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THESIS

**REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND THE TRANSNISTRIAN
CONFLICT: THE IMPACT OF NATO AND THE
EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENTS ON THE DISPUTE
RESOLUTION PROCESS**

by

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March 2006

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IMPACT OF NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENTS ON THE
DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

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ABSTRACT

With Romania's acceptance into NATO, the Republic of Moldova found itself at the frontier of the North-Atlantic Alliance. This thesis evaluates the impact of NATO and European Union enlargements on the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova. Theoretically, recent changes in the geopolitical environment in Europe can bring a new impetus to the process of political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. In the wake of these changes, Moldovan leadership is looking for new supporters to back Moldova in the stand-off against Russia on the Transnistrian issue. In this respect, NATO and the EU appear to be appropriate candidates. Either one of these two organizations, taken separately, possesses enough potential to create an asymmetry against Russia. Would these two institutions get more involved in the fate of this intra-state conflict? Possible courses of action of actors involved will be analyzed through the prisms of realism and liberal institutionalism theories of international relations. Rationale for further enlargement will be assessed against "soft power" resources, such as values, norms and knowledge, accumulated over the years and shared by member-states within both alliances.

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To my mother

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

In March 1992, an armed conflict erupted between the central government of the Republic of Moldova and the breakaway Transnistrian region – a separatist entity in the Eastern part of Moldova.¹ Over 300 people died in the violent clashes and more than 1,000 were wounded. This thesis does not intend, however, to re-tell the controversial history of the two regions (Bessarabia² and Transnistria) that culminated in a fratricidal civil war in early 1990s. This job has been beautifully done by Charles King, Nicolas Dima, and a number of other scholars.³ The focus of the thesis is on what happened after the conflict.

While briefly assessing the post-conflict developments and performance of external mediators involved in the negotiations process, this thesis evaluates the impact of enlargements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union on the Transnistrian conflict resolution process. Recent changes in the geo-political environment on the European continent, theoretically, can bring a new impetus to the process of political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Would these two institutions get more involved in the fate of the intra-state conflict in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova? Why would they?

Since 1992, negotiations between the two conflicting parties were mediated by the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, Russia and the Ukraine. After

¹ The region lies along the left bank of Nistru River (although in many sources the river appears under its Russian name Dniestr). From here comes the name of the region Trans-Nistria.

² More on modern history of Bessarabia can be found in Ștefan Ciobanu, Unirea Basarabiei: Studiu Si Documente Cu Privire La Mișcarea Națională Din Basarabia În Anii 1917-1918 (Chișinău: Editura “Universitas,” 1993), Romanian. Another useful publication on the subject published by the “Universitas” Publishing House can be The Pact Molotov-Ribbentrop And Its Consequences for Bessarabia: Documents (Chișinău: Publishing House “Universitas,” 1991).

³ For a detailed historical analysis of the region see Charles King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000) and Nicolas Dima, Bessarabia And Bukovina: Eastern Monographs (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982). For a thorough analysis of causes of the Transnistrian conflict see Stuart J. Kaufman, Spiraling to Interethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova’s Civil War, *International Security*, Vol. 21 No. 2 (Autumn, 1996). The chronology of events leading to the armed confrontation in the Transnistrian region is very well documented by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Paul Sullivan in Russian and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Documents, Data, And Analysis (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1997).

thirteen years of negotiations, it has become obvious that the existing mechanisms and format, established in 1992 (and which played a role in freezing the “hot spot”), are exhausted, outdated and ineffective.⁴ Neither the OSCE nor the UN has proposed workable mechanisms and approaches. Moreover, existing decision-making mechanisms within these two organizations allowed Russia to veto any decision taken (or considered) on the Transnistrian issue that would have been against its interests. OSCE, as a consultative forum, does not have an enforcing mechanism to impose its decisions on the member-states. Thus, the organization’s “envoy” to the conflict, OSCE Mission to Moldova, looked from the very beginning like a “handicapped coach”: smart and knowledgeable, but physically unable to reach out and stop the wrongdoings. The cease-fire agreement signed on 21 July 1992, provided the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces in the Transnistrian region which, in fact, prolonged Russian military presence in the area.⁵ It is true that the ceasefire agreement has never been violated by either party since it was signed. However, what “Russian peacekeeping” did not provide (and actually did not intend to provide) were conditions for the political settlement of the conflict. Under Russian protection, Transnistria has consolidated as an authoritarian state over the years, and may now challenge Kosovo in the *de facto* degree of independence.

From the outset of confrontation, Transnistrian leadership was trying to apply an ethnic aspect to the conflict and align Transnistria with other separatist regimes in the post-Soviet geopolitical space – Abkhazia, South Osetia, Nagorno-Karabakh. Throughout

⁴ A large number of publications by Moldovan and foreign analysts and political scientists have addressed the weaknesses of the OSCE as a security organization in Europe. For a detailed analysis see Robert Barry, *The OSCE: A Forgotten Transatlantic Security Organization?* (British American Security Information Council, Research Report 2002.3, July 2002); Vladimir Socor, “Apusul OSCE” (MoldovaAzi), Romanian. Last accessed in January 2006 at: <http://politicom.moldova.org/comentarii/rom/315/>. The article is also published in English under the title “Vienna Sunset” in *The Wall Street Journal Europe* 2-4 Sep 2005.

⁵ The controversy of this “peacekeeping operation” was discussed in a number of analyses on post Cold War peacekeeping. See William J. Durch, *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996). For a study on peacekeeping operation in the Transnistrian region of Moldova see Lynch, Dov, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000); Raymond C. Finch, III, MAJ, U.S. Army, “The Strange Case of Russian Peacekeeping Operations in the Near Abroad 1992-1994” (Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS, July 1996). Last accessed January 2006 at: <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/rus-pko/rus-pko.htm>, and John Mackinlay and Peter Cross, *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2003).

the 1990s, Western scholars of inter-ethnic conflicts studied all these conflicts extensively. Hence, the European public also became better informed on the issue of the Transnistrian conflict. An average database would take you to the official web page of the Transnistrian government, president, parliament, and so forth. Even the extensive Transnistrian propaganda over all these years could not obscure one distinct aspect of the Transnistrian conflict, one that comes from a different prospective. The inter-ethnic hatred failed to become the main drive of the conflict. Among the named conflicts, the real reason for the violence – the struggle for power and wealth – was never as obvious or apparent as it was in the case of Transnistria. The situation is fully under the control of Russia, which, theoretically, makes conflict resolution possible.

As for today, some 700,000 citizens of the Republic of Moldova, living on the left bank of the Nistru River, are being held as political hostages by a criminal regime that does everything it wishes and is not subjected to any kind of external control from the international community.

In this stalemate, the Moldovan leadership was looking for new supporters who possessed sufficient potential power – and could back Moldova in the stand-off against Russia on the Transnistrian issue. In this respect, NATO and the EU seemed to be appropriate candidates. Throughout the 1990s, however, both these institutions were undergoing transformation (NATO) and consolidation (EU) processes. To a large degree, that fact contributed to the ignorance of the Transnistrian problem for about a decade.

In the meantime, the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept “reaffirmed the risks and uncertainties facing the members and other states in the Euro-Atlantic region, such as ethnic conflict, the abuse of human rights, political instability, economic fragility and the spread of weapons of mass destruction.”⁶ But more importantly, international terrorism was increasingly becoming the number one threat facing allies in the post-Cold War security environment. Needless to say, the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York underlined the complexity and severity of the problem. The international community mobilized to support the United States in the declared War on Terror. The rogue regimes around the world were closely monitored by the international

⁶ NATO Handbook (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 2001), 45-46.

community. In this context, the Moldovan government presented more than enough evidence of links between the uncontrolled separatist regime in Transnistria and terrorist organizations. Huge ammunition and armaments stockpiles located in the Transnistrian region (as well as an arms-manufacturing industry) remain under the control of unaccountable Transnistrian leadership. “If Al Qaeda has not gone shopping there yet, it is only a matter of time.”⁷

As a Washington Post editorial pointed out, “Military records show that at least thirty-eight Alazan⁸ warheads were modified [in Transnistria] to carry radioactive material, effectively creating the world’s first surface-to-surface dirty bomb.”⁹ An Associated Press (AP) correspondent also stressed that the “AP investigation involving interviews with a dozen officials and experts strengthened suspicions that Transnistria is a hotbed of unregulated weapons transactions” and a “repository of rocket-mounted ‘dirty bombs.’”¹⁰ Another set of illicit activities widely flourishing in the Transnistrian region – bringing enormous profits to its leaders – are human trafficking, drugs and arms smuggling. Daniel Twining, a director of the German Marshall Fund of the U.S., identified Transnistria as “a leading exporter of kidnapped women to Europe, a lucrative transit territory for illicit drugs, and a key link in the arms-smuggling network that peddles the Soviet Union’s former military hardware on the international market.” Transnistria, as stated by Rudolf Perina, the former U.S. Ambassador to Moldova, became the biggest “black market” and “duty free zone” in Europe. Big profits clearly shape the interests of the local elite, who want to preserve the *status quo* for as long as possible.

Considering all of these views, this thesis addresses the following questions:

- Will Moldova benefit from NATO and/or EU enlargement in terms of the Transnistrian conflict settlement, or will it be left alone to deal with its internal problems?

⁷ Daniel Twining, “Beware Russia’s pocket empire,” Christian Science Monitor 1 Jul 2004.

⁸ “Alazan” – The code name of Russian Multiple Launch Rocket System.

⁹ Jobby Warrick, “Dirty Bomb Warheads Disappear. Stocks of Soviet-Era Arms For Sale on Black Market,” The Washington Post 7 Dec 2003.

¹⁰ George Jahn, “Hotbed of weapons deals,” The Washington Times 16 Jan 2004.

- Why and how can the European Union and NATO tolerate, for over a decade so far, illegal activities in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova?
- Are the stakes involved – in the relations of both alliances with Russia – really so high that they could undermine the perils emanating from the uncontrolled authoritarian regime put in Transnistria?

B. ORGANIZATION

This thesis dedicates a separate chapter to each of the two potential players that could have become involved in the Transnistrian conflict-resolution process: The North-Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. However, before the reader becomes acquainted with the possibilities and limitations of both alliances, Chapter II provides the background on what other involved actors have done so far in respect to Transnistria. Interests, official statements, and the practical deeds of stakeholder-states in Transnistrian dispute – Russia, Ukraine, and Romania – are also briefly assessed. Romania, initially present at the negotiations over Transnistria, was eventually squeezed out. That fact did not seem to create a significant disturbance among the politicians in Bucharest. Moreover, the turn of events seemed to fit their plans even better. Now they could totally devote their resources and energy to negotiations – with Brussels and Washington – for their eventual adherence to NATO and the EU. The Ukraine, another guarantor-state, has officially adopted a very ambiguous position (although a pro-Russia and pro-Transnistria mood was predominant). The victory of pro-Western forces in the 2004 presidential elections in the Ukraine raised hopes that the attitude of the Ukrainian political class towards the Transnistrian conflict would change.

The second purpose of the chapter is to provide a comparative analysis of the potential of different agencies, institutions and states, before and after the NATO and EU enlargement. Possible courses of action for the actors involved are analyzed through the prisms of realism and liberal institutionalism theories of international relations.

Policies and strategies of any alliance can not be assessed separately from the policies of key states – those that basically run the alliance. Thus, NATO policies should be considered in context with U.S. policies. In this respect, Chapter III discusses the intra-alliance developments during the post–Cold War era, determined to a large extent

by the visions of the American political establishment of Europe. A separate portion of the chapter assesses policies of the United States towards Eastern Europe at different points in time.

Likewise, the European Union's doctrines and strategies are evaluated in Chapter IV through the prism of Germany and France's visions of the Union's foreign policy. Chapter III and Chapter IV summarize the opinions vis-à-vis the expansion of both institutions (NATO and EU) to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Although skeptics were assessing the chances of Romania joining NATO as very low in the late 1990s (the country was viewed as likely to become the "frontline of a wider South-Eastern European region on the periphery of NATO,"¹¹) Romania today is a member of the North-Atlantic Alliance. The same mood was (and still is) predominant in respect to the Romania's acceptance into the European Union. Although the behavior pattern of the two alliances is different, and so are the factors that influence decisions, Romania's chances to become a member of the EU have significantly increased with adherence to NATO.

Russia is the third actor discussed in this thesis in connection to NATO and the EU enlargement to South-Eastern Europe, and a possible involvement in the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. In this context, Chapter V evaluates the stakes involved in the triangle of players: NATO, EU and Russia. In spite of all skepticism, Russia is still a major player in world politics, especially in this particular region. Its interests in this region are well known, and far-reaching strategic goals have been extensively described by political scientists. In the last few years, Russia was registering success in pursuing two out of three objectives ascribed to a *state* by neo-realist theory of international relations: "increasing its influence over the behavior of other states" and "exercising influence over the world economy."¹² Whatever amendments will be made in the existing format of negotiations on the Transnistrian conflict (excluding unwanted members, as happened with Romania, or inviting new members – USA and EU), Russia will always be present at the negotiations table.

The Conclusion summarizes the *pros* and *cons* of NATO and the EU involvement in the fate of the Transnistrian conflict. Even if things evolve according to Moldova's wishes and plans

¹¹ Charles King, The European Question in Romania and Moldova, in Ambivalent Neighbors: The EU, NATO and the Price of Membership, ed. Anatol Lieven and Dmitri Trenin (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 258.

¹² Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 24.

(which is very doubtful at the moment) the solution for the Transnistrian conflict would most likely be a compromise agreed upon by three actors: NATO (read USA), the EU and Russia. Compromise is not always the best solution; it excludes, by its nature, the clear victory of one actor, and entails concessions from all parties.

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II. TRANSNISTRIAN CONFLICT: POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

All wars result from political decisions and express a political intent – whether or not the politics are realistic and may be regarded as desirable – does not mean that any particular war is necessarily appropriate for implementing the policy it serves.

–Peter Paret¹³

It was the spring of 1992 when armed conflict erupted, lasted for about six months, and ended with the emergence of a *de facto* independent – although unrecognized by the international community – regime in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova, the so-called “Transnistrian Moldovan Republic.”¹⁴ Fought over a pro-Russian region called Transnistria, the conflict was the culmination of frictions and interactions involving the entire range of factors that normally fuel intra-state conflicts: ethno-linguistic and national identity strife and Romanian irredentism and Great-Russian chauvinism.¹⁵ In fact, all these factors started shaking Moldova in 1989 as a result of President Gorbachev’s policy of political openness and the restructuring of the Soviet Union. All these problems at the republics’ level were aggravated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. For indigenous politicians, who assumed the leadership of the newly emerged independent Republic of Moldova, it became a test in matters of state-building, governance, identification of roles, and the status of ethnic minorities within the future independent Republic of Moldova, which the central government in Chisinau failed to pass in the early 1990s.

¹³ Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 128.

¹⁴ The self-proclaimed, unrecognized republic in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova appears under slightly different names in various sources. The one presented in the text is the author’s direct translation from Russian (Preednyestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika).

¹⁵ Trevor Waters, “Russian Peacekeeping In Moldova: Source Of Stability Or Neo-Imperialist Threat?” in *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping*, ed. John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (New York: United Nations University Press, 2003), 132.



Figure 1. The Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.¹⁶

The Transnistrian conflict was seen by many in the West as a painful outcome of an imprudent strategy chosen by Moldovan state-builders in the circumstances existing at that time. The lack of a clear vision of Moldovan statehood, and a failure to formulate the fundamental principles on which the future independent Republic of Moldova would reside, resulted in violent confrontations. Society needed a core, around which the future state was supposed to be built. Radical in nature, pro-Romanian language laws adopted in 1989 could not serve the purpose of such a core and have only provoked anxiety amongst non-Moldovans. Language is a powerful element in unifying nations, but it needs a political context, or support of other state institutions. In Hagen Schulze's words, the true national identity can emerge only as a result of the combination of "two views of the nation – the subjective, political view of the French Revolution, and the objective,

¹⁶ Source: Federation of American Scientists webpage. Last accessed in January 2006 at: www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/agency/mo-md.htm.

cultural view of German Romanticism.”¹⁷ None of the state institutions existing or emerging in the early 1990s in Moldova – parliament, presidency, government, army, etc. – could provide such support.

Moldova followed the same path, from a province of a big empire (the Soviet Union) to an independent nation-state, as most nation-states that emerged in Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, the process started with a cultural revival of Moldovans in the late 1980s, followed by ideas of a *Kulturnation*,¹⁸ largely propagated by pro-Romanian forces. These forces were made up of indigenous intelligentsia who declared the unification with Romania as the only logical, culturally- and historically-driven outcome for Moldova. Under the banner of a *Kulturnation*, the indigenous political establishment emerged.

After the Transnistrian conflict, Moldovan state-builders realized that shifting the emphasis from cultural principles of state-building to political ones – i.e., building a state based on the Constitution – would have worked out much better. It would have accommodated all ethnicities, but, more important, all political groups. Unfortunately, that understanding and disposition for tolerance amongst Moldovans came through blood and soil. The society was already extremely polarized and divided by a “separation zone” – a term used in peacekeeping operations.

Today’s Republic of Moldova had never been an independent state in the past¹⁹ within the borders proclaimed on 27 August 1991, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. At different times throughout history, the lands of today’s Moldova were absorbed by different empires (Ottoman, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Great Romania, etc.) that emerged and disappeared on the Eurasian continent.²⁰ The controversial past of the country has generated debates over the true identity of Moldovans as an independent

¹⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations And Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), 158.

¹⁸ Ivan Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 145.

¹⁹ After the collapse of Tsarist Empire in 1917, followed by Socialist Revolution in Russia, Bessarabia declared independence and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Moldova. Very soon after, however, the republic united with Romania and became a province of “Greater Romania.” For details, see King, *The Moldovans* and Dima, *Bessarabia And Bukovina*, 32.

²⁰ For more than three centuries (1538-1812), Moldova was part of the Ottoman Empire that expanded into Asia as well as into Europe up to the borders of today’s Bosnia and Germany.

nation. Unfortunately, Bessarabia has failed to play the role of a unifying region for the Republic of Moldova,²¹ as England played in the fate of Great Britain, or the Castile region played in Spain's cultural integration.²²

This thesis does not intend to re-tell the history of two regions, Bessarabia and Transnistria, which formed in 1940 – under supervision of Soviet policy-makers – the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (one of fifteen satellite republics of former U.S.S.R.). This job has been beautifully done by Charles King in his book, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, and also by Nicolas Dima in his account, *Bessarabia and Bukovina. Eastern European Monographs*.²³ These are just two of many other excellent works that thoroughly describe the roots of the existing difference between two regions: Bessarabia and Transnistria.

It remains clear today that if Moldovan leaders paid more attention, in the late 1980s–early 1990s, to the history of these two regions, events would have probably followed a different path. It could have been foreseen back in 1991 that two regions, glued together by Soviet state-crafters in the late 1940s, would break in pieces again, sooner or later. Donald L. Horowitz suggested that “if it is impossible for groups to live together in a heterogeneous state, perhaps it is better for them to live apart in more than one homogeneous state, even if this necessitates population transfers.”²⁴ That approach can be applied to any other conflict except Transnistrian. Transnistria was far from being a homogeneous region²⁵ before 1992. Neither was the rest of the country (Bessarabia). It is true that in the late 1980s–early 1990s, pro-nationalist forces attempted to marginalize

²¹ While having failed to integrate Transnistria, Moldova has been used by the EU as a model of ethnic-territorial autonomy for the Gagauz minority living in the south of the country. Quoted from Trevor Waters, “Russian peacekeeping in Moldova,” 152.

²² Schulze, 125.

²³ See King, *The Moldovans* and Dima, *Bessarabia And Bukovina*.

²⁴ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 588.

²⁵ According to the Soviet census held in 1989 the Transnistrian region had the follow up ethnic composition: Moldovans 39,9%; Ukrainians 28.3%; Russians 25,5%; *See Table 10* in Charles King, *The Moldovans*, 185. Although migration after the conflict slightly changed the ethnic composition of the region, even today Transnistria remains a heterogeneous region.

and eventually squeeze off Moldova's Russian-speaking population.²⁶ There is no evidence of that phenomenon taking place today. The same can not be said of pro-Russian separatist authorities' attitudes towards Moldovans living in Transnistria.

In the years following the end of violence in Transnistria, scholars of intra-state conflicts analyzed the real causes of the conflict.²⁷ It is widely acknowledged today that the real cause of the Transnistrian conflict was not the ordinary people on both sides of Nistru²⁸ River who did not want to live together. The conflict erupted because there were people in the orbits of power, holding administrative positions in Transnistrian counties (*rayon*²⁹) and small towns of Soviet Moldova, who opposed sharing the power in a newly proclaimed independent Republic of Moldova, and giving up their privileged positions. Since these people could not openly admit the real cause of their opposition – the struggle for more power, wealth and independence from outside control – they decided to play the history card as the fuel for conflict and resistance.

Although a cease-fire agreement was signed in the summer of 1992,³⁰ a political level confrontation is still in place and gets worse as time goes by. The separatist regime has consolidated considerably over the years, developed all necessary state institutions (army, police, banking system, etc.) and, *de facto*, is an independent state. Adept of realism theory of international relations would say it is quite normal that people in control of even thin strips of land would want to be independent and have their own states. Kosovo and Chechnya are just two additional examples.

