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EUROPEAN BORDER –THE NEW FORMED IDENTITIES. THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

(Settore scientifico-disciplinare: SPS/10)

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*"If you wish to understand persons
- their development and their
relations with significant others -
you must be prepared to view them
as embedded in historical context"*

(Anselm L. Strauss)

INDEX

CONTENTS.....	5
ACRONYMS.....	9
INTRODUCTION.....	11
CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH THEME.....	13
1.1. Choosing the research theme.....	15
1.2. Methodological approach.....	18
1.2.1 Studying the identities.....	18
1.2.2 Fieldwork.....	20
1.4. Advantages and limitations.....	23
1.5. The structure of the thesis.....	24
CHAPTER 2: THE NATION-BUILDING OF THE MOLDOVAN STATE	29
2.1 Pre-Soviet Era.....	31
2.1.1. The birth of Moldova (Bessarabia).....	31
2.1.2. Ottoman period.....	33
2.1.3. Russian Empire.....	34
2.1.4. Great Romania.....	38
2.2 Soviet Era.....	40
2.2.1. Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.....	40
2.2.2. Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic.....	44
CHAPTER 3: THE MODERN SITUATION IN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	47
3.1 The independence of the Republic of Moldova.....	49

3.2. A short history of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic.....	53
3.3. The Gagauz.....	58
3.4. The Bulgarians.....	64
CHAPTER 4: THE CONFLICT.....	65
4.1. The conflict.....	67
4.1.1. Frozen conflict.....	70
4.1.2. Myth of the ethnic conflict.....	74
4.1.3. The geopolitical conflict.....	81
4.1.4. Factors which led to conflict.....	83
4.2. The present “situation of the conflict”.....	85
4.2.1 The actors involved in the resolution of the conflict.....	86
4.2.2. The objectives of the conflict.....	88
4.2.3. The strategies of the conflict.....	89
4.3. The resolution of the conflict.....	90
4.3.1. The resolution of the conflict.....	90
4.3.2. The chronology of the negotiation of the conflict.....	94
4.3.3 The scenarios.....	99
CHAPTER 5: THE NATIONAL IDENTITY.....	101
5.1. Nation and nationalism.....	103
5.2. The concept of identity.....	106
5.2.1. National identity.....	110
5.2.2. Civic identity.....	113
5.2.3. Ethnic identity.....	114
5.2.4. Social identity.....	116
5.2.5. Cultural identity.....	118
5.2.6. Personal identity.....	119
5.3. The new created identities at the European border.....	122
5.3.1. Moldovan identity.....	127
5.3.2. The “Moldovenism project”.....	135

5.3.3 “Homo Sovieticus”.....	141
5.3.4. Transnistrian people and Transnistrian identity.....	143
5.3.5. Collective memory in the creation of the identity.....	148
5.4. The language issue.....	153
5.4.1. Moldovan Language.....	156
5.4.2. Russian Language.....	160
5.5. The mass-media and the internet.....	163
5.6. The use of stereotypes.....	167
CHAPTER 6: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL RELATION OF THE REPUBLIC	
OF MOLDOVA.....	173
6.1. Relation of the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria.....	175
6.1.1. Economic relation and “border” cooperation.....	175
6.1.2. The custom stamps.....	176
6.2. The external trade of Moldova and Transnistria.....	180
6.3. The conflict settlement	188
6.3.1. The European Union.....	190
6.3.2. The United States.....	193
6.3.3. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	194
6.3.4. Russia.....	195
6.3.5. Ukraine.....	198
6.3.6. Romania.....	200
6.4. The role of the Non-Governmental Organizations.....	202
6.4.1. The Non-Governmental Organizations in Moldova.....	202
6.4.2. The Non-Governmental Organizations in Transnistria.....	203
CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS.....	205
7.1. The questionnaire and the data analysis.....	207
7.2. Further interpretation	230

CONCLUSIONS..... 237

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 243

ACRONYMS

AP – Action Plan

BSEC – Black Sea Economic Cooperation

CBC – Cross-Border Cooperation Programme

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

CEI – Central European Initiative

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

CMU – the Committee for Moldovanization and Ukrainization

CPM – the Communist Party of Moldova

CSCE – Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe

CSO – Civil Society Organizations

EaP – Eastern Partnership

EC – European Commission

ENI – European Neighborhood Instrument

ENP – European Neighborhood Policy

ENPAP – European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan

ENPI - European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument

ESS – European Security Strategy

ESDP – European Security and Defense Policy

EU –European Union

EUBAM – EU Border Assistance Mission

EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission

EUSR - European Union Special Representative

FSU – Former Soviet Union

FTA – Free Trade Agreement

GUAM – Organization for Democracy and Economic Development

IMF – International World Bank

MASSR –Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

MGB - Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Ministry of State Security of Transnistria)

MSSR –Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NIS – Newly Independent State

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PCA - Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

PRM – Priednistrovskaia Maldivskaia Respublica

RM – Republic of Moldova

SEE –South Eastern Europe

SU – Soviet Union

TACIS –Technical Assistance for CIS

TMR –Transnistrian Moldovan Republic

TRACECA – Transport Corridor Europe –Caucasus-Asia

UN – United Nations

UNA-UNSO - Ukrainian National Assembly – Ukrainian Nationalistic Self Defence

UNDP – United Nation Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

UNHCR – United Nation High Commission for Refugees

UNO – United Nations Organization

U.S. – Unites States

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WHO – World Health Organisation

WTO –World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

Before 1989, the Moldovan people have been a single nation, sharing a single, common identity. Now the situation has changed. Some of them consider that they are Romanians, but, due to the Soviet period, they have no possibility to feel the Romanian identity; others consider that they represent a distinct Moldovan nation, which is quite different from the Romanians; for some others, they know that have common ties with Romanians but, because the different evolution of the situation in the two countries, they consider that, today, they represent an independent nation; there are some, especially the residents of Transnistria, who consider that they have nothing to do with Romanians, even with Moldovans, because they represent a new people, distinct from Moldovans, or they consider themselves Russians. And all this is happening in the same country, the Republic of Moldova.

Actually, the purpose of this thesis is the fact that on the European border there is a complex phenomenon, a “frozen” conflict, which lasted for more than eighteen years, and, still, a real and certain solution for its settlement does not exist. The conflict creates a security dilemma at the European border, because the Republic of Moldova is a border line between Latin and Slavic culture, between Europe and Russia; that is why it involves more attention from the international actors. As Williams A. shows “Moldova stands as a constant reminder that, even within Europe itself, there are places that are potentially not only economic and political disaster areas but, also, real threats to the wider security of the continent”[Williams 2004: 346].

In general, the states deal with the question of identity and belonging, but the new created Transnistrian identity deals with statelessness. That is why there is a direct relation between the new created political identities and the conflict settlement in the Republic of Moldova and its separatist region, Transnistria. That is why the present situation represents a critical problem for the future redrawing of the national and international borders. For the Republic of Moldova, Transnistrian separatist region remains the main security problem, which has negative repercussions to Moldova's state independence and sovereignty, on economic, political and social level, as well as for all kind of international relations.

The Republic of Moldova still remains the poorest country in Europe, being affected by the Russian crisis in 1998 and, now, being affecting by the global crisis, and would be difficult to redress its situation under these circumstances. If Moldova would choose the European path, it could mean losing Transnistria and losing the Russian market and cooperation. If it would choose the Slavic path, it could lose the democratization process, the country's development and nobody could guaranty that the Transnistrian conflict will be settled. In other words, Moldova's decision regarding its future is a very difficult issue.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH THEME

1.1 CHOSSING THE RESEARCH THEME

Starting with the collapse of the USSR, the Eastern Europe faced multiple processes of nation building, which led to the forming of new identities and, in some particular cases, to ethnical or political conflicts. This is also the case of the Republic of Moldova, facing its nation building process, including the conflict with its separatist region: Transnistria.

“European Border – The New Formed Identities. The Case of the Republic of Moldova” researches exactly the forming of those new identities, including the historical background that led to their emergence. In 2007, along with Romania’s accession to the European Union, the Republic of Moldova became a European neighbour. The conflict situation in the Republic of Moldova, with its separatist Transnistrian region, influences the European border and, therefore, the conflict does not represent only an internal conflict, but an international conflict. The conflict influences the security of the European border because of the “frozen conflict’ in the separatist region. And this situation will have an impact on the future cooperation at the European border.

Another important argument for choosing this theme was the question “Which is my identity?” and elaborating on this topic has definitively been a challenge. The research itself represents a challenge for my co nationals to think about. Although some authors consider that the term “identity” represents a cliché nowadays, because it was overused in the research field, the Republic of Moldova needs to pass through this “identity

transformation”, because it represents a new independent state, and each new created state is passing through the identity crisis.

Another reason was the existing misunderstanding of the concept of identity and its types. The citizens in Moldova do not pay attention to the concept of identity, because they have to face the social, economic and political problems of the country, and they are too concerned with their daily problems. According to Lungu, considering Abraham Maslow’s¹ “Theory of Human Motivation”, the people from Transnistria are situated on the second/third level of needs from the bottom of pyramid [Lungu 2007: 12]. In my opinion, the people in Moldova are also situated on the second or third level of Maslow’s Pyramid, just like Transnitrians.

Another argument is represented by the political propaganda, which is using the identity, citizenship and nationalism in order to reach its goals. The propaganda represents a reason why the individuals make the confusion between the citizenship, national, civic, ethnic and other identities.

Furthermore, the thesis will approach the new formed identities in Moldova and Transnistria and the conflict readiness, which results from the type of chosen identity. Parting from the premises that “identity system depends on the social context” and that “the social context is influenced by the national and ethnic consolidated identities”, the thesis will analyze if those might generate or not the “conflict readiness”. However, the relation between conflict readiness and identity has not been studied yet in Moldova. This is why this thesis intends to research this argument and to reveal the motives why the citizens chose to consolidate a specific identity in a specific moment, which are these new formed identities and how these are linked to the conflict. Actually, the research is trying to present, on two parallel levels, the forming and the evolution of the new created

¹ “A Theory of Human Motivation” has been proposed in 1943 by Abraham Maslow. The theory represents “a hierarchy of needs”, having five levels. First level is situated at the bottom of the pyramid and it is characterized by psychological needs (breathing, food, water, sex), the second is the safety level (security of body, family, and types of security), the third is the level of love and belonging (friendships, sexual intimacy), the fourth is the level of esteem (self-esteem, respect) and the last level is the self-actualization level (lack of prejudice, problem solving, spontaneity, morality and creativity).

political identities, and the lasting and evolution of the conflict, because there is a directly proportional relation between them. If the gap between the identities becomes deeper, the resolution is more difficult and vice versa.

This thesis is studying, mainly, two hypotheses:

The conflict in Transnistria does not represent an interethnic conflict, but represents a political and geopolitical conflict. The conflict has an impact not only on the internal situation of Moldova, but has a heavy impact on the external situation and cross-border cooperation, because Moldova represents the European Union's neighbour.

The new created identities, and the existing gap between them, worsen not only the situation of the conflict resolution, but they also worsen the resolution of the country's future on both national and international level.

In order to demonstrate the hypotheses, it is necessary to reach some objectives, which will follow the structure of the thesis. The objectives of the thesis presume to research the argument that, during the eighteen years, the conflict has not yet been solved. The Transnistrian situation has been ignored by sociological researches, compared to other conflicts that have drawn the international attention, although they had, more or less, the same characteristics:

- ✓ First of all, flash back of the history is presented, in order to explain and understand the formation of the country – including all regions – and how the natural border – the Dnestr River – was transformed into an internal border, within the same country. The consequences history has on the nation-building process are also presented.
- ✓ The presentation of the national renaissance of the country and its consequences, which are very important because of their ties with the conflict that had appeared in the country, and with the future of the country.
- ✓ All the researches and documents about the conflict are analyzed, for a better understanding of the purpose of the conflict. The conflict is analyzed from all

points of view: political, ethnical, geographical and the beginning of the war is presented, including its consequences: the separation between the two sides and the transformation of the regions during the almost nineteen years.

- ✓ All the possible solutions and scenarios for the conflict are analyzed, by pointing out the most important events.
- ✓ The identities of the citizens of the country are defined and the relation between the imaginary and existing identities in the region is analyzed, including how the identities could interact.
- ✓ The relation between Moldova and Transnistria is analyzed, both internal cross-border cooperation and the cooperation with other countries. This objective aims to define and to figure the future of the region, the existing expectations and projects of the country.
- ✓ Analyzing what was done to solve the existing conflict and the taken measures, the involvement of the international organizations, NGOs, protectorate countries and other important actors, and the possible solutions.

1.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

1.2.1 STUDYING THE IDENTITIES

In order to validate the objectives of the thesis, quantitative and qualitative data have been used, from various ethnic and national barometer, various statistical researches and

non-governmental analysis, articles, papers and researches, regarding the main topics of the study.

The relevance of the ethnic barometer with the present research consists in the understanding of the conflict' reasons, and, more precisely, that the conflict is not an ethnic but a political one, and that the conflict is linked to the new created political identities. The barometer relieves the existing prejudices and stereotypes about “the others”, it presents also some opinion about the Republic of Moldova' future and describes the opinion of the respondents about their identity. The limit of the ethno-barometer, reliable to this research, is that it analyzes the situation only on the right side of the country. The survey about the public opinion from Moldova and Transnistria, conducted in June 2010, was also used. The authors John O'Loughlin and Gerard Toal made a complex research on both sides of Dnestr River and their cross-border cooperation.

All NGOs and OSCE reports also are relevant to the thesis, all related articles and statistical data from the European and USA official sites, which were analyzed, in order to better explain the presented objectives.

Regarding the most specific approach of the concept of identity, a study from 2002 about the collective memory was used and how it influences the formation of Transnistrian identity. The research is relevant because it helps to better understand the evolution of the created identity in Transnistria and also helps to make a comparison between 2002 and 2011. Another relevant study was conducted about the cross-border cooperation between Romania and Moldova and its implication on the national identity option. Other researches were also used, revealing identity comparison between Moldova and other ex-soviet states.

Some specific newspapers and sites were analyzed, in order to find out the public opinion about each other and how it could influence the peoples' future behaviour. In the same time, the political manipulation through mass-media was also analyzed. For a more

complex analysis, official and unofficial sites from Moldova and Transnistria have also been compared.

Finally, some economic data and sources have been used about the external and internal relation of the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria and their trans-border cooperation. The relevance of these data is consisting in the explanation of their general relation and further conflict settlement.

1.2.2 FIELDWORK

The questionnaire was the investigation technique used, as a quantitative tool represents, which quantifies the data and verifies the hypotheses. The questionnaire contains most of all questions with closed answers, which are finally interpreted with SPSS, to better quantify the results. Generally speaking, the questionnaire is a limited instrument, because it is rigid and could not represent the depth of the feeling of the individuals. But for the chosen topic, in my opinion, this is the appropriate tool, because this way is easier to obtain a general portrait of the thoughts and beliefs about the identity and the situation of the country. A semi-structured or open interview is more difficult to obtain, regarding the conflict situation in the regions, the existing stereotypes and the prejudices, and the lack of the communication between the two sides. So using a questionnaire is easier to obtain and to interpret their opinion.

The questionnaire includes 24 questions, structured in five sections, which will be applied to 30 respondents from the right side of the Dnestr River and 30 from the left side. The necessary time to fulfil the questionnaire is about 5-7 minutes.

The first section includes the general information about the individuals, in order to relax the respondents. It offers information about the respondents' background, age, citizenships and spoken languages. This section is important in any questionnaire, because it is important to know some general aspect about the respondents.

The second group of questions is created to reveal the level of prejudice, stereotype and ethnocentrism, which the inhabitants from the both sides of Dnestr River have of each other. Starting from the premise that there are no democratic attitudes regarding mass-media, the both sides face with strong stereotypical attitudes.

The third section includes questions about the civic, national and ethnic identity, which help us to understand the preferred identity, and the respondents' general opinion about the identity. Also, it reveals whether between the two sides the individuals' opinions are more or less different.

The fourth section includes the general question about the country's future and how could be the right solution to solve the country's problem. The section is important for the better understanding of the peoples' expectations in the region and how they will decide to choose the future of their country. It includes, as well, the individuals' preferred resolution of the situation.

And the last group includes the individual's possible beliefs and attitudes regarding the new armed conflict, the disintegration of the state, and the union of the state. This section also analyzes the individual's readiness to the conflict, and if the individuals are ready to fight for this reason.

The research also tries to demonstrate that, in spite of the common existence and cohabitation during nearly 50 years in the same country, under the same Soviet ideology, after the collapse of the USSR, the two sides of the country have chosen their own identity and their own future determination. And this is because of the historical background, because of the political and ideological propaganda and influence, because

of the present relation between two sides and their protectorate-countries, and, finally, because of their border neighbours and the cross-border cooperation between them.

The sample represents young people, aged between 20 and 30 years, because they represent the new generation and the future of the country; they do not know and feel the Soviet identity and they are more suitable for the chosen theme. In the same time, the older generations have a strong formed identity – Moldovan, Romanian, Russian, Soviet identity. But we are looking for the new formed identities, emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, because the new generations were not brainwashed by the Soviet propaganda and they see the future and act in a different way. The interviews were administrated during December 2010 and January 2011, in the Chisinau and Tiraspol, the two capitals of the divided Moldova, because the two cities include the most different opinion about the conflict situation in the country.

During the interviews, some challenges occurred regarding the totally contradictory attitudes about the inclusion of Transnistria within the Republic of Moldova and the consideration as a “common state”; another challenge represented the hostile attitude about the presented topic for the both sides, but especially from the left side.

And, finally, it is important to mention that the research represents most of all an experimental approach, because of the limited number of respondents, and, consequently, the problem of generalization of the research on national level has occurred. Also, we can not consider the results valid for all ethnic minorities existing in both Moldova and Transnistria, but only for Moldovan majority or mixed Moldovan groups. As presented above, it represents only the attitudes and the opinion of the “post-war” generation (20-30 years old).

1.3. ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

The present thesis offers a real and present situation in the Republic of Moldova, on both sides of Dnestr River, how the national identity in these regions has been created and the existing changes about the national identity during the history. The thesis includes my personal suggestions about the situation in the Republic of Moldova and it could represent a new approach for the further researches and studies; it could also represent a better understanding of the process transformation in the country in general.

There are some articles and statistic data about the most important topics of the thesis, written by Moldovan and international researchers and NGOs, but for most of all these, there is a lack of free access. There is also a lack of literature in the Moldovan and Transnistrian libraries and bookshops. It is known that mass-media does not represent an objective factor in the country, because of the censorship and political interests and manipulation.

One of the most important limits is the fact that there are a few researches about the identity of the Republic of Moldova, especially about the new formed identities in the country, including the separatist region Transnistria. There is also a lack of information relating to the conflict and the peoples' attitude about it, the existing stereotypes and prejudice between the two different sides. That is to say many social and psychological aspects regarding the study of these topics are neglected.

The real situation of the country is not very well known on the national and international level, because the main researches, articles and NGOs activities are investigating some specific terms, concepts, aspects; but the related problems have not been studied without

reserve. Actually, in a great extent it was scarcely studied, according to its importance for the international actors.

Particularly, regarding the present research, the limit is represented by the small number of respondents, in order to validate the questionnaire on the national level. So the research remains a start point for other papers and studies. Further, the other limits are represented by the information, most of all incomplete and not updated; the lack of data, documents and surveys about this theme particularly, and the Republic of Moldova in generally; and, finally, the researches analyze only some specific concepts and terms.

1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In order to better expose and analyze all the concepts related to the topic of the thesis, it is structured into seven chapters, starting from a general framework that analyses the historical aspects, continuing with a more specific approach towards the main concepts of the thesis and ending with a methodological framework that describes the techniques used and further elaborates and interprets the data gathered.

The first chapter includes some general aspects of methodological approach and makes a brief introduction of the main thesis' topics. It exposes the main data sources and how the sample was chosen. It also contains the reasons why the present work represents an interesting topic for the researched area.

The second chapter underlines a short brief of Moldova's history, describing the creation, the transformation and its nation-building process. Practically, in the period of nation-building in Europe, Moldova was becoming a state; but not an independent state, but a

“part” of another state. It was under Ottoman Empire, Russian Empire, within Great Romania and Soviet Union; actually it was an “object of intense nation-building projects” [King 2000: 7], and was a “borderland in a series of wars among Europe’s three great land empires” [King 2000: 18]. In Europe, the period was the moment of the creation and consolidation of the national identity and nationalism, meanwhile the national identity in Moldova has still remained a challenge until nowadays, because the frequent changes in this territory. One section from the chapter presents the foundation of the present separatist region, and how and why it was incorporated to Soviet Moldova. Generally speaking, the chapter presents the most transformations the country had passed in order to become an independent state. It also includes a little description of the Soviet Era and how it contributed to the formation of the distinct types of identity. Several phenomena are also described, such as starvation, deportation, migration in order to change the ethnic percent of the population, Russification, Socialization, industrialization, collectivization. That period represented the time of big transformation on the political, social and geographical level, including some territorial annexations and challenges. The period is important also to explain the differences existing among the people living in this country, according to their social status, ethnic minority.

The third chapter presents the modern situation of the Republic of Moldova, describing in detail the arguments that led to the conflict situation. This chapter starts with the beginning of the conflict in the Republic of Moldova, which became a new and independent state that was trying to consolidate its borders after the fall of the Soviet Union; on the other hand, the Republic of Moldova encountered a lot of obstacles in its transformation. The most problematic issue is the existing “frozen conflict” within the territory of Moldova: Transnistria. Hereinafter, the thesis describes all the problems which Moldova had to face, starting with Transnistrian separatism and war, continuing with the Gagauz autonomy and finishing with the present postponement of the resolution of the conflict. The period is presented as definitive for the creation and consolidation of new national identities.

The fourth chapter is presenting some aspects related to the conflict – settlement, objectives, strategies, scenarios – and all regional and international actors involved in the conflict. The existing conflict in the Republic of Moldova is analyzed, which, instead being solved, was transformed in a frozen conflict for more than eighteen years. The “frozen and forgotten” conflict represents a major security and stability challenge, not only for the state itself, but for the European border too. As long as the situation remains unsettled, it involves serious and unsolved problems for economic and civil society, democratic institutions and security border, massive unemployment, violation of human rights, trafficking people and drugs, criminality, closed borders and corruption. And, unfortunately, the present status–quo of “no peace, no war” leads to the consolidation of the separatist regime, that is why it needs an urgent conflict resolution.

Further, some concepts as “nationalism”, “national identity” are presented, by explaining the premises of the creation of the “Moldovenism project” and the “Moldovan identity”, parallel with the creation of the “Transnistrian identity” and the “Transnistrian people”. A concept of “nation”, “identity” had not existed at those times in Moldova, and there was no need to be aware of it and to consolidate it. During the Soviet period, all the Soviet Republics had to consolidate the Soviet identity and forget about own personal and desirable identity. Practically, the conflict of identities started since that period, leading to an ambiguous and weak sense of identity. In other words, the same country, divided in two different sides by the history, is analyzed, along with the construction of two different types of identities in these regions and how they interact between each other. Further, the main factors that are connected with the political created identities are presented, such as mass-media and the internet, the language, and the psychological tool of collective memory and stereotypes, in order to consolidate the existing gap between the identities.

To conclude, the analytical part of the thesis, the sixth chapter, underlines the present external cooperation of Moldova and Transnistria, where the Russian Federation and the Europe Union remain the two important partners. The external cooperation and the future development of the international relationships will be most important as an economic

factor for the forthcoming years, since it will affect the population and their choice of a national identity. The NGOs work is also presented, as they try to enforce the mutual cooperation between the both sides of the country. Generally speaking, the sixth chapter describes the major agreements and conventions which have been signed because the complete settlement of the conflict is impossible without the considerable and active assistance of the international community.

The last chapter deals with the methodological aspects of the research. The questionnaire was used as a statistical tool, in order to verify the hypothesis and the objectives of the research. Generally speaking the research also tries to demonstrate that, in spite of the common existence and cohabitation during nearly 50 years in the same country, under the same soviet ideology, after the collapse of the USSR, the two sides of the country have chosen their own identity and their own future determination. Furthermore, the fieldwork is analyzing the differences between the answers of the inhabitants that are living on the left side, compared to those on the right bank, and the descriptive correlation between one question and another, or between one concept and another.

The final part of the thesis represents the conclusive part and the bibliography, the websites and all annexes. The conclusions contain some personal suggestions about the interrelation between the two different formed identities and the connection between them and the main topics of the thesis. It also contains some general deduction about the entire research and it also presents the contribution of the fieldwork to the research field in generally.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATION-BUILDING OF THE MOLDOVAN STATE

2.1 PRE – SOVIET ERA

2.1.1 THE BIRTH OF MOLDOVA (BESSARABIA)

The Republic of Moldova is situated between Dneestr River, in the east and Prut River in the west. Considering its location, the Republic of Moldova (also named Bessarabia) was a route between east and west or it was a route between Europe and Asia. That is why a real battle was fought over this territory. During the centuries this land was occupied by nomad tribes (Goth, Mongols, Huns, Magyars, Turks, Polacks and Russians). From the beginning we should consider this territory as a *borderland*.

There is a legend about Moldova, which describes the young Romanian Prince Dragos, in the early 1300s, who was hunting in the east lands of the Carpathian Mountains, accompanied by his hunting dog Molda. The dog was gored by a bison and it drowned; therefore the Prince Dragos decided to give to the river the name Molda. After that, the territory was extended between the Carpathian Mountains and Dneestr River and Prince Dragos became the first lord of the entire land. The Prince Dragos is presented by the Moldovan historiographer Miron Costin¹ in his work as the first Prince of the Land, who had been ruled between 1347 and 1354 and gave the name Moldova to that territory.

¹ Miron Costin (1633-1691) was a Moldavian (Romanian) political figure and historio-biographer. His main work was *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei [de la Aron Voda incoace]* (The Chronicles of the land of Moldavia [since the rule of Aron Voda]), published in 1675.

The name of Bessarabia comes from ruling dynasty of Walachia, the Basarabs², who conquered this part of land situated on the east-southern plane between Black Sea, Danube and Dneestr River. Actually the territory was a windrow gained from the Tatars by the Basarab dynasty, which conquered and incorporated the territory in the 15th century, becoming the eastern part of Moldovan principality. Before 1812, this south-eastern part of territory has not had any particular name.

One of the most important books about the early history of Moldova is “Descriptio Moldaviae”, written in Latin language, between 1714 and 1716. The author is Dimitrie Cantemir³, Moldovan Prince, who describes the medieval foundation of the Moldovan state. Dimitrie Cantemir describes that the territory of Moldova is divided in three parts: Upper Moldova, (*Moldova de sus*), Lower Moldova (*Moldova de jos*) and Bessarabia. Bessarabia had its boundaries between Danube, Black Sea and Dneestr River, territory which was also called Bugeac [Cantemir 1973].

“By the end of 1350s, two broad entities existed in the territory beyond the Carpathian crescent: to the east, the Principality of Moldova, and to the south, Tara Romaneasca (Romanian Land), also known as Walachia” [King 2000: 14]. Moldova had two most important princes, Alexandru the Good (1400-1432) and Stefan the Great (1457-1504). Under Alexandru the Good the institution of the principality was developed and the border had been defended against Ottoman Turk and Hungarians. Under Stefan the Great Principality of Moldova reached its apogee, fighting with Ottoman Turks in the south, Hungarians in the West, Tatars in the east and Polish in the North [King 2000: 15].

Bessarabia had its bounders in the south the Black Sea, in the east the Dneestr River and in the west the Prut River. The area was about 45.000 sq km. Southern Bessarabia had a strategically importance, the Black Sea and the Mouth of the Danube River. It is

² The Basarabs had an important role for establishing of the Principality of Walachia (historical and geographical region of Romania), and they give the first line of Princes.

³ Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723) was twice Prince of Moldavia (March-April 1693 and in 1710-1711). He was also a historiographer, linguist, ethnographer, geographer, philosopher, composer and musicologist.

important to mention that initially only the southern territory, with the opening to the Black Sea was named Bessarabia, but after the frequent conquests this part was renamed Bugeac – in 1538, after the Turkish conquest - or it was included to the Moldovan Principality. The Russians used the “Bessarabia” to the whole part between Prut River, Dneestr Rivers and Black Sea in 1812, after the Russian –Turkish war [Crihan 1991: 72]⁴. Practically in that period the territory of Bessarabia was modified, which represents the first identity building and its further consequences.

Today Bessarabia is a part of the Republic of Moldova, excluding the southeast part (which actually, from historical point of view represent the original land of Bessarabia) and the northern part (called Bucovina), both parts settled by Ukraine.

2.1.2 OTTOMAN PERIOD

After the death of Stephen the Great, Walachia and Moldova (including the land of Bessarabia) became vassal of the Ottoman Empire. Until nineteenth century (1538-1812) this territory accepted the Ottoman suzerainty, but never was fully incorporated to it. Principality of Moldova was paying annual tribute in exchange to be ruled by the native princes, recognized by the sultan. The Moldovan and Wallachian territories were included in so-called “*House of Peace*” – an intermediate status between “*House of War*” (territories, over which Ottoman Empire planned to conquer by way of force) and “*House of Islam*” (territories, directly integrated in the Ottoman Empire) [Nantoi 2009: 161]. All the time over these territories was a fight in order to obtain the independence from the Ottoman Empire, but every time the attempts have failed, because of the fear of the

⁴ The author cited the Switzerland historiographer A. Babel, who mentioned that “Russia gave the name Bessarabia to the whole part between Prut and Dneestr, intending to develop the idea that from historical point of view there was a Bessarabian Country, divided of proper Moldova.

Austro-Hungarian, Polish and Russian powers, fear of other strong power which could conquer the territory.

2.1.3 RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Russian influences in Moldova started to develop stronger in 1673. Peter the Great planned a war with Ottoman Empire in 1711, and, for the first time, the Russian Army got past the Dneestr River and entered to Moldova. The Russian expansionism will continue during all suzerains and during the Soviet Union period. According to Arnautu, between 1711 and 1944 Russia will invade Romania, implicit Moldovan territory twelve times [Arnautu 1956].

The first Great Russian invasion was shortly after the Russian-Turkish War (1806-1812), when the territory of Bessarabia was ceded to Russia in the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1812.⁵ The treaty of 1812 required Turkey to leave only Bessarabia (meaning only the southern part also called Bugeac or Budjak). That is why Russia called entire territory between Prut River and Dnest River with the same name “Bessarabia”, the eastern part of Moldova. Under these circumstances the Russian Empire had the opportunity to leave here its troops in order to annex it to the Empire. Russia needs Bessarabia in order to have the exit to the Black Sea and the Danube, and has been interested from commercial and military point of view. Practically the Russian “pacification” presupposed a vision of the future Soviet Union. Since that period Bessarabia/Moldova became a main issue in the Romanian-Russian relations.

⁵ The annexation of Bessarabia represents, practically liberation from the Turkish yoke, and the help from Russian part as a Christian people, not pagans (as the Turks were). All these claims were named -the Russian protectorate - against the Ottoman oppression, in the Adrianople Treaty (1829).

Bessarabia became an *oblast*⁶ with capital in Chisinau. The annexation of Bessarabia to Russian Empire divided Moldova in two parts. The western part, situated between Carpathian Mountains and Prut River remained under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and the eastern part of Moldova (including the southern part, named Bessarabia), situated between Prut River and Dnestr River was included to the Russian Empire. Under the Tsar I (1801-1825) the newly incorporated territory had enjoyed a good autonomy but afterwards, starting with the rule of Nicholas I (1825-1855), the autonomous status disappeared and the imperial control has been created.

In 1828, the autonomy has been abolished and in 1830 the customs barriers on the Dnestr have been liquidated, and the territory of Bessarabia started to maintain a certain particularity within the empire's structure. By the end of the 1860s, Bessarabia was fully integrated into the Russian legal system, when the agrarian reform and the *zemstvo*⁷ regulations have been introduced.

In 1871 the status of Bessarabia was changed from the imperial region – *oblasti* – to a Russian province – *guberniya*⁸. The change of status shows the intention to transform this land in an inseparable part of Russian territory. The autonomous status was more restricted under the Tsar Alexander II (1855-1881).

During the Russian domination, a politic of Russification of territory and population was enforced. The statistic data from 1817 shows that in these territories 86% were Moldovans/Romanians and 14% were other nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Gagauz and Germans) [Crihan 1991: 115].⁹ Instead, the imperial census from 1897 reveals that Bessarabian guberniya had 1.935.412

⁶ Oblasti –in Russian Empire – means an administrative division, established by new incorporated territory to the Empire.

⁷ Zemstvo – was a form of local government, instituted during the great liberal reforms by Alexander II of Russia.

⁸ Guberniya – was a major administrative subdivision and was preserved until the collapse of Russian Empire. Peter the Great divided Russia into eight guberniyas, in 1708. Later the guberniyas were increased to 23.

⁹ The author describes that on 23 July 1812, Russia gave its citizenship to all inhabitants of Bessarabia (regardless the real nationality of inhabitants), the only condition was to swear the faith to Tsar.

inhabitants, being represented by Moldovans/Romanians (47, 6%), Little Russians (Ukrainians) (19, 6 %), Jews (11, 8%), Great Russians (8%), Bulgarians (5, 3%) and Germans (3, 1%) [Postarencu 1998: 126]. The real goal was to change the percentage of the ethnic population and to attract the colonists [Pelivan 1919: 49]¹⁰. In the same time, the Romanian peasants from Bessarabia were settled in Russian territory, having the promise to start a new life with Russian citizenship. Between 1912 and 1934 47 Romanian villages have “disappeared” because the exodus of Romanians into Russia [Istoria R.S.S. Moldovenești 1967: 456]¹¹.

