

Moldova with the areas of Transnistria and Gagauzia marked. The borders of Transnistria according to official Moldovan law on Transnistrian autonomy; in fact Transnistria controls city Bender and area of Chițcani laying on the right bank of Dniester, while Moldova controls areas to the north and south of Dubăsari on the left bank of Dniester.

Jacek Wróbel

Institute of National Remembrance Archives, Warsaw, Poland

ORCID 0009-0003-8374-4709

DOI: 10.48261/INRR250701



THE EMERGENCE OF SEPARATIST TRANSNISTRIA

ARTICLES

Abstract

Transnistria is a separatist state entity located in a territory internationally recognised as part of the Republic of Moldova, on the left bank of the Dniester River. Its creation resulted from factors both internal – including the concerns of the Transnistrian population over Romanian nationalism in an independent Moldova along with the efforts of local elites to maintain control over the region – and external, namely the Kremlin's strategy of leveraging Transnistrian separatism to retain influence over Moldova. This article analyses the causes of Transnistrian separatism, reconstructs the process of its emergence and the continued existence of an unrecognised *de facto* state, and then outlines the political, economic, and international context of the separatist republic, as well as the peace process.

Keywords: Transnistria, Moldova, Russia, separatism, secession, Transnistrian War, Transnistrian conflict

Introduction

The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR, or Transnistria) is a separatist state entity within territories recognised internationally as part of the Republic of Moldova. It encompasses the left bank of the Dniester River, formerly part of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), as well as two enclaves on the right bank: the city of Bender (Tighina) and the Chițcani district. Transnistria stretches approximately 200 km in length and 12–15 km in width, covering an area of 4,160 km². Meanwhile, the authorities in Chișinău exercise control over enclaves on the eastern bank of the Dniester, to the north and south of Dubosar, but do not recognise these areas as part of the ‘administrative unit on the left bank of the Dniester’ (Wróbel 2003, p. 51; Solak 2014, p. 133; *Atlas Pridnestrovskoy Respubliki*, p. 9; Crivenco and Löwis 2022). The population of Transnistria has been steadily declining due to high levels of economic migration, and current estimates place it between approximately 300,000 (Cașu 2023) and 350,000 (Pieńkowski 2023).

Separatist Transnistria is one of the flashpoints that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was created as a result of opposition from the elite and society of the left bank of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) to the aspirations of the Romanian-

Vladimir Lenin monument in front of Transnistrian parliament, Tiraspol, Transnistria (2024). Photo: tanya_tatyana / Shutterstock ID 2540041485





Bessarabia in the early 20th century. Fragment of a map of Russia from *Stielers Hand-Atlas*, Gotha: Justus Perthes Geographischer Anstalt, 1904. National Library, Warsaw, Poland

speaking community and elite of the right bank of Moldova for Romanian national revival, Romanianisation of the republic, and its independence, as well as the plans of some Moldovan elites to unite Moldova with Romania (Romanianisation of Moldova is understood here as the replacement of Russian with Romanian as the official state language, the introduction of national symbols referring to Romania along with the historical symbols of Moldova, and the Romanianisation of the education system, among other measures). The creation of separatist Transnistria should also be seen as being influenced by Moscow, which, by supporting the unrecognised republic, gained an effective instrument for exerting political pressure on Moldova.

This article aims to analyse the causes of Transnistrian separatism – both internal and external, including Russian influence – reconstruct the process of Transnistria's emergence and continued existence as an unrecognised de facto state, and outline the political, economic, and international situation of the separatist republic, as well as the peace process. An additional element, providing a point of comparison, is the development of Gagauz separatism, in which open, full-scale conflict was avoided and the dispute was resolved through the creation of the Gagauz Autonomy.

Historical Background (19th and 20th Centuries)

At the end of the 18th century, the territory of present-day Transnistria was incorporated into the Russian Empire. The southern part of Transnistria was taken from the Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Jassy (1792), while the northern part was seized from the First Polish Republic as a result of the Second Partition of Poland (1793).

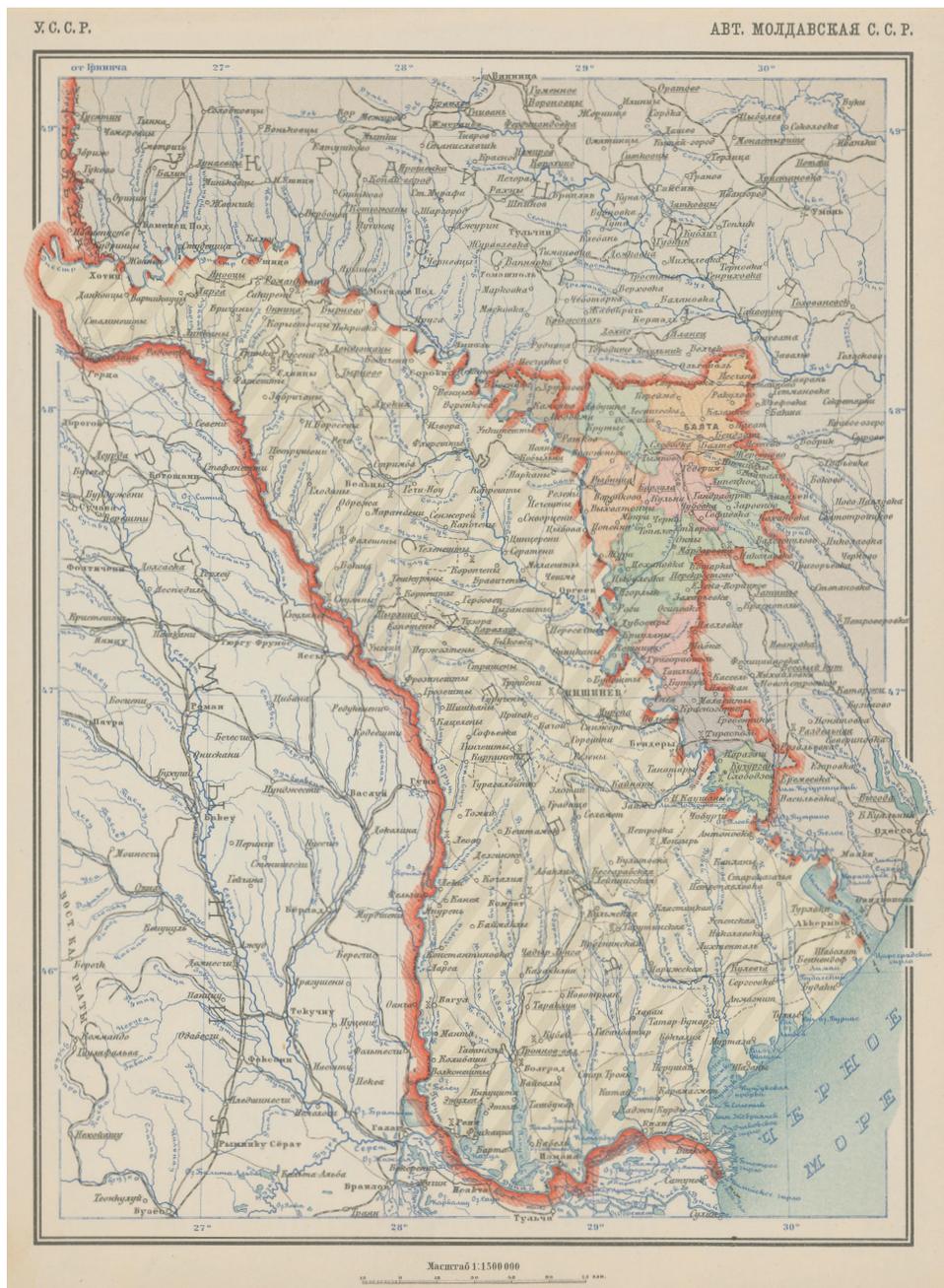
Under the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, Russia annexed Bessarabia from the Ottoman Empire – the territory between the Dniester and Prut rivers, which today forms the right bank of the Republic of Moldova.

During the 19th century, Transnistria became part of the so-called New Russia, experiencing significant civilisational development and migration of Slavic populations to the region. Tiraspol, the present-day capital of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR), was founded during this period (Oleksy 2018, pp. 169–170).

On 9 April 1918, right-bank Moldova (Bessarabia) united with Romania following a decision by the local parliament, the Country Council (*Sfatul Țării*), and remained part of Romania throughout the interwar period, until 1940.

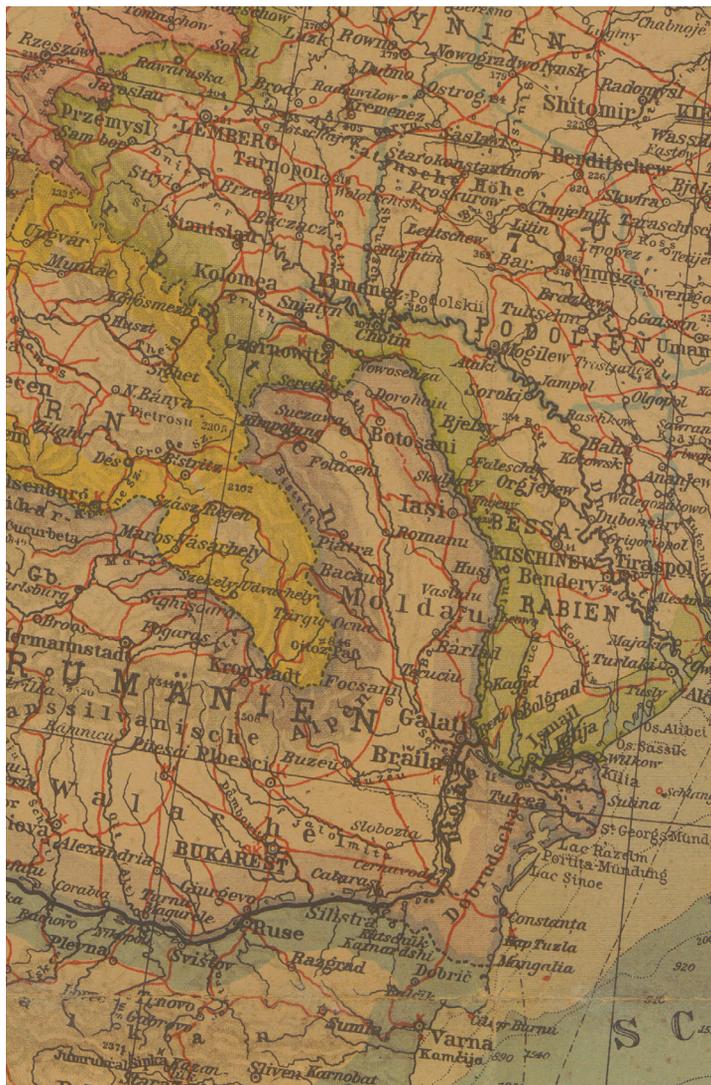
Transnistria, by contrast, did not belong to pre-war Romania, with the exception of Bender lying on the right bank of Dniester. This territory became part of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), established in 1924 within the Ukrainian SSR. By creating the MASSR, Moscow aimed to establish an ideological and organisational base for the eventual conquest of Bessarabia. The Kremlin never reconciled itself to the loss of this former Russian province. In Transnistria today, the current separatist republic is often presented as the legal successor to the MASSR. This narrative is disseminated among the local population through historical education and official propaganda (Gil 2006, pp. 41–42; Vahl and Emerson 2004, pp. 2–3).

