



Institute for Regional and International Studies

**THE THORNY PATH OF EMERGING
DEMOCRACY, VULNERABILITIES AND
CHALLENGES OF THE DEMOCRATIC
DEVELOPMENT OF MOLDOVA**

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Introduction

Declaring its independence in 1991¹, Republic of Moldova, the former Soviet republic, set down the path of establishing a democratic system of government rooted in fundamental rights and freedoms. Moldova constitutes a very interesting case of democratic transition. By the end of the early 2000's Moldova was very close to a liberal democracy. In 1994, the country held its first free and fair popular elections and since then has held several direct elections to Parliament and, until 2000, for the presidency. The year 2001 was a turning point in Moldova contemporary political history after the disintegration of USSR. On one hand, the Communists' return to power in Moldova worried both pro-reform groups in the country and international observers, particularly when President Vladimir Voronin reinstated Soviet-style territorial administration and moved toward closer alliance with Russia. On the other hand, Moldova is also a case of a very difficult and controversial exercise in state building. The country was hit by the existence of multiple ethno-political challenges to its statehood. The Transdniestrian region became the site of violent although short-lived military conflict at the beginning of the 1990's and has succeeded from Moldova. Another conflict in the Gagauzian region, at the time of the Soviet Union's disintegration, did not escalate into a full-blown military campaign. Although these conflicts are not the only political challenges to Moldovan statehood – a great part of the nation and the Moldovan political elite continue to forward the idea of separate statehood and a distinct Moldovan identity, advocating instead the option of unification with Romania – these conflicts still remained main factors complicating Moldova's democracy and state-building exercises.

The goal of this study is to understand the causes for the thorny path of the emerging democracy in this post-Soviet communist republic as well as the effects of the institutional development in Moldova. We will try further to provide a different interpretation of the origins of the political crisis in Moldova because there is a direct correlation between nature of social system existing in the country and fundamental cleavages of the elite polarization and fragmentation over core national issues such as state borders ethnic issues and the character of political and social system.

We focus our analysis on three key sets of questions, namely:

1. What explain the fact that Moldova together with other non-Baltic post communist countries were relatively pluralistic in the early 1990's but became less so over time?
2. Why Moldova, which by the end of the early 2000's was very close to a liberal democracy, had a difficult time adapting to the new post-Soviet environment?
3. What are the future prospects for the pluralism and democracy in Moldova after the communist party restoration to power in 2001?

The paper contributes to the general discussion of the causes, manifestations and consequences of the experienced pluralism and the sources of political liberalization in Moldova that facilitate or impede efforts to employ democratization and federalization strategies in a reinforcing manner.

¹ Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova, available on http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/moldova/md_appnd.html

I. Moldova's transition in theoretical and comparative perspective

It was largely accepted by scholars that many post-communist states have huge historical heritage from former Soviet Union that would seem to undermine democratic development, namely – a lack of democratic history, weak civil society, weak rule of law, and relative international isolation. In order to understand the development of pluralism and democracy processes in Moldova, we need to broaden our analytic framework beyond the exclusive focus on democratic institution building. Furthermore, we need to analyze the consolidating national identities policy as a key element of the quadruple transition in the country including democratization, marketization, state-institution and nation-building. Because it is accepted wisdom in political science that serious conflicts over national identity undercut democratic consolidation. There is a common consensus among the scholars that successful democratic transitions are improbable when national revolutions are incomplete.

The sudden collapse of the Soviet state and regime in 1991 fundamentally undermined the capacity of post-transition elites to concentrate power and carry out extra-legal measures despite their overwhelming access to state resources and the frequent absence of a strong opposition. The rapid and sudden disintegration of the Soviet Union undermined incumbent capacity of post-Soviet government in Moldova. First, the dissolution of the Communist Party eliminated key mechanisms of elite unity and control. Second, the collapse left Soviet successor states with relatively weak state-building mechanisms. Third, the extremely rapid pace of the collapse of the regime and state left existing elites with little understanding of how to hold onto power despite their dominant access to organizational and material resources. What has been observed in Moldova and in other non-Baltic post-Soviet republics (Ukraine, Russia and Belarus) was the so-called “pluralism by default”. As Lucan Way argues in case of pluralism by default political competition endures not because civil society is strong or leaders democratic but because there is a strong elite polarization and fragmentation.² In such cases, the same factors that promote pluralism may also undermine governance and state viability.