²⁶ In spite of Moscow's accusations and complains on discrimination of ethnic Russians in Moldova, anti-Russian moods in Moldova have never reached the proportions of similar feelings still persisting in Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia). Russian politicians tend to ignore that reality in negotiations with Moldova over Transnistria.

²⁷ For a thorough analysis of causes of the Transnistrian conflict see Kaufman, *Spiraling to Interethnic War*.

²⁸ In this paper the author intentionally uses the original name of the river Nistru, known and used by Moldovans and Romanians. In different sources in the West, though, the river appears under its Russian designation Dnestr (Dniestr, Dniester).

²⁹ Rayon. Administrative-territorial unit in the former Soviet Union equivalent to a county (or canton) in some countries.

³⁰ "The Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniestr Region of the Republic of Moldova" was signed in Moscow on 21 July 1992 by Moldovan President Mircea Snegur and his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin.

With such disparate views on their future, both parties came to the negotiations table in 1992. The main reason people agree to talk is to stop the violence at a certain point in time and place. Moldova was not an exception. However, as in many similar cases, conflicting parties were aware that they were engaging in a complicated negotiations process that may stretch over many years. Roy Licklider argues that negotiated settlements are deemed to fail because different factors drive rivaling parties to: negotiate, reach agreement, and implement these agreements. Therefore, negotiated settlements are always second-best solutions for both parties.³¹

The first one for Transnistrian leaders in 1992 was (and still remains) full and unconditional independence. The first and best option for the central government in Chisinau, in 1992, was an independent, united Moldova without any autonomous regions in its composition. Even today, gaining full control over the territory of the country remains the most important stake in negotiations. In this stalemate reconciliation of both parties appears hardly possible.

Negotiations have always been the most challenging endeavor for diplomats and politicians. Logically, each party tries to get the most out of negotiations. Wording in inter-state agreements and treaties can affect the evolution of relations between nations for years. Due to incompetence or intentional moves of some Moldovan leaders in negotiations over the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria, Russian negotiators managed to secure a prolonged Russian military presence in the region. This was accomplished via the *Agreement between the Russian Federation and Republic of Moldova on judicial status, ways and dates for withdrawal of Russian Federation military units, temporarily stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova*.³² They conditioned the withdrawal of troops upon a political resolution of Transnistrian disputes. In other words, withdrawal of Russia's 14th Army units from Transnistria was supposed

³¹ Roy Licklider, "Obstacles to Peace Settlements," in Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict, ed. C.A. Crooker, F.O. Hampson, and P. Aall (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 699.

³² Translation of the agreement name from Romanian given by the author. The Agreement was signed on 21 October 1994 by Moldovan Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli and Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdyn.

to be *synchronized*³³ with the progress in the determination of the Transnistria's final status. Regrettably for Moldova, the lack of skilled diplomats allowed Russia to set up several other "diplomatic traps" in different bilateral agreements³⁴ signed between the Republic of Moldova and Russian Federation throughout the 1990s.

Besides strong political backup, Russia has never, since 1992, ceased its economic assistance to the separatist regime.³⁵ Every conflict has an economic basis which nurtures belligerent groups and keeps the conflict going. The constant flow of resources from Russia has been (and still is) one of the drives for this particular conflict. Needless to say, Transnistrian leaders control a lion's share of Soviet Moldova's industrial base.

In the meantime, developments in other post-conflict zones like Kosovo were producing outcomes that weakened the positions of the Moldovan government in negotiations and, at the same time, added more arguments in support to the legitimacy of the Transnistrian regime. The international community (including UN, OSCE, and other IGOs and NGOs) has intervened into internal affairs of a *de jure* sovereign state, Serbia, and is very close to supporting the secession of a *de facto* separatist regime in Kosovo. Although Mohammed Ayoob argues that the Kosovo case should be regarded as an exception,³⁶ in reality it was seen and interpreted as a convenience for sympathizers. In fact, it spurred more confidence amongst leaders of other separatist regimes – like Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Osetia – in the legitimacy of their cause: separatism.

³³ Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, *Politica Externă a Republicii Moldova* (The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Moldova), 2nd edition (Chisinau: CIVITAS, 2001), 139. Romanian.

³⁴ Fourteen years after the conflict Moldova signed some over twenty bilateral normative documents with Russia.

³⁵ The Center for European Security Studies, NOSTRUM (Needs and Options for Security-sector Transparency and Reform in Ukraine and Moldova) Workshop Report, *Tools for Reform and Decision-Making in Defense and Security* (Groningen, Netherlands, 1-2 April 2005), 21. Last accessed in January 2006 at: www.let.rug.nl/cess..

³⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, "State Making, State Breaking, and State Failure," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. C.A. Crooker, F.O. Hampson, and P. Aall (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001).

International organizations (UN and OSCE), in turn, have proved ineffective for conflict settlement in a number of other crises besides Kosovo (Rwanda, Bosnia, etc.). The following section presents an assessment of the performance of external mediators in the Transnistrian dispute.

B. EXTERNAL MEDIATORS

The format for negotiations over the future status of the Transnistrian region was set up before the violence broke out. Logically, Moldova's next-door neighbors, Romania and the Ukraine, were two players interested in security and stability across their borders, so was the regional hegemon Russia. Initially, Transnistria was not invited to the negotiations table as an independent actor. In Chisinau, that was seen as recognition of Tiraspol as a state-level actor, a step that could begin the process of eventual legitimization. R. Licklider suggests that it is a normal temptation on behalf of legitimate governments to leave out extremists and separatists in negotiations.³⁷ He goes further by stating that this is the flawed approach and that "it is important to make every effort to include all the major groups involved in the conflict, particularly at first."³⁸ That is the so-called principle of inclusiveness in the practice of conflict settlement. So, this theory suggests that the appearance of Transnistrians at the negotiations table was unavoidable and that the central government could do little, in fact, to prevent that from happening.

1. Guarantor-States

Many studies on the Transnistrian conflict outline Moldova's neighbors, Romania and Ukraine, as key players in the conflict resolution process.³⁹ Of course, since both nations share portions of their borders with the Republic of Moldova, both would have security and economic considerations at stake in the resolution of the Transnistrian issue. It seems logical that the struggle of legitimate authorities against territorial separatism in a neighboring country must be given a priority in the political agenda of Romanian and Ukrainian leaderships. It is also true that both nations have ethnic ties in the Republic of Moldova. At different points in history, Romania, as well as Ukraine, had exercised

³⁷ Licklider, 701.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ NOSTRUM, 18.; For additional evidence see Cojocaru, 77-79.

control over parts of today's Republic of Moldova. Both have their stories and reasons to believe in the validity of their claims over Bessarabia and Transnistria respectively.⁴⁰ However, none of these countries has enough capabilities to stand against Russia. Limited state capacity and fragile state institutions did not allow them to curb Russia's interest in an extended military presence in Transnistria.

It could be foreseen, back in 1992, from a realism theory point of view, Russia would try to further consolidate its positions in negotiations to the detriment of Moldova. Whereas Ukraine was seen as a cooperative partner and an easy target to conquer, *Romania* had to be squeezed out of the negotiations format as soon as possible. Russian diplomacy decided to do this with Moldova's hands. For Moldovan leaders, the stake in this deal was the end of bloodshed and for Russia to exclude Romania from the negotiations process and bring Moldova back into the orbits of Russian influence. Adopted by Moldovan leadership, the decision has significantly distanced Moldova from the West, and determined the fate of negotiations. It was, however, the most reasonable decision – stopping the violence – at that point in time for those in power.⁴¹

In contrast to Romania, which has been a visible supporter of Moldova all these years, and a strong militant against Transnistrian separatism and the presence of Russian troops in the Eastern part of Moldova, *Ukraine* has adopted a quite ambiguous position towards the conflict. While, at the beginning, supporting the legitimate Moldovan authorities and integrity of the Republic of Moldova, Ukrainian leaders soon (in 1992) added expressions like “Transnistrian people” and “Ukrainian land” to their lexicon.⁴² With tacit approval of Ukrainian authorities, Transnistrian separatists have been smuggling their “goods” across the Moldovan-Ukrainian border.⁴³ The final destination of those “goods” remains a subject of investigation by the international community. A pro-Western government that came to power in Kiev after the presidential elections in the

⁴⁰ On this topic Charles King offers an objective analysis of Romanian and Ukrainian influence in Moldova. See King, *The Moldovans* and Dima, *Bessarabia And Bukovina*. For more on Ukraine's influence and connections with Moldova see Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, second edition (New Haven and London: Yale Nota Bene and Yale University Press, 2002).

⁴¹ Cojocaru, 109.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴³ NOSTRUM, 21.

fall of 2004 has promised to change Ukraine's attitude towards the Transnistrian problem. However, the gap between official declarations and practical measures on the ground widens as time goes by. The Ukraine plan for conflict resolution, proposed in May 2005, favored elections in the region's legislature as soon as possible without removing Transnistrian President Igor Smirnov and his entourage from key positions.⁴⁴

So far, reality shows that conflicting interests of guarantor-states has led to the emergence of a series of "veto" groups within the governments, impeding the problem-solving process. It is unnecessary to list all the violations of international laws and norms committed in Transnistria with the support of neighboring Ukraine. Today, means of communication and information exchange have reached a high level of ramification and anybody can obtain enough evidence from a variety of open sources.

However, there is a belief that the behavior of states tends to change within strong alliances.⁴⁵ Both Romania and Ukraine can assume a leading role in negotiations between conflicting parties, having the alliance support. Moreover, this should be an alliance where Russia is not a member as well. NATO and the EU fall under this category. The potential problem arising here is that even having alliance backup neither Romania nor the Ukraine can assume sponsorship responsibility over Moldova as West Germany did after unification with East Germany. In 1989 the EU put the entire burden linked to the adaptation of East Germany to Western standards on the shoulders of Federal German Republic.

2. International Organizations

So, in the initial four-sided format – Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and Russia – the balance of power was already not in favor of Moldova. Although all these countries were suffering the effects of transition from an authoritarian system to a democracy, Russia easily outweighed the others. The liberal institutionalism theory of international relations would suggest that small countries like Moldova should bring in any of the largest international organizations and alliances. As such, Moldovans launched appeals early on

⁴⁴ In May 2005 Ukraine proposed its plan for the Transnistrian conflict resolution which was supposed to start with internationally monitored elections in Transnistrian legislative Supreme Soviet.

⁴⁵ Thomas Risse-Kappen, Cooperation Among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4-5.

to all major organizations: United Nations,⁴⁶ North-Atlantic Organization,⁴⁷ and Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Unfortunately for Moldovans, neither NATO nor the EU sought a direct involvement in the Transnistrian dispute. The EU has relied on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which established a permanent mission in Chisinau and a satellite office in Tiraspol, the capital of the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldovan Republic.

It turned out that the CSCE (later OSCE) was the only international organization that responded to the appeals of the Moldovan government and remained, up until late 2005, the only organization actively involved in the negotiations process. Thirteen years of the OSCE mediation have not produced positive outcomes in negotiations. OSCE is criticized for ineffectiveness. Could this organization do better in Moldova than it did? A look inside the organization's structure and decision-making process can unveil some of the OSCE's capabilities and shortfalls. First of all, decisions adopted by the OSCE member-states are political but not legally binding. That leaves the organization without any leverage or any enforcing mechanism over its members. Accusing a nation (in the case of Transnistria – Russia) for not “displaying enough political” will to fulfill its obligations sounds different from accusing the same nation for violations [emphasized by the author] of international laws and treaties. Initially, OSCE was designed as a forum that was supposed to bring West and East European nations together. The forum was open for any nation who voluntarily wanted to participate in discussions on issues of common interest. Under OSCE auspices countries bargain over different deals in international relations but they do not form intergovernmental, transnational alliances which would restrain other members' behavior through a set of norms and rules.

Secondly, the basic principle of the OSCE decision-making process is *by consensus*. Although this principle underscores equality of its members and reflects the cooperative approach to all addressed issues, it is not hard to imagine that, in an organization with 55 member-states, this principle slows the decision-making process and

⁴⁶ On 31 July, 1992, President of the Republic of Moldova Mircea Snegur officially asked the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to consider the possibility of deploying a UN observers mission to the Transnistrian region. For details, see Cojocaru, 86.

⁴⁷ The issue of Transnistrian conflict was addressed to the NATO' Political Committee on 2 April 1992, following the outbreak of the violence. For more details see Cojocaru, 81.

leads to stalemates in disputes over sensitive issues. In 1992, however, OSCE adopted two mechanisms that were supposed to be used in case of deadlocks: “consensus minus one”⁴⁸ and “consensus minus two.”⁴⁹ These two mechanisms gave OSCE the flexibility to adopt decisions without the consent of the State (or two States respectively) concerned in “cases of clear, gross and uncorrected violations of CSCE commitments.”⁵⁰ The “consensus minus one” was used once against former Yugoslavia. The “consensus minus two” was never used. Why hasn’t this mechanism ever been used? Perhaps another consensus had to be reached on what could be called “cases of clear, gross and uncorrected violations.” In a situation when much worse confrontations (like the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region) have not qualified as being “cases of clear, gross and uncorrected violations,” Moldova’s complaints about violations in Transnistria had little chance (if any at all) of being considered and addressed.

Could OSCE provide a strong political back-up for the Republic of Moldova after all? It becomes clear, even after such a superficial analysis, that OSCE should not be blamed for failing to live up to the expectations of Moldovans.

At the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in 1999, Russia committed itself to dismantle its military bases and withdraw its troops from Georgia and the Republic of Moldova by the end of the year 2002. It remains a fact today that Russia did not keep the promise. All following OSCE summits have failed to pursue Russia to meet the assumed in Istanbul obligations and ended up with a decision “to hold another summit.” This failure indicated a lack of real progress on issues like Abkhazia⁵¹ and Transnistria. After 1999, Russia started to behave more aggressively. What happened? Obviously the upturn in Russia’s economic development and stabilization of political life – since 1999 inevitably linked with President Vladimir Putin’s rise to power – can explain such a change. Russia’s superpower ambitions did not vanished after dismemberment of the Soviet Union, but were put on hold for the period of turmoil and adjustment to new post-Cold War realities.

⁴⁸ Adopted at the Prague CSCE Ministerial Council meeting, held in January 1992.

⁴⁹ Adopted in 1992 in Stockholm.

⁵⁰ OSCE Handbook, 15. Last accessed in January 2006 at: <http://www.osce.org/item/13858.html>.

⁵¹ Formerly an autonomous Soviet republic administratively integrated into Soviet Georgia.

OSCE presence in Moldova counts amongst the reasons that can explain why the UN has never deployed an observer mission to the Transnistrian region. As long as OSCE was present in the area, the UN was not considering intervening in Transnistria. Especially since OSCE had declared, in the early 1990s, that it would play a role of a regional arrangement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.⁵² The UN, in turn, has welcomed the idea, and even encouraged the resolution of any disputes and conflicts at the regional level.⁵³ That is the official UN policy.

In reality, one peculiarity that united all UN peacekeeping operations in the past could better explain the UN refusal to intervene in Moldova. The UN did not want to get involved in areas where one of the superpowers, Russia, had clear, direct interests. Traditionally, UN peacekeeping was used on the periphery of the Cold War “battles,” where the United States and the Soviet Union did not have vested interests. This unwritten rule was still fresh in the minds of Russian diplomats in 1992. Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council (and direct successor of the Soviet Union) would not tolerate the emergence of another UN mission in its backyard. In exchange, Russia rushed to offer a kind of regional arrangement recommended in Chapter VI⁵⁴ of the UN Charter. Since Russia had a full control over the events and development, it intervened “just in time,” i.e., before the UN could qualify the conflict as one that “endangered the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁵⁵

In the meantime, UN peacekeeping itself was at a major turning point in its evolution.⁵⁶ UN “traditional” approaches to conflict settlement were failing to cope with the wave of inter-ethnic clashes erupting one after another in the former communist

⁵² It must be mentioned here that at the time OSCE declared its intention to play the role of the UN “regional arrangements” it did not have any capabilities at all to conduct peacekeeping operations. Only NATO has had (and still remains the most advanced institution) integrated military structures, capable of carrying-out peacekeeping and peace-enforcement missions mandated by the United Nations.

⁵³ See UN Charter, Chapter VIII “Regional Arrangements.” Last accessed in January 2006 at: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>.

⁵⁴ UN Charter, art. 33. Last accessed in January 2006 at: www.un.org .

⁵⁵ UN Charter, art. 33. Last accessed in January 2006 at: www.un.org.

⁵⁶ Mackinlay and Cross, 4.

countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, UN failures to prevent genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica were adding points to the legitimacy of Russian peacekeeping in Transnistria.

With four guarantors-states and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe involved in the mediation business, one could have an impression that the Transnistrian issue was important for a large number of actors. In reality the “frozen” conflict gradually became nobody’s priority in the West. Places of low strategic value, like Moldova, were always at the greatest risk of being left alone and forgotten. Whenever there is a clear-cut interest in a region (as defined by the U.S. Department of State in respect to Georgia,⁵⁷) the West can lobby in the UN over the question to deploy an observer mission. Of course, the threat emanating from Transnistria was not commensurable at the time with the one in Afghanistan under the Taliban or in Iraq under Hussein. However, it is less costly to prevent the problem at the earliest stage than to engage it when it is too late and things get much more complicated. Conflicts, like the Transnistrian one, don’t matter until they *matter*. However, decisions to intervene in one “hot spot” or another are always political and are not based on the situation on the ground alone. Predicting when decisions in favor of Moldova would be made is extremely difficult. It is a constant dilemma: what comes first – the interest or the value?

Assuming that UN deployed its peacekeepers to Moldova, what changes could UN-led (or any other international organization) peacekeeping force bring to the conflict resolution? Not many. UN proved to be, by and large, ineffective in meeting Paul Diehl’s second criterion – resolve the conflict.⁵⁸ No peacekeeping operation could do more than limit the armed conflict. However paradoxical it may sound, in some cases, a return to colonialism or imperialism seems to be a better solution for the recovery and development of conflicting countries, better than the deployment and meaningless presence of UN troops. At least in the past, former dominions had vested interests in

⁵⁷ U.S. policy towards Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, for instance, is saying that “it is in U.S. interest to support Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity; maintain international involvement in resolving conflicts in the former Soviet Union; and monitor the CIS/Russian peacekeeping operation.” From the U.S. Department of State’s website. Last accessed in January 2006 at: <http://www.state.gov/p/io/fs/2003/26671.htm>.

⁵⁸ Paul F. Diehl, International Peacekeeping (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 37-40.

maintaining stability in controlled colonies in order to protect investments. Today's UN peacekeeping became a business for many Third World countries. The major interest for these soldiers is to bring cash to the budget of their countries. The fate of the hosting nation becomes less important. Given the interests of Russian (and Moldovan to some extent) business elite in the region, Russian peacekeeping operation in Transnistria appears to be a better protection shield.

C. RUSSIAN TROOPS IN TRANSNISTRIA: PEACEKEEPERS OR COLONIALIST GARRISON?

The Soviet troops' withdrawal from Eastern Europe has ended the threat posed by Soviet Union offensive conventional forces. Furthermore, the democratization process that started in Russia in the early 1990s, although with significant deficiencies and deviations from Western norms, has reduced the danger posed by aggressive intentions.

Since the end of military confrontations in Transnistria, Russia's pressure on the Moldovan government has steadily increased. Once Russia's economy started to show signs of improvement, Moscow became more vocal in expressing concerns about Russia's relative power in world politics. By all possible means, Russia has created a kind of security regime in Transnistria in the sense of *regimes theory* of international relations.⁵⁹ Moldova's consent was not needed in this case since the deal was cut with other powerful actors who agreed to the established status quo. At that point in time, it was an option that the West seemed willing to support. Moldovan leadership has been forced to play by the rules of this regime.

The strength of Russian troops remaining in Transnistria after the disintegration of the Soviet Union did not present a real threat to the neighboring countries, Romania and the Ukraine. However, since these troops were stationed in the area not controlled by the legitimate Moldovan government, the presence of these forces was seen as a disturbing and destabilizing factor.

Russia kept proudly declaring over the last decade that its peacekeeping troops, present in Transnistria since the cease-fire agreement was signed, have been able to bring

⁵⁹ Robert Jervis, "Security Regimes," in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983), 176-177.

peace and stability to the region and maintain it ever since. That is true. It is also true that this is a quite common practice for outsiders (as Russia is in its capacity of guarantor-state) to invest in enterprises that have clearly visible effect and a blown-out resonance in the international mass-media. The argument of “successful peacekeeping” has been ostensibly exploited by Russian propagandists in Transnistria, especially against the background of failed UN-led peacekeeping missions in other parts of the world (Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia). Not only on the left bank of the Nistru River, but on the right one as well, was the local population willingly buying this argument. That is understandable, since most people, even far beyond Moldovan borders, expect no more from a peacekeeping operation than just stopping the violence and preventing the recidivism. Paul Diehl argued in his book “International Peacekeeping” that it is logical for the success of a peacekeeping operation to be judged on its ability to deter or prevent the re-emergence of violence in the area of conflict.⁶⁰ However, Diehl emphasizes that peacekeepers should not rely on an overwhelming force “to deter or prevent violence,” but rather should rely on “their moral or symbolic value as an international force representing the world community’s desire for peace.”⁶¹ Likewise, those who were in power in Moldova in 1992 were thinking about peacekeeping in Westphalian terms. That is to say, up to the 1990s, “blue berets” were seen “settling disputes and orderly relations *between* states⁶² using mostly soft tools and methods (preventive diplomacy, mediation in negotiations process, etc.). Basically, Westphalian, or traditional peacekeeping, was concerned with stopping the violence and paving the way for further negotiations.

