century bias against marital divorce.
> [178]
>
> Samuel Huntington

> …for federalism or regionalism to unify, not to divide, the polity, it must be coupled with policies whose effect is to raise the cost of a successful secession, and increase the benefits of association.[179]
>
> Timothy Sisk

After the end of the military confrontation in July 1992, the parties involved in the conflict and the international players gradually searched for the most plausible solution to the Transdniestrian conflict. During the last decade, the Moldovan government as well as the Transdniestrian authorities could not find the points of agreement on the main issues of a political settlement to the conflict. Since the beginning of the confrontation, Chisinau opted for the unitary status of the future Moldova, however, with significant political, economic, and cultural autonomy for the Transdniestrian region. The Transdniestrian separatist authorities demand their independence or at least a form of contractual federation between two equal subjects of international law. In the last two years, Moldova changed its position, accepting the possibility of a federal agreement; however, standing on the principle of an asymmetrical federation, while Transdniestria did not change its attitudes. Thus, taking into consideration the politico-economic and ideological conditions, created in both regions, the final political settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict in the near future is very difficult to achieve.

Given the current situation in the Republic of Moldova, this chapter analyses the possibility of three conflict-regulating mechanisms, brought to the negotiation table to

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[178] Samuel Huntington, "Foreword," in *Conflict Resolution in Divided Societies*, 1972, Eric Nordlinger. Occasional Papers in International Affaires No. 29, Harvard University, cited in Timothy Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, (USIP Press, Washington, 1996), p.1.

[179] Timothy Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, (USIP Press, Washington, 1996), 51.

create a long-term solution to the conflict: secession, confederation and federation. The author argues that none of these mechanisms under current conditions would facilitate a long-term solution to the conflict, but might increase the possibility of an escalation of violence and confrontation in the region. However, the federal solution has potential in case of the implementation of the necessary policies. First, this chapter will present the advantages and limitations of partition. The author will argue that partition would not solve the conflict, but, to the contrary, might facilitate the escalation of violence in the region with the potential to transform conflict from internal into interstate conflict. Second, the confederal arrangements would create the necessary conditions for the Transdniestrian region to undermine the contract and to secede, with the consequences characteristic of partition. Last, federalism is the form of government most extensively accepted as a conflict-regulating tool. It also can serve that purpose in the Transdniestrian conflict as well. However, the author argues that, taking into consideration many internal and external factors characteristic of the region and to the development of the conflict, in the current situation, the federal arrangement, even if achieved, would not last long, thus creating further possibilities for conflict. Thus, in order to eliminate the obstacles to final integration, the international community and internal actors must promote democratic values, the rule of law and a free marked orientation in the region; reduce the benefits of the status quo situation and, finally must offer the Transdniestrian region substantial politico-economic and cultural autonomy combined with fair representation at the central level. With the aforementioned conditions in place, the implementation of the federal solution will have a chance to act as a mechanism of unification and conflict-regulation, but not as a tool of division and conflict escalation.

A.   SECESSION   AND   CONFEDERALISM: POSSIBILITIES   AND LIMITATIONS

Some proponents of the partition theory argue that the separation of conflicting ethnicities might be the only possible long-term solution to civil wars. They acknowledge that an ethnic war cannot end without territorial partition and possible movements of the

population.[180] As discussed in Chapter III, the initial causes of the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova have been eliminated. However, over time, Moldova and the TMR have developed into two different de facto independent states with slightly different political systems and orientation. Thus, at first glance, the possibilities of partition possess some benefits: (1) the Western part of the RM will have a chance to increase its economic and political independence from Russia and integrate into the European Union; (2) the Transdniestrian region will legally pursue its course of integration into the CIS. This subchapter concludes that despite their attractiveness, these two possibilities are irrelevant to the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict, and their implementation will create new premises for conflict leading to the possible destabilization of all South- Eastern Europe.

1.   Possible Consequences of Partition

The negative conditions for conflict escalation that secession might create are more significant than its benefits. As a result of secession, ethnic grievances between the nationalities within both regions might escalate, the conflict might change its character from an intrastate into an interstate conflict, and it will have an encouraging effect on other secessionist movements. This combination of factors leads to the belief that cessation will not solve the conflict but will further entrench the dispute between Chisinau and Tiraspol.

As Horowitz mention, "Ethnic identity is not static; it changes with the environment and especially with the territorial boundaries."[181] Thus, despite the current unity of the Transdniestrian population, based not on ethnic identity, but on the old Soviet internationalist stereotype, partition of Moldova might trigger unification of population

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[180] See Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security* 20 (Spring 1996); idem, "When All Else Fails," *International Security* 23 (Fall 1998); John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera, "When Peace Means War," *New Republic* (December 1995). Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 588; Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 44–47; Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 121; and Samuel P. Huntington, "Civil Violence and the Process of Development," *Adelphi Paper* no. 83 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971).