Even the military service was made in Russia, so that the soldiers were Russified. The religion, schools and the administration were also used for Russification. Romanian schools were closed, and the relation between Romania and Bessarabia frozen to almost inexistent. In 1854 the Russian language was the only official language of the region [Pelivan 1919]. The subordination of the Bessarabian church to the Moscow patriarchy and the elimination of the Moldovan customary law were in the interest of separating the two Moldovan sides.

In the beginning, after the annexation in 1812, it was promised that Moldovan/Romanian language will be kept as a spoken language, but by 1856 it was prohibited to release documents or use the Moldovan/Romanian language. It is important to mention the writings of Batiushkov about the Moldovan national spirit and language:

”If we want the Russian population from this territory not to be Romanized anymore, Bessarabia not to be considered only a Russian guberniya, but not to be anymore the object of Romania’s will and agitation, and to be incorporated into Russia, it is necessary to familiarize the Moldovan peasants, using the schools, with religious Slavic language and transform the peasants in half-Russians by the means of language” [Postarencu

¹⁰ The author shows in this book that the gubernator Timkovski had written about this territory “Province of Bessarabia is composed of two categories of inhabitants: native Moldovan and vagabonds, which was introduced in different periods” (pg 49). The same author cited another Russian Zuzulinov, who took down that “Major colonist were Russian fugitives, which wanted to escape from boyar slavery, military service, religious persecution or punishment, being condemned for crimes”.

1998: 122]. As the Moldovans and the Ukrainians were almost a rural population and the most illiterate, it was possible to familiarize the peasants with Slavic church and language.

In the Treaty of Adrianople, in 1829, Russia asked for the Danube Delta to be included in the southern frontier. At the Treaty of Paris in 1856, after the Crimean War, returned the southern Bessarabia (divided into three districts: Izmail, Kagul [or Cahul], and Bolgrad) to Romanian Principality. But in 1878, in the Treaty of Berlin, these three districts were annexed to Russian once again, despite Romania's having fought on the Russian side against Turkey, giving to Romania the Dobrudja as compensation. The Central Powers asked Romania to cede Bessarabia to Russia, in order for Romania to be recognized as an independent state, because Walachia and the western Moldova have been transformed into dynastic kingdom in 1881, after obtaining its independence from the Porte in 1878 [King 2000: 49].

In 1816, after the occupation of Bessarabia, the Russian historic P.P. Swinim cited that the inhabitants of this territory are Moldovans and Romanians, descendents from Roman colonists [Dungaciu 2005: 84]. But more specific are the Russian ethnographer L. S. Berg, who noted that “Moldovans are Romanians who are living in Moldavia, Bessarabia and the neighbouring parts...Insignificant dialectal elements distinguish them from the Romanians from Walachia...” [King 2000: 59].

Russification means that the Moldovans should be transformed into Russians on a deeper lever. The incorporation of Bessarabia to the Russian Empire presupposes to *think and pray in the Russian language, feel and act in the Russian manner*. According to Ghibu, the Moldovans from that period have begun to think and express themselves in Russian language and then translate into Moldovan; in other words they have not ever known the Latin alphabet, they did not had the national consciousness [King 2000: 31].¹² The term

¹² King explains in this book that Ghibu, a Transylvanian writer and educator, is referring to the professors and students, not taking into consideration the rural population, which were represented the majority.

of “Moldovan people” is often used, represented in a Russian writing and documents from the imperial period.

2.1.4 GREAT ROMANIA

In the 1881 the Kingdom of Romania was founded, which will be the centre of Romanian nationalism that will be developed in Bessarabia, especially after the civic Russian revolution of 1905. The movement will be sustained, in the Bessarabian side, by parish priest and schoolteachers and only a few boyars, because most of boyars were been Russified. During this revolution, the Romanian intellectuals from both sides invoked national awakening, claiming national rights by printing a number of manifests in Cyrillic script.

In October 1917, *Sfatul Tarii* (Citizen’s Assembly) – a regional parliament was created in Chisinau by the “Military – Moldovan Congress”. The first meeting of *Sfatul Tarii* was held on November 21st. And on 2nd December, 1917, *Sfatul Tarii* declared Bessarabia a *Moldovan Democratic Republic*. In January 1918, the Romanian troops arrived in Bessarabia and in the same time the Citizen’s Assembly declared the Independence of Moldovan Democratic Republic of Bessarabia. Bessarabian’s union with Romania was proclaimed on 27th March, 1918 [King 2000: 35].

“Voted by Sfatul Tarii on 27th March, 1918. In the name of the people of Bessarabia, Sfatul Tarii proclaims: the Moldovan Democratic Republic (Bessarabia) in its borders between the Prut, Dnestr, Danube, Black Sea and the old border with Austria, broken by Russia more than a hundred years ago from the body of ancient Moldova. By virtue of historic right and right of ancestry, based on the principle that nations should independently decide own destiny, from here to eternity, unites with its mother Romania.

Long live the union of Bessarabia with Romania ever after!

*Chairman of Sfatul Tarii, Ion Inculeț; Vice-Chairman,
Panteleimon Halipa; Secretary of
Sfatul Tarii I. Buzdugan” [Nantoi 2009: 162-163]*

The union of Bessarabia with Romania was recognized by Romania, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, in the treaty (part of the Paris Peace Conference) signed on October 28th, 1920. The treaty was ratified by all signatories excepting Japan. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union never recognized the union between Bessarabia and Romania and in 1924 created Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on Ukrainian territory along the Dnestr River.¹³

In the interwar period the USSR stressed Romania declaring that *Sfatul Tarii* (Citizen’s Assembly) was not a representative body and Romania occupied Bessarabia illegally. Bessarabia should be under the USSR occupation because it was under Russian Empire, and the USSR is the successor of Russian Empire. That is why the Soviet Union created the MASSR (Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) in Ukraine, on the left bank of the Dnestr River. The Soviet Union tried to suggest that there was a big difference between Romanians and Moldovans from ethnical point of view, and Romania had violated the rights of self – determinism in Bessarabia. But the same official USSR maps demonstrated that the border of the USSR was along of Prut River, while the Bessarabia territory had the status “temporary Romanian occupation” [Nantoi 2009:163].

As Livezeanu asserts, “the creation, recreation, enlargement (and ever diminution) of East European states after World War I according to Wilsonian principles of self-

¹³ www.britanica.com

determination provided the occasion for shaping national identities” [Livezeanu 1995: 7-8]¹⁴

2.2 SOVIET ERA

2.2.1 MOLDOVAN AUTONOMOUS SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

In the 1920 and the 1930 the Russians made everything to produce tension between Romania and Bessarabia using propaganda. But the apogee was the creation of MASSR – Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was part of Ukrainian Soviet Republic, in October 1920. The new created MASSR was situated on the east bank of Dneestr River comprising a stretch of about 7,516 square kilometres. “The creation of the MASSR is the beginning of the liberation in Bessarabia. Once the economic and cultural growth of Moldova has begun, aristocrat-led Romania will not be able to maintain its hold on Bessarabia”. It was noted by a Soviet publication in 1926 [King 2000: 54].

“In the Memory regarding the necessity to create RASSM, the most important reason is that the republic will have the same role, as political and propagandistic factor towards

¹⁴The author explains that in the interwar period some nations in the Eastern Europe made a self determination. This is the case of Yugoslav and Czechoslovak, which were rebuilt; and Hungary, Romania and Polish, which should reunified its lost territory. For example, Romania doubled its territory in this period, taking Bessarabia from Russia, Bukovina from Austria, Transylvania from Hungary and Southern Dobrudja from Bulgaria (the last territory has been annexed in 1914 after the Second Balkan War)

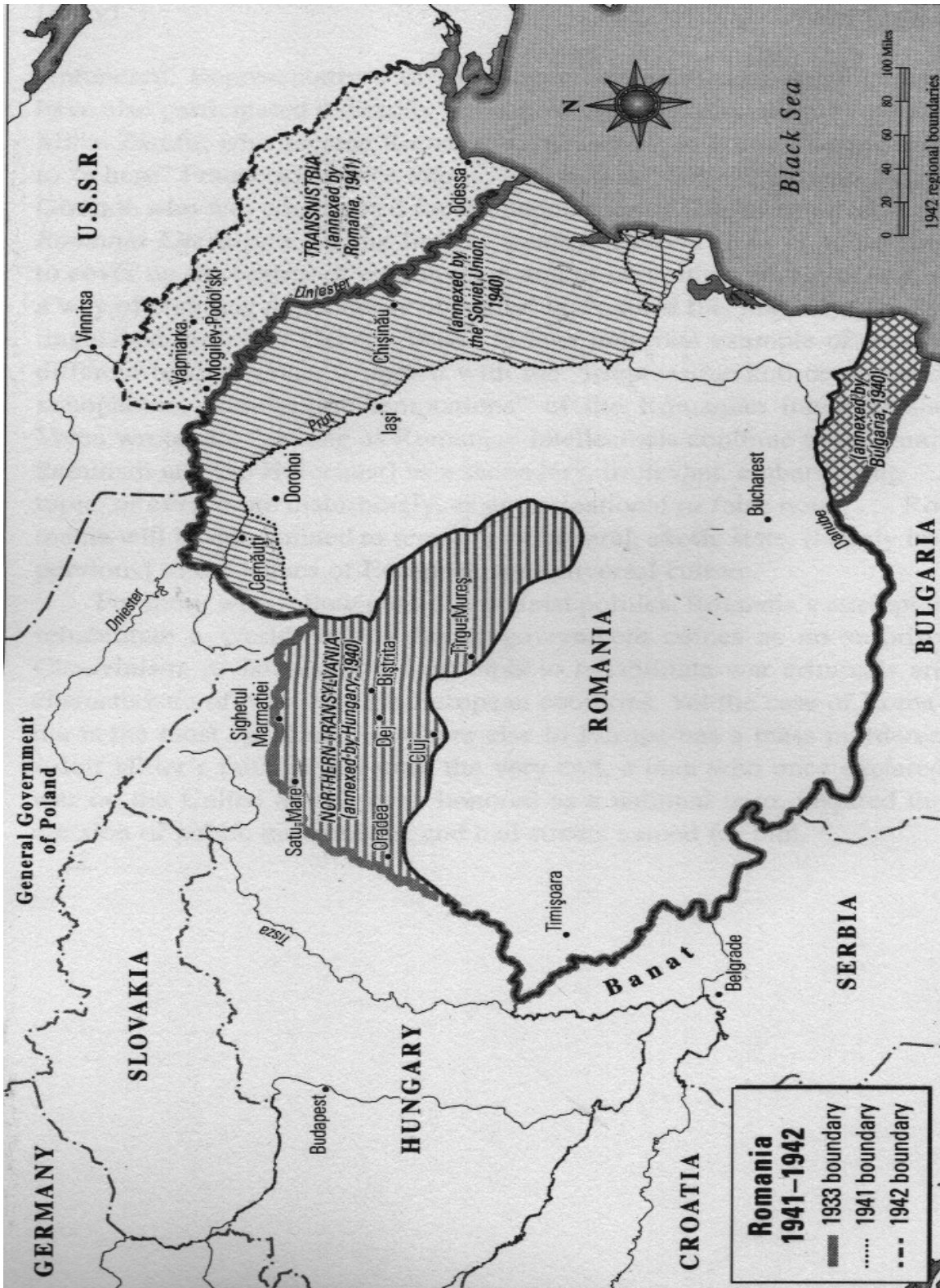
Romania, with Byelorussia towards Polish and Karela towards Finland [Fruntasu 2002: 154]. In other words, MASSR seems to be the beginning for Sovietising Romania. Transnistria was an ideal land to experiment such a project. The Moldovan population from this territory, minority, semi-Russified, semi-Ukrainized, illiterate, rural, most of them passive from political and cultural point of view, represents a perfect “experimental material” [Negru 2000: 16]. It was possible because prior to the creation of the RASSM, in this territory “was, at an even deeper level than in Bessarabia, a classic borderland where ethnic identities were fluid and situational, and where Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Jewish, and German influences combined to create a mixed culture” [King 2000: 181].

Some political soviet personalities as: Mykola Skrypnyk, commissar of justice in Ukraine declared about the MASSR: “*We consider the border to be not along the Dnestr, but along the Prut. Yes, for the time being the capitalist have Bessarabia in their hands. That is a question of fact, not of right. The right is on our side. On our map, Bessarabia is also included inside the red borderline, since Bessarabia should be an inseparable part of the MASSR*” [King 2000: 55]. Another soviet politician is Christian Radovsky, who argued that “*We do not deny the fact that a comparatively large part of the population of Bessarabian is Moldovan....What is important is not the percentage of population of this or that ethnographic element, but the will of the population.*” Actually, the population’s will to be part of something is very important, and the fact the Romanians and Bessarabians speak the same language seems to be not so relevant in his opinion [King 2000: 56].

The territory of MASSR was larger compared with nowadays Transnistria. In 1924, MASSR was extended to the east to the Southern Bug River, and had its capital in Balta city. In 1929, Tiraspol became the capital. After 1940, six *rayons*¹⁵ of MASSR were annexed to Bessarabia and altogether they formed the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR).

¹⁵ Rayon (or raion) represents an administrative division in the former USSR and it is commonly translated in English as “district”.

Figure 1: MASSR, Bessarabia and Romania



Source: http://www.morarup.narod.ru/Harti_T.html

In MASSR, in 1924 were living 45.5% Ukrainians, 32% Moldovans, 9% Jews, 8.7% Russians, and 2.5% Germans [Fruntasu 2002: 155]. The Russian created RASSM for annexing the Bessarabia and to try to Sovietize Romania and fight against the Ukrainian nationalism – because the Russian communists' authority was endangered. The goal was to suppress everything which has the meaning of culture and language (especially Ukrainians language and culture, because compared to the Moldovans, Ukrainians were manifesting their nationalism).

After 1945, Transnistria became an important element of Soviet defence sector. In Transnistria, heavy industry was developed and it had its own hydroelectric centre at Dubasari, opened in 1955. In 1961 Moldavskaia thermal power station was opened and in 1984 the steel working factory was opened up in Ribnita. Under such circumstances, the internal migration to Transnistria was sustained because many jobs have been created. The Moldovans formed 60 percent of rural population and a quarter of urban population comparing with the Russian population who in 1939 represented only 14 percent of the total population [King 2000: 185].

After the Second World War, the Soviet Forty-Sixth Army created a military district in Odessa, in the southern part of Ukraine and Transnistria. This military district was transformed into the Fourteen Army, numbering around 3.000 officers and tens of thousand of reservists and men who had an important economic and cultural life. Transnistria, as Belarus and Kaliningrad enclave, had a concentration of retired military personnel and their families. These territories are the highly Sovietized and the citizens are maintaining the loyalty to the Soviet Union, and represent the favourite area for the retirement of the Red Army.

“Tiraspol and Chisinau were only a short distance apart – about 50 kilometres of the highway linking the two cities – but in the term of social development, economic structure, and status within the republic, by the late 1980s their citizens were living in two increasingly distinct worlds” [King (2000: 184), and especially since that period the real misunderstandings between the two sides had begun.

2.2.2 MOLDOVAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, signed between Germany and Russia, provided a Secret Additional Protocol, in which Russia declared its interest for Bessarabia. On 26th June 1940, an ultimatum has been sent to Romania to cede the Bessarabia and the North-Bucovina. In August, Bessarabia became part of USSR and divided Moldova again in two parts. The Bessarabia was united with MASSR, became Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic and was declared a Union Republic of the USSR.

The born of MSSR (on 2nd August 1940), had 2 goals, one belonging to the central power in Moscow, made public in an article, in “Pravda” newspaper¹⁶, where was said that the whole territory of a new socialist republic should be more than 50.000 square km [Fruntasu 2002: 163]. *“People whose language and ethnicity has been previously named “Romanian” seemed to become overnight “Moldovans”, and the Soviet propagandists have begun to agitate for the unification of all Moldovans, who lived mainly in portions of Ukraine and the Romanian province of Bessarabia, into a single Soviet Moldovan state.”* [King 2000: 3]

The history of Moldova during the Soviet period was, in effect, the history of the Communist Party, because civil society ceased to exist and only the *Party* was predominant. The party abolished the private ownership of land and all the ways and means of production and distribution, promoting industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture, and coordinating all public activities. The Communist Party justified its monopoly of power as imperative to create the “material foundation” for the building of

¹⁶ Pravda, 11 July 1940

communism.¹⁷ The process of industrialization began in the 1960 almost entirely on the left bank and the right bank remained prevalent agrarian. During the process of industrialization, specialists and unskilled staff have arrived from other Union republics, and the “titular nation” were living in villages were under control of “*kolhoz*”¹⁸ and “*sovkhov*”.¹⁹ According to Soviet statistics there were more that 80% of representative of the “titular nation” [Nantoi 2009: 165]. From the statistics of that time the Moldovans and the Gagauz were the lower percentage among the specialists, mainly because of their lack of education. Under the Soviet rule, the Russian language was the “prestigious” language, was the language of the specialization, of the career, of the higher education. Starting with the Russian language project, all ethnic minorities and the titular nation started to develop some different characteristics: to feel in a Russian language, to think in a Russian manner or to exist in a Russian way, especially for the personal career. Little by little the historic memory was destroyed “and replaced with a primitive ideological cliché”. Practically, the creation of MSSR is one of the best examples of “ideological machine” of the “totalitarian state”. The experiment of creation of a “Moldovan socialist nation” was deducted “successfully”, because most of MSSR inhabitants did not find that they were occupied by Soviet Union, they believed in communist ideology [Nantoi 2009: 163].

In the Moldovan SSR, the Russian language was used everywhere, in all social, political, economical and even religious spheres. The Moldovan language, instead, was used especially in rural areas or at the household level. In Moldovan SSR, representatives of the “titular nation” were at the lowest rank of society, this meant that there was an unspoken, but “ruthless social hierarchy”, which shows a false social equality. The ideology, started in the Russian Empire period, and continued under Soviet Union, which was the policy of propagating “moldovenism” among the population, especially at the ethno – linguistic level [Nantoi 2009: 166]. That is why after the collapse of USSR there were a lot of discussions around the adopting the adapted language. Because of the

¹⁷ www.britannica.com

¹⁸ Kolhoz – was a form collecting farming in the Soviet Union that existing along the state farms.

¹⁹ Sovkhov – is a state owned farm. The term is originated in the Soviet Union and it is still in use in some post –soviet states (Russia, Byelorussia).

mutual misunderstanding within the Moldovan people, the population was divided in two parts. On the one hand there were pro - Romanian representatives, who declared that only Romanian language can be a state language, and the other hand, pro-Russian representative insisted that Russian language should have the same status.

Gustav Weigand, a German ethnographer, had noted that "*Romanian-speakers in Bessarabia and Bukovina spoke a distinct dialect from those from the Romanian kingdom, but these differences were no more striking than regional variation inside Romania itself*" [King 2000: 64]. In Transnistria, on the other hand, these differences were more prominent, in accordance with the political purpose, as the people living there were immigrants from various areas of USSR, and all of them speaking Russian language, and only the Moldovan immigrants knew the Moldovan/ Romanian language.

CHAPTER 3

THE MODERN SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

3.1 THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

*“War made the state and
the state made war”*

(Charles Tilly)

The Republic of Moldova is a sovereign, independent and democratic state, free to decide its present and future, without any external interference, in accordance with the ideals and the aspirations of the people, in the historic and ethnic space of its national becoming. Moldova is a member state within the United Nations (1992), Council of Europe (1995), WTO, OSCE, GUAM, CIS (1991), BSEC, and in 1994 became a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program and other international organizations. The Republic of Moldova currently aspires to join the European Union.

On 27-30 August 1989, 300,000 to 500,000 Moldovans have gathered at the "National Assembly", in order to sustain the state language, and on 31 August the Moldovan language became the state language and the Latin alphabet has been adopted.

On June 23, 1990, the Parliament adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty of the SSRM (Soviet Socialist Republic Moldova). On 27 April 1991, Moldova adopted the Romanian tricolor flag and the Romanian national anthem.

May 23, 1991, the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic became the Republic of Moldova. On August 27, 1991, it has declared its independence with the same boundaries as the preceding Moldovan SSR. The Declaration of Independence renounces the Ribbentrov-Molotov Pact as null and void *ab initio* and declares the territory of the Republic of Moldova as covering “its historic and ethnic area”. According to the international law the Republic of Moldova has succeeded the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, within the same existing borders as during the Soviet period.

The last census survey made was in 1989, still under the Soviet Union shows that on the right bank of the Dnestr River was a population of 4.356.100: 65% Romanians /Moldovans, 14% Ukrainians, 13% Russians, 4% Gagauz, 2% Bulgarinas and 2% others. On the left side of Dnestr River (in Transnistria), the total population numbered 750.000: 34% Romanians/Moldovans, 28% Russians, 24% Ukrainians and 14% others [Dungaciu 2005: 113]. The survey made in 2004 shows other data 3.383.332 - within the boundaries as defined at the 2004 census, without eastern counties and Bender municipality.²¹

Beginning with the Gorbachev’s “perestroika”, in March 1985, and the weakness of USSR only antagonistic groups with a “dominating totalitarian mentality” were spread throughout the country, instead of consolidating the Moldovan statehood. In this context, characterized with the absence of any notion as ‘statehood’, ‘sovereignty’, the ex-Moldovan SSR had to face some tasks: creating a “functional state mechanism of a rule and law”, to transform the “splintered” economy of the former USSR into a “national market economy” of the new state and, most important, to guide the population of former MSSR not to consider themselves citizens of Soviet Union anymore, but citizens of the Republic of Moldova [Nantoi 2009: 163].

At the same time an ideology of self-determination has been created, the “Moldovenism”. This ideology has its roots in Tsarist Russia, when propaganda was made in order to demonstrate that Moldovan language is different that Romanian language. This ideology of “Moldovenism” emphasizes that there is distinctiveness between Romania and

²¹ www.statistica.md

Moldova, from political and cultural point of view. Thereby, a new constitution, ratified by the parliament on July 28, 1994, imposed again the Moldovan language as a state language; and substantial autonomy to Transnistria and Gagauz been granted.²²

In September 1988, the Moldovan intellectuals demanded the language law, by starting to use the Moldovan language as a state language, written in Latin script. This request was adopted on August 31, 1989, by the “Law of the Republic of Moldova on the Functioning of the Languages Spoken in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic”. As a response, on December 1988, the members of the Moldovan Academy for Science, mainly being Russians or Russophone intellectuals, created “Interclub” for protecting the Russian minorities. This activists recruited personnel from Transnistria and Gagauzia, evoking the ethnic and language discrepancies [Sato 2009: 144-145].

Apart of national revival for all ex – Soviet countries, the “intrastate national revival for some specific group minorities” has been created by Russophone activist in the former Soviet space. This is why the activists from Gagauzia have intensified their activities of national and cultural revival; requesting the Gagauz language as an official language in the Gagauz – dominant district; claiming and supporting the concepts of minority rights and self-determination. The same has happened in Transnistria, the Russian minorities being the ethnic group claiming for the right to self-determination.

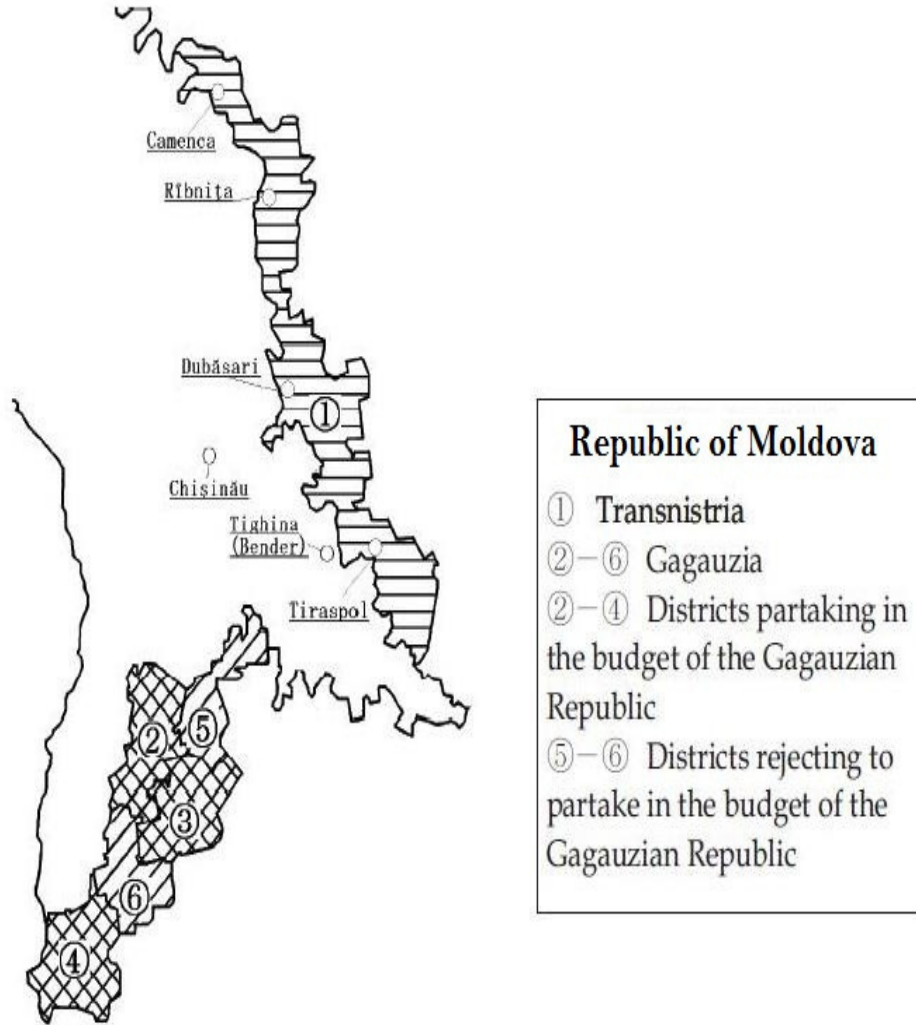
In Comrat, on May 21, 1989, a meeting has been appointed, in order to request the “Moldovan Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers to introduce the Gagauz Autonomous SSR as a constituent of the MSSR”, practically Gagauz Halki, desired to be an “autonomous republic”, non an autonomous region. The same has happened in Transnistria, several months later claiming the territorial autonomy [Sato 2009: 146].

The Transnistrian authorities were interested in forming a federation/confederation of Transnistria, Gagauzia and the rest territory of Moldova, where the sovereignty and

²² www.britannica.com

independence of the three regions is mutually recognized and the central power is divided to all autonomous areas [Chinn 1999: 96].

Figure 2 : Conflict regions in the Republic of Moldova



Source: Sato (2009), pg 148

3.2 A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TRANSNISTRIAN MOLDOVAN REPUBLIC

*“The Transnistrian case can
illustrate that individuals can learn to live
with political ambiguity”*

(Ch. King)

The region of Transnistria “appears to function as a state within its own boundaries”, claiming control over territory and self – determination which have not been recognized by international law [Isachenko 2007: 18]. Transnistria or Prednistrovie is a political concept, created in 1989, and its identity and people were created in the same time. Transnistria has an important role to the creation and promotion of the Moldovan people, distinct of Romanians; the projected has actually begun as early as 1924, when the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic has been created.

The conflict between Moldova and Transnistria began in 1980, when The Popular Front of Moldova, demanded to change the Cyrillic Alphabet into Latin, to adopt Romanian as the official language and to develop national identity. Some members also have claimed at that time that Moldova should unify with Romania.

Igor Smirnov, a factory manager, has led a group of Russian speakers, who were against the reunification of MSSR (including Transnistria) with Romania. In August 11, 1989, the Union

of Workers Collectives (OSTK) has been created, and Igor Smirnov has been appointed Chairman. The movement was the first step to developing a policy of secession from MSSR.

9-10 December, 1989, in Ribnitsa a Referendum took place to support the creation of a special economic zone and a language regime in Transnistria.

June 1990, a “Transnistrian Free Economic Zone” was established in Transnistria. On September 2, 1990, the separation of Moldovan Transnistrian Soviet Socialist Republic (MTSSR) from Moldova has been proclaimed and Transnistrian separatist began to take control of power, over government buildings and over police stations. November 25, 1990, Soviet Interior Ministry troops were used to protect the election for Supreme Soviet in Transnistria.

November 1991, MTSSR is renamed Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) and in December Smirnov was elected as the President and the results of a Referendum supported the independence from Moldova. In the same year, the 14th (former Soviet) Army takes up position to protect “Transnistrian people”.

Pridnestrovskaja Moldavskaja Respublic (PMR) is the name of the region according to the separatist leaders and the same name is used to the official sites of Transnistria.²³ The people joke about the expression “PMR”, meaning “*Papina i moia Respublica*” (*Papa’s and my Republic*) linking the appropriation of the state by President Smirnov’s family²⁴.

Transnistria, during all this period, has been named “*the museum of communism*”, “*the last Stalin’s colony*”, “*the Zombie Socialist Soviet Republic*”, or it had some nicknames as “*authoritarian state*”, “*quasi-state*”, “*pseudo-state*”, “*de facto state*” on the Republic of

²³ *Prednistrovie* is the Russian name for the region, meaning ‘on the Dnestr River’. *Transnistria* is a common English word, coming from Romanian/Moldovan language, which means ‘Beyond the Nistru/Dnestr River’ or other variant are *Trans-Dnestr*, *Transdnestria*, *Transdnistria*. Other names for the region are: *Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic* (PMR), *Transnistrian Moldovan Republic* (TMR) *Nistrian Moldovan Republic* (NMR), *Dnestr Moldovan Republic* (DMR).

²⁴ More analysts consider that the family of Igor Smirnov, the president of the secessionist region has the monopole over Sheriff, which represents the second-largest company in Transnistria, including a stadium, supermarkets, TV channels, publishing house, construction companies, petrol stations, mobile phone and advertising agency.

Moldova territory. Transnistria is a puppet state which is surviving thanks to the support of the Russian Federation. It is well known that for the first time MASSR was created in 1924 to annex Bessarabia to the Soviet Union, the same has happened in 1990 with the proclamation of the independence of Transnistria. The conflict was started for this purpose; actually, Russia's goal is to have some control-area. In this way the new and weak created state, the Republic of Moldova has been hit in its foundation and the process of integrity and development was slowed down more and more. It can be verified now: although 20 years have passed, the conflict is still present. All this events have been deliberately created to block the Republic of Moldova as much as possible from economic, administrative and political point of view. Historically and politically the elite from Transnistria were loyal to Moscow and they dominated the political scene in Moldova. Only in the late 1980, a man originating from Bessarabia has been named as a Secretary of the Moldovan Communist Party [Isachenko 2007: 19].²⁵

Transnistria has 4.163 km², about 200 km along the Dnestr River. The official languages are: Russians, Ukrainians and Romanian, but Russian language are completely dominant. Transnistria had only 11-12% of the Republic of Moldova territory but were providing 90% of entire republic's electrical energy , 40% of its GDP and 33% of its industrial production, in 1989 [Dungaciu 2005: 237].²⁶

For the ethnic proportion – in September 2005, the results of the last survey, conducted in November 2004, were published in Tiraspol. The results were: a total of 555 thousand persons; 31,9% were Moldovans /Romanians, 30,3% - Russians, 28,8% were Ukrainians. Another survey, conducted in 1989, shows that the total population was of about 679 thousand people. Russian population is living mostly in the urban areas, whilst the Moldovans are mostly rural [Dungaciu 2005: 256]. Transnistrian's residents account

²⁵ During the Soviet time there was a famous slogan in MSSR: "To become a Minister, you must be from beyond the Dnestr!"

²⁶ Dungaciu cited King, who shows, in this book, that Transnistria is the most important exporter to the west bank part of Moldova with "energy, ferrous metals, chemicals and construction materials". The Ribnita steel mill, which provides about half of the revenues in the state budget, had the contract negotiated directly with the foreign companies. The DMR rubles were printed in 1994 in Germany. After 1990, Transnistria became a supplier of small arm and ammunition in some war territories. All this examples shows the international links, neglecting the Republic of Moldova laws.

around 17% of the total population of the Republic of Moldova [Ciobanu 2007: 4]. The last unofficial sources presume that in Transnistria are living now between 400.000 and 420.000 persons, the rest have emigrated to other states, either as permanent residents or only for a determined period of time – to earn money [Safonov 2009: 181]. Because of the ethnic proportion, in Transnistria there are, potentially, two minority's rights protectors, Russian Federation and Ukraine, and this can threaten the Moldovan citizenship, as a significant amount of Russians and Ukrainians have obtained the protecting state's citizenship.

Transnistria adopted a constitution, in October 1995, declaring the eastern part of Moldova a separate State, [Gabanyi 2007: 502]. DMR is acting as an independent state, having its own constitution, flag, anthem and currency (the DMR ruble introduced in 1994). DMR had started to create this status of independence in 1990 but was never recognized by International law. DMR exist only *de facto*, but it is asking to be recognized *de jure*, and treats the Republic of Moldova on an equal footing, asking for them to take in consideration the existing political reality on the east side and establish confederative relationship with Transnistria [Enache 2000: 145].

