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RUSSIAN AND EUROPEAN POLICIES IN THE 'COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD': THE CASE OF MOLDOVA

Introduction

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it proposes to examine comparatively Russian and European policies in the 'common neighborhood'. Secondly, it seeks to illustrate how Russian and European policies have been manifested in Moldova. Looking to draw a holistic image, the first part will focus on objectives, tools employed and how Russian and European neighborhood policies are implemented. Geographically, the first part will deal with post-Soviet states, which form the 'land in between' where European and Russian neighborhoods overlap. To test the main findings, the second part will explore in detail Russian and European policies in Moldova along four dimensions: politics, economics, identity and security. The section dedicated to Moldova will look at developments between 2009 and 2012. The time frame covers the most politically intensive period in Moldova's post-Soviet history. First, however, an introductory question concerning the methodological angle of the research needs to be answered.

There is no single theoretical framework in the International Relations that could explain the policies of such heterogeneous actors as Russia and the EU. The debate on which analytical tools to employ to better explain actors' behavior revolves around approaches which underscore either tangible or intangible factors. Consequently, it is often assumed that Russian policy in the 'near abroad' is power-driven and pursues rough national interest, while the EU policy in the Eastern neighborhood is normatively-founded and is mainly about the diffusion of norms and ideas, and regional cooperation. Although the dichotomy between cynical realist versus benign constructivist approaches unveils some important philosophical fundamentals, neither entirely captures the factors which shape neighborhood policies. Plenty of alternative perspectives can also yield invaluable insights and help to draw a more complex picture.

Traditionally, Russian policy in the 'near abroad' is viewed through realist, neo-realist or neo-imperialist lenses,¹ while the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is explained in terms of neo-functionalism, historical institutionalism, liberal inter-governmentalism, soft imperialism, democratic peace theory or constructivism.² In contrast, this study seeks to transcend binary approaches and advocates for 'methodological pluralism'.³ As it has been aptly underscored: "[...] Not only can different actors employ different types of behavior/action, but even a single actor can switch from one mode to another depending on the circumstances".⁴ This observation pertains to neighborhood policies which have been attuned constantly to global and regional dynamics; successive reviews of the ENP and tactical adjustments of Russian policy in the 'near abroad' stand as proof. In addition, the complexity of neighborhood policies which impact security, politics, economics, and social and environmental issues of the targeted states requires 'methodological pluralism'. Neighborhood policies are powered simultaneously by different logics. For instance, the ENP is at the nexus of the EU's foreign security development, enlargement and trade policy,⁵ each one having its own rationales. Thus, the application of various approaches correlated with the empirical data could produce a more nuanced image. If 'methodological pluralism' is only at the beginning of its career in studying the ENP,⁶ investigation of Russian neighborhood policy has so far been deprived of this eclecticism.

I. RNP and ENP compared

1.1 RNP and ENP objectives

1.1.1 RNP objectives

Russia is pursuing several interwoven and reciprocally reinforcing objectives in the 'common neighborhood'. Given their often disruptive nature in neighborhood states, "declared objectives often differ from the real ones",⁷ while hidden agendas are often implemented via covert activities. As one EU official put it, "often we do not see Russian influence in the neighborhood, but we can feel it".⁸ This should not come as a surprise as "historically, Russia displayed a profound capacity to confound and confuse partially by design and partially due to opaque political culture".⁹ Close examination of Russia's policy actions can help

to deduce what objectives the Kremlin actually follows in the 'common neighborhood'.

The first and foremost objective of the Russian Neighborhood Policy (RNP) is to build a ring of relatively weak (but not failed) states and loyal political regimes in the 'shared neighborhood'. Weak statehood serves to maintain the power asymmetry between Russia and its neighbors and facilitate Moscow's meddling in domestic affairs.¹⁰ Occasionally, its neighbors' weak statehoods are instrumentalized for Russia's domestic purposes. Presenting these neighbors as products of failed liberal projects, the Kremlin aims to boost the legitimacy of the 'vertical power' it has built at home,¹¹ thus preempting revolutionary contagion in Russia. If not always at the origins of disputes, Moscow often works to breed intra-elite conflicts, national identity splits and dysfunctional state institutions. In turn, these provide a favorable environment to set or upset the domestic or foreign policy agendas of its neighbors when needed, significantly curtailing their sovereignty. Also, weak states make it easier for Moscow to prevent what it sees as anti-Russian regimes from seizing power, or to make life unbearable for such regimes by dramatically increasing the costs of their survival. In the latter case, Moscow seeks the collapse of the regime or at least accommodation of Russian interests.

Kremlin-friendly political regimes facilitate Russian economic and military penetration.¹² At the same time, Russia's expansion in the economic and security fields provides Moscow with levers to ensure its neighbors' dependence and ultimately compliant behavior. Thus, the RNP's second objective is to establish control over strategically important sectors of the economy (mineral resources, defense, nuclear, aerospace) and vital infrastructure of the post-Soviet states.¹³ As Russian business and state interests are interlinked, economic expansion in the 'common neighborhood' is guided by mercantilist, as well as political motives, although political ones often prevail over profit-driven rationales.¹⁴ As has been aptly observed regarding the state-business nexus, "under Putin, Russian businesses have increasingly come to operate in an atmosphere that encourages close alignment with both official and the tacit goals of the state".¹⁵

The third objective of the RNP addresses macro-regional dynamics. On the one hand, Russia strives to hamper NATO and EU expansion to the 'common neighborhood'. Confirmation of this attitude comes from the highest-level in Russia; president Medvedev linked Russia's intervention in South Ossetia in 2008 with Georgia's aspirations to join NATO.¹⁶

On the other hand, Russia strives to prevent the fragmentation of what is perceived as a common economic, security and humanitarian space in the neighborhood. To this end, Russia has developed several regional integration programs to shut its neighbors off from alternative integration projects and to regulate directly or indirectly the level of engagement between post-Soviet states and the EU and NATO. Humanitarian space preservation is supported through various soft power instruments aimed to augment Russian cultural influence and spread Russia-centric perceptions among people and elites in the post-Soviet region.