In order to place this discussion in perspective, a brief background of the historical experience is provided as the outset as well as a consideration of some of the basic concepts related to this phenomenon. Understanding the puzzle of competitive politics and regime trajectories in Moldova and other post-communist republics requires the application of different approaches. The first approach includes a study of the institutional design of Moldova. The second approach is to see political competition as the outgrowth of emerging civil society in the country. A much more promising approach focuses on the changing character of the international environment in the 1990's. Hence specific emphasis will be put on the new parliamentary elections in 2005 and on the

² Distinguish scholars made a distinction between “pluralism” and “democracy”. Pluralism refers broadly to the autonomy of “political units and subunits” and important areas of political competition. By contrast, “democracy” refers more narrowly to a specific set of institutional practices. While there is obviously a correlation between pluralism and democracy, pluralistic systems are not necessarily democratic (in: DAHL Robert, “Pluralism Revised”, 1978 Comparative Politics, Vol.10, No.2, p.197).

common commitment to strengthening democracy in Moldova. The EU's interest in Moldova, that will be another point of our discussion, is due to the threat this country may impose to the security of the EU's future south-eastern outskirts. This concern about security stems from Moldova's serious internal instability, and especially from the existence of the separatist Transdnistrian Moldovan Republic.

Among non-Baltic post-Soviet countries, Moldova has had the most dynamic and competitive politics throughout the 1990's and has come very close to meeting standard minimum definitions of democracy – with open and very competitive elections, diverse media, and regular observance of civil rights. Over last ten years, two elected Presidential incumbents have lost power according to democratic rules of the game – more than any other non-Baltic post-Soviet country. Thus, by the end of the early 2000's Moldova was very close to a liberal democracy.³ However, in the absence of consistent western pressure via the European Union or other institutions, Soviet institutional legacies characterized by a weak civil society, weak rule of law and relative concentration of resources in state hand, have over time allowed incumbents to monopolize greater political control. Where incumbent incapacity has flowed from elite polarization over core national issues and significant weakness, pluralism has been more robust. Moldova is a illustrative example of this transitional process. In addition, where elite polarization and fragmentation have been severe, pluralism has been most robust and lasted the longest. As Lucan Way pointed out *“that very separate process are involved in making a regime more competitive as opposed to promoting democratic consolidation. Many of the same factors that promote pluralism by default are likely to undermine long-term democratic consolidation”*.⁴ In other words, greater fragmentation over national identity in Moldova contributed to greater pluralism in that country than in Russia or Ukraine in the 1990's.

II. Impact of the ethno-political confrontation upon the democratic transition in minority-dominated regions (Transdnistria and Gagauzia)

³ Liberal Democracy is a phrase often used to describe Western democratic political systems, such as Australia, the United States, Britain, New Zealand, Canada and other nations. It refers to political systems in which there are attempts to:

- defend and increase civil liberties against the encroachment of governments, institutions and powerful forces in society
- restrict or regulate government intervention in political, economic and moral matters affecting the citizenry
- increase the scope for religious, political and intellectual freedom of citizens
- question the demands made by vested interest groups seeking special privileges
- develop a society open to talent and which rewards citizens on merit, rather than on rank, privilege or status
- frame rules that maximise the well-being of all or most citizens

⁴ WAY Lucan A., “Pluralism by Default and the Sources of Political Liberalization in Weak States: The Case of the Former Soviet Union”, <http://www.temple.edu/polsci/Faculty/Bios/Way/Pluralism%20by%20Default%20Way%20World%20Politics.doc>

There is a wide literature on the different pathways of transition in former Soviet Union. Even if these processes offer many similar characteristics, their outcomes are very different according to particular historical, religious, economic situations, and above all, according to the different type of relationships between state and civil society, held in the period before the communist regime. The republic of Moldova offers an interesting example of how could be difficult to construct “a unitary nation in a multinational context”. The case of Moldova is also interesting because we can see how the unresolved conflict in Transdnistria has had a direct affect on Moldova’s transition politics, contributing to the resignation of the government in 1994, the neglect of socio-economic issues and the attempt of both the Moldova executive and legislature to use the conflict as a justification to expand their power.

