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EXPLAINING RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE TRANSNISTRIAN CONFLICT (1991-2013)

Transnistria is Republic of Moldova's breakaway region situated in its eastern part and separated from it by the river Nistru (*Dnestr*). It proclaimed its independence from Moldova in 1990 and after the war of 1992 Transnistria consolidated its *de facto state*.

The biggest problem for any prospect of settlement of the Transnistrian conflict within the framework of a unitary and sovereign Moldovan state is the Russian policy. Russia has played a central role in the emergence, formation and maintenance of the Transnistrian *de facto state*. Its role in the Transnistrian conflict is incontestable and well documented. Yet political science scholarship and expert analyses on this issue provide insufficient accounts about the main factors which influenced Russia's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Transnistrian conflict. The academic and policy literature on the Transnistrian conflict is very rich. However it is dominated by theoretically uninformed analyses which focuses on specific aspects of the conflict, and by works which, often implicitly, adopt a particular theoretical perspective without testing it against the evidence.

Among those researches which implicitly or explicitly employ theoretical explanations (International Relations theories) in order to explain Russia's general and particular policy towards Transnistria we can distinguish among three approaches: constructivism, liberal and realist.

Constructivists generally share the assumption that ideational factors such as identity, culture and norms are decisive in shaping state's national interests and its external conduct.¹ Here we may identify between two broad groups of scholars and experts. On the one hand, there is the group who treat ideational factors as deeply rooted features and very difficult to change, and on the other hand, those who regard these ideational factors as only "relatively stable" mental constructs. The former often

refers to Russia's imperial, Soviet or Cold War identities. The latter, known as "social constructivists", analyse Russia's foreign policy through its "collectively held ideas" in some particular period.

Liberal theories on foreign policy highlight the central role of state-society relations for state's foreign policy preferences.² They are very close to the constructivist theories and sometimes are indistinguishable. Nevertheless, in liberal approaches the most important factors affecting foreign policies are considered to be the domestic politics and political regimes.

Realist theories, despite their diversity (offensive, defensive, neoclassical, etc.), build their explanations on the basic assumptions that states compete for power and security in an anarchical international system. Realists usually claim that external (geopolitical) context is more important than domestic politics, ideas, identities, etc., States, especially great powers, tend to maximize power and influence and react to any change of the systemic or regional status quo.

This paper aims at advancing the understanding of Russian foreign policy toward the Transnistrian conflict by confronting these approaches against the empirical record since 1991 until 2013. Shedding light on the causes of Russian foreign policy toward the Transnistrian conflict could help us better understand the current regional events and their underlying challenges.

This paper proceeds in two parts, each divided in two sections. The first part focuses on the Boris Yeltsin's period. The first section focuses in detail only on the first year, from August 1991 to July 1992. This stage is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, this is perhaps the least studied period of Russian foreign policy. Second, it was during this timeframe that the most interesting events occurred: the fall of the USSR, the birth of the CIS, the war in Transnistria, etc. The second section deals with the Russia's Transnistrian policy evolution in the post-war period until mid-1999. The second part analyzes Russian policy in the Putin-Medvedev era, since late 1999 until 2013.

Russia's Policy toward Transnistria under President Yeltsin (1991-1999)

How do liberalism, constructivism and realism perform in explaining Russian policy toward the Transnistrian conflict during Yeltsin's

presidency? In other words, what were the driving forces behind Russian policy: ideas, domestic politics or power/geopolitical considerations? To answer this question, this section focuses on two phases: since August 1991 until the end of the war in Transnistria (July 1992), and the subsequent period until the arrival of V. Putin as Prime-Minister.

August 1991-July 1992

According to the liberal and constructivist authors, Russian foreign policy in general and in particular regarding Moldova/Transnistrian conflict is an anomaly for the realist theories and could be explained only in terms of ideas or/and the domestic politics.

There is a broad consensus among scholars and policy experts who depict the initial period of the Russian foreign policy as “pro-Western” (Tsygankov, 2010), “liberal internationalist” (Clunan, 2009; D. Lynch, 2000), “Atlanticist” (Litvak, 1996; Jackson, 2003) or “Pro-Western Romanticism” (McFaul, 1999). These labels are often used interchangeably and are based on the assumption that liberal and westernist ideas shared by key Russian policymakers (Yeltsin, Burbulis, Kozyrev, Gaidar, etc.) dominated Russia’s initial foreign policy. In concrete terms, this principally meant establishing alliance relationship with the West, renouncement of geopolitical thinking and isolation from the former Soviet republics.³ From this point of view, A. Tsygankov claims, the CIS was only a “transitional institutional umbrella” and “never meant [...] to facilitate cooperation and interdependence in the region”.⁴ For the Russian policy toward Moldova/Transnistrian conflict, this entailed support of the “democratic Moldovan government” in its struggle against “pro-communist Dniester Republic”.⁵ This argument is also shared by analysts less concerned with theoretical appraisal as for example the experts of the International Crisis Group who claim that Moscow took initially an “anti-Transdnestrian” stance and that between August 1991 and the spring of 1992, “it did not interfere with Moldova’s ambitions to move towards the West”.⁶

This “unchallenged Atlanticist domination in the Russian government”,⁷ as the argument goes, lasted until the spring of 1992 when nationalistic and conservative forces begun to actively oppose those political circles which shared a “single-minded focus on the West”.⁸ According to this line of reasoning, if there was some support for Transnistria, it came principally from these nationalistic/conservative forces led by such politicians as the Vice President A. Rutskoi or the Speaker R. Hasbulatov.

Another allegedly important player was the 14th Army in Transnistria which promoted its own policy agenda. By some accounts, the army acted during the entire armed phase of the conflict (March-July 1992) without the consent of Moscow⁹ or against its orders.¹⁰ By other accounts, the 14th Army enjoyed some support from the political leadership and the military hierarchy, but this came only after its intervention in the conflict which eventually compelled Moscow to put it under its command in order to avoid further escalation of violence.¹¹

The historical evidence, however, refutes this liberal-constructivist argumentation and confirms instead the realist hypothesis. Between the late August 1991 and the spring of 1992, Russian policy was neither “isolationist” regarding the other Soviet republics nor was it “anti-Transnistrian” (and pro-Moldovan). Indeed, until late November 1991, Russian leadership pursued the aim of restoring the broken links within the Soviet Union which at that time had *de facto* disappeared as many republics declared (or pursued) independence. The approach here was, first, to reach an economic agreement (Treaty on Economic Community of the Sovereign States)¹² and then, conclude a political agreement establishing a new political entity in the form of a confederation under the name of Union of Sovereign States (*Sojuz Suverenyh Gosudarstv*).¹³ As many republics were refusing to be dragged into a new political project, and in order to “stimulate” them, president Yeltsin made clear in late October 1991 that Russia’s economic relations with those states which promote “artificial isolation from the economic and political community” would be based on world prices (in hard currency).¹⁴

Russia has also played the territorial card. The best illustration of this is the statement made on 26 August 1991 by Yeltsin’s press secretary P. Voshanov two days after Ukraine proclaimed independence. He warned the Soviet republics (except the Baltic States) stating that: “there is the issue of borders which unsettledness is possible and admissible only if enshrined by a relevant treaty establishing unional relationship. In case of their termination, the RSFSR reserves the right to raise the issue of revising the frontiers.”¹⁵ And, this was not a new approach. On 22 November 1990, A. Kozyrev himself stressed out during a session of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR which ratified the Russo-Ukrainian agreement that the Ukrainian frontiers were recognized only “in the currently existing borders within the USSR” or, in the event of a renewed union, “in the framework of the Union of Sovereign States”.¹⁶ Nor was Voshanov expressing exclusively Yeltsin’s opinion. For example, V. Lukin¹⁷ reiterated the same

message stating that “when some states would unilaterally violate unional relationship, then it will be necessary to conduct separate conversation about the boundaries”.¹⁸ In the same vein, F. Shelov-Kovedejev¹⁹ pointed to the Ukrainian regions of Sloboda (*Slobodskaja Ukraina*), Novorossija and Crimea highlighting that “if Ukraine will completely break away from Russia then on its vast expanses might appear processes that will threaten its internal integrity”.²⁰ The then mayor of Moscow, G. Popov had even proposed to merge the region of Odessa with Transnistria.²¹

Under these circumstances, there is no surprise that Moscow has not supported the punitive measures of the Moldovan authorities who arrested in late August 1991 the leaders of the Transnistrian and Gagauz breakaway republics for their support of the GKChP.²² In the end, all they were released by 1 October '91 as a result of the conclusion of two protocols mediated by N. Medvedev.²³ Most importantly, by the terms of this deal, Transnistria gained equal footing in negotiations with Moldovan authorities which had to settle the standoff exclusively by peaceful and non-coercive means.²⁴

Moldova, however, pursued complete political independence from the Soviet Union and “increased rapprochement” with Romania.²⁵ Notwithstanding the signature on 6 November '91 of the economic agreement (initialled on 1 October '91), the then Prime-Minister V. Muravschi reiterated that Moldova was not intending to join any political or military union.²⁶ Against this backdrop, the dynamic of the conflict has considerably increased. Tiraspol organized on 1 December 1991 presidential elections, won by I. Smirnov, and a referendum on independence. In order to defend Tiraspol authorities from eventual Moldovan powerful measures, on 3 December, the commander of the 14th Guards Army, G. Iakovlev became the chairman of the Transnistrian Republican Department of Defence and Security and remained in office until mid-January 1992.²⁷

Certainly, Moscow did not intend to recognize Transnistria. All these measures were principally aiming at bolstering Transnistria's bargaining power and bring Moldovan authorities at the negotiation table with Tiraspol. This policy line was well articulated in a joint declaration on Moldova made by the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, on 8 December 1991. That statement urged “the parties to sit at the negotiating table for the settlement of the occurred disputes” and expressed the “conviction” that “all the contentious issues in the republic, including the rights of national minorities, should be resolved by peaceful means”.²⁸

The fact that the situation in Moldova was approached in Minsk alongside such issues as the fate of the USSR and the creation of the CIS proves that the Transnistrian conflict was at the top of Yeltsin's political agenda.