Simultaneously, this should have helped Russia to advance another regional objective, namely the recognition of its sphere of 'privileged interests' in the 'near abroad'. From a normative point of view, such recognition is essential for Russia's self-perception as a great power.¹⁷ During recent years, Russia intensively sought to extract the legal and practical recognition of a 'privileged interests' zone from Western powers. In 2009 the Kremlin floated the European Security Treaty draft, which if concluded would implicitly seal the status quo, legitimize Russian-sponsored initiatives in the post-Soviet region and halt any future NATO or EU enlargement, as it might be regarded by signatory states as diminishing their national security.¹⁸ In another attempt in 2010, Moscow proposed a sector-based Russian-NATO missile defense system to overcome the stalemate on the US missile shield.

Ultimately, by securing the above-mentioned objectives, Russia would earn the ability to assert its great power status on global scale.¹⁹ Seen from Moscow, one of the defining features of contemporary international relations is regionalization. Regions are organized politically and economically around powerful poles, which form pillars of an international system. Russian-driven integration in the post-Soviet region aspires to project Russia as one such regional pole with global clout. As one Russian observer underscored: "[...] integration in the post-Soviet region is an opportunity to strengthen our negotiating position in dialogue with competitors for leadership".²⁰ Thus, Russia's primacy in the 'near abroad' is regarded as a prerequisite for its effective participation in a multilateral arrangement of great powers. This belief explains why the post-Soviet region is presented in state documents as Russia's main foreign policy priority.

1.1.2 ENP objectives

The EU engages its neighbors actively in order to advance several interlinked objectives. Analysis of official documents and actions unveils an ENP which is powered by a combination of normative/duty-narratives and threat/risk security narratives.²¹ In one of the first conceptual attempts to define the ENP, the EU argued that it “has a duty, not only towards its citizens and those of the new member states, but also towards its present and future neighbors to ensure continuing social cohesion and economic dynamism”.²² However, the duty narrative is balanced by a risk security narrative. The EU’s Security Strategy dedicates a large amount of space to security threats in the neighborhood and how to address them.²³ Although duty-based and security-based objectives often generate tensions, they are mutually reinforcing and cannot be separated.

As the EU faces weak states on its periphery, one of its objectives is to support state-building or state-consolidation.²⁴ Due to increasing interdependence, weak states with dysfunctional state apparatuses pose multiple soft security threats for the EU, as they are often engaged in conflicts, the export of organized crime and illegal immigration.²⁵ State-building efforts are particularly relevant in the Eastern neighborhood, where the ex-Soviet republics regained independence after the collapse of Soviet Union and embarked on nation and state-building processes. The EU’s support for building functional state institutions and improving the quality of governance aims to strengthen its neighbors’ statehood. One way to make state-building results durable is democracy. Thus, democratization is another task the ENP pursues. The EU does not impose democracy on others. However, the amount of assistance provided towards state building depends not on political regime loyalty, but on the partner state’s commitment to the principles and values of democracy. In this regard the EU’s High Representative for the CFSP remarked: “we do system change, not a regime change”.²⁶ This underlines the linkage between democratic state building and the long-term stability the EU is looking for in the neighborhood.

Political liberalization and institutions alone cannot guarantee stability in the neighborhood. Therefore, the EU’s second objective is to bring prosperity through “inclusive economic development – so that EU neighbors can trade, invest and grow in a sustainable way, reducing social and regional inequalities, creating jobs for their workers and higher standards of living for their people”.²⁷ Toward this aim, the EU facilitates

the gradual convergence and sectoral integration of its partners into its common market. The drive toward integration is guided by a formula of “sharing everything but institutions”.²⁸

But integration is not only about helping neighbors. It also involves a mercantile agenda of gaining access to the new markets. While some neighbors’ domestic markets are negligible because of their size, others represent a big piece of the pie for European businesses (e.g., Ukraine with population almost 46 million). Moreover, several neighbors provide transit or supply the EU with oil and gas. Thus, besides improving energy efficiency, rehabilitating partner states’ energy-related infrastructure and connecting it to the European market, integration aims to enhance the EU’s energy security as well. Often interests in the energy field create tension with the EU’s democratization objectives. Finally, integration means building links between the EU’s and the partner states’ specialized institutions to tackle soft security threats, such as illegal immigration, drugs and human trafficking, and cyber crimes. As one EU diplomat framed it: “We do not want a neighborhood which puts security pressure on us.”²⁹ In this field as well, the EU’s security interests often clash with its democratization agenda.

These very tangible ENP goals are congruent with the EU’s aspirations to reaffirm the viability of its model in its immediate periphery and assert itself into foreign politics under a ‘modest force for good’ banner.³⁰ Thus, for the EU, the neighborhood is “the principal testing ground for the European Union’s claim to have developed a unique capacity to promote internal transformations of states, which is driven less by a realist calculus of military power than by the civilian tools of economic integration and moral persuasion”.³¹ Its self-reproduction in the neighborhood has foreign policy implications for the EU and its international standing. Effectively employing ‘transformative power’ in the neighborhood should support the EU’s ‘strategic ambitions to be taken seriously as an autonomous and powerful actor in international politics’.³²