In a secret protocol attached to the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact of 23 August 1939, the Soviet government emphasised its ‘interest in Bessarabia’ – in reality, its intention to annex the region – while the German side declared complete political disinterest, effectively acquiescing to Soviet claims. On 26 June 1940, the Soviet Union issued an ultimatum to Romania, demanding the cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. The Romanian government accepted the ultimatum, and on 30 June, the Red Army entered these territories. On

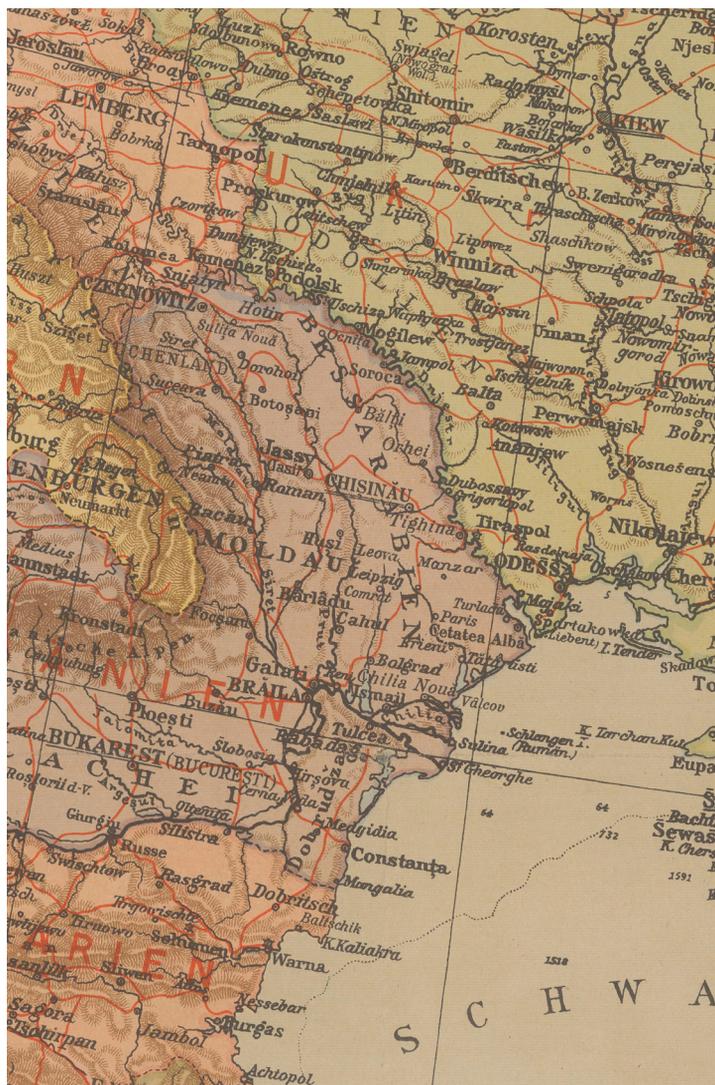


Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and Bessarabia (marked as “under Romanian occupation”). *Atlas Soyuzu Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik*. Moscow: Izdanie TsIK SSSR, 1928. National Library, Warsaw, Poland

Moldavia from
28 June 1940
to 22 June 1941.
Fragment of the map
*Das Europäische
Rußland, Bielefeld–
Leipzig: Velhagen
& Klasing, 1941.*
National Library,
Warsaw, Poland



11 July 1940, northern Bukovina and the northern and southern parts of Bessarabia – the former Romanian districts of Hotin (Ukrainian: Khotyn) (north) and Cetatea Albă (Ukrainian: Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, up to 1944 Akkerman) (south) – were incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The central part of Bessarabia was merged with the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (within its reduced borders) to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) (Gil 2006, p. 48). In the MSSR, industry was nationalised and agriculture collectivised. Significant numbers of Moldovans were deported to Siberia and other remote regions of the Soviet Union; in 1941, approximately 30,000 people were deported (Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 3; de Garda 2021).



Moldavia after 22 June 1941. Fragment of the map *Das Europäische Rußland*, Bielefeld–Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1942. National Library, Warsaw, Poland

Following Romania's participation in the Third Reich's invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Bucharest temporarily regained control of Bessarabia, and Romanian occupation of Transnistria also began. In 1944, as the tide of World War II turned, the Soviet Union re-occupied both Transnistria and Bessarabia.

After regaining control of the Moldavian SSR, the borders from before the German invasion were restored. The entire Moldavian SSR underwent forced Russification. The Romanian language, referred to as Moldavian, was written in the Cyrillic (*Grazhdanka*) alphabet (Gil 2005, pp. 15–17).

After regaining control of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Stalinist regime ruthlessly suppressed all forms of opposition. Pro-Romanian activists, the landed gentry, clergy, and intelligentsia

were either executed or deported deep into the Soviet Union. Between 1944 and 1951, approximately 45,000 people were exiled to Siberia or Central Asia. Moreover, to terrorise the Moldovan population, the Soviet authorities employed the same instrument previously used in Ukraine: the Great Famine (*Holodomor*). Peasants had their crops and livestock confiscated and were barred from travelling to cities in search of work or food. This campaign began in 1946 and, within less than three years, resulted in the deaths of between 150,000 and 200,000 people, with some estimates reaching 300,000. Approximately one in fourteen inhabitants of the Moldavian SSR perished during the Great Famine. These repressions led to the deep Sovietisation of Moldova and the near-complete elimination of all opposition (Cașu 2020, pp. 284–288; Cașu 2010, pp. 43–46).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the territory of present-day Transnistria underwent intensive industrialisation, attracting migrants from other areas of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the population of Transnistria became more Sovietised than that of right-bank Moldova and was more closely connected to the Soviet empire. Furthermore, the 14th Soviet Army was stationed in Transnistria, with the families of its officers and soldiers living in the region, further strengthening the local community's attachment to the USSR (Oleksy 2018, pp. 45–46).

These Soviet-era changes created profound economic differences between right-bank Moldova and Transnistria. The areas west of the Dniester were predominantly agricultural, producing wine and fruit, while Transnistria was far more industrialised. Major industrial facilities were established in the region, including the steelworks in Rybnitsa (Romanian: Rîbnița), the cement factory in Rybnitsa, and the largest power plant in the region at Dnestrovsc (Dnestrovsk). As a result, the left bank of the MSSR, home to only 15.2% of the republic's population, produced 40% of GDP, 90% of electricity, 56% of consumer goods, and 33% of industrial goods. Differences in urbanisation were also notable: west of the Dniester, 43% of the population lived in cities, compared with 66% on the east bank (Oleksy 2018, p. 45; Kosienkowski 2010, p. 41).

During the Soviet period, the proportion of Moldovans in the republic remained stable at between 64% and 66% of the population. Despite official declarations of support for the development of all nationalities in the USSR, a policy of Russification prevailed. Russian became the only official language, and primary schools and universities taught exclusively in Russian. Nevertheless, only a small minority of Moldovans (and Gagauz) declared Russian as their native language

in the 1989 census. In contrast, Slavic minorities, as well as German and Jewish communities, experienced significant Russification.

By 1989, 1,003,500 people, or 23.1% of the population of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, considered Russian their native language. Romanian (Moldovan) remained the dominant language in rural areas, while Russian was more commonly spoken in cities. West of the Dniester, Moldova remained Romanian-speaking, whereas the left bank rapidly became Russified (Solak 2006, pp. 55–58).

Ethnic differences between the territories on the left and right banks of the Dniester were therefore significant. On the right bank of the Dniester, Moldovans made up 68.4% of the population, with the remainder comprising Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, Jews, and other nationalities. On the left bank, Moldovans constituted only 39.3% of the population, with the majority being Russian-speaking (Vahl, Emerson 2004, p. 4; Solak 2006, p. 60).

By the second half of the 1970s, the elite of left-bank Moldova consisted of the directors of large industrial enterprises, local administrators, and military officers. There was a high turnover of personnel between the first two groups, with the same individuals holding senior positions in both industry and the administration of Tiraspol and the surrounding region consecutively. This created a relatively homogeneous environment, united by common interests and more closely connected to Moscow than to Chişinău, partly because local industry was directly controlled from Moscow. The broader Transnistrian community, including many immigrants from other regions of the USSR, also felt a stronger connection to the Soviet state and culture than to Moldova itself. To a large extent, this applied even to Pridnestrovian Moldavians, who were heavily Sovietised (Oleksy 2018, pp. 46–48).

The situation was markedly different in right-bank Moldova. In the early decades following the creation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Soviet authorities distrusted the inhabitants of the right bank, as they had been raised in 'bourgeois' Romania, which led to their marginalisation. This, combined with the fact that most right-bank Moldovans were rural residents, resulted in the dominance of Russian language and culture in the public life of the Moldavian SSR and the emergence of a 'glass ceiling' for right-bank Moldovans. Their career opportunities were severely limited throughout the entire existence of the MSSR. During the first twenty years of the Moldavian SSR, Russian-speaking activists from the left bank overwhelmingly dominated the republic's governing bodies,

and Russian became ubiquitous in state structures. The process of *korenizatsiia* (indigenisation) of the state apparatus, which began in the 1960s, somewhat mitigated the dominance of non-Moldovans in the republic's institutions. Nevertheless, in 1989, Moldovans held only about one-third of management positions in industry and administration and constituted only one-third of the membership of the Communist Party of Moldova (CPM). It was not until 1989 that Petru Lucinschi became the first leader of the CPM who was born on the right bank (Oleksy 2018, pp. 48–50; Miarka 2020, p. 74; Kowalczyk 2024, p. 256).

