

FEATURED ARTICLE:

ALL QUIET ON THE
COLD WAR FRONT:
MOLDOVA'S FUTURE BETWEEN
RHETORIC EU AND
REALPOLITIK RUSSIA
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I. INTRODUCTION

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moldova emerged as an independent state free from the red sphere of the USSR. The sudden dissolution of the Soviet Union left Moldova in disarray, with rapidly declining birth and fertility rates, in addition to unsettled political and economic conditions, the country was quickly becoming unsustainable as a nation. Tensions continued to increase as the state was torn between an enthusiastic Russian-speaking minority and resolute Moldova-Romanian majority. Conflict ensued in 1992 as a separatist war erupted between the official Republic of Moldova and a "self-proclaimed" Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR), in which some 1,000 lives were claimed and Moldova was left in ruins. Although a ceasefire between the two states was signed shortly after the outbreak of violence, Moldova was left with a frozen conflict on its territory and a dramatic loss in major resources as Transnistria controlled 90% of the nation's energy and one third of its industrial output in the early 1990s.¹ Currently the conflict is at a standstill as Moldova is torn between maintaining current relations with Russia, which involve both Moldova and

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Transnistria being heavily reliant on Russia economically, politically, and culturally, or alternatively seeking further integration into the European Union despite the organizations apparent lack of interest in the conflict. Russia presents itself as the leading supporter of Transnistria, using their involvement with the region to advocate for negotiations with Moldova regarding the reintegration of Transnistria on the basis that Russia is included as the key mediator in the agreement and entrusted as the sole international representative of the region. At the same time, Moldova has turned to western powers and the European Union to assist in resolving the internal conflict and to assist in decreasing the degree of influence Russia possesses over the region.² Unfortunately the EU has failed

to adequately respond to this interest and demonstrate the initiative to help Moldova deal with this situation. As a result of this, the conflict has remained at a standstill. Russia continues to pressure Moldova to conform to their wishes, while Moldova welcomed the EU intention to develop its relation with neighboring countries and was disappointed as the new EU Neighborhood Policy did not consider a European perspective on Moldova.³

II. MOLDOVA AND RUSSIA

Russia viewed the newly separatist region of Transnistria as "a zone of special strategic interest" due to the multitude of Russian residents and influence the area granted Russian leaders over the Moldovan Republic.⁴ In addition, Transnistria was the site of a massive Soviet era arsenal of military equipment at Kobasna, which the Russians insisted on providing their own guards to protect. This resulted in the 1992 Moscow Agreement that specified that Russian troops were to remain stationed in Transnistria as part of this protection

¹Evan Revak would like to thank his family (Pam, Tim and Haley) for the continued support and motivation and would like to give a formal recognition to Dr. Wayne Hunt for allowing to pursue our research on this topic

² Georgia Sibold wants to thank her family (Kathy and Neil Camarta and Steve Sibold) for the love and drive they have given to her as well as would like to formally recognition to Dr. Wayne Hunt for providing the opportunity to explore this particular topic

³ Elena Korosteleva. "Moldova's European Choice: Between Two Stools?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 62:8, (2010): Pg. 1267-1268.

² Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra. "Transnistria: A Bottom-Up Solution," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, (2012): 4.

³ Buscaneanu, Sergiu. "Moldova and EU in the European Neighborhood Policy Context: Implementation of the EU-Moldovan Action Plan." Cont. Igor Botan, Anna Popa, and Valeriu Prohnitchi. Chisinau: *ADEPT Association*. (2008): 12.

⁴ Elena Korosteleva, "Moldova's European Choice", 1268.

operation.⁵ The demise of the USSR left Moldova heavily dependent on Russia, with 80% of their exports being sent there.⁶ With the separatist movement, Russian support has shifted to focus on Transnistria, supplying 80% of their budget and allowing the region to collect a gas debt of nearly 3.8 billion dollars without pressuring them for any form of compensation. As Moldova continues to make moves towards joining the European Union, Russia is becoming increasingly desperate to maintain their influence over the region by continuing their support for Transnistria in hopes of reopening negotiations for the reintegration of the region into Moldova, with the condition that Russia remains the sole international representative of the area.⁷

RUSSIAN SUPPORT TO TRANSNISTRIA

Russia has maintained its connection to Moldova by supplying a plethora of support to the separatist region of Transnistria, “from military, economic, and nationalist to electoral and political [Russia supplies everything] to fully exert and extend its influence over the [region]” and in turn, over Moldova.⁸ Economically, Russia has a stronghold over the region by supplying not only industry, but also natural gas. Since the separatist movement began in 1991, Russia has been involved in providing large amounts of gas to the region. However, since 2007-2008 Transnistria has stopped repaying for Russian gas, leading to gas debts amounting to nearly 3.8 billion for which the Russian authorities are looking to Moldova for compensation.⁹ Of the Russian gas delivered to Moldova Gaz, half is redistributed to Tiraspoltrungaz, which handles distribution in Transnistria. In the Transnistrian region gas is sold below market price to residential and industrial consumers – this generates huge losses for Tiraspoltrungaz and Moldova Gaz. Because Transnistria is considered a separatist region within Moldova, and since the distribution channels through Moldova Gaz, Russian authorities claim the gas debt of the region to be Moldova’s responsibility.¹⁰ Furthermore, Transnistria is the site of numerous major Soviet-era industrial assets such as the MMZ steel plant, Rybnitsa cement plant

in the north, and the Cuciurgan cement plant in the south, all of which are at least partially controlled by Russia.¹¹