1.2 RNP and ENP tools/implementation

1.2.1 RNP tools/implementation

In the political realm, Russia often plays the role of electoral or post-electoral entrepreneur. Russia provides photo opportunities at the Kremlin for incumbent loyal leaders to boost their chances of being

re-elected and dispatches high-ranking officials throughout the region in the run-up to elections for the same purpose. Russia also orchestrates TV campaigns against leaders who tend in the Kremlin's view to disregard Russian interests in the region. Russian TV channels air documentaries exposing massive corruption in high echelons of power or reports on local officials' failure to deliver on previous electoral promises. Russia also often relies on CIS election monitors to validate rigged elections, covering up human rights abuses during the vote. When a Russian-friendly candidate is elected, a positive assessment from the monitors is usually followed by swift congratulations from the Kremlin. Alternatively, CIS monitors can play democratic games as well, harassing disloyal regimes with tough oversight of pre-electoral campaigns. In the case of an unsatisfactory outcome for the Kremlin, Russian TV channels are quick to point out that the dubious quality of the vote has led to local protest movements, if such events flare up after elections. However, if the post-electoral protest is aimed against a Russian-friendly candidate, the Kremlin is ready to provide authoritarian diplomatic protection against international monitors' criticism, blaming external forces for attempts to destabilize the country. Consequently Russia often uses such windows of opportunity, when leaders are under attack at home and/or heavily criticized by international organizations, to deepen states' economic and security dependence on Russia. The Kremlin is very efficient in extracting economic and political concessions in pre-electoral or bumpy post-electoral phases, which would be difficult to obtain otherwise. If elections are inconclusive, Moscow might send a high-ranking official to forge a Russian-friendly coalition in exchange for economic benefits. To solidify Russian influence, parties are also giving the opportunity to sign cooperation protocols with the powerful Russian party "United Russia". In case of un-friendly regimes, Russia works to isolate them internationally and/or to undermine from inside by inciting Russian-speaking minorities. NGO's are also often instrumentalized to promote Moscow's message that the wrong political orientation will have negative economic consequences and to outline the advantages of cooperating with Russia and joining its regional integration projects. Seeking to strengthen its political influence, the Kremlin provides financial and logistical support to political movements or parties with a pro-Russian message.

Russia is the biggest economy by share size in the post-Soviet region. It attracts millions of guest workers (legal and illegal) from the region, who by sending home several billion dollars annually fuel economic growth

in their countries of origin. Russia remains a significant trade partner for many states in the neighborhood and the ultimate source of cash, free of democratic strings, in times of crisis. Given these factors, over the last decade Russia has extensively applied economic levers to accomplish its objectives. The global economic crisis strengthened rather than diminished Russia's propensity to use economic tools in the post-Soviet region. Therefore, Russia (on a bilateral basis or via EurAsEc) has promised or offered loans and credits (to governments or local banks), gas at a discounted price and certain amounts of oil free of duty tax to obtain the right to participate in the privatization of strategic assets, to prolong its military presence and to bring neighbors inside Russian-sponsored regional economic projects, such as the CU or the CIS Free Trade Area. Russia recently provided diplomatic support against economic sanctions the EU imposed on Belarus, a CU member.³³ Russian experts observe that this kind of solidarity is a long-term trend which will become stronger with deeper economic integration among core groups of states in the post-Soviet region.³⁴ Besides carrots, Russia often uses economic sticks: limitation of access to its market, expulsion of immigrants, suspension of oil or gas deliveries, sudden hikes in gas prices, and communication blockades. Moscow uses or threatens to use these sticks to get involved in the privatization of attractive economic assets, to discourage neighbors' economic association with the EU and to coerce them to join Russian regional projects. The Russian side argues that by joining the Eurasian Union, states will boost their collective bargaining power and will get better terms of economic cooperation with the EU.³⁵

Despite the fact that Russia's cultural clout in the "common neighborhood" is declining, the Kremlin still holds several strong cards and lately invested substantial resources to boost its soft power. In EaP states Russia and its politicians (Putin and Medvedev) stand high in opinion polls. Important segments of society (between 40% and 80%) see Russia as an ally, strategic partner or attractive economic integrator (through the CU or the Eurasian Union). Even in Georgia after the 2008 war, the overwhelming majority of citizens who regard Russia as a threat to national security support dialogue with Russia and normalization of relations.³⁶ Russia's high scores in the neighborhood rest on Russian language and pop culture, religion, mass media, Russian-speaking population, scholarships for students, nostalgia for Soviet times' social welfare among the older population, immigrants who work in Russia, and socialization using Russian social networks. To amplify these advantages and convert cultural

potential in the neighborhood into political or economic dividends, the Kremlin has relied on partnerships with old institutions (the Russian Church), developed new institutions (e.g., Rossotrudnichestvo; Department of Socio-Economic Cooperation with CIS Countries, Abkhazia and South Ossetia within presidential administration, Russia's President Special Representative for Cooperation with Compatriots Organizations Abroad) as well as state sponsored NGOs and movements (Russkiy Mir; Gorchiakov's Public Diplomacy Support Fund; "Fatherland-Eurasian Union"), and is planning to create a new one (Russian Aid).

Besides organizing work with compatriots, this institutional infrastructure has been put into use to promote Russian-friendly historical narratives, diminish social support for the EU, propagate the idea of a Eurasian Union and forestall some reforms by invoking incompatibility with religious and moral values. Russia's soft power seduces not only the general public, but inspires elites as well. Russia provides a model of "authoritarian capacity building",³⁷ which ensures political regime resilience against bottom up democratization efforts.³⁸ In some cases, it also offers examples of foreign policy behavior. Therefore, the pronounced authoritarian trends in Ukraine after the presidential elections in 2010 were described as a "putinization" of the political system.

Russia remains the most powerful military actor in the neighborhood and often employs security levers to complement political and economic ones, or uses them as a last resort when political and economic coercion has not paid off. In addition to the full scale or limited use of military force against its neighbors, Russia redraws borders, fuels separatist sentiments, orchestrate cyber-attacks, extends its military presence or opens new bases, sells arms to conflict sides or acts to restrict arms transfers to states perceived as foes, participates in negotiation formats on protracted conflicts, strengthens de facto states, develops regional security forums and alliances, questions on the diplomatic level the integrity or viability of neighbors' state projects, provides security guarantees in the case of military conflict, and conducts "peace-keeping" missions. The Kremlin instrumentalizes security levers to keep or deepen states' fragility and dependence on Russia's security guarantees, to shut out other military alliances from expanding into the region, to maintain the status quo when favorable to Russia in conflict regions having enough resources to ignite tensions when deemed necessary, and to influence the foreign policy orientation of its neighbors.