Thus, the society of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was divided into two distinct communities, geographically separated by the Dniester River. The inhabitants of the left bank were more pro-Soviet, more Sovietised, and generally more satisfied with life in the USSR, while those on the right bank were more attached to the Romanian language and culture and tended to resent being treated as second-class citizens in their own republic.

The Process of Moldova Gaining Sovereignty and Independence

At the end of the 1980s, during the era of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union, the Moldovan (Romanian) national and reform movement became increasingly active in Moldova.

In 1988, several associations were established that, alongside social demands, and these concerning human and economic rights, placed particular emphasis on the national revival of Moldovans. They called for the introduction of Moldovan (Romanian) written in the Latin alphabet as the official language of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and demanded recognition of the unity of the Moldovan and Romanian languages. Among the associations raising national issues, two are particularly notable: the Alexei Mateevici Literary and Music Club and the Moldovan Democratic Movement in Support of Perestroika, known as *Demdvizhenie* (short for *Demokraticheskoe Dvizhenie*, Democratic Movement).

The Mateevici Club, operating since January 1988, organised public outdoor meetings. Initially attended by only a dozen or so people, the Club soon attracted a rapidly growing number of participants. While the gatherings were ostensibly cultural events dedicated to Romanian-language culture, they rapidly acquired a political character. Attempts

at repression by the authorities failed to halt the Club's development.

In February 1989, the Club co-organised a march of 30,000 people to the Moldovan Academy of Sciences, presenting a wide range of demands – from the introduction of the Latin alphabet to environmental issues. This event represented one of the first mass anti-government demonstrations in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Similar clubs soon emerged in the Moldovan provinces.

Constituted on 3 July 1988, Demdvizhenie organised mass demonstrations and garnered significant support. The movement called for administrative reforms and democratisation in line with Mikhail Gorbachev's slogans, but its core demands, like those of the Mateevici Club, focused on linguistic and national issues. Demdvizhenie aimed to Romanianise/Moldovanise the country and separate it from the USSR. By the end of 1988, the movement had approximately 300 support groups across Moldova and an extensive organisational network in 19 cities and districts of the republic.

Initially, the Communist Party of Moldova condemned both associations and opposed their reform proposals. However, under pressure from Moscow, it conceded on some minor issues at the end of 1988 (J. Solak 2014, pp. 118–119; Vahl and Emerson 2004, pp. 4–5; Erizanu 2021; Panici 2003; Oleksy 2018, pp. 52–53).

The establishment of a civic movement in Chişinău on 30 December 1988 to defend the rights of the Russian-speaking population – the Interethnic Movement “Unitate-Edinstvo” (Interdvizhenie) – was treated by Demdvizhenie as a Soviet provocation (the official founding congress of Interdvizhenie “Unitate-Edinstvo” took place on 8 July 1989 at the Chekhov Theatre in Chişinău; see Institute for Social and Political Research and Regional Development 2019). In response, from January 1989, Demdvizhenie organised a series of anti-Russian rallies on Chişinău's main street. Repeated clashes occurred between demonstrators and the militia, and Russian speakers were reportedly beaten in public (J. Solak 2014, p. 119).

The two most important Moldovan opposition associations – the Mateevici Club and Demdvizhenie – united on 20 May 1989 to form the Popular Front of Moldova (PFM). The Front's main demands concerned language issues and the pursuit of the republic's sovereignty. The PFM quickly gained massive support: its demonstration in Chişinău in August 1989, known as the Great National Assembly, attracted around half a million people. Based on the Greek principle of direct democracy, various legislative proposals were voted on there. Although these votes had no legal authority, they exerted pressure on

the parliament. In August 1989, language bills were passed at the Great National Assembly (Oleksy 2018, pp. 53, 178; Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 5; Cojocaru 2003, p. 11; Skoczylas 2013, p. 27; J. Solak 2014, p. 120).

The PFM campaign proved successful. On 31 August and 1 September 1989, the Supreme Council of the MSSR adopted three language laws establishing Moldovan as the official state language, written in the Latin alphabet, while Russian remained the language of interethnic communication. Gagauz was granted official status in areas inhabited by the Gagauz minority. The laws also confirmed the identity of Moldovan with the Romanian language, and all state employees were required to learn Moldovan. In many cases, employees who did not know the language were dismissed (Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 5; Oleksy 2018, p. 55; Kosienkowski 2007, p. 207).

In the elections to the Supreme Council of Moldova in February 1990 (second round in March), the PFM won 120 of the 380 seats. Although the Communist Party of Moldova (CPM) retained the largest number of deputies, a split within the party facilitated the success of the national movement, as some CPM deputies defected to the Front while others abstained from attending sessions. As a result of a compromise between the CPM and the PFM, the leader of the Front, Mircea Druc, became Prime Minister of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, while Mircea Snegur, a CPM member considered sympathetic to the national movement, became Chairman of the Supreme Council (Oleksy 2018, p. 55; Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 5; Skoczylas 2013, p. 27).

Following the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime in Romania in December 1989, the idea of uniting Moldova with Romania gained growing support within the PFM. After the elections, at the end of April 1990, the new Supreme Council adopted the tricolour Romanian flag with the Moldovan emblem at its centre as the national flag and recognised the Romanian anthem as Moldova's official anthem (Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 5).

On 6 May 1990, in a symbolic gesture, visa and passport requirements were suspended for six hours, allowing Romanians to cross the border en masse. Populations on both sides fraternised, and long-lost relatives were reunited (Całus 2015, p. 16; Całus 2020, pp. 17–23).

On 23 June 1990, the Supreme Council of the Moldavian SSR adopted a declaration of Moldavian sovereignty, establishing the supremacy of the republic's legislation over that of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the parliament introduced the office of president and, on 3 September 1990, appointed Mircea Snegur as the first president

of the republic (Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 5; Skoczylas 2013, p. 27; J. Solak 2014, p. 259; *website of the President of Moldova*).

In 1990–1991, talks were held between Chişinău and Bucharest on the unification of Moldova with Romania; however, only a minority of the population supported this solution. The radicalisation of the Popular Front of Moldova led to the loss of some leaders and public support, while deteriorating relations with Transnistria and Gagauzia further discouraged the idea of unification.

By early 1991, the political elites in Chişinău reached a consensus that Moldova should remain a sovereign – and potentially independent – state with strong cultural ties to Romania (Vahl and Emerson 2004, pp. 5–6).

In May 1991, the Moldovan parliament renamed the country from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Republic of Moldova. On 25 June 1991, Moldova was proclaimed a sovereign state within the confederation of Soviet republics.

Following the failure of the August coup in Moscow, the Moldovan authorities outlawed the Communist Party on 23 August, and on 27 August 1991, the Supreme Council declared the independence of the Republic of Moldova (Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 6; Kosienkowski 2007, p. 209).

Units of the Soviet 14th Army refused to submit to Moldovan authorities, remaining under Moscow's command, which prompted demands for their withdrawal. In response, the creation of a national army was initiated (Topolski 2006, p. 92).

President Mircea Snegur, who had initially supported unification with Romania, changed his position and opted to maintain Moldova's independence. At the summit in Almaty on 21 December 1991, Snegur formally introduced Moldova to the Commonwealth of Independent States (Oleksy 2018, p. 56; J. Solak 2014, p. 28).

Transnistria on the Eve of Secession

In response to the actions of the authorities in Chişinău and the trend of Romanianisation in the republic, as well as occasional acts of xenophobia directed against Russians and Russian-speaking people, concern grew among the Slavic-speaking population on the left bank of the Dniester. In Transnistria, fears emerged that, should Moldova unite with Romania, the Russian-speaking population would automatically become second-class citizens due to their lack of knowledge of the Romanian language.



Infantry fighting vehicle BMP-2 with painted acronym "PMR" (Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika, Transnistrian Moldavian Republic) and Transnistrian flag, used as part of "Bendery Memorial of Glory," i.e. memorial of 1990 war. Bendery, Transnistria (2024). Photo: Photoframe123 / Shutterstock ID 2512055645

Anxiety was further fuelled by xenophobic and sometimes anti-Semitic slogans proclaimed by some activists of the national movement, such as "suitcase–station–Russia," "down with the occupiers," "we will drown the Russians in Jewish blood," or "Russians beyond the Dniester, Jews to the Dniester" (for example, the poet Leonida Lari shouted from the stage: "Let my hands be covered in blood up to my elbows, but I swear that soon there will not be a single Russian left in Moldova"; cf. J. Solak 2014, p. 95; Oleksy 2018, p. 53).

These sentiments were actively exploited and reinforced by the Transnistrian elite, who perceived the developments in Chişinău and right-bank Moldova as a direct threat to their interests. This elite, consisting of the local nomenklatura and directors of industrial plants, sought to retain control over the region's industry, which accounted for approximately 70% of the industrial output of the entire Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Wróbel 2003, p. 54).

The creation of a separatist Transnistria was undoubtedly in the Kremlin's interest. Certain political circles in Moscow clearly supported the establishment of a secessionist republic, enabling Russia to exert influence over the newly independent Moldova. A key question remains as to the principal initiator of the separatist republic: the local Transnistrian elites or the Kremlin.

Local elites had an evident interest in creating a separatist Transnistria, and they were able to amplify the fears of Slavic communities regarding nationalist slogans in Moldova. At the same time, Russia had its own strategic interest in a separatist Transnistria,

as it provided leverage to pressure the authorities in Chişinău and force them to take certain steps (a similar situation occurred in the case of the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the internationally recognised territory of Georgia, and a slightly different one in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, located in the recognised territory of Azerbaijan).

Even without definitively resolving this question, the arguments for both perspectives are clear.

The primary motivation of the Transnistrian elites was to preserve political and economic control over the region in opposition to the Moldovan authorities, who were pursuing independence. These elites formed a tightly knit group with strong connections to the local population. The local roots of the separatist movement are further indicated by Transnistria's sense of separateness within the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and the surprising independence and assertiveness of its elites, even in relation to their Russian patrons.

On the other hand, as noted by Dr. Witold Rodkiewicz, a leading expert on Russia at the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw, at the end of the 1980s the Soviet authorities, in an attempt to block the sovereignty of the union republics, sought to oblige them to take into account the right to self-determination of areas densely populated by nationalities other than the nominal nationality of the republic. Furthermore, there is substantial evidence that separatist initiatives were promoted from above, along party, industrial, and KGB lines. Janusz Solak explicitly stated that the Transnistrian republic was "invented in Moscow" (J. Solak 2014, pp. 95, 171).