These sites have provided industry in the region and have aided in creating income and securing job opportunities for citizens. By developing economic relations with Transnistria, Russia has succeeded in creating a dependent relationship where Russia plays such a dominant role in the economic well being of the Transnistrian region that if they were to cut off support, the area would be incapable of sustaining itself. It is through this economic dependency that Russia hopes to extend its influence to Moldova. If a reintegration agreement were to be reached between Moldova and Transnistria, Russia would be strongly involved in the negotiation process and gain greater influence over Moldova via their dominating stance over Transnistria.¹² In addition to demonstrating a stronghold over the Transnistrian economy, Russia is also highly involved in Moldovan exports and imports and uses this position to further pressure the nation’s leaders to consider reintegration programs with the separatist region and to refrain from reaching agreements with western powers.

In the past, Russia has used economic means to negotiate its political leverage. This was seen in the sudden reduction in the supply of gas, oil, and electricity supplied to Moldova in the winter of 2005-2006 after the nation failed to reach an agreement on the Kozak Memorandum, which proposed the creation of a federalized state, in addition to calling for a Russian military presence in the state for at least 20 more years.¹³ Furthermore, in 2006-2007 Russia introduced sanction driven policies against Moldova including banning the import of some agricultural products and wine and placing embargos on the nation’s main items of export, wine, vegetables, and heavy metals. These tactics were used in order to discipline Moldova for its “increasingly defined leaning towards the West,” and to further emphasize the nation’s economic dependence on Russia.¹⁴ By continuing to serve as a leading supplier to both Transnistria and Moldova, Russia hopes to maintain and extend its influence over the region if a reintegration agreement were to be met. Serving as the main industrial and economic supplier to Transnistria has created a relationship where the separatist region is entirely dependent on Russia to sustain its economy. This power would allow Russia to exert in-

⁵ Matthew Rojansky, “Prospects for Unfreezing Moldova’s Frozen Conflict in Transnistria,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2011): 1-2.

⁶ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1268.

⁷ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 3-4.

⁸ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1279.

⁹ Andrey Devyatkov and Marcin Kosienkowski, “Testing Pluralism: Transnistria in the Light of 2011 Presidential Elections,” *Working Paper*, (2012): Pg. 7.

¹⁰ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 5.

¹¹ Matthew Rojansky, “Prospects for Unfreezing”, 3.

¹² Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 4.

¹³ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1278.

¹⁴ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1279.

fluence and preference within any negotiations between Transnistria and Moldova and demonstrates that “Transnistria’s greatest value to Russia is in providing a source of leverage within Moldova.”¹⁵ Furthermore Russia’s involvement in Moldova’s exports and imports provides them with a means of threatening the nation to refrain from reaching further agreements with western powers, in addition to pressuring them to consider negotiations with Transnistria.

CURRENT RUSSIA-TRANSNISTRIAN RELATIONS

Following the signing of the ceasefire between Moldova and Transnistria in 1992, Russia has been heavily involved in the politics of both Transnistria and Moldova. From the beginning, Russia was involved in the proposal of several documents that negotiated the reintegration of Transnistria into Moldova, such as the 1997 Memorandum on the “Normalization” of Relations Between the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, and the 2003 Kozak Memorandum, both of which were rejected.¹⁶ Within Transnistria, the Soviet Union and now Russia has played a large roll in determining the organization of the region’s political structure, resulting in a strong “neo-Soviet” collective identity within the breakaway region.¹⁷ From this, Transnistria developed a “basically Soviet style government,” known mostly for its long-standing authoritarian leader, Igor Smirnov of the Respublica party, who led the state from the time of the fall of the USSR until the most recent elections in December 2011. Smirnov was known to hold a strong relationship with Russian leadership, working closely with the Kremlin in his governing of the state, and being often referred to as a Soviet-style leader.¹⁸ Having this close relationship over the Transnistrian political system via the president allowed Russia to further increase their involvement in the organization of the state. Russia was able to advertise their involvement through Smirnov and his party, displaying posters of Smirnov with Putin modeling the logo “our strength is our unity with Russia,” throughout Transnistria.¹⁹ However, prior to the presidential elections in December of 2011, the citizens of Transnistria began to express interest in political change, specifically the need for new leadership in the form of a politician associated with true renewal. This pressure from