After 1992, TMR developed its own economic institutions; Transnistrian Republican Bank has its own currency and fiscal policy, which is organized independently from the rest of the Moldovan territory. Even the custom trade is considered as a foreign trade; World Bank Reports (1998) stated that since 1992 between Moldova and Transnistria no “budget relations” have been conducted. At the Moldova-TMR border the visitors (even Moldovans) have to register upon arrival and have to explain the purpose of visit. Practically, Moldova has border service custom with Transnistria, within its territory, as TMR were an independent state with distinct boundaries [Isachenko 2007: 21].

The loosing of Transnistria had a very negative impact for the Republic of Moldova from economic point of view. 25% of industry, 87% of electricity and 100% of electric machinery are in Transnistria, so Moldova remains main agrarian territory. Chisinau is more dependent of Tiraspol than Tiraspol is of Chisinau, if we are considering the

industrial point of view [Dungaciu 2009: 172]. This is another reason for which Transnistria enjoys the Russian's support. Moreover, we can note illegal traffic produced at the frontier with Ukraine, and they do not pay taxes for any kind of commerce. Neither Russian, nor Ukraine recognize Transnistria as a sovereign state but, unofficially, all type of support is given to TMR, by the state protectorate.

When the coup of the Soviet Union was found out about, Smirnov and other Transnistrian officials, in cooperation with some Gagauz leaderships, suggested the “establishment of a tripartite federation with Moldova” [King 2000: 191].

In the moment of secession, the idea to create a free economic zone was supported in Tiraspol, combining Transnistria with Odessa Oblasti of Ukraine, thus consolidating the economic power of the Region. Igor Smirnov, in his autobiography, confirmed the existence of the economic plan in the secession moment; the plan was elaborated altogether with the Russians economists [Sato 2009: 155-156].

As an argument, used to demonstrate the need of obtaining the independence for the Transnistrian region, leaders of separatist movement had presented the ethnic specific of the population of Transnistria, which forms the “Transnistrian people”, who has the right for self-determination, and they note the politics of discrimination of power of Chisinau towards the Russian minority. In the census made in 1989 (an year before the proclamation of the *Prednistrovskaiia Moldavskai Respublica*) nobody from Transnistria defined itself as a “Transnistrian”, on the contrary, 40% from the population from the region defined themselves as Moldovans. It is true that Moldovans from Transnistria were differing from Moldovan from right part of Dneestr River through a high level of Russification. That is the reason why all pro – Romanian manifestations have been rejected, unlike the ones that took place in Chisinau, which were being seen as a real threat for the Russian minority or other Russian speakers. However, the official politics in the Republic of Moldova toward the ethnic minorities was distinguished by tolerance, sometimes excessive, especially comparing with the situation in other Soviet Republics.

3.3 THE GAGAUZ

Gagauzia, formally known as the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri), is an autonomous region of the Republic of Moldova. The Gagauz are the fourth ethnic group in Moldova and they have no “county-protector”, as other ethnic groups have, such as Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and others; Turkey is closely interested in Gagauz, as they are considered to be the Turkish Christianized population.

The origin of Gagauz is uncertain. Scholars have counted nineteen separate theories of Gagauz ethno genesis [Dron 1992: 24]. Some of the most known theories about the origin of Gagauz are described next. According to some authors, Gagauz are the descendent of the Turkic Bulgars, semi nomadic people, who formed the nowadays Bulgaria; other theories speak that they are the Orthodox Christian Greek and adopted the Turkish language during the Ottoman ruling; other studies show that the Gagauz are the descendents of Cuman or Pecheneg tribes living in the territory along the Black Sea, in the thirteenth century; and, the most known theory, supported by the great Ottomanist Paul Wittek, shows that the Gagauz are the descendents of Turkic Oguz tribes in the thirteenth century. The last theory describes that the Gagauz that the Turkic Oguz tribes were inhabited the area of Dobrogea or Dobrudja (the western Black Sea coast of modern Romania and Bulgaria) and Michael VIII Palaeologus, the Bizantine Emperor, gave to the Seljiuk sultan, Izz al-Din Kay Kaus the control over this territory. So the name of Gagauz derives from the Kay Kaus [King 2000: 210].

Starting with the sixteenth century they migrated in the southern steppe land of Bessarabia, but most of them migrated near the 1780s. In the Tsarist period, some of them were forced to emigrate to Crimea, Stavrov and Azov.

In the Soviet era and before there was a high illiteracy between Gagauz, 88 percent of men and 98 percent of woman. In 1957, the first Cyrillic Gagauz alphabet has been made and a few schools have been opened in the southern Bessarabia. But in 1960 everything was changed and replaced with Russian language. The Gagauz language and cultural life disappeared, only some poetry and some works in Gagauz were published under the Soviet period. The Gagauz ethnic became a large Russified minority. That is why in a survey in 1989, 73 percent of total Gagauz considered that their second language is Russian, more than other minorities in Moldova [King 2000: 213].

In Gagauzia, the existing nationalism rather belongs to elite class, being nourished by Russians widespread among population when it is necessary to ensure popular support for the privileged positions of the clan or group [Fruntașu 2002: 338]. In this area there are several contracts concluded with Moscow; Comrat (the capital of the region) has signed an agreement of cooperation and collaboration with Russia in 1995; preferential relationships with Tatarstan and with Transnistria have also been established. Gagauzia, also, has established relationships in which it recognizes mutual and friendly relation with Transnistria and Abkhazia, since 1992. There is a relationship of collaboration with Turkey too. Turkey offers some help to the Turcophile-Gagauz minority, in the same time Turkey is really interested of this area's position, wishing to consolidate its power on the Black Sea, wishing to be closer to Russia, and promoting Turkish exports. Gagauz leaders are asking to the authorities of Chisinau to be more engaged in Gagauz politics, to solve the problem with the autonomy and practically to involve them and consider equal among ethnic co-founder of the Republic of Moldova.

As the rest territory of Moldova (excepting Transnistria), Gagauzia is a predominant agricultural region and village oriented. There are some dairies and wineries in Comrat, and cigarette factory and wineries in Ceadir-Lunga [Sato 2009: 152-153]. Gagauzia has

one of the lowest levels of educational attainment in Moldova and has remained less politically mobilized [Chinn 1998: 94-93].

On October 26, 1989, Gagauz Halki was officially registered as a juridical person, but The Moldovan Council of Ministers canceled the registration in 1990. The Moldovan SSR decided to cancel the registration when the Gagauz activists, claimed the formation of the Gagauz Soviet Socialist Republic, being subordinated not to the MSSR but directly to the USSR.²⁷

Sato describes in his research that, in order to claim the autonomy, the Gagauz should fulfill some conditions (such as population density, territory, and percent of ethnic group). The Gagauz activist argued that the Gagauz Halki fulfill all the requirements to become an autonomous state, comparing themselves with other existing autonomous republics. For instance, the Gagauz region has 3600 square kilometers, more than Adjara Autonomous Republic of the Georgian SSR, which has only 3000 square kilometers; and the Gagauz population is 295.000, more than the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of the Azerbaijan SSR, with only 278.000 inhabitants. But the argument not completely fair, considering all district where Gagauz minorities are living, it is possible to count 3600, but the density of Gagauz minorities remain small, representing only 44% of total population in the region [Sato 2009: 149]. The real amount of Gagauz population is 153.000 and represent 3, 5% of the population in Moldova [Chinn 1998: 95].

On August 19, 1990 Gagauz leadership proclaimed the separate “Gagauz Soviet Socialist Republic’. On October 28, 1990, the first elections for the parliament were scheduled, and some national symbols have been created – an anthem, a flag, a coat of arms; local defense forces have been created also [Chinn 1998: 94].

Gagauz authorities tried to create the autonomous power like in Transnistria, creating its own budget, based on three districts Ceadir-Lunga, Comrat and Vulcanesti; but after few

²⁷ See Arhiva Nationala a Moldovei (ANM), f. 2848 [Guvernul R.S.S. Moldova Hotarirea], in.22, do.535, pg. 214-216

months Gagauzian government had not the possibility to pay the local servants. That is why the local governor, at the beginning of the 1994, decided to secede from the Gagauzian budget; and to accept the “Moldova’s government plan of *autonomization* of Gagauzia as a constituent of Moldova in December 1994” [Sato 2009: 156].

In the moment of claiming of the autonomy the “Bugeac Battalion” has been created, a self-defense unit, using the small munitions from the Transnistrian territory. The violence between the Moldovan authority and the Gagauz leaders did not happen because of the intervention of the Soviet Ministry of Interior troops [King 2000: 216].

In the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, art. 111, entitled “Special Autonomy Statutes of Gagauzia” states: “Gagauzia is an autonomous territorial-unit having a special statute and representing a form of self-determination of the Gagauzian people; it shall constitute an integrant and inalienable part of the Republic of Moldova and shall independently solve, within the limits of its competence, pursuant to the provisions of the Republic of Moldova Constitution, in the interest of the whole society, the political, economic, and cultural issues”²⁸. On his turn, Gagauzia recognizes its subordination to the Republic of Moldova constitution. In the following, article 3 stipulates that the official language in Gagauzia are Moldovan, Gagauz and Russian languages; the Moldovan and Russian languages will serve for the correspondence and public administration [Chinn 1998: 98].

Vladimir Soros remarked that “*(i)ronically, the Gagauz were able to use the Latin script under the Soviet rule for the considerable longer time than the Moldovans, whose Romanian language was switched to the Russian script immediately upon the Soviet annexations of 1940 and 1944*” [Chinn 1998: 89]. Nowadays, the Gagauz are using Cyrillic script for the Gagauz language; that is why a group of scholars, from the Moldovan Academy for Sciences, have “worked for several years to devise a Latin-based script for the Gagauz language”. The implementation of this began with the 1996-

²⁸ See The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, art. 111 entitled “Special Autonomy Statutes of Gagauzia”.

1997 school year, and all this happened after the strengthened relation between Turkey and Gagauz [Chinn 1998: 89-90].

The Gagauz language is learned only a few hours a day at the school, but the lessons are held in Russian language, except two schools, where Moldovan language is used. Also, mass media and broadcast media is limited regarding Gagauz language. Practically, the pupils are studying the Gagauz language at school, but in commerce, administration, and other public activities Russian language is used.

The Gagauz aligned with Moldova Popular Front because their common goals, at the beginning, were fighting against the communist administration; but soon language divergence has appeared and between the two parts a contradiction aroused regarding state language and the union with Romania. That it is why the Gagauz has chosen the Russian language as official language. After the separation between the Moldovan and the Gagauz, the last became allied with the Transnistrian.

But Gagauzia shows that the given Special Autonomous Status has not led to the resolution of all kind of problems, instead, it led to the transformation of this region in a “self-isolated enclave”, as there are some lack of cooperation between the Comrat, the main Gagauz city and Chisinau, actually the local and central power. The national revival remained a project that was not been finished yet, because the Russian language still represents the official and inter-ethnic communication language in this region, neither Gagauz, nor Moldovan language are used.²⁹

²⁹ The Russian language is being used for all kinds of activities: economic, administrative, political and even education. The Gagauz language is not used by the Gagauz minority, for more information see the official site www.gagauzia.md

Table 1: State building at a glance

	Moldova	Transnistria	Gagauzia
Founding Acts	Declaration of Independence –August 7, 1991	Declaration of Independence – September 2, 1990.	Declaration of Independence – August 19, 1990.
Economic profile	Mainly rural, traditional food processing industry and largely successful agriculture, but the right bank (83% of the whole territory of the Republic of Moldova) has disproportionately small share of country's economic potential - 60%.	Mainly urban, industrial dominated and strong memories of the former military-industrial complex units, left bank has 15% of the country's territory, 11% of the population but over 40% of its economical potential.	Mainly rural, traditional agricultural grain and wine-growing capacities, with 4% of the whole population, but with only 3.1% of the Gagauz ethnics on its territory (territorial autonomous unit of Gagauzia, since 1994)
Reforms	IMF and World Bank, incomplete liberalization.	Unreformed, state ownership in industry and state capture by oligarchs.	In favor of collective ownership and mixed economy, but also active as entrepreneurs and private farmers after 1995
Symbols	Returned to Romanian language (although called Moldovan), flag, school, curricula, and largely embraced a pro-European orientation.	Retention of USSR, and later claiming to be attached to Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, keeping their own' symbols: flag, coat-of-arms, anthem, largely fearful of 'Romanization'.	Claimed to restore the Gagauz as a local language, but due to the scarcity of resources and teachers, Russian is overriding presently
Elections	Pluralist, 4 successful political cycles after 1990. Democrats-1991/93; Agrarians - 1994/98; Democrats -1998/01; Communists – 2001/2009	Igor Smirnov President since the beginning Elections regularly reconfirm him. No free media or right to campaign.	Pluralist, but with a weak party-basis
Form of Government	Parliamentarian republic, though President Voronin still keeps its political jobs as the Prime Secretary of the CPM government party.	Presidential and personal. High emphasis on security forces.	Regional autonomy, with highly devolved competencies, operates however as a semi-presidential republic (with a Bashkan as a head of state, General Assembly as a Parliament and a regional government appointed)

Source: Romanian Academic Society (2002), pg 39

3.4 THE BULGARIANS

The Bessarabian Bulgarians are settled in the southern part of the country. They have arrived and settled here in the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, under the Ottoman Empire and Russian Empire. Actually, strong waves of immigrants have settled after the Russo – Turkish Wars of 1806 – 1812 and 1828 – 1829.

According to the census made in 1989 for the entire population of the Moldovan SSR, there were 88,419 Bulgarians who lived there. The most recent census was held in October 2004, only for the right bank of Dnestr River. The results showed that there were 65,072 Bessarabian Bulgarians, concentrated mostly in the southern parts – mainly in Taraclia District. For the Transnistrian region a census was held in November 2004: there were 3,164 Bulgarians situated in Tighina and surroundings and further 10,515 on the Eastern bank on the River Dnestr.³⁰

The Bulgarians, along with the Gagauz, claimed autonomy from the Republic of Moldova, being alienated in 1980 by the Moldovan/Romanian language demand. Before 1980 the Bulgarians occasionally have protested that the education and all publication were published in Russian language and not in Bulgarian. But finally they are using the Russian language as their first language, while the Bulgarian language is used only at the household level [Batalden 1997: 69]. In the present there is no fear that the Bulgarians might make a pact with the Gagauz for claiming autonomy.

³⁰ www.gagauzia.md

CHAPTER 4

THE CONFLICT

4.1 THE CONFLICT

The conflict in Transnistria involves elements of identity, status and territory.

Nowadays, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, four unrecognized states have been formed: Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In the Republic of Moldova's position, TMR is using some other "actors" or "circumstances" in the idea of conflict, such as Gagauzia, by creating some disagreements; the purpose is to gain time and resources. An example is the fact that in 2002, before the Transnistrian Parliamentary elections, Igor Smirnov, a Transnistrian leader, asked the Moldovan authorities to recognize Moldova's culpability regarding the war in 1992 and that it was an act of aggression against the people of Transnistria. Consequently, he asked the Republic of Moldova to pay the damages, estimated at about 70 millions US dollars, and to apologize publicly. Anyway the idea of culpability has been used for political and electoral purpose. For the same reasons, the church has been involved, knowing that it has a strong power among the people of both sides, especially on the rural population.

There is not a real Transnistrian conflict, neither geopolitically, nor ethno-politically – a conflict *per se* – but there is an idea about a conflict, idea that was born when the convention that put an end to the military conflict was signed, in July 21, 1992. Starting that day, the *idea of Transnistrian conflict* was born and, in every opportunity, the term

and the situation were linked to the Republic of Moldova. This drawn the attention of the international actors, European Union, United States and Russia showing their interest in this conflict. This idea is only the smallest part of geopolitical confrontation for control over the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Some scholars have noted that the role of ethnicity is over-used and, as King shows, “the real source of the [Transnistrian] violence after 1990 lay in fact at the level of politics elite” [King 2000: 187].

Every conflict has 2 dimensions. One dimension is objective and it presumes all geographic, ethnic, military, demographic, religious and historic data. The other dimension is subjective and includes all actors involved and their behavior regarding the objective dimension [Dungaciu 2005: 186]. The conflict in Transnistria has a multifaceted origin, especially an economic and political interest.

According to Barsan, in the Transnistrian conflict, the two parties can be easily distinguished: the aggressor – Transnistria and the victim – the Republic of Moldova. The aggressor’s tactic is to produce the exasperation of the victim, who, in consequence, reacts in self defense; all reactions are used by the aggressor to create new conflicts in which the victim’s position is too precarious; the same procedure is repeated over and over again until the victim has the desired level of weakness [Barsan 1993: 7-8].

The war created a deep prostration in the country by accrediting the idea that Moldova cannot function and survive without the Russian Federation, it cannot create its own noncommunist politic and power. The war was a proof of Russia’s undemocratic power; it has proved that Russia’s obsession to maintain the Empire is an absolute priority, regardless of the new political frame. In order to achieve this, Russia does not take into consideration any moral principle whatsoever, not even regarding its own population [Barsan 1993: 250]. The conflict was the first of the post–Soviet conflicts, where Russia has intervened militarily to stop the violence, and the Russian Fourteenth Army, commanded by Alexander Lebedev, remained stationed in Transnistria, in order to further defend the inhabitants against the Moldovan “aggressors”.

Russian researcher Valery Tishkov, mentioned that the history of the nation–building in the USSR “*has imprinted on the memories of its people numerous traumas and conflict-generating issues which were to manifest themselves during the years of perestroika and afterwards. It becomes an academic and political truism to explain ethnic conflicts and tensions as a backlash of the previous Communist ‘divide et impera’ policy towards nationalities.*” [Ciobanu 2008: 22]

Some authors consider that that resolution of the conflict can be conclude only in a negotiation process. Today the conflict represents an alibi for the leaders to transform the present conflict situation into reality, including the changes produced in the separatist region regarding the legitimization of the military presence, assimilation of propriety, the release of the Transnitrian citizenship [Botan 2009: 118].

In all kinds of conflict – political, religious, ethnical – the role of the leader is very important for the conflict’s evolution and settlement. The Russian experts mention that there are some important factors that lead to local, regional, intra–state or inter–state conflicts: “1) the struggle for power between and within various political (local and central) forces and clans; 2) local push for greater autonomy and to independence from central authorities; 3) unsettled territorial and border disputes between various state and ethnic formations” [Ciobanu 2008: 27].

Transnistria represents the largest separatist region of the four breakaway territories from the former Soviet Union, it is larger that South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh together. Actually Moldova, Georgia and other countries from the former Soviet bloc represent “*the abused children of Eastern Europe*”, and that is why these countries are showing the same “*affective and behavioral problems*” – inability to learn, lack of self-esteem and “*occasional tantrums*” [Williams 2004: 346].

The majority of the Russian officials do not loose the opportunity to point that Transnistria was a Russian territory and it should remain Russian. Russia’s Vice President Alexander Rutskoy, in March 1992, called Transnistria “a Russian territory”, the nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy asserted that “both Moldova and Romania

represent Russia's sphere of influence", the former Commanding General of the 14th Army, Alexander Lebedev, stated that PMR represent a "strategic crossroad between Ukraine, Romania and the Black Sea. If Russia were to leave this area, it would lose its influence in the entire region"; Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, sustained that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) remains under Russia's sphere of influence and is still "being a region of vital interest for Russia". The defense of the Russians in CIS remains a major policy, if it will be necessary the use of force. [Gabanyi 2007: 501]

4.1.1 FROZEN CONFLICT

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was a peaceful event, but a number of conflict problems arose in the vicinity of the Russian Federation. These problems were called 'frozen conflicts', because of their complex nature and because they have lasted for many years without any resolution, as Dov Lynch emphasized: "a little progress has occurred toward their resolution". The author presented that no conflict resolution has occurred between 1992 and 2004 and the metropolitan state of Moldova, and de facto state of PMR "could survive without the resolution of the conflict, but none of them could prosper" [Lynch 2004: 7]. The same can be said about the de facto states of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh and the metropolitan states of Georgia and Azerbaijan. In the Newly Independent States (NIS) the so-called "frozen and forgotten" conflicts have repercussions in the history and dissolution of the Soviet Union. Those conflicts emerged in countries as Moldova (Transnistria), Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) because of the fight to consolidate the independence and the statehood [Ciobanu 2008: 11].

”The “frozen and forgotten” conflicts represent major security and stability challenges not only for the states of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, but also for the entire Black and Caspian Sea region. Such notions as Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh are becoming more and more familiar not only to political, diplomatic and scientific communities, but also to the general public, given the importance of finding peaceful solutions to these long-lasting conflicts.” [Ciobanu 2008: 68]

Kolsto was proposing, as an explanation for the better understanding of the surviving of these quasi-states, that there are five factors that had led to it:

- 1) the secession from a weak parent state;
- 2) the continuous and strong support from a potent external state-protector;
- 3) the internal creation and development of new identity, using propaganda as an internal support, or “symbolic nation-building”;
- 4) the absence of the involvement of the international actors and community in both parties’ policies – quasi-states and parent-state;
- 5) the maintenance of strong military presence [Kolsto 2006: 729].

For the all former Soviet frozen conflicts, there are two similarities: the presence of foreign military (mainly Russian military) and strong interest and corruption of regional elites (Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and, briefly, Ajaria) [Ciobanu 2008: 71]. Another author, V. Socor, is using the word “stagnation” for these conflicts in the ex – Soviet Union, which can be only a bad issue [Ciobanu 2008: 71]. The most tragically part of these “frozen conflict” is that almost 30.000 of people died and 2 million have been displaced during and after the civil wars. The civil war and the implicit “frozen conflict” involve a lot of problems for the implied countries: The conflict area involves serious and unsolved problems for economic and civil society, democratic institutions and security border, massive unemployment, violation of human rights, trafficking people and drugs, criminality, closed borders, and corruption. In this context it became the interest of international community [Ciobanu 2008: 71].

In 1992, the war in Transnistria has ceased and it has transformed in a “frozen conflict”. Since the same period some experts have been afraid that the separatist leaders would not allow the reintegration of Transnistria to Moldova. The relationship between Moldova and Transnistria has cooled down more every year and a psychological conflict has been created along with the separation among the population on both sides of Dnestr River. Meanwhile, some diplomats, officials and militaries have insisted that the conflict settlement could be very easy to achieve.

Starting with the time the conflict has transformed in a “frozen conflict”, the Republic of Moldova became an object of a permanent economical black-mail, applied in different periods by Transnistrian separatist and by Moscow, or by both [Cojocaru 2001: 27]. During that period, the consolidation of the separatist regime and its transformation in a state – like structure was possible because the existing of the status–quo of “*no peace, no war*”. As consequences of this kind of consolidation of a separatist regime, a series of major problems occurred in the process to become a legitimate state. The most important problems are: the undermining of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the obstruction of political, economical and social development, the livelihood of a source of tension for the society and for the region [Ciobanu 2008: 14]. Also, among the major concerns, the following must not be overlooked, as these have a direct and immediate effect on the population on both sides: the dismissal of the demographic situation, including the massive migration, the decrease of the standard of living and the turning of Moldova and Transnistria into the poorest European region and the isolation from the economic process and integration [Shirokov 2009: 199].

In 2003, Grigoriy Marakutsa, a Transnistrian Chairman at that time, declared; “*Every year we are getting closer to our international recognition.*” So, one of the conclusions might be that TMR “*is playing a waiting game*”.³¹ Meanwhile, the general opinion of the population can be changed, because the new generations might see Transnistria as an

³¹ The Association of the Bar of the City of New York (2006) Thawing a Frozen Conflict: Legal Aspects of the Separatists Crisis in Moldova, The Special Committee on European Affairs, Mission to Moldova (pg. 24), More information is available at: www.abcny.org

independent state, considering the political propaganda and the psychological impact of the region.

Some authors argue that the conflict in this region was frozen not because there are no other option under domestic and international law regarding secessionism, but because the separatist leaders have created the circumstances under which the resolution of conflict might be “intractable” by refusing any option all the time. For instance, if Moldova tries to reduce the ethnic tension, Transnistria exaggerates this tension claiming that separation is a necessity in order to avoid any conflict and “genocide”. Both parties involved in the negotiation process have their own antagonistic opinion about the final resolution – on one hand the Republic of Moldova desires the unification of the two parts, and the other hand - Transnistria considers that the only final resolution represents its independence. In all contexts Moldova tries to internationalize as much possible the negotiation process of the conflict.

The Transnistrian conflict has received less attention from international actors, compared with other “frozen conflicts” in the former USSR, the only constant mediator being Russia – also the only actor present since the beginning. Actually, the distinctiveness of the Transnistrian conflict presupposes that, de facto, the Russian Federation acts three distinct roles in this context: it is one of the *participants*, it is the main *mediator*, and, eventually, it would be one of the *guarantors* of a future resolution. This aspect results from the fact that, during the entire period of negotiation, Russia has been involved in all kinds of activities all the time. The process of negotiation can be divided into 4 steps; the post-war period; the period of equality of the parties during the negotiation process; the period of confrontation and the period of internationalization of the negotiation process [Botan 2009: 118].

Griffiths argues that is better to pay attention to “admittedly banal crimes such as bribery, state theft, extortion and tax evasion” than paying attention to the separatist “ethnically – based ‘heroic’ characteristics of ethnic entrepreneurs” [Griffiths 1999: 71]. In other words, the resolution of the conflict can be more productive focusing to some

peculiarities of political leaders and their activities. King notes that frequently “the separatists and their erstwhile opponents in central governments benefit from the untaxed trade and production flowing through the former war zones” [King 2001: 525]. That is why the conflict can be used for taking advantage of it, by both parties of the conflict: central governments and separatist elite. Till the last, all those “benefits” would maintain the conflict and the status quo of the frozen conflict. The same argument is sustained by another author, Botan, who states that during these 18 years of negotiations only few items have been changed for the population, for the civil society, but all are insignificant. On the *local level*, the conflict became a confrontation of economic and political interest of both sides of territory while, on the *international level*, a reality of influence has been created by the significant international players [Botan 2009: 133].

Concluding, we will use the Dov Lynch’s argument that the aim of the separatists groups is to exit the metropolitan states and build equal rights with it. Their purpose is not to gain the power in the metropolitan states, neither to negotiate the division of the state powers within the secessionist territory [Lynch 2004: 14].

4.1.2 THE MYTH OF THE ETHNIC CONFLICT

Ethnicity is defined, in this context, as a community which shared common myths of their origin, historic memory, had common cultural elements and a kind of feeling of solidarity and a connection with a specific territory [Dungaciu 2005: 81]. The secessionist literature on ethnic group can be divided in four groups: elite mobilization, psychological mechanism, economic and material motivations and indivisible territory [Feinstein 2010: 6].

On January 1989, Gorbachev's Statement Plenum of the Central Committee – *“We cannot permit even the smallest people to disappear, the language of even the smallest people to be lost; we cannot permit nihilism with regard to the culture, traditions, and history of peoples, be they big or small”*. Gorbachev's declaration is considered something as a “national renaissance” of the Soviet Republics and the beginning of the democratization process. That is why many scholars have mentioned culture and language issue in their researches as the factor key for ethno-political violent conflicts in the late of 1980s and especially in the beginning of 1990s [Ciobanu 2008: 32].

There are a lot of researches about post-Soviet quasi-states, where the terms “ethnicity”, “ethnic”, minority” are overused. The scholars noted that the “role of ethnicity” is used for “creation, consolidation and resilience” of these regimes. This is the case of Moldova, where the Moldovan nationalists promulgated the Romanian language and unification with Romania. The Russophone elite created a mobilization against the unification with Romania and “Romanization” of the state. Similar situations have happened in Georgia, where Georgian nationalists promoted the Georgian language laws but a similar mobilization of non-Georgian speakers has been created, escalating to violence and secession.

Some author considers that there is a real conflict of identities, which we have assisted to and we will assist in the future. Also, the fact that in Transnistria have been made some changes in the ethnic proportion of population must be taken into consideration, changes that occurred before, during and after the Soviet Era. Between 1989 and 1992 about 70.000 military soldiers arrived in the separatist region, along with their families. Russia paid them good wages (about 2.300-2.500 rubles), gave them free accommodations and many other advantages [Enache 2000: 146]. Slowly, but certainly, the ethnic proportion was changed such as to be easier to control this territory. After 1989, the Russian group or other interethnic minorities (especially those who lost their positions in the cultural institutions) have complained that no attention has been paid to history and culture of minorities in the Republic of Moldova.

Traditionally, the conflict in TMR is described as opposition of Russian-speaking language to the pro-Romanian and nationalist Moldovans, and consequently, an inter-ethnic one. But this might be a wrong issue because, in the moment of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian group constituted only 12% of the population of Moldova. Moreover, Russians were not the representative majority either in the Transnistrian region, with only 30, 5% [Shtanski 2009: 216]. Meanwhile, a survey has been conducted and 78.7% of the ethnically Russian population was agreeing with the idea that the Moldovan language should be one of the languages used in education [Ciobanu 2008: 38].

According to King there was “no significant movements of Russian or Ukrainian minorities to the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic”. Actually, from 1989 to 1993, only 22,351 people have left Moldova for Russia. If the ethnicity was the real argument for the conflict, then one could expect that many of the Russian minority might have moved to Transnistria or the Russian Federation before and after the conflict. Mentionable is the fact that Moldovans were “joining ethnic Slavs in seeking opportunities” in Europe or in Former Soviet Republic [King 2000: 173-174]. Moreover, there is not a single ethnic group in Transnistria, which constitutes half of the population and could be the ethnocratic explanation of the conflict. The conflict in Transnistria was identified as an interethnic conflict, at the beginning, the Russian ethnic against Moldovans. But the real purpose of this violence was in the name of the Soviets and the communist government. As Max Weber asserts, “wherever the memory of the origins of a community remains alive, there exists a very specific and often extremely powerful sense of ethnic identity” [Weber 1978: 390].

There are authors who believe that the “ethnic conflict” has been used as a convenient label, applied by outsiders and not a reflection of reality [King 2000: 177]. Concluding, the origins of the conflict are not to be found in the ethnic minority, as are in the Caucasus and in the Balkans States, because, in the Transnistrian conflict, Moldovans/Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians have been involved from both sides of the rivalry; the same mixed population with common social and culture features.

In TMR, there is not an ethnic conflict because the marriage is mixed. Nantoi considers that people from Transnistria does not represent a *conflict party* [Nantoi 2005: 4]. The most serious problems between the people of Moldova and Transnistria appear when some identity aspects are linked to, such as language, stereotypes and historical affiliation.

According to the Ethno Barometer survey, the Moldovans consider that their relation with Russian minority were better fifteen years ago, regarding other ethnic minorities the relation is the same; instead the relation of Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Gagauz with Moldovans is better now, but there were some respondents who consider that the relation was better before the 1990s; the relationship between Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Gagauz are better in nowadays; and only the Bulgarians consider that their relationship is better comparing with all other minorities.³²

Table 2: Results for the question: Which of the following expressions, which explain the relationships between different ethnic groups in Moldova, seems to explain the reality more accurately? Do the relation between [sample] and [ethnic group] expresses cooperation, conflict or reciprocal ignorance? (The percentage represents the answers for “Conflict relations”)

Ethnic Group	Sample				
	Moldovans	Russians	Ukrainians	Gagauz	Bulgarian
Moldovans	-	12%	5%	4%	6%
Russians	12%	-	1%	3%	2%
Ukrainians	7%	4%	-	3%	1%
Gagauz	10%	5%	2%	-	4%
Bulgarian	6%	5%	2%	3%	-

Source: Ethno-barometer (2005)

From the table above results that the “conflict relations” issue exist between the Moldovans and Russians (from both sides 12%) and between Moldovans and Gagauzians (only Moldovans are considering that a conflict relation exists between them and Gagauzians - 10%). The conflict relation refers, first of all, to the mutual trust in the other

³² Ethno Barometer of the Republic of Moldova (2006), More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

ethnic groups, which is a product of an existing phenomena and events in different regions of the country and outside the country. Practically, there is mutual missing trust between different ethnic groups, but there is not an inter-ethnic conflict, as some authors or politicians consider.

The Law of the Republic of Moldova regarding the rights of persons belonging to the national minorities and the legal status of their organizations, article 2, stipulates that any person belonging to a national minority has the right to choose freely to belong to that particular minority or not.³³ The predominant national and ethnic minorities from the Republic of Moldova are: Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz, and Bulgarians. We will use the concepts introduced by Kymlicka, the *national minority* – a pre-existent group, incorporated by a state, and the *ethnic minority* – based on individual or group immigration.

Russians represent a peculiar minority in the former USSR, implicit in the Republic of Moldova. They were not considered immigrants because they had the possibilities to settle in any part of ex-Soviet Union whose borders were legitimate and legal and were recognized by the international law. The Russian minority had the right to settle within the border of their homeland, the USSR, so they were not been the national minority neither the ethnic group. But according to the modern conception about the ethnic/minorities groups, the Russian settlement during the soviet period has had the features of an immigration process. So nowadays in the Republic of Moldova the Russian group represents an ethnic minority.

Gagauz represent another peculiar minority group in the Republic of Moldova, they claim themselves “the Gagauz People” and they enjoy political rights. They could represent an ethnic minority because they settle on the territory of the Republic of Moldova as immigrants and present the general features of the immigration process. But in the same time they could represent a national minority because their status in the Constitution of

³³ The Law of the Republic of Moldova regarding the rights of people belonging to national minorities and the legal status of their organizations, no. 382-XV from 19.07.2001

the Republic of Moldova. “The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova recognizes the unity of the people from the Republic of Moldova, which cannot be divided in more peoples, therefore, the use of the term Gagauz people is already a privilege.”³⁴ They represent the homeland and larger Gagauz community in the world, having the Turkish ties from the linguistic and historical level, but with Orthodox religion. So, their unique autonomous status could lead to consider them as a national minority.