1.2.2 ENP tools/implementation

In the political playing field, the EU also often behaves as an electoral entrepreneur, but the influence it exerts is of a different kind. The EU is more preoccupied with the quality of the process, rather than with who prevails in the competition. Obviously, EU member states have political preferences. But the EU tries hard to stay neutral in the run up to elections. Therefore, the EU is reluctant to provide photo opportunities to leaders before elections. Instead it encourages further interaction with the authorities on fair and free elections. Even if the European Council gives the mandate, the EU waits for the elections test before starting talks on Association Agreements or releasing macro-financial assistance. Similarly, if both sides have finalized negotiations, the EU could delay signing Association Agreements (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) pending the conduct of fair and free elections in the partner state. To monitor the electoral process, the EU contributes to OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions dispatching members of the European Parliament. In case of a post-electoral crisis, the EU, if invited, mediates between those in power and the opposition. Elections conducted with gross violations of human rights followed by violence and persecution of political opponents usually trigger critical resolutions of the European Parliament, sanctions, increased support for civil society and the scaling back of financial assistance to the government. In such cases, the EU insists on impartial investigation and the release of political detainees. When the EU's economic interests are at stake as well, EU institutions tend to use a "division of labor". For instances, the EU Commission promotes its interests by striking deals, while the European Parliament advance its values by securing the release of opposition figures.³⁹ The EU employs a variety of political tools to solidify neighbors' statehood and to support democratization after elections: Association Agreements, high level visits, human rights dialogues, the European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy and Civil Society Facility funding (and in perspective the European Endowment for Democracy), diplomatic backing, funding for the development of institutions which guarantee the rule of law, high advisory missions, action plans or individual road maps to guide reforms, and increased funding for the best performers of reform in the neighborhood (Governance Facility).

The EU's economic presence in the neighborhood rapidly expanded in the 2000s. Economic interconnection between the EU and its eastern

neighbors has deepened due to EU member states' investments and the EU's unilateral and asymmetric preferences (Generalized System of Preferences - GSP or GSP+; Autonomous Trade Preferences - ATPs), which extended duty-free treatment to certain products, thus opening the European market for its neighbors. The EU launched negotiations on DCFTA with four out of six states in the Eastern Partnership (Belarus and Azerbaijan are not members of WTO), which aim to eliminate mutual non-tariff trade barriers. The EU uses DCFTA talks and necessary reforms to implement agreements to build institutions, improve investment climates and institute the rule of law. To this end, the EU has pushed its neighbors to carry out reforms as a precondition to start DCFTA talks, and later unveiled financial packages for sectoral reforms and the Comprehensive Institutional Building program (CIB) to support reforms. To improve governance and public administration, the EU in partnership with OECD extended in 2008 the multidimensional assistance provided within the Support for Improvement of Governance and Management Program (SIGMA) to its neighbors. To bolster the development of social and economic infrastructure, the European Investment Bank (EIB) launched in 2010 the Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Trust Fund. In parallel with ongoing DCFTA talks with its eastern neighbors, the EU actively pursues sectoral integration. During the global economic turmoil in 2008-2009, the EU assumed the new role of expanding economic instruments previously employed only occasionally. It provided macro-financial assistance and facilitated the release of IMF loans to stabilize the macro-economic situation in the eastern neighborhood, ultimately helping its partners to weather the crisis.

The deployment of political and economic tools in the eastern neighborhood fuels profound societal transformations which reshape national identities. Reforms encouraged by the EU help to overcome civic apathy and intolerance. For instance the EU's focus on the protection of consumer rights nurtures the logic of the "consumer-based market" in opposition to the prevailing model in the region, that of the "seller-based market", a leftover from the Soviet epoch. The EU empowers citizens to demand respect not only of political rights, but also of economic and social ones, thus impacting various sectors of society and the state. The EU foments debates on tolerance and non-discrimination, norms enshrined in constitutions to which governments often pay lip service. Substantial soft power, still used across the neighborhood despite the economic crisis in the Euro zone,⁴⁰ allows the EU to generate transformative effects. Citizens in Eastern Partnership states have a preponderantly positive image about

the EU, support accession to EU to various degrees, would like to study or work in the EU, and are learning European languages in increasing numbers, challenging Russia's status as the lingua franca in the "shared neighborhood". Over the last decade, the EU developed instruments to boost its cultural influence: operationalization of EU Information Centers, visa facilitation or visa-free dialogues, mobility partnerships, students exchange programs (Tempus and Erasmus Mundus), research and innovation (participation in FP7), Civil Society Facility and cultural events and celebrations.

Often criticized for being a one-dimensional power which is not able to speak with one voice and lacks military capabilities,⁴¹ the EU has become increasingly involved in hard and soft security issues in the "common neighborhood". In some cases the EU has been forced by the crisis in its neighborhood to react, but there are examples of deliberate and pro-active involvement in tackling security issues. The EU has developed several instruments to promote a multidimensional vision of security. In addition to safeguarding macro-economic and social stability as well as improving energy security in the eastern neighborhood, the EU has mediated cease-fire agreements, extended the institute of Special Representatives (EUSR) and deployed CSDP missions to the region, gotten involved in post-conflict negotiations and applied sanctions against those who were blocking the peace-talks, sponsored infrastructure projects and confidence-building measure between sides, provided technical assistance for the demarcation of borders, offered equipment and funds to improve border controls and combat trans-border crimes, contributed to the modernization of law enforcement institutions, encouraged border cooperation between states in the region, concluded readmission agreements, started to institutionalize the link between law enforcement agencies and Europol and Frontex, and organized cooperation in the prevention of and response to natural and man-made disasters. To draw neighbors more closely into the realm of the EU's foreign and security policy (CFSP), states are regularly invited to adhere to the EU's CFSP positions. Responding to the aspiration of its neighbors, the EU launched bilateral consultation on CSDP, which could lead to bilateral agreements that would allow EaP states to participate in CSDP missions.