[181] Donald Horowitz, "*Ethnic Groups in Conflict*," (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), 589.

along ethnic lines, thus increasing the potential for future conflict.[182] The Republic of Moldova, including Transdniestria, is not an ethnically heterogeneous region. In the Transdniestrian region, Moldovans comprise 40 percent of the population, Ukrainians 28 percent, and Russians 25 percent. Despite the proclamation of the languages of all three ethnicities as official languages of the TMR, Russian is the only one used in the administration and Russians are overrepresented in all administrative structures of the government.[183] It is unlikely that this situation will change after partition due to the structure and orientation of the Transdniestrian administration. In such conditions, independence will considerably increase the significance of ethnic divisions. As mentioned previously, the idea of unification with Ukraine is becoming popular within Transdniestrian Ukrainians, a fact that can gain more popularity after independence because of the common border and significant economic dependence of Transdniestria from the Ukrainian markets. Thus, Moldovans and Ukrainians from the region might change their preferences, and therefore, creating an ethnic tension between all groups, which might result in open confrontation. Furthermore, the Transdniestrian authoritarian government will most probably maintain its form of government after secession, and might repress its minorities, creating the possibility for interstate confrontation.[184] In addition, cessation might affect the behavior of the Gagauz minority in the southern part of Moldova, which also has the highest potential of evolving into a conflict with the central Moldovan authorities. Thus, the partition of the RM into two independent states will not resolve the conflict, but have a real chance to trigger ethnic grievances within the Transdniestrian population as well as the conflict between the Chisinau authorities and the Gagauz minority in the southern part of Moldova.

Second, statistically, the relationship between the secessionist region and the rump state do not promise to be harmonious.[185] The future relationship between Transdniestria and Moldova will also be contentious because Transdniestria will

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[182] Daniel L. Byman, "Divided They Stand: Lessons about Partition from Iraq and Lebanon," *Security Studies 7*, (Autumn 1997).

[183] "Grigore Maracuta: "Nu exista egalitate intre cele trei limbi de stat in Transnistria," FLUX, March 17, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=28312, last accessed 06/06/04.

[184] Sambanis, Nicolas, "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic Wars: An Empirical Critique of the theoretical Literature," *World Politics 52*, (July 2000) 437-83.

[185] Horowitz, Donald, op. cit., 591.

constitute a large part of the industrial potential of Moldova and by the attitudes of the elites from both regions. As discussed in Chapter III, Transdniestria possesses 2/3 of the total of Moldova's industrial enterprises, and its geographical location allows it to exercise total control over the economic exchange of Moldova with the CIS countries. In that context, the Republic of Moldova will not easily abandon its claims over that region, thus straining the situation between them. In addition, any authoritarian political regime is characterized by the perception of an external threat and the presence of a real enemy.[186] In this case, the Transdniestrian authorities will further promote the perception of a pan-Romanian threat, and Moldova must face that threat. In this context, it is highly probable that the conflict between Transdniestria and Moldova could now escalate into an armed confrontation, between the two states, thus changing the character of the conflict from an intrastate to an interstate conflict.

The last argument against partition is that it will reward the Transdniestrian position during the last decade, thus providing a good example for other separatist movements, especially in the post Soviet regions. As Horowitz mentions, "The example of one movement (separatist) cannot create separatist sentiment where it does not exist; … But the strength of a movement, particularly one supported by external aid, can propel other separatists into action by convincing of the plausibility of success or of concessions short of success."[187] Crimea, Chechnya, and Kosovo are the regions that already experience secessionist inspirations. However, a potential threat for the escalation of the Hungarian minority movement in Romania and the Gagauz minority within Moldova exists.[188] Thus, partition of the Republic of Moldova might encourage other secessionist movements, thus destabilizing the security situation not only around Moldova, but also in other regions, especially in South-Eastern Europe.

To summarize, partition of the Republic of Moldova would benefit the Transdniestrian elites, but will not bring the conflict between the Transdniestrian and

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[186] Hryhory Perepelitsya, op. cit., 275.

[187] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict,* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985), 279.

[188] In the southern part of Moldova, comprises approximately 160,000 members of the Gagauz minority and approximately 80,000 ethnic Bulgarians. Most are Russian speakers and are also significant minorities in proportion to the country's total population. In 1995, the Moldovan government established the autonomous Gagauz region. Based on the author's personal knowledge.

Moldovan administrations any closer to its final resolution. Moreover, through partition, the conflict has the potential to escalate and transform into an intrastate conflict. In addition, the partition of Moldova will have an encouraging effect on the secessionist movements all over the world, thus the international community strictly opposes that method of conflict regulations and applies it with the greatest of caution.

2. Confederalism or the Same Partition?

Confederalism is often an intermediate stage between federalism and independence or vice versa from independence to federation. The main distinction between federalism and confederalism is that in a confederation, sovereignty rests within the consisting states (or regions); while in federations, sovereignty is shared between the center and the regions. In this context, the author argues that a confederal solution is only a pretext for recognition of the Transdniestrian administration by the international community, and afterwards, to compromise the contract and secede.