The history of the Republic of Moldova is the history of two different regions that have been joined into one country, but not into one nation: Bessarabia and Transdnistria. Bessarabia is predominantly ethnic Romanian in population and constitutes the eastern half of the region historically known as Moldova. On the other hand, the majority of the population in Transdnistria is Slavic – ethnic Ukrainians and Russians – although Romanians are the single largest ethnic group there.⁵ It is worth pointing out that the demands of Transdnistria and Gagauzia have been managed differently by the Moldova centre.

A) Gagauzia

Despite Gagauzia declared independence as early as 1989, Moldova did not perceive it as a threat to its territorial integrity and embarked on a negotiation process which resulted in a limited but constitutionalized autonomy arrangements in 1995. By contrast, accomodation about the future status of Transdnistria failed. While the linguistic concerns of the Russophone population of Transdnistria were a salient factor underlying the outbreak of conflict, pragmatic considerations of the regional elite make this conflict a regional rather than an ethnic issue. The as yet unresolved conflict has had a direct effect on Moldova’s transition politics, contributing to the resignation of the government in 1994, the neglect of socio-economic issue and the attempt of both the Moldovan executive and legislature to use the conflict as a justification to expand their power.

The Gagauz leadership has advanced several basic demands. These demands are expressed in calls for a greater degree of Gagauz autonomy or, a more radical option, a union with Transdnistria. The first category of demands relates to economic concerns and these appear to be the most fundamental. The situation that they insist be addressed is that there is an economic disparity between Gagauzia and the rest of the Republic of

⁵ In August 1991 the Gagauz declared a separate “Gagauz Republic” in the south, around the city of Comrat (Komrat, in Russian). In September the same year, Slavs on the east bank of the Nistru river proclaimed the “Dniestr Moldova Republic” (DMR) in Transdnistria, with its capital at Tiraspol. Although the Supreme Soviet immediately declared these declarations null, both “republics” went on to hold elections. Stepan Topal was elected president of the “Gagauz Republic” in December 1991, and Igor N. Smirnov was elected president of the “Dniestr Moldovan Republic” in the same month.

Moldova. A second feature of the Gagauz concept of autonomy is the creation of political parties that would be unique to this region. The third demand advanced by the Gagauz leadership is that Gagauzia be granted more seats in the Moldovan Parliament. Closely related in terms of intensity, is a demand that Comrat be included in the negotiation process concerning the future of Moldova. Failure to include Gagauzia as a partner in this process represents a denial of the legitimate status of the region. Finally, the Moldovan language issue is reflected in a fifth Gagauz demand: the joint publication of laws in Romanian and in the Gagauz language.

The Gagauz dispute has had at least a minimal international impact within the southeast European region. Any discussion of the international implications of this dispute focuses on the involvement of Russia and Turkey. Equally important in the Gagauz-Russian relations is the fact that the most of the region's gasoline and other energy sources come from Russia. Therefore, the Moldovan Republic, lacking in its own energy resources, is unable to offer such compelling inducements to bind itself and Gagauzia districts together. On the other hand, Turkey was among the first states to grant diplomatic recognition to Moldova. In addition, Turkey played an important role in the 1994 agreements on Gagauz autonomy by indicating that it would like to provide development assistance and make investments in this region. Many observers have praised Moldova for how tactfully it has dealt with the Gagauz problem. While the Tiraspol-Chisinau relationship degenerated into full-scale hostilities, there was only limited violence as the Gagauz and Moldovan leaders advanced their respective causes. Today, Moldova controls Gagauzia's external relations as well as the region's defense. Gagauzia has dissolved its military organization and accepted the authority of the Moldova army. The supreme authorities of Gagauzia are formally subordinated to those of Moldova.