Ukrainians represent the second minority in the Republic of Moldova. They came as immigrants, most of them, during the soviet time, so they could be considered ethnic minority, which enjoys ethnic rights – language, culture and tradition. Actually they enjoy multi-ethnic rights.

Bulgarians have the same characteristics as the Ukrainian ethnic minority has, could preserve their tradition, culture and language, and have multi-ethnic rights.

The others ethnic groups represent only ethnic minorities, from which the larger represent the Roma ethnic minority, also called *translational minority*, and the Jewish ethnic group, also a representative group in the Republic of Moldova. But these ethnic groups are insignificant from any study and numerical purpose.

The *Law of the Republic of Moldova regarding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and legal status of their organizations*, nr. 382XV from 19.07.2001, stipulated the fundamental multi-ethnic rights: culture, native language, religion, education, ties with historical homeland, multiple citizenship, based on ethno-cultural affection and identity; the symbolic rights, out of which the most important is the right to identity: “*The state recognizes and guarantees the right to identity of persons from different nationalities*”.³⁵

³⁴ Decision of the Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality of the Article 1, paragraph 4 of the Law no. 344 XII from 1994 regarding the legal status of Gagauzia no. 35 from 21.12.95

³⁵ Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Article 10, Unity of People and Right to Identity, paragraph 2

Table 3: Perception of legislation on minorities. How do you appreciate the law on the rights of the minorities in the Republic of Moldova?

	Sample									
	Moldovans		Russians		Ukrainians		Gagauz		Bulgarians	
	too many rights	not enough rights	too many rights	not enough rights	too many rights	not enough rights	too many rights	not enough rights	too many rights	not enough rights
Russians have...	22%	4%	5%	20%	6%	11%	9%	7%	9%	14%
Ukrainians have...	11%	6%	3%	19%	1%	16%	3%	9%	3%	17%
Gagauz have...	10%	7%	3%	19%	2%	10%	6%	15%	10%	13%
Bulgarians have...	7%	6%	2%	20%	2%	11%	3%	9%	2%	22%
Romanians have...	6%	10%	13%	10%	6%	7%	6%	3%	9%	8%

Source: Ethno barometer (2005)

From the table above we can see that the majority and the minority groups consider that they have few rights than other groups and consider themselves misjudged. For instance, 20% of the Russian group considers that they have too few rights, comparing with 22% of Moldovans that consider that Russians have too many rights; and the group of Bulgarians considers themselves misjudged, 22% of Bulgarians and 20% Russians consider that the Bulgarian ethnic group has too few rights. Although 60% of respondents, regardless their ethnicity, consider that all groups included in the questionnaire have sufficient rights, actually the table shows the results for the respondents of “too many rights” and for “too few rights”. The general opinion of all ethnic minorities is that the Romanian and the Russian groups are most advantaged and they have too many rights.

To conclude, in Moldova has not been an ethnic war because the fight was between the two sides of the same country that have been populated by the same Moldovans, Russians, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups, and because the fight has been held by a Moldovan against the Moldovan, by a Russian against the Russian, by a Ukrainian against the Ukrainian. The reason has surely been a political one, as an inhabitant of Transnistria asserts in the following:

“Everything has been artificially made and guided and if those three people (Luchianov³⁶ in Moscow, Blohin in Chisinau, Bilsacov in Tiraspol) would have not existed, the armed conflict would have not existed either and the population would have learnt Romanian language, as they have started. At that time, I was working at the Kirov factory, and everything started from that factory, when a deputy came with a newspaper that was describing the situation in the Baltic States. From that newspaper different slogans have been made and the propaganda has started, the riots at the University also started in Kirov factory. I realized the danger, and I even asked them: “Do you want war?” Former soviet intelligence officers, who comprehended the individual psychology, were still present in Tiraspol and they put fear into the peoples’ minds, creating panic in the city. (Company Director, Russian speaking language, 55 years old, Tiraspol [Suhan 2002: 35].

4.1.3 THE GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICT

Even since the beginning of the 20th century, it was said that Bessarabia means Danube, this is the reason why the Bessarabian problematic does not represent an local issue, but an European issue. From geopolitical perspective, Moldova and the Black Sea are the border of the Euro Atlantic space [Cojocaru 2001: 27]. Actually, the border between the west and east side is very important geopolitically, because it divides Europe from Russia, having a high potential for the conflict.

The Transnistrian situation is a fundamental problem for Russian’s security. Dnestr represent a strategically line, which divides the two geopolitical spaces, the Slavic space and the European Space. Even if the political border has oscillated between Prut and Dnestr, the strategically border remains Dnestr. The separation of Ukraine and the loose

³⁶ Anatoli Luchianov – First Deputy Chairman of USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium

of Odessa, the loss of the Azerbaijan, taken by Turks and the loss of Moldova represent new, but hard provocation for Russia [Roncea 2007: 157].

The Russian Federation, using force, has tried to apply the techniques of the conflict in Georgia, Estonia, Crimea and other region of CIS. The implementation of Russian interest in all this regions was different taking in consideration the ethnic texture, the external pressure and the dimension of the country. In Transnistria, the major objective was to maintain Moldova under the Moscow political ward, using the Transnistrian problem as a primed lighter, which can always be reignited [Roncea 2007: 158].

Nagorno-Karabakh is considered to be a key to the petrol resources in the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia. Ossetia is another key for Caspian Sea and Europe. Dobrudjea is a key for Southern Europe and Caucasus. Russia maintains its troops and military bases in CSI countries in the Black Sea region: Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan [Roncea 2007: 421].

General Alexandr Lebedev declared: *“If we would withdraw the 14th Army from Transnistria, it means that Russia will lose control over this small territory, and will lose all kind of influence in the Balkans”* [Roncea 2007: 421].

The conflict is not an ethnic one but rather a geopolitical one linked with the dissolution of the USSR and it had to deal with the revival of Moldova’s Romanian language and national identity, which threatened other ethnic minorities from political and economical point of view. The conflict was and remains an intra-state conflict, because of the difference of vision between the two parts of Moldovan territory. Transnistria was and it is more linked to Soviet Union and is pro-Russian, while Moldova was and it is more linked to Europe and some of the Moldovans are pro-Romanian. That is why the separatists considered that is better to choose the way of independence for Transnistria. Moreover, the Transnistrian leaders had a strong economical and military support from Russia and it was one more reason to take this decision and to consolidate the position of separatists’ leaders.

“New history of borders is in fact a history of borderlands, the region bisected by the boundary line between states, which in comparative perspectives is presumed to encapsulate a variety of identities, social networks, and formal and informal, legal and illegal relationship which tie together people in the area contiguous to the borderline on both of its sides” [Donnan and Wilson 1999: 50]. The definition explains the fluidity of the population, the creation and the consolidation of the new states and new identities.

4.1.4 FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE CONFLICT

- The *mistake made by the officials in Chisinau*, because, prior to the conflict, they used to decide together, but with the increasing uncertainty in the relation with Chisinau, lead to accumulation of contradiction in the most important issues, inside of the Supreme Council. The lack of information in the left bank about the events occurred in the right bank, which created and increased a strong ambiguity and lost of trust in officials from right side. Meanwhile, some leaders from Popular Front, considered that Transnistria is an alien territory, that it “have never been a part of Romania” [Nantoi 2009: 169].
- There are voices that consider the real conflict occurred because the *fear of Transnistrian elite to loose economic and political power*, after the Moldovans in 1989 claimed the Romanian language as a state language and their national identity. Transnistrian and Moldovan officials used history, culture and language to justify their action.

- Kaufman considers that Transnistrian *elites intentionally provoked a security dilemma* between Moldova and Russophones from Transnistria, trying to grow the fear of Moldovan nationalists, and then describing themselves as the defenders of the Russophones [Kaufman 1996: 127]. Practically, at the beginning, the Transnistrian conflict was the result of provocative action by secessionist leaders from Tiraspol, and, afterwards, was transformed into a war.
- Kolsto and Malgin argue that Transnistrian enterprise and factories were dependent on Russian raw materials and the access to the Russian market. This is a motive because the workers in this sector, being dependent of USSR, had supported the mobilization of Transnistrian independence from Moldova. The industrial workers played an important role in supporting the Transnistrian regime; they united with Russophone nomenclature *to defend Transnistria against Romanization*, and against introducing some reforms, that could lead to the closure of the enterprises, and create a mass of unemployed people [Kolsto 1998: 113]. Practically, the population from the left bank of the Dneestr River was not against the idea of being part of Moldova, but being incorporated to the Romania; they was fearing the unification with Romania [Nantoi 2009: 168].
- Kolsto, in other paper, presents that the conflict is due to the *existence of a common distinct identity of the Transnistrian people* [Kolsto 1996]. That is to say the conflict is due rather to the existing distinct identities on the two sides of Dneestr River, than the ethnic misunderstanding, because on the both sides there are living Moldovans, Russians, Ukrainians.
- According to Munteanu A. and Munteanu I. the factors that led to the conflict and violent situation was a combination of *military intervention* and *economic fears*, “coupled with an *active manipulation* of the post-imperial *syndrome of the ‘siege fortresses’*” and certainly sustained politically, economically and military by the Russian Federation. The elite from Transnistria would maintain their independence of action over export and trade. In the same time the Russia could

use Transnistria as leverage against the Republic of Moldova [Munteanu 2007: 51, 56].

4.2 THE PRESENT “SITUATION OF THE CONFLICT”

There are conflicts which might be resolved by the involved parties; and there are conflicts that would be resolved by the time.

(I. Botan)

The present Transnistrian situation represents still a “quite high conflict potential”; and, the maintaining of the present status-quo in the region for an indefinite period of time, could lead to the creation and enforcement of a number of social, economic and political risks that might have a lot of negative consequences for the entire region and the neighborhoods [Byanov 2009: 136]. This is a reason why all actors, directly involved or indirectly, are trying to create the adequate condition for the negotiation process and the conflict settlement.

The conflict is a complex phenomenon, which could be solved only in certain conditions, as the replacement of the authoritarian regime from Tiraspol and the corrupt elite from both sides, the development of the democratic process. The resolution of the conflict does not consist in signing and proposal of various plans, memorandums or other projects, but consists in a growing mutual trust and understanding between the two sides, by creating

the necessary premises to develop mutual agreements and cooperation for a common future.

4.2.1 THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

Paying attention to all actors involved in the negotiation process we can distinguish two types of players. A player is an actor who has been involved in all political decision making process during the negotiation of the actual status-quo. The player has the right to control, to monitor and to mobilize all the steps of the negotiation process. In the Transnistrian conflict we can distinguish local or regional players, which are involved because their common historical links and their neighborhood. The regional players are the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Romania. All those regional actors are more subjective regarding their implication in the conflict analysis.

The other players involved in the negotiating process are OSCE, UN and EU; they are called international actors or extra-regional players. Their responsibility is to monitor, in an objective manner, the resolution, respecting the international laws. These players have the role to internationalize the conflict too, because the Transnistrian situation is a hidden conflict and captured less attention from the international community. They have also an important role in the solving some basic elements as: economic power, military power, strategic importance and diplomatic capacity.

Regarding the military power, UN has its own troops but has never deployed them in this conflict territory. The same we can say about European Union, which has its own forces, but never used them in this case. OSCE has never had its own forces.

In the strategic terms, EU has the important role, on the economical and political level, for the resolution of the conflict. European Union borders the Republic of Moldova, and practically is being directly involved in the strategic issue. OSCE has its high level of involvement but is not the major. Starting with NATO's expansion to the East, Transnistria plays an important role for Russia, from military point of view, especially in the "Anti-NATO" scenario [Safonov 2009: 192].

The last element is the diplomatic issue, where European Union has a scanty diplomatic involvement; instead OSCE and United Nations have a very important role and implication in the diplomatic issue during the negotiation process.

The Central European Initiative (CEI) also has an important role in the process of negotiation. The Republic of Moldova joined CEI in November 1996, and had the CEI Presidency in 2008. CEI is assisting its non-EU member countries and is monitoring their social and economical development. Practically, in the Republic of Moldova CEI has been monitoring the enforcement of security and stability in the conflict territory; discussing and evaluating the withdrawals of Russian troops and munitions from the region; analyzing and supporting the direct discussion between the Moldovan and Transnistrian officials; developing the process of democratization; negotiating and stressing Transnistria to accept the international actors involvement; creating links between local and international NGOs or other independent institutions; monitoring the Ilie Ilascu³⁷ detention, being held as a political prisoner; providing continuous support for the present situation.

³⁷ "Ilie Ilascu group" – being represented by I. Ilascu and other three ethnic Moldovans/Romanians, have been arrested by the breakaway Transnistrian government and have been charged with the murder of two separatist officials, on June 2, 1992. During the trial the defendants were kept locked in iron cages. I. Ilascu was sentenced to death by firing squad, while the other members were sentenced to hard labor for terms between 12 and 15 years. Ilascu was released in 2001, and the others in 2004, and respectively 2007. Ilie

4.2.2 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFLICT

The most important objectives could be summed up in the following:

- a) to support and enforce the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova;
- b) to prevent the reopening of the fighting in the regions (as it happened in 1992);
- c) to negotiate the withdrawal of the Russian Fourteen Army from the region;
- d) to control the border issue, all illegal trafficking systems (munitions, goods, drugs, lack of custom stamps);
- e) to respect the human rights under the international law, of all ethnic groups in both sides of the country (the Gagauz and the Russians speaking in Moldova, and the Moldovan/Romanian speaking in Transnistria);
- f) to internationalize the conflict;
- g) to prevent all interest of local actors in the region and to have the support and the monitor of the international actors;
- h) to monitor the negotiation process and the resolution including the constitutional status of Transnistria with a high autonomy within the Republic of Moldova;
- i) the democratization process of the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria;
- j) the development and the promotion of the non-governmental organizations or other independent institutions on both sides of the state, and the facilitation of cooperation between them.

Ilascu is a politician who fought to introduce the Latin scrip and to the Moldovan language and to be recognized the Moldova-Romanian nationality in the Republic of Moldova.

All involved players in the negotiation process have their important roles in the achievement of these objectives. For the regional players, it is crucial to respect the international laws and to come to the negotiation process with a list of solutions. Instead, for the international actors the role is quite different: OSCE controls the extension of the conflict, by defending the interest of the neighbors and direct implied states in the conflict; UN is involved in the respect of human and minority rights in the region; and European Union's implications are linked to the economic and civil development in the area.

4.2.3. THE STRATEGIES OF THE CONFLICT

In the resolution of the conflict, the major opinion of the implied actors is that there are some strategies to discuss and to decide: military intervention, cooperation, compromise and postponement. The regional players – as the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria and Russia – have used the military force in the area and it was the single time when they have used this strategy. The international actors believe that is not necessary to use anymore this strategy – the military intervention. The cooperation strategy is more attracting for the extra-regional actors, comparing with regional actors. Regional actors are interested to use some advantages of the existing situation; the others are using some combined strategies instead, such as: mediation, negotiation, conciliation, observing – played by OSCE; EU signed the Partnership Agreement and European Neighborhood Policy and UN opened its offices for United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, UNESCO, World Health Organization (WHO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Regarding the compromise strategy, the extra-regional players are less agreeing with it; instead, regional actors are interested in it. And the last strategy, the postponement, is the major strategy used by the local players.

4.3 THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

4.3.1 THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

The resolution of the conflict could be achieved only in the condition of full “reinstatement of the negotiation mechanisms” and the “reaching agreement” on the level Moldova –Transnistria [Shirokov 2009: 210]. But, according to the model of a “self-sufficient ideological stereotype”, which was formed over this period, it leads to the weak “aspirations for progress in the negotiation process” [Byanov 2009: 135]. Actually, the negotiation process between Moldova and Transnistria has begun before the starting of the military confrontation, but it still remains at the same step, because of lack of some mutual compromise points.

Since the beginning of the “frozen conflict”, all political mechanisms and negotiation processes for the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria are ineffective. The only effective political mechanism for the conflict settlement should be based on international

actors under the principles of international law, respecting the democratic process of the state and the human rights; and the major consideration of the Republic of Moldova's and its citizens interests, on both sides of Dnestr River. The highest priority for the conflict negotiation is the continuation of its internationalization; and the involvement of these regions in trans-borders cooperation to create premises for demonstrating that the regions have their geographic and political importance, on both national and international levels.

The European Union and NATO enlargement might be a mechanism for the resolution of the conflict, including Moldova and Transnistria, as an inalienable part – into Euro-Atlantic architecture. There were some attempts to solve the conflict in a peaceful mode and in all the cases the Russian Federation has been involved. At the moment of the resolution of the conflict not only the regional and international actors are involved, but also the civil society institutions, including the non-governmental organizations, which have been participating to the conflict settlement with significant proposals, projects and initiatives [Byanov 2009: 143].

All the precedent given solutions for the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria proved that the negotiation using the “3+2” formula did not consist in bilateral talks, because, in this way, there still is the possibility for unilateral benefits. On the 27th-28th October 2005, the first round of negotiation using “5+2” formula was held. The new formula “5+2” is more objective; using this formula, the negotiation talks might lead to the conflict settlement. This requires not only “5+2” formula, but also the cooperation and confidence, without any ambiguities; requires democratic solutions internationally assisted [Munteanu 2007: 66]. The Russian interest does not coincide with the Western interest, as it was pointed by the United States, based on the Wall Street Journal; the Russian Federation desires to be the “*only broker of the Transdnestrrian settlement transaction*”, by preferring to act using “1+1” formula – Moscow-Chisinau [Byanov 2009: 137].

For the Western standards the terms “federalization”, “co-federalization”, “autonomy” used by both the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria is unclear and arcane. Some authors consider that the Kozak Memorandum might mean a “Transnistrianization of

Moldova”, not only the federalization of it [Chifu 2004: 3]. Moreover, other authors declare that signing the Kozak Memorandum would have started a civil war in Moldova and would have led to serious destabilization in the country, in both sides of the Dnestr River [Chifu 2008: 93]. Nantoi considers that the negotiations about federation, confederation, autonomy, “common” state are sterile, and all these do not lead to the conflict settlement. Only the attenuation or even the dismissing of the local elite might lead to the honest negotiation process and the conflict settlement [Nantoi 2005: 4].

The problem for the existing conflict in the region is being seen by the international actors in different ways. For instance, the interest of the European Union and the United States are coinciding with Moldova’s interest, to reunify the country and to continue the process of democratization, enforce the statehood and its sovereignty. Unfortunately, Transnistria, the Russian Federation and, from some points of view, Ukraine do not have the same goals for conflict resolution. The political elite and their interests in the region are more powerful than the start of the negotiation process and the solving of the conflict. To the arguments given above, it can be added that between Chisinau and Tiraspol there are some political, social, cultural and ideological differences, which are characterized by a weak or total lack of dialogue.

Both sides have developed own useful administrative mechanism of state administration to face all occurring problems; but the present stressful situation on both banks lead to a sum of negative aspects that affect the present and the future living standards.

On one hand, Moldova has to face its problems, such as: low living standard, economic and social negative aspects, demographic level that includes a high percent of emigration for a “better life”. In such conditions, the survival is provided by the consolidation of the sovereignty and the statehood of Moldova, by the process of democratization, by the development of economical and social projects, by signing new treaties on the regional and mainly on the international level.

Transnistria, on the other hand, deals with the same negative aspect as Moldova – low living standards, negative economic and social levels, and a high amount of migration – but its survival is mainly dependent of its relation with Ukraine and Russia, even if it does not have a direct border with the Russian Federation. Ukrainian border is used for all kind of Transnistrian traffic to all direction, using the Black Sea, the railways or the airports. Even if the Transnistrian authorities have been banned from USA and EU, all of them have Russian citizenship and they still use the airport in Odessa for traveling abroad. Practically, some Ukrainian politicians use the propaganda that Transnistria was part of Ukraine, then Stalin created in 1924 the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialists Republic, and they are not interested in reunification of the Republic of Moldova as a resolution of the conflict; other politicians agree with the independence of Transnistria, for their political and regional interests, but, on the other hand, the idea that Russia might have a small satellite, is not a good for them, as Russia gets to have a better leverage over Ukraine, especially in the Odessa Oblast and in the Black Sea. Also, there are some politicians for whom the actual *status quo* of Transnistria, is the better context and situation: for regional interests, for the cross border changes of goods, for Ukraine's implication and its major role in the zone and its dominant power over Transnistria.

4.3.2 THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE MAIN NEGOTIATION PROCESSES

The official newspaper of the Transnistrian government: “if Transnistria would have been a democratic and demilitarized state, indeed liberal, it would have not existed at all”³⁸.

- In 1990 the first plan was presented, called the *Primakov Plan*, which promoted the idea of a Transnistrian independent state.
- July 21, 1992 the “*Agreement on the Principles of the Peaceful Settlement*” has been signed, being the first firm act for the conflict negotiation and settlement.
- Between 1996 and 2000 the *OSCE Mission Plan 1996/2000* has been proposed, which promoted the Republic of Moldova’s federalization. Russia, Ukraine and OSCE had the role of mediator and the guarantor of the conflict settlement, using the “3+1” formula.

³⁸ „Vzgljaid is Moskvj”, Priednistrovie, 20 aprilie 2005

- In 1997 the *‘Memorandum on the Bases for Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria’* has been signed, being deposited with the OSCE. This Memorandum stipulated the idea that Transnistria should have the right to economical relations with other states. The same Memorandum lined the idea of “building of a *common state* in the border of the MSSR by Moldova and Transnistria” by creating a good neighborhood relation; this idea was developed at the Kiev Meeting in 2002, having the major point – a “*common space*” on economic, social, legal, border and security levels [Ignatiev 2009: 149]. The OSCE, Russia and Ukraine became mediators in the negotiation process, and the formula was “3+2”; Russia and Ukraine had the role of guarantor parties.
- At the Istanbul *summit in 1999*, Russia promised to withdraw its troops from Transnistria, by the end of 2002. When the deadline expired, the Russian troops were still stationed in the region, so the deadline was prolonged by OSCE with six months, and afterwards with one year. At the beginning, Russia used to argue that the separatists blocked the withdrawal of the troops, but after started to argument that the 14th Army represents the guarantee of peace and stability in the area. Practically, the military troops were transformed in peacekeeping factor.
- In 2001, Moldova and Russia have signed, a document to reconfirm, officially, the stability, the indivisibility and the integrity of the Republic of Moldova, but with no other progress.
- In 2002 the OSCE plan for the resolution of the problem, the idea of creation a federation was presented, stating that Moldova and Transnistria shall have common competencies in the conflict negotiation.
- In 2003, Russia came with other solution for Moldova, the “Kozak Memorandum”, which practically would transform the Republic of Moldova in a confederation, Transnistria having a strong veto to decisions and Russian troops remaining in the region for several decades. Under the international pressure,

Moldovan official did not sign the Memorandum, because it contained the idea of an “asymmetric federation”. The Council of Europe and OSCE have expressed their disapproval towards the Kozak Memorandum.

- The “*Belkovski plan*”, which promoted the unification of Moldova/Bessarabia with Romania, in exchange of the Transnistrian independence. According to some experts the “Belkovski plan” represented a trap for Romania in its ongoing negotiation process of the European accession.
- In 2005, another proposal has been presented, the “*Yushchenko plan*” by Ukraine. Yushchenko plan is considered to be a modified version of the Kozak Memorandum and it was called “Kozak plan II”. But the “Yushchenko plan” had some interesting points as: a) Ukraine supported EU and USA to be involved in the negotiation process; b) Ukraine proposed to Transnistria to build a democratic state; c) Ukraine suggests to replace the existing peacekeepers from Transnistrian region with an international force.

Practically, Transnistria remains dependent on Russian economical and political support, but in the same time Transnistria, as a political unity, also has its own political interests and playing its own cards with Moldova, Ukraine and even Russia. An important bargain tool, used by Transnistria, is its own parallel economy, which maintains the present *status quo* [Munteanu 2007: 65].

- “3D” resolution plan – *democratization, demilitarization and decriminalization* – has been proposed by a group of 26 Moldovan NGOs and the Moldovan Institute for the Public Policy of the Republic of Moldova. According to them, the 3D resolution could function for the South Ossetia and Abkhazia too. Another important issue is that the 3D strategy implied the transformation of the “3+2” format into the “3+1+3” formula (Russia, Ukraine, Romania, plus the Republic of Moldova, plus OSCE, EU, USA).

- ✓ The first issue is the *demilitarization*, which means the withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army from the Transnistrian territory, in order to start the democratization and decriminalization processes. The first process is very important because the whole 3D strategy is depending on it.

- ✓ The second step represents the *democratization* process. Some authors consider that only the 3D plan can lead to a real conflict settlement. But unfortunately, the 3D plan has its own limits regarding to the openness of Transnistria to respect the 3D plan conditions. Practically, the democratization process is very ambiguous for both Republic of Moldova and Transnistria. Although in Moldova, little by little, the democratization process had started and it is led with success, along with the EU's efforts; in Transnistria it remains vague and only written on the paper.

Yushchenko plan issued on September 2005, for instance, included some element of democratization of Transnistria; but in an erroneous assumption, that in Transnistria should be applied the democratization process as a distinct state from the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with its own legislations. Analyzing all these ideas, it is easier to note the fact that implementing such a plan, where Transnistria is a distinct state, gives the possibility to Tiraspol to “claim endless negotiation for vesting the independence of Transnistria” or to declare that Transnistria “does not accept any form of incorporation into the Republic of Moldova”; which reminds of Kosovo model. Actually, this plan represents once again the Russian and Ukrainian attempt to realize their interests in the region [Nantoi 2005: 8].

Another attempt to discuss about the democratization process in Transnistria, which is only an approach, is the plan proposed by the *civil society of the Republic of Moldova*, representing the concept of democratization of Transnistria, and formulated in the Law on the Basic Principles of the Special Legal Status of the Localities of Transnistria, passed by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on July 2005; it includes the

democratization process on the left bank in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Moldova and the extend the sovereignty of the Moldovan state to that territory [Nantoi 2005: 8].

- ✓ The last issue for the conflict settlement is the *decriminalization* of Transnistria, but, unfortunately, this issue has some limits which might block the resolution. One limit is represented by the border issue, that the Transnistrian border segment, between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, is not under Moldovan control, involving the transports of goods pass the state border, without paying tax and customs duties to the Republic of Moldova. All efforts made for the border control, due to the consistent efforts of EU have not been solved yet. Through the Transnistrian border segment, all kind of illegal traffic is made –drugs, munitions, human beings – which is crucial for the economic survival of the Smirnov regime in Transnistria [Nantoi 2005: 9].

Since 1992, there were many attempts to find a solution for the conflict, but today the frozen conflict is still in an unsolved situation. Today the people from both sides are continuing to live in the same uncertain conditions, they still believe that the “other” side was the aggressor or is guilty for the existing situation. New generations will come on both sides and they will consider the two sides are two different countries and that they do not have anything in common. That is why the negotiation process should be continued and should also conclude into a settlement.

The figure below represents the general opinion of the respondents from the right bank, about the possibility of disintegration of Moldova in the present conflict situation. The interesting aspects is that only the Moldovan group is the most concerned about a possible disintegration of the Republic of Moldova (very much - 23%, quite much – 29%); the second ethnic group that is afraid the disintegration of the state is Russian minority (very much -10%, quite much – 29 %); the other minorities from Moldova are less concerned about this aspect. Another interesting issue is that only 52% of Moldovans

are afraid of the disintegration of the state (for the rest of 48%, the conflict in Transnistria does not represent a real threat and the maintaining of the actual borders does not represent an important issue for them); followed by Russians with 39%, Ukrainians with 29%.

Table 4: How afraid are you of the disintegration of the Moldovan State? (in %)

	Very much	Quite much	Quite a little	Not at all	Don't Know	No answer
Moldovans	23	29	14	14	12	8
Ukrainians	7	22	20	14	24	13
Russians	10	29	13	23	11	14
Gagauz	5	22	18	24	20	11
Bulgarians	5	19	26	26	20	5

Source: Ethno-barometer (2005)

4.3.3 THE SCENARIOS

Looking at all proposals made until now for the conflict settlement, it is clear what kind of strategies were used and some future scenarios can be drawn:

- *The transformation of the Republic of Moldova into a federative state;*
- *The maintenance of Transnistria in the same frame by postponing the conflict negotiation;*
- *The recognition of the independence of Transnistria;*

- *The fragmentation of the Republic of Moldova, the union of the right part with Romania and the left part becoming a Russian enclave;*
- *Transnistria obtains autonomy, becoming an Autonomous region within the Republic of Moldova;*
- *Transnistria becomes part of Ukraine.*

Federalism means trust; federalism could function in the Republic of Moldova only if it represents an internal project, which it is sustained by the citizens from both sides and in which they trust [Harbo 2007: 234]. Federalism means that the federal state offers optimal conditions in order to equilibrate the various territorial national, social, economic, politic and cultural interests. Unfortunately, all attributes of federalism, as presented above, are scarce to inexistent in both Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova; therefore, federalism does not represent the only and absolute solution for the separatist region, but might become a viable solution if the two parts negotiate their positions.

Both sides have to work and cooperate together to create a common state, to develop a common economic area. As Williams asserts, the “power-sharing can take different forms – it can mean autonomy, federalism, proportional representation and other forms” [Williams 2004: 351].³⁹ Williams emphasizes that the formation of smaller and smaller states – like a Matrioschka effect – might prove itself a real danger for the region.

Concluding, by now, the only palpable thing was the perpetual postponement of the negotiations. More hopes are now bound to the new regime in Chisinau, which, added to EU’s – and other international actors – more and more active implication, might lead to the conflict settlement.

³⁹More information is available at : www.sagepublications.com

CHAPTER 5

NATIONAL IDENTITY

“Without language, without history, without identity a nation is like a body without soul - it does not exist, it is dead, unless it is still breathing...”

(Dabija Nicolae)

5.1 NATION AND NATIONALISM

The nation exists in so far as its citizens believe in its founding myths and act according to them.

(L. Oakes)

Smith defines a nation as “*a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members*”, and nationalism as “*an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by someone of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’*” [Smith 1991: 14, 73]

The nation, in most theories, is characterized by three elements: *spatial* – the territory; *social* – the population of a nation which is sharing the same memories, traditions, myths, beliefs and aspirations; and *politic* – represented by the state. Bufon argues that nationalism can be defined as “a particular expression of a human territoriality”, by claiming to have a certain social control for definite territories, which represents “parts of land with distinguished sociopolitical and socio-cultural characteristics” [Bufon 2004: 41].

Nationalism is the ideology “based on the premise that the individual’s loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests”.⁴⁰ The nationalism is considered to be a modern movement, having its start at the end of the 18th century, along with the nationalization of the education and public life, the states and political loyalties. Scholars and poets have prepared the “foundations for the political claims for national statehood” by reforming the mother tongue delving deep into the national past. During the history people have been attached to their native soil, to the traditions and the culture of their ancients, but only after the 18th century, “nationalism has begun to be a generally recognized sentiment molding public and private life”. “Nationalism, translated into world politics, implies the identification of the state or nation with the people – or at least the desirability of determining the extent of the state according to ethnographic principles.”⁴¹ The age of Nationalism in Europe was the 19th century. “In the age of nationalism, but only in the age of nationalism, the principle was generally recognized that each nationality should form a state – its state – and that the state should include all members of that nationality.”⁴²

Population in former Soviet countries give a relevant importance to the concept of nationalism, because of their need to discover and consolidate the personal identity; because of their need to finally have a chosen identity, not an asserted identity, like in Communist times. This could be an explanation why in the most Communist countries the “crisis of identity” has arisen.

The purpose of nationalism is to obtain, preserve and strengthen the *national status* that possesses *de facto* and *de jure* the state sovereignty and the right of administration of internal problems. The national feeling represents the consciousness of belonging to a nation and the feeling of solidarity with its members; moreover, the aspiration for strengthening the nation, for its liberty and union. The nation represents a group of people who share a common distinct set of cultural elements, a feeling of solidarity springing from common experience, an economic feeling relatively unified, the equal rights for all

⁴⁰ www.britannica.com

⁴¹ www.britannica.com

⁴² www.britannica.com

members accepted *per se* and who is occupying a territory [Dungaciu 2005: 81]. Ciobanu explains why the nationalism could not be developed in the USSR, because the Soviet Union's politics featured two antagonistic principles: on one hand, the consolidation and the development of the nation and the ethnicity were promoted, while, on the other hand, the political sovereignty of the people was liquidated [Ciobanu 2008: 21].

As Safran is arguing in his book, there are two directions to create a nation: one direction is to create the state and this will entail the establishment of the nation, practically the nation is “the consequence of the establishment of the state”; and second direction is the formation of the state, “as the political expression”, for the existing nation. The state “is an integrative agent” which can “transform” one or more “primordial” ethnic communities into a nation [Safran 1994: 61]. Although the post-Communist Moldova is neither stable nor consolidated, it is confronting with a competitive process of state building on its territory – Transnistria, which blocks own consolidation. Practically, the Moldovan nation represents a result of the establishment of the state. Another issue represents the fact that in Soviet Moldova there was also a lack of literature about the nation-building topic, and, in consequence, the national feelings have been less developed.

