

# Moldova - Narrative

## ***ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND CONDITIONS OF THE MOLDOVA - NIESTER CONFLICT***

There is a risk of misperceiving the nature of this conflict as essentially ethnic. This was not the cause of the conflict, rather its effect. It is multi-dimensional and includes territorial issues, questions of national identities, ethnicity, security, democracy, ideology, religion, power and other factors.

The deep rooted historical, social, economic and political factors increase the potential for violent conflict in the Dniestr region. The historical controversy over possession of Moldova still persists today.

In the Middle Ages territories of Moldova and Romania were divided into several princedoms dependent from the large neighbouring states. During the last half of the 15th century Moldavia was governed by Prince Stephen the Great, the ultimate symbol of freedom in present-day Moldova. During the 18th century Moldavia and Walachia were brought under the supervision of Turkey, but came under Russian dominance in 1812. After the Crimean War (1853-56) the areas were overtaken by Turkey, but were allowed to pursue more autonomous policy. In 1859 they elected a common prince and adopted the name of Romania in 1862. After the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78), Romania was compelled to cede Bessarabia to Russia, but regained the territory at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. (Nina Graeger, 1995:41). A greatly expanded Romanian state has been existed during a short period between the two World Wars and did not include the territory of the present Transdnestr. On 27 March 1918 the Bessarabian parliament "Sfatul Tserij" has voted for unification of territories between the Prut and Dniester rivers. In Northern Bukovina population, following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, expressed itself on 3 November 1918 at the Bukovina Popular Assembly as being in favor of reunification with Soviet Ukraine.

During the Russian Civil War (1919-1922), the territory that is currently Moldova (also called Bessarabia) was seized and annexed by Romania. During this period (until 1940) the Romanian state provided policy of forced "romanization" of Moldovan territory.

Ethnogenesis of Moldovians and Romanians goes back to the Roman Frakijskij population of the Balkans, included Irans, Slavic and other elements.

The Moldovian Romanians constitute 2.795 (64%) of the population, Ukrainians - 600 thousand (14%), Russians - 562 thousand (13%), Gagauzi (Turkish-speaking Orthodox) - 153 thousand (6%), Bulgarians - 2%, Jews - 1,5%, and 1,8% of the population represent other nationalities. The majority Russian population (approximately 70% of the Russians) is concentrated west of the Dniester and in Chisinau (Kishinev), 70% of the Ukrainians and almost all the Bulgarians with the Russians making up almost three quarters of the population of Moldova and live west of Dniester. The remaining 30% of the Russians live to the east of the Dniester river. This area covers approximately 15% of the Moldovan territory, and was settled in the early 1940s. (Nina Graeger, 1995:41). The population of the area consists of 40% Moldovian Romanians, 30% Ukrainians, 30% Russians.

Moldova while being part of the former Soviet Union was to a certain degree medium developed republic with the agrarian-industrial structure. The most developed region in Moldova has been Transdnestr, ("Nezavisimaya gazeta", 1994, 2.03.p.3) It covers approximately 12% of the Moldovan territory, comprise 17% of total population in Moldova and produced 34% of agricultural production (vegetables and fruits), 33% of industrial and 56% of consumer production in Moldova. The largest in Moldova electric power station is Dniestrovskaja in Transdnestr, it produces 90% of the total electric power. The main transport and gas lines are located in the left side of the Dniestr river. The composition of rural and urban population in 1989 has been 52,5% and 47,5% in comparison with Kazakhstan ( 42,4% and 57,6%), Azerbaijan (46,5% and 53,5%), Russia (26,1% and 73,9%) and Lithuania (31,2% and 68,8). The part of rural population in Moldovans and Gagauzs ethnies is higher than in other ethnies in Moldova. This archaic structure

of economy in Moldova was compensated by open pattern of its economy with high trade orientation of agriculture, based on industrial agricultural production. Moldova was specialized in internal labour division on crops production. It was the highest specialized republic of the former Soviet Union totally dependent from exchange of industrial production and energy. In 1988 it had crops production estimated in roubles 112,8 thousand roubles in comparison with the total Soviet Union -17,0 thousand, the Russian Federation - 18,0; Kazakhstan - 3,2 thousand roubles, Lithuania - 46,0; Azerbaijan - 59,4 thousand roubles. (Agropromyshlenij kompleks of the Soviet Union; Statistical book. M., 1990,p.46)

The socio-economic development of Moldova and level of socio-psychological modernisation have contributed to the susceptibility of local intellectuals to propaganda of national ideas. Similar socio-economic development is seen in the South Caucasus and Kazakhstan. Further violent development in Alma-Ata in 1986 (Kazakhstan) and violent conflicts in Georgia and Azerbaijan has proved this thesis. The possibility of violent conflict emergence in Moldova was higher than in other parts of the former Soviet Union.