It seems that the Kremlin version of the initiative should be given consideration. The Soviet Union was a highly hierarchical structure, and Transnistrian irredentism served, to some extent, to consolidate the old order in the region. Of note is also the involvement of individuals and groups from other parts of Russia and the broader Soviet/post-Soviet space in the Transnistrian separatist movement. For many years, Vladimir Antiufeyev served as Minister of State Security of Transnistria and was the second most important political figure in the republic. Previously, he had commanded the OMON special unit of the Soviet militia in Riga, responsible for suppressing Latvian independence demonstrations, and later became Deputy Prime Minister for Security of the separatist Donetsk People's Republic. The leader of Transnistria, Igor Smirnov, was a Soviet official who spent most of his life in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, only arriving in Transnistria

in 1987. These circumstances reinforce the view that Moscow played a decisive role in the creation of separatist Transnistria.

Throughout the republic, Russian speakers protested against the policies of the People's Front of Moldova.

Facing a weak political position nationwide, where the PFM's influence was supported by part of the Communist Party of Moldova, pro-Russian forces began to concentrate in the Transnistrian region and in Comrat, the largest city in Gagauzia. They started to contemplate independence from Chişinău. The aggressive and chauvinistic rhetoric of Moldovan nationalists facilitated the mobilisation of the local Russian-speaking population (Oleksy 2018, pp. 57–58, 178; J. Solak 2014, p. 119).

On 11 August 1989, the United Work Collective Council was established in Tiraspol, the largest city in Transnistria (*Ob'edinionnyi Soviet Trudovykh Kollektivov*, OSTK), becoming a platform for the Russian-speaking population of Moldova. The Council called for a two-hour warning strike on 16 August 1989, in which over 27,000 people participated. On 21 August, a general strike broke out in Tiraspol and was joined by workplaces in Chişinău, Bender, Comrat, Bălţi, and other Moldovan cities. On 26 August, a republican strike committee was formed. Demonstrations continued in the streets of Tiraspol, gathering around 200,000 people—more than the city's population. These events are remembered in Transnistrian history as the “Republican Strike” and are seen in the PMR as a turning point when the Transnistrian political community emerged, with residents recognising their shared interests (J. Solak 2014, p. 96; Oleksy 2018, p. 60).

The authorities in Chişinău ignored the strikers' demand to introduce two official languages – Romanian (Moldovan) and Russian. As previously mentioned, on 31 August 1989, the Supreme Council of the MSSR established Moldovan as the state language and Russian only as a language of interethnic communication. The positions of the parties were irreconcilable: the Moldovan national movement sought to reclaim the republic for Moldovans, while the protesters demanded a formally bilingual state. The protesters soon realised that their demands had no chance of being met in Chişinău.

Under pressure from Moscow, the strike was suspended. Delegates to the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union brought Mikhail Gorbachev's personal request to the strikers to end the strike. Since Gorbachev supported recognising Russian as a state language throughout the USSR, the strikers hoped

he would pressure Chişinău on their behalf. The Transnistrian elites understood that the all-Union centre was too weak to support pro-Soviet forces in Moldova and that power in Chişinău had permanently passed into the hands of the Moldovan national movement. The fact that the left bank remained under the control of a group over which the Transnistrian leaders – mainly factory directors – had no influence meant that they would eventually lose their position. Faced with this reality, the Transnistrian elites embarked on a path toward Transnistria's independence.

In the local and Supreme Council elections held on 25 February 1990, candidates from the Workers' Collectives won in Transnistria. At the first session of the Tiraspol City Council, the newly elected councillors chose Igor Smirnov as chairman, who quickly rose to become the leader of Transnistria. However, in the Supreme Council of the Moldavian SSR deputies from Transnistria were isolated and unable to pursue their demands effectively (J. Solak 2014, pp. 96–97; Oleksy 2018, pp. 61–62).

The Gagauz Issue

The Transnistrian problem was closely linked to Gagauz separatism. The Gagauz are a Turkic-speaking people who adhere to the Orthodox faith, with their largest concentration in Moldova (154,000 people according to the 1989 census).

In February 1988, a discussion club of the Gagauz intelligentsia, Gagauz-Halky (Gagauz People), was established. On 21 May 1989, it was transformed into a structure uniting the most important Gagauz socio-political organisations.

The laws introducing Moldovan written in the Latin alphabet as the state language of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, combined with the aspirations of some Moldovan elites to unite with Romania, consolidated and radicalised the Gagauz national movement (in 1989, only 4.4% of the Gagauz population spoke Moldovan). As a result, on 12 November 1989, at the Extraordinary Congress of Representatives of the Gagauz People, the establishment of the Gagauz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (GASSR) was proclaimed in areas densely populated by Gagauz within the MSSR. A day later, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Moldavian SSR declared this resolution invalid.

On 27 July 1990, the parliament of the Moldavian SSR denied the Gagauz the right to autonomy, despite the efforts of Gagauz deputies.

In response, on 19 August 1990, at the First Congress of Gagauz Deputies of All Levels in Comrat, the creation of the Gagauz Republic was announced – a socialist republic independent of Moldova but remaining part of the USSR, effectively replacing the GASSR. Two weeks later, on the left bank of the Dniester, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed, also within the USSR (Kosienkowski 2007, pp. 207–208; J. Solak 2014, pp. 77–80; Hatlas 2009, pp. 65–71; Vahl, Emerson 2004, p. 5).

It is noteworthy that both Gagauzia and Transnistria established congresses of deputies of all levels, indicating coordination between the two separatist movements.

Prime Minister Mircea Druc organised paramilitary formations (“volunteers”), 20,000 strong, supported by the MSSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, to disrupt the parliamentary elections in Gagauzia scheduled for October 1990. The outbreak of open conflict was prevented by the deployment of troops from the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs to areas densely populated by the Gagauz people. On 28 October 1990, elections to the Supreme Council of Gagauzia were held without hindrance. A few days later, a clash between Moldovan and Transnistrian militias in Dubăsari resulted in several deaths. The Supreme Council of Moldova reacted negatively, dissolving the Moldovan paramilitary formations. Consequently, tensions between the central authorities and Gagauzia eased (Kosienkowski 2007, pp. 208–211; Hatlas 2009, p. 72).

Following Moldova’s declaration of independence in August 1991, a government was formed in Gagauzia in October. On 1 December 1991, presidential elections were held (Stepan Topal became president), and a referendum on the independence of the Gagauz Republic, which remained part of the USSR at the time, ended positively.

When war broke out between Moldova and Transnistria in March 1992, Gagauzia remained largely peaceful. Chişinău’s failure in the war with Transnistria prompted the Moldovan authorities to seek a compromise with Gagauzia. The Gagauz side also wanted to avoid war, and Gagauzia’s capabilities were far smaller than those of Transnistria.

From the second half of 1992, the Moldovan parliament worked on a bill concerning Gagauz autonomy, but progress stalled throughout 1993. A compromise became possible due to the victory of the Agrarian-Democratic Party of Moldova in the February 1994 parliamentary elections, in which representatives of the Gagauz people ran, the involvement of Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, and

the 1994 referendum in which Moldovans voted against unification with Romania. The compromise was facilitated by the loss of power by the former People's Front of Moldova – operating since 1992 as the Christian Democratic People's Front – a strongly nationalistic party unwilling to grant broad autonomy to the Gagauz people (Kosienkowski 2007, pp. 209–210; Bejan 2017, interview with S. Topal; Baluk 2007, p. 43; Partidul Popular Creștin Democrat (PPCD), e-democracy.md).

On 29 July 1994, a new constitution of the Republic of Moldova was approved, allowing for the possibility of granting special status to the left bank and southern regions of Moldova. On 23 December 1994, the parliament passed a law on the special legal status of Gagauzia (*Gagauz-Yeri*), establishing the Autonomous Territory of Gagauzia. Gagauzia was granted the right to self-determination should Moldova cease to be an independent state, particularly in the event of unification with Romania. On 5 March 1995, a referendum was held to define the borders of the Gagauz Autonomy (Kosienkowski 2007, p. 210; Hatlas 2009, pp. 75–77).

In Gagauzia, the threat of separatism was similar to that in Transnistria. The population of Gagauzia is heavily Russified, and, as in Transnistria, there were fears of a Romanian/Moldovan national movement and the possibility of Moldova being annexed by Romania. However, in Gagauzia open armed conflict was avoided. Several factors contributed to this. Gagauzia has less potential, both in terms of population and economy, including industry. Its territory is also more difficult to defend, consisting of the main area with its capital in Comrat and three separate enclaves, and lacking natural barriers such as the Dniester River, which protects Transnistria. Additionally, no USSR or Russian Army units were stationed in Gagauzia, unlike in Transnistria. These factors prompted Gagauz leaders to be more cautious in their relations with Chișinău.

When war broke out in Transnistria, both sides wanted to prevent a similar conflict in Gagauzia. Granting autonomy to Gagauzia eased tensions but did not fully resolve the issue. The region remains pro-Russian, both in terms of its society and its political leadership. In 2014, a referendum held in Gagauzia – deemed illegal by Chișinău – showed that 98.9% of residents would choose independence if Moldova lost its sovereignty and united with Romania, and 98.4% preferred joining the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan customs union (Serban and Ungureanu 2023). Yevgenia Gucul, elected Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia in

2023, is associated with the pro-Russian Șor Party and engaged in provocative pro-Russian activities. On 6 March 2024, she met with Vladimir Putin in Sochi. On 9 April 2024, she signed an agreement on behalf of Gagauzia with Promsvyazbank, a Russian state-owned bank closely linked to the military sector and subject to Western sanctions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Oleksy 2024).

Declaration of Sovereignty of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and Declaration of Independence by the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic

In 1990, anxiety and a sense of threat grew among the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Moldova. On 14 May 1990, nationalist militants in Chișinău beat a young man to death for speaking Russian in public. His funeral took place on 22 May. On the same day a demonstration against violence toward Russian-speaking people was held. Riots broke out, and deputies from Transnistria and Gagauzia were attacked, prompting them to stop participating in parliamentary proceedings, citing concerns for their personal safety. A few days later, on 26 May 1990, PFM leader Mircea Druc became Prime Minister of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Oleksy 2018, pp. 62, 116; J. Solak 2014, p. 99).

These events convinced the Transnistrian elites and the broader left-bank community that they should strive for maximum independence from the authorities in Chișinău.