From the economic point of view, Moldova was presenting neither a special interest for Russia nor for an eventual renewed union. Yet, Moldova geographic location represented a key strategic importance for Moscow. To recall that in 1984, the "Stavka" of the High Command of the South-western Direction was established in Chişinău. It suffices a brief looking at the military formations under its command to understand its strategic value: the Kiev and Odessa military districts, the Black Sea Fleet (Sevastopol), the 24th Air Army VGK ON (Vinnitsa), the Southern Group of Forces (Budapest), the 2nd independent Communications Brigade (Chişinău), etc. And with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, the strategic role of the south-western group had only increased.²⁹ The territory of Moldova alone, according to the most conservative estimates, was sutured with enough weaponry for two armies.³⁰ In this respect, controlling Transnistria was instrumental for exerting the control on Moldova.

Moreover, Transnistria in itself represented an important geopolitical asset as many Russian officials sought it as a bridgehead for Russia's influence in the region. The best illustration of this is a note (unpublished) of E. M. Kozhokin³¹ addressed in late 1991 to I. F. Yarov.³² Kozhokin underscored the role of Transnistria as a "bridgehead for Russian influence in the near Balkan region (*pribalkanskij region*)" and substantiated his argument as follows: "Transnistria would serve as a basis for any kind of activity (from economic to intelligence) of the Russian state in the region which has historically been a zone of our vital interests (southern Ukraine, Bessarabia, Romania and Bulgaria)."³³

The official dissolution of the USSR and the creation of the CIS on 8 and 21 December 1991 have not changed Russia's geopolitical approach neither towards Transnistria nor regarding its "near abroad". Quite the contrary, the CIS confirmed this approach as it was principally an attempt to accommodate Ukraine. To recall that Kiev was steadfastly severing itself from the union since 24 August 1991 and the referendum on independence of 1 December 1991 in which 90% voted for independence had put an end to all hopes regarding a renewed political union.³⁴ Signing the agreement on USS without Ukraine would not only mean a stillborn union as its economy represented 25% of the USSR's GDP, but, most importantly, it would have allowed Ukraine to establish effective control over the

colossal armed forces on its territory. This aspect is usually neglected but it should be stressed out in the first place. In 1991, on the Ukrainian territory was deployed the third nuclear arsenal in the world, superior to that of France, UK, and China combined and inferior only to U.S. and Russia.³⁵ In conventional terms, the armed forces located in Ukraine were even more impressive. It would be sufficient to remark that Ukraine enjoyed “a significant advantage in conventional forces in Europe” as General L. Kuznetsov has worryingly noticed.³⁶

The CIS agreement responded precisely to this fundamental military issue as it provided that the Commonwealth members “will preserve and maintain under unified command a common military-strategic space, including unified control over nuclear weapons” (art. 6).³⁷ For Russia, this meant keeping the army united and subsequently creating a sort of military-political alliance, in some respects similar to NATO.³⁸ It is worth noting here that Russia imposed its conditional approach on the issue of borders. The article 5 of the Minsk Agreement stated that “territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers” were respected and recognized (only) “within the Commonwealth”. One of the authors of the agreement, S. Shakhrai (then State Counsellor on legal policy and Deputy Prime Minister) explained that this article “was referring to Crimea and all other things” in the sense that: “If you want a problem with Crimea, quit the CIS. Or, conversely, integrate the CIS and there will be no border problems.”³⁹

Not surprisingly then that territorial problems occurred as early as January 1992 since Ukraine struggled to take possession of the armed forces on its soil, including the Black Sea Fleet, agreeing to put only the nuclear weapons under the control of the CIS’ unified commandment.⁴⁰ For Ukraine, the CIS was merely a form of “civilized divorce” and a first step towards complete independence.⁴¹ In this context, the Russian Supreme Soviet and the MFA commanded the examination of the “Crimean issue” by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (chaired by V. Lukin) which issued on 17 January 1992 the recommendation regarding the cancelation of USSR’s decision of 1954 to cede Crimea to Ukraine.⁴² It is important to notice that this recommendation was made exactly the day when the first All-Army Officers’ Assembly took place in the Kremlin Palace during which the President Yeltsin had emphatically declared that Russia (like Kazakhstan) will “stand to death for unified armed forces”.⁴³

The desire to keep the former Soviet army united and to form the CIS armed forces was the chief priority of Russia’s foreign policy toward its near abroad in the first months of 1992. With much reluctance, Moscow

accepted the idea that a part of the armed forces will enter in the national armies (of Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine, etc.), but it sought to maintain the most important part of them under the CIS high command (Marshal E. Shaposhnikov). So, in early January 1992, the CIS Deputy Commander-in-Chief B. Piankov was charged to conduct negotiations on military issues. On 29 January, the CIS' group of officers led by B. Piankov was included in the State Delegation of the Russian Federation set up by B. Yeltsin in order to prepare the agreements on the "totality of political-military issues" with the former Soviet states.⁴⁴ The delegation was headed by S. Shakhrai and comprised different representatives from the executive and legislative power branches, including A. Kozyrev, P. Grachev (then Chairman of the State Committee on Defence), V. Lukin and others.⁴⁵

The negotiations with Moldova have begun in mid-January 1992 and were conducted principally by B. Piankov. From the very beginning, he made clear that the army on the left bank of Nistru (Transnistria) was beyond negotiation and that only the military units on the right bank were susceptible of being left to Moldova, although without specifying how many and what military equipment.⁴⁶ After thorny and long negotiations, an agreement on the partition of the army between Moldovan and CIS forces (on temporary basis) was concluded on 20 March between V. Muravschi and Marshal E. Shaposhnikov. Remarkably, throughout this period of "military diplomacy", there was no noteworthy Russian diplomatic initiative for the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. Quite the contrary, Moscow enhanced its support for Tiraspol as the conflict degenerated in early March into armed confrontation between Moldovan police forces and volunteers and Transnistrian Guard backed by the Cossacks.

The conflict escalated exactly at the moment when Moldova was becoming a member of the United Nations. Then, in the night of 1 to 2 March, the police station in Dubăsari was seized by the Transnistrian and Cossack forces and 34 policemen were taken prisoner. After a brief pause (4-8 March), the armed confrontation resumed in Bender/Tighina (9-13 March)⁴⁷ and in the area of Dubăsari (14-15 and 17 March).⁴⁸ On 17 March, the two sides have agreed to a ceasefire.⁴⁹ Local skirmishes have occasionally occurred thereafter, yet the intensity of fighting had considerably decreased.

During this first period of armed confrontation in 1992, Moscow supported Tiraspol principally in the economic and defence fields.

Economically, the Russian Central Bank officially registered the Transnistrian cash settlement centre on 12 March 1992, thus enabling Tiraspol to effectuate international transactions bypassing the National Bank of Moldova.⁵⁰ This was a fundamental decision because it gave Transnistria economic independence from Moldova. In the defence field, two aspects should be highlighted. Firstly, Russian authorities encouraged, or at least tacitly accepted, the arrival of the Cossacks in Transnistria. Their arrival in the region from Russia (Don and Kuban) begun by mid-December 1991,⁵¹ but their number had significantly risen with the new round of confrontation. By some accounts, almost 800 Cossacks came in Transnistria in the single day of 5 March.⁵² Secondly, Moscow and the CIS military commandment allowed Transnistrian forces to take over weapons from the warehouses of the 14th Army. One relevant example: on 14 March, the guardsmen and Cossacks seized the entire arsenal of the Electronic Warfare Battalion located in Parcani, an event about which Russian authorities were informed in advance but did nothing to curb it.⁵³

In the second half of March 1992, two particular events changed the regional geopolitical context. On the one side, Moldova-CIS military agreement of 20 March meant that Moldova acquiesced to the presence of the CIS forces on its soil, mainly in Transnistria although on a temporary basis. On the other side, Ukraine changed its stance on the conflict and, on 17 March, L. Kravchuk issued a decree by which the transition of the Ukrainian territory towards Moldova was halted.⁵⁴ In this way, Ukraine turned itself from a gateway to Moldova into a buffer for Russian influence and, at the same time, increased the role of Romania which had no such geographical constraint. A. Kozyrev was particularly anxious about this stating in late March: “we have no border with Moldova; we have a buffer in the form of Ukraine. But Romania has no such buffer...”⁵⁵

These two geopolitical events have led to a relative shift of Russia’s policy expressed in a pro-active diplomacy regarding the conflict resolution, the inclusion of Romania in this process and the prohibition of the arrival of “volunteers” in the conflict zone. The first instance of this shift was the adoption of the CIS declaration of 20 March by which Moldova’s territorial integrity was declared the “principal factor of stability in the Commonwealth and in the region” while also emphasising “Moldova’s wish to settle the conflict by political means”.⁵⁶ Regarding the Cossack issue, the declaration stated that the CIS members will neither allow the involvement of foreign citizens in the conflict nor permit the transition of their territories. These terms were reiterated in the Helsinki declaration

of 23 March by the ministers of foreign affairs of Moldova, Romania, Russia and Ukraine. In addition, this quadripartite declaration provided for the creation of a “mechanism for political consultations” to resolve the Transnistrian conflict.⁵⁷ However, despite the hopes raised by this diplomatic activity, the situation in Transnistria has soon worsened.