The scenario of violent conflict development was characteristic for the majority regions in European part of the former Soviet Union. It consists of several phases: national-political revival and development of self-consciousness, consolidation of nationality leaders and emergence of independent political structures, participation of "patriotic" forces (nationalistic) in the parliament fighting, attainment of political power and declaration of Independence.

The first signs of nationality revival became manifest in 1987-1988. Moldovan intellectuals were concentrated around the literature journal "Kodry". These groups constituted the nucleus of the "Popular Front" ("Narodnyi Front") further Christian Democratic Front). It announced the main objectives: dominant position of Moldovan language and culture, attainment of political power and political independence, unification with Romania. The Popular Front slogans soon became popular. It could be explained by the fact that in the late eighties Moldovan culture has experienced deep crisis as the result of forced russification processes especially assimilation in the urban areas. The percentage of mixed marriages was especially high during this period. The problems of Moldovan language were actual for the majority Moldovan population. First mass actions since 1989 were against Russians and Jews.

The roots of the Dniestr conflict run deep. The immediate cause, however, can be traced to the Moldovanization of national life, i.e., replacement of Russian as the dominant language, and de-Sovietization aroused some fear among the Slavic (Russian/Ukrainian) minority within Moldova. This population, which formed a majority within the Transdnister region, was also fearful of ethnic ties of the majority of the Moldovan population to Romania and agitation by some nationalists in Romania and Moldova for eventual union of the two states. All the developments described above raised fears of the loss of national identity, social status, and economic security. In response to these fears, Slavic nationalists called for creation of the "Dniester Republic" and proclaimed their independence from Moldova.

There were abundant signals of all categories to indicate the upcoming crisis in Moldova, which might have given time to Russia, Moldova and Ukraine to react in an adequate manner in order to de-escalate the situation. It is obvious from the violent clashes in Bendery and Tyraspol that this has not been indicated, that Moldovan leaders behaved in a counter-productive manner. They had chosen use of force coupled with the demand to unite with Romania which led to escalation rather than de-escalation (Appendix 2).

The decline of the central authority and the strengthening of regional forces, based upon nationalist sentiments as well as erosion of the basis for dialogue, the escalation of hostile rhetorics and the escalation from rhetorics into the use of force contains general elements of internal conflict in Moldova.

## ***NATIONAL LIBERATION AND FORMATION OF THE NEW INDEPENDENT STATE (Intra-state conflict around Dniestria in the Soviet Union)***

The Language Act of 1989 was the trigger in the conflict between the Russian minority in the Dniestr region and the Moldovan authorities which affected radical rethorics of the Popular Front and the sense of vulnerability and fear among Russian minority concerning the demand for reunion with Romania. The presense of threat and discrimination (fear to occupy a lower economic and social status in Moldova) heightened the importance of protecting the Russian community social identity.

Moldavia adopted the name Moldova on 5 June 1990 and declared itself an Autonomous Soviet Republic on 23 June in the same year. The nationalistic pro-Romanian Popular Front won the parliamentary elections in December 1990. The Popular Front line was dominated in Moldovan policy until

1992. Members of the Popular Front, who were in power, made no attempt to integrate members of all minority communities in the process of government, or to solicit their support for the new state.

The further escalation was fuelled by the provoke policies of the central authorities who supported the establishment of different International Fronts and International movements in the Republics of the former Soviet Union including Moldova. The central government has presented the idea on the Union Treaty. It decided to rely and have the basis in autonomous regions of the Republics and suggested that autonomus formations had equal rights with the Republics to sign the Union Treaty. There were no autonomous provinces in Moldova, but after the declaration of equal rights for the status of republic and the autonomous province based on the Union Treaty several national-political elites have started fighting to get autonomous status in Moldova. They included elites from Gagauz and Transdnistria. A referendum on independence for Dniester was held on 28 January 1990, and the region declared itself as the Socialist Moldovan Soviet Republic of Dniestria - also called Transdnistria - on 2 September the same year. Leaders of Gaguzia have proclaimed Independence within the framework of Moldova borders in Summer 1990. Economic reasons affected the Gagauz decision. Gagauzia was comparatively more dependent on Moldova than Transdnistria.