As mentioned by Steven Roper, "Transdniestria wants to move from unitary to confederal state, a process that has never occurred."[189] In this context, a confederal solution implies recognition of the sovereignty of the Transdniestrian region. For this reason, the Transdniestrian administration is promoting the idea of establishing a confederation between Serbia and Montenegro, which implies possible revision of a contract at certain times, and the maintenance of each state attributes, including its own armies, own police forces, and currency. The central authorities of the confederated state will mainly conduct only their foreign policy together, resulting in a deadlock for Moldova's development and an intensification of the conflict.

The RM does not support the confederal solution of the conflict. In case of the establishment of the confederal agreements as described previously, the Republic of Moldova will still not benefit very much economically and politically from the reunion because Transdniestria will maintain the same independent control over the region's resources, but now legally. At the same time, Moldova must coordinate its policies and course of development in accordance with the interests of the Transdniestrian authorities. Under such conditions, democratic development, a free market economy and integration

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[189] Roper, Steven D., "Mediation and Legal Considerations in Resolving the Moldovan Transnistrian Conflict." East Illinois University, 2001, p. 24.

into the EU will become a dream for the Moldovan population, because the authoritarian, old Soviet style, criminal Tiraspol administration will possibly be able to block any aspirations of Moldova's western-oriented development. However, Moldovan society will resist these tendencies, which has some experience in democratic development. That resistance will certainly trigger the conflict in the society, as a result, between the Chisinau and Tiraspol administrations, thus providing the Transdniestrian authorities the needed pretext to jeopardize the contract and secession process, which as argued previously, might escalate the conflict. Thus, finding a final solution to the Transdniestrian conflict in confederal arrangements between the RM and TMR will not resolve the situation in that region, but will prepare the required basis for Transdniestria's final secession, with the potential for an escalation of the conflict, as described in the previous section.

In summary, the position of the Transdniestrian administration is for partition of the Republic of Moldova or a confederal agreement between the parties in conflict. However, even if achieved, these mechanisms will not eliminate the conflict but will create the necessary preconditions for its escalation. Despite some benefits, which partition might bring to both parties, its costs are more significant not only for the region but also for the international community. As a result of partition, the ethnic grievances might escalate on both sides, the conflict might change its character from an intrastate into an interstate conflict, and it will have an encouraging effect on other secessionist movements. A confederal agreement will emphasize recognition of Transdniestria as a subject of the international law, a factor used by its administration to jeopardize the contract between the two sides and, in the end secede, which will have the same effect as partition.

B. POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE FEDERAL SOLUTION

In contrast to secession, autonomy and federalism are viewed as some of the major tools for resolving ethnic and internal conflicts. However, federalism has the potential not only to resolve the conflict, but also in some circumstances, to escalate it or to create a new one. In this context, this section analyses the theoretical pros and cons of the federal system as a conflict regulating mechanism and possible outcome of the federal arrangements if applied to the Transdniestrian conflict in the current situation. This

section argues that the solution to the Transdniestrian conflict after a decade of de facto independent development of both regions cannot be achieved without according Transdniestria the substantial possibility to exercise power at the center. In this context, the federal arrangement between Tiraspol and Chisinau would be the most plausible solution to the conflict, if both regions would want to integrate. However, the authors argues that in the current situation, the federalization of Moldova will not diminish the conflict, but will create a situation of political stagnation, democratic drawback, and further dependency on Russia, factors that might provoke further escalation of the conflict. Thus, internal actors as well as the international community first must direct their efforts toward the creation of the necessary conditions for federal agreements to last, and afterwards, only to pursue a policy of federalism. Otherwise, Moldovan federalism is condemned to failure from its very beginning.

1. Possibilities and Limitations of the Federal Solution: Theoretical Approach

David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild argue that political and administrative decentralization might contribute to the management of the political conflict.[190] Among the methods of dividing territories, federalism is the most applicable, because of its conflict-regulating effects. Nancy Bermeo reinforces that dispute arguing that federal systems provide more settings for peaceful bargaining by building more layers of government. These systems also at least give some regional elites a greater stake in existing political institutions.[191]

In fact, many scholars including Smith, Duchacek, Riker, Lijphart, Przeworski, and Sisk support the idea that federalism, as a method of ethno-territorial conflict settlement, indeed is the best method for achieving long-term successful results. In federal arrangements, the central government has specific areas of authority, the units have some degree of autonomy and both levels of government have limited coordinated powers.

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[190] David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security 21,* (Autumn 1996), 61.

[191] Bermeo, Nancy. "The Import of Institutions," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2) (April 2002), 99.

Horowitz mentions four major positive functions of federalism: (1) combined with the electoral system, it can encourage party proliferation, which also might facilitate coalition building across groups; (2) the politics at the local level can serve as a training ground for the politics at the higher level; (3) federalism disperses conflict at the center by resolving some of the issues at the regional level; (4) it creates difficulties for parties to achieve hegemony at the central level-, and would be difficult for any of them to challenge all constituent regions.[192] Thus, devolving power enhances autonomy within one national unit; multiplies the number of power positions and thus lessens the stakes of controlling power at the center, which in turn, lessens the zero-sum nature of unitary systems. The most important fact is that in federal arrangements neither the center nor the regions can amend the arrangement without mutual consent.[193] These factors create possibilities for peaceful management of the ethnic and civil disputes in the short, as well as, in the long run.