Given Tiraspol’s refusal of any solution to the conflict that fell short of Moldova’s federalization with Transnistria (and Gagauzia) as subject and also, perhaps, overestimating the geopolitical advantages, Moldova passed to powerful measures. On 28 March, President Snegur decreed the state of emergency throughout Moldova and sent an ultimatum urging Tiraspol to surrender arms or otherwise Moldovan forces would “liquidate and disarm” Transnistrian armed formations.⁵⁸ Russian reaction came immediately as Moldovan police attempted to establish full control over Bender.⁵⁹ On 1 April, B. Yeltsin signed the decree by which the 14th Army, and other military units, formations, institutions, etc., that “have not been included in the armed forces of Moldova”, were transferred under Russian jurisdiction.⁶⁰ The rationale behind this decision was to defend Transnistria and stop Moldovan advancement. Or how V. Baranets, serving then in the General Staff (CIS), has put: “the presidential decree of April 1 indicated that the Kremlin was trying to cool the aggressive intentions of Chişinău to keep Transnistrians ‘in check’ by force.”⁶¹ Intentionally or not, in the same day was issued A. Kozyrev’s interview where he declared that the protections of Russians in Moldova was a priority and that Russia will also use “power methods” (*silovye metody*) if necessary.⁶² Not surprisingly the next day, after a long period of silence, the 14th Army Officers’ Assembly sent a warning telegram by which it threatened to put the army on full combat alert if Moldovan forces were not stopping fighting.⁶³

Simultaneously, the MFA and A. Kozyrev personally increased efforts for turning the course of events from the battlefield to the negotiation table. Relative progress was achieved at the second quadripartite meeting of the foreign ministers held in Chişinău on 6-7 April. Its principal results were an immediate ceasefire, the creation of a mixed commission, in order to observe the ceasefire, and a “goodwill mission” to mediate the dialogue between the sides.⁶⁴ At the third quadripartite meeting of 17 April, it was decided to set up a group of military observers (each side with 25 observers).

Further on, however, the negotiations have reached deadlock mainly because of Transnistria’s and Russia’s insistence to grant a special political status to Transnistria (with the right to self-determination in case of

unification with Romania) and empower the 14th Army with peacekeeping functions. Indeed, A. Kozyrev has raised (unsuccessfully) these issues during both quadripartite meetings of 6 and 17 April.⁶⁵ As a consequence of these divergences, the military confrontation resumed with new force from 17 to 21/22 May.

On 17 May, Moldova, using for the first time a limited contingent of military forces with heavy weapons, launched an offensive on the Cocieri-Coșnița direction (Dubăsari) and were close to take the control over the central part of Transnistria and cut it in half.⁶⁶ Russian administration foresaw this evolution and sought it as a “direct strategic threat to Russia’s interests” as follows from a confidential note of S. Stankevich⁶⁷ to B. Yeltsin who served also as Prime Minister (until 15 June ’92) and Minister of Defence (until 18 May ’92). In that note, Stankevich pointed to the speedy formation of the Moldovan regular army, allegedly trained and equipped with the Romanian support, and warned that the “Transnistrian Guard will not be able to withstand the regular army units.”⁶⁸ Of course, on 19 May, a contingent of Russian forces consisting of one tank company, three mortar batteries, one anti-tank battery and several other armoured vehicles,⁶⁹ which have led in combats additional Transnistrian guards armed by the 14th Army, intervened and stopped Moldova’s advance. The newly appointed Defence Minister P. Grachev (18 May) denied any involvement of the Russian forces and insisted that Transnistrians “captured” those arms.⁷⁰ In reality, it was a volunteer transfer “carried out on the basis of an agreement between the Russian Ministry of Defence and the TMR.”⁷¹ On the involvement of the Russian troops, it seems that they did not have an explicit order to open fire. Nevertheless, the Russian officers were encouraged and even forced to intervene by the retired Col. Gen. A. Makashov who threatened to dismiss and even to imprison some of them in case of no action.⁷² The fact that commander I. Netkachev allowed Makashov, a person who had mysteriously escaped prison for his active support of the GKChP, to speak to his subalterns and even threaten them suggests that Makashov enjoyed the support of Moscow from the highest level.

This indirect form of military intervention was conditioned by the geopolitical context. In this period, Russian-Ukrainian relationship has soured to the point that, on 21 May, the Russian Supreme Soviet nullified the Soviet acts of 1954 on Crimea.⁷³ In this context, Russia could not count on Ukraine in order to assure a supply route for its army in Transnistria. So, an open and direct intervention of Russia in Moldova would have put

an end to diplomatic negotiations which entailed the risk of a large-scale war that Moscow could not afford.

In order to give a new impetus to political negotiations, B. Yeltsin broke the silence on 27 May and promised to withdraw the 14th Army, whilst his ministers A. Kozyrev and P. Grachev conditioned the offer with the final conflict settlement and a special political-judicial status of Transnistria within Moldova.⁷⁴ At the same time, P. Grachev warned that in the event of Moldova's military operations in Transnistria he "would find it difficult to restrain the military units subordinated to him".⁷⁵ This "stick and carrot" tactical manoeuvring has borne fruit and the two sides engaged in serious negotiations in the first half of June. By mid-June, the sides agreed to a series of measures in order to settle the conflict, the most important of which was perhaps the creation of a "government of national concord" which had to assure proportional national representation in the formation of the governmental institution on all levels.⁷⁶ On 18 June, the Moldovan Parliament approved those measures by a special law.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, this peaceful conflict resolution process was brutally halted the next day by an incident (or provocation) at the printing house (near the Moldovan police station) in Bender (Tighina) which has quickly degenerated into intensive fighting. Moldovan Supreme Security Council, the ruling institution during the state of emergency, overreacted and took the decision to launch a massive offensive on Bender in the evening of June 19 involving overall 2500 troops and 56 artillery systems.⁷⁸ Bender, including the bridge over Nistru, was relatively rapidly conquered in the night of 19 to 20 June. The Russians and Transnistrians were probably taken by surprise as an eventual attack was expected in Dubăsari where Moldova concentrated up to 3800 troops and 74 pieces of artillery.⁷⁹

From the strategic point of view, Moscow could not allow the fall of Bender under Moldova's rule: if for Chişinău the city was a perfect outpost, for Tiraspol it was a natural buffer. Since the violence has also escalated in South Ossetia (Georgia), on 20 June the Russian government met in urgency and adopted two statements (on Moldova and Georgia)⁸⁰ and one resolution (*postanovlenie*) on the use of force.⁸¹ That was a fundamental decision because it empowered the "commanders of formations, units and sub-units of the Armed Forces of Russia in the territory of the former USSR" to take "adequate measures to stop [the] acts of aggression, including firing against the attackers".⁸² In the same day started the artillery support of the 14th Army to the Transnistrian counter-offensive in Bender.⁸³

By 22 June, due to the Russian military support, Transnistria has retaken a large part of Bender. However, their forces were insufficient to pull Moldovan army and police out of the city, let alone to compel Moldova to make peace on Russian terms. For that, Russia needed the support of Ukraine, and that was eventually obtained during the Dagomys summit (22-23 June) of the presidents, prime ministers and speakers of Russia and Ukraine.⁸⁴ Kiev changed its neutral policy on Transnistria and opened its air space for Russian military supplies. Since then, Moscow started preparations for a sort of “peace enforcement” mission and chose Maj. Gen. Alexander Lebed to carry it out.

General Lebed arrived in Tiraspol on 23 June (under the pseudonym “Colonel Gussev”) with an airborne battalion of *Spetsnaz*.⁸⁵ Even before his official appointment (27 June), he took two fundamental decisions. First, on 24 June he obliged I. Smirnov to sign the decree “On the appointment of the Military Commandant of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic and the city of Tiraspol” in the person of the Colonel M. Bergman.⁸⁶ This decree, as M. Bergman puts himself, “subordinated all power structures of the unrecognized republic to the Military Commandant who in turn was subordinated to the commander of the 14th Army”.⁸⁷ Secondly, he ordered the mobilization of the army and the enrolment of new conscripts from the local population. By the end of June the troops of the 14th Army amounted from overall 10.000 to 17.000.⁸⁸ At the same time, he engaged the army in the military confrontations which have resumed in the Dubăsari-Grigoriopol area and, at a low-intensity level, in Bender.