The concept of “peacekeeping” changed a lot over the 1990s and moved closer to the second criterion identified by Paul Diehl as a measuring tool of success – conflict resolution.⁶³ It goes further than the dismantling of authoritarian, totalitarian and other types of despotic regimes, to building democratic institutions and creating conditions for democracy’s consolidation. That is the post-Westphalian concept of peacekeeping⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Diehl, 34.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶² Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams, and Stuart Griffin, Understanding Peacekeeping (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 3.

⁶³ Diehl, 37.

⁶⁴ Bellamy et al., 2.

using Bellamy's terminology. This approach entails the most powerful argument against Russia's claims of success in Transnistria. Restoration of peace is not enough. It is a short-run success, but does not bring sustainable peace in the long-run. Security and freedom of movement of every individual within rival entities must have been ensured and become the first priority. When Transnistrian law enforcement forces were obstructing Moldovan farmers, living on the left bank of Nistru, from harvesting their crops, and when Moldovan children, living in Transnistria, could not go to school for the same reason, Russian peacekeepers did nothing to stop the separatists. What kind of security could they (Russian peacekeepers) possibly claim to provide?

In sum, the post-Westphalian concept would have suggested that if the peacekeeping operation in Transnistria "implanted seeds of liberal-democratic statehood" the conflict would have been most probably solved by now. If Mr. Smirnov, President of the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, accepted democracy as "the only game in town," preconditions for the conflict recidivism would have gradually disappeared. With the consent of both parties, democracy would have had a chance for a long life, and peace and stability in the region would have endured. That is the fundamental principle of the Democratic Peace Theory – *democracies do not fight each other*.⁶⁵

In 1992, however, it was doubtful that Moldovan politicians were focusing on the principles of the Democratic Peace Theory when they opted for an external intervention. Stopping the bloodshed was the first priority. With Moldova's consent, Russian peacekeepers showed up in Transnistria. Russians lacked a democratic tradition and culture. Even if they wanted, they could do no more than merely disengage the belligerent parties. So, as mentioned above, Russian troops created a security regime around Transnistria, a kind of *status quo*.

Unfortunately for Moldovans, it seems that the existing *status quo* of "no peace, no war" in the Transnistrian region satisfied the West all these years. In the meantime, this false "stability" allowed Russia to claim that the presence of its peacekeeping forces in the region was indispensable. Over the years, however, the real face of Russian

⁶⁵ Bruce Russett, Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a post-Cold War World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11-16.

peacekeeping has surfaced. It is sad to see this happening since it is widely acknowledged, by the European Union and NATO policy-makers, that peacekeeping in post-modern era (post-Westphalian) terms encompasses more than merely disengaging belligerent parties.

In the early 1990s, however, Moldovan leaders followed the world's most common practices of conflict resolution – involving the United Nations Organization peacekeepers. Never since then has the idea to invite an international peacekeeping force been abandoned. Taking into account Russia's interests in the region, Moldova does not suggest entirely replacing the existing Russian peacekeepers, but, rather, diversifying the national composition of peacekeepers. The peculiar Russian concept of peacekeeping, developed specifically for former Soviet republics, significantly deviates from international principles and doctrines on peacekeeping. Although OSCE military observers in Transnistria have been doing a fairly good job in documenting the performance of Joint Peacekeeping Forces, Russian peacekeepers remain, by and large, unaccountable to the international community and, in some cases, even to their government in Moscow.⁶⁶ Their behavior towards the central government in Chisinau is worse than that of military units stationed in Moldova during the Soviet times. Unlike the Russian peacekeepers deployed in other post-conflict zones, namely the Balkans, those stationed in Transnistria are out of reach of the EU observers. In this context, Trevor Waters argues in his analysis of Russian peacekeeping in Transnistria that Russian peacekeeping “is not so much a source of regional stability as rather more a neo-imperialist threat that has prolonged the conflict and, in so doing, blocked the strengthening of Moldova's independence and restoration of its territorial integrity.”⁶⁷

D. WHAT HAS MOLDOVA DONE SO FAR IN RESPECT TO THE TRANSNISTRIAN CONFLICT?

According to Max Weber, one of the characteristics of the *state* is its *territory*.⁶⁸ Weber argued that a *state* is an organization that wields power over people and territory.

⁶⁶ Mackinlay and Cross, 205.

⁶⁷ Waters, 133.

⁶⁸ Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in Essential Readings in Comparative Politics, ed. Patrick O’Neil and Ronald Rogowski (New York, London: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., 2004), 34.

In other words, the state is defined by a certain territory within which governments exercise the “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force.”⁶⁹ If one applies this criterion to the Republic of Moldova, then it can be concluded that Moldovans have failed the test on state-building. Never since independence had official Chisinau fully controlled the entire territory enclosed within the boundaries it proclaimed as state frontiers in August 1991.⁷⁰ The eastern part of the country along the left bank of the Nistru River did not recognize the legitimacy of the central government in Chisinau and remained under the control of local authorities. It can be argued, though, that the population in Transnistria has never been given the possibility to express their allegiance to central government. All attempts by Chisinau to have population of the Transnistrian region participate in elections were being obstructed by the separatist regime.

Throughout the 1990s, Moldovan authorities were looking for political solutions to the conflict, solutions that were supposed to accommodate interests groups on both sides of the buffer zone. Chisinau can be blamed by Transnistrian leaders for anything but for disregarding one of the most important principles of post-conflict settlement – inclusiveness. Although this intention was secured in the first Moldovan Constitution (adopted in 1994), on the ground it was not an easy task. First and foremost, Chisinau had to agree to a single strategy towards the future status of Transnistria, and to speak with one voice. In order to achieve that uniformity, all political parties had to reach a consensus.

As such, Chisinau agreed to grant large autonomy to the Transnistrian region. There was a significant change in Chisinau’s official position towards Transnistria. Gradually Moldova moved from the concept of a unitary state to a loose federation with Transnistria.⁷¹ Approaching the option from realism theory prospective, Transnistrian leaders wanted to secure as much autonomy for the region as possible. Tiraspol was willing to accept either a symmetrical federation, confederation, or complete partition. A

⁶⁹ Max Weber, 34.

⁷⁰ After the proclamation of independence, the central government in Chisinau of newly emerged state the Republic of Moldova has claimed legitimate rights over the territory within the borders of former Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (including Transnistrian region).

⁷¹ For an analysis of three options for the Transnistrian conflict resolution see Vitalie Marinuta, Evolution Of Transdniestrian Conflict In The Republic Of Moldova: Prospects For Its Solution, (Naval Postgraduate School, 2004).

symmetrical federation was acceptable for the central government in Chisinau with some exceptions. In the version of federation proposed by Chisinau, Transnistria was supposed to get enough autonomy and space to maneuver. Other options could not be acceptable by either party in the negotiations, especially by Russia and the Ukraine. Both countries were still struggling with their own territorial separatism movements (Chechnya in Russia and Crimea in the Ukraine). For Moldova, symmetrical federation was a serious concession. Russia had jumped on this opportunity to secure one more time, and, hopefully (for Russia), for the last time, its extended military presence in Transnistria.

A 2004 Moscow-brokered plan, termed by people in Moldova and beyond its borders as the “Kozak” Memorandum,” was supposed to extend the presence of Russian troops in the Republic of Moldova for another twenty years or so; it was rejected by Moldovan leadership and was shelved.

In spite of the stalemate in the Transnistrian dispute, life on the right bank of the Nistru River went on. Moldova continued to build its democratic institutions in accordance with Western standards. However, in contrast to old established democracies, Moldova, as many other countries of the Third World, was struggling to democracy within a different international environment. It took approximately three centuries for most West European democracies to pass through the process of state-building – from *nation* to *nation-state* and then to *states*. Moldova, in contrast, found itself under time pressure in promoting democratic reforms set by the West. That fact can not be considered as an excuse for the relatively modest progress in building workable democratic institutions. However, as Mohammed Ayoob⁷² argued in his account “State Making, State Breaking, and State Failure,” this kind of “encouragement,” exercised by Western democracies, can result in state collapse. In addition, Western democracies impose quite high human rights standards, which are not always suitable for young democracies like Moldova. In the consolidation process, there is a need for a heavy hand and tough policies.

But the most important drawback of Moldovan politicians in negotiations with Transnistrian leadership was (and still is) the fact that official Chisinau has failed to come

⁷² Ayoob, 129.

up with an ideology that could have been more attractive for the population on the left bank of the Nistru River and, most importantly, could have been strong enough to withstand the communist ideology successfully used by those who controlled Transnistria all these years. Sending patriotic messages across the Nistru River was not going to bring serious dividends. A viable economic dimension had to support the political strategy of the country. A good example here, and a reference in the history, would be the U.S.-led Marshall Plan. Besides economic benefits that this plan promised to Europe, it was seen as a “psychological offensive” on the Soviet system. The old bureaucracy has managed to secure its positions within governmental institutions for quite a long period since independence. The conservation of old principles of state-management was inhibiting the emergence of new ideas. It was a resemblance of a “dual society” discussed by Ivan Berend in one of his books on pre – World War II Eastern Europe.⁷³

And still, those who followed the evolution of the negotiations process over the Transnistrian conflict could have an impression that Moldovan leadership has overemphasized the issue. To some extent, this stalemate was a convenient excuse for any failures of the elected politicians to improve the country’s economy. Roy Licklider has quoted William Zartman, saying that:

stalemate is not necessarily a bad outcome for parties; one may control the state apparatus and be able to gain some resources from its international connections, while the other may control a substantial part of state’s population and territory and run a shadow state, again benefiting those in control. Thus the elites of both sides may find stalemate a comfortable outcome, although it may be less attractive to those in whose name they govern.⁷⁴

You could make sound promises and, in the end, blame Transnistria as the main cause of the lack of success. Juan Linz has defined this kind of situations as “unsolvable problems.”⁷⁵ The problem will only get worse if governments set unrealistic goals for themselves. By linking everything with the Transnistrian problem, Moldova made herself a hostage to the separatist regime. Chisinau can do much on its own to ultimately

⁷³ Berend, 28.

⁷⁴ Licklider, 699.

⁷⁵ Juan J. Linz, The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes, ed. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 51.

influence the fate of the dispute. Internal structural changes, optimization of state institutions, and improvement in the economic realm might have spillover effects.

Another key cause of slow progress in negotiations with the Transnistrian regime, as identified by some political groups, was Moldova's economic dependence on Russia (mainly dependence on energy resources). After the 2001 parliamentary elections, the Moldovan communist party – which won the majority of seats in Moldovan legislature – used this fact to defend its pro-Russian electoral platform and eventual union with Belarus and Russia. Although state-ownership of the oil industry allows Russian leaders to easily convert the energetic dependency of some nations (especially in former Soviet republics) into a powerful political leverage,⁷⁶ developments in other former Soviet republics proved that there are ways to overcome this obstacle. For example, Lithuania's dependence on Russian oil⁷⁷ is also quite high, but that did not obstruct the country's integration in both NATO and the EU. The other two Baltic States, Latvia and Estonia, along with other EU candidate states, Romania and Bulgaria, also depend almost 100% on the gas imported from Russia.⁷⁸

E. CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter brings a few more arguments in support of Moldova's current position that the existing format in negotiations over Transnistria is exhausted and outdated. It is widely acknowledged in the West today that Moldova needs a strong supporter in the negotiation process to counter-balance Russia, which openly backs the Transnistrian regime. So far, none of the involved guarantor-states could possibly provide this backup. The same can be said about international organizations. Neither the UN, where Russia, as a member of the Security Council, can block any decision that would harm its national interests, nor OSCE, whose decision-making process by consensus gives the same opportunity to its member-states, could provide a strong political support for the Republic of Moldova.

⁷⁶ Energetic dependence is part of Russia's strategy to secure its dominance over the former Soviet republics. Through various ways Russia buys any energy-related assets available in these countries.

⁷⁷ Sutela Pekka, *EU, Russia, and Common Economic Space*, (BOFIT - Institute for Economies in Transition, 2005, No.3), 12. Last accessed in January 2006 at: www.bof.fi/bofit.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

The UN tends to rely on OSCE as a regional player in post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. Besides, the long-standing tradition to avoid involvement in areas where world superpowers have direct interests stopped the UN from getting involved in Transnistria. That and a few other factors played out in favor of Russia, which deployed its peacekeepers to the region.

No matter what peacekeepers will deploy to Transnistria and no matter what mandate and rules of engagement they will have, they will have little chance (if any at all) to solve the root causes of the conflict. The UN does not have a single peacekeeping operation that solved the conflict in the long term.⁷⁹

New players should be given a try in the Transnistrian conflict resolution process. NATO and the EU are considered two potential candidates that can bring about changes in the negotiations process. Theoretically, either one of these two organizations taken separately possesses enough potential to create an asymmetry against Russia. Combined together, the efforts of both organizations, again theoretically, can significantly diminish Russia's influence in the region. Would they go for this option?

In the spring of 1992, when the violence was on its rise, NATO and CSCE⁸⁰ refused to intervene in Transnistria; motivating their decisions were the “insignificant proportions” of the conflict.⁸¹ Have considerations of NATO changed over time? What has the EU to say about Transnistria, and where does the issue stand in the long list of internal European problems?

The next chapter will examine possible incentives that could push the North-Atlantic Alliance and the European Union into a more active engagement in the Transnistrian conflict resolution process. Likewise, the chapter will identify the main factors that slow or divert the two organizations from getting involved in the fate of Moldova.

⁷⁹ Diehl, 95.

⁸⁰ CSCE (later OSCE) has deployed eventually, in 1993, a mission to Moldova with the main task of monitoring the conflict settlement and is still present in the country as for the time of this writing.

⁸¹ Cojocaru, 81-82.

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III. NATO AND THE EU: NEW ACTORS ON THE SCENE

A. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the case of NATO, the alliance's policies are heavily shaped by the United States. Opinions differ here as to what extent other NATO members are able to contain Washington and influence the Alliance's courses of action and policies. Thomas Risse-Kappen, for example, is among those who argue that, throughout the years of its existence, NATO has developed a collective identity and that "this sense of community helped the Europeans to influence American policies" through three mechanisms: timely consultations, domestic pressures within the U.S. and trans-governmental coalitions among societal and bureaucratic actors."⁸² Proponents of *regimes theory* of international relations would support Risse-Kappen by arguing that, although a hegemonic nation (in this case, the United States) can fund a significant portion of a regime's (NATO) budget, the regime can still handcuff the hegemony on some occasions.⁸³

On the other end of the spectrum are those who point to the unchecked hegemony of the United States, "the Pax Americana of a polity wielding more absolute power than any since ancient Rome."⁸⁴ Following recent developments within the North-Atlantic Alliance, one can notice a shift to unilateralism within the American political establishment.

Within the European Union, on the other hand, Germany and France set the tone and influence the foreign policy formulation process. Of course, their influence within the EU is not commensurable to that exercised by the United States in NATO. Realists would say that they lack the necessary resources that would allow them to put pressure on other EU members. However, EU's policy documents and doctrines in the defense area resemble the threat perception and crisis management approaches existing in these two

⁸² Risse-Kappen, 4-5.

⁸³ For example, European allies have prevented U.S. from using nuclear weapons during Korean War in 1950s and influenced decision-making process within U.S. Administration during "Cuban missile crisis". See more in Risse-Kappen, 71-75, 176-182.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Pond, Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), ix.

European nations. In fact, strong and close cooperation of these two nations, Germany and France, was the core for the European unification.

So, we have two international organizations, NATO and the EU, whose intervention can speed up the Transnistrian conflict resolution process. The former was undergoing a transformation process throughout the 1990s, searching for a new identity and adjusting to modern realities. The latter one – the European Union – was on the rise. However fragile it is, the European Union (France and Germany) is competing with NATO (the U.S.) to win the hearts and minds of new NATO/EU members from Central and Eastern Europe. Rationale for further enlargement will be analyzed against “soft power” resources such as values, norms and knowledge,⁸⁵ accumulated over the years and shared by member-states within both alliances.

B. NATO – REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: STAKES FOR INTERVENTION IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN DISPUTE.

1. Post–Cold War Intra-Alliance Developments

To better understand the alliance’s behavior today, as an independent actor in world politics, a short survey of the alliance formation is needed. Likewise, intra-alliance cooperation and quarrels should add more to one’s understanding of how NATO works and makes decisions. In fact, conflict is embedded in the nature of any military alliance. In the past, a state’s decisions to form alliances were not necessarily accompanied by reciprocal sympathy. It was not uncommon for even rivaling countries to unite temporarily in an alliance in order to benefit from each other.

The United States exited from World War II in much better shape than Europeans. After Germany was defeated, Americans wanted to withdraw from Europe. This intention was repeatedly stressed by U.S. governments after the war. Europeans, on the other hand, had an interest in an extended U.S. presence in Europe. As a result, Americans and Europeans cut a “win-win” deal. For Europeans, it was a great opportunity to use U.S. troops as a security guarantor on the continent and a deterring force against the Soviet threat. That gave them the chance to refrain from investing in rebuilding indigenous defense forces destroyed in WW II, but to direct resources to other spheres of the

⁸⁵ Risse-Kappen, 6.

economy. Secondly, Europeans had no incentive to build up large conventional forces because, in the end, they would have failed to outnumber U.S. forces. So, a buildup of indigenous forces would have not released them from dependency on the U.S. on security issues. America, in turn, sensed the opportunity to secure its positions in Europe after it exits (whenever this was going to happen). Amongst the first things Washington wanted to take care of was to prepare a suitable successor. If Europe was ever to unite in a kind of federation, then the United States would have probably liked Britain to take the lead in this community. Britain was seen in Washington as the best candidate to lead the others in a direction that was acceptable to the U.S., and also promote the values of liberal democracy on the European continent. As John Harper summarized, the predominating opinion within the American political establishment in late 1940s, Americans did not see themselves in “Britain’s place, but America and Britain side by side.”⁸⁶ And besides, Americans needed at least one truthful, loyal ally amongst those “others.” In spite the fact that United States failed to impose the idea of British leadership on other European countries, American leadership was ready to propose a form of cooperation acceptable for all West European countries – the North-Atlantic Alliance.

As previously noted, any military alliance is, from the outset of its formation, incompatible in nature. The North-Atlantic Alliance was not an exception. One could have doubted, back in 1945, that the world’s largest holders of colonies (France, Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands) would be able to form a lasting military alliance with the United States – the world’s fastest-growing economy. Increasing domestic consumption and demands for large social welfare programs in most European nations were conflicting with the future commitments to the alliance’s pool of military resources. As Wallace Thies characterized the predominating opinion in most European countries at that time, “every dollar, pound or franc not spent on defense is one that can be spent on programs that benefit large groups of voters, like pensioners or workers in depressed industries.”⁸⁷

Therefore, from the moment the Washington Treaty was signed in April 1949, the United States was quite aware that it would have to carry much of the North-Atlantic

⁸⁶ John L. Harper, *American Visions of Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 275.

⁸⁷ Wallace J. Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining And Burden-Shifting In NATO* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2003), 6.

Alliance burden. Whereas, on a political level, the decision to form an alliance was seen as a necessary step against the Soviet threat, on the level of practical implementation, things looked more problematic. Europeans have always been very hesitant to increase their commitments of resources to NATO.⁸⁸ It was widely acknowledged in Europe (and still is) that United States would assume the bulk of the burden. In the meantime, U.S. policy-makers sensed the advantages that would accompany these arrangements. Besides providing a political-military framework and justification for U.S. military presence in Europe, the Washington Treaty established certain limits for European members of the alliance. Europeans, in their turn, could still use certain leverages (such as a commitment to timely consultations among members) to influence the decision-making process within the alliance. However, the allies' success in influencing decisions was indirectly proportional to the willingness of U.S. decision-makers to respect alliance norms of behavior. Debates erupted within U.S. political and military elites over the need to consult the allies⁸⁹ versus going for unilateral actions.

After the end of the Cold War, the threat posed by former Warsaw pact countries to the North-Atlantic Alliance members significantly decreased. As such, preservation of the alliance has been questioned by many. The United States ceased to see Europe as an “outpost of its national defense”⁹⁰ against the Soviet Union. Since the international security environment has changed, NATO leaders had to come up with a new military doctrine for the post–Cold War security setting. Militaries needed new doctrines and, respectively, new missions. A new major threat (or threats) had to be identified, and this caused one of the roots of eventual disagreements within the alliance. On one hand, everybody agreed that the concept of maintaining large standing armies had lost its validity. The Soviet Union was gone and, with it, the need for thousands of tanks and artillery systems. New threats required lighter and more mobile armies, capable of deploying out-of-area of operations. On the other hand, alliance members were looking for “new threats” in different places. Most West European nations perceived the Soviet threat as the only one that they feared during the Cold War. Different perceptions of

⁸⁸ Thies, 6.

⁸⁹ For example, the conflict that emerged between U.S. State Department and Pentagon over the need to consult the allies during the war in Korea. See Risse-Kappen, 54.

⁹⁰ Risse-Kappen, 79.

threats, and approaches on how to tackle these threats, led to confrontations within the alliance, and claims on behalf of the United States for the right to act unilaterally.