B) Transdnistria

In contrast, Transdnistria's fundamental demand is to assume equal status with the Moldovan Republic within a confederation. The fundamental political goal of the "Dniestr Moldovan Republic" ("DMR" hereinafter in the text) is to enjoy equal status with the Moldovan Republic within a "common state". In May 2000, the DMR rejected Moldova's offer to give the DMR a specified, guaranteed number of seats in the Moldova Parliament and to make the DMR President a vice-minister of the Moldovan Republic. Because this offer did not incorporate the notion of the DMR as the equal of the Moldovan Republic, it was rejected. Sovereignty is the first political objective of the DMR, and securing the ability to demonstrate that sovereignty is a necessary element. A key justification for this stance is the fact the DMR has an economic potential that exceeds that of the largely agricultural Gagauzia. An additional specific demand is that DMK must have both its own currency and its own army. The demand for its own currency is equally difficult to fulfil. While there is DMR ruble, it is not accepted as a legitimate currency outside of Transdnistria. The greatest security concern of the DMR is to protect itself against those who would undermine the "state". Furthermore, the future stability of the DMR is heavily dependent on its ability to satisfy the basic economic

requirements of a people who increasingly realize that their best economic prospects lie in Russia or even in the Moldovan Republic.

There four main issues which have been at the core at discussions since the beginning of the conflict and which are crucial to a political settlement: the language issue, the question of unification with Romania, the withdrawal of Russian troops and the discussion on a special status for Transdnistria. Firstly, the language issue was at the very origin of the conflict in Moldova. In particular on the left bank, the language legislation introduced in 1989 is widely regarded as the cause of the subsequent political troubles and the armed conflict in Transdnistria. Long before the declaration of sovereignty and months before the possibility of unification with Romania was publicly discussed, the language legislation became the clear signal for a process of emancipation from the Soviet legacy. Secondly, as regards the question of unification with Romania, the initial stages of Moldova's process breaking down from the communist rules brought about a reassertion of Romanian ethnic and cultural awareness. This was not surprising since under the former regime, everything was done to discourage cultural exchanges with Romania and to eliminate references to the existence of a common cultural awareness. Furthermore, the role of the Russian troops in the left bank remains the major military issue in the region. The continued presence of a Russian army in this region also raises concerns in the neighboring states of Moldova and is viewed by them as internationally destabilizing. In this context, it is important to take into consideration while discussing the Transdnistrian conflict, the strategic significance of the territory of Moldova, lying at the crossroads of the Slav world, the Black Sea and the Balkans. Finally, reinforcement of the territorial integrity of Moldova along with an understanding about the special status for Transdnistria is the declared policy of all OSCE States.

Of all the foreign states having an impact on and an interest in the potential instability of Moldova, none plays a more important role than Russia. Russian diplomats are careful to describe their interests in terms that are consistent with the requirements of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). They express their determination to continue to participate in the three party negotiations on the status of Moldova. As of early 2001, the official Russian position was that the final solution of Moldova's problems was in the hands of the leaders of the Moldovan Republic and those of the DMR.

The Ukraine has a major interest in development in Moldova. One of its most important concerns is that it is a major transit point for weapons that are to be removed from Moldova. Insuring the security of the transit process is a legitimate concern for the Ukraine. Having a common border with the DMR gives them an equally compelling reason to work for the stability of the region.

Romania shares some of the concerns evidenced by the Ukrainians. The most compelling matter expressed by the Romanians relate to the withdrawal of the Russian weapons and military forces in Transdnistria. One of Romania's most consistent demands with regard to this issue is that an observer mission be introduced into the region in order to evaluate

the withdrawal of the Russian military forces and weapons as well as the destruction of weapons.

Transdnestrian problem has many aspects – political, legal, military, economic and humanitarian. The peaceful resolution approach should undertake three dimensions for examination: political and regional perspective; social cohesion and reconciliation perspective; human rights and rule of law perspective. There two existent solutions of the Transdnestrian problem: federative solution proposed under the auspices of OSCE⁶ and autonomy solution proscribed by the Constitution of Moldova⁷.