the public led Russia to shift their support from longtime ally Smirnov to Anatoliy Kaminskiy of the *Obnovleniye* (Renewal) political party.²⁰ Russia publically declared Smirnov a “monument, which should be honored and respected,” but added that he should no longer be in power.²¹ Despite aggressive involvement by the Russians in the internal politics of Transnistria by backing Kaminskiy and his party, in addition to campaigning with posters of him as well as Putin stamped with “supported by Russia,” Kaminskiy was defeated by Yevgeniy Shevchuk.²² Shevchuk focused on the idea of Transnistria’s revival and provided harsh criticism of Smirnov and the whole political establishment, accusing it of incompetence and bribery.²³ Although relations between Shevchuk and Russia are not as closely bonded as those of the previous leader, Russia continues to exert a prominent influence over the region as Shevchuk recognizes that Transnistrian is dependent on Russia both politically and economically. Therefore, although Transnistria has made the move to elect a leader who is more dedicated to the revival of Transnistria as a more independent nation, this goal cannot be fully realized due to the nations inability to adequately sustain itself without Russian assistance.²⁴

RUSSIA, TRANSNISTRIA AND MOLDOVA

Russia continues to push for the reintegration of Transnistria into Moldova with an agreement that would see the “...recognition of Russia as the only country which possesses political and coercive authority in the region,” with the creation of a common state formed on a federative basis.²⁵ However, with the election of new leadership in Transnistria, agreements have been reached between the separatist region and Moldova, which have, much to their dismay, left Russia behind. This was demonstrated at the most recent round of ‘5+2’ talks held this past April in Vienna, which focused on whether Moldova and Transnistria could be considered equal parties. During these discussions Russia and Transnistria argued together for the recognition of equality, while Moldova stated that “there could be no parity between a recognized state and a secessionist entity.” However, during a break in discussions while the Russian representative, Gergey Gubarev, was absent from

¹⁵ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 5.

¹⁶ Elena Korostelva. 1277-1278.

¹⁷ Rebecca A. Chamberlain-Creanga. *U.S. Embassy Policy Specialist Program (EPS) Research Report*. (2007): Pg. 2.

¹⁸ Nico Popesco and Leonid Litra. Pg. 2.

¹⁹ Matthew Rojansky, “Prospects for Unfreezing”, 4.

²⁰ Rebecca A. Chamberlain-Creanga. *U.S. Embassy Policy*, 1.

²¹ Andrey Devyatkov and Marcin Kosienkowski. “Testing Pluralism”, 13.

²² Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 6.

²³ Andrey Devyatkov and Marcin Kosienkowski. “Testing Pluralism”, 16.

²⁴ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 6.

²⁵ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 4.

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the room, the Moldovan and Transnistrian representatives reached an agreement on a compromise that recognized the “equality of all participants in the negotiating process.” This implied that the Moldova capital of Chisinau would recognize its equality with Tiraspol and that all participants in the ‘5+2’ meeting would be considered equal in the negotiations. Those involved included Russia, Ukraine, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as mediators, and the European Union and United States as observers. Upon his return to the discussion room, Gubarev was shocked to hear of the agreements reached between Transnistria and Moldova without Russian approval. Through the discussion Russia was hoping to achieve equality between Transnistria and Moldova that would see further integration of Russian influence into the nation without increasing western involvement.²⁶

Russia’s historical political influence over Moldova and Transnistria has allowed it to play an integral role and obtain a coercive position within the region. Possessing this political influence over Transnistria allowed Russia to intertwine itself in the negotiations between the region and Moldova, insisting that its continued involvement be a precondition to every agreement.²⁷ Following the 2011 elections and coming to power of Yevgeniy Shevchuk, a new leader dedicated to the revival of Transnistria who won despite having no Russian support for his campaign, the region has made some strides to independently hold negotiations with Moldova and decrease Russian influence in the area. Because Smirnov had been the main obstacle for any substantial dialogue between Tiraspol and Chisinau, the election of Shevchuk has opened the doors to increased negotiations in the future.²⁸ Unfortunately Russia is not prepared to lose their stronghold over the region and continues to emphasize their economic and political importance to both Transnistria and Moldova, making it increasingly difficult for both districts to act without considering the impact on Russia.²⁹

“Unfortunately Russia is not prepared to lose their stronghold over the region and continues to emphasize their economic and political importance to both Transnistria and Moldova, making it increasingly difficult for both districts to act without considering the impact on Russia.”