Throughout the 1990s, *unilateralism* was the word that was associated with the deterioration of the intra-alliance climate. Violations, by the United States, of the alliance's norms became more frequent. Violations of alliance norms were not a new phenomenon in the history of the North-Atlantic Organizations.⁹¹ There were equal temptations in the past, within European governments, to break the alliance norms. Whenever it happened, it triggered retaliation from the U.S. side,⁹² which eventually disturbed the balance of the entire community. Robert Jervis characterized this kind of behavior by saying that "states change or break the rules as their power and interests change."⁹³

What lesson can the Moldovan political establishment learn from this NATO experience? Pragmatically, Moldova can benefit from the intra-alliance problem. First and foremost, the choice of actors to negotiate with, over assistance in the Transnistrian problem, can be limited to the United States. Secondly, Washington can go for unilateral actions if it sees an interest and deems it necessary to do so.

2. NATO's Official Policies and Views Vis-À-Vis Expansion to the East

The idea to enlarge the North-Atlantic Alliance to Central and Eastern Europe did not emerge after the end of the Cold War. The possibility of NATO expansion eastwards was considered by President Truman's administration and the authors of the alliance, even before the Washington Treaty was signed in 1949.⁹⁴ When the North-Atlantic Alliance had become a reality, its eventual enlargement was considered only in the context of the fight against non-democratic regimes and prevention of the spillover effect of non-democratic practices into the West. John Harper quoted the

⁹¹ Risse-Kappen, 91.

⁹² Ibid., 91.

⁹³ Jervis, 189.

⁹⁴ Ronald D. Asmus, Opening NATO's Door (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xxiii.

U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, commenting on the rationale behind the aid that Washington was going to provide to Greece within the framework of the Truman Doctrine.⁹⁵ Acheson said,

. . . like apples in a barrel infected by one rotten one, the corruption of Greece would later infect Iran and all to the east. It would also carry infection to Africa through Asian Minor and Egypt and to Europe through Italy and France.⁹⁶

Although the Transnistrian regime can not “infect” such large territories as described by Secretary Acheson, the dangers it emanates should worry Europeans no less than Greece worried the Truman Administration in late 1940s.

In fact, Ronald Asmus, former Deputy Assistant U.S. Secretary of State, argues in his book, “Opening NATO’s Door,” that the decision to expand NATO was a culmination of the combined efforts of American interventionists (of Harry Truman and Dean Acheson’s formation) and Central and East European pro-Western, anti-Soviet and anti-communist dissidents, who wanted Europe united under the auspices of democracy and freedom.⁹⁷ That is to say, long before the Berlin Wall came down, East Europeans themselves started, to some extent, building the bridge over the Wall to unite with the West. For the White House, it was a crucial moment – to decide in the turmoil ensuing from the collapse of the Soviet Union as to whether the United States would take the lead in world politics and affirm itself as the only superpower remaining. Going back to isolationism was not an option for people in power at that time in Washington.

After the end of the Cold War, however, NATO enlargement was seen by most West Europeans as another increase in defense expenditures. Defense structures of East

⁹⁵ The Truman Doctrine (known also as a policy of containment), presented by the U.S. President Harry S. Truman to the U.S. Congress on March 12, 1947, was part of the U.S. political response to perceived aggression by the Soviet Union in Europe and the Middle East, illustrated through the communist movements in Iran, Turkey and Greece. Under the Truman Doctrine, the United States were prepared to support financially and technically (Turkey and Greece got \$400 million in military and economic aid) countries which were threatened by the communist government. In President Truman's words, it became the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. The doctrine was specifically aimed at assisting governments resisting communism. Truman insisted that if Greece and Turkey did not receive the aid that they needed, they would inevitably fall to communism with the result being a domino effect of acceptance of communism throughout the region.

⁹⁶ Harper, 276.

⁹⁷ Ibid., xxv-xxvi.

European nations aspiring to NATO membership had to be brought in accordance with alliance standards. Defense transformations were always quite expensive enterprises. Most of Central and East European countries could not afford such expenses, therefore NATO was supposed to assume the largest portion of the costs. That, in turn, triggered the public opinion within old member-states since, for the population in respective countries, it meant that additional money was supposed to go for “collective needs.” This factor, among others, shaped the attitude of West Europeans towards new NATO members and towards the idea of expansion to the East – something else to consider for the Moldovan political class. Also, since the United States was covering the lion’s share of the NATO budget (and still is, although the EU is trying to shift the burden), Europeans couldn’t complain much about expansion. The problem of burden-sharing looks quite different when it comes to EU enlargement. Europeans are concerned with the ability of future members to take over part of the financial burden. That issue is discussed in more detail later in this thesis. In spite of the opposition within both institutions towards enlargement to South-Eastern Europe, Moldova’s neighbor, Romania, is already a NATO member and presumably will become an EU member in January 2007.

With Romania’s acceptance into NATO, the Republic of Moldova found itself at the frontier of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, sharing 450 kilometers of its Western borderline. Thus, the Transnistrian “black hole” is no longer somewhere “far away,” but is in very close proximity to the North-Atlantic Alliance and (from January 2007), EU’s border. The buffer zone no longer exists. Thus, the Transnistrian regime poses a threat, not only to the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, but to the South-Eastern part of NATO (and, eventually, of the EU).

From a security standpoint, NATO can be anticipated to more closely scrutinize illegal activities in the Transnistrian region from now on. Current Transnistrian leadership, as an intelligence target, could be expected to move up on the list of NATO intelligence structures. Romania might benefit, in this context, from more resources that could be re-directed to Romanian military intelligence services. These resources would improve their ability to collect and process information on any suspect activities in the vicinity of the NATO area of operation. The West will then have first-hand information

on Transnistrian activities (weapons smuggling, human trafficking, money-laundering,⁹⁸ etc.), which would be a great help for Moldovan intelligence agencies. So far, they have relied only on national assets and resources. As a result, Transnistrian leaders will face significant difficulties in covering up the illegal activities that bring them considerable income.

Furthermore, before the conflict is solved, it makes sense for NATO leaders to improve security along the border between the territory controlled by the Moldovan government, as well as an additional security line in the eastern part of the country (Transnistria). The security lines could be also be part of an isolation strategy (or *containment*, to use a less aggressive term), which the Moldovan government might want to consider in relation to the separatist regime in Tiraspol. Hence, a more secure border with Transnistria would benefit both NATO (it would create a buffer zone) and the Republic of Moldova, since it would put constraints on Transnistria. The central government has, in the past, applied some economical constraints on Transnistria, but these actions triggered immediate retaliation from Moscow. With NATO as an ally, Moldova would gain more legitimacy in continuing with such practices.

Moreover, the weight of Romania, in negotiations, significantly increased after the NATO enlargement. Strong political backup allows Romanian leaders and diplomats, now more than ever before, to be more vocal on issues such as human rights violations, the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria, and illicit support rendered to the non-democratic regime in Tiraspol. In his “welcome-to-NATO” speech held in Bucharest in November 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush hinted at the role the North-Atlantic Alliance has attributed to Romania as a regional pilot-nation. Romania, in President Bush’s words, would be a “bridge to a new Russia” and would “help the Alliance to extend a hand of cooperation across the Black Sea.”⁹⁹ On the other hand, careful remarks about Russia and the projection of NATO strategic objectives “across the Black Sea” have disappointed people in Moldova. Several months later, the American President’s views on Romania’s role in the region were paraphrased by the NATO Secretary General

⁹⁸ NOSTRUM, 21.

⁹⁹ From President Bush’s speech given in Bucharest in November 2002 on the occasion of Romania’s invitation to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Last accessed in February 2006 on the White House website at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/11/20021123-7.html>.

Lord Robertson, who said that Romania's "efforts to bring peace and stability in the region" should take into consideration the "critical importance of Russia and the Ukraine."¹⁰⁰

Terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September, 2001, sped up the alliance's transformation process. On one hand, that tragedy strengthened the alliance and united members-states against a common threat – transnational terrorism. On the other hand, different perceptions of the threats have generated disagreements vis-à-vis the strategy to be used and the prioritization of targets. Opinions varied within NATO and within the European Union, respectively, as to what constituted security issues. The most glaring difference was the interpretation of the post-September 11 security environment. As a result, NATO's focus has shifted from Europe to Asia (Afghanistan) and the Middle East (Iraq). Alliance assets and resources have been broadly dispersed; NATO has gladly handed over part of the security burden in the Balkans to the European Union. Such a drastic shift in priorities has further distanced other conflicts in Europe, such as the Transnistrian one.

C. WHERE DOES MOLDOVA STAND?

What help can Moldova possibly expect from NATO? To put it simply, NATO can provide what no other organization (UN, OSCE) can provide for the time being and in the nearest future – security guarantees. In the long-run, Moldova could have enjoyed the full extent of the security guarantee of Article V of the Washington Treaty. NATO, in addition, is the only real force that can counterweight the Russian pressure. Taking into consideration that fighting communism and authoritarianism was the eternal mission of the alliance during the Cold War, Moldova had a reason to believe that NATO would push to the end – until the last non-democratic regime in Europe would be dismantled. The separatist regime in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova definitely falls under this category. From a realist theory prospective, military power is a key element and a universal currency in world politics. It can be transferred to other areas

¹⁰⁰ Speech by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, at the Romanian Parliament, 3 March 2003. Last accessed in January 2006 on NATO official website at <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/s030303a.htm>.

(trade, economics, etc.) in order to leverage development. Needless to say that security provides an attractive climate for investments desperately needed in countries like Moldova. Operationally, NATO is far more sophisticated, flexible and experienced than the newly established EUROCORPS. Moreover, NATO is an organization where Russia is not a member and, therefore, it can not participate, interfere or influence the alliance's decision-making process. That is important for Moldova, to bring in new international organizations and alliances that do not share its institutions with Russia, or at least not to a full extent.

These, in brief, are the benefits that Moldova could have enjoyed if it became a full member of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization. So far, though, the Republic of Moldova has never declared its intention to adhere to the North-Atlantic Alliance due to its neutrality status. The neutrality clause has been included in the first Constitution of the Republic of Moldova in a specific socio-political environment, and was supposed to accommodate the interests of certain political groups inside and outside the country at that point in time.

In the aftermath of the violent confrontations in 1992, the neutrality status was supposed to reconcile all political forces largely dispersed across the political spectrum (pro-Romanian, pro-independent Moldovan and pro-Russian – supporters of the Transnistrian regime). In addition, the neutrality clause was supposed to underline the illegitimate presence of Russian troops in Transnistria and force their withdrawal. Moldova's neutrality fit in the West's strategic interests as well. Had Russia withdrawn its troops from Moldova, Moldova's neutrality would have been a good protective measure against Russia expansion to the West.

It is not surprising that, over the years, Russia sensed the same benefit out of Moldova's status of neutrality as an obstacle in the way of NATO expansion eastwards. What used to be purely Moldova's interest – the status of neutrality – later became Russia's strategic objective in the region. In the context of NATO's enlargement to the East, Russia is interested in continuing Moldova's neutrality. Therefore, Russia will use everything in its might to bar any potential move of the Moldovan government to amend the neutrality clause in the Constitution with the intention to apply for NATO

membership. So, in the current geo-political settlement, Moldova is seen on both sides as a buffer zone. If Chisinau applied for NATO membership now, its chances would be quite low.

In the meantime, when NATO membership is not yet considered in official circles in Chisinau, the country can benefit – gaining most of the advantages offered by the alliance – through the NATO-led “Partnership for Peace” program. In March 1994,¹⁰¹ the Republic of Moldova joined the “Partnership for Peace” program. The initiative did not receive a warm welcome within the Moldovan political establishment at that time, which saw the program primarily as a tool of U.S./NATO propaganda and preparation of grounds for future expansions. In order to disperse the fears of domestic political groups, Moldovan President Mircea Snegur declared, at the signing ceremony in Brussels, that Moldova was not considering joining NATO¹⁰² in the near future. Reluctance towards NATO, mixed with confusion over what the program could do for Moldovan Armed Forces and for the nation as a whole, turned out to be the biggest impediment at the outset of cooperation. Although, at first glance, the program appeared to emphasize mostly military aspects of cooperation, in reality it opened the doors for assistance in other dimensions as well: economic, social, technological and political.

First of all, the “Partnership for Peace” program presents a link for Moldovan authorities with the most powerful and effective political-military alliance. Having an access to such a forum, where leaders of the world’s most advanced democracies get together and address different issues, is crucial for Moldova’s leadership. To put it another way, the fact of being invited and accepted into the “PfP” program meant a recognition of Moldova as a democracy, although weak, but moving in the right direction. Now, it had to be understood that, for merely joining the Program, you could get a chair – but not necessarily a microphone. To put it simply, in order to have a “say” at the forum, to be given the floor and be listened to and maybe understood, the country-members had to start contributing to the Alliance soon after starting to consume funds and resources.

¹⁰¹ The Republic of Moldova has signed the “Partnership for Peace” Framework Document on 4 March, 1994.

¹⁰² Waters, 146.

Secondly, NATO possesses the most advanced experience in defense transformation and military reform areas, and can assist countries like Moldova through such a channel as the “PfP” program. Expertise has a great value and it can save Moldova’ limited resources from being unwisely wasted (for example, costly maintenance of obsolete military hardware inherited from the Soviet army). A Defense Assessment, which Moldova conducted in 2002, resulted in a set of recommendations on defense budget management and resource allocation for different categories of expenses.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, within the framework of the “PfP,” a variety of country-oriented programs can be developed and implemented. All initiatives and areas of bilateral cooperation are united into one consolidated document, the so-called Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). In fact, IPAP is a format designed by Brussels in which NATO aspiring countries and PfP members confirm their adherence to Euro-Atlantic security space and Western democratic values. Although Moldova holds its status of neutrality, it has also been granted the IPAP. In a way, it is a provocative measure on behalf of the NATO leaders, since Moldova, as all other PfP members, will have to clearly and unequivocally formulate its foreign policy objectives. By having endorsed IPAP, Moldova has officially confirmed the irreversibility of the pro-European course. Along with many other useful initiatives, the security of borders around the Transnistrian region discussed earlier can also be addressed within the framework of this plan. More resources can be made available through various NATO/PfP Trust Fund projects.

And finally, even though NATO membership is not a goal for Moldova for the time being, active participation in the “PfP” program would significantly facilitate the nation’s integration into the European Union. In a situation where the EU is looking at borrowing much of NATO’s experience and assets in building its defense forces, the “PfP” can better prepare Moldova for any kind of pre-admission inspections.

Unfortunately, for the last decade, Moldovan political elite (as, in fact, politicians in a number of other Central and East European countries) did not display an interest in exploring the opportunities offered by this program. Several reasons can be outlined here that can explain this indifference and apathy. The first is a lack of knowledge (and lack of

a will to learn more) in defense matters within the political elite. In the first post-Soviet parliamentary elections, held in February 1994, thirteen independent parties and electoral blocs competed for seats in the country's legislature.

The Agrarian Democrats – the largest political bloc, whose members were drawn mostly from Soviet-era collective farms and agro-industrial enterprises leaders¹⁰³ – had won the majority of seats, and assumed the formation of government and other state institutions. Needless to say that these people, who eventually formed the bulk of independent Moldova's political elite, had very little knowledge of defense issues and only a vague understanding of how the militaries work – how they adopt their decisions, where should they be placed within the political landscape, and how they should be controlled and held accountable (if they have to be accountable at all.). In the first years of independence, the situation was aggravated by the lack of basic laws that were to stipulate the formation and operation of main state institutions.

For the first years of the transition period, old Soviet laws were used in most state spheres of activity. Likewise, the same approach was used towards the military. Unlike the Baltic republics that decided to build up their military from scratch according to new principles and norms, Moldovan politicians chose to create armed forces with expropriated portions of the Soviet military, preserving the structural organization, legal foundation and regulations. Creation of the National Army was driven mostly by a desire to conform to the world's practices of state-building. For years to come, Moldova's political elite would not bother to properly define the role of the army in their society. Armies have always served as unifying pools of the nation.¹⁰⁴ Given the heterogeneous composition of the Republic of Moldova's population, the importance of this feature of the military increases significantly, especially when the Transnistrian conflict is not yet solved and the population remains divided. As the German Kaiser and King of Prussia,

¹⁰³ Moldova was (and still is) mostly an agricultural country. Back in Soviet times it used to be one of the main food suppliers of the USSR. Therefore, the huge agricultural bureaucracy has formed, after the break-up of Soviet Union, the Moldova's political class which assumed the leading role in the country's transition to democracy.

¹⁰⁴ For more details on the role of the army in the Austrian-Hungarian empire see James Joll, The Origins of The First World War (Gosport, Hampshire: Ashford Colour Press Ltd., 1992), 83. For insights on the role played by the army in unifying France and fostering a French identity see Eugen Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 105, 108.

Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche (Wilhelm I), proclaimed in 1891: “The soldier and the army, not parliamentary majorities and decisions, have welded the Empire together.”¹⁰⁵ The armies have traditionally played an educational role in societies, where “even recruits from the humblest circumstances became aware of new horizons.”¹⁰⁶ In an agricultural country like Moldova, the army can still contribute to the emancipation of the youngsters coming from the countryside.

Second, since armies were always a very expensive enterprise in the short-run, cooperation in the defense area with NATO countries (even through an intermediate program like “Partnership for Peace”) meant increased expenditures for defense. No political party wanted to propose to their constituencies an increase in defense budget spending when the country was struggling to overcome steadily increasing proportions of poverty. Moldovan politicians were not any different in that respect from their counterparts in the European Union and NATO member-states who, at the offset of alliance formation, were looking “skeptically on suggestions that they should do more collective effort, in order to conserve resources for programs vital to their reelection, like health, education, and welfare.”¹⁰⁷ In a period of turmoil and economic devastation, people believe in “quick impact” programs and promises.

Third, those currently in power in Moldova started their political careers during the era of the Soviet Union and thus, were unavoidably affected by the Soviet propaganda that touted the European Union as an economic basis for NATO. Therefore, in the early 1990s, the EU had a negative connotation as well. And last, but not the least, Moldovan politicians did not reach a common agreement on whether the nation needed an army or not. And if, presumably, the answer was “yes,” then what kind of army and for what purpose?

Now, when cooperation with NATO has intensified, the country’s leadership is lacking adequate public support. All this time, since 1994, could have been used to educate the population on the necessity and, eventual benefits that the country could get out of closer cooperation with the North-Atlantic Alliance within the frameworks of

¹⁰⁵ Joll, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Schulze, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Thies, 6.

“Partnership for Peace” (PfP) program. So far, “PfP” did not stir much interest within the Moldovan society. “Social mobility,”¹⁰⁸ as Hagen Schulze put it, played a crucial role in the integration and consolidation of many European states. Engagement in the political and social lives of Moldovan society, or “civic-ness,”¹⁰⁹ as Robert Putnam called it, is still weak and underdeveloped. This phenomenon is explained by several factors. First and foremost, it is due to the economic migration phenomena that has driven about one million Moldovans abroad in search of jobs (mostly to Central and Western Europe). Second, low living standards do not allow those who remained in the country to coordinate their efforts, address and solve problems, and defend their rights through indigenous and international civic organizations. Third, Soviet rule has left a deep impact on the mentality of the people. As a result, Moldovans lack a civic culture and traditions of civil engagement in state affairs. That problem is common for all former communist countries. And the final factor is the frustration caused by the politicians’ performance. Numerous discouraging factors, due to incoherent behavior displayed by political elites, have also added to the indifference and apathy of the society. All these factors put together affected the social activity of Moldovans and can explain their lack of interest in what is going on in political, economical and social spheres. When it comes to the military, politicians and the public are on the same page. Most Moldovans consider the army as a useless instrument of the state.

To some extent, lack of knowledge explains the lack of questions. The “fourth estate” of Moldova, the media, remains underdeveloped as well. Opposition TV stations and newspapers are few and they limit their diffusion to the suburbs of the capital of the country. Those mass-media that reach out to the countryside are obsolete; they lack innovative spirit and educationally-, politically- and socially-oriented shows. Few media sources (if any) can claim, today in Moldova, to have a diversified financial portfolio. Most newspapers and TV stations are sponsored by a single political party or political block with a similar platform. That makes the media dependent and excludes objectivity.

¹⁰⁸ Schulze, 122.

¹⁰⁹ Robert D. Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 99.

In the created situation, chances to incite society – to a productive and fruitful debate on the necessity for closer cooperation with NATO – seem doomed.

Actually, pro-NATO and pro-West political groups in Moldova should thank Russia for her blatantly brutal policy towards Moldova, which has made Moldovan politicians review the priorities in the nation' foreign policy. Perhaps Moldova needed such a slap on her cheek. As a result, the issue of cooperation with the North-Atlantic Alliance through the PfP program moved up on the list of the country's leadership priorities. Moldova's leadership declared that the adopted pro-Western course is definitive and is not going to be changed. Such declarations were not made as a bluff, nor were they merely expressions of ambitions by individual leaders in response to aggressive Russian policies. All recent developments in Moldova point to the country's leadership decision to pursue pro-Western policy. It seems that Moldovan rulers clearly understood that benefits from a partnership with NATO would come after some investments made by Moldova itself. Under "investments" should be unequivocally understood Moldova's contribution and active participation in NATO and EU-led peacekeeping operations. On the political level, it is widely acknowledged now that cooperation with NATO is an expensive but worthy enterprise.¹¹⁰ How these decisions will be implemented remains to be seen. Some state institutions and structures within the legislative and executive branches present a serious impediment in the way of such reforms. The gap between official declarations and their practical implementation remains quite wide. Cumbersome state bureaucracy widens the gap even more.