In this relation peaceful resolution of this conflict is of great concern for the regional organizations as well as for the neighbourhood countries. At a meeting in Kiev on 1-2 July 2002, the mediators for the Moldova-Transdnestrian conflict proposed, on the initiative of the OSCE, a draft agreement on the constitutional system that would regulate the distribution of competencies between Chisinau and Tiraspol. This draft agreement defines the Republic of Moldova as a “federal state”. The implementation of the agreement would be monitored and ultimately guaranteed by the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE. Furthermore, the federalization of Moldova could lead to a positive spillover effect in the frozen conflicts of the southern Caucasus.⁸ It is greatly welcomed that the interested parties have reached the stage of negotiation over the text to finally resolve a conflict in a constitutionally ordered way. Under the present circumstances, the choice of the federal solution should be welcomed as the best option for a multi-national state as Moldova.⁹

Current Constitution of Moldova, in Article 111, provides that Transdnestrian region of Moldova can be attributed a large self governing autonomy comparable or even larger than the autonomy enjoyed by Gagauz in south of Moldova.

⁶ The outline of the plan is as follows: Republic of Moldova will become a federative state with two or three territorial administrative units that will form up a federative state of Moldova. The federative state of Moldova elect a bi-cameral Parliament composed of chamber of deputies (deputies proportionally to the population from each territorial federative unit) and chamber of representatives (equal from each territorial federative unit). It is presumed that left bank of Moldova, Gagauz autonomy and the rest of right bank of Moldova will form up the federative state. Each federative territory will enjoy vast regional powers including its constitution, regional executive, judiciary, law enforcement authorities. The federative level will be responsible for common currency, defence, and external policy.

⁷ Text of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, adopted on July 29, 1994, which available on <http://confinder.richmond.edu/moldova3.htm>.

⁸ See also OSCE, Second Parliamentary Seminar on Federalism, Moldova, 29-30 September 2003, <http://www.oscepa.org/admin/getbinary.asp?FileID=261> and OSCE documents, <http://www.osce.org/moldova/13426.html>

⁹ As Bruno Coppieters and Michael Emerson have pointed out there are some weaknesses in the draft agreement which need further attention. There is no clear position on the exact number of the subjects of the federalization: two (Moldova and Transdnestria), three (Moldova, Transdnestria and Gagauzia) or more. The long list of joint competencies could make future conflicts over the competencies of the federative subjects. There is also no political and judicial mechanisms (such as a constitutional court) for conflict mediation or resolution in case of disputes (in: COPPIETERS Bruno and EMERSON Michael, “Conflict Resolution for Moldova and Transdnestria Through Federalization?”, CEPS Policy Brief No. 25, August 2002).

Article 111. Special Autonomy Statutes

- (1) The places on the left bank of the Nistru river, as well as certain other places in the south of the Republic of Moldova may be granted special forms of autonomy according to special statutory provisions of organic law.
- (2) The organic laws establishing special statutes for the places mentioned under paragraph (1) above may be amended if three fifths of the Parliament members support such amendments.

The two existent solutions differ primarily in the degree of devolution of power to the region that needs a solution for long decade unsettled problem. From the overall observation of the Moldovan-Transdnestrian conflict we could make the conclusion that autonomy is a more viable, sustainable and realistic solution of the problem. On one hand, the federative solution apparently has a character of externally imposed solution. On the other hand, the autonomy solution can face significant threats from the negotiation position of the Russian Federation aided by unwillingness of illegitimate Transdnestrian leadership, whereas federative solution has primarily concerns of the solution legitimacy. It is generally believed that a federative solution to an internal conflict can be solved by devolution of power via federalism or autonomy and decentralization. Comparatively, as based on the individual situation of Transdnestrian conflict, federative solution can theoretically bring certain advantages as compared to the autonomy solution.