As the European Union continues to pressure Moldova into joining their organization and adhering to their international laws, Russia maintains that Moldova should steer clear of western influences and instead focus on mending the conflict between Transnistria and accept membership into the Eurasian Union.³⁰ Although Chisinau is seemingly determined to move further towards closer integration with the EU, Russia continues to pressure them that

the EU is a failing organization and that the reintegration of Transnistria can be easily accomplished if Moldova were to accept Russian language, culture, and political support into their nation because these are the factors that Transnistrian citizens fear they are losing by being a part of Moldova. A majority of the conflict stems from fear that Moldova is looking to form connections with Romania. The Russian-speaking citizens of Transnistria dislike Romanian nationalism and still refer to Romania as the villain and Russia as the hero in a historical narrative dating back to World War I when Bucharest was allied with Nazi Germany.³¹ Therefore, in addition to demonstrating both economic and political influence over the regions of Moldova and Transnistria, Russia

is also heavily involved in the cultural aspects of the separatist movement. Transnistria is home to a large majority of Russian citizens, with over 150,000 Russian passports issued in the region, and has a strong cultural connection to the former Soviet nation.³² Because reconciliation between the two areas involves the acceptance of Russian culture into the Moldovan sphere, Russia can use this aspect to further ensure that their interests and preferences are represented in any agreements made between the two regions and any other external participants.³³

RUSSIA-MOLDOVA CONCLUSIONS

As Moldova develops as a nation and continues to explore its options for becoming involved in the international com-

²⁶ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 5.

²⁷ Rebecca A. Chamberlain-Creanga. *U.S. Embassy Policy*, 2.

²⁸ Andrey Devyatkov and Marcin Kosienkowski. “Testing Pluralism”, 14.

²⁹ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 4.

³⁰ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 9.

³¹ Matthew Rojansky, “Prospects for Unfreezing”, 2.

³² Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 3.

³³ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 4.

munity, it is going to be strongly impacted by the economic, political, and cultural pressures asserted through the nations unresolved conflict with Transnistria supported by Russia. To Russia, Moldova is an important nation over which to maintain influence because of its past position within the Soviet sphere and the Russian belief that it provides a “foothold” in that region of Europe, projecting

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an image of strategic depth against possible threats from the west.³⁴ Through the separatist movement in Transnistria, Russia has found a way to aggressively maintain its influence over Moldova by working through Transnistria to support the reintegration of the region into the main nation through negotiations and agreements that see that Russia is granted maximum power over the state and serves as the sole international representative of the area. By doing this, Russia hopes to not only maintain their sphere of influence over Moldova, but also to ensure that the leaders of the nation are not tempted by western powers and organizations looking to integrate Moldova and Transnistria into their community. By developing itself as the key economic supplier to both Moldova and Trans-

nistria, Russia has created a system where any negotiations between the two regions or any other external participants regarding trade agreements would require the involvement of Russia. As a result, both areas are so dependent on the economic support provided by Russia that they would need to channel any possible changes through them in order for them to progress. Possessing this level of influence over the Moldovan and Transnistrian economy makes it very difficult for either region to even consider agreements with western powers because they are so heavily monitored by the Russians, and any agreement without Russian participation would be automatically disapproved. Furthermore,

Russia has always played a key role in the organization of the Transnistrian government by working closely with the former president, Igor Smirnov, to ensure that Russian involvement in the region was maximized and encouraged throughout the system. Although the newly elected leader does not have this same connection with the Russian Kremlin, Russia is still heavily involved in Transnistrian governmental processes because of the state's dependence on them for support, in addition to Russia's persistence in attempting to organize political negotiations between Transnistria and Moldova. Finally, Russia continues to exert influence over the regions through the multitude of Russian citizens that reside in the separatist region and the cultural issues relating to the integration of Russian language and lifestyle into Moldova as a condition of resolving the conflict between the two states.³⁵ Therefore, any plans for Moldova to integrate with western powers are greatly impacted by the degree of influence exerted by the Russian government over both Moldova and Transnistrian in terms of the economic and political support they provide to each, in addition to the Russian connection in the cultural disputes between the two regions.

III. MOLDOVA AND THE EU RELATIONS

The European Union (EU) has expressed openly “a fundamental change in its approach towards Moldova, which was about to become a direct [neighbour] after the European Union's eastward enlargement” soon after the fall of the Soviet Union.³⁶ Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) originating in early 2002, the EU made “proposals to mitigate the exclusion of the imminent enlargements for Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus”.³⁷ However, despite the mandated intent of the ENP, “EU relations with Moldova clearly lack a sufficient institutional framework or a basis of mutual trust and commitment”.³⁸ Whether the EU's tepid response to Eastern European inclusion vis-à-vis the ENP's implementation and viability in Moldova, the larger “conundrum that evolves is [...]: how can the EU take advantage – if at all – of enlargement-tested ‘conditionality’ and, for that matter, expect compliance from neighbouring countries without relying

³⁵ Nicu Popesco and Leonid Litra, “Transnistria”, 4.

³⁶ Giselle Bosse. “The EU's Relations with Moldova: Governance, Partnership or Ignorance?”. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62:8, 2010, 1291.

³⁷ Sergiu Buscaneanu, et al., *Moldova and EU in the European Neighbourhood Policy Context: Implementation of the EU-Moldovan Action Plan*, Chisinau: ADEPT Association, 2008, 7.

³⁸ Giselle Bosse “The EU's Relations”, 1307.