Civilian democratic control over the armed forces and healthy and productive civil-military relations are also pre-requisites for NATO membership in the future, but before that, it is a facilitating factor for cooperation within the "PfP" program today. Democratic and civilian control of the military is an accepted principle among all Western democracies, and a precondition for attaining national security goals and objectives within a democratic society. A fundamental element of democratic control is a uniformed military structure that is subordinated to civilian leaders. In order to ensure

¹¹⁰ In a wake of closer cooperation with North-Atlantic Alliance a National Commission for the Elaboration of the Moldova's Individual Partnership Action Plan within the NATO-sponsored "Partnership for Peace" Program has been established in 2005.

civilian control over the armed forces, democratically elected or appointed authorities are given the responsibility, in law or legislation, for developing defense policies, overseeing their implementation, and promoting transparency and accountability.

Although, in 2002, the Moldovan Parliament approved the Concept of Military Reform, little progress has been registered since then in implementing the provisions of this concept. Besides the lack of knowledge discussed in previous paragraphs, there was reluctance within certain political groups to have a matrix¹¹¹ that could have been used by society to measure and assess the progress made in the area of national security.¹¹² In the absence of a clear foreign policy strategy, politicians would always be tempted to shift priorities and goals for their own convenience. For the society, in turn, it appears to be difficult to judge whether deputies, to whom they gave their votes, succeeded or failed. Since state institutions in charge of national security (Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Security and Information Service) lack strategic guidelines, it appears difficult to judge the validity and reasonability of currently-assigned tasks.

Now, when the NATO border has moved closer to Moldova, it can also be expected that the external pressure exercised by the so-called U.S. regional “combatant commanders”¹¹³ will increase. Given the absolute lack of coordination between Moldovan Armed Forces components and the will to work together, such a “stimulus” might be beneficial, in the long run, for Moldova as well. Since its foundation in 1992, the National Army conducted little joint training with the Border Guards and Carabineers Troops. Relations between three branches of the armed forces are characterized by competition and rivalry. At the domestic level, the *divide et impera* approach facilitates the oversight of people in uniforms. In terms of external cooperation with NATO

¹¹¹ Quite astonishing remains the fact Moldova still does not have a single National Security Strategy (NSS) document approved by the legislative or executive branch. Similarly, the Ministry of Defense has not published a single National Military Strategy (NMS) document ever since independence. Instead, the nation relies on a progressively increasing number of legal acts and laws that ranges from general provision for defense and armed forces to specific aspects, such as combating terrorism and participation in peacekeeping.

¹¹² The most astonishing fact is that Moldova still does not have (as for the time of this writing) a single National Security Strategy document, approved by the legislative. Similarly, the Ministry of Defense has not published a single National Military Strategy document ever since independence.

¹¹³ Thomas Bruneau and Richard B. Goetze Jr., “Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control,” in Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 77.

Moldova faces major problems. The problems will persist and might even worsen over time if the nation's leadership doesn't get directly involved in overcoming the stalemate.

What are other ways that Moldova can possibly use to bring in NATO? Certainly Moldovan diplomats can not follow the experience of their West European colleagues in the late 1950s. The story is well known and has been described in John Lamberton Harper's book, "American Vision of Europe."¹¹⁴ It is basically about how West Europeans were trying to solve their internal problems with America's help. Immediately after WW II, the U.S. Administration was considering pulling U.S. troops out of Europe and letting Europeans take care of themselves. Most West European governments started to pull Americans by the arm, asking them to remain in Europe "for a while" and provide a security shield against the Soviet menace. Their ambassadors in Washington tended to dramatize the situation at home and, by doing that, were trying to influence and manipulate the U.S. political establishment. At that time, Europeans were driven by immediate gains from the U.S. presence on the Old continent. However, in the long run Europeans failed to foresee the price they would have to pay for this "temporary intervention." Once they decided that they wanted Americans to stay in Europe for a longer period of time, they had to assume all the ensuing consequences.

To put it simply, if Europeans did not want to build their defense forces and take over the duty to defend their territories, then America understandably reserved the right to impose its rules of the game. That is also something to consider for Moldovan politicians who push for Moldova's integration into the North-Atlantic Alliance. One alien rule can be replaced by another. Visible advantages always come in packages with invisible disadvantages. Analysis of these advantages and disadvantages is not part of this thesis; however, if Moldova concludes that it may benefit in the long-run from NATO' membership, it has to ask for that. One thing to keep in mind for Moldovan politicians is that NATO enlargement further to the East came from Central and East European leaders themselves.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ See Harper, American Visions of Europe, 333-336.

¹¹⁵ Asmus, 7.

So, the West Europeans' approach has little chance for success in the contemporary world, although the lobbying tactics are still used by diplomats around the world. European members of the North-Atlantic Alliance, even today, tend to manipulate the data of their contribution to the alliance by recurring to "selective statistics."¹¹⁶ Ironically, those Europeans that tend to shelter themselves from burden-sharing within NATO are very pretentious vis-à-vis such countries as Moldova when it comes to European integration (which is conditioned by the ability to contribute financially), and assistance in reforms and other issues.

Instead, Moldova can be more successful by showing progress at home, thereby creating an attractive environment. Corruption and poverty certainly do not attract people. Periodic assessments, especially in defense and security areas, would help to better measure this progress. It is also important to take advantage of Western experts in defense issues and train indigenous ones (train the trainer), who would be able to "read" those matrixes without external help. Many niches of the "PfP" program remain untouched so far.

From the realist theory standpoint, states fight each other because they believe that defeating the enemy is in their best self-interest: they get more power and wealth. On the other hand, realism can similarly explain why some states cease to fight each other. At some point these states may realize that it is in their best interests to stop the violence – that they will be better off if they don't fight each other. By further developing this statement, Moldova should try either of the two follow-up options in respect to the Transnistrian problem: clearly identify the existence of a "hurting stalemate" in which, according to the Zartman definition,¹¹⁷ each side expects things to get worse unless some change occurs; or Chisinau should try to identify mutual gains for both regions (Bessarabia and Transnistria) in case of integration, and bring them to the negotiations table. The center of gravity in negotiations should be shifted from power distribution after unification to mutual benefits and gains for the people (prosperity, a better economy, better infrastructure, social and health care systems, etc.).

¹¹⁶ Thies, 163.

¹¹⁷ Licklider, 699.

D. U.S. VISION OF EUROPE, POLICIES TOWARD EASTERN EUROPE AND RUSSIA

The policies of the North-Atlantic Alliance can not be viewed separately from the U.S. vision of Europe as an actor in world power politics. Omitting the details of the alliance formation, it should be made clear that it was not without Europe's tacit approval that the United States used NATO as an institution through which Washington consolidated its foothold on the Old continent.

All together – the U.S. political system and the nature of the policymaking process; adherence to the principles of a liberal economy and interests of American business elite; the culture and ideology of society; and Europe's vision of America, and vice versa – influenced the formulation of the American foreign policy towards the Old continent throughout the years.

Three main strategies towards Europe have guided the American political elite at different stages in history: internationalism, isolationism and interventionism. The shift from one strategy to another was conditioned at all times by developments around the world, perceptions and preferences of different domestic groups, as well as those of politicians who were running the country at that very moment. People who work in the White House today, or who have a seat in the U.S. Congress, or work in the U.S State or Defense Departments are inevitably students of one of these schools of thought.

Already, at the turn of the twentieth century, America started to challenge the supremacy of Europe. Provisions of President James Monroe' Doctrine of non-interference in the internal concerns of any of European powers, which guided American political class for about a century, were losing their validity. America's emergence as a world superpower brought up the European Question, which, in the words of Alfred Mahan, was about deciding "whether Eastern civilization or Western civilization is to dominate throughout the earth."¹¹⁸ This view was embraced, by and large, by many key figures within the American political elite at the beginning of twentieth century. Although *isolationism* from Europe continued to be argued with varying temper in American political circles in the course of the twentieth century, the *interventionist*

¹¹⁸ Harper, 24.

option was enjoying more supporters. Debates and disagreements arose around the question: What would be the best way for America to implement this goal?

It has been acknowledged, though, that supremacy of the United States could be achieved only by having a better organization, stronger military and enough boldness to suppress the opponents. Fears were expressed that U.S. entanglement in world power politics would affect the economical development of the country. Proponents of this view, led by President Woodrow Wilson, believed that prosperity could be achieved only by avoiding the involvement in “predatory imperialism.”¹¹⁹ And besides all, Wilson’s view (as well as Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s, later on) was inspired by the Jeffersonian idea of “peaceable coercion.”¹²⁰ Basically, this meant creating conditions that would attract people and supporting domestic groups in other countries that could challenge non-democratic regimes. In this case, the U.S. could get involved in country “N” – not directly but indirectly – under the banner of different initiatives. The Truman Doctrine and, later, the Marshall Plan were two initiatives of a kind launched by the U.S. in Europe after World War II. Eventually, societies would supposedly put adequate pressure on their governments, making them adopt liberal political and economic systems.

Hence, Washington has a long tradition of debates between interventionists and isolationists. Any expansion of the U.S. presence abroad was not always welcome at home. In the 1930s, isolationists within U.S. Congress were fiercely opposing the expansion of the U.S. military to the Philippines and Pacific. But even isolationists were arguing that a reasonable balance in the world would be “an autonomous Europe, defined to encompass most of the territory west of the Soviet Union’s interwar borders, a more liberal regime in Russia, and a self-contained United States.”¹²¹ “Most of the territory” obviously didn’t mean “all” and that gave a freedom of actions to American policy-makers.

¹¹⁹ Justus D. Doenecke, Storm On The Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941 (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), xi.

¹²⁰ U.S. President Thomas Jefferson stated as early as in 1801 that peace at home, i.e., in America, “was practically equivalent to the absence of entanglement with Europe.”¹²⁰ From here derived his concept of “peaceable coercion.” The balance of power within European countries was also less important unless one became too powerful to threaten the United States. Jefferson attempts to implement his “peaceable coercion” did not have much success. Besides all that, “predatory instincts” of Europe did not allow America to “cultivate its garden without outside interference.”

¹²¹ Harper, 185.

After the fall of the Soviet Empire, American diplomacy has re-oriented its efforts towards restoring good relations with Russia, a country that was always at the center of world politics. In the 1990s, an improved partnership with Russia was especially important to the U.S., given the slow but steady progress in the process of Europe's unification.

On the other hand, although the United States was supporting democratization processes in Russia since the break-up of the Soviet Union, preventing Russia from becoming too strong and being able to dominate the Eurasian continent continues to be in the "supreme American interest."¹²² Moreover, stable growth of the Russian economy, since 2000, strengthens the beliefs of those advocating Russia's re-emergence as a superpower. America cannot afford to underestimate, or even worse, ignore Russia. The United States learned a good lesson back in 1941¹²³ before Germany attacked Russia: no matter how weak it was (and could be) at the moment, Russia could survive and get up from its knees.

So, Washington would continue to balance between the two main actors on the Old continent – the EU and Russia. If the strength of one of the two starts challenging the U.S. hegemony, Washington would most likely increase its cooperation with the other. To put it simply, the United States will do everything in its might to prevent the re-emergence of "holy alliances," "Warsaw pacts," "quadruple alliances" or any other kinds of alliances in Europe and beyond its borders. Although American political leaders officially declare the interest of their nation in a united, strong Europe, Washington never ceased applying the *divide et impera* rule. Times have changed, but the tactics remained quite the same. Preceding the invasion of Iraq, Washington was extensively promoting the idea of New Europe versus Old Europe. In the post-Cold War security environment, Old Europe was becoming increasingly disobedient in the eyes of U.S. leaders. Washington, in fact, was never willing to tolerate allies that question its decisions and oppose its policies on the international scene. The shift to unilateralism was already imminent in mid-1990s. Unilateralism is just another interpretation of isolationism and

¹²² Risse-Kappen, 222.

¹²³ Before Germany launched its attack against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the U.S. intelligence services predicted a quick collapse of the Soviet Union.

neutrality. A major event was going to be a tipping point and mark the shift from multilateralism to unilateralism. The 9/11 terrorist attacks provided an impetus for the U.S. to espouse a different philosophy within the American political establishment. The event has granted legitimacy to U.S. policymakers to avoid consensus within the North-Atlantic Council. On the other hand, certain domestic groups were not going to accept America's sole intervention in the Middle East and Asia. A kind of alliance would decrease the anti-American tensions in Europe and other parts of the world.

It was in connection with new NATO members that the U.S. Administration came up with the definition, "coalition of the willing." Former Warsaw Pact countries, in appreciation for the United States' contribution in tearing down the communists regimes, were amongst the first who supported Washington in its calls to form "coalitions of the willing" for the military intervention in Iraq. Moldova's commitment to send troops in Iraq as part of the coalition can be considered a significant step on the international scene. In a situation when some West European partners refused to support the Iraqi campaign, everybody else on board earned, relatively quickly, Washington's gratitude. Attention of the United States towards Moldova has risen noticeably. Again, since the country leadership did not involve the media in an informational campaign, the Moldovan society could barely understand the benefits that the country might get in the long-run from the participation of Moldovan soldiers in a post-conflict stabilization operation in a Middle Eastern country.

In the meantime, Washington sponsored the emergence of a series of regional organizations in South-Eastern Europe and in the Black Sea region (Pact for Stability in South-Eastern Europe, GUUAM). There are several gains behind this policy. First of all, the White House can hand over part of the security burden in some regions (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and free resources needed in other areas of interest to American policymakers (Iraq). Secondly, these organizations can weaken, to some extent, Russia's positions in the region and lessen its influence. That is nothing more than a renewed form of *internationalist* approach in world politics largely advocated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt's interpretation of an *internationalist* approach differed from President Woodrow Wilson's views on the problem. Wilson's understanding of an internationalist approach in foreign policy found its expression in the idea to create the

League of Nations. Under the League's umbrella, as Wilson believed, the U.S. could form a coalition of world powers that would be able to deter intra-European conflicts. The onset of World War II made it clear that the League had failed in its primary purpose – to avoid any future world war. Liberal institutionalism in its pure form turned out to be a weak tool in achieving a balance of powers on the European continent. Such a large organization as League of Nations (and later United Nations) needed a supra-national institution that could, ideally, enforce the implementation of the decisions adopted by member-states. And besides, there was no room for everybody's ambitions in this organization. It could be expected that the United States, just as other great world power, would not accept a higher authority that would constrain it from pursuing its interests around the world.

The idea of regional alliances combined principles of liberal institutionalism and realism. The United States can control the national composition of all these regional organizations and make sure they don't challenge U.S. hegemony. In contrast to the European multilateral concept of international cooperation, in Washington' view, an "effective" international cooperation must be "backed by American readiness to play our [America's] part."¹²⁴ Member-states, in turn, have a chance to improve their relations with neighboring countries and contribute to the regional security. Since all these regional arrangements ultimately ease the burden for the United States, contribution of every single nation matters. As noted earlier, Moldova's decision to participate in the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq gives Chisinau the chance to trade with Washington for a stronger support in the Transnistrian issue. Likewise, a more active participation in other regional organizations would bring Moldova, although indirectly, closer to the United States. It should be kept in mind that, if Moldovans succeed in stirring a real interest within the American political establishment in Transnistrian issue, the path from intention to implementation is much shorter in the U.S. (and respectively in NATO) than in the European Union.

Support and different kinds of assistance programs for former Soviet republics, sponsored by the U.S. Government, form another dimension of an internationalist

¹²⁴ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (The White House, 17 September, 2002), 31.

approach. That is also not a new idea. In the 1940s, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's calculation was that, if the U.S. backed the colonies' struggle for independence, later on America would have been able to count on their votes in the League of Nations. In 2003, eight out of fifteen former Soviet republics joined the United States in the military campaign in Iraq.

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IV. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: DOES THE “NEGLECTED RELATIONSHIP”¹²⁵ HAVE A CHANCE FOR REVITALIZATION?

A. WHAT DOES THE EU OFFICIALLY SAY?

Following the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the European Union remained one of the two major political institutions, alongside NATO, which had to face the consequences of the transition to democracy and consolidation of governance in former rival countries. Officially, Western Europe opened its door to the newly emerged democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Certainly, it was not in the EU’s interest to build up another Iron Curtain farther to the East. That is to say, no more dividing lines had to emerge on the continent. That was in everybody’s interest. Forty years of division during the Cold War had significantly increased the misbalance between the Western and Eastern halves of Europe. Former Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev is quoted on this subject as saying that “new ‘iron curtains’ and *cordons sanitaires* would merely provide fertile ground for nationalist and imperial extremism.”¹²⁶ The geopolitical changes of the late 1980s–early 1990s have also significantly altered the security environment on the Old continent.

Although the process of European unification had always been on the agenda of Western European leaders since World War II, Europeans’ most successful achievements were reached in the 1990s. It was a culmination of a series of initiatives, beginning with the declaration on 9 May 1950 of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, to create a kind of union of European states to the European Defense Community (in 1952), which developed further into European Political Cooperation (in 1970), and finally crystallized in the form of Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Maastricht treaty of 1992. All initiatives had a common purpose: coordination of the West European nations’ position on foreign policy issues. The Common Foreign and Security Policy, introduced by the

¹²⁵ Marius Vahl, “The EU and Moldova: A Neglected Relationship,” in The EU and Moldova, ed. Ann Lewis (The Federal Trust for Education and Research, 2004), 171.

¹²⁶ James Sperling and Emil Kirchner, Recasting The European Order (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 74.

Maastricht Treaty, reflected the desire of Europeans to see Europe more involved in foreign affairs, security and defense areas: “greater and coordinated action to deal with troubled spots in and around Europe and in the rest of the world.”¹²⁷ The document set off the process of framing a common defense. The next treaty, signed in Amsterdam on 2 October 1997, mentioned the “progressive character” of the process. That is to say, as time went by, existing threats were replaced with new ones. Constant changes in the geopolitical environment had to be assessed and incorporated into the common EU defense policy. Another conclusion, drawn by the Member States from the EU experience in dealing with security issues, and thus, reflected in the EU Constitution, was that the Union “shall have competence” to fulfill declared intentions. The term “competence” presupposes the ability to do something based on *skills, experience* and adequate *funding*.

The Maastricht Treaty called for the mutual solidarity of EU member-states on issues of foreign policy and security, and advised nations to refrain from actions that contradicted the Union’s interests. The Amsterdam treaty went further, introducing a kind of remuneration for solidarity. In response to compliance, each Member State would get financial assistance in the case of severe difficulties. However, the mechanism for rendering this “assistance” looked quite complicated. It stipulated that a Member State would be able to get help only in difficulties “caused by exceptional occurrences....after unanimous voting ...and under certain conditions,” which sounded more like “never.” The December 2000 Nice Treaty was supposed to simplify the procedure.¹²⁸ The EU Constitution introduced the *solidarity clause* which stipulated conditions and arrangements for collective defense. Should a nation be attacked or in crisis, other Member States would intervene only following a request from political authorities of the country. In rest, commitments to mutual assistance in the defense area would be consistent with commitments under the NATO Treaty.

In December 2003, the European Union adopted its Security Strategy: “A Secure Europe in a Better World.” The strategy outlined five key global threats confronting the

¹²⁷ Maartje Rutten, “From Nice to Laeken. European Defense: Core Documents,” vol. II, Chaillot Paper 51 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, April 2002), 112.

¹²⁸ However, an analysis of the Treaty raised criticism that it complicated even more the decision-making process within the Union. For details see Kristin Archik, The European Union’s Constitution, (Washington, D.C.: US Congress, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, 27 December, 2005), Order Code RS216118.

EU – terrorism, weapons proliferation, regional conflicts, failed states and organized crime. The security strategy also called on the EU to promote stability in the European neighborhood, which included the EU’s eastern border after enlargement. In this respect, the European Security Strategy says that “dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its (EU) borders all pose problems for Europe.”¹²⁹ The European Union’s task is to “promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union.”¹³⁰ If the EU is serious in implementing this strategy, Moldova may then hope that the Transnistrian regime will be among the first priorities on the list. “Well governed countries” obviously does not equal “authoritarian regimes.” Whether the European Union has adequate capabilities and political will to implement these policies is in question. There are at least positive signs of doing that. The proposal to develop a common strategy with the Republic of Moldova within the framework of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy is one of them. According to the provisions of this strategy, the EU will grant “special neighbor” status to Moldova after the EU’s expansion into the region (namely Romania’s acceptance into the community).