On 2 June 1990, at the initiative of the Tiraspol authorities, the First Congress of Deputies of All Administrative Levels (from village councils to the Supreme Council of the Moldavian SSR and Supreme Council of the USSR) was convened in Parkany. The broad representation aimed to demonstrate the democratic nature of the meeting. During the congress, provisional authorities of Transnistria were established: the Coordinating Council, headed by Igor Smirnov, and the Executive Committee. It was declared that the decisions of the Moldovan authorities would only be valid in Transnistria after approval by the Coordinating Council. A referendum on the creation of a republic independent of Chișinău was ordered. The participants also recognised Transnistria as a free economic zone, excluding the region's enterprises from the economy of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On 23 June 1990, the parliament in Chişinău adopted a declaration of sovereignty, declared the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact invalid, and deemed the 1940 creation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic unlawful. In response, Transnistria moved toward the creation of a sovereign republic, arguing that if the establishment of the MSSR had been illegal, its incorporation of Soviet Transnistria was also unlawful (Oleksy 2018, pp. 62–63; J. Solak 2014, pp. 97–98).

After the strike ended in August–September 1989, the United Work Collective Council in Tiraspol continued its political rebellion, campaigning for a referendum on Transnistrian autonomy.

In a referendum held in Rybnitsa on 31 December 1989, 91.1% of voters supported the creation of the Transnistrian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, with a turnout of 81.8%. In a subsequent referendum in Tiraspol on 28 January 1990, 96% of voters supported the establishment of the TASSR, with a turnout of 92.3%

In June 1990, the authorities in Tiraspol launched a large-scale propaganda campaign ahead of the vote on Transnistria's secession from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. As a result, in a series of referendums held in Transnistria and right-bank Bender, 95.8% of voters (according to data provided by the Transnistrian authorities, the reliability of which remains uncertain) voted in favour of the region's secession from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On this basis, on 2 September 1990, the Second Congress of Deputies of All Levels proclaimed the establishment of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (PMSSR) within the USSR. The congress appointed a 50-member Provisional Supreme Council chaired by Igor Smirnov, whose task was to establish state institutions and prepare elections for a fully-fledged Supreme Council.

The secession of Transnistria from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was supported by the local nomenklatura and the directors of industrial enterprises in the region (J. Solak 2014, pp. 96–98; Oleksy 2018, p. 63; Wróbel 2003, p. 53).

Paramilitary formations were established in Transnistria with the support of the 14th Soviet Army. At that time, the Moldovan authorities could counter them only with police forces (Topolski 2006, p. 91).

The conflict gradually escalated as both sides made increasingly intransigent demands. On 2 November 1990, OMON special units of the Moldovan police intervened in Dubăsari, using firearms and killing three demonstrators while injuring several others.

As the disintegration of the USSR continued, the process of Transnistria gaining independence advanced. On 25 November 1990,

general elections to the Supreme Council of the PMSSR were held. The newly established parliament created the post of chairman of the republic, soon renamed president of the republic.

On 8 December 1990, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic declared full sovereignty (J. Solak 2014, pp. 98–99; Oleksy 2018, p. 64; website of the Supreme Council of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic).

The Moscow coup of 19–22 August 1991 was supported by both Transnistria and Gagauzia. In response, the authorities in Chişinău arrested the Transnistrian and Gagauz leaders. On 29 August, Igor Smirnov was detained in Kyiv, and deputies from Transnistria as well as political activists from Tiraspol were also arrested (Topolski 2006, p. 92, fn. 3; J. Solak 2014, p. 100).

In reaction to these arrests, Transnistria established a Women's Strike Committee, which mobilised thousands of women to block railway lines across Transnistria, demanding the release of the detained leaders. For over a month, the activists halted all train traffic between Moldova and the rest of the Soviet Union. Eventually, on 1 October 1991, the authorities in Chişinău relented and released the detainees (J. Solak 2014, p. 100; Oleksy 2018, pp. 70–72).

On 28 August 1991—one day after Moldova declared independence—the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic likewise declared independence as the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic. The local nomenklatura and industrial elites successfully exploited the prevailing public sentiment (Wróbel 2003, p. 53).

On 2 September 1991, the Transnistrian parliament adopted a provisional constitution modelled on the Soviet one, as well as the coat of arms and flag of the new republic.

A referendum on independence and general presidential elections were held on 1 December 1991, resulting in Igor Smirnov's election as the first president of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (J. Solak 2014, p. 98).

In September 1991, a decision was also made to form Transnistria's own armed forces – the Republican Guard – while paramilitary units had been active in the region since late 1990. The Guard received support from volunteer Cossack detachments. By the end of 1991, the separatist forces had gradually taken control of an increasing number of Moldovan public institutions, including administrative buildings, police stations, schools, newspaper offices, and local radio stations. The Moldovan authorities, aware of their own forces' poor equipment and fearing further escalation, initially refrained from the use of force.

However, on 13 December, Moldovan police opened fire for the first time during an attempt to seize government buildings in Dubăsari (Vahl and Emerson 2004, p. 6; Oleksy 2018, p. 72).

Following the failure of the August 1991 coup, Moldova's declaration of independence, and, most importantly, Transnistria's own declaration of independence, tensions escalated sharply.

On 6 September, an attempt by Moldovan Interior Ministry and OPON forces to enter the left bank of the Dniester failed when Transnistrian authorities blocked the access roads and bridges. A second attempt on 25 September by Moldovan police units to break through the Transnistrian defences in the Dubăsari area also ended in failure.

In this situation, Tiraspol received open support of the commander of the 14th Soviet Army, General Gennady Yakovlev. General Yakovlev openly stated that he did not intend to prevent 2,500 of his officers and several thousand recruits from defending their families, thereby effectively consenting to their joining the Transnistrian forces. Many soldiers of the 14th Army were natives of the region. According to Yakovlev's officers, the general planned to hold a ceremony during which the soldiers of the 14th Army would swear allegiance to the Transnistrian Republic. Having exceeded his authority and acted on his own initiative, Yakovlev was dismissed by the command in Moscow and expelled from the army. He was subsequently appointed by Igor Smirnov as commander of Transnistria's defence forces. His successor, General Yuri Netkachev, was instructed to maintain formal neutrality in the conflict (Oleksy 2018, p. 73; J. Solak 2014, pp. 100–101).

The War in Transnistria

Armed incidents began long before the outbreak of full-scale civil war. Attempts by the Moldovan police to capture Dubăsari took place in November 1990, and again in September and December 1991. Dubăsari was chosen as the target of these operations primarily because it lies roughly in the centre of Transnistria; its capture would have effectively cut the separatist republic in half. Moreover, as the majority of the local population was Moldovan, the authorities in Chişinău hoped they would support Moldovan actions. In the following months, the situation in Dubăsari remained tense, with both the Moldovan police and the Transnistrian militia operating in the city. By the end of February 1992, mutual provocations became increasingly frequent (Oleksy 2018, pp. 70, 77).

On 1 March 1992, riots broke out in Dubăsari, triggered by yet another operation by Moldovan special forces. During the unrest, someone in the crowd opened fire, killing the head of the Transnistrian militia. The Transnistrian authorities regarded this as a provocation by Moldovan special services and placed a Republican Guard battalion on alert. Upon learning of the militia chief's death, after midnight, a crowd of Dubăsari residents surrounded the Moldovan police station still present in the city. The police negotiated an agreement allowing them to be transported to 'proper' Moldova by bus, escorted by Transnistrian Cossacks. However, as the officers were boarding the bus, the Cossacks came under fire from unidentified assailants – one was killed and two wounded. A shootout followed.

A few hours later, the 1st Special Forces Brigade of the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs set off from Chişinău towards Transnistria. On 2 March 1992, the first armed clash occurred near Cocieri (Oleksy 2018, pp. 78–79; J. Solak 2014, pp. 104–105).

In the face of the outbreak of open conflict, the commander of the 14th Russian Army declared neutrality. However, despite General Yuri Netkachev's opposition to supporting Transnistria and his efforts to maintain neutrality, weapons were repeatedly transferred to the separatist side through covert agreements at lower levels of command, and his troops often acted insubordinately in this regard. Weapons and equipment began to disappear from the barracks. The most notorious incident occurred on 14 March 1992 in Parkany, when several thousand women from the Women's Strike Committee arrived at the barracks and demanded that the weapons depots be opened. The Russian soldiers complied, and the Women's Committee seized, among other things, more than 1,300 rifles. It later emerged that the commander of the Parkany garrison had been involved in the incident and that the Women's Committee had been protected by a unit of the Transnistrian Guard.

In mid-March and early April, Moldovan forces launched two offensive operations aimed at capturing Dubăsari. As previously mentioned, the purpose of this move was to divide the separatist-controlled territories into two parts and prevent Tiraspol from transferring reinforcements between the northern and southern sections of the republic. After the capture of Dubăsari, the plan was to advance south and take Tiraspol. Although the Moldovan forces enjoyed a significant advantage in weaponry, the separatists succeeded in holding their positions.

On 12 April, the parties to the conflict signed a truce negotiated through Russian mediation. However, the Moldovans resumed

military operations on 10 May. The Transnistrian side increasingly pressured the command of the 14th Army to intervene on behalf of the separatist republic. A mass protest organised by the Women's Strike Committee began at the army headquarters, and individual units started to defect to the Transnistrian side.

Alongside the fighting, peace negotiations were also taking place. Three ceasefires were concluded but subsequently violated by Moldova.

After the failure of the plan to capture Dubăsari, the Moldovan command decided to target the right-bank city of Bender, which remained under Transnistrian control (Oleksy 2018, pp. 79–84; J. Solak 2014, pp. 106–112).

On 19 June 1992, the Battle of Bender began – the bloodiest phase of the Transnistrian war. According to the Moldovan operational plan, codenamed “Trojan Horse,” Moldovan police officers, special service agents, soldiers and members of paramilitary sabotage groups began to infiltrate Bender several hours before the attack on the city. At the moment of the regular army's assault, they were to seize control of key strategic points.

The Moldovan forces attacked the city from three directions but encountered fierce resistance. The Moldovan saboteurs who had infiltrated Bender proved largely ineffective. The commander of the Russian 14th Army subsequently transferred to the Transnistrian side, among other things, ten T-64 tanks, several armoured personnel carriers, and artillery pieces. The Transnistrian counterattack, supported by tanks, was successful – partly because the Moldovan troops believed they were being attacked by the Russian 14th Army. Panic ensued, and some Moldovan units fled. Nevertheless, the Transnistrian side failed to completely expel the Moldovan forces from Bender, and heavy street fighting ensued (Oleksy 2018, pp. 86–89; J. Solak 2014, pp. 113–115).