The definitive decision to bring the 14th Army at a new level of engagement was probably taken by B. Yeltsin in June 26, against the backdrop of continuing fighting which was violating the ceasefire agreed the previous day in Istanbul by the presidents of Moldova, Romania, Russia and Ukraine.⁸⁹ On 26 June, the General Lebed publicly announced the so-called “armed neutrality” warning that the 14th Army was “strong enough to fight back anyone” and also that it will “interact with the armed formations of Transnistria”.⁹⁰ The next day, Lebed had been officially appointed as commander of the 14th Army.⁹¹ The same day, the Russian MID expressed a “determined protest over Moldova’s continuing military actions” and warned that “the leadership of the Russian Federation cannot stand idly by”.⁹² Shortly after, President Snegur “noticed the beginning of the economic blockade”.⁹³

Since Lebed took officially the rule of the 14th Army, the intensity of the war has considerably increased culminating with a massive artillery

attack in the night of 2 to 3 July 1992. During this time, all structures of the Russian MoD were actively involved in boosting the 14th Army's firepower.⁹⁴ Dozens of cargo aircrafts were coming in Tiraspol carrying all the 14th Army was in need: different weapons, batteries, laser devices, and even satellite photos of Moldovan positions.⁹⁵ Moreover, Col. Gen. Nikolai Dimidjuk, the Commander-in-Chief of the MF & A of the Russian Ground Forces, gave the order to all Russian military districts to not hinder the coming of artillerists in Transnistria.⁹⁶ At 3 in the morning of July 3, the 14th Army launched a 45-minutes attack with eight artillery battalions (*divizion*) and six mortar batteries.⁹⁷ The exact number of Moldovan casualties remains unknown, but unofficial sources indicate that over 112 Moldavian combatants were killed by that bombardment.⁹⁸ After this episode, the continuation of military operation from the Moldovan side became pointless. So, Snegur embarked upon a peaceful course which culminated on 21 July with the signature in Moscow of the "Agreement on the principles for the friendly settlement of the armed conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova" by Yeltsin, Snegur, and also endorsed by Smirnov who put his signature without specifying his title.⁹⁹ Besides, the Russian and Moldova presidents issued a *Communiqué*. Two major points should be underscored regarding these agreements. First, by the establishment of a security zone and a trilateral peacekeeping mechanism formed by Russian, Moldovan and Transnistrian military contingents, Russia obtained the legalization of its military presence and also the recognition of Transnistria's right to have its armed forces. Second, Moldova took the engagement to grant Transnistria a political status and only after to proceed with the fate of the 14th Army. This is little noticed but the preamble of the agreement made a reference to the agreement on principles of the conflict resolution reached on 3 July between Yeltsin and Snegur. The most important of them was the granting of a "political status" for Transnistria and, subsequently, the negotiations on withdrawing of the 14th Army.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the *Communiqué* has stipulated Transnistria's "political status" and the "right to self-determination" in the event of "change of the statehood status" of Moldova (i.e. unification with Romania).¹⁰¹ Here B. Yeltsin had also expressed the hope that Moldova will soon become a full member of the CIS.

August 1992 – November 1999

According to liberal and constructivist scholars the evolution of Russian foreign policy in the '90s was marked by tremendous changes in its domestic politics and identity which accordingly led to a shift away from the initial liberal pro-Westernism/Atlanticism towards a national-pragmatic and even anti-Western stance.¹⁰² For some, the first instance of this shift occurred by late 1992 – when the Prime-Minister Y. Gaidar was replaced with V. Chernomyrdin – and had gradually intensified onwards.¹⁰³ For others, liberal ideas ceased to dominate the Russian foreign policy since late 1993.¹⁰⁴ Regardless the disagreement over the timing, liberals and constructivists share a strong vision over Russia's increasing departure from the West in the subsequent years of Yeltsin's presidency. They also underscore the importance of the parliamentary elections of December 1993 (when V. Zhirinovski's LDPR gained almost a quarter of the vote) and those of December 1995 when the Communist Party outranked LDPR as the main opposition party, a fact that compelled B. Yeltsin to replace A. Kozyrev with Y. Primakov at the head of the MFA. In this light, Primakov, who is usually treated in the West as "*homo sovieticus* and Cold War warrior",¹⁰⁵ marked another stage in the growing illiberal trend.

If the liberal and constructivist representations are correct, then one should expect the following Russian foreign policy outcomes regarding the Transnistrian issue. First, we should observe a significant shift from a cooperative towards a more assertive policy occurring in late 1992 or 1993. Second, as most non-realist scholars agree that by late 1993/94 the initial Westernist/Atlanticist period had fade away, we should take notice of a less cooperative Russian policy comparing to the previous period. And third, this assertive trend should have been enhanced after the appointment in 1996 of Y. Primakov at the MFA.

Yet, the historical evidence does not support any of these expectations. First, Russian approach toward the conflict resolution model and the issue of troop withdrawal remained unaltered from 1992 to 1994. To recall that by the terms of the understandings of 21 July 1992 (the peace agreement and the joint declaration of Snegur and Yeltsin), Russia conditioned its withdrawal of armed forces by a final political settlement of the conflict which in turn was conditioned upon the granting of Transnistria a political status within a reunified Moldova which implicitly meant federalization/confederalization of Moldova. President Yeltsin made clear this point on 8 October 1992 when he declared for *Ostankino* TV: "We insist on the fact

that the President of Moldova has to convince the Parliament to provide Transnistria political status¹⁰⁶ which would ensure the implementation in the region of the right to self-determination."¹⁰⁷ Consequently, under these conditions, Russian military and political establishments had no intention to discuss the issue of troop withdrawal. A convincing example in this sense is P. Grachev's telegram to A. Lebed from 16 September '92 in which he stated: "The fate of the 14th Army will be decided after the full resolution by the political means of Transnistria's fate. [...] The army will leave only after the consent of the people of Transnistria and Moldova in general."¹⁰⁸

At the same time, Lebed legalized Transnistrian's possession of all arms and ammunition which had fallen into its hands during the armed conflict by "approving" on 10 September '92 the "Act on seizure of weapons, equipment and ammunition from the units of the 14th Army."¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting that just six days later, President Yeltsin had promoted Lebed into the rank of General-Lieutenant. During the award ceremony which took place on 2 October '92 in Tiraspol, the Russian government has also awarded medals for meritorious service about 200 servicemen.¹¹⁰

Second, Russian policy on Transnistria in 1994 contradicts the prediction of a less cooperative foreign policy. In fact, it was exactly this year that marked the first progress regarding the conditions for the conflict resolution and the timeframe for troop withdrawal. In August 1994, after two years of unsuccessful negotiations, Chişinău and Moscow have finally reached a political-military agreement which was signed on 21 October 1994. It stipulated the principle of *synchronization* between the process of troop withdrawal and the political resolution of the Transnistrian conflict with the determination of its special status within Moldova.¹¹¹ When compared to Russian previous approach which required first political settlement and only after troop withdrawal, it appears that synchronisation was Russia's tactical concession. Even though, it was a small concession since this principle reflected its basic interest in granting Transnistria a political status. Another major provision was the establishment of a three-year timetable for troop withdrawal counting from the entering into force of the agreement. This provision advantaged the Moldovan side more as it could have been invoked irrespective from the progress in the political conflict resolution.

In geopolitical terms this agreement was risky for Russia. In this case, Moscow's risk-acceptant stance could be explained principally by its desire to take advantage of Moldovan political transformation and induce

it even more into its sphere of influence. At the parliamentary elections of February 1994, the pro-Romanian party FPCD (former Popular Front) lost its influence becoming only the fourth political party with 9 seats out of 101. On the other side, the pro-Russian Democratic Agrarian Party became the main political force gaining 56 seats. Against this political background, Moldova was distancing from Bucharest and leaning towards Russia. Regarding Romania, Chişinău organised on 6 March a referendum with respect to the independence of the Republic of Moldova. Although it was called "Sociological survey: advising with people" (*La sfat cu poporul*), and did not directly address the question of unification with Romania, 95.4% voted for the independence of Moldova, thus being indirectly interpreted as rejection of the unification. As regard the Russian vector, the most important decision of the new parliament was the ratification of the CIS Agreement and its statute on 8 and 26 April respectively, although declining its military part. Despite this, integrating the socio-economic institutions was an encouraging signal for Moscow and that explains its eagerness to strengthen relations with Moldova.

Yet, in 1995 Russia has significantly changed its policy embarking upon a more ambitious course. Russian government refused to adopt the October 1994 agreement¹¹² and by the same torpedoed the process of political resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. It appears that in 1995 the chief priority of Russian in Moldova was the establishment of a military base. Although rumours about the military base intensified since the late 1994, this new Russian policy line was discussed at the highest level in June 1995.¹¹³ What has caused this radical shift? In this period, the Russian political and ideational contexts showed no significant change. The only obvious cause was NATO's announcement of eastern enlargement in late 1994. Against this new geopolitical background, and also taking account of Moldova's constant refusal to join the CIS military alliance, it becomes obvious that Russia would not be able to secure for a long time its influence in Moldova without a long-term (permanent?) military presence.

In respect to the third hypothesis – Russia's more assertive foreign policy under Primakov in 1996/98 – we notice a less assertive approach comparing to 1995. In fact, Moldova's constant refusal to accept Russia's plan for a military base has induced Primakov to search progress in the diplomatic-political field. Thus, the new Russian Foreign Minister struggled to revitalize the political dialog between Chişinău and Tiraspol and bring about a political solution. His efforts, and also those of Ukraine and OSCE, bore fruit when on 8 May 1997 was signed the "Memorandum on the

principles of normalizations of the relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria” between the Moldovan President P. Lucinschi and the Transnistrian leader I. Smirnov. This memorandum introduced the phrase “common state” thus supposing the existence of “two parties” Moldova and Transnistria which has paved the way for a political resolution within a (con)federal framework. In essence, it was nothing new with this document as Moscow pursued this objective since 1992.

Russian Policy Evolution toward the Transnistrian Conflict under V. Putin and D. Medvedev

Due to space limitation and also to the complexity of Russia’s Transnistrian policy in the Putin-Medvedev era, this part divides the analysis in two sections. The first scrutinises Russia’s policy from 1999 until 2007 and the second from 2007 until 2013.

November 1999-2007

Russian approach on the Transnistrian conflict underwent a significant shift in late 1999 opening thus a cooperative chapter in the conflict resolution process. This phase has lasted until June 2003. Afterwards, Moscow’s policy changed once again culminating in 2005-06 with a series of economic sanctions against Moldova.