In 1993 the Gagauz deutes returned to the Supreme Soviet of Moldova. Political elites as well as economic elites were ready for compromises with the Moldovan leadership. One reason has to be seen in the economic dependence of Gagauz economy which was connected with the Moldovan economy, basically the economy of South regions traditionally occupied by the wine production and light industry was strongly integrated into the Soviet and Moldovan economy. Despite the economic crisis agrarian economy of Gagauz was easily adapted to new conditions thanks to the naturalization of economy. ("Novoe vremya", 1993, No 29 July, pp.10-13.)

The announcement of Moldovan as an official language in the Republic, closing of Russian schools, adoption of Law on Citizenship (5 June 1991) which gave privileges to the Moldovan ethnies, "Moldavisation" of the state apparatus, "cleansing" of research organisations, discrimination of local governance in regions with compact minority population (under the Rule on Local Governance), negotiations with Romanian leaders on issue of further unification - these were manifestations of Moldovan nationalism as being offensive. Slavic minorities have experienced sense of insecurity, threat and injustice. As a reaction, the most political organised minorities including Slavic and Gagauz opposed the growing assertiveness of Moldovan nationalism.

First clashes broke out in the town of Dubosari between Moldovan government troops and militant civilian groups from Transdnistria in November 1990.

In March 1991 presidential elections were held in Transdnistria, together with a referendum on future membership in successor state of the Soviet Union. With the exception of the Moldovan Romanians in the villages, an overwhelming majority favoured a union governed from Moscow.

At the first half of the 1991 the situation in Transdniestria was rather stable. Opinion polls have shown confidence of the population in the region in favour of Declaration of Independence of Moldova (53%), support of the territorial-administrative reforms (41%), for radical economic reform (62%), for participation of Transdniestria deputies in Moldovan parliament (45%), for establishment of department on Transdniestria issues (41), consider the main cause of tension in Moldova in nationalism and discrimination (19%). However, at the second half of the 1991 and in 1992 the Popular Front has provided repressions towards the minorities and strengthen its line for the unification with Romania.

Transdniestria supported the organisers of the Soviet coup in August 1991. The Moldovan government however, denounced the attempted coup and arrested several of the Transdniestrian leaders who had supported it. This triggered a new wave of ethnic uprisings, a month-long blockade of railways, attacks upon police stations and the occupation of public buildings. The first armed combat between Moldovan government troops and the Dniestrian Republic National Guard

- supported by the former Soviet 14th Army stationed in the region and Cossacks from Russia - took place in December 1991. (Nina Graeger, 1995:42) The issue on the unification with Romania was discussed during the meetings of Druk-Iliesku (January 1992) and Snegur-Iliesku (February 1992). The unification was planned at the end of 1992. The Popular Front Congress which was held in 15-16 February 1992 has adopted the programme of unification between Moldova and Romania. These plans of unification with Romania underpinned a potential outbreak of conflict.

In the further development, Moldovan nationalism increasingly turned "offensive", claiming the right to re-establish Moldovan leadership over Transdniestria. For this purpose military forces were used to suppress the autonomous province. This, in turn, fuelled nationalist tendencies in Transdniestria, the establishment and activation of paramilitary units in the province and contributed to new signs of Transdniestrian independence, including military forces, national currency, etc. This was challenged by the majority population extremism which led to secessionist claims between the ethnic minorities of Moldova.

However, the "unionists" dominance at political level in Moldova ended in July 1992 when a government of "national consensus" was established and some portfolios were reserved for representatives from Transdniestria and Gagauz. (Camplisson, 1996:20)

During this period an early third-party intervention was vital for peaceful conflict transformation. There was a possibility to encourage and facilitate negotiation between then contending parties: Moldovan central authorities and the autonomous province - the Socialist Moldovan Soviet Republic of Dniestria. But no action was taken at the time. Lost opportunities in the first half of 1991 when the conflict was internal for the Soviet Union by character have affected further dynamics toward violence.

The escalating confrontation between parties to a Moldova-Dniestr conflict progresses in phases. Escalatory process may be defined as maturation of the crisis and violence phases.

### ***EMERGENCE OF THE CONFLICT (MARCH-AUGUST 1992)*** ***(Intra-state conflict in Moldova)***

Events in the first half of the 1992, in particular armed clashes between Moldovan police and "Dniester insurgents" and the seizures of arms from military arsenals, have raised the prospect that communal violence may turn into civil war. Attacks on the police headquarters and road blocks led to fighting on 1st and 2nd March 1992. In March alone 50 people were killed and at least 5,000 fled to Ukraine. (Nina Graeger, 1995:42). Escalating violence from the parties to the conflict shifted the balance from political to military action.