However, federalism is not an "innocent child". It also has many pitfalls that can create problems. For one, federalism has costs. It creates a duplication of functions, increases expenses on building state capitals, and might create conditions for civil servants to serve only in their home regions, thus creating possibilities for discrimination. In addition, the decision–making process in the federal states is slower and more complicated. However, the most important drawback of the federal arrangements is that they can "foster the very secession they aimed to prevent."[194] In case of a strong central authority, the center can take the lead in making and implementing the appropriate decisions. Nevertheless, in cases of weak central power, devolution is a matter of bilateral agreements, and in most of the situations, is very fragile.[195] Thus, for federal arrangements to work, commitment and patience are necessary conditions.

In order for federal arrangements to work as a conflict regulating mechanism, and not to fail, there should be sufficient political-ideological commitment to the idea of a federation. Thus, "the leaders and their followers must 'feel federal," which includes the

[192] Horowitz, Donald, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 601-621;

[193] Wheare, Sir Kenneth. *Modern Constitutions.* (Oxford University Press, 1964), xviii.

[194] Horowitz, Donald L., op. cit., 622-23;

[195] Horowitz, Donald, op. cit., 623.

loyalty of the general population to the national unity, belief in territorial integrity, and ideological commitment to the idea of a federation for its own sake.[196] Otherwise, the parties will stay federal until they reach their goals, in many cases, the acquisition of independence or the strengthening of the economic situation, after which the federation has a high chance of failure with a possible escalation of conflict. Thus, "unless there is some factor or set of factors which clearly and inexorably push in the direction of commonality, then the pressures of asymmetry will increasingly present themselves, making continued federal existence impossible."[197]

In summary, federal arrangements can facilitate conflict regulation. At the same time, if the politico-ideological commitment of the population and elites is not directed toward working together, but is inspired by other goals, or outside parties impose the solution, this federation will not last long, and in the end, might result in an escalation of the conflict.

2. The Consequences of Moldova's Federalization

The option of federalization of the Republic of Moldova was introduced by the OSCE in 1992. Many projects of federalism had been proposed to the parties in the conflict since then. However, none of these plans satisfied the interests of both parties. The author argues that the federal arrangement in the current politico-economic conditions of the Republic of Moldova, including the Transdniestrian region, will not resolve the conflict between Chisinau and Tiraspol, but will escalate the conflict. The main causes of this situation are that the population does not support the federal ideas, the leaders have different goals and expectations from the federalization, the orientation of the political and economic development of these regions are different, and the international community is dispersed on that subject as well. In addition, in both regions, the governments are corrupt, the poverty level is increasing, and official policies restrict democratic development and the free media. Under such conditions, federalism cannot serve as a tool for unification.

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[196] Franck, Thomas, *Why Federation Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism*, ed. Thomas M. Franck, (New York University Press, NY, 1968), 173

[197] Tarlton, Charles, "Symmetry and Asymmetry as Elements of Federalism: A Theoretical Speculation," *The Journal of Politics,* Vol. 27/4 (November 1965), 874

First, at the mass level, there is no substantial support for the idea of federalization. This opposition is mostly based on the lack of knowledge of what constitutes a federation. A poll conducted in April –May 2003 in the Republic of Moldova (excluding the Transdniestrian region) revealed that only 16 percent of the population supports the idea of the federation, while 28 percent reject it categorically. Meanwhile, 61 percent do not know what a federal state means.[198] The percentage of the population that rejects federal ideas is increasing.[199] There is no available comparable information on the opinion of the Transdniestrian population. However, in 2001, 34.9 percent of the Transdniestrian population considered itself first and foremost, citizens of Transdniestria, 13.9 percent considered itself inhabitants of their locality, and only 4.4 percent consider itself citizens of Moldova.[200] From that data, it is possible to conclude that very few people of the Transdniestrian region are loyal to the Moldovan national unity, which could prove problematic if the country were to physically devolve power to the Transdniestrian authorities under a federal system. In addition, for federalism to work, citizens need to feel loyalty toward national unity and not only to sub-national loyalty. Thus, the population of the Republic of Moldova does not know the benefits and drawbacks of the federal systems and do not "feel federal." Under such conditions, the creation of a federation cannot serve the purpose of reintegration, but easily might escalate the conflict. In that case, the positions of leaders might change the situation, very significant for the success of federalization.

Under such conditions, when the general population resists the federal ideas, the ideological commitment of the leaders to the idea of the federation might be transmitted to the people, and as a result, serve as a precondition of a successful federation. Both leaders, Vladimir Voronin, the President of the Republic of Moldova, and Igor Smirnov, the leader of the Transdniestrian administration have great support from the population. In recent polls, the population in the western part of Moldova mentioned Vladimir

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[198] "Barometrul de Opinie Publice, realizat de IMAS Inc," April-Mai 2003, available at http://www.ipp.md/publications/Barometer_of_Public_Opinion_-_May_2003, last accessed 05/22/04.