5.2. THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

*“Once an identity is created, it induces
a dynamics of inclusion and exclusion
around it.”*

(J. Kalpakian)

Identity is an abstract concept and we can distinguish different uses and meanings for the concept of “identity”. The most frequent meanings are the following forms: personal identity and collective identity, cultural, ethnic, social, national and multicultural identity. In some researches “cultural identity”, “ethnic identity” and “national identity” become synonyms by being related; in other researches each has its own meaning by using different concepts. Generally speaking, the term of identity involves language, culture, history, customs, national and political opinions. The individual or the group is able to have in the same time a national, ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, politic identity.

A more explicit definition of the identity is “the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else” [Simpson & Weiner 1989: 620]. In other words, the identity is building up over time and it can not be inherited, being very vulnerable to the historical, political and cultural changes. That is why the identity represents a long process, but it can be changed very quickly.

The identity is an *unstable, dynamic* and *open system*, which implies *short-term* identities, *core* identities and *situational* identities. The short-term identities represent those identities which are the most instable identities and are changing frequently, but a

short-term identity might become a core identity if its frequency is high or it has acquired an important value. The core identities are the most stable and dominant in the identity system. Usually, the core identities remain during the individual's entire life, and could be changed in radical period of social changes. The situational identities are linked to the contextual events and situations, and might disappear if the contextual situation disappears. The situational identities could also represent a "raw material" for the short-term or the core identities.

All identities are situated in an interrelation systems and subsystems. One identity can lead to the development or to the disappearance of another identity, and it is linked with the individual's value – at a personal level; with the individual's role and status – at the group level; and with the group's guidance – at the holistic level. Moreover, the identity is formed or becomes core after a long process of contradictions, but usually in some emergence and radical situations.

Practically, the identity is not only an abstract concept, which is applied to the communities, but is also a sum of elements perceived by the subjects in their relationship with the society. So, the concept of identity has two dimensions; one dimension explains the fact that the community represents a sum of individuals and the second dimension explains the relation between community and individual. There are societies where the identity is formed, it exists; and there are societies with lack of identity that might create problems at social and individual levels. The countries with lack of identity are the newly created countries, where Moldova can be included, along with its separatist region Transnistria. However, some authors (Feinstein 2010) consider that Moldova, prior to its annexation to former USSR, did not have a strong national identity and that is why, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has confronted serious problems in terms of national identity.

The identity represents one of the major questions in the process of the consolidation of the state and its institutions. In Moldova, there is another issue regarding identity: the community has different state identities, which may create competition in the affirmation and determination of the state identity. Reber defines that identity is "an internal

subjective concept of oneself as an individual” and “a person's essential, continuous self” [Reber 1995: 355]. Or, more simply, in order to define the identity, one can use the question “*who am I?*” But is very important to understand the term “*I*”, “*our*” – with the limit of the “*our group*” and “*they*”, the “*otherness*”.

The social theories of identities consider that individual’s identity system is strongly linked to the social context. Actually, the individual has a strong need to identify himself to a particular collectivity that can offer him a weak or a strong sense of identity, a weak or a strong self identification. The problems occur with the collectivities, societies, groups that are represented by a divided or weak sense of identity, and because of it the individuals could be affected, on an individual mental state or on a collective mental state.

The most theories of social identity accept the following definition “*each identity is formed as a result of an individual’s membership in an in-group and is in opposition or comparison to members of an out-group. The existence of an out-group and the in-group’s negative and conflict-ridden relations with it strengthen group identity*” [Korostelina 2007:51].

The identity system is characterized by two processes: the *assimilation* – in order to validate and incorporate the new components and the *evaluation* – of the real significance of the existing identities and the new-forming identities [Korostelina 2007:52]. After the evaluation process, if the significance of the existing identities is out of date, then some of existing identities are losing, step by step, their values and disappear and the new-formed identities acquire a strong sense of significance.

For instance, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the population of the ex-Soviet countries had to face the disappearance of the Soviet identity, which was the core social identity between the Soviet people. In the new created context, along with a radical social change, some of the citizens started to form a new identity that could satisfy the real need and could have an important significance on the social identity system; at the same time,

other citizens, especially elderly people, are still looking to find a strong significance for the old – “expired” – Soviet identity.

In the multi-structural and complex identity process, some identities can be salient at a given period of time. An identity can be salient “because of the person’s level of commitment to that identity”, and if it is salient for a long period of time, it might become a central identity and might have a strong influence on behavior [Korostelina 2007:52].

The *identity* is changing because of the global migration and transformation, influencing the country of origin and the target country, but, in the same time, is changing because of the historical, national and social evolution of the each country. This is why it is possible to speak about the multicultural identity, European identity, regional identity and so on. The identities are situational and negotiable, the identity process and its becoming is dynamic and fluid, and it is shaped and reshaped, formed and reformed in the social and contextual interaction.

According to Hannum, the identity includes three elements: given identity, chosen identity and core identity [Hannum 2007: 12]:

- *Given identity* includes birthplace, age, gender, birth order, possibly religion, physical characteristics and the certain family roles;
- *Chosen identity* includes family roles, the chosen religion, the political affiliation, all hobbies and occupations, place and country of residence;
- *Core identity* represents the attributes that a person thinks that make him special and unique, which could remain core the entire life or could be changed. These attributes are all beliefs and attitudes, values, behaviors and skills.

For the better understanding of the definition of identity, the *opposition* is used as one of the most important mechanism for the identification process. The individuals or groups are using the opposition to identify themselves in comparison with other individuals or groups, by using the positive or negative characteristics, stereotypes, prejudices even

discriminations. The identity can be explained and studied only in relation with other individuals and groups, between “I” and “other”, between the self-perception and the perception of the others.

According to the Ethno Barometer, the main criteria for the definition and explanation of the identity in the Republic of Moldova are the language and the blood relations [Ethno Barometer 2006: 26]⁴³. The Moldovans express more their culture identity, in terms of traditions, while the other ethnic groups express their culture identity rather vague, and that means that the relation with a distinct culture is vaguer. Also, the study shows that the respondents use other classifications associated to identity alternatives as: the ethnic identity (a culture affiliation), the civic identity (a legal affiliation) and the alternative identity (local or regional).

5.2.1. THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

“Since national identity is a product of history, it can also be remade in history”

(B. Parekh)

According to Smith, the national identity has a strong impact on the individual and it is characterized by the following:

⁴³ More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

- a) it satisfies all personal answers of the individual oblivion fear by the identification with a nation;
- b) the individuals can feel personal dignity and renewal by being part of a “political super-family”;
- c) the consolidation of the feelings of fraternity, by using ceremonies and symbols [Smith 1991: 160-161].

The national identity is usually researched by comparing the interrelations between the majority and the minority groups, or by comparing two or more states. Considering that, the national identity is very important for each individual, who has strong feelings that belong to a certain nation, by sharing common and positive feelings and attitudes with own group and sharing negative feelings and attitudes to the other groups. The national identity gives strong feelings of self-esteem, confidence and dignity by comparing with other groups; it can strengthen the unity with other groups, and implicit reduce the inter-group conflicts and biases or, vice versa, it can weaken the unity and can provide and increase the inter-group biases and conflicts.

Montero gives one of the most explicit definitions of the national identity, including also the “ethnic” and “cultural” identities. He defines the national identity as a “*set of meanings and representations which are relatively stable through time that allows the members of the social group, who share a common history and territory and other socio-cultural elements, to recognize themselves as related biographically with the others*”; the ethnic identity represents “*the feeling of belonging to a social group that has a developed culture and comes from a common ancestry*”; while the cultural identity is being related to “*the feelings of shared habits, costumes, ... which are historically developed , and the production of which allows an identification*” [Valle Gomez 1998: 7]. As a completion, the national identity is mainly used “to refer to, amongst other things, the dimension in which different groups recognize themselves and relate to each other in terms of national belonging” [Valle Gomez 1998: 43].

According to Korostelina, the analysis of interrelation between two or more ethnic minorities led to three different ideas about national identity. First concept about the national identity represents the *civic concept*, which presumes that the state claims obligations and rights, while the citizens represent a contract between the people and the state; the most important features of the civic concept are the constitution, law and civic responsibilities, while the ethnicity is insignificant. The second concept represents the *multicultural concept* of national identity, where the titular and the ethnic groups have equal rights, and, in some cases, have right of autonomy or self-governance; the most important features represent the cultural heritage and the possibly to maintain it. And the last concept, represents the *ethnic concept* of national identity, being characterized as a mono-ethnic and monolingual nation, where the nation is built around a core ethnic community, and the other minorities should be integrated to the same core community [Korostelina 2007: 57].

When an individual has an incompatible identity, comparing with the identity imposed by the other groups or the social context, all these can lead to the conflict; especially then the identity is a new created identity. In this context, the new created national identity could have a strong and relevant impact on the groups' conflict readiness. For instance, the groups with ethnic concept of national identity are characterized with higher readiness for conflict behavior toward other groups. In the same time the stereotypes, prejudices, emotions, feelings, discrimination, beliefs, are reinforcing the conflict readiness that is strongly interconnected with individual's cognitive and affective components. When an individual develops a high level of conflict readiness, consequently he develops stronger negative feelings [Korostelina 2007: 55].

The conflict readiness is enforced by the ethnocentric groups, because the members of such groups would give personal loyalty primarily to own ethnic groups, by having a positive in-group and negative out-group estimation. The ethnocentric individuals tend to consider the own-group superior comparing with other groups, and start to use the stereotypes and prejudice regarding the out-groups.

Identity is strongly linked to the differences between an individual or a group and other individuals or groups, but the most important is that identity expresses the values which the individuals or groups share with other individuals or groups, values that enforce all types of identities. Schouls argues that identity represents one of the key elements, which provides to the individual a sense of personal stability and location. In the same time, identity is strongly linked to the conflict, while the desired feelings are not expressed in the identity process, and the individual or the groups are drawn into conflict with others. Or a more traditional definition of the identity is represented by the terms which are referring to something peculiar, specific and unique for a group or a community by distinguishing them from the others [Schouls 2003: 2-3].

“Identity orientation is a result of individual socialization and international aspiration for value and objectives”, which can explain the changes in “the ethnic affiliation” [Ashraf 1994: 63]. The definition explains the fact that if a group represents the negative values for its members, this can lead to the identification of the conflict for that group’s members. Each of the group’s members should have a positive and strong sense of identity.

5.2.2. THE CIVIC IDENTITY

The *civic identity* is linked to the state structure, “implying a legal-formal affiliation” [Ethno Barometer 2006: 26]⁴⁴, while the local civic identity is described as a sense of belonging, solidarity and equality with local community members. According to Guntram, in Eastern Europe, implicit in the Republic of Moldova, two types of identities arose: the *civic identity*, linked to the “political” or “civic nation”, and it is associated

⁴⁴ More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

with the territory of the state and the *ethnic nation*, which is linked to the language and culture and it unites all members in an adjacent territory [Herb 1999: 12]. Knefelkamp concludes that the civic identity has four major characteristics:

- a) it “develops in the context of engaging the real social, political, and economic structures within any given society and culture”;
- b) it is strong linked to the “complex intellectual and ethical development”;
- c) it “requires an integration of critical thinking and the capacity for empathy”;
- d) it “requires active reflection, experimentation” and “moral rehearsal” [Lewin 2009: 471].

In other words, the civic identity represents the relation between the citizen and the state, including the duty to be an active citizen in the present and in the future. The civic identity is also strongly connected with the political country transformation, where politics has the major role in the developing of the civic culture and values of citizenship.

5.2.3. THE ETHNIC IDENTITY

The concept of *ethnic identity* has been long debated in the social science research and history. According to some authors, the ethnic identity “is a construct or set of self-ideas about one’s own ethnic membership” and it gives a “sense of self as a member”, including the knowledge, understanding, values, feelings and attitudes correlated to the personal ownership [Bernal 1993: 33]. In Marx Weber’ opinion, the ethnic groups have three essential common elements: the belief in common descendents, the shared native customs and the common physical features [Deaux 2006: 92]. The ethnic identity is a malleable and circumstantial dimension, varying according to the historical process and

context on the national level, the different social situation on the social level and the different development periods and stages through the life course on the individual level.

“Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group - large or small, socially dominant or subordinate – with which one has ancestral links. There is non necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socializations of cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.), or by more subjective contribution to a sense of “groupness”, or by some combination of both.” [Edwards 1994: 128].

The negative connotations for the concepts “ethnic” and “ethnicity” have their roots in the first Greek translation for the Bible. The word “ethnos” has been used in Hebrew for distinguish the non-Jewish and non-Christians outsiders [Oakes 2001: 9]. The Latin word “nation” and the Greek word “ethnos” has been used to express the same meaning – *foreigners* – united by common blood ties [Oakes 2001: 12]. According to Deaux, the concepts of national identity and ethnic identity are not identical, but often they overlap, because the ethnic group and nation represent the basic categories for the national classification. The key elements for the nation identity are the recognition and the commitment to the nation-state, while nationalism may “forge allegiances” among the minorities groups, on purpose, to create a national image. The national identity is linked to a certain definite geographical location, while the ethnic identity can cross the national boundary lines and it might not have a definite geographical location; but it is linked to the groups with whom one shares histories and meanings. Another important issue is the fact that the national identity and ethnic identity are mutually supportive, that strong national identification is compatible with strong subgroup identification. But between the national identity and ethnic identity there is not a clear distinction and often persist the ambiguity [Deaux 2006: 93-94].

The *ethnic identity* could not be studied without explaining the concept of the social identity that is deriving from one's personal status or position of group membership.

Between the ethnic identity and social identity a clear distinction exists, and if groups or individuals desire to change their social identity this does not imply the change or lose of the ethnic identity. Actually, each individual has, in the same time, in a conscious or unconscious way, more than one identity. So the ethnic identity represents only one from multiple personal identities, but it has a very important role, especially in the ex-Communist areas.

According to Phinney “the ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, within the large (sociocultural) setting” [Phinney 2003: 63]. Another author explains that the ethnic identity does not have general conceptions about its development, because the ethnic identity is strongly influenced by the transformation of the social and cultural experiences. In the following, the author gives an explicit definition that “one's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal in which how one construes oneself in the situated present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future.” [Weinreich 1986: 147]. The definition also asserts that identity is changing with each encountered cultural and social situation and groups.

5.2.4. THE SOCIAL IDENTITY

The theory of the *social identity* lines out the importance of the relation of the individual and the collective identities, by studying the essence of inter-group contacts. The social identity represents a general concept, which can include the ethnic and the national

identities. Deaux explains that the ethnic, national and social identities have in common the form of shared elements, but the shared elements of the social identity are less specific [Deaux 2006: 95]. The social identity represents the individual's knowledge about its membership in different social categories and all values given to the membership.

Furthermore, another definition of the social identity asserts that it represents a combination of person's aspects, which include the nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, race, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. All these aspects can be more visible or less apparent, and they lead the individual to choose a certain group or other [Hannum 2007: 7].

According to Korostelina, the social identities could have become a source of inter-group confrontation, once a society has been divided in two parts. The competition is held to protect own group security, beliefs, values, and even material advantage and increased position. Further, the individuals begun to comprehend the “*positive We*” and the “*negative They*”, and the general believe “that is moral and essential to destroy the evil Others”. [Korostelina 2008: 104]

The social identity has five functions:

- to give personal safety;
- to increase the self-esteem;
- to increase the social status;
- to fulfill the group support and recognition;
- to offer the recognition of the in-group [Korostelina 2008: 106].

If the needs mentioned above are satisfied, the individual's readiness to fight is decreased significantly.

5.2.5. THE CULTURAL IDENTITY

*“The expression “cultural identity” is understood as the sum of all cultural references through which a person, alone or in community with others, defines or constitutes oneself, communicates and wishes to be recognized in one’s dignity.”*⁴⁵ This definition represents a more than a complex approach on the cultural identity, which was given by the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights. The definition explains that a person can incorporate the world values and attitudes through his groups or his community. The definition makes the connection between the personal beliefs and other communities’ beliefs, including “the sum of all cultural references”. The cultural identity is more complex than the personal, national, ethnic or even social identity, because cultural identity is the sum of all those identities, which, after all, are actually subspecies of it and underlie its development.

To avoid the confusion between the personal, cultural and social identity, these concepts will be explained in the following. The personal identity is referring to all proprieties that distinguish “he” – a unique person – from “other”; the social identity includes all proprieties that distinguish a certain group or collectivity from another; the cultural identity is more complex, because it is referring to all elements that make the differences between certain collectivities or even the entire world. The cultural identity is more general comparing with the other two concepts, because it includes all groups and collectivities.

⁴⁵ Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights, available at:
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/Fribourg%20Declaration.pdf>

Some authors have divided the cultural identity of a person or group into different levels, in order to better define the complexity of the cultural identity [Kupiainen 2004: 8]:

- a geo-cultural dimension, which includes local, regional, state-wide and continental dimensions;
- a national, ethnic, linguistic and religious dimension;
- another dimension, which is characterized by individual's sexual behavior and self-definition and their role in social life;
- another dimension that defines the generation issue and is characterized by the fact that every generation has same sort of basic experience of the world;
- the dimension of people's social positions and their places in the hierarchy
- and the organizational-corporative dimension, characterized by working life.

Schouls asserts that the existence of the *cultural* differences is major and primordial rather the existence of the culture itself, because it provides the basis for the community identities [Schouls 2003: 5]. In other words, culture has an important role to identify the individuals, groups and communities by creating a peculiar and unique style of expression and, in the same time, it divides individuals and groups, as well as their identities, one from another to the deepest level of the individual and social scale.

5.2.6. THE PERSONAL IDENTITY

Most of the authors consider that the *personal identity* is influenced and depends on national and cultural sources. While other authors consider that the personal identity is created in a symbiotic relationship with the collective identity [Schouls 2003: 4]. The personal identity is a self – conception of the individual about its-self, and tries to respond to the question “Who am I?” It has multiple dimensions, and is depending on the

contextual situation, one dimension can be more or less salient comparing with other characteristics [Fong 2004: 31]. According to Joseph, there are three pairs of subtypes of the personal identity:

- 1) a personal identity for real and for fictional individuals – which are very difficult to separate or distinguish, because the real individuals can take fictive identities;
- 2) a personal identity for “oneself “or “I” and for the “others”;
- 3) a personal identity for individual and for groups [Joseph 2004: 3].

Nenad Miscevic explains that “*the national identity of the group is essential for the personal identity of each of its members*”, [Miscevic 2000: 239] because the personal identity is deeply linked and dependent on one’s own community. The author continues to argument that, in this context, the concept of nation and nationalist refers to an ethnic and cultural belonging. The essential element for acquiring and developing a stable and lasting identity is that the individuals has to belong to a given and unified comprehensive community; and the ethno-nation, which is the carrier of the national identity, is the key element for the identity forming and for the community protection [Miscevic 2000: 242].

According to Fong and Chuang, individuals may have a strong or weak sense of national identity, as opposed to their cultural or ethnic identity, and all these results are depending on the context. The authors explain that the national and ethnic identities remain the same over the time, but, in a certain context, the ethnic identity can be more salient than national identity or vice-versa [Fong 2004: 30].

A common spoken language and a “discourse accent” are shared by the members of the ethnic and cultural groups. The language features, such as grammar, syntax, lexicon and phonology, represent the discourse accent; the members of a particular community are using a peculiar combination of style of talking, speeches, presentations. Through language, the individuals can express themselves, but, in the same time, language represents the coercion to use the characteristics of the ethnic and cultural discourse accent [Fong 2004: 36-37].

In the identity process language is pivotal, by solidifying the cultural and ethnic identities, using the linguistic distinctiveness to distinguish the in-group from the out-groups. Actually, the use of the ethnic language represents the people's ethnic affiliation and the development of their ethnic identity [Fong 2004: 56]. Language has a major role in the “establishment and in the maintaining of the national identity” [Joseph 2004: 3].

Regarding the importance of the language as inter-ethnic communication, Giles and Noels have distinguished three important elements: the first element is that the language offers the members of in-group the means to classify themselves as active members of a particular ethnic group; the second element represents the fact that language is considered the key elements of ethnic identity; and the last element suggests that language is usually used to enforce the solidarity between the members of the same group and to exclude the members that do not belong to the in-group [Giles 1998: 139-147].

Another important issue represents the “ethno-linguistic vitality”, actually the relation between the vitality of the language identity within an ethnic-cultural group. Ethno-linguistic vitality shows whether a group is a dominant group or is a marginalized group in a certain community; it involves the cultural social status of the group and it is strongly linked to the social, economic and language status of the particular group. The status of the particular cultural group language is directly linked to the institutional support or oppression, and the higher the social status of the group is, the greater is its vitality [Fong 2004: 58]. The ethno-linguistic identity is defined by the interrelation of language and ethnicity, having the result the forming of the social identity and the group membership [Fong 2004: 74].

5.3. THE NEW CREATED IDENTITIES AT THE EUROPEAN BORDER

The Soviet ideology supposed canceling historical and collective memory and destroying the national identity of non-titular people by Russification and enforced assimilation. For the opponents several methods were used, such as deportation and cruel repression, because the main goals were to preserve and save the status-quo of the “last Empire”. [Ciobanu 2008: 22]. But after the collapse of the USSR, the former Soviet Republics felt the national revival and started to search the recovery of own national identity, a process which was a painful one. And this because of the transition from the Communism – a totalitarian and autocratic regime - to the democracy; from an authoritarian type of policy to a permissive one; from a central planning administrative systems to a local market economy [Ciobanu 2008: 17].

“New history of borders is in fact a history of borderlands, the region bisected by the boundary line between states, which in comparative perspectives is presumed to encapsulate a variety of identities, social networks, and formal and informal, legal and illegal relationship which tie together people in the area contiguous to the borderline on both of its sides” [Donnan 1999: 50]. The definition explains the fluidity and the change of identities, which has been happening all over the world. In the former Soviet Union many borders have been changed, some of them have been modified peacefully and some of them only under conflict circumstances. As a general fact, the identity is changing

slowly in normal and stabile condition, but is changing quickly when the situation is changing suddenly and unexpected. In the same time, the internal border can be changed continually and newly according with the political evolution on the national and international context. But, usually, the creation of the new border has certain reasons, as one of the most important reasons in the former Soviet Union is represented by the purpose to separate the dominant groups, reconstructing identities or avoiding ethnic conflicts. And there is also an “investigator” for this purpose – a leader, a certain interest group or even the population.

According to Johanson, the Soviet borders were created to form “a plurality of new identities and loyalties, though restrictive economic effects were minimized by the largely administrative character of the new boundaries”. The author further explains that the reason to create and form the boundaries was a political and ideological one, in order to legitimate the formation of the new state, having a centrifugal force, and attract the different and widespread part to the center [Johanson 2004: 238]. Considering one of the explanations of the term “*boundaries*”, which represents a “precise, linear division, within a restrictive, political context”, while “*frontiers*” had more a “zonal qualities, and a broader, social context”, we can distinguish that in Moldova, a “borderland identity” has been created between two regions with a similar ethnic and cultural background. Sahlins suggests “that both state formation and nation building” represented two-way processes and the “states did not simply impose their values or boundaries on local society. Rather, local society was a motive force in the formation and consolidation of nationhood and the territorial state” [Sahlins 1991: 8].

In Transnistria, in the Soviet period, supra-ethnic identities were created. “Transnistrians” were strongly linked to the Soviet Union; after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they lost the Soviet identity, so they started to search for a new identity. Their leaders could not impose Russian, Ukrainian or even Moldovan identity, because of the mix of ethnic minorities, so they had to avoid creating some intra-ethnic tensions in the region, and under these circumstances, the desire to have an identity led to the creation of a “new Transnistrian identity”, which has a lot of common aspects and features with the “Soviet

identity”. They have used the same Communist pattern and all Soviet values for the new identity.

The situation in the right bank, in the Republic of Moldova, was different, since the people have always been against the Soviet Union, expecting something different from the society. They lost their Soviet identity too, but they noted that they could regain their Moldovan/Romanian lost identity. Some of them perceived the Moldovan identity as the historical Romanian identity, others perceived it as a new Moldovan identity and there are also a few residents who desire to have the Russian identity (especially the ethnic Russian minorities). Of course, the situation is also complicated in the right bank because of the differences between them in choosing their state identity.

“Ethnicity appears and becomes relevant in and through social situations and interactions, and the way people react to these situations” was highlighted by Th. Eriksen [Eriksen 1993]. The identity is influenced by the social process and context, being changed by it, and, in the same time, the identity can influence the social context. Actually there is a strong causality between social context and identity, the social process can generate distinct types of identity, and a certain type of identity – stable, unstable, strong, weak, ethnic, cultural, multicultural – can change and determine the social context and process.

In the ex – Soviet Union the national identity was considered an ethnic identity, because a series of similar factors have been created: language of inter-ethnic communication, customs, traditions, religion. This was possible because the national identity can coexist with the ethnic identity as essential group’s elements; for national identity the state and political similarity is important, while for the ethnic identity the language and cultural similarities are important. Brubaker explains that, in the former USSR, the Soviet identity was created using double-parallel identity, the first was the national or ethnic identity of the individuals, and the second was the new cultural identity – relied on the perspective of communism building, which was meant to become the state identity. But the new created identity, the Soviet identity, proved to be very unstable, weak and fragile, and this

is why, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet identity has disappeared [Brubaker 1996].

The national conscience was understood and was represented differently in various republics and regions of the former USSR at the national-social level, and differently in various ethnic groups and communities at the inter-relational level. The differences between the Estonian nationalism and the Moldovan nationalism are a very good example: in the Estonian case, the ethnic and national identities were very strong and stable under the Soviet rule, rejecting the new created state identity and claiming the ethnic identity. According to Castells classifications, the Estonian identity represented an identity of “resistance” [Castells 1997]. Or, as Feinstein explains, the Estonian identity was strong and stable prior to the creation of the USSR, remaining stable during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union [Feinstein 2010]. Completely different was the situation in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic: the national and ethnic identities were very unstable and fragile, and this could explain why, after the collapse of the USSR, the identity crisis exacerbated in the Republic of Moldova, which, unfortunately, still persists after more than twenty years. Erikson asserts that the identity crisis appears when people lose “a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity” [Erikson 1963: 153] For the most ex-Soviet republics, the Soviet identity remained an ideological identity, artificially created, but for some regions from the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria, the Soviet identity still exists, the people from that region still believe in the Soviet ideology, highly politicized. But it seems to be an interesting point, that the more the ethnic groups are concerned about their national identities, the more they become a tool of political manipulation, at both formal and informal levels.

The Russian Empire, when it had annexed Bessarabia, had an important purpose to create a new identity and new people in Bessarabia; during the Soviet rule, the creation of a new Moldovan identity has succeeded. Actually, the real success is that they managed to clear the Moldovans’ mind of their real identity – the Romanian national identity. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the people have searched their identity, but, apart of the Soviet

identity, there was not any strong national identity, so they started to look for a new one – Moldovan identity that was imposed by Soviet propaganda.

The affinity of the villagers with the state is very weak, they do not expect anything from the state and do not feel the civic responsibility; they are linked only with their land. There is a strong affinity between the urbanization and national consciousness and vice versa. In the Republic of Moldova there are individuals from rural areas who consider that the Soviet Union still exist, they are still making references to the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, in Transnistrian region, this phenomenon is more exacerbated and the individuals desire to return to the Soviet Era.

According to Petrescu, the process of Moldovenization begins in 1924, when Transnistria has been created, but before this period, the Bessarabian peasants did not have any knowledge about their identity, even the term of identity had not existed. The people actually are considering themselves Moldovans because they have been living in Moldova, but it has nothing to do with the concept of identity. But it is possible to find elements of Russification, for instance if they are asked about their affinity, they would mention the Russian people [Petrescu 2007:132].

In 1989, after the disintegration of the USSR, the Moldovans have claimed only the linguistic identity not ethnic identity; they also asked for the rebirth of the national culture, not for the independent nationalism; that means that the origin of the Transnistrian conflict does not represent an ethnic issue, neither a national issue. Actually it was overused by the elites from the left side of the Dneestr River in order to maintain the entire control in the region. According to Serebrian, in Transnistria was rather an intercultural conflict [Serebrian 2001: 140], because the Russian language was considered as a mother tongue in all USSR, so it continued to be the same in Transnistria, and the change of language it was very difficult to accept. A Romanian language, written in Latin script, is considered to be a language without political and official importance; meanwhile, the Moldovan language written in Cyrillic alphabet, an artificial alphabet

created by the Soviets, which still remains a “wooden language”, is more appropriate for the people living in Transnistria.

There is also a psychological issue regarding the Dnestr River that was perceived as a natural border between Moldova (Bessarabia) and the East. This fact represents the psychological limits to perceive the spatiality, although the Dnestr River remained a psychological barrier between the people living on both sides of the country. Moreover, there is another psychological difference between the right and left side, regarding the history that Transnistria never was part of Romania, and it is characterized rather by Slavic culture.

To the consolidation of two different conceptions about each other also contributed the existing differences between the two sides of Dnestr River. While Transnistria represented 13 percent of the entire Moldova’s territory, with 17 percent of population, it has been holding 33 percent of the country’s industry. Therefore, the inhabitants from the left side considered themselves more developed than the right side. The existing or imagined differences between them continue to be enforced in order to develop two different communities and two different peoples.

5.3.1 THE MOLDOVAN IDENTITY

Moldova is a young state whose identity has not been well shaped yet.

The Moldovan identity has been build by Soviet scholars and was “based on the culture of the peasants” [King 2000: 226] because Bessarabia was less urbanized; on the census

from 1830, 87% from the total individuals were living in the rural environment [Petrescu 2007: 133]. As the Moldovan elite were being sent in Gulag, other ethnic minorities, especially Russian, were encouraged to emigrate in a rich land, receiving good positions in administrative and industrial sectors. During the Soviet rule, campaigns have been permanently created against all nationalist or anti-soviet movements.

In Fruntasu's opinion, the geopolitical evolution has created the process of changing and modifying the "physiognomy of the social identity" [Fruntasu 2002: 59]. That is why, in 1812, in the moment of the annexation of Bessarabia to Russia, the Moldovans/Romanians Boyars represented 95% and later, after 100 years since the annexation, they represented only 31%. This situation have been created by giving some elevate position to Russians or other ethnic minorities, or by the fact that Moldovans have given up their ethnicity in order to have an elevate position. The same type of "Russification" was used during the Soviet Union. Only peasants, because of their "natural conservatism", were able to maintain the language and the tradition, despite of the foreign ruling, but they never could distinguish and understand abstract concepts as *nation*, *state*, *social* and *national emancipation*. This has been happening because they were and are politically immature. Practically, the rural population does not consider the identity issue as important as economic and social issues. This was a strong reason for the use of the confusion between some abstract terms, to habituate some classes with it. Fruntasu notes that the class and the ethnicity have been superposed in a complex way in Bessarabia, the nation has consolidated the class and the class has consolidated the nation [Fruntasu 2002]. The concern of the Tsarist officials about the Moldovan identity can be added, beginning with the influence of the "Greek inspired-nationalism along the lower Danube" [King 2000: 25], therefore the progressive integration of the territory into the Russian Empire was created.

When Bessarabian nationalism was high, the Tsarist and, later, the Soviet officials have been trying to show the differences between the Romanian Moldovans, which, in their opinion, are descendents of Romans and Bessarabians, which are descendents of Slavs. In 1912, the celebration of the centennial of the annexation to the Russian Empire was

presented as liberation from the Turkish Yoke and the re-creation and re-conquer of the ancient Slavic land. In fact, it represented new Russian propaganda for the creation of a new identity, a Moldovan identity. In 1918, a visitor from Banat (Romania) describes his opinion about the Romanians from Bessarabia that “have lost all sense of national sentiment as a result of systematic idiocy of Russification. Even today, the people call themselves “Moldovans” and think of themselves more as brothers of the Russians...than of Romanians...” [King 2000: 31].

An interested argument is given by Feinstein in his research about the national identity, comparing the case of Estonia and the case of the Republic of Moldova after the collapse of the USSR. In Estonia, the author found a strong coherent ethnic identity, before the rise of the Soviet Bloc, identity which was kept and enforced under the Soviet Rule, otherwise was the situation in Bessarabia with a lack of coherent identity prior and during the Soviet Union rule. Analyzing this, the author deduced that the existence of a strong national identity in Estonia has not permitted to the Russian minority to develop some secessionist movement; meanwhile, the weakness of the national Moldovan identity allowed to the Russian minority, which was stronger, to create some violent secessionist movements. Feinstein used the two countries as a comparison because he found many similarities between them: the similar geographic and population size, titular population size and minority opposition size, a highly concentrated territory with ethnic Russian and Russian troops in the territory [Feinstein 2010].

As an argumentation for Feinstein’s research is the fact that in this context of “identity crisis”, TMR people decided their wish to be and to consolidate a “Transnistrian people” with “Transnistrian identity”. Unfortunately, the titular nation for the rest of the territory of the Republic of Moldova still has an “identity crisis”. They are hesitating between “Moldovan identity”, “Romanian identity” and even “Russian identity”. Practically, if “Transnistrian people” took the decision about their identity, the Moldovans from the right part of Dnest, are hesitating between Romanian and Moldovan identity, the ambiguity toward ‘Europeanization’ and something unknown, something peculiar. Now, the national identity, for Moldovan people, is more complex. If, between 1980 and 1989,

there were only two directions, pro-Russian and pro-Romanian, nowadays Moldovan people are more confused, acting between Moldovan people, pro-Romanian and pro-Russian orientation.

Practically, in this context, none has been consolidated: neither Romanism, which should be the “normal ethno-political evolution”, nor Moldovenism, because the lack of the historic legitimacy (only during the Russian and Soviet occupation historic legitimacy was artificially created) [Fruntasu 2002: 187]. The lack of the coherent identity leads Moldovan people to difficulty to distinguishing and to consolidate their national conciseness, and, implicit, the state integrity and sovereignty.