At the OSCE Istanbul Summit in November 1999, Russia has finally agreed to withdraw its military equipments, arms, ammunition and troops from Transnistria (by the end of 2002). The decision to remove its arms and troops from Moldova (and Georgia) was linked to the adoption of the Adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE2) which limited the deployment of the troops in Europe on the flanks. Although this process would ultimately be halted in June/July 2003, by that date Moscow withdrew the most important part of its arsenal from the region. The International Crisis Group has concluded that “If the withdrawal had continued at the same pace, most of the ammunition and military equipment would have been evacuated by the end of the year.”¹¹⁴

Moscow also took an active stance regarding the final settlement of the conflict. For that reason, President Putin made a special visit to Chişinău in June 2000. To note that the resolution process was the most intense in this period, thus giving hopes that a final political settlement would soon be

reached. However, the goal of those negotiations remained constant as in the previous post-Soviet years – federalization. In July 2000, President Putin set up a special state commission for the Transnistrian conflict. The first result of that diplomatic activity was the proposal in July 2002, in common with Ukraine and OSCE, of the “Kiev document” which proposed the federalization of Moldova. Russia exerted substantial pressure on Chişinău and Tiraspol to meet a middle ground for understanding. Although the Moldovan government under the rule of the Communist Party has easily embraced the idea of federalization, Transnistrian leader I. Smirnov lived with the illusion of an independent Transnistria sabotaging the process in various ways. In order to get Tiraspol onboard, Moscow resorted to stick and carrot tactic using commercial pressure and financial rewarding. For example, Moscow halted Transnistrian’s exports by refusing to recognize the old Moldovan custom stamps in the possession of Tiraspol which were replaced by Chişinău in 2001.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, Moscow (Gazprom) promised Tiraspol on 4 March 2003 to cancel the Transnistrian gas debt of 100 million dollars which had an immediate effect.¹¹⁶ The next day Transnistrian Supreme Soviet adopted a decree asking the government to ensure and facilitate the withdrawal of Russian military equipments and ammunition.¹¹⁷

However, since June 2003 the Kremlin pursued a more assertive line vis-à-vis the Transnistrian conflict. Gazprom’s promise to write-off Transnistria’s gas debt was not kept and, consequently, Tiraspol returned to its familiar practice of obstructing the military withdrawal. This in turn gave an excuse to Moscow to halt the process. At the same time, Moscow set up a parallel, trilateral (with Chişinău and Tiraspol) negotiation mechanism which put the OSCE on the sidelines. Moreover, Putin sidelined the MFA by charging Dmitri Kozak, then first deputy chief of the presidential administration, to negotiate a quick solution to the conflict.

The results of this activity emerged in November with the so-called “Kozak Memorandum” (Memorandum on the Basic Principles for the State Structure of the United State). That document granted Tiraspol a veto power on internal and external policies of the “united state” and, more importantly, assured the presence of Russia’s troops in Transnistria until 2020. This document provoked a harsh reaction from the West. U.S. ambassador and Javier Solana exercised considerable pressure on the then Moldovan President V. Voronin to repeal the agreement. So, in the morning on 25 November 2003, the day when V. Putin ought to come in

Chişinău to sign the agreement, V. Voronin announced that he changed the mind and cancelled the signature of the memorandum.

After this short stage when Russia tried to bring about federal formula by guaranteeing the stay of its troops in Moldova through bilateral negotiations, Russia's favours were switching towards Transnistria. This became evident especially in 2005 and 2006. After the failure of the Kozak Memorandum, Moscow turned its back to V. Voronin making it clear that this is the only solution to the conflict. Smirnov, feeling that his room for manoeuvre increased, resorted to provocative actions. Thus the year of 2004 was an *annus horribilis* in Chişinău-Tiraspol relations when Tiraspol authorities harassed the Moldovan schools in Transnistria.¹¹⁸

It followed a difficult period until the end of 2006/early 2007 during which, on the one side, Moscow increased its support for Tiraspol, and on the other, imposed various sanctions against Chişinău. Among sanction on Chişinău we can count: a ban on meat (April 2005), on fruits and vegetables (May 2005), the twice rise of the price for gas (announced in November 2005) and the hardest sanction – the embargo on Moldovan wines and cognacs in March 2006.

In relations with Tiraspol, Moscow substantially augmented the financial support, especially after March 2006 when a new Moldovan custom regime entered into force which obliged the Transnistrian economic agents to register in Chişinău in order to export their goods. Politically, Moscow was not shy to organize various meetings between South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria, which led to the creation of the so-called "CIS-2".¹¹⁹ During this period, it was not exceptional to hear Russian official defending Transnistria's cause.¹²⁰ In September 2005, before the "elections" in Transnistria, the CIS Duma Commission noted that the Electoral Code of Transnistria was consistent with "international standards" and in December 2005, the Kremlin portrayed the "elections" as "respecting international standards".¹²¹ In May 2006 there was even a protocol signed with Tiraspol for bilateral cooperation where Smirnov was named "President of Transnistria".¹²² And in September 2006 Tiraspol organized a referendum for the separation of Moldova and the inclusion into Russia, a referendum which was *de facto* recognized by the Russian Duma.

How could liberal, constructivist and realist theories explain Russian foreign policy dynamic? In order to not complicate too much the analysis, I will first consider the weaknesses of the non-realist perspectives

concerning the initial stage (1999-2003), then apply the realist perspective for the subsequent period.

From the liberal point of view, neither the domestic politics in Russia, nor the type of regime could explain why Russia decided in Istanbul to withdraw its troops from Transnistria. In 1999 Russia was neither democratic nor liberal, quite the contrary. Since the arrival of Vladimir Putin to power, Russia followed on the path of “de-democratization” and consolidation of the “power vertical”. So, from a domestic political perspective, it is difficult to explain why it was Putin’s government that has firstly acquiesced to withdraw its troops from Transnistria in November 1999 and why this trend lasted until June 2003.

If one considers that V. Putin is a product of the KGB, Cold War, or Soviet imperial identity, Russian policy of 1999-2003 is represents an anomaly. This is all the more obvious especially if we consider the enormous humiliation that Russia endured during the Kosovo crisis in 1999.

For constructivists who see the identity as a relational process of the national Self with the significant Other, this seems to be an interesting case. Some are interpreting this shift stating that Russia had an interest to cooperate because at stake was the adapted CFE Treaty and this provided an “equal participation of Russia in the European security system”.¹²³

This explanation has four shortcomings. First, CFE Treaty does not give Russia a special say in European affairs in order to make it feel included in Europe. After NATO intervention in Serbia, the West should have offered Russia something more than just a regime on conventional forces in order to show “recognition” and “inclusiveness” and make it cooperate over Moldova and Georgia. Second, this treaty did not exclude the enlargement of NATO (or EU), the process considered by social constructivists as the central cause for Russia’s fear of being excluded from Europe. What we should notice is the fact that in 2002, seven central and eastern European countries were invited to join NATO during the Prague summit. Third, it compelled Russia to withdraw its troops and ammunition from Moldova and Georgia, thus depriving Moscow of its strongest arguments in those countries. Forth, it is not consistent with the fact that Russia still insisted on the federalization of Moldova. If the adapted CFE Treaty really represented a strong signal that Russia is accepted by the West, then all resolution frameworks should have been acceptable, even the unitary state solution.

When seen through the realist lenses, one could argue that NATO’s enlargement did not ceased to be a threat for Russia’s influence in Europe.

Yet Russia was powerless to hinder its expansion into the East. Russia was already severely affected by the financial crisis of August 1998. The awareness of this state of impotence also contributed to the Russian thundering failure in Kosovo when it was unable to reinforce its troops in Pristina. Moreover, other security challenges occurred in North Caucasus. In August 1999 took place the invasion of Dagestan by the Chechen Wahhabi rebels aiming at the creation of the "United States of Islam" in Caucasus, thus provoking the second Chechen war. Against this security background, NATO expansion was somehow eclipsed.

The only realistic possibility for Russia regarding NATO enlargement was to limit the penetration of NATO in the new and future members of the East by the adoption of a new treaty on conventional forces in Europe which limited the deployment of forces on flanks. Thus, Moscow accepted the link between its military withdrawal from Moldova (and Georgia) with the adoption of the CFE2 Treaty. Given the fact that Russia's military presence in Moldova was also a tool in negotiation process by which Moscow obtained concessions from Chişinău, Russia needed to find a quick political solution to the conflict before the completion of the withdrawal. This explains why the negotiation process had accelerated in this period. Yet Moscow needed a final solution sufficiently to maintain a minimum influence in Moldova and at the same time acceptable to the parties and actors involved.

Russian u-turn in June 2003 could be explained as a balancing act against the intensifying enlargement process of the euro-Atlantic institutions. The concrete episode which triggered this change was the OSCE proposal to change the existing trilateral peacekeeping mechanism (Moscow-Chişinău-Tiraspol). In June 2003, Netherlands Chairmanship sent an informal paper to Russia and other OSCE countries proposing the replacement of the existing mechanism with an EU-led OSCE Consolidation Force. This was "real dynamite" in Moscow, as diplomats are noticing.¹²⁴ Facing the perspective of being progressively replaced by the EU and potentially NATO in Moldova, Putin rushed to find an agreement with Moldova which would have prevented such geopolitical evolution. This is the reason behind V. Putin's decision to send D. Kozak to negotiate a particular agreement which would have granted Russia a long military presence in the region.

After the failure of Kozak Memorandum Russia has not changed this policy line while Moldova started to lean towards the West. In this context we could notice a strong correlation: the greater the Moldova-Western

rapprochement, the greater Russia's pressures on Chişinău and the greater its support for Tiraspol.