Fighting escalated in mid-March 1992 when "Dniester Republic Guards" and "Don Cossacks" attacked Moldovan police units in three villages in Dubosari region in an attempt to eliminate the last remaining Moldovan police presence on the left bank of the Dniester. Russian forces also blew up two highway bridges over the river.

Paramilitary forces in the region have grown with the arrival of Slavic volunteers and "Cossacks" from the Don region. Reaction to the fighting came rapidly. On 15 March the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry issued a statement expressing concern about the involvement of "Cossack" volunteers from the Don region in the armed conflict in Moldova. The statement described Cossacks fighting on the side of the "Dniester Republic" as "mercenaries," whose involvement violated international legal norms. The following day, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine called for a cease-fire in the Moldovan conflict over the "Dniester Republic" and offered to mediate, adding that refugees were crossing into Ukraine. Within a week the number of refugees who had fled to Ukraine numbered 3,000.

On 16 March representatives from the large indigenous Ukrainian population living in the Transdnistria appealed to the Supreme Council of Ukraine and to Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk to help in preventing conflict in their region from spreading. Heavy fighting continued with the initiative in the hands of the "Dniester" volunteers. At the same time, mass demonstrations in Chisinau (Kishinev) demanded arms and criticized Moldovan President Mircea Snegur and his government for not declaring a general mobilization. The same day, Snegur announced a unilateral cease-fire to go into force on 18 March and asked "Dniester" forces to honor it. Kravchuk responded to the crisis by imposing a special regime in a 50-km zone along the Moldovan-Ukrainian border to prevent infiltration of arms and armed troops.

This temporary cease-fire did not put an end to the conflict. Rumors and protests multiplied, especially as it became more evident that Russia was supporting the "Dniester Republic." On 18 March the Moldovan government protested the Russian State Bank's decision to open accounts in the self-proclaimed "State Bank of the Dniester Republic." On 24 March the Moldovan parliament described the 20 March appeal from the Russian parliament on the conflict in the Dniester region as an "unfriendly act" and blamed it for interfering in the "internal affairs of another state."

At the Helsinki Foreign Ministers' conference, Moldova protested the activities of insurgent forces operating on the left bank of the Dniester River. They were supported by the Romanian government which issued a statement condemning these activities. On 24 March, following the CSCE meeting in Helsinki, the Foreign Ministers of Romania, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine issued a joint statement saying they would continue their efforts to resolve the conflict in Moldova and announced that they planned to meet again in April.

None of these diplomatic moves put an end to the fighting, which in the last week of March escalated from sporadic raids into planned acts of sabotage and large-scale fighting. On 26 March Igor Smirnov, President of the "Dniester Republic," signed a decree ordering partial mobilization of men up to the age of 45. Smirnov justified the action on the grounds that the Moldovan government was actively preparing for combat operations.

The fighting that emerged in Moldova on 2 April 1992 grew out of weeks of escalating violence. On 29 March President Snegur declared a state of emergency throughout Moldova, calling on separatists of the "Dniester Republic" to surrender their arms and acknowledge the authority of the Moldovan government. He ordered Moldova's security forces to disarm illegal armed formations which were backing the Dniester "pseudo-state." Snegur appealed to the parliament on 31 March with the statement that time for negotiations between the two sides had run out, and that it had become apparent that leaders of the "Dniester Republic" were not interested in resolving the conflict in a peaceful manner.

Each side called upon the other to back down but prepared for the worst. On 30 March, Snegur warned that his government would take "all the necessary measures" to restore its authority in the breakaway "Dniester Republic" and threatened to take back an offer to guarantee the region the status of a "free economic zone." The leader of the "Dniester Republic," Igor

Smirnov, stated on the same day that his supporters would do everything possible to protect their region, to include turning part of the area's industry over to military production. There were also reports of more sporadic violence and a number of new casualties.

The Transdniestria leadership responded with a call to arms and appealed to Russia for protection. The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement calling on Moldovan authorities and all parties concerned to act strictly in accordance with the norms of international law, legality, and respect for the rights of individuals and ethnic minorities.

When the escalating of violence forced the Russian government to play a more active role in Moldova-Dniestr conflict, it sought to resolve the problem by "peace enforcement". To promote political compromise horizontal escalation in Moldova was stemmed by preventive action of the Russian troops. The deployment of the Russian 14th Army in Moldova is unilateral action within the framework of the Russian military operations in the post-Soviet territories. It is not set up by the UN Security Council and have no mandate given to peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

Since December 1991 up to April 1992 it has been difficult to determine the loyalties of the Russian 14th Army deployed in the Dniestr region. The 14th Army commander has announced his intention to become Commander of the Armed Forces of the "Dniester Republic" and to transform 14th Army into the nucleus of that state's armed forces. However, the existence of the Russian military force has its impact on the policies of parties to a conflict in a positive way and control the spread of violence.