The identity has two dimensions, first is represented by the fact that it defines the community as a sum of individuals, and another defines the community in the relation with its individuals. In countries with strong national identity, the individuals adopt the available identity, but in countries with more fragile and new formed identities the identity conflicts appear. In the same time, the Republic of Moldova is a new formed country, which enforces the identity problems, because each individual is looking for an “available” identity. According to the Ethno Barometer there are two types of categories about the national identity: one category includes the individuals who consider the national identity in the framework of a common people, history and memory; the second category includes the individuals who consider that the choosing of the identity is based on the freedom to join which group or community is in concordance with the personal values and beliefs.⁴⁶

The Republic of Moldova has never been an autonomous and independent state before; the right side of Moldova was either part of Principality of Moldova or incorporated to Russia, and the left side was either part of Ukraine or, afterwards, of Moldova. So, in this territory, a complex problem connected to the national identity has existed since the beginning and it still exists. If under Russian Empire and during the Soviet Union the

⁴⁶ Ethno Barometer refers only to the territory between Prut and Dnestr Rivers, excluding the region of Transnistria. More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

national identity concept has been destroyed, after the collapse of the USSR, the Republic of Moldova began to create and consolidate the statehood and its sovereignty, but, in the same time, it started the confrontation for the national revival. The individuals, the groups, the peoples should have their specific identities – personal, national, ethnic, cultural etc. – because the fact that an individual identifies himself with a certain identity creates and permits the individual survive.

Another author, Ciobanu, considers that Moldovan people had never been nationalistic, in the usual and normal meaning of the word – *nationalism*. The national interest is based on the national origin, the cultural affiliation of the territory, including the civilization. But, as a paradox, the Moldovans are the only minority who has not yet clarified their national identity. The question of national identity still remains unsolved nowadays. Certainly, Ciobanu mentions that there are some anthropologists who consider that identity is “exclusively an individual and personal option”, it is a “mental construct”, which could mean that Moldovenism could be understood and treated as an “expression of a community to define its liberty” [Ciobanu 2005: 209-210].

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the 1980s brought the first wave of “national revival” in Moldova, promoted by Popular Front, a socio-political and cultural-linguistic movement. In MSSR, the Moldovan crowds have been meeting in cultural gatherings, and they have been reciting poems and singing national songs in native Romanian language. The Poems were about *Limba Noastra* (Our Language). In the same time, some anti-Communists movements have been organized, using extremist elements, as the most popular slogan: “*Chemodan, Vokzal, Rossia*” (Suitcase, Train Station, Russia) was meaning that all Russophile and Russian population, which are against the national revival, should leave MSSR. In this ambiguous context, the population divided in two antagonistic sides: Popular Front, which was pro-Romanian orientated, and Interfront, which was a pro-Russian and Soviet orientated. One side was demanding the immediate secession of USSR – the Moldovan majority – and some of them have asked the instant union with Romania; and the other side, Russophile or Russian-speaking minority, being

devoted to the USSR, they were against the dissolution of the Soviet Union [Ciobanu 2008: 34 -35].

In this context some aggressive propaganda and speeches from both sides – Popular Front and Interfront – have started. The Popular Front has presented Russians as “*occupants*”, describing the “*crimes*” committed between 1940 and 1949, when many Moldovan peasants and Moldovan intellectuals were deported to Siberia, and has spoke about the mass starvation of 1949. As an argument, some documents about the deportation and starvation were published, but were denied by the opposite side. On the other hand, Interfront was using the Soviet ideology, the “friendship among all Soviet people”, “proletarian internationalism” and has created even a theory about the fact that “Russia has brought Moldovan culture and education” and that “Russia has fed and washed up the Moldovans for years” [Ciobanu 2008: 36-35].

The Popular Front declared about the “real national identity” the following: “*The historic name of our people, which we have carried for centuries – a right to which chronicles and manuscripts, historical documents from the modern and contemporary periods, and the classics of Marxism-Leninism testify – is Romanian and the name of our language the Romanian language.*”⁴⁷

In 1994, the Popular Front was defeated, after 90 percent of population voted against the unification with Romania in a referendum. In the same year, on November 24, the new Moldovan Constitution has been ratified, and the Moldovan language declared state language.

In that period national identity was used as a “centerpiece” of the political campaign. On February 5, 1994, a congress, named “*Our Home – The Republic of Moldova*”, was held in Chisinau, organized by the opponents of the pan-Romanianism. Mircea Snegur, president of the Republic of Moldova at that time, accused the pan-Romanianism of “betrayal” and the scholars, historians and writers of doubting “the legitimacy and historical foundation of our right to be a state, to call ourselves the Moldovan people”;

⁴⁷ “Documentul final al Marii Adunari Nationale”, *Literatura si Arta* (31 August 1989): 2.

practically, he stressed about the existence of a “distinct Moldovan ethnos as the foundation of the Moldovan state” [King 1994: 354], emphasizing another over used idea *that history condemned Moldova to be a state.*

As a response to the president affirmation, an open letter was send by the scholars (signed by 43 scholars) declaring that:

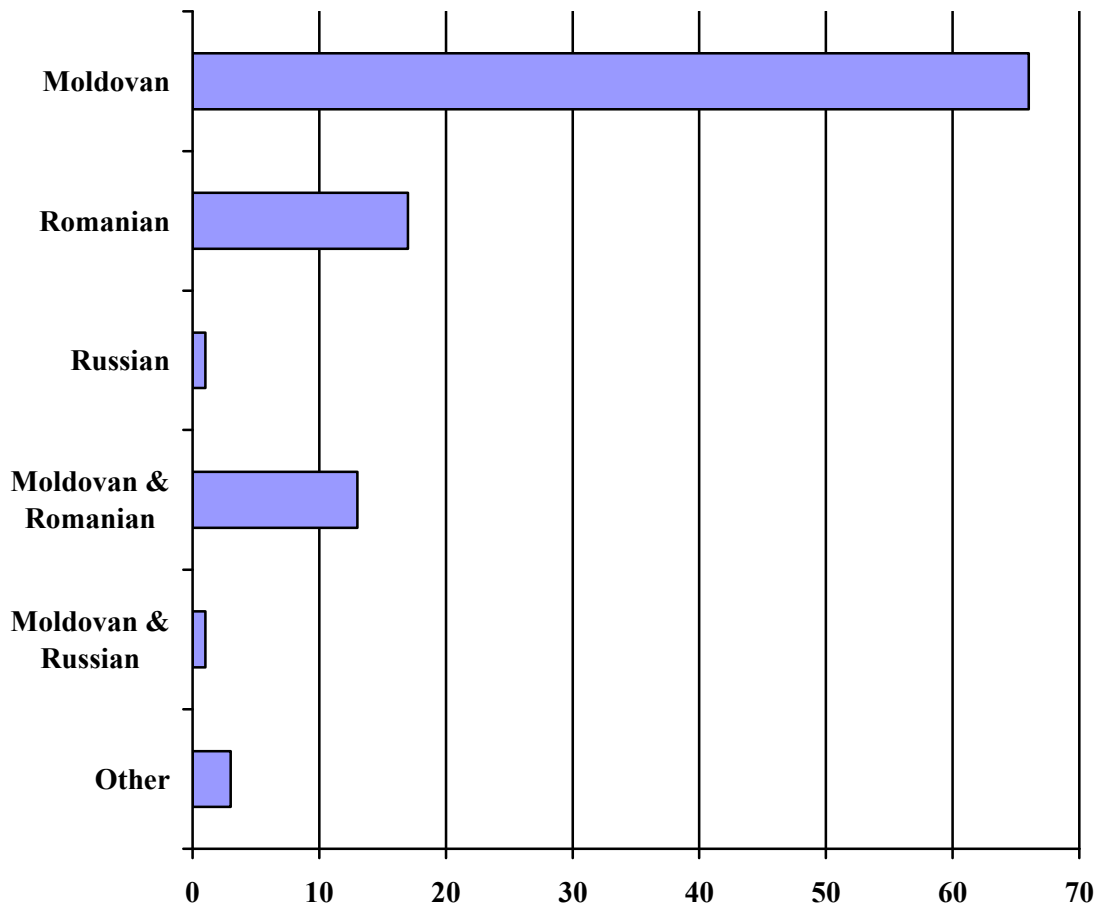
“...the glottonym “Moldovan language” can have no confirmation whatsoever. It is true that the same thing can be said about the “Moldovan state”, and we would like to believe that this is the reason that you decided to convince us that we are Moldovans. There was no need to do such a thing. We know very well that we are Moldovans ...just as the Italians are Milanese, Venetians, Piedmontese...

Thus, that it is not difficult to understand that the name “Moldovan” signifies not a people as such, but merely a part of the Romanian nation. It comes from topographic name Moldova and is, therefore, essentially geographic, not ethnic, just like the names of Romanians living in other parts of the national territory. In other words, being Moldovans by virtue by the region where we were born, as an integrant part of the Romanian people we are at the same time Romanians, whatever we like it or not.” [King 1994: 355-356]

King also explains the reasons why President M. Snegur decided to use the national identity question, by stressing the citizens with the concept of “Moldovan language” of the independent state, because his attempt “to portrait himself and his government as the guarantors of Moldovan independence and territorial integrity”. In the following, King considers that the tactic used by the Moldovan president is to gain the loyalty of the countryside adepts, because two-thirds of ethnic Moldovan/Romanians were living in rural area. In Moldova, actually, only the intelligentsia was favorable to historical true; only they wanted to support and consolidate the real national identity of the country, but they were negligible quantity, comparing with the rural population, who does not pay attention to abstract concepts as “true historical identity”. For them, the independence of the country was most important, and the state consolidation, not which identity they should choose again. So, in this context, the concept of “Moldovan identity” was enforced, that Moldova is an independent state, with a strong sense of national identity. It

can consider also that Transnistria reacted on Moldova’s “nationalism” and “identity” and developed the “Transnistrian identity”.

Chart 1: Attitude towards own national identity



Source: Arambasa (2008), pg 365

The international regulations stipulate the rights of choice for the individual identity, not to choose the identity imposed by the country one lives in; in the same time, the chosen identity is individual and does not represent a collective choice. But the people from the Republic of Moldova do not identify themselves as Romanians because they fear being considered an ethnic group in their own country, or because of the political order, which

suggests developing the Moldovenism project. An interesting issue about the chosen identity in the Republic of Moldova refers to the fact that the individuals who identify themselves with Romanian identity are accused that they do not respect the identity promoted by the officials, and actually they represent the traitors. The individuals who choose the Russian identity have the possibility to maintain strong links with the state protector - Russia, without being accused by betrayal.

To conclude, according to Zgureanu-Guragata, in the Republic of Moldova two types of nationalism, which are competitive and divergent, have consolidated: cultural nationalism and political nationalism. The first one – the cultural nationalism is pro-Romanian and it is characterized by the Romanian collectivity of the common ancestry and the cultural pro-Russian nationalism that respect the rights of Russian minority. The second - the political pro-Moldovan nationalism is promoted to defend and consolidate the independence of the state. Identity was also used as a political strategy to obtain the state power [Zgureanu-Guragata 2007:60-70].

5.3.2 THE “MOLDOVENISM” PROJECT

“The Moldovan Nation was a Russian invention to prevent the (re)born of a Romanian national consciousness for Bessarabian people”.

(W. Van Meurs)

The “Moldovenism” project was, first of all, a doctrine of the Tsarist regime, and, afterwards, it started to be used by the Stalinist regime, to justify the annexation of

Bessarabia by Russia [Dungaciu 2005: 102]. “With the appearance of the “Moldovan nation” and the creation of its provisional homeland in the MASSR, the ethnonational identity of the Moldovans themselves became the centerpiece of Soviet propaganda efforts.” [King 2000: 57] “Moldovenism”, as Soviet project, was based on a deliberately distorted historic reading, as the ultimatum given to Romania regarding the cession of Bessarabia was argued that its population was “for the most part Ukrainian” [King 2000: 92], which, of course, was a false argument. It accredits the idea that between Romanians and Moldovans there are ethnic and linguistic differences. The purpose of this Soviet project is to create a “new ethnic-identity”. The “Moldovenism project” has had, from the beginning, two goals: one was to prove that there is a strong difference between Moldovan and Romanian languages, using the Cyrillic script, made some direct deliberate translation from Russian, even created some new words; and second was to prove that there is a strong difference between Romanians and Moldovans, by describing, during all period, both Moldovans and Romanians in different ways. Romanians were “fascists”, “occupants”, and “enemies”; meanwhile, Moldovans/Bessarabians were most of them “capitalists”, “dull” and “unclear”.

The present “Moldovenism” project presumes that “*The Moldovans, the nation –founder of the state, together with other ethnic minorities: Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauz, Bulgarians, Jews, Romanians, Byelorussians, Roma, Polish and others form the people of Moldova, which are their common homeland*” [Dungaciu 2005]. If Romanians in Moldova represent a minority, why is Romania not allowed to protect the Romanian minority, as Russia does? It is well known the case of Ilie Ilascu, who was imprisoned because he considered himself a Romanian.

The project is based on several axioms, used obsessively. Practically, the promoters of “Moldovenism” are trying to create a new history of Moldova, especially of Bessarabia, but they do not realize “that modifying the history of Bessarabia, they are modifying the history of Europe” [Roncea (2007: 136]. The last project that had this purpose, being initiated by President V. Voronin, was the law project named *Conceptia politicii nationale de stat a Republicii Moldova* (The conception of state national politics of the

Republic of Moldova), published in *Moldova Suverana* (Sovereign Moldova) [Dungaciu 2005: 98].⁴⁸

The same day, the Moldovan - Romanian dictionary⁴⁹ has been published in *Comunistul* (Communist paper). Some authors consider that this political publication represents a part of a bigger process of “nation building”, which has been initiated with the occupation of Bessarabia and is continuing in our days. In other words, it started in the Tsarist Period, continued under the Russian Soviet occupation and is continuing under the present “ethno-political conflict”.

In Moldova, the use of the term “Moldovan people”, in generally represents the community with all ethnic minorities, the terms is used to avoid some discrepancy towards some ethnic minorities. To avoid some interethnic divergences among people, the total sum of individuals of the country is called “Moldovan people”. To be identified with Romanian identity may give birth to some negative issues, like the fear of reunion with Romania, but, most of all, the term is connected to the local political propaganda. In the same time, the Moldovan historians from Transnistria also contributed to the Moldovan ideology by editing journals and books on this theme.

Under the Soviet Union, the predominant language used was Russian; only few kindergarten and schools were using the native language with Cyrillic script and all superior institutions in Chisinau and other important cities were using only Russian. After the national revival, the newly independent Moldovan government decided to switch from Cyrillic to Latin script, and to adopt the anthem and the tricolor flag, as Romania.

⁴⁸ The author explains that the cited document is a political document and is intended to cancel the Declaration of Independence from 27 August, 1991, which shows that Romanian language is the state language and to confer to the Republic of Moldova a new ethno-cultural, historical, linguistically, political and juridical identity. The purpose of all these, is to develop the ideology of “Moldovenism”, and to create the idea that Moldovan people and Moldovan language do exist.

⁴⁹ The Moldovan-Romanian Dictionary was published by Vasile Stati, who is a politician and linguist in the Republic of Moldova. He is one of the promoters of the “Moldovenism” and he is trying to show that there are big differences between Moldovans and Romanians; arguing that, during the Soviet period, the “popular Moldovan language” has been created and the Slav influence over the Moldovan culture was developed and maintained. The linguists from the Romanian Academy consider that there is no difference between Moldovan and Romania words, that the same Romanian words meaning the same Moldovan words. Even the Head of the Linguistic Institute from the Republic of Moldova, Ion Barbuta, considers the dictionary as an “absurdity, which is serving the political interests”.

This was one of the excuses for the secession movement in the left bank of MSSR, in nowadays Transnistria, invoking the so-called Romanization of the Moldovan SSR. As a protest, in the left bank the Soviet symbols were used, such as flag, sickle and hammer emblem, even the red star was used. This was a demonstration of loyalty for the Communism and the Soviet Union. Even a Referendum has been organized and 96 – 98% voted against the dissolution of the USSR. All these movements and transformations created the premises for the violent confrontation, turned in an armed conflict in March – June, 1992, in the left bank of the MSSR [Ciobanu 2008: 36-37].

In Moldovan SSR, there was confusion between the “citizenship” and “ethnic identity”. The term “Moldovan” does not have ethnic connotations, but highlights that they are the residents of MSSR. But those who promoted the term “Moldovenism” masterfully used it to create confusion [Dungaciu 2005: 83-84]. The term “Moldovenism” is still used nowadays to promote the same idea of confusion. For instance, apart of Moldovans who considering themselves Moldovans or Romanian, having “Moldovan” citizenship and speaking Moldovan/Romanian language, all ethnic minorities are considering themselves in compliance with their ethnic specific (Gagauz are considering themselves Gagauz, Russians – Russians, Ukrainians –Ukrainians), having the “Moldovan” citizenship and all of them are speaking the minority language and Russian language (only few of them speak Moldovan language).

Moldovan people generate the negative reaction, because they do not have a clear defined content, by having two meanings. One meaning refers to the totality of the citizen to the Republic of Moldova, and the second meaning represents the largest community, used from the territorial perspective. Another ambiguous characteristic of the concept Moldovan people is referring to its ideological dimension, created by the Soviet Union, the ideology which implies conflict relation and maintain it. It is supposed that when the Soviet ideology’s effects would disappear, the identity conflict relation will disappear as well.

As Kymlicka explains, the concept of “multiculturalism” was created to avoid some “terminological confusion”, based on the political interests. The author explains that a state can be named multicultural if it is formed by immigrants from other countries or it is formed by citizens who belong to more nations. Moldova represents from this point of view a multi-ethnic state [Kymlicka 1995].

Moldovan people represent the sum of the citizens or the ethnic majority who lives in the definite territory. The “Moldovans” represent “a nation with a separate identity which implied initially a multiethnic mixture (Moldovans, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, etc.)”. This definition explains the creation of the Moldovan people, but does not explain the way the people choose their identity. But there is a confusion regarding the Romanian identity: those who choose the Romanian ethnic identity are treated in opposition with Moldovan citizenship. Another ambiguous issue is the fact that some individuals refuse to choose the Romanian ethnic identity because they fear to not unify with Romania and automatically to lose the actual identity and status.

The letter published in the newspaper „Moldova Suverana (January 22, 2002), and addressed to the writer Ion Druta by the President of the Republic of Moldova, which includes: „... *After many years of distress and large social unrest, we came to the conclusion that it is impossible to accomplish something positive if the population does not engage fully in materializing the IDEA of NATIONAL INTEGRATION. Despite the fact that the Moldovan intelligentsia is divided and that some of its representatives contribute to the destabilization of the situation in the country, disseminating discord among its citizens, I think...that the time has come for us to have a creed. In my opinion, this belief could be an INTEGRATION IDEA for our entire NATION, namely the idea of building the Modern Moldovan State*“[Ethno barometer 2006: 162].⁵⁰

In the creation of the Moldovan nation, the first step was to define who will represent the Moldovan people and to elaborate their cultural elements and especially the language, so,

⁵⁰ More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

in September 1925, the CMU – the Committee for Moldovanization and Ukrainization – was formed [King 2000: 70].

The main idea of the Moldovenism project is that the Moldovans are not Romanians, and Romanians have anti-Moldovan nature. The Moldovenism project, from its beginning had reached its goals, because everything was created to change the national feeling of the population of Moldova. The language was named Moldovan language, using a Cyrillic script, and including some distorted words, in order to create the idea of a distinct language. The history was changed, being replaced by the Soviet history, in order to loose the contact with the own national feeling. Even the peoples' names were Russified, for example the name *Ciubotaru*, was transformed in *Cibotari*. Everything was made artificially and with the actual purpose to build new identities. The existing ambiguity in the Republic of Moldova is a consequence of the frequent changes in the country's general situation. There are generations that studied the Soviet history and geography at school, and these generations have difficulties to read and understand the Latin script; and there are generations that studied the history of Romanians and they have different opinion. The advocates of the Romanianism consider they have the Romanian nationality and some of them want to unify with Romania, while the Moldovenism supporters considers that Moldova and Romania are two separate countries and do not see a union as a future perspective.

According to Rurac, the Transnistrian conflict contributed indirectly to the “maintaining” of the Moldovenism and to the identity crisis in Moldova, because it does not permit the consolidation of the integrity of the state, and, on the other hand, the conflict itself is due to the identity crisis [Rurac 2002: 13]. So, it suggests that the conflict and identity crisis represent a vicious circle, because without the resolution of the conflict it is impossible to consolidate the sovereignty of the country and the resolution of the identity crisis, meanwhile, the weak identity might lead to the conflict.

5.3.3. HOMO SOVIETICUS

*“Homo Sovieticus equals to homo
Russicus”*

(J. Galtung)

In 1977, the last USSR Constitution was adopted, proclaiming the forming of a new Soviet people as a result of “convergence of all classes and social strata, juridical and practical equality of all nations (ethnicities), and their fraternal collaboration.” It was considered that this supra-ethnic community will survive and there could not be inter-ethnic problems. This Communist propaganda emerged from Stalinist principles and promoting the Soviet people – in a common territory, with a common language, economic life, culture and national psychology. In this context it was thought that the “*national question [...] was solved once and for all time*” [Ciobanu 2008: 9].

However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the premises were created for the decreasing of the *interethnic tolerance* – based on Soviet ideology and the emerging of the national identity. But the collapse of the USSR was a collapse of people’s values and ideals, because, in the Soviet times, *homo Sovieticus* existed, with a Soviet identity, and with no needs to know the personal history and roots. There was a general history, the history of the USSR, for all Soviet states. After losing the Soviet-space, the ex-Soviet people found that they did not have identity, history or a country anymore. In this ambiguity, people started to search and find their national and ethnic identity and their roots, to understand some terms as “*the people*”, “*nation*”, “*citizen*”. As a consequence, on the former Soviet space there was a burst of inner ethnic-political conflict, a “*conflict of identities*”, and a conflict for “*self-identification*”.

This conflict of identities, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, started in the Republic of Moldova too, which, meanwhile, has become an independent and sovereign state. The so-called Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, has never been a part of historical Bessarabia, so the poly-ethnic region refused to form a new and independent state within Moldova, but claimed its own statehood. This can be considered an example of development of a “new” post-Soviet identity on the ex-USSR territory.

According to Steven D. Roper, in the Republic of Moldova “is a conflict between Moldovans and a regionally concentrated Russophone population that has a “Soviet identity”” [Roper 2002]. Eugen Doga, a Moldovan composer, says that “During the 70 years of Soviet power, a Soviet people have been created. A certain “*homo Sovieticus*” was created, whom you can find in Tiraspol, in Tallinn, in Kiev, and in Moscow. I saw him everywhere – he had a distinct face and a peculiar way to think and act. This *Soviet image* clears their national identity and keeps the nostalgia after the Soviet Empire, after the big brother. My co-nationalists suffer of this same contagion.”⁵¹

S. Lazarovsky, in his work about Transnistrian ideology, shows that the people of Transnistria chose “to preserve the former Soviet – Russian identity, without wasting time and effort for drafting a national idea, to easily overcome the crisis of identity overwhelming their neighbors. In this context, Transnistria remains to be Russia to a significantly greater extent than Russia itself that lost its historical orientation in the 1990’s”. According to the results of the Referendum of the preservation of the Soviet Union, which was held in 1991, after the collapse of the USSR, above 94-98% from the respondents from Transnistria were for preservation of the USSR. According to the poll, conducted in 2007, two thirds of Transnistrians regret the disintegration of USSR; among the respondents, 60% are middle aged. And this is happening after 17 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union [Shtanski 2009: 220].

Russian experts of the Center for Geopolitical Studies of the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science, based on the results of the survey conducted by the Centre

⁵¹ Sfatul Tarii, 4 iulie, 1992

in Transnistria, concluded that “Transnistrian identity is political, based on commonality of historical destinies of the region’s residents” [Shtanski 2009: 219]. Practically, this newly created civic identity reflects the same civic identity during the Soviet Bloc, where ethnic differences were acknowledged but every time played a secondary role and the Russian language continued to be used as an interethnic language, linking the Transnistrian minority groups. As King argues, Moldova’s Purge of Intellectuals under the USSR created the land for the new Transnistrian intellectuals, whose writings started to shape the “new Transnistrian identity” [King 2001: 545].

According to Galtung, “Homo Sovieticus equals to homo Russicus” as “the Russian element was trying to incorporate some of the more fundamental aspects of history and social structure”, especially in the former Soviet countries [Galtung 1996:244].

5.3.4. TRANSNISTRIAN PEOPLE AND TRANSNISTRIAN IDENTITY

Some authors consider that the creation of the “Transnistrian identity” after the model of Russian identity is the purpose to rebuild of the Russian Empire.

(Iulian Chifu)

After the war in 1992, some ideas about the independence and sovereignty of Transnistria were promoted on the political level; also, it was promoted that the Transnistrian people

is “created by descendents of settlers of Russians, Moldovans, Polishes, German, Greeks and from other countries”.⁵² The following books were published: “Fenomenul Transnistriei” (The Transnistrian Phenomenon) and “Istoria Transnistriei” (The History of Transnistria) in two volumes that describe the Transnistrians, not as ethnic minorities (Russian, Moldovans, Ukrainians) but as a *one people*.

During the Soviet Union, Russification was used in all former Soviet States, but this type of politics had succeeded in some parts and failed in other. Regarding the territory of Transnistria, it was a real success, promoting the Soviet politics and developing some new identities. The territory on the east side of the Dneestr River, most of all, passed through several contradictory social and political transformations: Russification under the Russian Empire, Romanization in the interwar period, Moldovanization in the MSSR, and Sovietization during the entire Soviet period [King 2000: 225].

About the existence of a newly created Transnistrian identity, the scholars are using various terms: “*particular Transnistrian identity*” [Dressler 1998], “*determined, definite identity*” [Buscher 1997], “*undetermined, indefinite identity, but perceived*” and it is perceived and explained “*rather due to the history and geography than to the ideology*” [Kolsto & Malgin 1998]; even the CSCE Mission to Moldova’s Report No.13 promoted the idea of existence of ‘*a distinct Transdnestrian feeling of identity*’, which is represented by language – Russian, history – as part of Russian Empire, not Bessarabia, geography – separated by Dneestr River from the rest part of the Republic of Moldova, and perception – that Moldovans attempted to solve the problem by force in 1992 [Wolff 2010: 3].⁵³ The identity process is a long process being changed by historical, political and cultural backgrounds. In the identity-forming process, the member of the group starts to feel the belonging to the same identity. If in Transnistria a particular identity did not exist, then it had to be created. The territory of Transnistria is a territory of border during the centuries, it is a territory where many nomadic tribes had settled. It is a territory which did not have a peculiar identity, neither a state-building history. This territory

⁵² Бессарабский вопрос и образование Приднестровской Молдавской Республики. Сборник официальных документов, Тирасполь: 1993, pg. 96-97

⁵³ More information is available at: http://www.princeton.edu/lisd/events/talks/wolff_frozenconflict.pdf

became important since the moment of establishing the MASSR, in 1924, when it was projected to Sovietize the borderlands, especially the Bessarabians.

People living in Transnistria identify themselves both as “*Transnistrian people*” – therefore as a “*Transnistrian citizen*” – and Russian compatriots. The number of those who considers themselves “inhabitants of their land” (TMR) is 13,9% and only citizen of TMR is 34,9% (out of 34,9%, only 35,1% are Moldovans). The inhabitants who live in Transnistria but feel themselves as citizens of the Republic of Moldova are: 9,7% Moldovans, 2,6% Ukrainians and 1,4% Russians [Shtanski 2009: 215]. Rurac considers that, along with the Transnistrian conflict, the Republic of Moldova lost the control on the important issue of the sovereignty – the citizenship, by releasing the internal identity document and promoting the Transnistrian citizenship [Rurac 2002: 12].

Oazu Nantoi, a Moldovan political analyst asserts that “not more than one percent of the adult population in this region controls financial fluxes, manipulates the public opinion and intimidates the rest of the population, using the repressive instruments characteristic for totalitarian states”. According to, the Transnistrian population is divided into seven groups [Nantoi 2002]:

- 1) the “*interested*” or those who are taking benefits from TMR’s independence;
- 2) the “*shock detachments*” or the Cossacks, which are the so-called elite troops, and security services;
- 3) the “*fanatics*” or the people, most of the pensioners, whom are dominated by nostalgia for the Soviet times;
- 4) the obedient “*TMR citizen*” or the “*homo pridnestrovicus*”;
- 5) the “*functionaries*” of local bureaucracy;
- 6) the “*amorphous mass*” or those indifferent;
- 7) the “*conscious opposition*”.

The idea of the existence of a distinctive “Transnistrian identity” (*narod Pridnestrovie*), composed by three nationalities: Moldovans, Russians and Ukrainians, is a little incoherent. The inhabitants are calling themselves “nation”, “people”, “ethos”. The

political elite state that Transnistria Moldovan Republic is, actually, “a Russian ancestral territory”, other groups consider that it is a “part of Ukrainian territory” and the last one sustains that it is “ a successor of the Moldovan Medieval statehood”⁵⁴ Another aspect about the “Transnistrian people and identity” can be pointed by taking into consideration the fact that some settlements, situated on the left bank of the Dneestr River (*Dorotcaia, Cosnita, Cocieri, Malovata, Pohrebea, and Pirita*) are under Moldovan jurisdiction. All these settlements have never been part of historical Romania; likewise, the historically city of Bender, and villages of *Gyska, Kitskani* and *Mereneshti*, situated on the right part of the river chose to become part of Transnistria. Practically, it is a peculiar behavior of some elites, of some political classes and their dominance in these areas. The name “Transnistria” or the Russian name “Prednistrovie” neither were nor existed until 1989, only from geographic point of view. The “Transnistrian people” also has not existed; it was created artificially, starting since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Table 5: The ethnic population in Transnistria from 1897 to 1989.

	1897*	1926**	1989***
Moldovans	3,0	30,3	39,9
Ukrainians	67,9	48,8	28,3
Russian	11,7	8,6	25,5
Others	17,3	12,3	6,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Sources:

* King (2000), pg 185

** Galuscenco (2001), pg 44

*** The general Census of the population from 1989.

After the creation of MASSR, the growth of the ethnic Moldovans is obviously observed. The political goal to annex the Bessarabia has started, using the Moldovan migration toward MASSR. From the table above we can see that Ukrainians represented 67,9% in 1897 and 48,8% in 1926, but the new created republic was named Moldovan

⁵⁴ Pridnestrovie, October 16,1997

Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. So, the number of Moldovan population increased, from 3,0% in 1897 to 30,3 % in 1926.

In 1998, a Survey about the Transnistrian identity has been made and 15% of respondents said that there are common features with Moldovan people, 15% of respondents said that there are common features with Russian people, and the rest of the respondents said that the people of Transnistria is unique and have only few common features with the neighbors (from which 39% Moldovans, 47% Russians and 40% Ukrainians) [Бабилунга 1998: 36-37]. For most citizens from Transnistria, the collapse of the Soviet Union represented a humiliation, a lost of a national equilibrium, which was not characterized by a single dominant nationality; the need to face with strong Moldovan and Ukrainian nationalism led to the creating of their own nationalism. But Transnistria has chosen the same Soviet nationalism and, according to some scholars, became a “Soviet Empire in miniature”. In other words, Transnistrian identity could represent a background for “Moldovan nationalism and Moldovan oppressors”.

Even the existence of the Transnistrian people is questionable because some promoters of it considers that the region is a Russian ancestral land, others consider that Transnistria represents only a Ukrainian territorial appendix and the last consider that TMR is a de jure successor of the old Moldovan Medieval statehood. The inhabitants of Transnistria, with Transnistrian citizenship and passports, are considered, even by the Russian Embassy, “individuals without identity”. The same treatment is applied even for the ethnic Russians in their “Motherland” [Lungu 2007:28]. The Transnistrian people represent the statelessness people and identity.

5.3.5 COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE CREATION OF THE IDENTITY

In the following paragraphs, some important aspects of two researchers about the general situation in Transnistria will be presented, including the people's opinion about the history, about the Soviet Union period, about the creation and the consolidation of a new Transnistrian image. The authors remark that mass media in Transnistria is using, in an obsessive way, the collocation “Transnistria”, “Transnistrian Moldovan Republic”, “Transnistrian people” (between January 1 and March 1, 1992, in *„Днестровская правда”* (Transnistrian true, newspaper), in only 10 analyzed articles, this type of collocation appears 73 times). Another impact on the population on the left bank of Dneestr is the editing of a newspaper called *„Приднестровье”* (Transnistria), which consolidates the opinion that a state called “Transnistria” really exists. The probability to accept easier something, that can be reached with the routine repetition until it is transformed in an absolute true. Concluding, by using frequently the term “Transnistria”, or other collocation with the same meaning, one could produce and consolidate the idea of “different identity” from the Central power, “different people” from Moldovan people. To all these, the separatist propaganda came with historical fact, that Transnistria never has been part of Romania or Bessarabia, and that the “transnistrian people” have the “rights to self – detrermination” (*о праве народа на самоопределение*)⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Днестровская правд, 6.02.1992

In this entire ambiguous context, the population from Transnistria can be divided in five types, considering their opinion about “Transnistrian people”.⁵⁶

- ✓ First type of individuals does not believe that “Transnistrian people” exist:

*“There can not be a “Transnistrian people”, because many ethnic minorities are living on the left bank” (20 years old, student, Russian speaking, Tighina)*⁵⁷*

*“This people (i.e. Transnistrian) cannot exist because it does not have historical roots” (20 years old, student, Romanian speaking, Tighina).**

*“I do not separate Moldova (i.e. the Republic of Moldova) into the left bank and the right bank; there is a union, a whole and the separation into two people (i.e. the state), into two banks (i.e. of Dnestr River) is simply banal “(24 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tiraspol).**

- ✓ The second type of individuals strongly believes that “Transnistrian people” exist:

*“Transnistrian people do exist, because, from historical point of view, we were a people which did not belong to Moldova (i.e. the state).”(20 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tiraspol)**

*“This people (i.e. Transnistrian people) exist and this thing is known a very long time ago, and the arguments are evident”. (20 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tiraspol)**

*“This people (i.e. Transnistrian people) exist – it is a mix of several nations and it had its own traditions, customs, and language”. (20 years old, student, Tiraspol)**

⁵⁶ For better explanation of the Transnistrian identity it was used the research of Suhau, from which some answers about the identity were extracted, about the existence of “Transnistrian identity” and “Transnistrian people”.