³⁴ Matthew Rojanksy, “Prospects for Unfreezing”, 3.

on the 'golden carrot' of membership"?³⁹ In essence, the EU has externally taken a passive, rhetoric-based stance in terms of integration of Moldova into "the EU's fundamental values and objectives [and...] [the] enormous gains [...] in terms of increased stability, security and well being".⁴⁰ Through this EU pacifism, Moldova remains in political and economic stasis with ever-looming questions over a resolution to political tensions, economic unviability, incohesive civil society and the 'frozen-conflict' of Transnistria under a European-led vanguard.

THE EU AND THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Since its inception and implementation, the ENP has functioned as the EU's primary integrative operation in relation to neighbouring states of 'interest'. Its primary function and mandate states:

In return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, the EU would offer to its neighbours a range of opportunities such as: closer economic cooperation [...]; a stake in the EU's Internal Market; preferential trading relations; liberalisation of the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; cooperation to prevent and combat common security threats; great EU political involvement in conflict prevention and crisis management; greater efforts to promote human rights; integration into transport, energy and telecommunication networks; new sources of finance; etc.⁴¹

Under this framework outlined by the EU, it requests "compliance of candidate countries with a set of economic and political criteria, the [...] Copenhagen Criteria."⁴² However the application of the ENP meant "the partners in Eastern Europe had very little or no role in defining the very terms of the proposed partnership, its

content and mechanisms."⁴³ Rather, states under the purview of the ENP were subject to the terms and conditions set forth by the European Commission. Fortunately, the EU became aware (not entirely) of the incompleteness and asymmetry formulated within the ENP and rectified these defects through further legislation. The amelioration of EU-Moldova relations came from the application of the New Enhanced (Neighbourhood) Policy (NEP), Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+), and the Moldova Action Plan (MAP). In fact, even the nomenclature had changed and "became clear in the categorisation of neighbours such as Ukraine and Moldova, not as 'Western Independent States' (WIS), but increasingly as 'Eastern ENP' – and thus clearly European countries."⁴⁴ Yet, these rhetorical alterations and institutional reconfigurations did not resolve the fundamental issues plaguing the EU-Moldova ENP implementation: "[these mechanisms] were too 'thick' on Moldova's commitments and too 'thin' on EU responsibilities."⁴⁵ Although the "ENP has been underdeveloped conceptually [as...] a Commission-driven policy,"⁴⁶ "the EU delimits itself and refuses to assume any responsibility on ENP implementation, even though the document was negotiated and adopted by both [...] the EU and Moldova."⁴⁷ Ultimately, despite the EU's insistence on a shared, equally negotiated partnership, the ENP remains a unilateral 'bestowment' from the EU to Moldova where Moldova must meet the criteria placed by the EU rather than mutually agreed political convergence.

THE EU AND THE TRANSNISTRIAN CONFLICT

In addition, the EU "does not have [...] a strategic framework into which to integrate its substantial and scattered actions on Moldova and Transnistria" creating further political distance from the hope of EU-Moldovan cohesion.⁴⁸ Openly, the EU has "declared that it 'shared' responsibility with Moldova in settling the Transnistria conflict" as part of the initiatives set forth by the ENP.⁴⁹ In association with Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "[supporting...] mediation efforts aimed at establishing a viable and democratic Moldovan state" has been at the crux of EU-Moldova's doctrine of political

³⁹ Stefan Gänzle, "EU Governance and the European Neighbourhood Policy: A Framework for Analysis", *Europe-Asia Studies* 61:10, 2010, 1716.

⁴⁰ Nicu Popescu, The EU in Moldova: Settling conflict in the neighbourhood, Occasional Paper 60, 2010, 9.

⁴¹ Sergiu Buscaneanu, et al., *Moldova and EU*, 8.

⁴² Stefan Gänzle, "EU Governance", 1716.

⁴³ Giselle Bosse. "The EU's Relations", 1297-1298.

⁴⁴ Stefan Gänzle, "EU Governance", 1725.

⁴⁵ Nicu Popescu, *The EU in Moldova*, 38.

⁴⁶ Nicu Popescu, *The EU in Moldova*, 10.

⁴⁷ Anna Lungu, "Peaceful Conflict", 22.

⁴⁸ Nicu Popescu and Leonid Litra, "Transnistria", 1.

⁴⁹ Giselle Bosse. "The EU's Relations", 1302.

collaboration.⁵⁰ Further, the EU Border and Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) was set up 30 November 2005 with the explicit intention “to make a sustainable contribution to the development of border-management procedures that meet European Union standards [...] which in turn enhances regional security and supports economic development.”⁵¹ EUBAM reflects the commitments of a multilateral measure “to combat the smuggling in Transnistria section of the Moldova-Ukraine border” on behalf of the EU as well as participating states and organizations: Moldova, Ukraine and OSCE.⁵²