Boris Yeltsin has signed a decree on 1 April that placed the 14th Army and several other units deployed in Moldova under Russian jurisdiction. The report said all troops in Moldova had been subordinated to the CIS Commander-in-Chief and that Colonel General Vladimir Semenov, then commander of CIS Ground Forces, had been named Russia's representative for all Russian troops in the area. A Moldovan Deputy Defense Minister immediately labeled the decree illegal, stressing that all forces in Moldova, except those on the left bank of the Dniester, have been placed under the legal jurisdiction of Moldova.

Subordinating these troops to Yeltsin's control permitted him to use that part of the armed force that is Russian and perhaps even obtain military cooperation from several other states. Statements by leading officials implied that Yeltsin was considering use of force. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, for example, was quoted by ITAR-TASS on 1 April as saying that Russia "will be protecting the rights of Russians in other states of the CIS. This is top priority. We shall be protecting their rights firmly and will be using powerful methods if needed." ("Nezavisimaya gazeta", 1 April 1992)

Experts from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine gathered in Chisinau on 31 March to discuss a solution to the "Dniester" conflict. The participants were quoted as saying before the meeting opened that they would be guided by the Helsinki agreements on stability of borders and would seek the peaceful resolution while preserving Moldova's integrity. However, these talks have been unsuccessful.

Special Moldovan Inner Forces attacked Bendery on the same day, leaving at least ten people dead. The attack was described as one of the heaviest actions on the breakaway Transdniestria during that month and the possibility of another meeting being scheduled later that month (April) between the four countries was proposed.

Russian military presence in the region played the decisive role in conflict termination and containment. Moldovan authorities were insisted on redeployment of the 14th Army first in 1991, but grass roots movements, especially womens' ("The Women's Union for support of Transdniestria") have organised blockade of the railway route. In fact the 14th Army supported the secession aspirations of Transdniestria in conflict with Moldova.

The situation has not improved in May and as the crisis deepened, on 9 May, the forces that previously belonged to the Confederation of Independent States (CIS), reverted to the control

of the newly-formed Russian National Army, which created direct confrontation between Russian and Moldovan interests.

Additionally, more violations of the cease-fire were reported on 9, 10 and 11 May. President Snegur appealed through the UN Security Council for the world community to intervene and stop Russian aggression in his country, which he claimed was causing Moldova's search for a political solution to the country's problems to fail. In June, Yeltsin offered to withdraw the 14th Army from Moldova, but his plan encountered heavy opposition from Russian military officials. They claimed that over half of the army's personnel were local inhabitants who wanted to defend their "homeland" and that even if this were not the case, there were no apartments in Russia for servicemen, should they be returned.

On 23 June Radio Ukraine reported a change in its position toward the Moldovan conflict. President Kravchuk called for the left bank of the Dniester to be given the status of an autonomous republic within Moldova. This was the first time Kiev had recognized or supported the Transdnistria's calls for federalization of Moldova.

On 3 July President Yeltsin held talks with Moldovan President Snegur and they agreed in principle on a sequence of steps designed to settle it. The agreement included: implementing a cease-fire, creating a demarcation corridor between the forces, introducing "neutral" peacekeeping forces, granting a "political status" to the left bank of the Dniester by the Moldovan parliament, and ultimately, scheduling bilateral negotiations on withdrawing Russia's 14th Army. Yeltsin also agreed to resume deliveries of Russian goods to Moldova, which had been previously agreed to, but had since been halted. Although these agreements were a step in the right direction, they have been disappointing.

Similar attempts by the CIS institutions have been equally unsuccessful, though in a 6 July Moscow meeting, the heads of states from the CIS agreed to create and deploy what they called a joint "peacemaking" force of between 2,000 and 10,000 soldiers to eastern Moldova within the next few weeks. This force, consisting of soldiers from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania and Bulgaria, would have the mission to enforce and monitor a cease-fire and keep the forces of both sides in the Dniester region separated.