2007 - 2013

From 2007 until 2013, Russian foreign policy on Moldova evolved through two stages. The first one, since 2007 up to the spring 2011, was marked by a gradual shift of Russian policy in a relatively positive direction. Russia took a more moderate stance towards Moldova and became more open relative to the conflict resolution problem expressing readiness for a status quo change. By the spring of 2011, however, the signs of a policy reversal start to emerge and thereafter the policy trend went down towards a more assertive and conflicting stance.

By 2007, Russia began to leave its embargoes against Moldova. In early summer 2007, Moscow cancelled its embargo on agricultural products and the restrictions on Moldovan alcohol production were removed in the first half of 2008. Even though Moscow continued to help economically Transnistria, this was an important policy shift especially if we recall that the principal causes for these embargoes against Moldova – the new Moldovan custom regime from 2006 and the deployment of the EU Border Assistance Mission at the Moldovan-Ukrainian frontier which forced Transnistrian firms to register in Chişinău – were still in place.

Russia gave a new impetus to the talks on conflict resolution within a trilateral framework Moscow-Chişinău-Tiraspol, bypassing the "5+2" negotiating format (Chişinău, Tiraspol, Russia, Ukraine, OSCE plus EU and U.S. as observers).¹²⁵ This new impetus led to the historical meeting between the Moldovan President Voronin and the Transnistrian leader I. Smirnov in April 2008 (the last meeting took place in 2001). Another important trilateral meeting was held in Moscow on 18 March 2009. In the final joint declaration it was agreed to resume the official negotiations in the "5+2" framework in the first half of 2009, and to transform the existing "peacekeeping operation" into a "peace-guaranteeing operation under the auspices of the OSCE". The positive aspect was that Russian drop out its ambition to be the only guarantor for the unified state (as stated in the Kozak Memorandum). The negative aspect was that this transformation would take place "as a result of the Transnistrian settlement".¹²⁶

The Parliamentary elections in Moldova of 2009 and the subsequent change of the Moldovan government ruled by the anti-communist Alliance for European Integration did not enable these initiatives to be brought

to the logical end. Yet the positive momentum in Russian policy on the Transnistrian conflict resolution has not been lost. Quite the contrary, it gained a new impetus in the context of the Merkel – Medvedev “Meseberg process.” Its name comes from the Meseberg Memorandum which was signed by A. Merkel and D. Medvedev in June 2010 and intended to pave the way for a deep cooperation between Russia and the EU in the areas of security and foreign policy through the creation of a committee at the level of Foreign Ministers (Ashton-Lavrov). The Transnistrian conflict was mentioned in this document as an example where cooperation could be translated into reality. The Russian Foreign Minister, S. Lavrov even accepted a possible EU involvement in a peacekeeping mission in Transnistria during the talks with the “Weimar Triangle” held on June 23 in Paris.¹²⁷ At the same time, Russia has suspended the financial assistance for Tiraspol and intensified its pressure on Smirnov.¹²⁸ Moscow’s efforts and pressures had eventually led to the acceptance of Smirnov to reactivate the “5+2” negotiation which resumed on 30 November 2011 (too late) in Vilnius, and represented a key factor of Smirnov’s failure at the Transnistrian elections of December 2011.

Two particular factors which are consistent with realism stand high in explaining Russian policy in this stage. First, there is Moldova’s foreign policy. Since late 2006, Chişinău has begun to lean towards Russia. The Moldovan government became more reticent with regard to reforms demanded by the EU and distanced himself from GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) while searching for the international recognition of the permanent neutrality of Moldova. In 2009-10, despite the fact that the “Alliance for European Integration” comes to power in Moldova, Russia maintains its moderate approach because of the weakness of the government and the impossibility to elect a president.

The second factor was the positive dynamic of Russian-Western relationship. In 2009 the President Obama announced the “reset” of the U.S.’s Russia policy. This opened the route for intensive dialogue with NATO over the possible ways to cooperate in the missile defence sphere (Lisbon 2010 NATO Summit). It also boosted cooperation with the EU and intensive talks on the ways to institutionalize the partnership in the security and foreign policy spheres (inter-ministerial committee) led to the Merkel – Medvedev memorandum in June 2010 (Meseberg process).

The Transnistrian conflict was mentioned as an example where cooperation could be translated into reality. Officially, it was stated in the memorandum that first the new EU-Russia committee would be set up,

and then, with joint efforts, the new committee would be directed to the search how to put an end to the conflict. But unofficially, Russia's European partners (Germany) advanced a precondition: Due to the reluctance of some EU countries to pursue institutionalization in such sensible domains as security and foreign policy, it was necessary for Russia to demonstrate its *bona fides*, thus stimulating positive tendencies on the Transnistria issue.

However, since March 2011, signals were occurring as about a shift in Russian Transnistrian policy. On 10 March 2011, the President of the State Duma, Boris Gryzlov point out that Russia renewed the "humanitarian" (financial) assistance to Transnistria. At the same time, the Russian government decided to elaborate a strategy for the development of Transnistria until 2025. To do this, on March 15, a roundtable was organized in Tiraspol with the participation of two experts from the Centre for Strategic Initiatives close to the Russian government, and led by G. Gref and D. Kozak.

From the summer of the same year, Moscow began to intensify its efforts to push Chişinău to give up the "unitary state" conflict resolution model, and by the autumn it became clear that Moscow had no longer hopes for a quick resolution. If in 2010 the Transnistrian conflict was highlight by Medvedev as "absolutely solvable",¹²⁹ then in October 2011 Medvedev said that one of the few frozen conflicts in Europe that can be solved was the Nagorno-Karabakh.¹³⁰ In December he even stated that the Nagorno-Karabakh "is the only conflict in the post-Soviet space that can be solved at the present time".¹³¹

From March 2012 onwards, this negative policy line has only intensified so that the year of 2013 resembles in many respects the 2004 *annus horribilis* in the Chişinău – Tiraspol relations. Russia's new policy line on Transnistria became obvious on 21 March 2012 when the President Medvedev appointed the deputy-Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin - former Permanent Representative of Russia to NATO - as a special representative of the President to Transnistria. On 16-17 April, Rogozin made a visit to Chişinău and Tiraspol during which he promised to contribute to the socio-economic development of Transnistria, announced the strengthening of institutional links between Moscow and Tiraspol, and the establishment of joint committees with the economic ministries of Transnistria. He also promised to open a Russian consulate in Tiraspol. From the second half of 2012, we notice the amplification of this policy.¹³² Moscow undertook steps in order to consolidate the military potential of Transnistria and started to repair the military aerodrome in Tiraspol. Perhaps this was the

aim of the secret visit in Transnistria of the Russian Minister of Defence on 12 April 2012. Financial aid for Transnistria has also increased. Moreover, Russian officials multiply messages like “Transnistria has the right to exist”. There are also open advocacy of Transnistrian “Eurasian choice”. The Russian embargo on Moldovan wines in September 2013 is just another element of this policy. In 2014 this trend has continued as Moldova signed the Association Agreement with EU. Moscow increased its sanctions against Chişinău as for example the embargo on Moldovan agricultural products and the cancellation of the free trade regime with Moldova within the CIS.

Why did the cooperative stage begin to lose momentum in 2011? And why did the negative trend replace it afterwards? Two key systemic factors influenced Russia’s reconsideration of its Transnistrian policy. First of all, there was the lack of desire from the EU to deliver on the Meseberg process and Russia’s growing frustration throughout 2011. The second key factor was the failure to find a way to cooperate with the U.S./NATO on the missile defence issue. The dialogue on this issue came to a standstill in late spring 2011. Moreover, The U.S. pursued its deployments plans in Europe without taking into account negotiation with Russians. The fact that in October 2011 Romania signed an agreement with the U.S. allowing them to settle in Romania a part of the missile defence shield provoked visible irritation in Moscow. With the failure of these two initiatives was lost a rare window of opportunity to change the geopolitical context and to bring about a solution to the Transnistrian conflict.

Conclusions

This analysis shows that Russian foreign policy evolution toward the Transnistrian conflict is mostly consistent with the realist theory. Since the early post-Soviet period Russia behaved as a power-seeker actor searching to maintain or increase its influence in Moldova. Depending on its power means, Russia was also adapting and reacting to the stimuli and constraints on the local level (Moldova’s policies toward Transnistria, Russia and the West), regional (Ukraine and Romanian), and international level (Western/NATO expansion to the east or cooperation with Russia).

The findings of this study have implications for the theoretical/scholar debates and also for the practitioners of international relations/foreign policy. The major finding of this paper is that geopolitics play

a central role in Russian policy toward Moldova/Transnistria. This puts under question the dominant opinion on Russia's initial liberal and pro-Western policy of Boris Yeltsin. Researchers should reassess the role of the former Soviet republics in Russia's foreign policy since 1991. Even if Russia has initially pursued good relations with the West, which is understandable if considering the huge internal problems and the need for financial assistance, Russian attitude toward its Near Abroad was far from "isolationism". There is an obvious contradiction between the idea that Russia was seeking a rapid integration into the West and its policy toward Moldova and the CIS in general. How Russian leaders could have expected a rapid integration into the democratic West by applying a *realpolitik* policy in relation to a former Soviet republic? Was the alleged pro-Western Russian foreign policy a deeply-rooted conviction based on its democratic-liberal ideas or should we rather consider it a tactical move in order attract financial and economic assistance during very difficult times? In other words, was that a real foreign policy or rather discourse?