II. RNP and ENP in Moldova

2.1 *RNP in Moldova*

2.1.1 Politics

In the run-up to the 2009 parliamentary elections, Russia acted to boost the Moldovan Communist Party's chances to stay in power. Despite bumpy relations between the Communist government and the Kremlin after the failure of the Kozak memorandum, Russia decided to support what has been seen in the Moldovan political field as the lesser evil. Moscow dispatched in March 2009 the foreign minister to Chisinau, his first visit to Moldova since 2001. Later that month, outgoing president Vladimir Voronin was offered a photo opportunity at the Kremlin. Unlike in 2005, when Moldovan authorities stopped CIS election observers at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, in 2009 the Communist government welcomed monitors from the CIS. In the aftermath of the April 2009 elections, the CIS election-monitoring arm qualified the vote as "free and transparent",⁴² while Russia officials swiftly recognized the outcome of the elections in which the Communist Party prevailed. The Kremlin promptly reacted to post-electoral violence by providing diplomatic back up for the Communist government and by praising the Moldovan authorities for economic stability and multi-vector foreign policy, and at the same time blaming external forces for trying to undo these accomplishments.⁴³

After the Communists failed to recruit the one vote in the parliament needed to elect a head of state, the Kremlin again threw its weight behind the Communist Party in early elections. Vladimir Voronin was offered more photo opportunities with the Russian leadership in Moscow and was promised a \$500 million loan.⁴⁴ After the elections, the Kremlin sent the head of presidential administration, Sergey Naryshkin, to convince Democratic Party headed by Marian Lupu to join the Communists in a central-left ruling coalition. When this attempt failed and the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) was formed instead, Russia scaled back its \$500 million promise and invested resources to strengthen its ties with the Democratic Party, a member of the new ruling coalition in Moldova. With the Communists in opposition, Moscow was looking to have a strong voice inside the AEI by supporting Lupu's candidacy for president and institutionalizing a partnership between "United Russia", the party in power in Russia, and Moldova's Democratic Party. However, as the political crisis in Moldova dragged on, Russia switched tactics. It shifted

into first gear, speculating on new opportunities offered by the early elections in 2010. In December 2010 the head of the Russian presidential administration again visited Moldova to foster the development of a center-left coalition, apparently tempting the Communist and Democratic Parties with discount gas prices, non-restricted access to the Russian market and economic integration projects developed by Russia. But his mission proved again unsuccessful.

In 2011 Russia continued its electoral entrepreneurship in Moldova. It supported the Communist Party in local elections and engineered the removal of Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov, who despite the Kremlin's advice refused to step down. Russian TV channels aired critical reports about Chisinau's mayor Dorin Chirtoaca and documentaries about the separatist leader's shadow deals. To put pressure on the AEI and Smirnov, Russia raised doubts regarding the correctness of the electoral process in Moldova, particularly in the capital city of Chisinau,⁴⁵ launched a criminal investigation against Igor Smirnov's younger son and suspended financial aid to Transnistria. As the Communist Party kept losing important members, who ventured into the re-making of political parties, Russia decided to support such initiatives. The Party of Socialists from Moldova, headed by Igor Dodon, is a case in point. Despite the successful election of a head of the state in 2012, which prevented more early elections in Moldova, Russia still portrays the ruling coalition in Chisinau as incapable of defining and promoting a set of clear objectives.⁴⁶

2.1.2 Economics

Although Moldova's trade has diversified, Russia remains an important market for Moldovan goods (26% of exports in 2010),⁴⁷ a vital source of natural resources (natural gas) and an attractive destination for migrant workers (estimations vary between 100.000 and 400.000). Given the European orientation of the ruling coalition in Chisinau, the Kremlin did not hesitate to use economic levers to underscore Moldova's structural dependencies on Russia, to convey a strong signal to respect Russian economic and political interests, and to hamper reforms that endanger Russia's position in Moldova. Between 2009 and 2012 Russia several times selectively restricted access to its market for Moldovan goods claiming poor quality and a failure to comply with Russian standards. Usually temporary restrictions were followed by a period of negotiations, inspections and ultimately a re-opening of the Russian market. Instead of

permanently shutting down access to its market, Russia preferred to play the game of “half-closed, half-open door” in order to mount domestic pressure on the government and to induce a more cooperative stance towards Russian economic initiatives. In particular Russia eyed Moldova’s participation in the CIS Free Trade Area. It seems that Russia would like to see Moldova in the CU as well after bringing in Ukraine.⁴⁸ In spite of Moldova’s proposals in 2010 to relax the travel and registration regime, Moscow has dragged its feet in negotiations. In May 2012 both sides announced the conclusion of talks on a labor force migration agreement. However, it was not clear whether after signing the agreement Moscow would ease registration rules for Moldovans, who often come to Russia as seasonal workers for 2-3 months. Fully aware of the importance of remittances for Moldova (around \$1 billion came from Russia in 2011, oscillating between 20-30% of GDP⁴⁹), Russia will play the migration/registration card as long as it can, linking the issue to membership in the CU. The Russian ambassador to Chisinau insinuated that Moldovan migrant workers would benefit from better conditions once Moldova joins CU.⁵⁰

The energy sector in Moldova draws much Russian attention. While the 2007-2011 gas supply and transit contract with Gazprom envisioned a gradual price increase up to the level paid by European customers, Russia hinted in 2011 that Moldova might get a discount if it is ready for a Harkiv-type deal; in other words an extended Russian military presence in exchange for cheap gas. Later Russia implied that by joining the CU Moldova could get up to a 30% discount for oil and gas, as export duties are not applied to Russian energy resources exported within the CU.⁵¹ These trade-off proposals were followed in parallel by the instrumentalization of sticks. In 2010 Moldova acceded to the Energy Community, assuming obligations to align its legislation and practices with European ones by 2015. The provision that raised eyebrows in Moscow was the separation of production from the transport and distribution of gas (unbundling) when the same company controls both. This is the case of Moldovagaz in which the majority stakeholder is the Russian state monopoly Gazprom. Anticipating the upcoming unbundling, the Kremlin delayed negotiations on a new long-term gas supply contract with Moldova, pressured the government to give up on unbundling and raised the issue of the payment of the gas debt (around \$100 million), including Transnistrian’s debt (which nears \$3 billion).⁵²

2.1.3 Identity

In Moldova, the soft power developed by Russia has impacted elites as well as the general public. The outgoing leader Vladimir Voronin tried to reproduce an authoritarian scheme of power (non-) transfer. By moving into the position of speaker of the parliament and naming the successor in the presidential seat, Voronin tried to imitate a Putin-style power transition. Thus, he aimed to respect constitutional provisions formally in order to stay and consolidate his position in the power pyramid. As this soft authoritarianism scenario failed and Moldova formed a European-oriented coalition government instead, Russia actively employed soft power instruments to shape the information space and public opinion. In the aftermath of post-election violence, Russia revived Romania's threat to Moldovan statehood rhetoric. Later the Russian foundation "Recognition" organized a series of public debates questioning the feasibility of Moldova's European choice, criticizing the deployment of US missile shield elements in Romania and attacking those who tried to falsify history.