⁵⁷ * represent the respondents answers, from Suhau’s research about the Transnistrian identity, pg. 16-18

- ✓ The third type of individuals is starting to habituate with the idea of a “Transnistrian people”:

*“Although it does not exist (i.e. the Transnistrian people), many residents of Transnistria consider themselves as citizens of this state”. (18 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tighina)**

*“The inhabitants of the two banks (i.e. of Dnestr River) do not differ, we do not perceive Moldova (i.e. the Republic of Moldova) as a border from psychological point of view, but, for our children, the border will most likely exist”. (20 years old, student, Tiraspol)**

- ✓ The fourth type of individuals believes that “Transnistrian people” do not exist. but the existence of people is associated with the “existence of TMR”:

*“If TMR exists, the “Transnistrian People” also exist” (21 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tighina)**

*“This people (i.e. “Transnistrian”) do not exist, TMR is defined not by the national index, because both there and here (both side of the Republic of Moldova) are living Moldovans, Ukrainians, Russians and others; but, on the other hand, the one who lives in America is American, the one who lives in Moldova is Moldovan, the one who lives in TMR is “Transnistrian”. (21 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tighina)**

*“I cannot have the certainty that it (i.e. people) exists, but a “Transnistrian people” do exist because Transnistria exists de facto, de jure. The leaders desired power, and so they created Transnistria”. (Teacher, 45 years old, Russian speaking language)**

- ✓ The fifth type of individuals believes that a “Transnistrian Moldovan Republic” exists but it has not been internationally recognized yet:

*“There is a multinational republic, although not recognized by anymore yet – TMR (28 years old, student, Russian speaking language, Tiraspol)**

*“We can not deny the existence of the state that has all the state responsibilities, even if it is unrecognized” (21 years old, student, Romanian speaking language, Tighina)**

Analyzing all these responses, one can conclude that the citizens on the left bank of Dnestr River started to believe in their “different Transnistrian identity”, which is a continuation of a “homo Sovieticus”. If all former Soviet Republics found their real national identity, here we can find the same “homo Sovieticus” but which was upgraded and renamed “homo Transnistrians” or “Transnistrian people”. Considering that the study was made in 2002, nowadays we can be sure that the situation has changed and there are more respondents who believe in the existence of “Transnistrian people”. Looking at the age of the respondents, the number of younger respondents (under 35-40 years old) is higher because their interference with all kind of propaganda – mass media, television, internet, schools and universities, companies and career (where it is obligatory to be more “Transnistrian” if one wants to have a future there). The elder respondents (more than 40 years old) do not believe that there is a “Transnistrian people”, because they have participated to all political transformations of the region, but still accept it (resignation, fear, incapacity, poverty).

Neculau, in his papers about memory, mentions that “*collective memory is building with recollection, with images forged from the external instances which are “imposed” to the individual by formative systems and mass communication tools*”. Continuing his argumentation, the author considers that when the Soviet scholars created the history of the USSR they declared “war to the memory” [Neculau 1999: 179]. This can explain why Moldovan people from both sides of Dnestr River and all ethnic groups from the Republic of Moldova have their own different knowledge about the history of their country. As an example, we can use the response given by a student from Transnistria: “*I know that Suvorov⁵⁸ discovered Transnistria*”. The same response is given by other respondents, that history of Transnistria starts with Suvorov, in 1792. In opinion of N. Cojocar and S. Suhan, in Transnistria, in the schools, each student and pupil are

⁵⁸ Alexander Vasilyevich Suvorov was a Russian general, one of the few great generals in history who never lost a battle. In 1791 Suvorov has captured Ismail, a historic town, which today is situated in the Odessa Oblast at the south-western Ukraine. The population in Transnistria is still studying the history of the USSR, which considers Suvorov the founder of Tiraspol, capital of Transnistria, in 1792. In the central square of the city Tiraspol Suvorov’s statue is situated, as a symbol of “Transnistrian people”.

continuing to study the history and geography of the USSR, a “state that does not exist anymore on the world’s map” [Suhan 2002: 46].

King also describes the propaganda used, by explaining that, in Transnistria, the schoolbooks and history books that are currently used in schools describe the armed conflict in 1992 as a national liberation against the Moldovan oppressor. The students learn that they live in an independent republic, which obtained its independence with blood and sacrifice [King 2000: 197].

The members of ethnic and cultural groups are identifying each other because they are sharing common historical events or even a political struggle. They use some event celebration or holidays to create a sense of common fate, enforcing their fight against the opposition. Considering all the historical events or struggles, every ethnic and cultural group uses some particular events in accordance with the psychological impact and meaningful significance for each member of the group [Fong 2004: 44, 46]. In the centre of Tiraspol, a Lenin Monument stands near Supreme Soviet, in order to not forget the identity of people living there. At the Moldovan-Transnitrian border there is a tank which has its cannon turned toward Moldova, as a symbolic warning for the oppressors.

In Transnistria some communist holidays are still celebrated – *Defenders of the Homeland Day*, on 23 March, *October Revolution Day*, on 7 November – along with the parades and a crowd of people that are very happy of their life and chanting communist slogans. The same extreme secrete services, militia and Cossacks are still predominate, the same false history about the state existence, the ideology of the sole party, Smirnov’s party, lack of liberal expression, mass media and television under control. Tiraspol is a President administration, and the political regime evolved into a totalitarian, centralized and repressive one. The structure of the “presidential republic” is a pyramidal one.

Concluding, by making a comparison between the former USSR and Transnistria, the continuity is obvious and Transnitria lives up to its name as the „Museum of Communism”. In Transnistria, the totalitarian system predominates, as in Communist era,

with the same slogans: “Игорь Николаевич Смирнов как гарант мира и стабильности авторитетного и не имеющего достойной альтернативы” (Igor Nicolaevich Smirnov represents a guaranty for peace and stability and is an authority that does not have a worthily alternative).

Hereinafter, an opinion of a respondent about the reality from Transnistria:

“There is a part of people who still believe in Smirnov, actually I am surprised of the fact that it was possible for him to manage to won the elections and how much time will he be able to control the power, because he represents genocide, and most of all, we know that the people who were against him have been cruelly punished (now, during the elections), some people disappear without a trace, another ones are dismissed from their appointments, only those who are besides him have good job...” (teacher, Russian speaking language, 38 years old) [Suhau 2002: 14].

5.4 THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

According to Joseph, in the process of the identity formation language plays an important role. “[A]ny study of language needs to take consideration the identity if it is to be full and rich and meaningful, because identity is itself at the very heart of what language is about, how it operates, why and how it came into existence and evolved as it did, how it is learned and how it is used, every day, by every user, every time it is used” [Joseph 2004: 224]. Language and identity have a fundamental interrelation between them, which is materialized through the constitution of the community language.

Bordieu defines language as a “*product of a complex set of social, historical and political conditions of formation*” [Bordieu 1991: 2-3].

In the same time, language is strongly related to the national consciousness; and the loss or the change of the language can lead to the loss and change of the national identity. Language also plays an important role in the group behavior, as Slama-Cazacu asserts “*if we use the stereotypes in our language, we will start to use these stereotypes in our behavior*” [Slama-Cazacu 2000: 40]. Hymes considers that language is a “form of social action”, the language and the society actually do not represent distinct concepts [Hymes 1974: 14-15].

Schiffman is using the concept of linguistic culture, which in his opinion represents “*the sum of totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious structures, and all the other cultural ‘baggage’ that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture*” [Schiffman 2006: 12]. This definition shows the mutual relation and influence between language and (cultural) identity.

According to Kymlicka, there are two types of cultural diversity: the national minorities and the ethnic minorities. The *national minorities* were previously linked to a certain territory and were self-determined, and, afterwards, were incorporated into the state of cultures and are still claiming various forms of self-government. Meanwhile, the *ethnic minorities* can represent the individuals, families and groups which are integrated with the country or society where they migrated [Kymlicka 1995: 10-15]. In the second type of cultural diversity there are no necessary cultural and linguistic claims from the ethnic minority, comparing with the national minorities where the linguistic and cultural claims can lead to the interethnic conflict.

In the Republic of Moldova the native language is used to define the personal affiliation of the most ethnic groups. By using a standard common language it is possible to create some discrimination and injustice for some ethnic groups, which could lead to the interethnic problems and conflict. So in Moldova the Moldovan language is used

predominately in administration and in politics, while the Russian language is considered to be the language of inter-ethnic communication and it is used in the economic field. Also, 80% of the books in Moldovan libraries are printed in Russian language.

In Moldova, confusion persists between terms like “state language”, “official language” “language for inter-ethnic communication”, “second native language”. On 27 August 1991, the Declaration of the Independence of the Republic of Moldova named as the official language of the state Romanian language with Latin script. In 1994, the constitution of the Republic of Moldova (Title 1, Article 13) states that Moldovan language, with the Latin alphabet is the state language. The Russian language represents “the language of inter-ethnic communication”, being different from the official one. A new draft was proposed for the Concept of National State Policy⁵⁹, which had the purpose to promote the idea that there is a difference between the state language and the official language, defining them as different concepts. But they resigned to the draft and now both terms are used – state language and official language.

According to some scholars, the Moldovan language does not represent a language of its own, it represents a Romanian dialect that is used in the Romanian Moldova. But one of the first and important tasks of the scholars and linguist in MASSR was to select the applicable dialect that will constitute the basis of the Moldovan literary norm and develop the grammar linked with the new formed dialect [King 2000: 65].

Alexander Von Humboldt considers that the “language is the outer appearance of the mentalities of peoples; their language is their mentality and their mentality their language. One can hardly overemphasize their identity. People who share a common language develop a similar subjectivity, a *weltanschauung* (world view)” [Von Humboldt 1830-1835/1985: 12].

⁵⁹ More information is available at: www.parlament.md

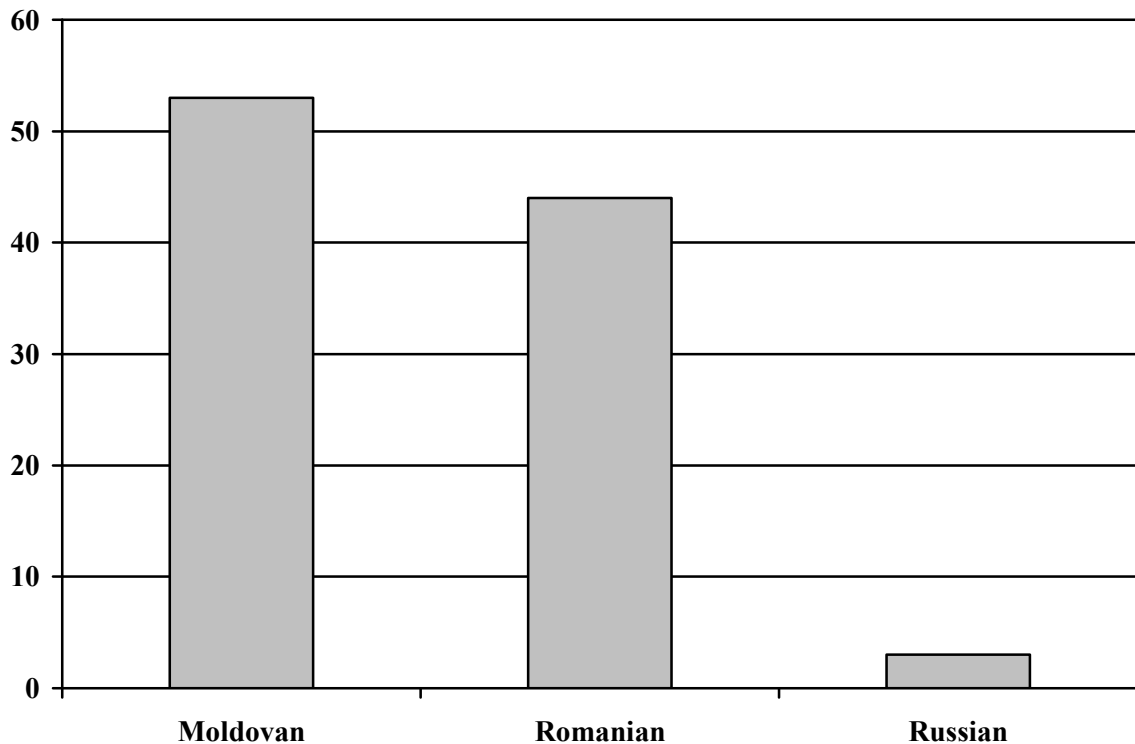
5.4.1 THE MOLDOVAN LANGUAGE

First of all, the concept of “Moldovan language” has been used through the Romanian history, in the Chronicles written by Miron Costin, Grigore Ureche, Ion Neculce and Dimitrie Cantemir, all of them historiographers. They have used the term of Moldovan language as a dialect of Romanian language. Until 1918, the Moldovan language has never been used as an opposition of a Romanian language. Dimitrie Cantemir mentions in his writings that “the people from Walachia and from Transylvania have the same language as the Moldovans do, but the pronunciation is rougher” [Cantemir 1901: 180].

Serebrian mentions that the term “Moldovan language” has a correct use from the historical point of view, as the terms “Sicilian language” and “Saxon language” and “Francon language” were used with same historical context. In the Medieval and early Modern Epoch, one could not talk about a standard Italian, German and French language, and neither a Romanian language. As most of the European languages, the Romanian language was established in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the Medieval period, the Moldovans were considering that they were speaking the same language as Walachians and Transylvanians were; there were not any unique literary norms, as there were not in Italian provinces for Italian language or in German provinces for German language. The Romanian language, with all literary norms, has been established with the constitution of the Romanian Nation. But, unfortunately, in this period, Bessarabia was under Russian rule and did not participate to the creation of the national Romanian identity, which started together with the Romanian state nation building. During the period between 1918 and 1944, when Bessarabia was under Great Romania’s rule, it was

insufficient time to create the conception of identity of the Bessarabian people and even if something has been created, it was abolished during the Soviet rule, developing a different identity for Bessarabian people [Serebrian 1998: 118]. All these can explain the lack of the national identity and national consciences. The separation between Bessarabia and the rest of the Moldovan territory, and, implicit, Romania, created some minor differences in the spoken language, spiritual and material culture and even psychology. For instance, in nowadays Republic of Moldova, the Moldovans are most of them bilingual (Romanian-Russian); but the problem is that they are speaking badly both Romanian and Russian languages [Serebrian 1998: 118]. Some authors consider that the language problem is over used in all national critical situations: as national revival, as independence, as nation building.

Chart 2: Mother language for Moldovans (in %)



Source: Arambasa (2008), pg 364

The native language in Moldova is de facto Romanian language, but it was identified by Constitution of the Republic of Moldova as “Moldovan” language, and was used, over the Soviet period, only in the household and in the countryside, or in a political field, especially as propaganda. Sometimes, a “wooden language” was used, representing a direct translation from the Soviet Russian. Actually, non-Russian nationalities, perforce, found themselves to be linguistic and cultural minorities of the Russian speaking USSR [Ciobanu 2008: 34].

In 1994, the Republic of Moldova’s Constitution was adopted and the Parliament proclaimed the official language Moldovan⁶⁰, not Romanian. The same situation was happening in other ex-Soviet republics, where a really opposition to the Communist regime had never existed. The political power, which gave the “kolhoz” presidents or agronomists, has continued to promote the “Moldovenism” project and anti-Romania propaganda and also promoted that they are the right next power in Moldova. The intelligentsia has been distanced from political power and has been accused of “betrayal of national ideal” [Ciobanu 2008: 41].

After the long period of disputes about the language issue, in the right side of the Dnestr River, the majority of the population has accepted the idea of the distinction between the Moldovan and Romanian languages; actually, the majority considers that in the Republic of Moldova the population is speaking the Moldovan language, written with Latin Script. Meanwhile, in Transnistria, the ethnic Moldovans are also using the Moldovan language, but using “an artificially-created, Soviet-originated orthography”. *“Transnistria touts its own brand of nationalism, while billing itself as the last bastion of Moldovanism (an exotic ideological artifact promoted by Stalin), which it pits righteously against a Romanian-ised, right-bank Moldova”* [Munteanu 2007: 57].

⁶⁰ In Moldova, one of the main domestic debates that still remain is whether the native language is Romanian or Moldovan. The Moldovan Academy of Science proved that is the same language, but the Moldovan Parliament, controlled by Agrarians, adopted the Moldovan as language for the Republic of Moldova. All these called for a large manifestation in the capital of Moldova. The Moldovan language represents a political issue and it is strongly linked with the conflict.

According to Madan, who published the Moldovan Grammar in 1929, after the disintegration of the Roman Empire, the peoples as – Goths, Huns, Tatars, Poles, Turks, Bulgarians, Greek Phanariots, Russians, Ukrainians, Jews and other contributed to the creation of the distinct Moldovan people speaking a distinct Moldovan language [King 2000: 68]. In the same time, another issue was to introduce new words into the language, being based on rural speech, and in such way to increase the difference between the standard Romanian and Moldovan languages.

“There is no doubt that Moldovan and Romanian are languages of the same Romance group. Between them, in fact, there does not exist a great deal of difference. But the recognition of their commonality, the identity [of Moldovan] with other languages from the same Romance group, cannot serve as a real reason for renouncing one in favor of the other” [King 2000:125] – noted the guidelines drafted by the Communist Party of Moldova for implementing perestroika in MSSR. It was the first time when the party recognized the same origin of the Moldovan and Romanian languages. However, they fought to implement and maintain the idea of a strong distinctiveness between the two languages. The language spoken in Moldova during the Soviet rule was, for all Soviet peoples Moldovan, but it was considered to be Romanian, by anyone who lived outside the Soviet Union [King 2000: 112].

After a serious research of Soviet publication about the Moldovan language, according to Carlo Tagliavini, a well-known Italian linguist, the difference between the Romanian and Moldovan languages, was the Cyrillic alphabet and some minor variations in pronunciation and mutations in diphthongs. The linguist considers that there is a difference at the level of the popular speech, and considers the Moldovan language a “dogma of Soviet linguists”⁶¹. There were more linguists in Western part that condemned the Soviet project of the Moldovan language and identity, such as to force the Soviet scholar to reconsider the projects about the Moldovan people and to create new theory

⁶¹ The paper of Carlo Tagliavini - *Una nuova lingua letteraria romanza? Il moldavo* - was presented in 1956, to the Eighth Congress of Romance Studies in Florence.

about the differences between Romanian and Moldovan language, the Byzantine explanations. [King 2000: 12-13].

Concluding with the Census from 1989 when 95.5% of Moldovans, with the age over fifty-five, have reported that their mother tongue was Moldovan, same as 89.3 % of Moldovans under twenty-four years old [King 2000: 115]. That means that the propaganda to create the Moldovan languages was successfully fulfilled before, during and after the Soviet Rule.

5.4.2 THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

Since the creation of MASSR until nowadays, the cultural, political and economical life has been happening in the Russian language and Russian mentality. From the Interclub was developed the Unity (*Edinstvo*), which claimed the bilingual status in Moldova, Russian language being a language for inter-ethnic communication [Sato 2009: 146]. Russian language is still used in Transnistria, in the detriment of Moldovan/Romanian or Ukrainian languages.

The fact that language is an important tool to create or change the identity is well known and that is why, on the left bank of the river, the Russian language is used, in order to habituate the people with it, but on the right bank both are used, Moldovan and Russian languages, to maintain at least the Moldovan identity. Probably, in Transnistria, a new identity is trying to be created, using the Russian language and eliminate all ethnic differences and emphasizing some common patterns and values, with Soviet features.

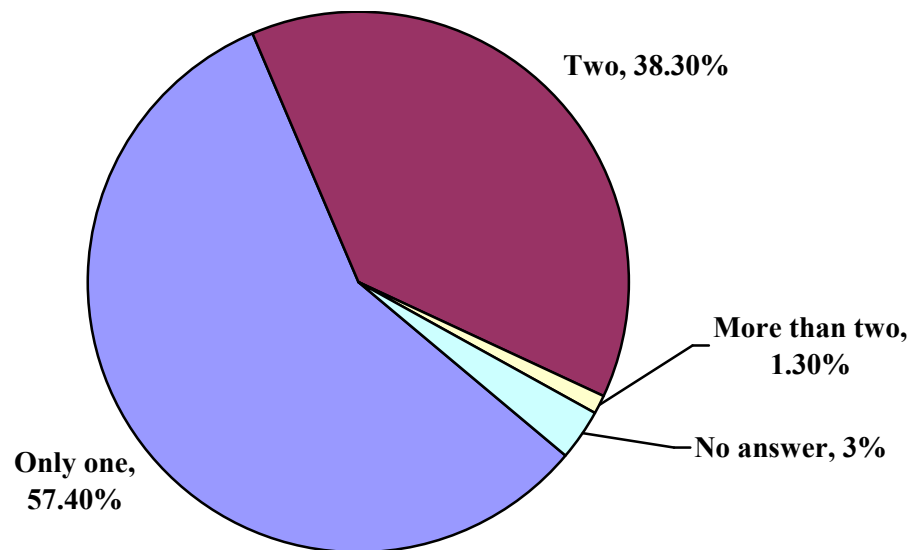
Russians have managed to sustain a cultural-informational Russian space in Transnistria, using lamentation and exaggeration as psychological tools, manipulating public opinion between ethnic minorities. Some scholars, especially Bordieu, clearly demonstrated in their studies how language is not only a means of communication, but also an instrument of power [Bordieu 1991].

The Romanian/Moldovan language of the titular population in the Republic of Moldova was a marginalized language, being used in rural area and at home, in 1989; the Constitutional amendments introduced Moldovan language as a state language, but using the Latin script. Russian language was defined an interethnic communication language, and lost its de facto status of state language. In the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, the language law was abolished and the Moldovan language written in Cyrillic reinstated [Ciobanu 2008: 45-46].

In Transnistria, during Soviet Union and nowadays, there are three state languages: Russian, Moldova (with Cyrillic script) and Ukrainian, with one and very important difference – the Russian language is used in all institutions: economic, administrative, educational, juridical, political and health care. Even the official sites of Transnistria are in Russian and English language, or are only in Russian language. As Ricento shows, *“In cases in which states have little control over their populations or territories, cross-border influences and penetrations may dictate language policies in the absence of state control”* [Ricento 2006: 6].

The Russian language is used for the inter-ethnic communication, but there was some speculation to promote the idea to create the Russian language as the second official language in the Republic of Moldova. In Transnistria, the Romanian language with Latin script is forbidden, only Moldovan language with Cyrillic script is used. But most used of all is the Russian language, because the Russian language is linked to the Soviet identity, and the Transnistrian identity is a copy of Soviet identity, that is why the Russian language remains the preferred language.

Chart 3: Represent the answer to the question: How many state languages should the Republic of Moldova Have?



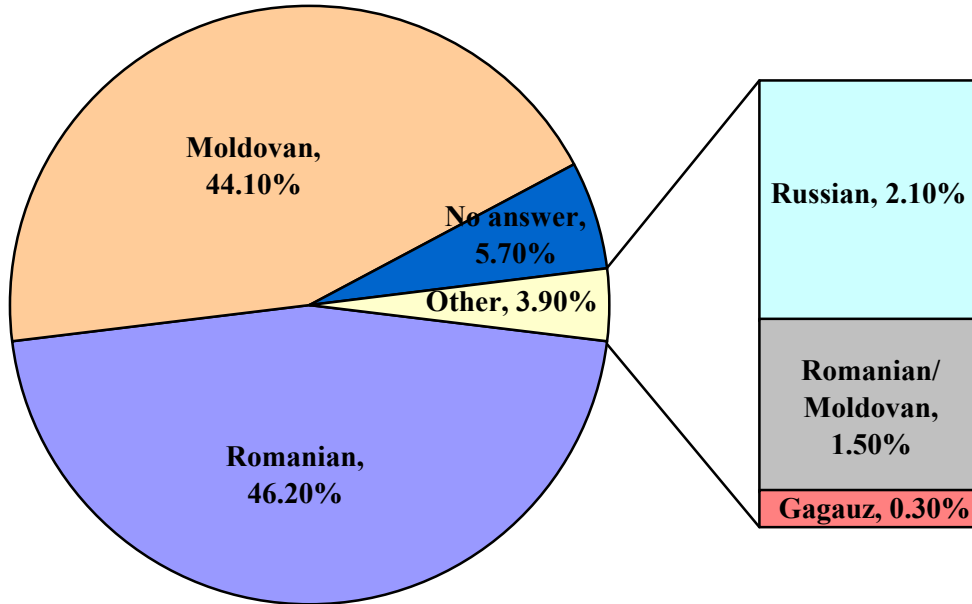
Source: Barometer of Public Opinion (November 2010)

At the question “*How many state languages should have the Republic of Moldova?*”, as chart 3 shows, 57,4% of the respondents consider that the Republic of Moldova should only have 1 language (out of those 67,6% are Moldovans, 14,8 % are Ukrainians and only 7,2% are Russians); 38, 3% consider that it should have 2 state languages (out of those 83,7% are Russian, 78,4% are Ukrainians, and 28,5% are Moldovans) and 1,3% consider that it should have more than two state languages.⁶²

For the respondents who consider that the Republic of Moldova should only have one state language: 46,2% consider that it should be Romanian, 44,1% Moldovan, 2,1% Russian, 1,5% Romanian/Moldovan and 0, 3 % Gagauz.

⁶² Barometer of Public Opinion (2010), more information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=558&parent=0>

Chart 4: “Which one?” – representing the answer of those that chose that RM should only have one state language.



Source: Barometer of Public Opinion (November 2010)

5.5. THE MASS-MEDIA AND THE INTERNET

According to the OSCE report, “the situation of the independent media is very difficult, with different methods of pressure applied on those few journalists who do not follow the official line”.⁶³ Practically, the mass-media is censored and all newspapers, sites and television describe Transnistria as a democratic, liberal, non-militarized and soon

⁶³ www.freedomhouse.org

independent country. The censorship does not permit deliberations on political, economical and identity themes, by using all types of mass-media. Mass-media could also have a major role in the conflict settlement as well as it could inflame the conflict by presenting a different reality.

Barsan considers that the inverted relation between victim and aggressor is used, by using a constant Soviet propaganda [Barsan 1993: 79]. The method of accusation is still used by separatist leaders, using a defensive language, that they are a victim and are suffering because of the aggressor's behavior. Studying the official Transnistrian and Moldovan sites we can see such inverted relation. First of all, the official sites of Transnistria, are only in Russian, and some of them in English – if Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian languages are considered as being state language, why we can not find this official sites written in Moldovan and Ukrainian too? Because the Soviet time is continuing and we assist at the same Soviet propaganda. Looking at the content, it is easily observed that half of the articles contain data about the Republic of Moldova in a bad neighbor posture:

“After failing in its 1992-invasion of Pridnestrovie, Moldova launched a new kind of war: An information war designed to isolate Pridnestrovie by portraying it as an outcast country and, presumably, deter other countries from establishing relations”

“Part of the reason is Moldova's human rights record. The poorest country in Europe is also the world's top exporter of forced child prostitution. Censorship is rampant, torture is widespread and it has “failed to build” democracy. 90% of its young want to leave. Pridnestrovie does not want to join. Pridnestrovian newspapers are banned in Moldova even though the Moldovan press is freely available in Pridnestrovie.”

“Even ethnic Moldovans living in Pridnestrovie today have no desire to join Moldova and prefer to live in freedom and independence.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ I cited from site www.pridnestrovie.net, which is written in both Russian and English languages. Another site www.ava.md, is written only in Russian and describes all political, economical situations in Moldova, especially the bad ones. According to The Economist, both sides represent a propagandistic campaign, created specially for English speaking audience. These sites were created under uncertain circumstances and there are not certain details about their provenience. More information is available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/7258534>

Now, looking at the Moldovan official sites, we can see that those are written in Moldovan/Romanian, Russian and English and do not contain any discriminatory or injuring articles.⁶⁵

The same inverted relation and accusation is happening with mass media, by using all these descriptions and injuries regarding the Republic of Moldova. There are a lot of authors who believe that “Transnistrian identity” and “Transnistrian nationalism” became an instrument of political manipulation, by using it to develop and maintain the idea that the most important events are happening near TMR border. Practically, the nationalism and identity are used to develop some political ideas about the minorities and population from the surrounding regions; ideas, which are more “imagined” than “representative” for the demographic and democratic reality of the population.⁶⁶ All these led to the idea that the Republic of Moldova is the aggressor and Transnistria is the victim and that TMR will obtain the victory against Moldova.

Transnistrian nationalism was and is used “in the name of the interest of Transnistrian people”, as a political tool for manipulation and repression. The Transnistrian regime desires to purify the population from the liberal expression of its identity; that is why there can only be a single identity, a “Transnistrian one”. The Transnistrian nationalism is not created among the Russians, using the ethnic criteria, but was created among the Russophiles, have none any importance the ethnicity.

According to Lungu, the population from Transnistria is experiencing the “*mirror effect*”, as they turn left or right they see the same background [Lungu 2007: 13]. Actually, the people are seeing every day the same poverty, the same enemies – the Moldovans, the same protectorates – the Russians, the same president – Smirnov, the same militia – the

⁶⁵ I present only some sites, all of them written in Moldovan/Romanian, Russian and English. www.moldova.org, www.moldova.md, www.pmr.md (the official site of the President of Republic of Moldova)

⁶⁶ Anderson (1991) shows in his book “Imagined communities” that these communities are real and exist, but ‘is imagined because the members will never know most of their fellow-members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (pg. 7). The same is happening in Transnistria, where every member of ethnic community knows only an insignificant part of his community; although his identification to a group assumes an effort to imagine the members of his group, appreciating them according to the image that the whole group gives to the other groups or the foreigners.

former KGB, the same Soviet symbols and events, everything is the same, and it represents a strong reason why the identity was created very easy.

Lungu also explains an important reason why the people are so easily manipulated: they have not the opportunity to share with other nationalities, cultures, religions, values, traditions, apart of the Soviet ideology. The people need to travel around the world and experience some mutual activities and behaviors, exchanging knowledge, actually they need a strong self-actualization [Lungu 2007: 13]. The Transnistrian people are living in a closed society, being fed by mass-media with propaganda, in order to preserve the political and structural society, stereotyping all beliefs in order to maintain and develop the own identity, different from the Moldovan non-Slavic people and expressing Transnitrians' good fortune that they have such an important state protectorate – the descendents of Russian Empire and Soviet Empire.

However, from the total percentage of population (550.000), over 270 thousand people, aged 18 or more, who live in Transnistria opted for the Republic of Moldova's citizenship, while the Smirnov regime encourages the increase of the number of persons who have or opt for Russian citizenship [Nantoi 2005: pg 3].

But now, in Transnistria, a new generation exists, who does not remember the Soviet Union, does not even remember the unified Moldova; they only remember and recognize Transnistria. For these new generations the USSR, the MSSR or united Moldova represents history [Safonov 2009: 187].

5.6. THE USE OF STEREOTYPES

Sometimes, stereotypes could contain some truth, but more often, it is just an incident.

(O. Klineberg)

In the following we will analyze the term “stereotype”, because it will show how a group perceives the in-group and the out-groups, and how the individuals act and behave toward the otherness. Stereotypes are also linked to the complex concept of identity, because each group fights to develop a social positive identity, which is defined as self-respect.

The use of stereotype is as antique as the world is. But the word “stereotype” was used for the first time in 1922, by a journalist called Lippman with the meaning as “to describe judgments made about others on the basis on their ethnic group membership” and it is considered to be “schematic and inexact”. In the present, the notion of stereotype is defined as a “fixed idea or image”, which people have about a “person or a thing but which is not always true in reality”. In the same time stereotyping can be explained as “overgeneralization about an identity group without any attempt to perceive individual variation within this group” [Brunsch 2005: 3].

Stereotyping is “*a natural human surviving mechanism*”, representing a generalization on limited information. Stereotypes do not treat the person with the unique qualities so it can be a hurtful for individual [Fong 2004: 43].

That is why every difference existing between left and right sides of the Dnestr River created different attitudes and beliefs toward the own identity and toward the others, relative to inner representatives and to the others. So, from the beginning, the population from the left bank of the river has perceived the Bessarabian people less developed as themselves and less intellectual. This is one reason why many Moldovans gave up their ethnicity, language and identity to gain a “superior” position and role in the society. The differences between the two sides were increased by political class, considering that Moldovans from MASSR are more loyal to the Communist Party. Practically, the Moldovans from nowadays Transnistria consider that they are superior to the Moldovans from the right bank of River. This situation continues in the present day, developing the idea that there is a certain affinity to Slavs and no affinity to Romanians.