In practical terms, this analysis suggests that Russian policy toward the Transnistrian conflict will principally depend on the regional and international geopolitical contexts. It suggests that Russia's cooperation or confrontation approach would largely depend on Moldova's European integration progress and on Western (EU and NATO) in the region. The crisis in Ukraine increases Transnistria's geopolitical importance for Russia. It is unlikely that Russia would provoke a war in Moldova as many analysts expect. Moscow has other means to exert influence over Moldova. Yet, should Moldova's integration process in the EU become irreversible, or at the point to retake/regain Transnistria, Moscow could resort to some assertive or even aggressive measures. Reasoning from the realist perspective, there is also the possibility of Russia's power decline as a result of economic, social or political crisis and Moldova's reunification with Transnistria as a consequence. However, serious Russian internal turbulences will most probably have a destabilising effect throughout the entire post-Soviet region, Europe and Asia with unpredictable repercussions.

NOTES

- 1 T. Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1998, pp. 171-200. R. L. Jepperson, A. Wendt, and P. J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security," in Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 33-75. A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- 2 Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics", *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4, Autumn 1997.
- 3 For example, constructivists describe Russia's initial westernism as dominated by three features: radical economic reform, rapid membership in the Western international economic and security institutions, and isolationism from the former Soviet states Tsygankov. See A. P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers (2nd edition), 2010, p. 59. Liberal authors claims in the same vein that Russia's initial foreign policy was dominated by "conspicuously pro-Western views, with heavy tilt toward economic determinism, universal democratic values and general neglect of competitive geopolitical and strategic facets of international politics." See K. Litvak, "The Role of Political Competition and Bargaining in Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of Russian Policy Toward Moldova," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 224.
- 4 A. P. Tsygankov, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- 5 K. Litvak writes that "in accordance with the dominant Atlanticist views, the Russian leadership took the side of the "democratic" Moldovan government in its struggle against the pro-communist Dniester Republic." *op. cit.*, p. 224-25. N. Jackson also claims that "Yeltsin chose to support Moldova's new 'democratic' government and the principle of territorial integrity" because "a liberal westernizing idea: Russia could not maintain preferential ties with Transdnistria (or other regions) if that meant jeopardizing its newly favourable relationship with the West." See *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS. Theories, debates and actions*, Routledge, 2003, p. 94.
- 6 International Crisis Group, "Moldova: Regional Tensions Over Transdnistria", *ICG Europe Report*, no.157, vol. 17, June 2004, p. 3.
- 7 K. Litvak, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
- 8 D. Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan*, RIIA and Macmillan, London and New York, 2000, p. 47, 114.
- 9 This argument is supported also by scholars adopting an eclectic approach. For example Y. Breault, P. Jolicoeur and J. Lévesque, who claim in their

- collective work that “the role it [the 14th Army] played in the short civil war cannot be assimilated to Russian foreign policy of that time.” See, *La Russie et son ex-empire. Reconfiguration géopolitique de l’ancien espace soviétique*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2003, p. 145. There are also authors who explicitly identify themselves as Realists and adopting this argument about the 14th Army. Allan C. Lynch for example considers that the 14th Army escaped Moscow’s control to the point becoming “an effective institutional actor.” See, *The Realism of Russia’s Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- 10 Kate Litvak, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
- 11 A. Devyatkov (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 43, 73, 74. N. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 83, 95. I. F. Selivanova, *op. cit.*, p. 57. D. Lynch, *op. cit.* p. 114.
- 12 The economic agreement was initiated by all republics except the Baltic states on 1 October 1991; see V. Ardaev and E. Matskevich, “Itogi vstrechi v stolitse Kazakhstana prevzoshli vse ozhidaniya,” [Results of the meeting in the Kazakh capital have surpassed all expectations], *Izvestia*, no. 235 (23501), 2 October 1991, p. 1, 3. However, when the day of the official conclusion came in October 18th, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, declined to sign.
- 13 G. Alimov, “Privykajte k slovam: Sojuz Suverennyh Gossudarstv (SSG),” [Get used to the words: the Union of Sovereign States (USS)], *Izvestia*, no. 272 (23538), 15 November 1991, p. 1. The Baltic States, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine refused to join the political treaty.
- 14 “Obrashenie Prezidenta Rossii k narodam Rossii, k Siedzdu Narodnyh Deputatov Rossijskoj Federatsii,” [Address of the President of Russia to the peoples of Russia, to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Russian Federation], *Rossijskaja gazeta*, no. 224 (270), 29 October 1991, p. 1.
- 15 “Zajavlenie press-sekretarea prezidenta RSFSR,” [Statement by the Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation], *Rossijskaja gazeta*, no. 177 (223), 27 August 1991, p. 2.
- 16 See the shorthand report of the joint meeting of the second session of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR (meeting 42) in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 10026, Inventory 1, Affair 426, p. 27-28.
- 17 He served then as the Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR.
- 18 See V. Kuznetsova, “Metamorfozy Yeltsinskoj natsional-politiki,” [Metamorphosis of Yeltsin’s National Policy], *Nezavissimaja gazeta*, no. 102, 31 August 1991, p. 3.
- 19 Then Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Committee on inter-republican relations of the RSFSR’s Supreme Soviet and later Russia’s First Deputy Foreign Minister (October ’91-November ’92).
- 20 See in A. Gagua, “My pereotsenivaem nashih partnerov,” [We overestimate our partners], *Nezavissimaja gazeta*, no. 101, 29 August 1991, p. 3.

- 21 M. Sokolov, "Sudba Sojuza: 'N+0' ili '9-9'?" [Fate of Union: "N + 0" or "9-9"?], *Kommersant*, no. 35, 2 September 1991.
- 22 M. Snegur, *op. cit.*, p. 464-465.
- 23 Then Chairman of the Committee on National State System and Interethnic Relations of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of Russia.
- 24 E. Kondratov, "V Moldove ponjali: nasilie – besilno," [In Moldova understood: violence is powerless], *Izvestia*, no. 235 (23501), 2 October 1991, p. 1.
- 25 In late September 1991, Moldovan and Romanian presidents, prime ministers and defence ministers met in Huși (Romania) and agreed on the "coordinating actions of the two countries after the fall of the USSR" and Moldova's "increased rapprochement with Romania, including support [from Romania] with weapons and ammunition." See I. Costăș, *Transnistria 1989-1992. Cronica unui război "nedeclarat"*, RAO, București, 2012, p. 239-240.
- 26 A. Sheehy, "Moldavia Joins Economic Union," *RFE/RE Daily Report*, no. 212, 07 November 1991.
- 27 I. Dnestrjanskij, "14-ja obshchevoyskovaya rossijskaja armija v Pridnestrovskom konflikte" [The 14th Russian Combined Arms Army in the Transnistrian conflict], 26 April 2011, available at: www.artofwar.ru.
- 28 "Zajavlenie 'O sobitjah v Respublike Moldova'," [Declaration 'On the events in the Republic of Moldova'], *Rossijskaja gazeta*, no. 270 (316), 10 December 1991, p. 1.
- 29 V. N. Baranets, *Genshtab bez tajn [General Staff without secrets]*, Moscow, Politbjuro, 1999. See the Chapter 1, Part 15: "Moldavskoe vino" [Moldovan wine], www.militera.lib.ru.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 He was serving then as Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Affairs of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.
- 32 Then Deputy Chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.
- 33 E. M. Kozhokin, "Zapiska Zamestitelju Predsedatelja Verhovnogo Soveta RSFSR Iarovu I. F." [Note by the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, Iarovu I. F.], Fond 10026, Inventory 4, Affair 3336, State Archive of the Russian Federation, p. 17.
- 34 Most surprisingly, 54% of Crimeans and two-thirds of the Soviet military personnel in Ukraine supported independence. See Referendum/Presidential Election in Ukraine, *CSCE Report*, 1992, p. 1.
- 35 S. Pifer, "The Trilateral Process: The United States, Ukraine, Russia and Nuclear Weapons," Arms Control Series Paper 6, Foreign Policy at Brookings, May 2011, p. 4, 39, www.brookings.edu.
- 36 Quoted in S. Foye, "Storm Clouds on the Horizon?" *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 88, 08 May 1992.

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- 39 P. Aven and A. Koh, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- 40 V. Zenetsov, “Manipulyatsii s armiyey ne privedut k dobro, [Manipulation of the army will not lead to good], *Rossijskaja gazeta*, 10 January 1992, p. 1.
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- 43 “Rossija vystupaet za edinye vooruzhennye sily” [Russia calls for united armed forces], *Rossijskaja gazeta*, no. 14 (350), 18 January 1992, p. 1.
- 44 “Rasporjazhenie Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federatsii ot 29.01.1992 N 38-rp,” [Order of the President of the Russian Federation of 29.01.1992, no. 38-rp], www.kremlin.ru.
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- 48 V. Socor, “Russian Insurgency in Eastern Moldova Escalates,” *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 53, 17 March 1992; see also, “Russians Continue Offensive in Eastern Moldova,” *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 54, 18 March 1992.
- 49 V. Socor, “Another Cease-Fire Agreed,” *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 54, 18 March 1992.
- 50 I. Stadnik, “Vojna i finansy” [The War and Finances], *Moskovskie Novosti*, no. 27 (622), 5 July 1992, p. 2.
- 51 A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobrivyj, *Nepokorennoe Pridnestrovie: uroki voennogo konflikta* [Unconquered Transnistria: Lessons of the Military Conflict], Moscow, Vesche, 2015, p. 34.
- 52 M. Snegur, *op. cit.* p. 496.
- 53 A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobrivyj, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