Russian officials selectively adopted a soft power discourse towards Moldova. For instance, former representative of Russia in the bilateral inter-governmental economic commission Andrei Fursenko declared that "Russia never regarded Moldova as a wine republic only. You had in the past a strong school of physicians and mathematicians".⁵³ To provide a new impetus for cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, he promised to increase the number of scholarships for Moldovan students in Russian universities to 500. In 2009 Russia opened the Center of Science and Culture in Chisinau, while "Russian World" launched its regional center in Transnistria. In just 3 years the Russian Cultural Center substantially increased its visibility not only in Chisinau, but across the country.

Russia's soft power was put to work in Moldova to blur national identity formation, change foreign policy priorities and hinder European integration. Russian sponsored NGOs, even if unable to organize mass public events, are usually very vocal in the public space. They protest against pro-unionist manifestations, support Russian military actions in Georgia, demand renaming of streets, distribute Russian symbols during holidays and organize celebrations of Russian national holidays. The launch of the Eurasian Union initiative in Moscow had immediate spill over effects in Moldova. The Russian Center of Science and Culture in Chisinau organized a debate on the benefits Moldova could obtain by joining the CU. Russia supported the creation of the Eurasia-Inform

Center, which aims to provide information about Moldova's integration into the Eurasian Union. The Center organized with the support of Rossotrudnichestvo and the Center of Social-Conservative Politics affiliated with the "United Russia" Party a conference on Moldova's perspectives in the Eurasian Union. To provide further support to the Eurasian Union theme, the Eurasia News Agency started to operate in Moldova in July 2012. At the same time, under the banner "Fatherland-Eurasian Union" Russian MPs from the "United Russia" Party launched an initiative to unite all pro-Russian organizations in Moldova and streamline their activities, a process not confined to Moldova.⁵⁴ Last but not least, besides being involved in electoral entrepreneurship in Moldova, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has been instrumentalized to obstruct Moldova's European integration. In a move without precedent, the ROC publicly opposed the drafting of an equal opportunity law and later condemned its adoption, denouncing its "sexual orientation" formulation.⁵⁵ As the law was part of the road map towards a visa-free regime with the European Union, the ROC, closely interacting with the Kremlin, hindered Moldova's European agenda by publicly supporting constituencies that were effectively militating against the law.

2.1.4 Security

Russia is an indispensable actor in the resolution of the protracted conflict in Transnistria. Although Russia's position in Transnistria is not as strong as before, the Kremlin possesses a variety of instruments to shape politics and economics in the separatist region. For instance, the Russian-sponsored candidate advanced to the second round of the presidential elections in 2011, but ultimately was defeated by the independent Evghenii Shevchyuk. However, in the aftermath of elections Russia flexed its muscles in Transnistria by temporarily suspending financial aid. In terms of Russian foreign policy, the conflict in Transnistria has implications for EU-Russia relations, overall policy in the "common neighborhood" and Moldo-Russian relations. The EU and Russia discuss the Transnistrian conflict in the context of potential cooperation in the realm of foreign and security policy. Russia's policy actions in Transnistria often send signals to the EU as well as to immediate neighbors. After the war in the South Caucasus, Russia's discourse on Transnistria sought to convince the EU and post-Soviet states that recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is an exception, and that Moscow is ready to engage

constructively to settle protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region. Last but not least, the Transnistrian conflict is instrumentalized to project and strengthen Russia's influence over the present and future of Moldova.

Firstly, the Russian side linked settlement of the conflict to Moldova's permanent neutrality status. Although Moldova's neutrality is enshrined in its Constitution, Russia suspects that it could be amended once Moldova is reintegrated. Russia therefore seeks additional guarantees that a reunified Moldova will not join NATO. Practically, Russia refuses Moldova the freedom to choose its military alliances. Secondly, Russia tries to hinder or misuse the "5+2" format to prevent any progress in negotiations. In 2006 Russia encouraged Transnistria to withdraw from "5+2" talks when Ukraine agreed to enforce a customs regime on the border with Transnistria and the EU deployed a border assistance mission to facilitate the implementation of the agreement. In the period 2009-2011 when the international community mounted pressure to restart "5+2" talks, the Russian side tried to stonewall the process by invoking domestic instability in Moldova and the lack of a credible partner in Chisinau.⁵⁶ After talks resumed, Russia showed little flexibility behind closed doors during successive rounds in Dublin and Vienna.⁵⁷ Thirdly, Russia seeks in the medium and long term a formula for reunification that would allow it to influence Moldova's domestic and foreign politics decisively via a Transnistrian elite integrated into Moldova's political power structure.⁵⁸

Recently Russia acted to solidify its clout in the region by reiterating its military presence in Transnistria until a political solution to the conflict is found. Russian universities concluded cooperation agreements with Tiraspol State University. Russia strengthened Transnistria's currency reserves in 2012 and planned further financial assistance to the separatist entity. There are signs that Russia is considering taking over Transnistria's gas network in exchange for forgiving its debts, and re-launching the process of passportization. To boost its political oversight of the region and deepen Russia's multilevel relations with Transnistria, the Kremlin appointed Dmitry Rogozin, the deputy-prime minister of the Russian government responsible for the defense industry, as the president's special representative to Transnistria.