Despite continuing controversies, on 21 July a peace agreement was signed in Moscow by Presidents Yeltsin and Snegur. Just after this agreement was signed, in a 31 July 1992 interview printed in *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, former General Lebed fueled the controversy by criticizing the Moldovan government as being "criminal" and "fascist" and calling for a "Nuremberg trial." He said that his army was a "local" army and the "Dniester people have a right to this army." (*"Literaturnaya Rossiya"*, No:31, 1992)

In early June, the "Dniester separatists" proposed to transform Moldova into a federation of 3 republics - Moldovan, "Dniester", and Gagauz. Moldovan President Snegur immediately rejected the proposal. He reiterated that Chisinau (Kishinev) had offered to negotiate some form of territorial autonomy, but something short of federalization. This proposal, in turn, was dismissed as unacceptable by the "Dniester government." On 13 and 14 August, the President of Transdnistria announced that the Republic intended to form its own army and at the same time General Lebed said his (14th Russian) army would help create this new army. In late August, Russia again seemed to hasten progress toward resolving the crisis. On 26 August, General Pavel Grachev, at the time Russian Defense Minister, signed an agreement with Major General Pavel Creanga, the Moldovan Defense Minister, on withdrawal of Russia's 300th Paratroop Regiment from central Chisinau.

## ***SITUATION IN SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1992***

By early September, it seemed as if the Moldovan government was seeking to "soften the crisis" through compromise. On 16 and 17 September, the second round of bilateral talks to decide the terms of the withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army from Moldova were held in Chisinau but were unsuccessful. The association between a political solution to the Transdnistrian conflict and withdrawal of the former Soviet 14th Army has further complicated the negotiations. Due to the active and central role of the army in the Dniester-Russians' withdrawal is a condition for a solution.

In a 15 October interview with *Izvestiya*, former Russian Defense Minister, General Pavel Grachev, added to the uncertainty over 14th Army intentions, when he stated that "the withdrawal of the 14th Army from the Dniester area will only be possible when the conflict in the region is settled." He also noted that "14th Army units (were) manned by personnel from the region and that they would refuse to accept withdrawal unless the conflict was over." ("*Izvestiya*". 15 October, 1992)

Moldovan President Snegur told a group of Russian journalists visiting Chisinau on 16 October that Moldova will continue to resist its transformation into a "federation of republics" and the creation of a "Dniester Republic" with an army, security services, border guards, and other attributes of statehood. He reiterated, however, Moldova's willingness to grant the left bank of the Dniester self-government, with political, economic, and cultural autonomy, within an "integral and indivisible" Moldova. This was yet another example of Moldova's unwillingness to recognize any insurgent attempt to formally divide its republic.

The third round of negotiations for withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army from Moldova, achieved no concrete results. The proposals of both sides were rejected: the Russian side offered to "disband" some of their units and transfer their equipment to "local authorities" rather than withdraw units; the Moldovan authorities insisted that units be withdrawn and "left bank" residents not be drafted into the Russian Army for compulsory military service. Consequently, the stalemate continued.

The main argument behind normalization of relations between Transdnistria and Moldova was economic. Until 1993 the economic situation in the Transdnistria was better than in other regions of the former Soviet Union. Prices were rather low. But this temporary "economic surprise" has come to an end: inflation has begun, production decreased and unemployment started. The integration with more strong state became a necessity. Political independence and self hard currency could not solve economic problems. Economic situation has its impact to the approach for compromises with Moldova. At the same time political leadership in Moldova has changed in favor of more liberal and moderate leaders. Agrarian-Democratic Party has won parliament elections in 1994. The second largest factions in the Parliament became Socialist Party and "Yedinstvo". The Popular Front has divided into the bloc of peasants and intellectuals and allies of the Christian-Democratic Popular Front.

## ***STALEMATE AND SHIFT TO POLITICAL BALANCE***

At the end of January, representatives from Moldova and Transdnistria held another round of negotiations in Bendery. At the conclusion of the session they approved the basic principles for settling conflict in the region which include principles for recognition of characteristic features of the formation of regions and dictate what kind of status the Transdnistrian region receives in the Republic of Moldova. According to the agreement the Transdnistrian region is a part of the Republic of Moldova, but it has its distinct features in comparison with other regions of the republic. Therefore, it should be given special status, but not at the expense of the republic's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Details of the agreement were later released in a statement from Chisinau on 11 February. Anatol Tsaran, the leader of the Chisinau delegation from the mixed parliamentary

commission established to oversee a peaceful settlement of this conflict, further clarified the Dniester region's status. He stated that the region would be granted "administrative self-government on condition that the unity and integrity of Moldova is maintained."