The EU is a young actor in the security building business. It is making its first steps and has not yet dispersed its resources on such a large scale as NATO has. Unlike the United States, major players within the EU have not displayed an intention to police the world.¹³¹ Instead, as a European organization, the EU seemed to dedicate much of its efforts and resources to the problems on the Old continent. Starting in Maastricht with pretty vague declarations “to elaborate and implement decisions that have defense implications,” the EU made a significant step in Amsterdam by including the so-called “Petersberg tasks” (humanitarian and rescue, peacekeeping, crisis management, peacemaking). That was an echo of a series of ethnic conflicts that broke out in the Balkans in mid-1990s. All lessons learned from these conflicts, as well as from post-

¹²⁹ The European Security Strategy, *A Secure Europe in a Better World*. (Brussels: December 8, 2003), 10. Last accessed in December 2005 at <http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/reports/78367.pdf>.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³¹ The EU mission in Congo launched in May 2005 in order “to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform” can be interpreted as an ambitious enterprise pushed forth by some European nations (mainly France that provided the bulk of forces for the operation) which had a scope to prove to the United States the ability of the EU to reach out of its area of operation. For the full content of the EU mandate in Congo see EU Council Joint Action 2005/355/CFSP of 2 May 2005. Last accessed in January 2006 at: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_112/l_11220050503en00200023.pdf ().

conflict stabilization operations, were well reflected in the EU's Constitution. The EU's Constitution added a few more tasks to the previously identified list: "joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance, conflict prevention, post-conflict stabilization."¹³²

Security of its future Eastern borders should concern the European Union more than NATO (where the United States set the tone). Arms and people, illegally smuggled from Transnistria, will flood Europe in the first instance. It is much more cost-effective to invest in localizing and neutralizing sources of such perils rather than spending overwhelming amounts of time and resources trying to fight the problem domestically. Beginning in 2007, between Moldova and Germany, for instance, there will be only one border – with Romania – instead of the three or four before the enlargement. Every national border was playing the role of a filter for illegal immigrants, drugs and arms contrabandists. Now there will be only one filter. Even equipped with the most sophisticated technologies, one border control will not do the work of three. That raises again the argument that neutralizing the source of threat, in this particular case, would be much cheaper. As for now, a whole bouquet of the so-called "soft threats" – organized crime, arms contraband, illegal immigrants – has fewer obstacles to spillover into EU space across the Moldovan-Romanian border.¹³³

On 22 February 2005, the Republic of Moldova and the European Union signed the so-called Action Plan setting out the road map for Moldova's institutions to adjust existing practices and norms to meet European standards. Implementation of the plan's provisions is supposed to bring Moldova closer to the eventual integration into European structures. With respect to the Transnistrian conflict, the EU-Moldova Action Plan includes a set of obligations assumed by the EU: "to step up its involvement in supporting OSCE and mediators in this process...continue its efforts to ensure the fulfillment by Russia of the Istanbul commitments with regard to Moldova...reinforce

¹³² So, officially the EU documented its intention in the Constitution to get more involved in post-conflict stabilization operations. Since the ratification of the Constitution has encountered quite a few difficulties and brought the EU to a crisis one can be skeptical about the practical implementation of these declarations. For the time being, the EU is partially funding the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo.

¹³³ NOSTRUM, 21.

political dialogue between the EU and Moldova on the Transnistrian conflict...significant [emphasized] further progress with the Ukraine on pending border questions along the Transnistrian border section.”¹³⁴

To conclude, things look promising in the official EU policies and statements. Adepts of liberalism theory would argue that cooperation between nations within the European Union would most likely be sustained, since relations are based not on the power structure of the international system, but on the democratic domestic orders of these states. As such, since the Republic of Moldova is moving towards democracy and a market economy, it has many chances to be integrated into the peaceful order of liberal democracies.¹³⁵ One can not deny that, culturally, Moldova is more European than Turkey, for example, another country that aspires to EU membership and which has better chances of being accepted into the European community in the near future than does Moldova. The question arises as to whether the EU has really become a viable alliance. A look inside the European Union portrays the community from a bit different prospective; the next section addresses the other side.

B. WHAT REALLY HAPPENS WITHIN THE EU?

In the meantime, member-states of the European Union are still struggling over developing a common European identity. Egotism persisting in many European nations seriously affects the progress of the negotiations process. Since the European Union is still undergoing the process of consolidation, even today the CFSP does not speak clearly with one “European voice.” In this direction, the European Union succeeded far less than in promoting a single market and introducing a single currency. New provisions included in the EU Constitution that were supposed to fix the problem – such as new president and foreign minister positions – will not be in force until the Constitution is ratified by all twenty five members.

¹³⁴ From the EU-Moldova Action Plan, p.2.2. Last accessed in February 2006 on the European Union official web site at http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/Proposed_Action_Plan_EU-Moldova.pdf.

¹³⁵ Risse-Kappen, 8.

With respect to the aspiring to EU membership nations, the process of developing a comprehensive integration strategy is even slower. It has sounded more like a mixture of different views and policies of West Europeans towards Newly Independent States (NIS) that emerged in Eastern Europe. Throughout the 1990s, the European Union was more concerned with its internal problems, namely internal reforms and preparations for the upcoming enlargement. In the meantime, a series of inter-ethnic clashes broke out in the Balkans, drawing the attention and, eventually, the resources (diplomatic, political, financial, etc.) of the European community. All these problems have shifted the focus of the European Union away from South-Eastern Europe, including the Republic of Moldova. These are just a few factors that could explain why the EU's policies towards the Republic of Moldova did not progress much beyond the declarations.

Nationalism is still felt quite strongly in Europe. As Hagen Schulze put it, "there can be no doubt that the poison of mass nationalism, to which Europe almost succumbed once before, has lost none of its virulence."¹³⁶ Susan Strange has argued in this context that, "Europeans are more serious in the attention they pay to historical evidence and more sensitive to the possibilities of divergent interpretations of 'facts'."¹³⁷ Whatever role memories have played, fact remains that with the rejection by French and Dutch voters of the Union's Constitution in separate referenda in May and June 2005, respectively, the EU has come to a serious internal crisis. At the time of this writing, only twelve out of twenty five EU members have ratified the Constitution.

Moldova had to learn the complex interplay of national and common interests, and often conflictual relations between national and EU authorities. In such a situation it appears to be more efficient to lobby the issue of European integration on a bilateral basis rather than trying to push them through official Brussels. It can be argued, though, that it is normal that, at the country level, Europeans are concerned with their internal problems more and place them higher than the Union's problems. Disparity in income and economic opportunities between different member-states within the EU has quite often led to a stalemate in negotiations. As such, all these internal quarrels have had an impact

¹³⁶ Schulze, 321.

¹³⁷ Susan Strange, "Cave! Hic Dragones: A Critique Of Regime Analysis," in International Regimes, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983), 339.

on the EU's activities on an international scale. The entry of ten new member countries in May 2004, whose citizens' incomes were well below the EU average, has widened these gaps even more.

National interests of member states inevitably influence the formulation of the EU's policies. Moldova has discovered that, along with other former Soviet republics, the European Union is a quite complicated bureaucratic partner. Different policy areas have different decision-making procedures. Issues on economics, trade and social policies, for example, are currently decided by a complicated system of majority voting (Qualified Majority Voting – QMV¹³⁸) while decisions relating to foreign, security and defense issues still require consensus. Critics have long charged that the EU's decision-making processes “are too slow and cumbersome, and that the EU's institutions are overly complex, lack transparency, and are unintelligible to the average European citizen.”¹³⁹ And besides, how many of those “average European citizens” will agree (and will have the ability and enough intelligence) to study a 240-page Constitution drafted within the EU structures. In this context, further enlargement of the Union will only make the decision-making process more complicated.

Officially, the EU dignitaries say that any country that meets the so-called Copenhagen criteria¹⁴⁰ is eligible to become a full EU member. In reality, however,

¹³⁸ For the first time the EU Constitution gave a clear definition of the *qualified majority*: 55% of the members of the Council, comprising at least 15 of them and representing Member States comprising at least 65% of the population of the Union.¹³⁸ The clause with the “percentage of population” points out to the advantageous position of bigger nations over the smaller ones. Thus, theoretically there is a possibility for such nations like France and Germany, given their size, to block an unfavorable decision strongly supported by a group of small nations like Netherlands, Luxembourg and Malta.

¹³⁹ Archik, 2.

¹⁴⁰ In June 1993 in Copenhagen the EU member-states' heads of government agreed upon a certain criteria (the so-called Copenhagen criteria) for those nations who might want to join the Union: existence of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy; rule of law, respect for and protection of human rights and minorities; existence of a functioning market economy; capacity to cope with market forces and competitive pressures within the Union; ability to take on the obligations of membership, including economic and monetary union.

unlimited EU enlargement is not unanimously welcomed.¹⁴¹ And here, perhaps, something else is at play, something more than mere indexes of the Copenhagen criteria. Whereas it can be anticipated that any nation aspiring to EU membership can mobilize its internal resources and “pass the Copenhagen criteria test,” the EU is concerned with “political, economic and societal culture”¹⁴² that new members will bring to the community. These cultures are believed to be deeply affected by communist ideology and would only damage the existing EU institutions.

The European Defense and Security Policy (EDSP), as a component part of CFSP, is also still underdeveloped, which was confirmed by the negative reaction of the EU member-states toward Javier Solana’s Report¹⁴³ regarding the more active involvement of the EU in the settlement of the “frozen conflicts” in the post-Soviet countries. In the early 1990s, the European Union tried unsuccessfully to broker a political solution to the crisis in Yugoslavia. After the genocide in Bosnian Srebrenica in 1995, the EU seems to have come to understand that besides diplomatic means it must develop a robust mechanism of military intervention, i.e., “diplomacy must be coordinated among the main European partners and be based on a credible ability to use force.”¹⁴⁴

The coherence of the European response to other security threats, such as terrorism, deserves a harsh criticism as well. Neither the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in the USA, nor the Madrid explosions in 2003, have incited an adequate concern among Europeans. Only since the London bombings on 7 July 2005 have the Europeans started taking some measures towards improving security of the population. However,

¹⁴¹ EU Commission President Romano Prodi has stated in his speech at Sixth ECSA-World Conference in Brussels, 5-6 December 2002 that “the integration of Balkans will complete the unification of the continent.” The speech was given on the occasion of the Conference with title “A Wider Europe – A Proximity Policy as key to stability: Peace, Security And Stability International Dialogue and the Role of the EU.” The full text of the speech can be accessed at: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/02/619&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (last accessed in February 2006).

¹⁴² Anatol Lieven and Dmitri Trenin, Ambivalent Neighbors: The EU, NATO and the Price of Membership (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 6.

¹⁴³ From the speech by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on “The European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: The Shape of Future Cooperation” (Vienna, 25 September 2002).

¹⁴⁴ Jean-Yves Haine, ESDP: an overview (European Union: Institute for Security Studies), 2.

neither has the London tragedy made Europeans more united under the security banner. Moreover, France declared after the bombings in London that it deemed necessary to reinstate border control for people traveling from other Schengen states. In a situation where the EU is dealing astonishingly slowly with more imminent threats, one might have a feeling that it would take forever to draw the West's attention to and involvement in the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova.

C. REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA ON THE EU AGENDA: WILL OFFICIAL DECLARATIONS BE EVER CONVERTED TO REAL DEEDS?

Although the Republic of Moldova has never declared its intention to adhere to NATO due to its neutrality status, it has expressed its will to join the European Union. The European Union has attracted former communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe with more advanced and stable political and economic systems. Some nations expressed their desire to join the European community sooner than others. Although all these countries had lived for several decades under a similar political system – communism – its collapse produced different social and political contexts.¹⁴⁵ Some societies have managed to break, definitely and irreversibly, with the past; some are still suffering from nostalgia for the “good old days.” Indeed, Moldova marked itself by its inconsistency in developing a comprehensive policy for external cooperation.

For Moldova, being accepted into the European Union is not just a matter of being officially recognized as a European country. It is also a desire to align itself with the advanced Western civilization, which resides on higher values and superior norms. However, it should be mentioned here that these aspirations have been formulated, more or less clearly, only in the last few years. It is doubtful that Moldovan society manages to follow such quick and drastic shifts in foreign policy from a strong pro-Russian orientation in 2001, to an equally strong pro-European orientation in 2003. Moldovans remain, for the time being, the only people in the world that brought communists to

¹⁴⁵ The former Yugoslav republics, for example, owe to Marshall Tito for a differentiated approach displayed in many Western democracies towards their internal problems. Back in 1970s Tito, for the good of his country, dared to go in open confrontation with Moscow and pursue in the meantime more liberal relations with the West.

power through free and fair elections. With such a reputation, the pro-European aspirations of Moldova would most likely be questioned by many in the West.

On 28 November 1994, the Republic of Moldova and the European Union signed the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (in force since July 1998 for an initial period of ten years), which aimed at replacing old arrangements of cooperation with the Soviet Union. In terms of practical implementation the country's leadership didn't progress much beyond the provisions and opportunities offered by this agreement.¹⁴⁶ It is also true that Moldova's joining the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) contributed to the EU's modest and careful involvement in the country's democratization process. This kind of behavior on the international scene reflected the calculations of Moldova's domestic interest groups and the business elite, which maintained strong ties with Russian counterparts. Inconsistency in formulating the nation's goals and priorities in foreign affairs have generated a negative response, even in the hearts and minds of those willing to help Moldova. Therefore, it should not have been surprising that the EU's technical assistance to Moldova (through TACIS program and other projects) was indirectly proportional to its cooperation with CIS countries. And besides, from an economic rehabilitation point of view, the Commonwealth of Independent States could not be a suitable format for Moldova since CIS countries were imposing tariffs on each other's goods in contravention to world practices of economic integration treaties.

It was not until 2003 that the country's leadership officially applied for EU membership and undertook some important measures in this direction. In respect to Transnistria, the issue had been addressed on every occasion in the meetings with EU officials, at different levels, well before Moldova has firmly settled on the European vector. After all these meetings and visits, both in Chisinau and Brussels, Moldovans had reason over the last decade to expect more critical voices from the EU regarding the human rights violations, armaments smuggling and human trafficking that were taking place in Transnistria. In this regard, the European Union proved to have limited capabilities and political will. The EU is mostly an economic entity that has not been able, so far, to convert its wealth into a strong political leverage. It could establish

¹⁴⁶ Vahl, 174.

regulations for the markets' operation, develop and impose a monetary policy, and impose tariffs. But, it has not been able to provide security on its own. Investments do not flow into unsafe and unstable areas, and trade obviously follows the investment flow.

With what eyes is the EU looking to further expansion to the East? Those who promote the idea of limiting the EU's expansion eastwards rely on the *regime theory* provisions, which stipulate that if the "N"-number of states participating in a regime is lower – cooperation is easier. In this respect, given the strength of nationalists' feelings in Europe, it could be expected that Moldova would be sacrificed as a candidate in favor of the national interests of some West European states.

The next obstacle on the path to European integration derives from the preference of older democracies to see, amongst their colleagues, only strong governments that are capable of collecting revenues from their constituencies and contributing to the community budget. That issue has become extremely sensitive and important for Europeans, especially in a situation when the EU wants to prove (mainly to the United States) its ability to recruit, and maintain a strong and modern military force. In this context, the principle of conditionality used by the EU towards countries aspiring to EU membership can work against Moldova. In brief, this principle gives EU authorities quite a strong leverage over the countries that have lined up to join the community in the nearest future.

Furthermore, there is a concern within original fifteen EU member-states that newcomers would lower the overall living standards in the EU. Concerns are raised in regard to an increasing number of immigrants (legal and illegal ones), which basically means an influx of cheap labor into EU member-states. Moreover, the cultural gradient might disappear in the near future with the increasing heterogeneity of Europe's population. The burst of revolts within Muslim communities in 2005 in Western Europe (France, Germany and the Netherlands) has also strengthened the anti-EU-expansion feelings among Europeans.

That explains the fierceness with which the EU is forcing aspiring nations to improve their economies and raise the living standards for their populaces. It is worth mentioning here that West Europeans did not propose to their eastern neighbors anything

like Marshall Plan – a U.S.-sponsored initiative that helped them, West Europeans, rebuild their economies after WW II. One can not deny that it was thanks to substantial financial assistance that today's EU members have reached the high standards in their economies and living conditions for their populations. Eastern European nations were struggling to overcome the legacies of authoritarianism without (or with very limited) external support.

Moreover, the EU can, at any time, modify all standards and requirements in respect to an individual country and, conversely, increase them in regard to others. Add to that, the fact that interpretation of achievements can differ from one standard to another. For example, Moldova, as all other candidate countries, would be accepted into the EU only after having solved its internal problems. The Transnistrian dispute is the main one. But, in order to find a political solution for the Transnistrian problem, Moldova needs the EU's direct and active involvement in the negotiation process with Russia. That is a vicious cycle. That said, Moldova has equal chances of getting, instead of membership, the "special status" of the Union's New Neighbor after Romania joins the EU in 2007. Hopefully, the EU will pay closer attention now to how its "new neighbor" is doing. Perhaps, the EU will also watch closely what is going on along Moldova's border with another "new neighbor," the Ukraine. Illicit trade across this border has sustained the Transnistrian regime all these years.

Moldovan politicians should be prepared to be disappointed if the EU fails to live up to Moldova's expectations. The intensity of the EU's involvement depends on the stakes involved. For Moldova, the stake is clear – EU membership. For the EU, in turn, Moldova is not an attractive member. In a situation when the interests of one side in a dialogue is lacking, it appears difficult to formulate any "common strategies," "mutual interests," "common spaces, areas, or spheres of cooperation." All these definitions entail the equal participation of two parties.

The EU did not have, throughout the 1990s, a clear strategy¹⁴⁷ as to how to build its relations with former Soviet republics. This was mainly because, in most West

¹⁴⁷ One idea extensively expressed in most West European countries in early 1990s was that former Soviet states should stay together and form up another cohesive community that was to replace Soviet Union. The emergence of the Commonwealth of Independent States has been seen as prove to this assessment.

European states, such a strategy was absent. There must be an explanation to that phenomenon. Some sources suggest¹⁴⁸ that Western Europe took a cautious position vis-à-vis the East and, to some extent, believed in the recidivism of Soviet Union-like alliances in the East. The next section discusses the visions of Eastern Europe held by the key players of the European Union (namely Germany and France) that could explain, to some extent, the ambiguous EU policy towards the Republic of Moldova for the past decade.

A sign of the EU's more active engagement in Transnistria is the decision of the European Council on 16 March 2005, to assign Mr. Adrian Jacobovits as the European Union Special Representative for Moldova. Thus, Moldova became the second country, after Macedonia, in which a EU special envoy has been assigned only for a single country, not for a whole region.¹⁴⁹ It should be mentioned here that the EU assigns a Special Representative whenever it wants to give a particular case a diplomatic strike and visibility on the international scene. Two out of four main tasks stipulated in the mandate are directed to the "conflict settlement" and "preparations for EU participation in implementation of the conflict settlement."¹⁵⁰ In addition, at the end of 2005, the EU launched a Border Assistance Mission with a two-year mandate, which is empowered by the EU to monitor the Transnistrian segment of the border with the Ukraine. The Mission intends to identify a solution to the frozen Transnistrian conflict as part of the European Neighborhood Policy.

Whether all these steps are "window-dressing" moves on behalf of the European Union, or the beginning of a long-term engagement, remains to be seen. So far, the EU has proceeded carefully (perhaps too carefully) in respect to the Transnistrian dispute.

¹⁴⁸ See Lieven and Trenin, *Ambivalent Neighbors*, 7-8

¹⁴⁹ EU Special Representative for Bosnia, Lord Ashdown is also the UN High Representative, and he exercises most of his extensive prerogatives by virtue of his UN mandate. Ambassador Heikki Talvitie is assigned as EUSR for the whole region of South Caucasus.

¹⁵⁰ A full description of the EUSR's mandate for Moldova can be viewed at: http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/84175.pdf (last accessed in January 2006).

D. VISIONS OF MAJOR PLAYERS WITHIN THE EU VIS-À-VIS EASTERN EUROPE

"Your map of Africa is really quite nice. But my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here is Russia, and here... is France, and we're in the middle – that's my map of Africa."¹⁵¹ (*Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismark*)

The citation reflects the debate that was alive in *Germany* before World War I when major European powers were competing with each other for new territories and more wealth. The main subject was where “the backyard” of Germany should be: in Africa, Asia or in Eastern Europe. The majority of Germans leaned towards Eastern Europe.

That vision, of Germans towards South-Eastern Europe, was still valid almost a century later. In 1999, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer was quoted as saying that “obviously south-east Europe is part of Europe and it is our responsibility. This is true.”¹⁵² Although that phrase was said in the context of the burden sharing between allies (mostly between Europeans and the United States) during the NATO campaign in the former Yugoslavia, it indicates to some extent the importance Germany attributes to South-Eastern Europe in its foreign policy.

So, where are Germany’s stakes in the East? Russia can certainly be named as Germany’s major partner in the East. One of the most recent pieces of evidence that unequivocally points to the existence and rise of mutual German-Russian interests was a new strategic joined project, launched by both nations in December 2005. The project aims at building the North European Gas Pipeline (NEGP) that is to carry Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bypassing the Ukraine and Poland. Such a move from both states can be interpreted in many ways. However, it certainly indicates the big interests that both nations have at stake in their relations. An interesting detail of this story is that former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has been appointed as head of the NEGP shareholders oversight committee. From a historical standpoint, that is not an unusual thing. Although two world wars in the 20th century have cooled down

¹⁵¹ Quoted from a conversation of Bismarck with a colonial enthusiast 1888. Last accessed in February 2006 at: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Otto_von_Bismarck

¹⁵² Thomas Lippman, *Yugoslavs Begin Kosovo Retreat* (Washington Post, June 11, 1999), p.A22; quoted in Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 164.

relations between these two nations, there was a common practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that German bureaucrats and military officers used to be invited to the Russian court¹⁵³ and offered high level postures by the Russian czar. Unusual is the fact that this old practice has been re-animated in the 21st century. Is it a case of history repeating itself? Again, talking about the role of individuals in international relations, amicable relations of Russian President Vladimir Putin with German Chancellor Gerhardt Schroeder could be another good example. Because of Schroeder, Germany was (during his entire term in office, until the 2005 elections at least) one of Russia's strongest supporters in Europe. A significant moment in the relations of both nations was the participation of Chancellor Schroeder in the 60th anniversary celebrations of the end of World War II in Moscow – a historical event that marked the reconciliation of a re-united Germany and Russia.