2.2 ENP in Moldova

2.2.1 Politics

The elections in 2009 overlapped with preliminary talks between Moldova and the EU to start negotiations on the AA. The EU conditioned the launch of AA talks on free and fair elections in April. Although with some delays, the EU reacted to post-electoral violence by dispatching the EUSR, the prime minister of the EU's rotating presidency and High Representative for the CFSP to Chisinau. The EU aimed to stop human rights abuses and find a political solution to the crisis by trying to mediate between power and opposition. The EU Parliament adopted a resolution on Moldova condemning violence against protesters and demanding a peaceful and consensual way out of the crisis.⁵⁹ As the talks produced no results and Moldova headed to early elections, the EU focused again on fairness and correctness of the vote. The EU saluted the improved electoral process and the formation of a ruling coalition after the elections. Once the government was installed, the EU worked to stabilize the situation by nudging power and opposition to find a compromise on the election of the head of state. When the AEI was contemplating solutions that excluded the Communist Party, the EU pressured authorities in Chisinau to keep decisions within the framework provided by the Constitution and to take account of the Venice Commission recommendations.⁶⁰ The EU was crucial in negotiating the new agreement between AEI members after new early elections in 2010.⁶¹ The EU was also instrumental in reaching a consensus inside the alliance to engage with three MP's who broke with the Communist Party in order to overcome the political stalemate. As a result the Moldovan parliament elected a president in 2012.

Soon after its formation the AEI worked to improve relations with EU member states, in particular with Romania, and to foster a more pluralist environment. These moves triggered measures taken by the EU to deepen relations with Moldova and support the reformist drive of the new government. The EU launched AA talks, opened a human rights dialogue and sent a High Level Advisory Mission. The EU has shown political and symbolic support for Moldova's European future. The group European Friends of Moldova, initiated by Romania and France in 2010, has rapidly expanded. An unprecedented number of visits by high ranking EU officials to Moldova and vice versa took place since 2010. These have been complemented by an intense interaction between mid-ranking officials from Moldovan ministries and EU Commission Directorates.

The EU Delegation in Moldova increased its profile and visibility in the public space. In 2011, the EU Parliament adopted a positive resolution on Moldova calling for the application of a “more for more” approach.⁶² To reward Moldova for progress on reforms the EU provided funds from the Governance Facility and increased the ENPI bilateral allocation from €209.7 million between 2007 and 2010 to €273.1 million between 2011 and 2013.⁶³ The EU did not hesitate to use conditionality to speed up reforms (e.g. adoption of a justice sector reform strategy).⁶⁴ As Moldova passed the test of the 2011 local elections and overcame the political deadlock regarding the election of the president, in early 2012 the EU multiplied its signals to channel all efforts into domestic reforms and to pay peculiar attention to fighting corruption.⁶⁵

2.2.2 Economics

As the new government in Chisinau had to face repercussions of the global economic crisis, the EU stepped in and boosted macro-financial assistance to Moldova. It allocated €90 million in 2010 to stabilize the macro-economic situation.⁶⁶ The EU decided to prolong the ATP’s validity for Moldova until 2015 and extend import quotas for wine, wheat, barley and maize. Despite some downturn in bilateral trade, it rebounded in 2011, with the EU remaining Moldova’s main trade partner (50%) and a major destination of Transnistrian exports (45.5% in January-November 2010). However, the EU channeled its major efforts towards sectoral integration, which would challenge the monopolized economy, increase transparency, bind Moldova to the European market, attract the FDI and instigate economic development. The EU opened negotiations on DCFTA in 2012 as Moldova fulfilled a set of preconditions and the EU Fact Finding mission submitted a positive evaluation on work done by Chisinau. The EU signed with Moldova a Common Aviation Area deal and welcomed it to the Energy Community after several normative acts in the energy sector (laws on natural gas and electric energy) were passed by the national parliament. To help Moldova in fulfilling its obligations taken under the AA, the DCFTA, the Common Aviation Area and the Energy Community, the EU earmarked €41.6 million for CIB in Moldova, allocating the first tranche of €14 million in 2012. This program in particular will support the creation of agencies responsible for the enforcement of sanitary and phytosanitary norms. Modernization of legislation will have no effect without an independent, functional judiciary. Thus, the EU allocated

€62 million in technical and budget support to Moldova to implement justice sector reform.

The EU approved also Moldova's participation in European Community programs and agencies opened for candidate countries (e.g. in the fields of transpiration, food safety, customs and aviation security). The EU has worked to improve Moldova's energy security and infrastructure and to increase the competitiveness of local industries. Between 2010 and 2012 the EIB approved loans to support the modernization of roads (€75 million), the wine industry (€75 million) and electricity transmission systems (€17 million).⁶⁷ The EU Commission decided to finance a feasibility study on the interconnection of electric networks between Ukraine and Moldova and European. To alleviate pressure exercised by Russia, the EU co-financed a project for the connection of a gas pipe between Moldova and Romania. If successfully carried out, the project will provide Moldova with an alternative source of gas in case of shortages, accidents or disputes between third parties which disrupt deliveries to Moldova. According to Moldovan diplomats, the EU is closely following ongoing negotiations between Moldova and Russia over a new gas delivery contract; the Moldovan side informs and consults with the EU on this matter.⁶⁸ By the end of 2014 Moldova should "unbundle" its gas transportation and distribution network. In this regard, one EU official explains, "in 2015 we will be directly involved in gas delivery contract negotiations as the EU will have to evaluate it for confirmation with the *acquis communautaire*."⁶⁹

2.2.3 Identity

While pushing for political and economic reforms the EU has directly or indirectly influenced the content of social debates and the identity formation process in Moldova. Rapid rapprochement between EU and Moldova in 2009 has generated much more interest in the mass media and society about European integration. The possibility of visa-free travel to Europe is on the top of Moldovan citizens' European agenda. As the opposition picked a target, namely an anti-discrimination law which is part of the visa-free road map with EU, Moldovan society was challenged to debate attitudes towards sexual and religious minorities. Another law linked to the DCFTA also has the potential to impact society. The consumer protection act adopted in 2012 goes against a deeply engrained logic that the seller is the master of the market, while the consumer is a powerless agent. Implementation of this law has the potential not only to increase

the quality of products and services provided, but also gradually to change attitudes towards customers. In general, the process of Europeanization in Moldova has contributed to civic participation and strengthened the basis for a rule-based society.