At the end of June 1992, General Aleksander Lebed assumed command of the Russian 14th Army. On 26 June, Moldovan aircraft flying over Transnistria were fired upon by the 14th Army's air defence units. That same day, General Lebed held a press conference at which he declared: “The army will remain neutral, but the nature of this neutrality will change. It will be a completely different kind of neutrality – a wartime neutrality. It will mean that as long as they do not poke at us, we will not poke at anyone” (as cited in Oleksy 2018, p. 91). The general added that, from that point on, the 14th Army would cooperate with the Transnistrian armed forces. At a subsequent press conference, he went so far as to threaten Moldova, labelling it a fascist state and accusing the authorities in Chişinău of genocide.



Gen. Alexandr Lebed monument, Bendery, Transnistria (2024). Photo: Photoframe123 / Shutterstock ID 2512043501

With the support of the Russian 14th Army, which attacked Moldovan positions, the Transnistrian forces succeeded in holding Bender and driving the government troops out of the city.

After Lebed's statements accusing the Moldovan authorities of fascism and genocide, and declaring armed neutrality, Russian forces subsequently launched an attack on Moldovan positions threatening Bender. Lebed's statements indicated an increasing likelihood of the Russian 14th Army intervening on the side of Transnistria. Under pressure from Russian threats, Chişinău agreed to halt the fighting. On 6 July 1992, Moldovan President Mircea Snegur and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a ceasefire agreement. However, Moldova was initially reluctant to implement the terms of the truce and continued to shell Transnistrian positions. Only after further Russian warnings did Moldovan forces finally cease fire (Oleksy 2018, pp. 90–94; Solak 2014, pp. 115–116).

Throughout the conflict, the Russian 14th Army repeatedly supplied Transnistrian forces with light and heavy weaponry and ammunition. Its soldiers assisted in mining the approaches to the separatist defensive lines. A considerable number of Russian Cossacks and other volunteers from Russia also took part in the fighting on the Transnistrian side. In the final phase of the conflict, units of the Russian 14th Army became directly involved in combat operations in support of the unrecognised republic (Chirtoaca 2004, pp. 43–45).

On 21 July 1992, the Presidents of Russia and Moldova signed in Moscow the Agreement on the Principles of a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova.

A security zone was established along the demarcation line. To ensure compliance with the agreement – supervision of the security zone and maintenance of the ceasefire – a trilateral Moldovan–Russian–Transnistrian Joint Control Commission (JCC) was established, based in Bender, together with a trilateral peacekeeping force composed of Moldovan, Russian and Transnistrian contingents (*Agreement on the Principles...*).

Transnistria After the War

Thanks to the agreements imposed by Russia in July 1992, Transnistria's existence was secured.

The separatist entity possesses all the attributes of a state except international recognition – formally, it remains part of the Republic of Moldova (even Russia has not recognised its independence). The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic exercises full control over its own territory and has a constitution, a president, a unicameral parliament (the Supreme Council), armed forces, a militia, its own currency (the Pridnestrovian rouble, introduced in 1994), as well as a flag and a coat of arms. The capital of Transnistria is Tiraspol (Wróbel 2012, p. 31; J. Solak 2014, p. 63).

Russian soldiers marching during the 9 May parade in Tiraspol, Transnistria (2017). Photo: annva / Shutterstock ID 1091042126



Transnistria's political system is authoritarian, with the security services maintaining strict control over society. Until 2016, however, genuine elections were held in the separatist republic, allowing for changes in government (in the case of the presidency, there have been two such changes). Since 2016, full power in Transnistria has been seized by a mafia regime linked to the Sheriff holding company, which prevents candidates competitive with its authority from standing in presidential or parliamentary elections. The elements of political pluralism that had previously existed have been eliminated (Rodkiewicz 2011; Całus 2016; Pieńkowski 2023; Freedom House 2024, 2025 and previous years; Całus, Kosienkowski, Oleksy, Pieńkowski, Rajczyk 2014, pp. 23–24; Gnatkova 2020).

The core of Transnistria's armed forces is the Dniester Republican Guard – approximately 4,500 personnel – which is about half the size of the Moldovan army but better armed. In addition, there are border guard troops, a militia, civil defence forces and the Black Sea Cossack Army, which can reach around 3,000 men after mobilisation. These units, commanded by a military ataman elected by the Cossack army, constitute an important part of the militarised Cossack community, which enjoys legally guaranteed autonomy (J. Solak 2006, pp. 152–153; J. Solak 2014, pp. 153–162).

“Sheriff” chain shop in Rybnitsa, Transnistria (2017). Photo: The Road Provides / Shutterstock ID 1802781649



In the case of renewed conflict in Transnistria, military assistance from Russia was also anticipated, but this is currently unrealistic. Almost the entire 14th Russian Army has been withdrawn; Russian peacekeeping forces are few in number; and the war in Ukraine means that Russia would be unable to come to Transnistria's aid from its own territory if necessary. This is all the more so since Ukraine has declared that, if requested by Chişinău, it would assist Moldova in eliminating the separatist republic, including by force. However, the authorities in Chişinău are not inclined to pursue such a scenario (Caţus 2023).

The Economic Situation of Transnistria and the Sheriff Company

Transnistria accounted for 12.4% of the territory of the Moldavian SSR and was inhabited by 15.2% of its population, yet its economic significance was considerably greater. The left bank of the Dniester was the most industrialised region of the Moldavian SSR. After the collapse of the USSR, Transnistria managed to preserve most of its industrial potential despite the difficulties of operating within an unrecognised state. This was partly possible because the leadership of the separatist republic consisted of directors of industrial enterprises, who were well acquainted with economic management. Nevertheless, the economic situation in Transnistria deteriorated during the 1990s – in the first decade of the parastate's existence, its industrial production declined 2.5 times, and agricultural output fell fourfold. Economic growth was recorded for the first time only in 2000 (Kosienkowski 2010, pp. 41–42; Wróbel 2012, p. 33).

It should be noted that throughout the 1990s, the most important Transnistrian enterprises remained state-owned. At the same time, grassroots entrepreneurship developed, with the increasingly powerful “Sheriff” company distancing itself from competitors. Large state-owned enterprises were privatised only at the beginning of the 21st century. Although this privatisation was not officially recognised by the authorities in Chişinău, in practice, the privatised companies were able to join international capital groups.

Transnistria also possesses its own military industry, which is linked to the problem of illegal arms exports from the parastate. However, the largest source of weapons illicitly exported by Transnistria was the military depot of the 14th Russian Army located in Cobasna (Russian: Kolbasna).

Due to the very low price of electricity in Transnistria – resulting from Gazprom’s virtually free gas supplies – the region has attracted investors from Russia and China, who have engaged in “cryptocurrency mining.”

A distinctive feature of Transnistria is the dominance of the Sheriff holding company, which since 2016 has also exercised de facto full political control over the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic.

Sheriff was founded in mid-1993 by two former officers of the Transnistrian Ministry of Internal Affairs and has long served as the business foundation of the region’s political elite.

The company has achieved supremacy in many sectors of Transnistria’s economy. It owns a network of petrol stations, the dominant supermarket chain in the region, and the largest wholesale enterprises. It operates its own private television station – the only one in Transnistria – and is virtually the monopoly provider of cable television services. Sheriff also controls the only mobile phone network in the separatist republic, as well as the largest publishing house, an advertising agency, a construction company, and several food industry plants, including AquaTir, a producer of caviar and fish products. The company further owns the Tirotext textile factory and the renowned Transnistrian cognac producer Kvint. Sheriff has monopolised the import of petroleum products, spirits, and alcohol, while simultaneously enjoying tax and customs privileges. It has also been exempted from the mandatory sale of foreign currency. According to some estimates, the Sheriff holding company currently controls at least 80% of Transnistria’s economy.

At the same time, Sheriff has derived – and to a considerable extent continues to derive – profits from criminal activities, including smuggling across the Transnistrian section of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. The company is known to have cooperated with criminal groups from Odessa and Russia.

In 1997, Sheriff founded the FC Sheriff Tiraspol sports club. Shortly thereafter, it invested approximately USD 200 million in the construction of a state-of-the-art stadium with capacity of 15,500 spectators and a large sports complex, the most modern facility of its kind in the region.

Over the past two decades, Sheriff has gradually achieved political dominance in Transnistria. It established its own political organisation – the Renewal (*Obnovlenie*) party – which has held a majority in the republic’s parliament since the 2005 parliamentary elections. In December 2016, Sheriff succeeded in installing Vadim

Krasnoselsky, a politician representing its interests, as president of Transnistria. Since then, the company has exercised full control over the republic.

It should be noted that Transnistria's lack of international recognition entails a range of economic difficulties, although it also provides certain advantages to its economy. One of the key problems is the region's exclusion from the SWIFT system due to its unrecognised status. Consequently, the administration in Tiraspol established its own electronic payment infrastructure – the Klever system – and introduced Raduga payment cards, which, however, cannot be used outside the separatist republic (Eberhardt 2011, pp. 12, 15–16; Oleksy 2018, pp. 125–134, 158–159; Wróbel 2003, p. 15; Wróbel 2012, pp. 37–38; Całus 2016; Kowalczyk 2024, pp. 267–271).

Transnistrian-Russian Relations

Transnistria has largely survived thanks to the assistance of the Russian Federation. This support takes the form of political backing in international forums and in negotiations with Moldova, even though the political visions pursued by Tiraspol and Moscow are not always fully aligned.