III. Realities and illusions of democratic consolidation. Moldovan experiment: from democracy to the communist party restoration (“back to the future”)

The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Mircea Snegur, chairman of the Communist Supreme Soviet, became the first President of the democratic Republic of Moldova. Snegur's centrist Agrarian Democratic Party (ADP) subsequently won a majority of parliamentary seats in the country's first free and fair popular election in 1994. The first President Mircea Snegur gained power in the early 1990's by riding a wave of anti-Soviet feeling. However, the association with highly unpopular pro-Romanian nationalism and the violent conflict in eastern Moldova set him against a large portion of the leadership and population and he was defeated in the 1996 Presidential elections by a pro-Russian candidate. Thus, two years later, Petru Lucinschi, also a former Communist, defeated Snegur in the 1996 presidential elections. While the party of Moldovan Communists (PCM) won a plurality of votes in the 1998 elections for Moldova's unicameral parliament, three centrist parties united to form a majority coalition. During this time, Moldova undertook much-needed economic reforms, drafted a new constitution, and joined NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, the PCM won a victory on the promise of a return to Soviet-living standards. Hence, in April 2001, PCM leader Vladimir Voronin was elected president. Moldova thus became the first former Soviet republic to elect a Communist Party member as president.

The dramatic change in the policy of the Communist government in Chisinau is the most important development related to the Transnistrian conflict. Elected in 2001 on a pro-Russian, anti-European programme and renewed efforts at reaching a negotiated settlement with Tiraspol, the government of President Vladimir Voronin has since

completely changed Moldova's foreign policy priorities. One of the top foreign policy priorities on Voronin's agenda when he assumed power in 2001 was the resolution of the situation in Transnistria. President Voronin stated recently however that the government in Chisinau will not even consider any federalization plans, calling for the direct involvement of the US, the EU and Romania in the negotiations. A bill on a special autonomy status for Transdnistria under the 1994 Moldovan Constitution is currently being developed by the Voronin government. However, by 2004, there still was no resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. The main reason is the pro-Russian orientation of Voronin's foreign policy because President Voronin tended to pursue a resolution of the problem based on a Russian model.

According to the Freedom House "Nations in Transit 2004"¹⁰, democratic practice in Moldova continued to decline in the period 2003-2004, with the country receiving worsening ratings in the areas of electoral process, civil society, independent media, and governance. The ruling Communist Party achieved victory in flawed local and regional elections in 2003. Overall public support for the party actually slipped during the year, but the opposition remained fragmented and lacking in resources. Efforts to settle the Transdnistrian conflict continued, but Russia failed to comply with commitments to withdraw its armaments and munitions from the breakaway region. The persistence of weak governance, widespread corruption marked the year 2004.

The last parliamentary elections were held on 6th March 2005. These were the fourth elections since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. As a result of March 6th elections only three out of the twenty three contestants passed the threshold of representation – Party of the Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) (45,98% votes, 56 mandates), Block Moldova Democratic (BDM) (28,53% votes, 34 mandates) and Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD) (9,07% votes, 11 mandates).¹¹ It is worth noting that International Election Observation Mission – a joint undertaking of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament – found that the "6th March 2005 parliamentary elections in Moldova were generally in compliance with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards. They did, however, fall short of some key commitments, particularly regarding campaign conditions and media access and in this respect, the negative trends noted already in 2003 local elections were confirmed."¹² In addition, unexpected opposition move overshadowed the re-election on April 4, 2005 of Vladimir Voronin as a President.¹³

¹⁰ Freedom House, Moldova, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nitransit/2003/index.htm>

¹¹ Information on the March 6, 2005 parliamentary elections could be find on: <http://www.elections2005.md/>

¹² Ibid, see footnote 8.

¹³ BOTAN Igor, "Post-Election Reflections", Political Commentaries, available on: <http://www.adept.md/en/comments/political/200503141/>

In other words, this campaign has also confirmed some of the tendencies registered in the previous elections: a) 1/3 of the Parliament membership remains the same; and 2) 2/3 of deputies come from Chisinau and the regions remain again under-presented.