To multiply and convert the increasing interest in European integration, the EU expanded its network of EU Information Centers across the country and is planning to open one in Tiraspol as well. In addition to education opportunities in Europe for young people provided by the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programs, the EU opened its research and innovation program FP7 to Moldova in 2012. In 2012 the EU Delegation, instead of celebrating “Europe’s Day” on the 9th of May, organized together with EU member states a diplomatic mission called “Europe’s Week” with sports, cultural and artistic events, debates and public presentations across the country, especially in euro skeptic regions of Moldova (e.g. Gagauzia). Thus, the EU aimed to underline its common European heritage and unite Moldovans around a theme which could transcend bitter divisions over the interpretation of history.

2.2.4 Security

In terms of security, the EU sought to combat soft security threats in Moldova and to make headway on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The EU also played a crucial role in addressing issues which had poisoned relations between Moldova and its neighbors, Romania and Ukraine. To address a variety of security issues the EU extensively employed a visa-free dialogue, Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements, a Mobility Partnership signed in 2008, the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), Europol, Frontex, mediation activities and financial incentives.

The Moldovan government adopted a pro-active stance on visa-liberalization, setting it as a major objective. The EU reciprocated by financially supporting the transition from regular to biometric passports. The EU also played a role in equipping and connecting 40 of Moldova’s border check points in order to improve information flow and exchange as well the monitoring of the border. Besides technical assistance the EU via EUBAM has been involved in training and instructing Moldovan border guards. After several successive EU assessment missions to Moldova, the EU decided to offer in 2011 a two-phase visa-free road map. The process required the reform of the Border Guard Service and the Center

for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption. Both institutions will undergo radical transformation, which will lead to the formation of the Border Police and the National Anticorruption Center. At the same time, Moldova has striven to initiate cooperation with the EU Agency dealing with judicial cooperation in criminal matters (EUROJUST) and deepen its interaction with EUROPOL (to conclude an operational agreement) and the EU Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States (FRONTEX).

On the Transnistrian dossier, the degree of EU involvement increased proportionally with Moldova's rapprochement with the EU. EU investment in Moldova's statehood and economy in itself could be part of a more complex solution to the Transnistrian dispute. A stable, pluralist, modernized, free and rule-of-law based Moldova whose citizens enjoy visa-free travel to Europe has more chances of attracting the population of Transnistria and fostering reintegration of the country. But the EU also got involved directly in an attempt to move the conflict resolution from a dead point. The EU and its member states' diplomatic support was important in restarting formal "5+2" talks in 2011. Despite Russia's obstructions, EU diplomats actively pushed for a consensus on principles and procedures of negotiations, which were ultimately agreed upon by all sides after three rounds.⁷⁰ The EU tried to engage Russia on the Transnistria issue in the larger context of security cooperation in the "common neighborhood". Germany, in spite of the "Meseberg Memorandum", agreed with Russia but failed to translate it on the EU level, because Moscow had shown little interest for substantial progress on Transnistrian issue. At the same time, the EU worked to reconnect Moldova with Transnistria. In the initial stages, the EU was actively involved in mediations on rail-traffic resumption. However, the "final aim of EU is not to mediate but to make sides talk and solve issues directly."⁷¹ Thus, in the final stage of talks on the resumption of freight railway transport via Transnistria, Chisinau and Tiraspol have spoken without intermediaries. In order to facilitate the peace process, the EU allocated €12 million for the period of 2012-2015 to support confidence building measures between Moldova and Transnistria. The EU prolonged EUBAM mission until 2014.

In the fields of foreign and security policy, the EU behind the scene encouraged Romania to sign a border regime treaty with Moldova and facilitated through EUBAM the process of border demarcation with Ukraine. The EU welcomed rapid improvement of Moldo-Romanian relations and encouraged inter-regional cooperation between Moldova

and Ukraine within the Dniester euro-region, which could encompass Transnistria. Following European good practices and implementing the IBM Moldovan and Ukrainian border guards agreed to patrol the state frontier jointly, including the Transnistrian segment, which Moldova does not control. Moldova continued to align with the majority of EU CFSP declarations; 63 out of 82 in 2011.⁷² In 2012 the EU started preliminary talks with Moldova to conclude an accord which opens CDSP missions for Moldova's participation.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to assess comparatively Russian and European neighborhood policies. It also sought to analyze comparatively how the two policies have worked in Moldova. A comparative analysis of RNP and ENP in the 'common neighborhood' and in Moldova in particular, leads to the following conclusions. Firstly, some RNP objectives are not spelled out openly, because of their disruptive nature. The ENP's objectives are set in its official documents and pursued in a transparent way. Secondly, while Russia acts to hamper state building, the EU's efforts are channeled towards democratic state building. Russia's focus is on loyal regimes' survival and disloyal regimes' change (promoting stability and instability), while instead the EU attaches importance to the regime's commitment to democratic values (not often followed consistently across the Eastern neighborhood) and is pushing for incremental systemic changes. Thirdly, although both actors look to increase their market share in the neighborhood, Russian economic expansion is mainly geopolitically driven. This is particularly visible in the energy field. While the EU seeks to guarantee its own and neighbors' energy security, Russia employs its energy policy in order to tighten its control over post-Soviet states. Fourthly, both actors tried to develop instruments which they considered to be missing from the arsenal in the neighborhood. Last but not least, Russia has striven to learn to use complementarily various levers to advance its objectives more rapidly and assertively. At the same time, the EU built over the last decade a significant presence in the "common neighborhood" and has been learning how to use these to advance its objectives in the increasingly competitive environment. The learning process for both actors is far from the end.

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