[199] In April-May 2004, more than 30 percent of the population on the western part of the Dniester expressed their categorical opposition to the process of federalization, thus marking an increase in the numbers compared to the opinions from the last year. See "Rezumat de presa," IPP, available at http://www.ipp.md/publications/Rezumat_pentru_presa_rev1.doc, last accessed 05/22/04.

[200] Kulik, Vitaly, op. cit., 268

Voronin as the most popular political figure (38 percent of the respondents) last year and more than half (60 percent) expressed their trust in him.[201] The Transdniestrian leader, Igor Smirnov, was reelected in December 2001, obtaining 80 percent of the votes from a total of 65 percent of electors who showed up to vote.[202] In addition, both leaders have total control over the legislatures and executives of these two regions, and their parties are in position to win next year's elections. Thus, they may create the necessary conditions for the development of a durable federation.

However, the leaders of these two entities are also dispersed on the future goals and forms of the federal agreement. Igor Smirnov is of the position of accepting partition, or as a last resort, contractual federation between two equal subjects of the international law, thus he and his administration is not interested in the promotion of the national unity of these two entities.[203] Taking into consideration that in the Tiraspol administration are the same leaders as at the beginning of confrontation and their attitudes during the last decade it is obvious that the goal of the administration is to enter in an agreement with Moldova, which will not be hard to abolish. As a result, they will obtain the recognition of the international community and independence.

The Communist president of the Republic of Moldova is in the position to neglect the Transdniestrian leader, and they have not met since 2001. In addition, the Chisinau administration, after the election of the Communist majority, is undermining the democratic course of development in favor of a more authoritarian rule, but federalism is the devolution of power, which cannot be fully implemented without a democratic form of government. Under such conditions, the expectation is that in case of the federalization of Moldova, this Communist administration will also undermine the autonomy of the Transdniestrian region, a fact that cannot facilitate the federal aspirations of the

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[201] "Rezumat de presa," IPP, available at http://www.ipp.md/publications/Rezumat_pentru_presa_rev1.doc, last accessed 05/22/04.

[202] Kulik, Vitaly, op. cit., 267.

[203] "Liderul transnistrean considera ca trebuie continuat procesul de negocieri cu Chisinaul, dar el nu este impotriva unui 'divort civilizat," INFOTAG, March 22, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=28361, last accessed 05/22/04.

Transdniestrian population. Thus, neither Voronin, nor Smirnov are devoted to the idea of federalization as such, each looking for better methods to promote its own interest, but not the interests of national unity.

The third negative condition that disfavors the federal option for the settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict is the political and economic orientation of these regions. Both regions are currently under the Russian sphere of influence and are politically and economically oriented and dependent on it. This fact might facilitate the implementation of the federal solution. However, the western part of the Republic of Moldova declared integration with the European Union its strategic objective for the future and has a free market orientation. Despite only theoretical steps made by the Chisinau administration on the issue of EU integration and attempts to intimidate the free market mechanisms, this course is supported by 57 percent of the population and is constantly gaining more support. At the same time, the aforementioned position is not admissible to the Transdniestrian leadership. Thus, the federal arrangement, if achieved, might have two negative impacts. The first is that it might create a deadlock in the relationship between the center and the region over the political and economic development, and, second, the authoritarian model might prevail, thus, seriously threatening the democratic and free market development of Moldova. Both impacts have the potential to facilitate the escalation of the conflict, but not its solution.

The last negative condition rests at the level of international affaires. As discussed in the previous chapter, the international community has different interests and different levels of involvement in the resolution of the conflict. Russian Federation involvement is based on the aspirations of political, economic and military domination of the region, while the western powers and organizations are mainly concerned with the presence of the Russian military arsenal and troops in the Transdniestrian region. With the enlargement of NATO and the future expansion of the EU, this fact becomes even more important. In the case of the federalization of Moldova under the current conditions, it is obvious that one of the conditions that must be accepted is the presence of Russian troops, leading to changes in Moldova's status as a neutral country. Introducing the peacekeeping operation of the military contingent from the EU countries might challenge the dominance of the Russian military in the region. However, currently the Russian and

Tiraspol administrations posse such developments, creating tension on NATO and EU borders, thus not increasing security in the region, but creating the premises for an escalation of the conflict.

In summary, because of the aforementioned negative conditions, the implementation of the federal arrangement in the current politico-economic situation in the Republic of Moldova, including the Transdniestrian region, would not integrate the country, and as a result, resolve the conflict between Chisinau and Tiraspol, but will escalate the conflict. However, the federal solution might be a good tool for the future development of relationships between Tiraspol and Chisinau, if the necessary steps are taken to eliminate or diminish the effect of the negative factors discussed previously.

3.   The Necessary Conditions for Federalism

In the last decade, the Transdniestrian leadership benefited from the status quo situation and was used to prolong the process of negotiation. Thus, the author argues that in order to achieve a final settlement to the Transdniestrian conflict the benefits of the status quo for Transdniestrian authorities have to be reduced, both societies should be opened to democratic development, the rule of law and the free market, and finally, Transdniestria must be offered a substantial power at the center, and significant autonomy in its own affairs. Under these conditions, the federal solution might serve as a tool for integration and not dissolution.