Marshal Alexandr Suvorov monument in Tiraspol (erected 1979, designed by Ya. Druzhynin and Yu. Chistyakov). The Transnistrian statehood emblem is in the foreground, behind the monument are the visible flags of the Abkhasia, South Ossetia and Mountain Karabakh states. Tiraspol, Transnistria (2020). Photo: s_oleg / Shutterstock ID 1802781649



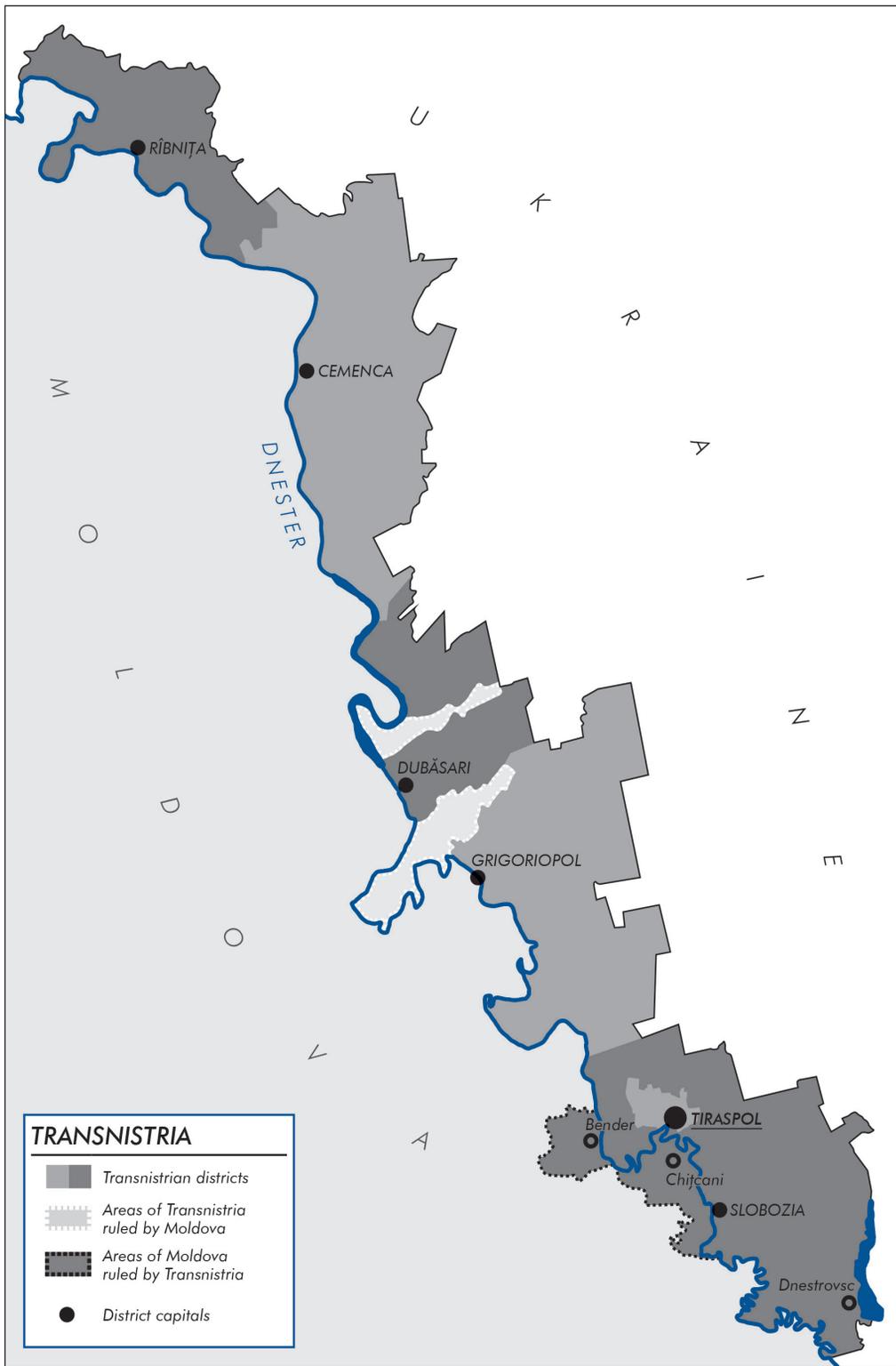
Equally significant is Russia's multifaceted military support for Transnistria. This primarily concerns the Russian troops stationed in the region – both those forming part of the trilateral peacekeeping contingent and the units of the Russian 14th Army, which in 1995 was transformed into the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF). The OGRF has never been completely withdrawn from Transnistria. Its continued presence is justified by the need to guard the Russian military depots in Cobasna (Russian: Kolbasna), some of which remain in place. At the same time, this support constitutes a form of assistance to Transnistria's industrial–military complex. Moscow has supported the modernisation of the parastate's military industry, providing technology and qualified technical personnel to supervise compliance with production standards on site.

Russia's economic aid to Transnistria is equally important. It includes the supply of natural gas to the region – essential for the functioning of the separatist republic's industry. For a long time, Transnistria only paid part of the cost of these supplies, and Gazprom did not press for payment. Since 2009, Transnistria has ceased paying Gazprom for gas altogether. Orders from the Russian defence sector and loans from Gazprombank are also vital to the Transnistrian economy. Furthermore, the Russian banking sector provides crucial support to Transnistrian banks excluded from the international settlement system. Transactions carried out in Transnistria are recorded in financial documents as operations of Russian banks conducted from the territory of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation also assists the region through a variety of social programmes – among them, funding scholarships for Transnistrian students, granting local youth free places at Russian universities, and offering healthcare-related aid, such as staff training (Kosienkowski 2010, pp. 93–107; Kosienkowski 2019, pp. 3–22; Kosienkowski 2008, pp. 16–19; Wróbel 2012, p. 34; Kowalczyk 2024, pp. 258, 271).

Transnistria has long served Russia as a means of exerting pressure on Moldova. Whenever Chişinău distanced itself from Moscow, the latter refrained from urging the authorities in Tiraspol to negotiate with the Moldovan government. Conversely, when Chişinău took Russian interests and political objectives into account in its policies, prospects for an agreement with Tiraspol appeared more promising – although the relative independence of the Transnistrian authorities from their Russian patron often complicated such efforts.

Since the 1990s, the principal objective of Russia's policy towards Transnistria has been the creation of a Moldovan–Transnistrian





Dmitriy Kozak, former Russian Deputy Prime Minister (2008–2020), (8 July 2010, Moscow). Photo: De Visu / Shutterstock ID 57170452

peacekeeping forces guaranteeing observance of the agreement. Given the likely addition of pro-Russian voters from Transnistria to Moldovan society – already divided between supporters of the West and Russia – and the expected involvement of Transnistrian elites and services infiltrated by Russian intelligence in Moldovan political life, it can be assumed that the federation proposed in Kozak Memorandum would have become dependent on Moscow and would have effectively abandoned prospects of integration with Western structures (Solak 2014, pp. 172–178; Oleksy 2018, pp. 240–245; Całus 2016-2, pp. 77–78; Kozak Memorandum). To forestall similar federalist solutions in the future, in July 2005 the Moldovan Parliament adopted a law establishing Transnistria's autonomy (see *Parliament of the Republic of Moldova Law on Fundamental Regulations...* on the OSCE website).

In Tiraspol, however, the annexation of Transnistria by Russia remains the preferred scenario. Yet the Transnistrian elites must take into account the position of their Russian patron, which continues to treat the separatist republic as a geopolitical instrument (for the legal aspirations of Transnistrian statehood see Serzhanova 2016; Serzhanova 2017a; Serzhanova 2017b).

federation. Such an arrangement would impede Moldova's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and ensure that the resulting state remained sufficiently dependent on Russia. This strategic consideration explains why Moscow has never recognised Transnistria's independence, unlike in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow came closest to realising this objective during the negotiations on Dmitry Kozak's Plan in 2003. The so-called Kozak Memorandum – whose signing was cancelled by the Moldovan side at the last moment in November 2003 – envisaged the establishment of a tripartite federation composed of Moldova proper, Transnistria, and Gagauzia. Under its provisions, Tiraspol and Comrat would have been granted extensive powers to block federal legislation unfavourable to them, including international agreements. The memorandum also legalised the presence of Russian troops in Moldova for at least twenty years, under the guise of

The Peace Process and Plans to Resolve the Conflict

Peace negotiations aimed at achieving a political settlement of the conflict have been ongoing since 1992. The mediators include Russia; since 1993, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (later transformed into the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE); and, since 1995, Ukraine. From October 2005, the European Union and the United States have also participated in the talks. This format, known as the 5+2 formula, brings together the two parties to the conflict and three mediators (the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine), as well as two observers (the EU and the US) (Całus et al. 2014, p. 56; Wróbel 2003, p. 16; J. Solak 2014, p. 298). Despite the duration of this peace process, no final resolution to the conflict has been achieved. Following the outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, negotiations in their existing form effectively lost relevance.

Summary

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has regarded the post-Soviet space as its sphere of influence. Its strategic aim has been to minimise Western influence in the region and to limit the independence of the newly established states. One of the principal instruments employed to this end has been the support of separatist state entities – so-called parastates. This has been the case with Transnistria, which for decades after the collapse of the USSR enabled Moscow to exert political influence over Moldova and, to a lesser extent, Ukraine. Russia resorted to military force only as a last resort – it was the threat of intervention by the 14th Russian Army that compelled Chişinău to agree to a ceasefire, thereby ensuring the survival of the de facto Transnistrian state. In subsequent years, Transnistria continued to exist largely due to Russia's comprehensive political, economic and military support, including the ongoing stationing of Russian troops in the region. However, the Kremlin's instrumental use of Transnistria as a geopolitical tool, though effective in maintaining leverage over Moldova, ultimately failed to achieve its main strategic goal – the creation of a Moldovan-Transnistrian federation dependent on Russia. The importance of

Transnistria has diminished since the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine, primarily as a result of the parastate's isolation from Russia by the territory of a country now engaged in armed conflict with it.

References

- “Agreement on the principles for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Dniester region of the Republic of Moldova.” In *Peace Agreement Database*, the University of Edinburgh. https://www.peaceagreements.org/media/documents/ag1024_56c5f9e3d3890.pdf.
- Atlas Pridnestrovskoy Moldavskoy Respubliki*. Tiraspol, 2000.
- Baluk, Wincenty. “Zarys transformacji demokratycznej w Republice Mołdowa w latach 1988–2005.” *Wschodnioznawstwo* no. 1 (2007): 37–53. <https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/texts/wschodnioznawstwo/2007-tom-1/wschodnioznawstwo-r2007-t1-s37-53.pdf>.
- Bejan, Ștefan. “Noi trebuie să ne închinăm rușilor și să uităm de români.” Interview cu primul lider al găgăuzilor din Moldova.” moldNova website, 21 August 2017. <https://moldnova.eu/ro/noi-trebuie-sa-ne-inchinam-rusilor-si-sa-uitam-de-romani-interviu-cu-primul-lider-al-gagauzilor-din-moldova-20505.html/>.
- Całus, Kamil, Marcin Kosienkowski, Piotr Oleksy, Jakub Pieńkowski, and Robert Rajczyk. *Naddniestrze. Historia – Polityka – Gospodarka*. Poznań: EastWest Analytics, 2014.
- Całus, Kamil. “Państwo niedokończone. 25 lat mołdawskiej niepodległości.” *Prace OSW* no. 59 (2016).
- Całus, Kamil. *Mołdawia. Państwo niekonieczne*. Wołowiec: Czarne, 2020.
- Całus, Kamil. *Transnistria in the new international reality*. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2023. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-12-29/transnistria-new-international-reality>.
- Całus, Kamil. *Naddniestrze: cała władza dla Sheriffa*. Warsaw: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 2016. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2016-12-14/naddniestrze-cala-wladza-dla-sheriffa>.
- Całus, Kamil. *In the shadow of history. Romanian-Moldovan relations*. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2015. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2015-09-23/shadow-history-romanian-moldovan-relations>.
- Cașu, Igor. “Stalinist terror in Soviet Moldova, 1940–1953.” In *Stalinist terror in Eastern Europe. Elite purges and mass repression*, eds. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe. Manchester–New York: Manchester University Press, 2010.
- Chirtoaca, Natalia. “Juridical study of the documents signed in the course of the negotiations process on the Transnistrian conflict settlement.” In *Aspects of the Transnistrian conflict*, eds. Arcadie Barbarosie and Oazu Nantoi. Chișinău: Institutul de Politici Publice, 2004.
- Cojocar, Ghenadie. “Ruch niepodległościowy i przemiany społeczno-polityczne w Mołdowie (Mołdawii).” In *Mołdowa. Mało znany w Polsce kraj*. Wrocław: KWSM, 2003.