Even though there many institutions in place that outwardly express an interest of the EU to be an important player within Transnistria discourse, the reality remains that the EU has continued policies of indifference and impartiality. Besides playing a participatory role within ‘5+2 framework’ negotiations, the EU has taken a considerably passive and complacent role in seeking a settled resolution on the subject of Transnistria. On the whole, “the EU [has] not [used] all its influence [...] to relieve the Transnistrian settlement negotiation process because of prevalence of other important issues on the agenda.”⁵³ Thus the Transnistrian conflict is relegated to irrelevance and nonchalance within the context of the EU’s overarching goal of cooperation in a greater community of Europe. For the EU, “its success in transferring its rules and norms to Moldova” – Europeanization – remain at the forefront of the ENP ideology rather than engaging in relatively inconsequential power politics between itself and Russia.⁵⁴ Thus, it becomes more and more transparent that “the ‘theory’ and political rhetoric in ENP documents [...] has little bearing on the actual day-to-day practice of the EU’s engagement with Moldova.”⁵⁵ As a consequence, Moldova arrives at a political and economic impasse in terms of adhering to the EU’s ENP terms while receiving little relief from the EU itself to ameliorate the Transnistrian question.

THE EU AND MOLDOVAN POLITICS

Under the EU-Moldova Action Plan (MAP), the primary objective is to:

further [strengthen] the stability and effectiveness of institutions guaranteeing democracy and the rule of law; ensuring the democratic conduct of parliamentary elections [...] in Moldova in accordance with European standards.⁵⁶

These parameters make a clear indication that the political and institutional framework must be altered in order to advance towards a possibly deeper integration. The Moldovan political environment has been changed post-2009 with the defeat of the Communist Party (Partidul Comuniștilor din Republica Moldova) and the ushering in of the Alliance for European Integration (Alianța pentru Integrare Europeană) (AEI), a party committed and “engaged in a dynamic rapprochement with the EU.”⁵⁷ Because of this particular electoral outcome, Moldova has taken the necessary democratic steps – albeit spasmodic and protested – to fall closer within the EU fold of member states. The new politics undertaken by the AEI have yielded benefits and evidence of a commitment to EU integration: “Moldova has launched talks on an Association Agreement, entry into a [Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area] (DCFTA), and the establishment of a visa-free regime with the EU.”⁵⁸ Yet, “the EU has kept a rather low profile in the political conflict between the pro-European opposition and the Communist Party” thus demonstrating to the Moldovan government as well as to political actors that political apathy is the EU’s *modus operandi*.⁵⁹ Furthering the EU-Moldovan conundrum is the major question of Transnistrian politics that play a large role in the possibility of political integrations within the EU. While Moldova has progressed towards a democratic electoral system, Transnistria remains encumbered by a quagmire within a system where “Transnistrian leadership [chooses] to severely restrict political competition in order to consolidate its hold on power” – an

⁵⁰ European External Action Service, “EU-Moldova Relations”, accessed 16 Oct. 2012, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/moldova/pdf/internal_political_economic_en.pdf.

⁵¹ EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, “Background”, accessed Oct. 13, 2012, <http://www.eubam.org/en/about/overview>.

⁵² Sergiu Buscaneanu, et al., *Moldova and EU*, 76.

⁵³ Sergiu Buscaneanu, et al., *Moldova and EU*, 54.

⁵⁴ Giselle Bosse. “The EU’s Relations”, 1306.

⁵⁵ Giselle Bosse. “The EU’s Relations”, 1306.

⁵⁶ European Union. “EU/Moldova Action Plan.” EUROPA.eu. N.p., 1 May 2004. Web. 15 Oct. 2012. <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf> . 4.

⁵⁷ Nicu Popescu and Leonid Litra, *Transnistria*, 7.

⁵⁸ Nicu Popescu and Leonid Litra, *Transnistria*, 8.

⁵⁹ Giselle Bosse. “The EU’s Relations”, 1306.

ideology more aligned with the (former Soviet) Russia.⁶⁰ Thus, Moldova finds itself in a conflicting position: “if Moldova attempts to integrate with the West, it would most likely lose Transnistria [...] in addition, Moldova would be disconnected from the Russian Market.”⁶¹ It is a domestic issue that gets no political consolation from the EU, thus forcing Moldova to consider the possibility that: “if state functionality and EU integration cannot be reconciled with reintegration [of Transnistria], then reintegration is considered to be the less important.”⁶² And although the domestic political climate of Moldova and Transnistria has progressed more democratically in terms of political agents – in Moldova with Prime Minister Vlad Filat (AEI); and in Transnistria with President Yevgeny Shevchuk (Renewal) – both must foster “in-depth administrative reform involving greater transparency, a simplification of administrative procedures and a fight to counter corruption” under the active participation and continuing inspection by the EU.⁶³