In such circumstances, in order to achieve a political settlement to the Transdniestrian conflict, first, internal and external actors must cooperate in creating a favorable basis four integration.[204] Second, democratic values, the rule of law, and free market orientation must be more promoted in the Republic of Moldova, especially in Transdniestria. Transdniestria is controlled by an authoritarian regime that limits political pluralism to the antireform process. Political opposition to the current leadership is under permanent threat from the security services. The elections, conducted in that region, had not been monitored by any international or regional organizations. However, the consensus is that they were neither free nor fair. The media is also mostly under the

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[204] For more information on this approach, see ICG Europe Report #147, "Moldova: No Quick Fix," Chisinau/Brussels, August 2003.

control of the Tiraspol administration. Under such conditions, final settlement of the conflict might promote the interests of the ruling elites but excluding the broader interests of the population.

The development of a democratic society, the rule of law and free market mechanisms will make Moldova more attractive to the Transdniestrian population. As mentioned in previous chapters, Moldova, in the last decade, failed to promote efficient economic and social policies. As a result, currently the extreme level of poverty, corruption, human rights abuse, and insufficient performance of the democratic institutions characterize the RM. With the election of the Communist majority in 2001 in the Moldovan Parliament, authoritarian insights are also implemented in the rest of the Moldovan society. Thus, implementation of the aforementioned tasks would make Moldova more attractive to the Transdniestrian population. Accordingly, democratization and establishment of the rule of law will open up both societies for the development of integrative methods and will diminish the elite's unilateral control over society. These reforms will increase the confidence of population in the process of integration.

Second, the benefits of the status quo must be reduced. In that context, the Transdniestrian authorities must be removed from the legal and illegal revenues, leading to the possible continuation of their authoritarian regime. Thus, the establishment of common custom posts between Moldova and Ukraine as well as improvements in taxation of all goods coming to Transdniestria through Moldova will have a beneficiary impact on reducing the benefits of the status quo. The OSCE, EU and other international organization might substantially contribute in training Moldova's and Ukrainian custom services, and if Transdniestria will cooperate, it should be involved in such training also. One more possibility for the international players to influence the status quo is to continue the ban on travel of the Transdniestrian leadership. The restriction imposed by EU countries, and supported by the United States and other non EU member countries on the Transdniestrian president and his immediate entourage in 2003 and 2004, affected their capabilities on the international level, and as a result, the Transdniestrian leadership agreed not to impede the Russian withdrawal of military equipment and ammunition from

the region.[205] In addition, the withdrawal of the military presence of the Russian Federation will result also in the need to open cooperation between Transdniestria and Moldova, thus reducing the benefits of the status quo. Thus, strict control over the exports and imports of the Transdniestrian region combined with the restriction on travel on its political and economic elites, and the evacuation of the Russian militaries from the region will decrease the benefits of the status quo and increase the possibilities for cooperation, and as a result, for a final solution to the Transdniestrian conflict.

Considering the fact the Transdniestrian region de facto is an independent state, "granting substantial autonomy to Transdniestria without giving it an incentive to participate in politics at the center would ensure continued separation."[206] In this context, federalism might be a good solution for the final political settlement of this conflict. An asymmetric federation with substantial autonomy of the Transdniestrian region might be a good tool for final integration. However, as Timothy Sisk mentions, "for federalism or regionalism to unify, not to divide, the polity, it must be coupled with policies whose effect is to raise the cost of a successful secession, and increase the benefits of association."[207] In this context, due to the different path of the development of the Transdniestrian region from the rest of Moldova, the Transdniestrian region must have significant control over its resources, revenues and cultural development.

In summary, the Chisinau administration, the Transdniestrian authorities, and the international negotiators brought three options to the negotiation table that they believe might facilitate the final political settlement of the conflict in the Republic of Moldova: secession, a confederal solution and federalism. The Transdniestrian authorities are promoting the option of a contractual federation or partition, a solution, which if implemented, will legalize Transdniestria as a subject of the international law, but will not solve the conflict situation around that region. It is also possible for it to escalate ethnic grievances between the populations of the region, transform the character of the

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[205] However, in the Summer of 2003, the Transdniestrian administration blocked the process of the evacuation of Russian ammunitions and military equipment, demanding compensation of $100 million dollars in gas debt from the Russian Federation for their permission to continue the process.

[206] ICG Europe Report #147, "Moldova: no quick fix," Chisinau/Brussels, August 2003, 15.

[207] Sisk, Timothy D., *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, (USIP Press, Washington, 1996), 51.

conflict from an intrastate into an interstate conflict, and encourage the secessionist movements in other regions. All these facts combined decry the security situation in South-Eastern Europe. Taking into consideration the Transdniestrian position, the confederal solution in the end is creating the same situation as partition. These two methods are firmly opposed by Moldova and the international community because of the aforementioned reasons..