In a surprising turn of events, Petru Lucinschi, First Secretary of the Moldovan Communist Party from 1989-1991, was elected chairman of the Moldovan Parliament. Lucinschi was reputed to be liberal-minded and pro-reform and was closely tied politically with Mikhail Gorbachev when he was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In his inaugural address to the parliament Lucinschi "pledged to focus on settling the Dniester conflict politically and on pursuing balanced relations with Romania and Russia." At the same time, the Presidiums of both the "Dniester" and Gagauz Supreme Soviets demanded that the "Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic" be changed "into a federation of three equal republics- Moldova, Dniester, and Gagauz- and its accession to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)."

The prospects for resolving Moldova-Dniestr conflict peacefully were better in spring 1993 than before. The Moldovan and Russian presidents in May 1993 agreed in principle on arrangements for procedures and deadlines for a withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army.

In 1993 direct negotiations were opened with the Transdniestrian leadership. At a meeting between the Moldovan Parliament chairman Lucinschi, Prime Minister Sangheli and "Dniester Republic" President Smirnov, the sides agreed to pursue a political dialogue and to focus at this stage on restoring economic links.

During this current stage the situation in Moldova was filled with periods of tension separated by short periods of relative calm as the two (or more) sides attempted to sort out their interests and make attempts, however feeble, to resolve the conflict. However, the attitude of the parties themselves in conflict such as Moldova-Dniestr contributed to its continuance. Stalemate in 1993 has helped buy time and develop new constructive solutions to the conflict.

The permanent Mission of CSCE in Moldova was officially opened on 25 April 1993.

The work of the mission contributed to reduce the level of mistrust among conflicting parties and promote to start a permanent process of negotiations. It maintained an active dialogue for creation of the necessary conditions for mediation. OSCE can't recognise Transdniestria as an independent state and consider it as a component part of Republic Moldova. The report N13 prepared by CSCE mission in November 1993 was one of the important inputs of the mission for encouraging dialogue, restraint, and compromise between the parties. (Ataman, 1998:4)

A real dialog was started after the Spring 1994 when the President of Moldova and the leader of Transdniestria signed a framework document concerning the format of negotiations. Each side has created independent expert groups that submit directly to the presidents. These groups were supposed to negotiate a political agreement with the assistance of the mediators from OSCE and Russia. Initial mediated negotiations were quite difficult because while each side tried to verbalise and prove their positions, the subject in discussion and the role of the mediators was not quite clear.

In January 1994 the Moldovan government accepted in principle the peace plan proposed by the CSCE.

The Moldovan constitution of 28 July 1994 establishes the "permanent neutrality" of Moldova, and prohibits the stationing of foreign troops on Moldovan territory. Only on 21 October 1994 did the parties sign an agreement on complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova within three years. (Diplomaticheskij vestnik, N 21-22, pp.47-51). However, the Russian 14th Army was transformed into Operative group of Russian forces. During 1996-1997 26 units of Operative group of Russian forces were transformed and reduced. Russia initiated a new formula for the peace-keeping forces in Transdniestria which includes units of the Russian, Moldovan and Dniestrian forces under the Joint Military Command. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 26 February, 1999).

In 1996 stabilization of the situation was connected with the fact that both sides were ready to make concessions. Conflict prevention activities including external Russian intervention

for preventive purposes have contributed to the situation when means have not escalated to the large-scale use of violence. Peace enforcement actions of the Russian 14th Army had a purpose to restrict the conflict to the non-coercive phase and further containment. The presence of the 14th Army in the Dniestr region has a calming effect in terms of easing any inter-ethnic tensions arising from perceptions that Moldovans abused Russians.

On 17 June 1996 Presidents Snegur and Smirnov agreed in outline new constitutional arrangements to end the conflict. (Campplisson, 1996:42)

The breakthrough in conflict prevention became visible in 1997 when the "top down" strategy of conflict prevention was carried out by the Russian Federation leadership. It was fuelled by perspectives of NATO enlargement. The demand to preserve Moldova in the Russian sphere of interest contributed to efforts to prevent escalation.

During this period (1997-1998) the aim of Russia and Ukraine was to avoid new violent escalation by mediation efforts and confidence-building measures aimed at preserving the territorial integrity of Moldova. A plan proposed by Dniestria involved a free confederal association, while Moldova proposed a special status for Dniestria with concentrated Russian population.