THE EU AND MOLDOVAN ECONOMICS

The opportunity for convergence of economic legislation, the opening of economies to each other, and the continued reduction of trade barriers which will stimulate investment and growth; [as well as...] increased financial support.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, “[Moldova’s] per capita real GDP is the lowest in Europe and [consequently, it] is classified as low-income by the World Bank”, thus making economic integration a major component of a EU-Moldovan cooperation.⁶⁵ For this reason, the EU does provide economic mechanisms as well as immediate financial support to the Moldovan state. In fact, “Moldova has been one of the leading ENPI [European Neighbourhood Policy Instruments]

recipients, receiving a per capita spending of €48.”⁶⁶ Additionally, the Moldovan state has grossed large financial aid from the EU and subsidiary bodies via indirect programs and payments: EUBAM direct payment of €400,000, plus €730,000 for developing Boarder Guard; Food Security Programme payment of €10 million; Eastern Partnership (EaP) payments to increase by another €2.1 billion by 2020.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Moldova has signed onto several EU economic agreements and agencies in order to increase economic integration such as: Autonomous Trade Preferences (ATP), Generalised System of Preferences (GSP+), Instrument of Technical Cooperation and Information Exchange of the European Commission (TAIEX), cooperation with the European Investment Bank, and others.⁶⁸ But despite the EU’s reliance on a ‘hand-out’ diplomatic approach, “these generous financial provisions [...] do not automatically translate into Moldova’s unequivocal commitment to the European course.”⁶⁹ Thus, these financial ‘hand-outs’ by the EU do not completely address the underlying economic reforms that are necessary for complete integration. In fact, a major concern arises from the energy market due to Transnistria’s transit status in relation to Moldova. In essence, “Gazprom [a major Russian energy company] ‘sells’ gas to enterprises in Transnistria which pay reduced fees for the gas to Tiraspol, which in turn simply allocated that money to the ‘state’ budget. The resulting debt, worth over \$2 billion, is sent Chişinău, consistent with Russia’s official position that Transnistria is a part of Moldova.”⁷⁰ This transnational subsidized energy market makes it difficult for the Moldovan state to alleviate and ameliorate economic conditions within the terms of the EU partnership parameters thus forcing Moldova to acquiesce towards “prioritisation of Russia over the ‘moral’ commitment to Europe.”⁷¹ Perhaps the fault of weak economic institutions within Moldova, the fundamental problem

“In this way, the EU is hoping that “supporting pluralism will mean supporting capacity building for NGOs in the region.”

⁶⁰ Oleh Protsyk, “Representation and Democracy in Eurasia’s Unrecognized States: The Case of Transnistria”, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 25:3, 2009, 277.

⁶¹ Inna Lungu, “Peaceful Conflict”, 20.

⁶² Nicu Popescu and Leonid Litra, *Transnistria*, 4.

⁶³ Florent Parmentier, “Moldova, a Major European Success for the Eastern Partnership”, *Fondation Robert Shuman, European Issue* 128, 2010, 4.

⁶⁴ European Union. “EU/Moldova Action Plan.” EUROPA.eu. N.p., 1 May 2004. Web. 15 Oct. 2012. <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf> . 3-4.

⁶⁵ European External Action Service, “EU-Moldova Relations”, accessed 16 Oct. 2012, <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/moldova/pdf/internal_political_economic_en.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1276.

⁶⁷ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1276.

⁶⁸ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1275.

⁶⁹ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1277.

⁷⁰ Matthew Rojansky, “Prospects for Unfreezing”, 3.

⁷¹ Elena Korosteleva, “Moldova’s European Choice”, 1283.

lies within the EU's economic approach towards Moldova, which lacks any "offering of more tangible incentives [that] it cannot give or promise."⁷² Inherently, "it [requires] more clarity and commitment from the EU in order to convert Moldova's current [economic] alignment into a resolute [economic] commitment" rather than continuing a 'money pouring' policy without any form of institutional reform or economic consultation a capite ad calcem by providing easier mechanisms for Moldova to integrate into the EU and detach from Transnistria's energy debts.⁷³

THE EU AND MOLDOVAN CIVIL SOCIETY

The ENP explicates and MAP reifies that the EU is committed to "[ensuring] respect for the freedom of association and [fostering] the development of civil society [through...] [enhancing] dialogue and co-operation."⁷⁴ Under this framework of the ENP, the MAP and the supplementary EaP, "dialogue with civil society has noticeably improved and measure have been taken to increase access to information and transparency of the public decision-making process."⁷⁵ The EU has been instrumental in supporting "the Moldova branch of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) [which both] could play a positive role" in quelling political tension and building civil society cohesion.⁷⁶ In this way, the EU is hoping that "supporting pluralism will mean supporting capacity building for NGOs in the region."⁷⁷ However, in relation to its capacity and capability to engage in problems of civil society, "the EU's involvement with [Moldovan] civil society [has been...] rather limited."⁷⁸ *Grosso modo*, "besides endemic problems related to human rights, freedom of the media, anti-corruption fight, independence of the judiciary and business climate, a serious gap of the political dialogue between Moldova and [the] EU has encouraged the reticence of the later towards Chişinău's demands."⁷⁹ For the EU, its primary strategy should not be to institute civil society organizations within Moldova; rather, it should "act as a watch dog and [...] monitor the implementation