The federal arrangements between Transdniestria and Moldova might serve as a path for the final resolution to the conflict, but current conditions in both regions do not permit its implementation, and even if achieved, will not serve the purpose of integration, but will lead to the escalation of conflict and further disintegration. It seems that neither the Chisinau authorities, nor the Tiraspol administration is ready to pursue such policies. Moreover, the Transdniestrian administration believes that it can do better in the case of partition, thus decreasing the possibilities of the federal arrangements.[208] This situation is reinforced by the population's distrust toward the federal solution and interests of the outside players. In such circumstances, federalism, the same as cessation and confederalism, would divide, not unite. In order to eliminate the obstacles for final integration, the international community and internal actors must promote democratic values in the region, the rule of law and a free market orientation, reduce the benefits of the status quo situation and, finally offer the Transdniestrian region substantial politico-economic and cultural autonomy combine with fair representation at the central level.

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[208] "Liderul transnistrean considera ca trebuie continuat procesul de negocieri cu Chisinaul, dar el nu este impotriva unui 'divort civilizat," INFOTAG, March 22, 2004, available at http://www.azi.md/news?ID=28361, last accessed 05/22/04.

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VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed the causes and evolution of the Transdniestrian conflict and the capability of three conflict-regulating methods, given the current politico-economic and social situation in the region and positions of players in the process of negotiation, to solve the Transdniestrian dispute: secession, confederalism and federalism.

The conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova is one of the conflicts that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has transformed over time and is still not resolved after more than a decade of negotiations. Many scholars and political leaders from both conflicting parties reject the claim that this was an ethnic conflict. This thesis argued that it was an ethnic conflict, which, however over time, lost its ethnic aspect and transformed into a politico-economic conflict. The conflict erupted because of the competition among old party and administrative nomenclatura and the new nationalistically oriented elite, fighting over the division of the Soviet state and redistribution of political and economic benefits. However, in their initial fight for power, the elites mobilized the instrumental and primordial grievances of the population, thus lending an ethnic aspect to the confrontation.

In the last two centuries, the area between Prut and Dniester many times changed hands, first between the Russian Empire and Moldovan Principalities and later between the Soviet Union and Romania. In their struggle for the hearts and minds of the population of that territory, these states accordingly implemented the policies of Russification, Sovietization and Romanization. As a result, the population of Bessarabia, and later MSSR, was always dispersed and did not have a sense of unity of identity. However, the biggest impact, which in the end the elites manipulated, was the creation of two different identities in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic during the Soviet era. The Transdniestrian population was more inclined toward Soviet internationalism, while the rest of Moldova identified itself with the Republic of Moldova, not the Soviet Union or Romania., a factor that was very well manipulated by the elites in order to secure their political and economic positions after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The liberalization of political life in the Soviet Union contributed to the formation of the Moldovan "informal organizations" in the summer of 1988. These organizations were mostly oriented toward cultural awareness and were the first organized opposition to the Moldovan Communist Party. In the beginning, these movements were more ethnically inclusive than exclusive. Leaders of these movements were oriented toward the mobilization of all citizens of MSSR toward democratization, restructuring and transparency. The main reason for such widespread support was often not the national sentiment of those actors but mainly a possibility to secure or increase their own political and economic security in the difficult years of transition from the authoritarian power of the Soviet government to a situation yet unknown to the population.

The introduction of the Language Law in August 1989, which made Moldovan the official language of the Republic, and pro-Romanian inspirations of some newly elected politicians threatened the lifestyle of the Transdniestrian population, which, as discussed previously, was heavily dependent on the connections with the Soviet center, and of the Soviet pragmatic nomenclatura, who did not want to accept any changes and were devoted to the Communist ideology. Threatened by the aforementioned movements and supported by the Russian nationalists and militaries, the Transdniestrian elites manipulated the population in the region toward a continuous affiliation with the Soviet Union and resistance to the new changes, introduced by the newly emerging elites. The Tiraspol administration announced its independence from Moldova, created irregular military formations, and took control of the government institutions on the Left bank of the Dniester River, thus undermining the legal authority of the Moldovan government in that region.

The new emerged indigenous elites, at the same time, saw the opportunity to escape from the control of the center, and directly steer the country in another direction. The demands and actions of the Transdniestrian traditional authorities were seen by these elites and the rest of the Moldovan population as an attempt to maintain the old regime and old ruling elites. This situation created an intergroup security dilemma, which in the end, escalated to the point of military confrontation. Russian interests in maintaining political, economic and military domination over the region is an important intervening variable for the escalation of the conflict into a military confrontation. Direct Russian

political, economic and military support of the Tiraspol administration encouraged the secessionist elites to take more aggressive actions against the legal Moldovan government and to establish authoritarian control over the Transdniestrian region.

Over time, all ethnic causes of this conflict had been eliminated, thus creating the necessary conditions for a final political settlement of conflict. The Moldovan administration changed the language law in 1994, Moldova's constitution assured its independent course of development, rather than integration with Romania, Moldova joined the CIS community, and agreed to synchronize the Russian ammunition withdrawal by offering Transdniestria autonomous status. However, this is not the case.