- 54 V. But, "Kazakov prosjat ne vmeshatsa," [The Cossacks are asked to not interfere], *Izvestia*, no. 68 (23642), 20 March 1992, p. 1.
- 55 See A. Kozyrev's interview to *Nezavissimaja gazeta*, 1 April 1992, no. 63 (234), p. 1, 3. From the text and the context we may understand that Kozyrev's interview was made in the first days after the Helsinki meeting.
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- document is available at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 10026, Inventory 4, Affair 3336, p. 39-44.
- 69 General Makashov, *Znameni i prisjage ne izmenil!* [I have not Betrayed the Banner and the Oath!], Moscow, Algoritm, 2006, p. 132.
- 70 See the interview of P. Grachev to *Izvestia*, no. 127 (23701), 1 June 1992, p. 1, 3.
- 71 In a single day of 19 May, the Transnistrian guards were supplied with 63 items of military hardware consisting of 14 BTR-70, 1 BMP-2K, 2 BRDM, 1 PRP-3, 1 122-mm howitzer D-30, 8 85-mm gun D-44, 10 100-mm gun KS-19, 20 cars and 6 fuelling lorries. After the combat, the Russians handed over all other armoured fighting vehicles, including 10 tanks. See A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobrivyy, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
- 72 M. Bergman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 5, Part 5 - "Sozdanie armii PMR" [The creation of the army of the TMR]. A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobrivyy, *op. cit.*, p. 61-62.
- 73 G. Starovojtova, "Ieshche odna mina pod SNG," [Another mine under the CIS], *Moskovskie Novosti*, no. 22 (617), 31 May 1992, p. 6-7.
- 74 See A. Kozyrev's declaration in *Izvestia*, no. 125 (23699), 29 May 1992, p. 1. For the statement of P. Grachev, see V. Socor, "Grachev Qualifies Yeltsin's Remark," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 102, 29 May, 1992.
- 75 V. Socor, "Grachev Again Warns Moldova," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, No. 106, 4 June, 1992.
- 76 M. Snegur, *op. cit.*, p. 612-613.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 614.
- 78 The author is not precisising whether all those forces were involved from the beginning or joined in the following days. Ion Costaş, *op. cit.*, p. 433.
- 79 M. Bergman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 5, Part 3 - "Vzryv 'porohovoj bochki'" [Explosion of the 'powder keg'].
- 80 See the declarations in *Rossijskaja gazeta*, no. 141 (477), 22 June 1992, p. 1.
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- 82 *Ibid.* It is important to note that without the agreement of B. Yeltsin, who was at that time on a trip to North America (U.S. and Canada), the Prime Minister E. Gaidar would have not allowed the adoption of such a crucial decision.
- 83 During the day of 20 June, the Russian artillery fired at least 76 rounds on 4 different Moldovan targets in Bender and Varnița. See A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobrivyy, *op. cit.*, p. 252-253.

- 84 In Dagomys Russian and Ukraine reached an 18-point agreement. See R. Solchanyk, "Ukraine and Russia Reach Agreement," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 118, 24 June 1992.
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- 86 M. Bergman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 7, Part 3 - "Komendant Respubliki," [Republic's Commandant].
- 87 *Ibid.*
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- 89 V. Socor, "Four Presidents Discuss Moldova," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no. 121, 29 June 1992.
- 90 A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobryvj, *op. cit.*, p. 157. See also V. Litovkin, "14-ja armija: novyj komandujushij – novaja taktika nejtralitate," [14th Army: a new commander – a new tactic of neutrality]. *Izvestia*, no. 150 (23724), 29 June 1992, p. 2.
- 91 A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobryvj, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- 92 V. Socor, "Russian Note Increases Pressure on Moldova," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, No. 123, 01 July, 1992.
- 93 S. Gamova and E. Kondratov, "Mircea Snegur: nachalas ekonomicheskaja blokada Moldovy" [The economic blockade of Moldova has begun], *Izvestia*, no. 150 (23724), 29 June 1992, p. 1, 2.
- 94 M. Bergman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6, Part 12 "Komandarm Lebed," [Army Comander Lebed].
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 *Ibid.*
- 97 Ten different Moldovan targets were destroyed, including ammunition depots, fuel storages, a command centre and recreation bases of troops and police. See A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobryvj, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
- 98 S. Skripnik, quoted in E. Medvedev, *Krovavoe leto v Benderah ... op. cit.*
- 99 Moldovan authorities and M. Snegur were constantly denying that Smirnov has signed the document in either form, but this claim is highly suspect. Moldovan government had presented to the European Court for Human Rights a copy of the text without Smirnov's signature at the process of Ilie Ilaşcu and others, while Russia provided a copy with Simonov's signature. See ECHR, "Case of Ilaşcu and Others vs. Moldova and Russia," Application no. 48787/99, Judgment, Strasbourg, 8 July 2004, paragraph 87, p. 21. M. Snegur then declared that he ignored where Smirnov's signature is coming from. However, in his memoirs, Snegur affirms that Smirnov "endorsed" (*vizat*) the document before the official ceremony of the signature of the agreement. M. Snegur, *op. cit.*, p. 655.
- 100 V. Socor, "Russian-Moldovan Meeting," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, no 126, 06 July 1992. See also, V. Kuznetsova, "Eltsin i Snegur postavili sebja pod ogoni

- pridnestrovskogo konflikta, esli ogoni ne prekratitsa segodnja" [Yeltsin and Snegur put themselves under the fire of the Transnistrian conflict if the fire does not stop today], *Nezavissimaja gazeta*, no. 126 (297), 4 July 1992, p. 1.
- 101 See the "Communiqué regarding the meeting between Moldovan President Mircea Snegur and the President of the Russian Federation, B. Yeltsin," in M. Snegur, *op. cit.*, p. 656-57.
- 102 M. McFaul, "Russia's Many Foreign Policies," *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1999, p. 402.
- 103 A. P. Tsygankov, *op. cit.*; A. L. Clunan, *op. cit.*; T. Hopf, Identity, legitimacy, and the use of military force: Russia's Great Power identities and military intervention in Abkhazia, *Review of International Studies*, No. 31, 2005; K. Litvak, *op. cit.*; N. Jackson, *op. cit.*
- 104 For a liberal view of this see M. McFaul, *op. cit.*, p. 403. For a social-constructivist example, see Ch. Thorun, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- 105 See in B. Lo, "Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking," Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 41.
- 106 In the source the quote reads "political state" (*politicheskiju gosudarstvennost*), however, other sources indicate that it is not "state" but "status," see in M. Snegur, *Op. Cit.*, p. 680.
- 107 "Helsinki watch – rossijskim vlastjam: Rossija vyshla za ramki dobroj voli" [Helsinki Watch – to Russian authorities: Russia has gone beyond good will], *Nezavissimaja gazeta*, No. 214 (638), 9 November, 1993, p. 5.
- 108 See in A. Lebed, *Op. Cit.*, p. 458-50.
- 109 A. V. Kozlov and V. N. Chernobrivij, *Op. Cit.*, p. 255.
- 110 *Nezavissimaja gazeta*, No. 214 (638), 9 November, 1993, p. 5.
- 111 A. Țăranu and M. Grecu, *op. cit.*,
- 112 Yeltsin passed the agreement to the Duma for ratification knowing certainly that it would not ratify it. To note here that there was no specific disposition in the agreement regarding the ratification procedure, thus Yeltsin could have approved the agreement by a governmental decision as Moldova deed.
- 113 See *Kommersant* No. 118 and 119 from 28 and 29 June 1995, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/111934>; <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/112039>.
- 114 International Crisis Group, "Moldova: no Quick Fix," *ICG Europe Report*, No. 147, 12 August 2003, p. 11.
- 115 International Crisis Group, Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transdnistria, *ICG Europe Report*, No. 57, 17 June 2004, p. 8.
- 116 International Crisis Group, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- 117 *Ibid.*
- 118 G. P. Herd, "Moldova and the Dniester Region: Contested Past, Frozen Present, Speculative Futures?" *Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central and Eastern Europe Series*, February 2005, p. 8-10.

- 119 Tracey C. German, "Le conflit en Ossétie-du-Sud: La Géorgie contre la Russie," p. 60. Nicu Popescu, "Outsourcing de facto Statehood: Russia and the Secessionist Entities in Georgia and Moldova," *CEPS Policy Brief*, No. 109, July 2006, p. 5.
- 120 For example, in 2005 the then Russian deputy D. Rogozin has warned that Transnistria could turn to be a second Kaliningrad, *Flux*, No. 159 (1479), November 22, 2005.
- 121 *Flux*, 172 (1492), December 15, 2005.
- 122 A. Devyatkov, "Russia: Relations with Moldova under a Paradigm of Ambiguity", in Marcin Kosienkowski and William Schreiber (eds.), *Moldova: Arena of International Influences*, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2012, p.192.
- 123 A. Devyatkov, *Politika Rossii v otnoshenii Pridnestrovskoj Moldavskoj Respubliki*, p. 54 and 107-110.
- 124 J. Löwenhardt, *Op. Cit.*, p. 107.
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- 126 http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/0C29B78403398C46C325757D0056C04E
- 127 O. Rusu, "Le 'redémarrage' et la politique russe à l'égard de la Géorgie et de la Moldavie," *Regard sur l'Est*, 17 December, 2010.
- 128 Kremlin's pressures upon Igor Smirnov have evolved in the fall of 2011 to lawsuits against members of his family, sharp statements against Smirnov and unprecedented media campaign against him and his clan.
- 129 "Transnistrian conflict resolvable – Medvedev," *The Voice of Russia*, 20 October 2010.
- 130 <http://news.day.az/politics/294668.html>
- 131 <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/14114>
- 132 D. Minzarari, "Russia is Building Diplomatic and Military Tools to Prevent Western Resistance to its Eurasian Union," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, December 11, 2012.