On 8 May 1997 A Memorandum on Basic Principles in Relations between Moldova and Transdniestria was signed in Moscow. However, the proposed draft Declaration on Transdniestria State (February 1998) is not coincided with Memorandum. The Transdnister leaders want a confederative solution, where the Dniestrian Republic has the status as a sovereign state, as does Moldova. The Moldovan government wants a solution which would give the Dniestrian Republic considerable local autonomy and the legal right to self-determination if Moldova should relinquish its status as an independent state, i.e. reunite with Romania. ("Nezavisimaya gazeta", 10 February. 1998)

As the economic situation in Moldova deteriorated by the end 1997 Moldova administration had to cope with permanent economic difficulties and growing "black economy" sector" (48% of Moldovan economy). As a result, communists won the national elections in March 1998. It was devastating defeat for the Agrarian-Democratic Party who has lost mandates in the Parliament.

## Notes

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# **Moldova - Chronology**

## ***The Escalatory Dynamics of Moldova-Dniestr Conflict***

### **Dispute Phase 1**

31 August 1989: The Language Act is passed in Moldavia.

27 January 1990: the town of Tiraspol declares itself a self-governing independent territory, followed by Bendery and other towns in the region.

28 January 1990: A referendum on independence for Dniester is held in the region.

23 June 1990: Moldova declares itself an Autonomous Soviet Republic.

2 September 1990: The Dniestrian region declares itself the Socialist Moldovan Soviet Republic of Dniestria.

### **Crisis Phase 2**

November 1990: First use of armed force.

5 June 1991: A Law on Citizenship is adopted in Moldova.

27 August 1991: Moldova declares independence.

### **Abatement Phase 5**

### **Limited Violence Phase 3**

December 1991: Fighting between the Transdniestrian National Guard and Moldovan government forces.

28 March 1992: A state of emergency is declared, with direct presidential rule.

### **Abatement phase 5**

21 July 1992: Ceasefire and peace agreement between the Dniestrian Republic and Moldovan authorities.

25 April 1993: The official opening of the permanent mission of OSCE in Moldova.

December 1993: Negotiations between Moldova and Transdniestrian authorities under Russian mediation

March 1994: Negotiations between Moldova and Transdniestrian authorities under Russian mediation

21 October 1994: Russia and Moldova reach an agreement on withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army.

5 July 1995: Negotiations between Moldova and Transdniestrian authorities under Russian mediation

## **Conflict Settlement Phase 6**

9 May 1997: Memorandum on Basic Principles in Relations between Moldova and Transdniestria is signed in Moscow.

19-20 March 1998: Four-parties meeting on conflict resolution in Odessa (Moldova, Transdniestria, Russia, Ukraine). Two agreements on confidence-building measures and contacts are signed.

# Chronology

## *The Escalatory Dynamics of Chechen Conflict*

### **Dispute Phase 1**

25 November 1990: The convocation of a National Congress of the Chechen People

27 November 1990: The Supreme Soviet of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR declares sovereignty

### **Crisis Phase 2**

6 September 1991: Dudaev's armed supporters penetrate the building of the Supreme Soviet during its regular session

October 1991: A National Congress of the Chechen People declares the mobilization of all males between 15 and 55 years of age

8 October 1991: A National Congress of the Chechen People declares the only power in Chechnya

27 October 1991: President and Parliament elections are held in Chechnya 1 November 1991: The Chechen Republic declares its sovereignty

2 November 1991: The Congress of People's Deputies of the RSFSR declares the elections in Chechnya illegal

7 November 1991: the President of the RSFSR declares a state of emergency in Chechnya

11 November 1991: the Presidential decree is set aside by the Supreme Soviet of the RF

June 1992: Dudaev dissolves the Parliament and introduces direct presidential rule

November 1992: The first attempt to use the Russian Army against Chechnya

### **Abatement Phase 5**

January 1993: Negotiations in Grozny between the Russian delegation and representatives of the Parliament of the Chechen Republic

### **Massive Violence Phase 4**

December 1994: Active Russian military operations in Chechnya

March 1995: The State Duma adopts a resolution which excludes the possibility of direct negotiations with Dudaev

### **Abatement Phase 5**

March 1996: President Yeltsin presents a Plan of Peaceful Conflict Resolution in Chechnya

March 1996: The Congress of Vainakhs in Volgograd. Alternative plan of peaceful Chechen conflict resolution

27 May 1996: An Agreement on ceasefire and the end of military operations in the Chechen Republic is signed between Yandarbiev and Chernomyrdyn

25 June 1996: A Decree by President Yeltsin on withdrawal of Russian troops until the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1996

## **Conflict Settlement Phase 6**

January 1997: Presidential elections in Chechnya

12 May 1997: An Agreement on Peace and Principles governing relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic Ichkeria and economic intergovernment treaties are signed by Presidents Yeltsin and Aslan Maskhadov.