As Barbara F. Walter mentions,

> Resolving a civil war is never simply a matter of reaching a bargain and then instituting a ceasefire. To be successful, a civil war peace settlement must consolidate the previously warring factions into a single state, build a new government capable of accommodating their interests, and create a new national nonpartisan military force.[209]

In the case of the Moldovan conflict, the peace accord signed in 1992 between the Russian Federation and Moldova and the introduction of peacekeeping forces created a status quo situation, which permitted the establishment of two de facto independent states: the Republic of Moldova and the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic. This status quo situation perfectly suits the economic and political interests of the Transdniestrian elites, thus encouraging them to promote a radical position toward the process of negotiations and to demand anything but independence, a fact that cannot be accepted by the legal Moldovan Government. These divergences led to the permanent deadlock in the process of negotiation and impossibility of achieving the final political solution to this conflict only through the efforts of the internal players. In such circumstances, the role of external actors is more important and is the only path to follow.

The attitudes of the external actors, involved in the negotiation of the final settlement of this dispute are mainly driven by their interests and goals. Russian interests toward domination over Moldova did not decrease and, speaking in realists' terms, with

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[209] Barbara F. Walter, "Designing Transitions from Civil War," ed. Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (NY, Columbia University Press, 1999) 38-69, 43

the extension of NATO to include Romania in April 2004, the importance of military, political and economic influence over that region became a strategic goal of the RF. In that context, the Russian Government views the military presence in the region as an important factor for exercising control over the region as well as lately as a security factor. Thus, the Russian Federation is of the position to support such a solution to the conflict in Moldova, which will permit legalization of its military presence in the region. Otherwise, Russia is satisfied with the created status quo situation.

The Western powers and international organizations oppose the Russian position, but have very limited interest in the conflict. The U.S. interests in the Transdniestrian conflict are mostly related to the establishment of effective control over the large Russian military arsenal, concentrated on the left bank of the Dniester River and the withdrawal of the Russian military presence from the region, thus diminishing Russian military dominance over Moldova. European Union involvement in the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict is mainly based on the security concerns, and will increase with the expansion of the Union to include Romania. However, the Republic of Moldova is not one of the main areas of interest of the western powers, thus limiting their implication in the conflict only indirectly through the OSCE, and at the same time, trying not to disrupt their relations with Russia. Thus, the solution to this conflict, which would accommodate the major demands of all parties, is impossible in the current situation.

Three major conflict regulating tools, secession, federalism and confederalism, promoted by various internal and external players to solve the conflict, was brought to the attention of negotiators. The unrecognized Transdniestrian government promotes the option of the confederation or total secession, while the international community as well as the government of the Republic of Moldova is opting for a federal solution. However, none of these mechanisms under the current conditions would facilitate conflict resolution, and at the same time, maintain Moldova's sovereignty and democratic course of development. Moreover, their implementation under the current conditions will escalate the conflict with the potential for a renewal of military action.

As a result, the secession ethnic grievances between the nationalities within both regions might escalate, the conflict might change its character from an intrastate into an interstate conflict, and will have an encouraging effect on other secessionist movements. This combination of factors lends itself to the belief that cessation will not solve the conflict but will further entrench the dispute between Chisinau and Tiraspol.

Confederalism is often an intermediate stage between federalism and independence or vice versa from independence to federation. The main distinction between federalism and confederalism is that in the confederation, sovereignty rests within the consisting states (or regions); while in federations, sovereignty is shared between the center and the regions. Thus, in the case of the Transdniestrian conflict, the confederal solution, proposed by the Tiraspol administration, is only the pretext for its international community's recognition. Afterwards Tiraspol can compromise the contract and secede.

The Federal solution might facilitate the final settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict. Federalism is the form of government most extensively accepted as a conflict-regulating tool. However, taking into consideration the attitudes of the conflicting parties, external players and population from both sides of the Dniester River under the current conditions, a federal system of government would not be effective. It would create the necessary conditions for conflict between pro-Western democratic forces and left-wing totalitarian forces, thus not providing the solution to the conflict but escalating it.

However, in the future, this federal model might be the solution if the necessary conditions were created. Thus, in order to eliminate the obstacles for final integration, the international community and internal actors must take steps to promote democratic values, the rule of law and a free market orientation in the region, to reduce the benefits of the status quo situation and, finally to offer the Transdniestrian region substantial politico-economic and cultural autonomy combined with fair representation at the central level. With the aforementioned conditions in place, the implementation of the federal solution will have the chance to act as a mechanism of unification and conflict-regulation,

but not as a tool of division and conflict escalation. Until then, the Republic of Moldova does not have any chance of finding the final solution to the conflict and dig its way out from stagnation, which is drawing this country into extreme poverty and chaos.

APPENDIX   ABBREVIATIONS

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

EU – European Union

GUUAM- Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova Cooperative Initiative

MASSR – Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

MSSR - Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

RM – Republic of Moldova

TMR – Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic

UN – United Nation Organization

US – United States of America

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

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