of the reform."⁸⁰ To the credit of the EU, the European Parliament has a limited role in formulating and applying EU foreign policies, but, in contrast its resolutions for Moldovan civil society have had a great role to raise the awareness of member states of the necessity of more EU involvement in ENP application and a more general, solid commitment.⁸¹ But unfortunately, despite the constant rhetoric and political 'lip-service', the EU – and more generally the West – "has lost some of their interest [and...] a large portion of [financial assistance... goes] towards institutional and legal reform" than direct investment aid to Moldovan-lead NGOs and civil society organizations.⁸² On the side of Moldova, "Moldovan NGOs do not feel involved in any form of decision making with the EU in any form of partnership" leading to increasing feelings of alienation and estrangement to an institution doctrinally invested in a 'Neighbourhood' cooperation.⁸³ Additionally, the EU could take a firmer stance in reuniting Transnistrian and Moldovan civil society "by downplaying ethnicity [and focusing...] on theft and asset stripping by political leaders [which will...] reframe the discourse of conflict and may lead to a more productive dialogue for resolution."⁸⁴ With a perpetuation of apathy and unresponsiveness on part of the EU, Moldova will ultimately continue to languish within in terms of repairing and rebuilding a functioning civil society that is reflective of ENP's and MAP's objectives.

THE EU AND MOLDOVA CONCLUSION

The ENP and subsequent mechanisms (e.g. EaP, MAP, etc.) promised a continuous engagement of Europe within the affairs and integration of Moldova within the EU supranational entity. Through the implementation of these institutional instruments, the EU allowed for the possibility of a progressive and incremental transition of Moldova from an Independent State of the West (ISW) into a possible EU Candidate. However, a large disparity has arisen between rhetorically promulgated policies and effectively enforced policies, and the EU has erred on the side of 'rhetoric politics' rather than realpolitik. In the perspective of Moldova, the EU's exercised policy of ignoring Moldova is certainly not a step towards the mutual trust

⁷² Elena Korosteleva, "Moldova's European Choice", 1284.

⁷³ Elena Korosteleva, "Moldova's European Choice", 1287.

⁷⁴ European Union, "EU/Moldova Action Plan", 9.

⁷⁵ Victor Chirila, "New Opportunities for Moldova", Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2011. 115.

⁷⁶ Rebecca A. Chamberlain-Creangă, *Identity*, 5.

⁷⁷ Nicu Popescu, *The EU in Moldova*, 39.

⁷⁸ Dura, George, *The EU and Moldova's*, 13.

⁷⁹ Nicu Popescu, *The EU in Moldova*, 39.

⁸⁰ Klas Markensten and Igor Grozu, Review of civil society organization in Moldova: Final Report. SIDA : Stockholm (2011). 13.

⁸¹ Nicu Popescu, *The EU in Moldova*, 53.

⁸² Jos Boonstra, *Moldova, Transnistria and European Democracy Policies*, FIRDE, Madrid, 2007, 3.

⁸³ Giselle Bosse, "The EU's Relations with Moldova", 1307.

⁸⁴ Jeffrey Own, "Neopatrimonialism", 7.

and 'shared responsibility' that it has espoused.⁸⁵ Independent sovereignty is not a legitimate excuse for institutional apathy on the part of the EU; instead, it must be remain actively seized of the matter and actively participatory. In the end, "the EU [...] takes its 'soft power' appeal for granted, as reforms that the EU demands from its neighbours are hard, laborious and in the short term, socially alienating."⁸⁶ In order to improve Moldovan-European relations as well as to arrive at the result stipulated by the ENP and MAP, the EU must involve itself more in the transformation of the political environment, the reformation of economic institutions, the enhancement of civil society and the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict.

IV.MOLDOVA CONCLUSIONS

Moldova is ultimately placed in a precarious position after the fall of the Soviet Union and its declared independence on 27 August 1991. Although the Soviet Union no longer exists as a tangible international entity, remnants still exist within the power politics exerted by the Russian government; conversely, Europe has evolved into the ideological institution of the European Union which looks to increase its influence abroad. Thus, "Moldova find itself 'courted' by two 'rivals' [and] as a result, Moldova is playing a confusing double game."⁸⁷ However, the dynamics of the superpower relationships are considerably different: Russia chooses to act upon 'domination' policies of realpolitik, while Europe chooses to rely upon 'soft power' and 'moral' policies of persuasion. Ultimately, "as a small and weak state, Moldova is adopting the identity and ideology of its most powerful neighbours", but since Russia is preoccupied by Transnistria and the EU remains apathetic to the region, Moldova is at a prospective impasse. In the end, the future of Moldova's integration either into the Russian sphere or into the EU system depends entirely on whether either side decides to play a more active role; because as of right now, Moldova will continue to stay within its political and economic quagmire until interest by either side concedes to increased involvement to find an answer to its current stasis.

85 Giselle Bosse. "The EU's Relations", 1307.

86 Elena Korosteleva, "Moldova's European Choice", 1280.

87 Anna Lungu, "Peaceful Conflict", 20.