Moreover, the Freedom House and the Council of Europe noticed a worsening of the political climate since the communists came to power. Thus, in February 2002 a coalition of 30 Moldovian NGO's blamed the communist for using the public media as a communist propaganda machine, violating political pluralism, neglecting decisions by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that concern Moldova and marginalizing the Romanian language in favour of Russian. In addition, the relations between Romania were considerably worsened since the communists came to power in 2001. The communist authorities underlying the Russian connection have raised fears in Bucharest for the return of a Soviet approach to the identity of Bessarabian Romanians.

It is extremely difficult to make prognosis how the new elected Moldovian communist government will deal successfully with the Transdnistrian conflict. Because although the conflict remains unresolved, there have been a number of significant and at times dramatic developments in recent years, both in the diplomatic efforts to negotiate a settlement, and in the underlying geopolitical alignments and political and economic structures sustaining the conflict.

IV. European Union, OSCE and Moldova

At the beginning of the Moldovan-Transdnistrian conflict, the role of the European Union was mainly reactive and of limited importance. Since 2003, the EU has taken a series of measures vis-à-vis Moldova and Transdnistria. Indeed, what emerges looks like the beginning of rather coherent and long-run conflict resolution plan. Hence, the growing EU engagement with Moldova can be described of a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, the EU has gradually established itself as a key external actor in diplomatic efforts to resolve the Transdnistrian conflict, as well as in a post-conflict settlement. And secondly, the EU is attempting to change the underlying economic, social and political structures that have allowed to conflict to remain frozen for more than a decade by upgrading its relations with Chisinau and by measures to prevent smuggling and trafficking.

The two latest proposals from the mediators, the Kyiv document of July 2002¹⁴ and the Kozak memorandum of November 2003, both called for the creation of Moldovan federation. Ukraine and Georgia were to make joint proposals for a settlement at the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) summit on 22 April 2005 in Chisinau, supposedly suggesting the creation of a federation, which remains the favoured model for Russia and the leadership in Transdnistria.

¹⁴ Kyiv statement, available on http://www.osce.org/documents/mm/1999/07/458_en.pdf

In addition, the definition of the status of the Transdnistriean region is the most important and challenging task for the OSCE Mission to Moldova¹⁵. Alongside Russia and Ukraine, the OSCE Mission acts as co-mediator in a five-sided negotiation process aimed at finding a final and comprehensive settlement of the Transdnistriean conflict. The Mission facilitates meetings between the two parties and works together with the co-mediators and both parties in a five-sided negotiation process. The aim of the negotiations is to find a lasting political settlement of the conflict. Furthermore, the Mission actively supported the creation and work of a Joint Constitutional Commission set up in February 2003 at the initiative of the Moldova President. The Commission, composed of representatives from Moldova and the Transdnistriean region, is to work out a new constitution for a united federal state. Between May and October 2003 the Joint Constitutional Commission worked in parallel with the ongoing political settlement negotiations and drafted a chapter on human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, it failed to make progress on the federal structures of the future State and on the division of competencies between local and central authorities.

Conclusion

This study of Moldova examines the controversial wisdom that an early break with the communist past is critical for democratic consolidation and finds it to be problematic. Thus Moldova's democracy in the 1990's was stronger than in any other non-Baltic post-Soviet republic. Nevertheless, the country political system is best understood not as a struggling or unconsolidated democracy but instead as a case of failed authoritarianism or pluralism by default.

Furthermore, apparently Vladimir Voronin was re-elected as a result of a consensus reached with opposition, still one question remains unanswered: what are the guarantees that President Voronin would stick to the promise made related to peaceful settlement of the Moldovan-Transdnistriean conflict?

¹⁵ Proposals and Recommendations of the Mediators from the OSCE, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine with regards to the Transdnistriean settlement, http://www.osce.org/documents/mm/2004/02/2079_en.pdf. See also Declaration of the Foreign Policy Association of Moldova regarding the "Settlement Plan for the Transdnistriean problem", http://eurojournal.org/comments.php?id=187_0_1_0_C and Moldovan Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, "Critique for Federalization of Moldova as a Mean to Solve Transdnistriean Conflict", <http://www.humanrights.md/eng/News/Federalization.chdom.pdf>

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