Germany is by far Russia's biggest trading partner in Europe. In 2004 Germany accounted for 14% of Russia's exports comparing with other European states. About the same figure reflects Russia's imports of goods from Europe as a whole.¹⁵⁴ Amazingly, the NEGP was initially negotiated as a joint EU-Russia project.¹⁵⁵ Whether it was a deliberate choice of the Russian political elite or not, the fact is that Russia has cut a deal with Germany only on a bilateral basis instead of with the EU as a partner. It could be supposed that making a strong ally within the European community was more important for Russia. *Divide et impera* remains a valid and quite powerful strategy.

As early as in 1975, *British* politicians proposed in the so-called "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine" a new plan for a division of Europe (Christianized soon after as "Yalta II") which aimed at accommodating Russia's interests in Eastern Europe. At that point in time, British leaders declared that the "Finlandization"¹⁵⁶ of Soviet republics would be an acceptable solution for them. Interestingly enough, the idea was not supported by Britain's closest ally – the United States. The U.S. State Department objected to the plan, worrying about the "complicity of the United States in consigning East European states to

¹⁵³ Since Russians retain 51% of project' shares it could be said that German Chancellor has been offered a job by Russians.

¹⁵⁴ Pekka, 12.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵⁶ Harper, 335.

the Soviet sphere of influence.”¹⁵⁷ In fact, perceptions in the West differed and changed over time as to where Europe started and where it ended. At some point in history, even Czechoslovakia was, for highly-placed politicians like former British Prime-Minister Neville Chamberlain, a “far away country.” Times have changed and people’s perceptions of the world have changed as well. However, visions of a nation’s first people inevitably have an impact on the next generation and the vision of the society as a whole.

Britain, another major European Union member-state, does not fear less the rehabilitation of Russia as a key player on the European stage. Russia herself has recognized that Russophobic feelings persisted in most East European countries.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps on these grounds, the United Kingdom has extended its cooperation with Moldova in the last years.¹⁵⁹ Or it is just a part of “classic British policy of a balance of power in Europe in which, through a system of pacts, it would pacify an unruly continent on England’s threshold.”¹⁶⁰

France’s relations with NATO, its influence within the European Union and attitudes towards Eastern Europe are shaped to a large extent by the belief among the French political class in France’s “unique international role and aspirations to world power status.”¹⁶¹ With this in mind, with respect to the enlargements of NATO¹⁶² and the EU to Eastern Europe, France remains the most vocal opponent in both cases. One should not forget that unification of Germany in 1989 was received with reluctance by the French political establishment and perceived as a threat to its relative power in European politics.

¹⁵⁷ Harper, 335.

¹⁵⁸ Pekka, 30.

¹⁵⁹ In 2005 UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs assigned its permanent representative in Moldova for a three-year term that is going to provide expertise on EU-Moldova Action Plan implementation.

¹⁶⁰ Schulze, 314.

¹⁶¹ Anand Menon, France, NATO And The Limits of Independence: 1981-1997. The Politics of Ambivalence (Chippenham, Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd., 2000), 69.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 45.

Among France's arguments against NATO expansion, fear to "provoke a negative reaction in Moscow"¹⁶³ lists as one of the main reasons, along with concerns about increasing American influence within the alliance. It can be argued, though, that these two arguments have equal weight for French politicians. The French equally want to maintain good relations with Russia and to decrease U.S. influence within the North-Atlantic Alliance – and in Europe as a whole. Every new NATO member is perceived in Paris as an additional ally of the U.S. in Europe. Therefore, potential NATO candidate countries would not enjoy much support from France in the adherence process.

With the enlargement of the European Union, French opposition is even stronger. France traditionally played a key role within European affairs. A further enlargement of the Union is believed to "erode French influence in the EU." That fear was at the core of France's rejection of the EU Constitution in May 2005.¹⁶⁴

When it comes to relations with Russia, France, just like Germany, has developed separate cooperation initiatives, which were supposed to fall along the lines of common EU policies towards Russia. France follows Germany in the list of European countries most dependent on Russian oil (24% of its internal consumption). Some French oil companies have a share in the Russian oil industry.¹⁶⁵

In sum, the lack of cohesiveness amongst West European countries in their strategy towards South-Eastern Europe can be explained by the lack of a real interest. The West understandably fears that, by accepting traditionally poor countries (like Moldova, which has been labeled as the poorest country in Europe ever since independence) in the Union, they would have to carry much of the burden. The idea is deeply seeded in the minds of West Europeans that the anthropology of East Europeans is not predisposed to a Western civilization, democracy and everything that comes along with it.

On a general scale, it appears that some West European nations (France, Germany) have gladly handed over their anti-Russian mood to their new colleagues from

¹⁶³ From the speech of the Delegate for European Affairs, Alain Lamassoure on "L'Heure du vérité"; quoted in Menon, 45.

¹⁶⁴ Archik, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Pekka, 18.

Central and Eastern Europe. Perhaps somebody must play this role and keep Russia under tension. In the meantime West Europeans can repair their bilateral relations with Russia and extend their contacts in the business area.¹⁶⁶ The question that emerges here is: to what extent can the former Soviet republics and East European countries develop their policies based on this kind of phobia? Can they indefinitely rely on NATO/EU support in solving disputes with Russia? Can Moldova afford to pursue the same approach? It remains clear, however, that bitter historical experience will inevitably dominate the Moldovans' attitude towards Russia. But, on the other hand, it is very unlikely that any of the major powers would enter into open confrontation with Russia over Moldova.

E. CONCLUSION

If the Republic of Moldova decides to continue in an equal manner its cooperation with both NATO and the EU, it might get frustrated at some point by the duplication of efforts and commitments it has to make. The same institutions (MOD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.) will have to deal with two slightly different approaches to defense and security issues and two separate commitments with forces and resources. Of course imitation is much easier than invention. Moldova can follow the tendency spreading amongst other European countries – trying to put two different hats (NATO's and EU's) on the same soldier. That could be what Wallace J. Thies called a “two-for-one-deal.”¹⁶⁷ However, given recent developments within the EU, Moldova is not going to have to face the problem of duplication of efforts in the near future. So far, NATO is still up and running. Its capabilities remain “superior to those of the Europeans alone, and will remain so even if and when the Europeans develop their own capabilities.”¹⁶⁸ By stating that, James Sperling and Emil Kirchner relied on their empirical data, which pointed to

¹⁶⁶ Several Western oil production companies have invested so far in the Russian oil industry. Besides Germany, French Total company holds 25% of Russian Novatek gas company; British Petroleum has united part of its capital with Tyumeni Petrol Company TNK; Shell has acquired 55% of another Russian company on the Sakhalin peninsula. See for more Pekka, EU, Russia, and Common Economic Space.

¹⁶⁷ Thies, 191.

¹⁶⁸ Bauwens *et al.*, The CSCE and the changing Role of NATO and the European Union, 21; quoted in Sperling and Kirchner, Recasting The European Order, 77.

the lack of indication that “European countries are prepared to spend the extra 2-3 percent of GDP annually needed to achieve a minimum level of autonomy from NATO and the United States.”¹⁶⁹

Moldova has committed itself to the “Partnership for Peace” program. Unfortunately, “commitment” was understood differently by some politicians in Moldova. Commitment means implementation of the assumed obligations. Waving implementation of “PfP” objectives from one year to the next did not earn Moldova a good reputation.

It is true that there is much room for improvements even within the limits of existing partnership programs and agreements with both NATO and the EU (“Partnership for Peace” program with NATO and Action Plan with EU). Every program, initiative is virtually an additional “pipeline,” channel of cooperation through which Moldova can get assistance in the period of transition to democracy and consolidation. From its side, Moldova must ensure that the “taps” from these “pipelines” are kept permanently open. That is to say, it should make sure that there are workable mechanisms put in place that will contribute to the wise management of allocated resources.

Although Moldova should not slow down its efforts in negotiations with Transnistrian leadership, it should try not to overstress the severity of the problem. Instead, it should increase its efforts in other areas of state-building as well. It must focus on improving living standards, creating a more attractive (for people living in Transnistrian region) investment climate. The Moldovan legislators have come up with initiatives of a kind (such as a preferential fiscal policy for Transnistria-based businesspeople). Unfortunately, these positive moves have been hampered by the clumsy bureaucracy.

The last actor, whose role in the fate of Moldova remains quite important, is Russia. All arguments – pro-intervention and against – discussed in this chapter will lack objectivity and viability if not considered through the prism of NATO-Russia and EU-Russia relations. Some experts in the West believe that major EU members’ (Germany and France) heavy reliance on Russian oil is one of the main reasons these nations tend to

¹⁶⁹ Sperling and Kirchner, 77.

avoid public criticism of “Russia’s domestic and foreign behavior.”¹⁷⁰ The U.S. would also like to have Russia as a partner on more important issues. The next chapter presents a short survey of interests involved in relations of the three major actors in contemporary world politics.

¹⁷⁰ Pekka, 15.

V. NATO/EU – RUSSIA BARGAIN OVER MOLDOVA

A. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 2004, an International Crisis Group (ICG) report on Transnistria contended that, despite Russia’s comforting rhetoric regarding cooperation with the EU and the United States in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, “old habits appear to die hard. Russia remains reluctant to see the EU, U.S. or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe playing an active role in resolving the Transnistrian conflict because Moldova is still viewed by many in Moscow as a sphere of exclusively Russian geopolitical interest.”¹⁷¹

Can Russia be forced to abandon its imperialistic ambitions? For Moldova, there is no other choice than to rely on liberal institutionalism theory of international relations. Whereas realism is a theory about Great Powers, small nations can survive only by integrating in international organizations and alliances. Large international organizations, of which Russia may or may not be a member, can constrain its aggressive behavior towards smaller and weaker members. Yet, even liberal institutionalism provides some niches for big nations. Supporters of the “rationalist” school of liberal institutionalism argue that “international institutions and norms are expected to merely influence the cost-benefit calculations of actors in international relations and constrain their behavior” and not to make states abandon their interests at all.¹⁷² These concepts apply to organizations like the United Nations and OSCE and, to some extent, to the EU as well.

At the outset of the twentieth century, U.S. policy-makers came up with their solution on how to deal with Russia. Debates within the American political elite have generated a new policy in the area of power politics – the policy of *protocontainment*. In brief, the essence of the policy was not to engage openly a given country (in this case Russia) but rather to keep its power within limits so that it did not become too powerful and, respectively, influential in world politics. The policy could be implemented by threatening Russia’s interests simultaneously in different parts of the world and, by doing

¹⁷¹ International Crisis Group, Europe Report No 157, Moldova: Regional Tensions Over Transdnistria (Chisinau/Brussels, 2004).

¹⁷² Risse-Kappen, 6.

that, forcing Russia to disperse her resources on a large front. Who is able and willing to use this tactic against Russia today? Theoretically, the United States can use the North-Atlantic Alliance as a tool to pursue such a policy. In reality, the interests of the American political elite may not support this course of actions.

Realists would say that in a triangle made of NATO, EU and Russia – any two players, theoretically – would most likely seek to make an alliance in order to weaken the position of the third party.¹⁷³ Every party would be concerned about its relative power in respect to others. In this context, NATO and the EU enlargement could increase the asymmetry in negotiations with Russia over its former and current zones of influence, in case the two alliances agree to combine their efforts. That possibility was successfully tested during the 2004 presidential elections in the Ukraine, when NATO and the EU launched in unison a harsh criticism towards Russia for its brutal interference in the electoral campaign of an independent state.¹⁷⁴

With respect to the cooperation between NATO and the EU on the Transnistrian issue versus Russia, the realist theory of international relations, again, would say that there must be a clear pay off – a visible benefit – for a country or alliance to make a coalition with another state (or in this particular case, an alliance) against the third player (Russia). This is not just for the sake of principle. In reality, there is little at stake for either NATO or the EU in Moldova (let alone the Transnistrian conflict) that could outbalance the interests both alliances have at stake in their relations with Russia. To paraphrase this argument from a neo-realist theory prospective, a state (or a political actor) will “attempt to change the international system if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ An anti-American German-Franco-Russian alliance has already emerged over the war in Iraq. Although spirits over the Iraqi occupation have cooled down the idea of Russia-EU alliance against USA has not. For both, EU and Russia, such an alliance can in a due time change the balance of economic power on the continent and alienate United States from European affairs. In order to prevent the consolidation of such coalitions White House Administration would most likely pursue a differentiated policy towards different EU member-states by pressing on sensitive points in bilateral relations with every nation. Basically it is the famous *divide et impera* policy.

¹⁷⁴ However, debates over the war in Iraq, when Russia has aligned with Germany and France in opposition to U.S. unilateralism, have proven the viability of opposite combinations as well.

¹⁷⁵ Gilpin, 10.

So far, NATO and the EU seem to have accepted the existing state of affairs around the Transnistrian dispute. Russia has provided a set of arrangements – territorial, political and economic – that satisfied all parties. However, since every system in international relations is subject to adjustments due to constant political, economic and technological developments, the balance of power in Russia’s arrangements vis-à-vis Transnistria might change as well. Thus, this chapter discusses the rationale of NATO making a coalition with the EU against Russia in negotiations over the Transnistrian conflict.

The intra-alliance developments (within NATO and the EU), as well as the policies of major powers towards Moldova, were discussed in previous chapters. Now, this chapter discusses the political and economic interests existing in relations of both alliances (NATO and the EU) with Russia, and what could be the incentives to use potential asymmetries in negotiations over the Transnistrian region.

B. NATO – RUSSIA RELATIONS

1. NATO Policy Towards Russia

Russia is not as central to NATO’s interests as was the U.S.S.R. The importance of the Soviet Union was due to the menace it projected towards the West during the Cold War. Differences in political systems rendered impossible any tentative cooperation between the two superpowers. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, much of the former Soviet threat has disappeared. The old ideology is gone. Russia, however, having inherited the Soviet nuclear assets, remains a nuclear superpower. Therefore, it will continue to play a major role in determining the security environment on the Old continent and beyond. With this in mind, NATO was seeking in the post-Cold War setting to provide Russia a “respected place in a European security arrangement.”¹⁷⁶ That was definitely not an easy task. Russia’s economic and military powers have significantly decreased, but ambitions have remained the same. Whatever “arrangements” NATO was going to propose, Russia would have never accepted a secondary positions in any deal.

¹⁷⁶ Sperling and Kirchner, 75.

On the other hand, the future NATO policy towards Russia pretty much depends on internal developments in this country. In a situation when a reverse to authoritarianism in Russia was not excluded, it made sense for NATO to extend its security guarantees to Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁷⁷ In the late 1990s, President Clinton's administration managed to overcome Russia's resistance to extend NATO into Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Ronald Asmus believes that President Clinton's merit was to get through the decision for alliance expansion by avoiding, in the meantime, a crisis in relations with Russia. Indeed, it was a masterful use of Russia's weakness at that time. Yeltsin's administration would be accused later on for this weakness and concessions made to the West that would cost Russia a tremendous amount of effort to recover.

In relations with NATO as an alliance, Russia could not apply the famous "divide and conquer" approach to influence certain decisions as it was successfully doing with the EU member-states. This was true because the ultimate say on important decisions within the North-Atlantic Alliance rests with the United States.

2. Russia's Vision of NATO

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, different factors and developments in the Euro-Atlantic space shaped Russia's attitude towards NATO. Memories of the past were influencing the formulation of Russian foreign policy in the early 1990s by inertia. Russia has certainly inherited the Soviet Union's ambitions to rule the entire European continent. Soviet propaganda has deeply embedded in people's minds the belief that the Soviet Union alone won World War II, saved Europe and the world from an evil like fascism and had, therefore, exclusive rights to liberated territories. Although the Soviet Union (and later Russia in the early 1990s) had to give up to the West more than it seemed possible at that time, namely to pull its troops out from Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s–early 1990s, a bitter sentiment of retreat has remained in Russian people's hearts. That is why President Yeltsin's accommodating policy towards the West, which weakened Russia's position as the world superpower, was harshly criticized by Russian pro-nationalist forces after his retirement. In the late 1990s, the idea of restoring Russian dominance over the former Soviet territories still had strong support within the Russian political establishment. Indeed the idea is still alive. However, during

¹⁷⁷ Risse-Kappen, 224.

Yeltsin's last years in office, Russia's assertion on the international scene was pretty much done through open confrontation with the West. Times have changed and visions towards the Euro-Atlantic Alliance as well; however, the negative connotation has not vanished completely. That is to say, negativism towards the former rivaling military alliance was still at the core of Moscow's policymaking.

Throughout the 1990s, Russia's position on the issue of NATO expansion can be best explained by applying the level-of-analysis framework at the level of individual leaders and politicians.¹⁷⁸ The other two levels (national level – Russian government; international system level – military and economic alliances of which Russia was a member) were very weak to influence the course of events. Indeed, political life in Russia in the 1990s was influenced from the bottom up, i.e., individual leaders and members of political elite were determining the government strategies at different points in time and were formulating foreign policy goals. Leaders' personal perceptions can have a significant impact on a nation's behavior on the international scene and should not be underestimated. History has witnessed many cases when politicians' perceptions and visions ended up in real deeds. Personal beliefs – acquired through education, culture and psychological processes experienced in the past – can explain the predisposition of leaders towards certain decisions. Thus, unpredictable behavior (on many occasions for Russians themselves) of President Yeltsin was reflected in inconsistency, which characterized his administration's actions in domestic and foreign affairs. The inconsistency of Russian diplomacy affected the negotiations process over Transnistria.

Similarly, Russia-NATO relations were affected by the impulsiveness of Yeltsin's administration. Evolution of these relations went from “understanding” of Poland's aspirations for NATO's membership, to a strong opposition of the Alliance's expansion and “freezing” the relations.¹⁷⁹ However, it would not be fair to evaluate the Kremlin's actions separately from geo-political context and developments in the mid-1990s in Europe. NATO can be held guilty to some extent for providing Russian anti-NATO

¹⁷⁸ Jack S. Levy, “Theories of Interstate and Intrastate War: A Level-of-Analysis Approach,” in Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict, ed. C.A. Crooker, F.O. Hampson, and P. Aall (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 3-20.

¹⁷⁹ Vladimir Baranovsky, “Russian Views on NATO and the EU,” in Ambivalent Neighbors: The EU, NATO and the Price of Membership, ed. Anatol Lieven and Dmitri Trenin (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 280.

domestic groups with sources of inspiration. By bombing Yugoslavia in 1999 during the Kosovo crisis, NATO confirmed its “aggressive nature” as a military alliance. So, NATO had to make some concessions in turn and soften Russia’s opposition.

By signing the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997, Russia has established permanent diplomatic and military contacts with its former rival. Relations with NATO were maintained through the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. The forum operated on the “19+1” principle (all NATO members before the first wave of enlargement plus Russia). In May 2002, this format was replaced by a new arrangement: “NATO at 20.” The new agreement allowed Russia to participate as equal members on certain issues.

With all these diplomatic tricks aimed at calming down the spirits within domestic political groups, Russia still remained unhappy about NATO’s enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe. But whether Russia has reconciled with the fact of the Baltic republics joining the alliance, it turned out to be more decisive to oppose any expansion of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance to the South-Eastern part of the former Soviet Union (Moldova and the Ukraine). After concessions made in Central Europe, Russia decided to secure, with all available means, its positions in Transnistria as the last bastion before the Balkans. Moreover, Romania’s aspirations to join the North-Atlantic Alliance have contributed to Russia’s determination to not withdraw from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.

Going back to the individual level-of-analysis theory – if one believes in validity of this theory – biographies of current Russian political elite (namely President Putin and his close associates, mostly former intelligence officers labeled by Russian people as “siloviki”) can hint at Russia’s foreign policy vector for the next decade or so.¹⁸⁰ Developments of the Cold War have converged in Putin’s biography as well. These people (former KGB operators) witnessed, from the front-line, the confrontations between the two super-powers during the Cold War. They had a chance to get close enough to the North-Atlantic Alliance’s assets and see NATO might. On the other hand, as front-line warriors, these former Soviet intelligence officers have inherited the spirit of

¹⁸⁰ Nickname for people working in defense and security structures (army, police, foreign intelligence) coming from Russian word “*syla*” (force).

pride and prestige that their country used to inspire in them. Although the end of the Cold War had retired most of these people, it can be presupposed that the idea of revenge has always had a place in their minds.

With all this having been said, people brought to power by President Putin were aware of the outcomes of the “exhausting confrontation” with NATO.¹⁸¹ President Putin’s team has chosen a different approach to Russia’s re-vitalization as a major actor in world politics – through constructive cooperation with the West and the United States. The devastated Russian economy could be repaired only by integrating it into the network of the world’s advanced economies. The main task remained to identify areas of mutual interest and concentrate most efforts towards exploration of these channels of cooperation, which should shift the attention attributed to NATO enlargement to other issues. Since there were few chances for Russia to stop North-Atlantic Alliance expansion, it would make it look like it was done with Russia’s consent as well. However cynical it may sound, the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States offered Russia these “areas of mutual interest.” Russia and the United States became allies in the war on terror, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) counter-proliferation and arms control policies.