- Crivenco, Andrei, and Sabine von Löwis. "Shrinking Transnistria. Trends and Effects of Demographic Decline in a De Facto State." *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 70, no. 1 (2022): 47–79. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2021-0089>.
- de Garda, Ziarul. *Moldovan Memories of Siberian Exile*. 2021. <https://tol.org/client/article/moldovan-memories-of-siberian-exile.html>.
- Eberhardt, Adam. *The Paradoxes of Moldovan Sports. An insight into the nature of the Transnistrian conflict*. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2011. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2011-12-14/paradoxes-moldovan-sports-insight-nature-transnistrian-conflict>.
- Erizanu, Paula. "The literary-musical clubs that sparked Moldova's national liberation movement 30 years ago." *New East Digital Archive*, 27 August 2021. <https://www.new-east-archive.org/features/show/13047/literary-musical-clubs-sparking-moldova-national-liberation-movement>.
- Freedom House report on Transnistria 2024. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/transnistria/freedom-world/2024>.
- Gil, Andrzej. "Geneza Mołdawskiej Autonomicznej Socjalistycznej Republiki Radzieckiej." In *Konflikt niskiej intensywności w Naddniestrzu*, eds. Maciej Celewicz, Jerzy Kłoczowski, and Marek Pietraś. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2006.
- Gil, Andrzej. *Naddniestrzańska Republika Mołdawska jako element przestrzeni politycznej Europy*. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2005.
- Gnatkova, Olga. "V Pridnestrovie dvukh pensionerov prigovorili v trem godam tyur'my za oskorblenie Krasnosel'skogo." *NewsMaker.md*, 10 March 2020. <https://newsmaker.md/ru/v-pridnestrove-dvuh-pensionerov-prigovorili-k-trem-godam-tyurny-za-oskorblenie-krasnoselskogo>.
- Hatłas, Jerzy. *Gagauzja i Gagauzi. Historia i współczesność*. Poznań: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Instytut Wschodni, 2009.
- "Institut Sotsial'no-politicheskikh issledovaniy i regional'nogo razvitya 2019 – V Kishynievie sostoyalas' nauchnaya konferyentsya k 30-letiu Interdvizheniya "Unitate-Yedinstvo." INSPIRR website. <https://www.ispirr.org/30-let-interdvizheniyu-unitate-edin>.
- Kosienkowski, Marcin. "Geneza, status i funkcjonowanie terytorium autonomicznego Gagauzja." *Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations* no. 3–4 (2007).
- Kosienkowski, Marcin. "The patron-client relationship between Russia and Transnistria." In *De Facto States in Eurasia*, eds. Tomáš Hoch and Vincenc Kopeček. Abingdon: Routledge, 2019.
- Kosienkowski, Marcin. *Federacja Rosyjska wobec Naddniestrza*. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2008.
- Kosienkowski, Marcin. *Naddniestrzańska Republika Mołdawska. Determinanty przetrwania*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2010.
- Kowalczyk, Maciej. "Gospodarka Naddniestrza jako przykład funkcjonowania separatystycznego obszaru ekonomicznego." *Wschodnioznawstwo* no. 18 (2024): 255–279. <https://ejournals.eu/czasopismo/wschodnioznawstwo/artykul/gospodarka-naddniestrza-jako-przyklad-funkcjonowania-separatystycznego-obszaru-ekonomicznego>.
- Kozak Memorandum. <https://www.scribd.com/document/192677525/Kozak-Memorandum>.
- Macuzato, Kimitaka. "Vvedenie." In *Pridnestrovye w makroregional'nom kontekste chernomorskogo poberezhya*. Hokkaido University, 2008.

- Miarka, Agnieszka. "Obecność rosyjskich sił zbrojnych na obszarze Naddniestrza w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku – wybrane aspekty." *Athenum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 66, no 2 (2020): 72–86. <https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/apsp/66/apsp6605.pdf>.
- Oleksy, Piotr. *Gagauzja – rosyjskie narzędzie destabilizacyjne*. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowej, 2024. <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/kies-1107/>.
- Oleksy, Piotr. *Naddniestrze. Terror tożsamości*. Wołowiec: Czarne, 2018.
- Panici, Andrei. "Romanian Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova." *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2, no. 2 (2003). <http://miris.eurac.edu/mugs2/do/blob.pdf%3Ftype=pdf&serial=1047909431571>.
- Parliament of the Republic of Moldova Law on Fundamental Regulations of the Special Legal Status of Settlements on the Left Bank of the River Nistru (Transnistria). OSCE website. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/8/16208.pdf>.
- Partidul Popular Creștin Democrat (PPCD), *e-democracy.md* – Asociația pentru Democratie Participativă "ADEPT." <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/ppcd/>.
- Pieńkowski, Jakub. "Zakres swobód politycznych i praw człowieka w Naddniestrzu." *Biuletyn Polskiego Instytutu Spraw Międzynarodowych* no. 110 (2023). <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/zakres-swobod-politycznych-i-praw-czlowieka-w-naddniestrzu>.
- "Presidency of the Republic of Moldova (short history)." <https://presedinte.md/presidency>.
- Rodkiewicz, Witold. *The change of Transnistria's leader offers Moscow an opportunity to reinforce its influence in the region*. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2011. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2011-12-21/change-transnistrias-leader-offers-moscow-opportunity-to-reinforce>.
- Serban, Alexandra and Laurentiu Ungureanu. "Gagauzja – najdziwniejsze 'państwo' w Europie." *Onet.pl* website (after *Liber Tatea*), 2023. <https://podroze.onet.pl/ciekawe/gagauzja-najdziwniejsze-panstwo-w-europie/51qx8dt>.
- Serzhanova, Viktoriya. "Geneza ustrojowa ziem naddniestrzańskich." *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego* 5, no. 33 (2016): 203–221. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppk.2016.05.12>. <https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/journals/30/618/10211>.
- Serzhanova, Viktoriya. "Powstanie Naddniestrzańskiej Republiki Mołdawskiej i jego implikacje." *Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs* no. 1 (2017): 253–276. <https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-7b2b3d4a-e7a1-4fc4-bc34-b9b65fe99c27>.
- Serzhanova, Viktoria. "The 1991 constitution of independent Transnistria." *Przegląd europejski* 4, no. 46 (2017): 132–146. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31338/1641-2478pe.4.17.7>.
- Skoczylas, Adrian. "Proces demokratyzacji Mołdawii po rozpadzie ZSRR." In *Meandry procesów demokratyzacji i transformacji systemowej*, ed. Małgorzata Rączkiewicz. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2013: 25–43. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/7969-002-2.03>. <https://dspace.uni.lodz.pl/handle/11089/30542?show=full>.
- Solak, Janusz. "Polityka bezpieczeństwa Mołdawii w kontekście dążeń politycznych Naddniestrza." In *Konflikt niskiej intensywności w Naddniestrzu*, eds. Maciej Celewicz, Jerzy Kłoczowski, and Marek Pietraś. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2006.
- Solak, Janusz. *Mołdawia. Republika na trzy pęknięcia. Historyczno-społeczny i geopolityczny wymiar "zamrożonego konfliktu" o Naddniestrze*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2014.

- Solak, Marlena. "Struktura etniczna Mołdawii i Naddniestrza jako uwarunkowanie bezpieczeństwa w regionie." In *Konflikt niskiej intensywności w Naddniestrzu*, eds. Maciej Celewicz, Jerzy Kłoczowski, and Marek Pietraś. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2006.
- Topolski, Ireneusz. "Pozycja militarna Republiki Mołdawii." *Konflikt niskiej intensywności w Naddniestrzu*, eds. Maciej Celewicz, Jerzy Kłoczowski, and Marek Pietraś. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2006.
- Vahl, Marius and Michael Emerson. "Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict." In *Europeanisation and conflict resolution*, eds. Bruno Coppieters, Michel Huysseune, Tamara Kovziridze, Gergana Noutcheva, and Nathalie Tocci. Brussels: Academia Press, 2004.
- Verkhovnyi Sovet Prodnestrovskoy Moldavskoy Respubliki. Ofitsial'nyi sayt.* <https://vspmr.org/>.
- Wróbel, Jacek. "Transnistria." In *Konflikty zbrojne na obszarze postradzieckim. Stan obecny, perspektywy uregulowania. Konsekwencje. Armed Conflicts in the Post-soviet Region. Present Situation, Prospects for Settlement. Consequences*, ed. Krzysztof Strachota. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2003: 53-58. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2003-06-10/armed-conflicts-post-soviet-region-present-situation-prospects>.
- Wróbel, Jacek. "Naddniestrze." In *Mołdowa. Mało znany w Polsce kraj*. Wrocław, 2003.
- Wróbel, Jacek. "Struktura interesów gospodarczych Rosji w Naddniestrzu i w regionie." In *Konflikt niskiej intensywności w Naddniestrzu*, eds. Maciej Celewicz, Jerzy Kłoczowski, and Marek Pietraś. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2006.
- Wróbel, Jacek. "Przestępczość gospodarcza w Naddniestrzu." *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego* 7, no. 4 (2012): 31–48. <https://abw.gov.pl/download.php?s=18&id=3381>.