Political analysts who followed Russia’s performance in international relations could notice that Russia uses different tools vis-à-vis different states. When the U.S. abusively (in Russia’s eyes) resorted to unilateral actions in defending its strategic interests in different parts of the world, Russian diplomacy rushed to draw the attention of the international community to the provisions of liberal institutionalism theory of international relations. Russians stress then the supremacy of the United Nations in inter-states relations and dispute resolution, and underscore the importance to obey the provisions of the UN Charter. Russia’s opposition to military actions against Iraq in 2003 can serve as evidence in support of this argument. However, when it comes to policy towards the former Soviet republics, Russia seems to forget about idealism and institutionalism values, and resorts to unilateralism as well.

¹⁸¹ Baranovsky, 281.

Russia's membership in NATO has not been considered so far, neither by the Russian political establishment – although it is suggested that it “could be a fundamental solution” – nor in NATO's plans for the future.¹⁸² If NATO decides, at some point in time in the near future, to open the door for Russia as well it should acknowledge now that Russia, understandably, will ask for a seat in the decision-making bodies. That will change the balance of power within the alliance. In this case, NATO has a chance to become a cumbersome organization, like the European Union, with a very slow decision-making process.

Before it happens (if ever), Russia would most likely prefer to make loose alliances with main actors within the European Union rather than being bound by the alliance's commitments and obligations (EU). A separate bilateral partnership with the United States will diminish the significance and the role of NATO.

C. EUROPEAN UNION – RUSSIA RELATIONS

1. The EU Policy Towards Russia

With respect to Russia, the European Union also sought, throughout the 1990s, to pursue a differentiated policy. Due to internal problems described in Chapter IV, however, the EU did not speak with one voice in negotiations with Russia in the early 1990s. The first signs of an emerging common policy towards Russia were registered in 1995 with the Union admission of Sweden, Finland, and Austria. However, it wasn't until 1999 that The Common Strategy on Russia was adopted (4 June 1999) in Cologne. In December 2001, it was complemented by the EU Country Strategy Paper on Russia, which stipulated the objectives and priorities of the EU towards Russia for the period of 2002–2006.¹⁸³

Energy and security constitute two major pillars on which the EU-Russia partnership resides. The EU depends on Russian gas and oil, and some studies of EU economics indicate that this demand will have a tendency to increase in the future.¹⁸⁴ The

¹⁸² Baranovsky, 282.

¹⁸³ Andrei Zagorski, “EU Policies Towards Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus,” *Occasional Paper Series, No.35* (Geneva: Centre for Security Policy), 5.

¹⁸⁴ Pekka, 15.

recent Russian-Ukrainian oil scandal, which tangibly affected some European Union members as well, has brought to surface this dependency never so clearly visible before.

Many believe that the expansion of the European Union to South-Eastern Europe (namely acceptance of Romania and Bulgaria) would change the whole situation in the region. The European Union will have, then, a large portion of a Black Sea coastline (and even more after Turkey's accession). In addition to the fact that the EU's land border with Russia doubled after the first wave of enlargement (Poland and Baltic States), the Union will increase its maritime border with Russia as well. Although dimensions of cooperation will continue to be determined by political will and interests on both sides of the EU future border, calculations in Moscow and Brussels supposedly will change. Capital and investments will flow much easier into South-Eastern members of the EU, thus increasing the asymmetry against Russia. Russia, in turn, can expect that some of the resources it received from the EU before enlargement would be re-directed to newly accessed nations.

In an attempt to avoid becoming overly dispersed in terms of resources, and in order to create an intermediate criterion for EU membership, the Union encouraged the emergence of regional organizations and initiatives – GUUAM and Pact for Stability in South-Eastern Europe – that promote democratic values and norms of cooperation.¹⁸⁵ Both initiatives, by and large, might, in the long-run, lessen Russia's influence in the region (perhaps the former to a larger extent than the latter). This can also be viewed as another variation of the containment policy promoted by the EU and the U.S. through different regional arrangements.

By the provisions of the Partnership Cooperation Agreement, signed between the EU and Russia in 1994 (in force since 1997) the latter has been granted the status of Most-Favored-Nation (MFN). Although Russia could not benefit much from the MFN

¹⁸⁵ On October 10, 1997, the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine met in Strasbourg during summit of the Council of Europe and stated their mutual interest in developing bilateral and regional cooperation, European and regional security, political and economic contacts. Thus, the initiative has become known as GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) Group and was formally founded as a political, economic and strategic alliance designed to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of these former Soviet Union republics. The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe has been created in the aftermath of Kosovo crisis, on 10 June 1999, the day the UN issued the famous Security Council Resolution No. 1244 that ended the NATO air-strikes of former Yugoslavia.

status until it joined the World Trade Organization, the fact itself was an indicator of a special place the EU attributes to Russia in its foreign policy. Some international relations theorists suggest that states (or state-level actors) agree to cooperate on issues that they can easily monitor.¹⁸⁶ How could Russia, whose state institutions were still weak and underdeveloped by the time the PCA was signed, ensure the necessary transparency in cooperation with the European Union?

Although the EU has imposed some conditions and criteria for its cooperation with Russia, the former proved unable to use this leverage to prevent the latter from interfering in the internal affairs of former Soviet republics. Moreover, by inviting Russia to share the responsibilities for maintaining security and stability on the continent, the EU provided Russia with a *carte-blanc* for such interference.¹⁸⁷

For Moldova, it is essential that the EU sticks to its promise to “share everything but institutions” with its neighbors in the East as part of the “Wider Europe”¹⁸⁸ initiative outlined by the EU leaders in 2003.¹⁸⁹ Russia definitively falls under the category of the EU’s “neighbors in the East” (so does Moldova, in fact) outlined by former President of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi. If Russia somehow succeeds in getting a seat in the EU’s decision-making bodies, or in getting any other arrangements with the EU that would allow her to influence or at least restrain the EU’s freedom in foreign policy, then Moldova will lose one more potentially strong ally in negotiations over Transnistria.

Increased U.S. unilateralism could be an incentive for the EU to accept Russia in its structures. The more often the U.S. will recur to unilateral actions without the consent

¹⁸⁶ Functional theory of international regimes. For detailed analysis of the theory see Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 107.

¹⁸⁷ The Common Strategy of the European Union of 4 June, 1999 on Russia states that “Russia and the Union have strategic interests and exercise particular responsibilities in the maintenance of stability and security in Europe, and in other parts of the world. The Union considers Russia an essential partner in achieving that objective and is determined to cooperate with her.” See *Common Strategy of the European Union of 4 June 1999 on Russia* (1999/414/CFSP), L 157/2.

¹⁸⁸ Later the “Wider Europe” initiative was renamed in European Neighborhood Policy.

¹⁸⁹ See the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi’s speech “Looking ahead in transatlantic relations”, given at the dinner at Rayburn House with German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington, 24 June 2003. Last accessed in January 2006 at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/prodi/sp03_322.htm.

and consultations with other NATO members, the tighter will become EU-Russia relations. To put in simply, Europeans need Russia to blackmail the U.S. Administration. In this respect, maintaining good relations with Russia becomes essential.

2. Russia's Attitude Vis-A-Vis the European Union

Russia's attitude and relations with the European Union have developed in indirect proportion to Russia's relations with NATO. That is to say, against the background of negativism towards the North-Atlantic Alliance, the EU was becoming a more attractive partner.

For Russia, the European Union is a steadily growing "economic superpower."¹⁹⁰ In the era of reduced possibility of conventional warfare, the economic dimension in global politics is gaining importance. Economically, Russia depends on the European Union. The EU is the largest trade partner for Russia, consuming half of Russia's exports.¹⁹¹ For the EU, in turn, Russia counts just for a few percentages in the total volume of the EU's external trade. So, although the EU values its partnership with Russia, an asymmetry does exist in relations between the two. This asymmetry is reflected even in the Partnership Cooperation Agreement, signed in 1994. Basically it says that Russia assumes to adjust its legislation to the European standards and not vice versa. Russian lawyers have never been invited (and never will be) to give advice on what these standards should look like. This kind of "partnership" satisfied Russia in 1994 when she was struggling to overcome a deep economic crisis, and needed the recognition of the West as a newly emerging democracy. It could be foreseen, however, that once Russia would improve economically it would certainly claim equality in relations with the EU.

Yet, the EU enlargement to South-Eastern Europe in 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria) could be a tipping point in EU-Russia relations, which will increase the asymmetry even more in favor of the EU. Dimensions of the EU markets will increase substantially.

¹⁸⁹ Baranovsky, 284.

¹⁹¹ In 2002, 53% of Russia's oil and 62% of natural gas exports went to the EU. See Pekka, 14.

However, inclusion of these South-European nations into the European community (and even including Turkey) will not significantly increase the security and political potential of the EU in comparison with Russia's potential in these areas.

D. POSSIBLE NATO – EUROPEAN UNION ALLIANCE ON THE TRANSNISTRIAN CASE?

The pattern of future European security settlements depends pretty much upon the extent to which the policies and agendas of both alliances for Eastern Europe coincide. This coincidence is not in Russia's interest. Therefore it would most likely keep shifting its diplomatic efforts between the two actors in order to keep the coincidence of views as low as possible. Conflict between NATO and the EU is not in Russia's interest either.

On both sides of the Atlantic, a partnership between NATO and the EU is officially welcomed. Preservation of the North-Atlantic Alliance is especially important for Europeans before they will develop a robust defense force. For the United States, NATO was an institution that has been successfully working for over fifty years now. It remains an "institution of choice" as suggested by one U.S. State Department official should the need for a combined U.S.-EU military action arise in the future.¹⁹²

However, even without Russia's opposition to NATO/EU involvement in Transnistria, cooperation of two alliances seems problematic. First, there is a difference in threats perception and, most importantly, in the ways to deal with them. Whereas the U.S. puts an emphasis on military power in conflict resolution, the EU leans more towards a political option of crisis management.¹⁹³ The problem with Transnistria is that NATO can not use its military arm there. It took an enormous amount of time and resources to convince Russian people of the "peaceful intentions" of the North-Atlantic Alliance towards Russia; breaking this informal agreement over Transnistria seems nonsensical, if not ridiculous. In terms of setting disputes with purely diplomatic means, NATO is weaker than the EU and has less experience and less "patience" to conduct lengthy negotiations. Europeans are more experienced in this matter. Not all problems

¹⁹² Asmus, 279.

¹⁹³ Kristin Archick and Paul Gallis, NATO and the European Union (Washington, D.C.: US Congress, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, December 27, 2005), 4, Order Code RL32342.

can be solved by military preemption. NATO has already used the EU mediation experience once, in the Balkans. It managed to have a kind of division of labor with the EU in settling disputes in former Yugoslav republics, especially in the post-conflict phase.

Second, there is a disagreement between NATO and the EU on the role of international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The U.S. has already proved that it could intervene in a foreign country without a UN Resolution. Talking in realist terms, that suits Moldova since Russia is excluded from the decision-making process. Of course, officially, Moldova, as a country which aspires to EU membership, can not support such behavior from the United States. The EU, on its part, would rely heavily on mentioned institutions and would intervene only on secondary roles. It is worth mentioning here that, while the EU is proclaiming itself as a pro-UN actor, one should not forget that when it was in the interest of most West Europeans to overturn the Milosevic' regime in Yugoslavia, all major EU powers endorsed the air-strikes of a *de facto* independent country. Another issue that also falls under the EU pro-institutionalism principle concerns the presence of foreign military on the territory of an independent country. Once the EU is not approving the U.S. presence in Iraq, then the same accusations should apply to the illegal presence of Russian troops in Transnistria. The problem here is that America's actions have undermined the EU's moral right to tell Russia what is right and what is wrong.

Third, in the vision of NATO and EU leaders, there are many much more important issues than the Transnistrian one, on which both alliances wish to come to a full agreement and understanding of the problem (Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo). In this regard, it is doubtful that decision-makers in either institution would want to be distracted with an "insignificant" issue like Transnistrian conflict. The "problem" of Moldova, thus, was that the separatist conflict in the Eastern part of the country didn't get "bad enough" to matter to the West. How many people in the world heard about Srebrenica before 1995 and knew where this poor village was located?

Fourth, both alliances are undergoing internal crises. Solidarity of NATO members has been compromised over the military campaign in Iraq, while the process

within the EU has been thrown back after the rejection of the Constitution in several countries. And besides, European members of NATO have already started to question the faithfulness of the United States to the alliance norms, values, principles and the *raison d'être* in general.

E. CONCLUSION

Although realism is considered a problem-solving theory, it is still not a great universal theory. Realism is a theory about the behavior of great powers who make use of it to justify their struggle for more power and acquisition of new territories. That was a valid theory for Soviet-U.S. confrontation during Cold War times. Realism justifies the U.S. hegemony in the post-Cold War era.

Since small countries like Moldova do not have the ability to contain great powers, they tend to rely more on different kind of *regimes* (international organizations, blocs, alliances, etc.) to monitor and constrain, where needed, the behavior of neighboring nations and regional hegemonies. Regimes emerge and exist if they are led by a powerful leader-state. All three actors discussed here – NATO, EU and Russia – theoretically have the capabilities to create an international regime around the Republic of Moldova. In fact, Russia has already created an informal regime around Moldova and, for the last decade, has forced Moldovan leadership to play by the rules of this regime. However, when Chisinau was undertaking measures to adjust to the rules of the created regime, the rules were being changed. The pro-Russia strategy adopted by the Communist government after the 2001 elections did not accommodate Russia's interests. Russia did not need a friend in South-Eastern Europe. A friend had to be respected. With an opponent, things don't look the same. The basic thing for a regime is a set of clear standards for cooperation and interaction, even though they are developed intentionally by strong states (those who created and dominate the regime) in order to influence weaker states.

The European Union does not yet have adequate mechanisms to convert the Union's economic and financial strength into a strong political leverage. With respect to Russia, the EU can not apply the principle of conditionality as it does in respect to other

East European countries that aspire to EU membership. Russia does not have the intention to join the Union, therefore EU membership is not at stake in Russia-EU relations. As such, Europeans must identify another anchor for Russia on the West that would bring her into a kind of dependency on the EU. Russia's desire to join the World Trade Organization can be used as a hook for a while, at least until Russia gets full membership. In order to be accepted, Russia has adjusted its legislation and agreed to comply with rules and regulations set by the West.

After bombings of Yugoslavia, the United States widened the gap of disagreements within the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. American unilateralism has set a negative example and added legitimacy to Russia's imperialist claims on Transnistria. Although the interplay of the three actors will continue, it looks very unlikely that an anti-Russian entente will emerge on the West.

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VI. CONCLUSION

After his meeting with the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs in February 2005, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoope Scheffer stated: “I don’t think NATO will get involved in Transnistria and I don’t think the Alliance will have a direct role in this region.”¹⁹⁴ This kind of statement, however demoralizing and unpleasant the words may sound for Moldovan diplomacy (and for general public as well), reflect the current disposition within the North Atlantic Alliance. At the moment, *counter-engagement* factors prevail over *pro-engagement* factors. Just a few of the much more important issues that preoccupy NATO leaders today are the internal transformation in the Alliance, disagreements amidst member-states over the military campaign in Iraq, and overstretched resources in several out-of-area operations. Visions within the leading EU nations, vis-à-vis the Union’s enlargement to South-Eastern Europe, haven’t changed much over time since the statement of the former EU Commission President Romano Prodi, who concluded in 2002 that “the integration of the Balkans will complete the unification of the continent.”

Whatever advantage might come with NATO and EU enlargement, Moldova must concentrate on other internal problems besides Transnistria, including corruption, implementation of reforms, and building an attractive investment climate. With respect to foreign policy, Chapter II tried to emphasize that Chisinau bears some of the guilt for such an indifferent attitude of the West towards Moldova. Inconsistency in formulating foreign policy objectives throughout the 1990s–early 2000s still works against Moldova today, although the country’s leadership undertook significant steps towards improvement beginning in 2003. Already, at the end of 2004, Moldovan Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan was expressing his strong belief in the irreversibility of the pro-EU strategy adopted by the country’s leadership.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Quoted from George Coman, “NATO Isn’t Getting Involved In Transnistria.” Last accessed in March 2006 at: <http://www.moldova.org/pagini/eng/86/86/>.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Andrei Stratan, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Moldova (Romanian). Last accessed in January 2006 on the official web site of the Moldovan Foreign Ministry at: <http://www.mfa.md/Ro/Comunicate/2004-12-23InterviuAStratan.htm>.

Now, this strategy should be implemented. Another drawback would be disastrous for Moldova and would remove the nation from the international arena for an indefinite period of time. Systematic evaluations of supporting plans are crucial in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Public support and awareness of Moldova's commitments are even more important. A serious public debate has to be instigated by the indigenous mass-media and international non-governmental organizations.

In the meantime, the Transnistrian problem should not consume the bulk of the nation's resources. Strengthening security along the Moldovan-Ukrainian segment of the border (as well as the internal administrative border with Transnistria and the rest of the country) is an essential element. With respect to this issue, Moldova should exploit all opportunities: bilateral negotiations with Kiev, and U.S. and major European powers putting pressure on the Ukraine. The EU has already deployed its "eyes" and "ears" in the region with the EU-led Border Assistance Mission to Moldovan-Ukrainian border.

The truth is that Moldova lost the momentum for solving the separatism issue in Transnistria in the 1990s. The process of European integration was very dynamic; the internal climate in NATO was much better than today and Russia was barely surviving from one domestic political crisis to another. During this time Moldova was shifting back and forth between pro-Eastern and pro-Western options of foreign policy. When Chisinau finally (and hopefully forever) chose the Western way, the situation changed – not in Moldova's favor. The process of further strengthening the European Union was stalled when France and the Netherlands rejected the EU Constitution. After 2001, Europe became a target of large-scale terrorist attacks. The bombings in Madrid on 11 March 2004, and in London one year later, inevitably strengthened the anti-"those-others" mood in Europe. But it is important to note that all these tragedies instigated a new wave of mistrust among old EU members.¹⁹⁶

In NATO, the United State's U.S. unilateral decision to go to war over Iraq, and, in this context, calls for a "coalition of the willing," have brought the North-Atlantic Alliance to an internal crisis as well. The United States, as the leading ally in NATO, has become deeply involved in the post-conflict stabilization operation in Iraq. The shift in

¹⁹⁶ Namely, following the 7 July 2005 bombings in London, France has declared its intention to re-instate unilaterally border control for people traveling between Schengen states.

priorities in NATO – from a European area of operation to an out-of-area crisis – has distanced the Transnistrian conflict even more.

After the rise to power of the young and ambitious President Vladimir Putin, Russia became more vocal in international affairs. Political analysts in the West started to express concerns about Russia's neo-imperialism offensive on its "near abroad." Her ambitions are supported by a steady growth of the Russian economy. In the meantime, President Putin's administration tries to avoid open confrontation with either alliance. In the case of the European Union, Russia succeeded better by applying the *divide and conquer* approach. By controlling the domestic gas industry, Russian leaders have masterfully managed, so far, to convert economic wealth into political leverage. Separate agreements and projects with major European nations (Germany and France) constantly increase the cost of the stakes for all parties involved, thus making both Europeans and Russians more inter-dependent.

Against such a background, Moldova's invested hopes in NATO and the European Union look quite blurry. NATO and the EU would most likely proceed very carefully in respect to the Transnistrian conflict, always taking into account Russia's reaction and interests in the region. In the *status quo*, no party would go for significant changes because the benefits from trying to do so are not commensurate with "the anticipated costs of bringing about these changes."¹⁹⁷

In today's circumstances, it appears very difficult for Chisinau to "sell" the Transnistrian case to Western partners. Yet, the severity of the Transnistrian problem, from a security standpoint, is not advertised in Europe to a full extent by Moldova. Huge ammunition stockpiles, left behind in Transnistria by the Soviet regime, are not properly secured. Proliferation of arms is an issue discussed everywhere nowadays. Moldova can not depend on NATO and the EU. While continuing to knock on the doors of NATO and the EU, Moldova should concentrate its efforts on regional cooperation within the framework of such organizations as GUUAM and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. That is to say, Chisinau should incite concerns about the Transnistrian "black hole" in the closest ring of states surrounding Moldova. However weak these regional

¹⁹⁷ Gilpin, 11.

arrangements might look at the moment, participating nations have created a pool of expertise, and seem willing to support each other to overcome problems linked with the transition to a liberal democracy and a free market economy.

More efforts should be dedicated to a bilateral cooperation. Potential sponsor-nations can lobby for the inclusion of Moldova on the political agenda in both NATO and the EU. With all the internal problems discussed in this thesis, neither the North-Atlantic Alliance nor the European Union has completely closed the door for Moldova. NATO is pushing Moldova to better explore the opportunities offered through the “Partnership for Peace” program (namely by drafting and implementing the nation-tailored Individual Partnership Action Plan), whereas the European Union has signed the EU-Moldova Action Plan in the first half of 2005. Moldova has been given a chance to prove – on a case by case basis – that it is a reliable partner and worth attention. The only reasonable option for Moldova today is to use both opportunities to “anchor itself to the West.”¹⁹⁸

It remains clear, however, that the Transnistrian conflict requires an external solution agreed upon by three players discussed in this thesis. While continuation of the dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol represent an important element in the whole process, the center of gravity in negotiations is the middle of the triangle: NATO – EU – Russia. Transnistria is not the only controversial problem on the agenda of these players. At some point, one party might agree to make some concessions in one issue, in favor of bigger gains in another. The Russian region of Kaliningrad is also part of unpleasant discussions between Russia and Western partners. What incentives might come up in negotiations between the two sides, to give up positions on a particular issue (in our case, Transnistria), will be dictated by further developments in Russia, Europe and beyond.

¹⁹⁸ Asmus, 291.

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