Zanna, in his book, structured the most important and various definition for stereotypes: “*a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category, its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category*” (Allport); “*an ethnic stereotype is a generalization made about an ethnic group, concerning a trait attributions, which is considered to be unjustified by observer*” (Brigham); and “*stereotype is a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people*” (Stroebe and Insko) [Zanna 1994: 3].

Stereotypes are often considered the language of prejudice [Zanna 1994: 16]. Most stereotypes are incorrect and most of them can lead to all sorts of prejudices. Prejudice can also be defined as “*the set of affective reactions we have toward people as a function of their category memberships*” [Schneider 2004: 27].

Even the philosopher Spinoza studied prejudices, explaining the concepts of “love-prejudice” and “hate-prejudice”. According to him, “*love-prejudice*” means “feeling about anyone through love more than is rights”, while the “*hate-prejudice*” represents the opposite attitude, namely “feeling about anyone through hate more than is rights”. [Stangor 2000: 30]. Spinoza shows that prejudice represents, actually, an over- or under-estimation of the individual’s values and virtues.

Allport asserts the same idea: prejudice means “*Thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant*”, being based on the “*absence of fact*”, and it is strongly connected with the resistance to changes [Allport 1954]. The things heard or read by the persons are quite fallible, practically the persons’ judgments are based on their past information and experience. That is why all prejudice – negative or positive – is limiting the personal information and experience. In order to predict their adversaries’ behavior, usually, the individuals believe the stereotypes, or they are more likely to rely on past behavior or to consider the incitement news printed by extremist media and politicians as they attempt. For Transnistria, anything coming from Romania is suspicious and fascist, anything coming from Moldova is suspicious and not trustworthy, and even the western world is seen with critical eyes; the Russian Federation remains the one and only trustable partner, which will reward Transnistria, by allowing concessions of energy and gas and by giving some privileges for the business activities.

Personal need, relevant negative emotions and the need to identify with the in-group often lead to the rejection of the out-group, in the context of a psychological conflict, usually creating positive stereotypes for the in-group and negative stereotypes for the out-group. According to Bar-Tal “*stereotypes contents are not only shaped by the nature of inter-group relation by also by various sociopolitical characteristics of the in-group context*” [Bar-Tal 2005: 38]. The formed stereotypes for in-groups are more accurate than the stereotypes formed for the out-groups [Stanculescu 2003: 19-20].

Usually, the minority groups create positive or negative self-stereotypes, and develop a stronger collective self. Sometimes, the need to identify the inter-group dynamics leads to the development of the negative and enemy images even in the absence of a real hostility from the other groups. Negative stereotypes can be consolidated by the own group attribution of hostile goals to the target-group and the expectation that the target-group will react with hostility to the own group shared goals [Korostelina 2007: 59]. A psychologist, Slama-Cazacu, considers that “*if we use the stereotypes in our language, we will start to use this stereotypes in our behavior*” [Slama-Cazacu 2000: 40].

Tajfel explains in his books that, using the model of *minimalist inter-group situations*, only the separation of the subjects in two groups, for the experimental purpose, created a favoritism and discrimination regarding in-group and out-groups members [Tajfel 1981]. All these are happening because the psychological division between “I” or “our” and “they”. The stereotypes and prejudices do not represent an inflexible form even if they are resistant to the change; they could be modified over the time, being influenced by the social, cultural, historical and even the world’s changes. In order for the change to occur, the important factor is represented by the appearance of the psychological division that will create and recreate, will shape and reshape the individual’s and groups’ beliefs.

As Allport explains, in his book “The nature of Prejudice”, how the prejudice can be reduced and, automatically, the inter-groups conflict minimized. The author introduces the concept of the contact hypothesis, according to which “*by assembling people without regard for race, color, religion, or national origin, we can thereby destroy stereotypes and develop friendly attitudes*” [Allport 1954: 250]. The contact hypothesis represents a possibility to reduce inter-group prejudices and stereotypes, and implicitly reduce the conflict situation. But Allport explains in the following that a contact *per se* will not reduce the conflict dimension, because the simple and superficial contact might reinforce the stereotypes and the prejudice. So it is necessary to develop and use the positive and “common” contact as Allport explains: “prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals” [Allport 1954 267]. Radu confirms the concept of contact hypothesis, making an experiment with two ethnic groups, and his conclusion was that, in order to reduce the prejudice and the stereotypes, the groups’ contact should include a common activity, close relationship and progressive knowledge about each other [Radu 1994].

Another interesting research was conducted by T.F. Pettigrew, who explained that the decrease of the negative attitude of the stereotypes regarding “the others” is correlated with the respondent’s number of out-group friends, but it is also connected with the other

members from the same in-group that have the same friendships. The author tries to explain that the negative attitudes are reduced when the members of a certain group know that other members of the same group experience the same relation of friendship with other out-groups. This theory is a complement for Allport's contact hypothesis and suggests that, sometimes, more than direct contact is necessary, but also the positive relation between the groups, the need to create the positive attitudes between the groups, in order to reduce all negative beliefs. [Ilut 2004].

Ethnocentrism was defined for first time by the W.G. Summer (1906) as the “*view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it*” [Anyanwu 2009: 119]. The ethnocentrism has the following characteristics: the members give their “primary loyalty” to the own-groups; this loyalty substitutes the loyalty for the out-groups. Ethnocentric individuals characterize the own-group as superior and are trying to maintain the security of the in-group by stereotyping and mistrusting the other groups' intentions [Korostelina 2007: 59]. That is why Transnistria is shown in a positive posture in all of the comparisons between Moldova and Transnistria: it represents an industrial territory, has a better economy, it is overall more developed than Moldova; on the other hand, Moldova remains, in the Transnistrians beliefs, the same agricultural and the least developed country in Europe. All these are helping Transnistrians to secure their primary loyalty towards the left side, representing their own group, and to mistrust everything that comes from the right side. Another issue consists in considering themselves superior because of their Slavic ties and underestimating and mistrusting everything else.

CHAPTER 6

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

6.1 RELATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND TRANSNISTRIA

6.1.1 ECONOMIC RELATION AND “BORDER” COOPERATION

More than eighteen years of conflict between Transnistria and Moldova have led to a harmful collaboration on economic and social levels and all the mutual applied sanctions have only aggravated the situation and made it more difficult for the creation of the common market. Actually, since 1992, a low-intensity economic conflict was created between Moldova and Transnistria, which was held in parallel with conflict settlement resolutions negotiated on the political level [Dura 2004: 1].

First of all, a little of the “internal border” between Moldova and Transnistria will be explained. Actually, between these two sides there is a natural border, the Dnestr River. But after the end of the war, in 1992, on one hand Moldova has been working for the economic reintegration of Transnistria, but, on the other hand, Transnistria has been fighting to become an independent and sovereign state; so, a real purported border was created between the two banks of the river, with the crossing-points, the border guards and custom posts. As Rurac shows, Dnestr River represents a *de facto* political border between the two sides and even the president of the Republic of Moldova can not pass the border without permission. On February 6, 1996, a protocol was signed between the

Republic of Moldova and Transnistria regarding the border services, stating that Transnistria has the right of own border legislation [Rurac 2002: 12].

There is a major problem in the Republic of Moldova regarding the country salvation: whether the Moldovans and all other ethnic minorities should look for West or for East for this purpose, because the Moldovan people have to face with the choice of their identity in accordance to all geographical, historical and psychological challenges. Regarding the secessionist region, as long as Transnistria represents a continental enclave, it is possible to put an embargo on its export in order to reduce its autonomy and increase its dependence, to determine the relation between the two sides. According to the international law, the embargo could be inflicted to states that are breaking the international stipulations. But this kind of decision would not lead to the positive conflict negotiation and settlement.

6.1.2 THE CUSTOM STAMPS

Starting in 1992, one of the first strategies taken by Moldova towards Transnistria was the custom stamps and joint border control on the Moldovan – Ukraine border. Transnistria could not use its own custom stamps as long as it remained an unrecognized state. Practically, it can export its products only if it possesses Moldovan official custom stamps. For the economic and, implicit, the political survival of the Smirnov regime, the possession of Moldovan custom stamps is vital. Also, for the Transnistrian exports, the custom stamps represent a crucial element of control [Dura 2004: 1].

In 1996, an agreement was signed between Chisinau and Tiraspol, although Transnistria had the possibility to use Moldovan custom stamps to legalize its export, and, in this way,

it was able to develop and consolidate its economy. But, in 2001, Moldova introduced new custom stamps, after the accession to the WTO, and, in 2004, Transnistria was demanded to register with the Moldovan State Chamber of Commerce in Chisinau in order to receive the new certificate and stamps. Tiraspol accused Chisinau of an economic blockade, refused to sign and withdrew Transnistria from the negotiation process. Tiraspol introduced in 2002 import tax of 20% to all Moldovan goods and in 2003 increased it to 100% for the same goods. The consequences of this entire political and economical problem led to a dramatically failure of intra-Moldovan commerce and economy [Dura 2004: 2].

Ukraine has allowed Transnistria to use the common Ukraine-Transnistrian border for the goods without custom stamps until May 15, 2003 when, being under international pressure, has signed the recognition of the official Moldovan certificates and custom stamps as the only valid document for the Transnistrian goods. In 2002, the border problem has been taken into consideration by the OSCE, which had sent a delegation on the Transnistrian segment. In 2003, the European Union had its first intervention by imposing a visa travel ban for 17 Transnistrian officials. Actually, EU started its initiative of EU Border Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to the border between Moldova-Ukraine, which should be present at all crossing points between Moldova and Ukraine and Transnistria and Ukraine [Popescu 2005: 43]. Practically, Transnistria has blocked the development of five sectors of common spaces – economic, legal, defense, trade and cultural – with Moldova [Popescu 2005: 18].

Table 6: Exchange of goods between Transnistria and Rep of Moldova (1996-2000)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
External trade turnover	119.6	136.6	169.1	93.4	80.4
-export to Moldova	80.8	111.2	80.3	33.3	30.6
-import from Moldova	39.1	25.4	88.8	60.1	49.8
Trade balance	41.7	85.8	-8.5	-26.8	-19.2

Source: Statistical yearbook of TMR for 1990, 1995-1997, Tiraspol, 1998

Table 7: Exchange of goods between Transnistria and Rep of Moldova (2001-2005)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
External trade turnover	150.6	90.4	100.1	85.5	134.6
-export to Moldova	105.1	56.5	78.2	72.9	59.4
-import from Moldova	45.5	33.9	21.9	12.6	75.2
Trade balance	59.6	22.6	56.3	60.3	-15.8

Source: Statistical yearbook of TMR for 2000-2005, Tiraspol, 2006

The tables above represent the relation of the exchange of goods between Moldova and Transnistria, starting with 1990 up to 2006. The negative fluctuation is due to the sanctions and to the restrictions, which include the violation of the legal rule, when both individuals from the Moldovan government and Transnistrian citizens and elite (mainly businessmen) have benefited economically from the open border between Ukraine and Transnistria. Moreover, in the context of unilateral sanctions, the economical relation continues to exist between Moldova and Transnistria, especially after the normalization of the relation in 2001.⁶⁷

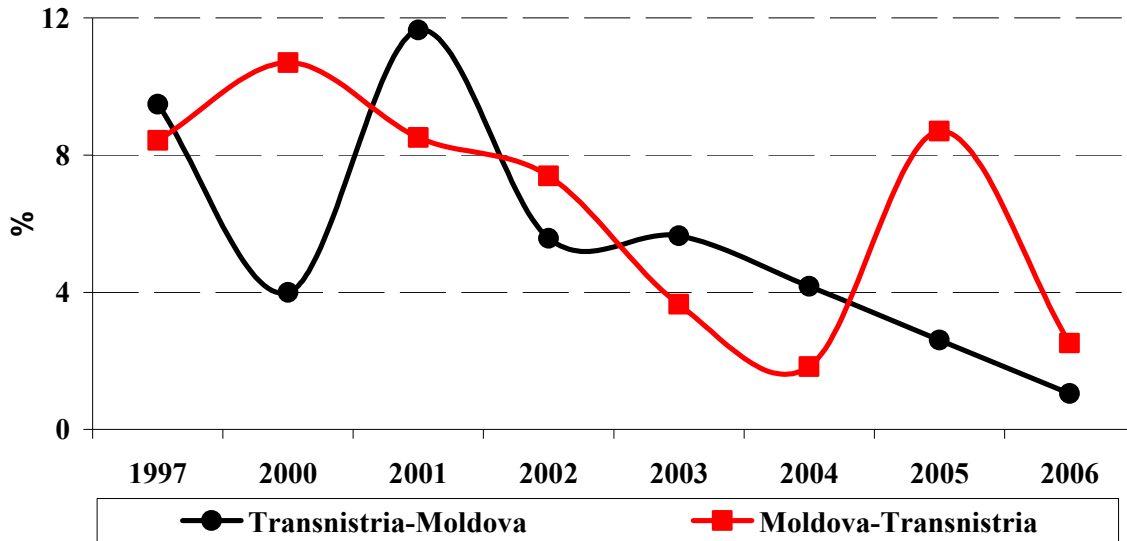
The table below shows that the flow of goods from Transnistria to Moldova is larger than the one from Moldova to Transnistria. Despite all kind of economical and custom restrictions, Moldova remains an important Transnistrian partner.⁶⁸

In march 2006, the common border between Transnistria and Ukraine, 1200 km long, became a subject of control and supervision, with the installation of EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), being the first EU-sponsored border monitoring mission in the ex-Soviet states [Munteanu 2007: 60]. In this context, both Russian and Transnistrian authorities denounced the monitoring mission as an economic “blockade”.

⁶⁷ CISR Moldova (2007), more information is available at: <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/2007%20Transnis%20Report%20rus%202en.pdf>

⁶⁸ CISR Moldova (2007), more information is available at: <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/2007%20Transnis%20Report%20rus%202en.pdf>

Chart 5: Success of mutual trade of Moldova and Transnistria. Success of trade is calculated as a ratio of exports to Transnistria (Moldova) to total imports from Moldova (Transnistria).



*Source: Statistical yearbook of TMR for 1990, 1995-1997, Tiraspol, 1998
 Statistical yearbook of TMR for 2000-2005, Tiraspol, 2006
 National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*

As a response, Transnistria blocked the Moldovan and Ukrainian transports and accused that it represented the loss of several million of dollars; but the most important point is that Transnistria lost the “confidence in Moldova as a serious partner with whom Transnistria can build the common state in the future” [Borsi 2007: 48]. Nowadays, Moldova is trying to regain and consolidate the control over the Transnistrian segment of its border, because it has a crucial role on the economic and strategic levels.

6.2 THE EXTERNAL TRADE OF MOLDOVA AND TRANSNISTRIA

The European Union's and the Republic of Moldova's first agreement was the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), on November 1994, which came into force on July 1998, when the first meeting of the Cooperation Council has been held (constituted by members of the European Commission, European Council and the Moldovan government). The main responsibilities of the agreement are referring to the political dialogue, economic cooperation, trade, internal affairs, justice, environment, science and culture.

The European involvement appears more supportive, in early 2003, regarding the border issue. Starting with EU involvement in the border issue, the situation at Moldova's border has changed. Regarding the Republic of Moldova's problem, the Europe Union started to be involved in February 2005, by signing the Action Plan on Moldova, which represents a relation and cooperation between EU and Moldova and a possible future accession of Moldova into the Union. Practically, between 2003 and 2004 the European Neighborhood Policy was signed and in 2005 the EU-Moldova Action Plan; in this way, Europe became more actively involved in Moldovan internal policy and in the negotiation and settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

On March 11, 2003 the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was signed, launched by the Commission Communication, with the title "Neighborhood – A new framework for

relations with our eastern and southern neighbors”, followed on May 12, 2004, by ENP Strategy Paper. On February 22, 2005 the EU-Moldovan Action Plan was adopted, being renewed in 2008 for one more year [Dura 2010: 11-12].

The EU involvement for solving the Transnistrian conflict occurs by direct consultation between EU (EU Special Representative for Moldova, EU Commissioner for External Relations, EU Council Presidency and its Secretary-General) and Moldova (the President, the Foreign Affair Minister and the Minister for Reintegration); there are some informal contacts between the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Republic of Moldova, an EU official, Transnistrian leaders and Russian and Ukraine representatives. The EU is also the observer in the 5+2 plan (alongside Moldova, Transnistria as parties involved; OSCE, Russia, Ukraine as mediators; and US as observers). Talks on this format have been suspended since February 2006 [Dura 2010: 12].

In the border issue, EU started by creating a policy of non-engagement and isolation of Transnistria regime, which has not had a visible result for the negotiation progress and for solving the conflict in the region. But now EU is ready to get involved in the conflict negotiations between Moldova and Transnistria, financially supporting many common projects between the two sides. The projects represent some economic and social problems (as the improving of the living in Transnistria) and some projects on environmental, health and educational fields. Practically, one of the aims is to make Moldova more attractive for Transnistria, implicit for a European orientation.

One of the tools used by EU is the development of the democratization of the region and increasing the trade (for the goods for Moldova and Transnistria, create some favorable condition for Moldovan goods, to attract Transnistria to register its goods with Moldovan authority); the liberal transit is also encouraged (exchange of students, visa regime and cross-border cooperation). Another strategy used by EU regarding the solution of the conflict is the process of reform and democratization in the country. Through the EU-Moldova Action Plan, the democratization process is implemented (democratic institutions, respect of law, human rights). But still, there are a lot of obstacles to

overcome in order to maintain and develop all these reforms: censored mass-media, corruptions, unfair elections, respect of rule of law. Unfortunately, during the implementation of the Action Plan, Transnistria does not cooperate with Moldova, and is excluded, in principle, from ENP funding.

Because of the permissive Moldova's normative framework, the EU collaborates with Moldova's NGOs to implement all the reforms, to create the mutual collaboration between EU and Moldova, to understand the real needs of Moldova, to transform it in a democratic country, and to develop the international cooperation. The internationalization of the conflict can also be a solution in the negotiation process. The openness of Transnistrian NGOs is a little bit different, because those are in the total control of the local authorities. That is why EU implements some reforms in Transnistria through Moldovan and Ukrainian NGOs. In the EU efforts, United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) plays an important role regarding the civil society in both Moldova and Transnistria. UNDP's involvement is seen by Transnistrian authorities more impartial as EU implication, so UNDP has already some local trusting networks and staff.

The NGOs on the right side of the river are more involved on different levels – political, economical and social – comparing with NGOs in Transnistria, where the implication is more economic and social, and less political (because of the fear of local authorities). However, it is possible to see some real results on creating some bridges between the two parts, by starting to change some psychological barriers, changing perceptions and mentality, creating some open dialogues and contacts. A number of seminars are being held (trainings, resources and information centers, information changes) about the conflict and its resolution, with participants from both sides, with the purpose to implicate more emphatically the participant and to find more common grounds for creating links and networks. Especially for Moldovan NGOs, there are many important objectives, such as: the process of democratization, development of the civil society and educational institution, enforcing the respect of human rights and enforcing the health systems.

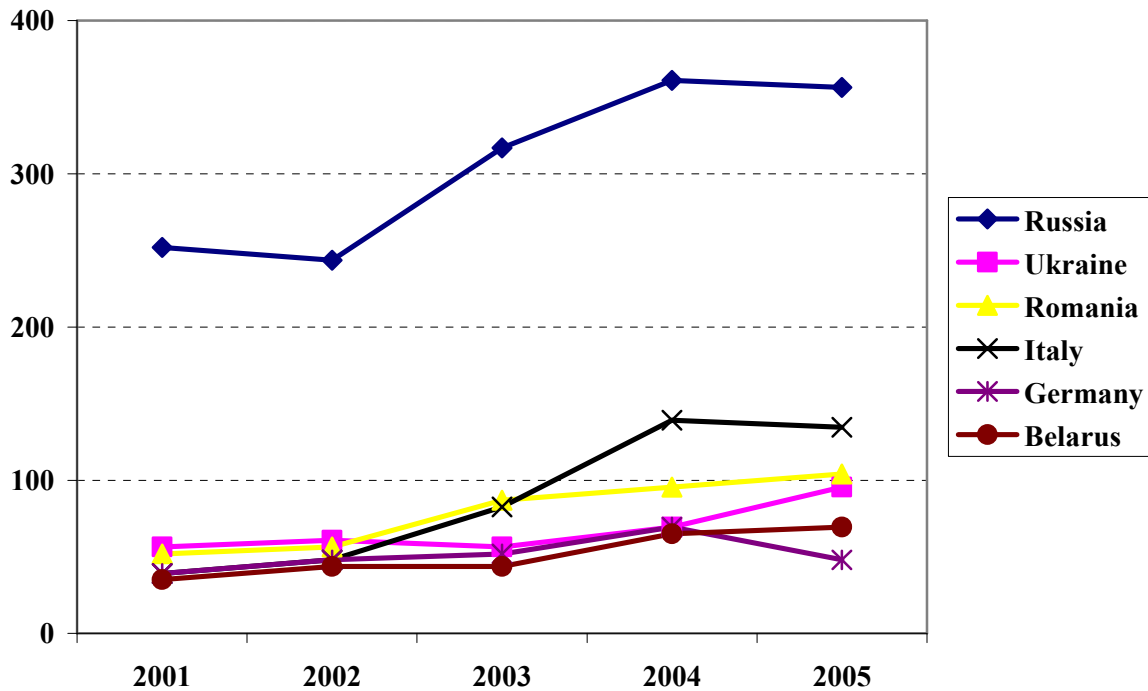
Regarding the Transnistrian NGOs, although these are less implied in political field, they still may develop on the social and economic levels, by building the trust of people in NGOs, developing the educational institutions, developing health systems. Half of the NGOs in Transnistria see the independence of TMR as the only resolution for the conflict, while the other half does not care how the conflict will be solved, but are expecting a faster resolution, in one way or another. Another involvement of NGOs activities in the field of international exchange is the institutional partnership between Transnistria, Russia, Ukraine and Romania, in order to avoid the Transnistrian academic isolation [Dura 2010: 22].

Another benefit for Moldova comes from EU TACIS Programme, which intends to develop a strong political and economic relation with the New Independent States (NIS) and includes national, regional and trans-borders programmes. The European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) replaced TACIS and some other thematic programmes. Actually, European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) is developed after 2006 and is considering the present and future framework regarding the financial mechanism oriented to the border cooperation – including cooperation programmes, partnership and advanced planning. ENI represents an instrument for the cooperation across external EU borders [Shirokov 2009: 202].

The recent elections, which were held in the Republic of Moldova might be the opportunity sought in order to reopen the EU policies towards the East. The dependence of the Republic of Moldova on the EU is enormous, and, compared with other states from the Former Soviet States, it is the state that depends the most on the EU policies. The same can be added regarding the migration flows and people-to-people interaction in Europe: the Republic of Moldova has the migration and people interaction higher than other ex-Soviet countries. The cooperation between European Union and the Republic of Moldova might have mutual and palpable benefits. Practically, in Moldova the EU policies can be developed more effectively, comparing with other ex-Soviet countries like Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia [Popescu 2009: 2].

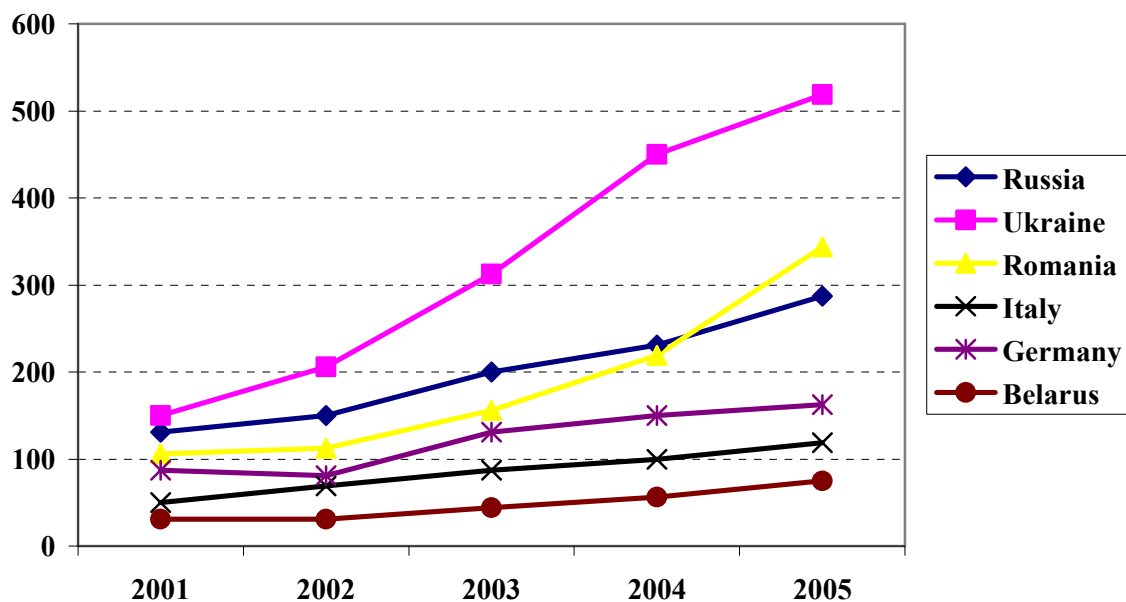
In May 2009 the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched, an “ambitious partnership” based on “common interests”. EaP includes six countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and aims to support the development of these countries following the European standards [Mocanu 2009: 2].

Chart 6: Export trends for major partners



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova

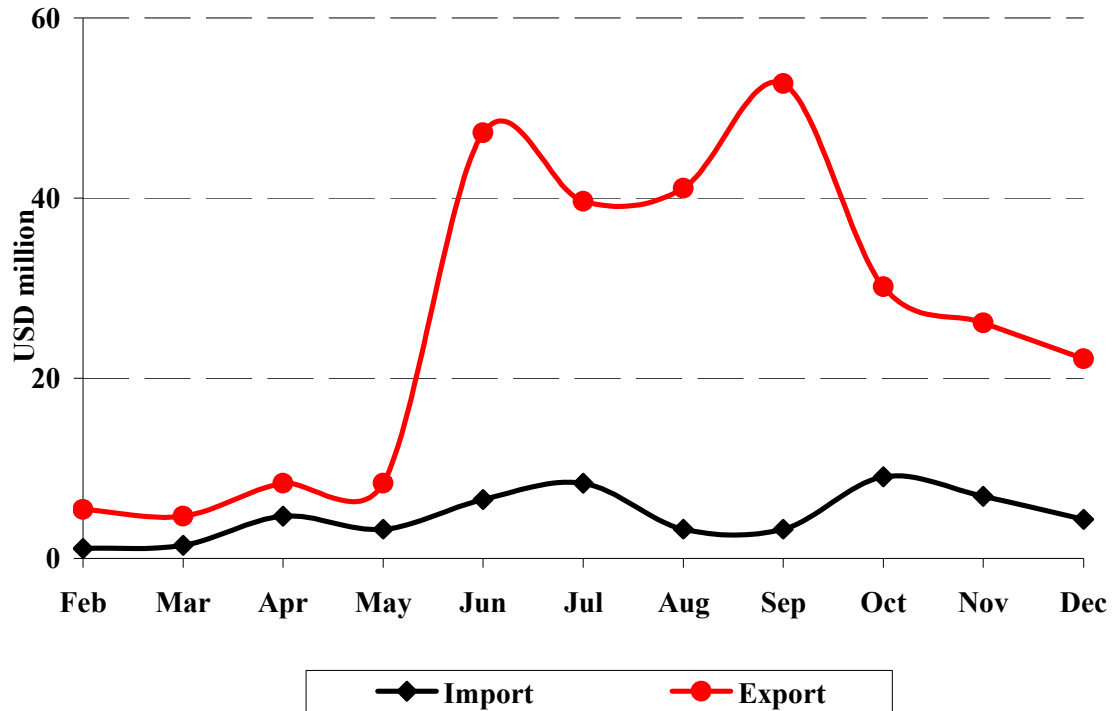
On the cultural, political, and economical level, Transnistria maintains and develops contacts and relation with 99 various countries in the world. Some of these countries have opened representations in Tiraspol, the capital of TMR. For instance, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the Russian Federation had inaugurated its permanent mission in Tiraspol in 2004. Another example is OSCE with a permanent delegation. On commercial level, EU calls Transnistria “a very open economy with a high degree of trade with the EU and the US.” [Popescu 2005]

Chart 7: Import trends for major partners

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova

From the tables above results that the major export and import partner of the Republic of Moldova constantly remains the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS), being represented by Russia (exports) and Ukraine (imports). Moreover, the import/export was increased for the European countries too; for imports, Romania and Germany have the first places, and for exports Italy and Romania have an important role. The South Eastern Europe (SEE) countries are about of 11% of Moldova' exports, Romania being the largest partner (10%) from the SEE countries [Jakubiak 2006: 23].

The pronounced growth of Moldovan trade with non-CIS countries might be explained by the geographically proximity, comparing with CIS countries. But, nonetheless, the CIS countries remain one the major partners of Moldova, especially the Russian Federation.

Chart 8: Evolution of external trade of Transnistria (Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova)

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova

The chart above represents the external trade custom of Transnistria in 2006, both the imports and the exports. Practically, starting since May 2006, the external Transnistrian exports were characterized by a significant grown, when the Transnistrian exports were registered by Customs Services of the Republic of Moldova. In this period, the main trade partner of Transnistria was the Russian Federation; the most important protocols on economic, technologic, scientific, social and cultural sphere have been signed with Moscow.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ CISR (2007), more information is available at: <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/2007%20Transnis%20Report%20rus%202en.pdf>

Table 8: The orientation of the country: Europe or CIS?

Ethnic Group	Integrate with the European Union	Remain within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
Moldovans	62%	14%
Russians	38%	41%
Ukrainians	21%	48%
Gagauz	18%	48%
Bulgarian	36%	35%

Sources: Ethno-barometer in the Republic of Moldova (2005)

The table above measures the orientation of the ethnic groups towards Europe and CIS. The Moldovans are more orientated towards the European Union, comparing with other ethnic groups, which are more orientated towards CIS – the Ukrainians and the Gagauz are minorities which desire to remain with CIS. An interesting score has the Russian minority, with 41% for CIS orientation and 38% for European orientation, representing more or less an equal score for both directions. According to Gabanyi, the Western economic organizations were putting pressure on the government of Chisinau in order to join the CIS. “Moldova’s President Mircea Snegur himself pointed out that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had linked their promise of economic assistance to Moldova to the “recommendation” to sign the CIS Pact in Alma Ata.” [Gabanyi 2007:501]

6.3 THE CONFLICT SETTLEMENT

With every passing year of the negotiation process, the Transnistrian separatist power and its statehood is being consolidated.

In the maintaining of the conflict some political figures are involved both from Transnistria and other countries, such as the Russian Federation, Moldova and Ukraine. Practically, keeping the conflict unsolved or prolonging the conflict for as much as possible is more important and has a higher priority for internal and external groups than winning the conflict or coming to a resolution for it. Transnistria survives thanks to legal, semi-legal and illicit trade. The region is exporting, both legally and semi-legally, textile and steel for EU member state and US, having lower prices; it also exports illicitly munitions or makes other forms of trafficking through Ukraine to CIS, without paying taxes, and, in this way, maintaining the status-quo. The main Transnistrian companies, such as “Moldavizolit, Moldavkabel, Tighina, Floare, Tirotext, Odema, Moldovan Metal Works (MMZ), and Vestra all have established relations with Western partners”. The trade is possible because of the corrupt politicians, both Moldovan and Transnistrian; without paying the tax but using the Moldovan custom stamps, Transnistria exports goods in EU and US [Popescu 2005: 17, 18, 21].

The resolution of the conflict is, for Europe, a strong and strategic partnership between EU and Russian Federation, including a common space on external security within Russia and the cooperation in the crisis management. The conflict region represents the most important sector for the international organizations' activities, UN, OSCE and NGOs. Also, the conflict represents an interest for the big powers as Europe, United States and the Russian Federation. In other words, "the complete settlement of the conflict is impossible without the considerable and active assistance of the international community" [Taranu 2000].⁷⁰

In this context, the neighboring countries are also involved, directly or indirectly, in the conflict process. In our case, Ukraine is involved in the conflict resolution, and both Ukraine and Transnistria pursue their own interests. The same we can say about Romania, trying, during all this period, to give moral support for the Republic of Moldova. The protector-states are also involved in the conflict resolution, states like the Russian Federation, which is concerned about the ethnic Russians from Moldova and Transnistria.

The international actors and neighbors have paying attention to the resolution of the conflict in different ways, in compliance with the national and international changes and events. For instance, starting with 2003, the international actors' attention started to increase, along with the establishment of the European Commission Office in Chisinau, but it decreased then it turned out that the progress toward the conflict settlement was very weak. It increased again, when Romania accessed into the European Union, and remained strong, as EU is promoting now all the possible solutions for the conflict settlement.

⁷⁰ Taranu (2002) Isig Magazine, more information is available at: www.isimagazine.isig.it

6.3.1 THE EUROPEAN UNION

Considering the European Union's experience in settling conflicts, it is important for the conflict negotiation EU's presence and its influence in the region. Another EU issue is the Europeanization of Moldova, being a crucial element for Moldova's accession to the European Union. In Transnistria, European Union has at its disposal the largest range of means, from the military, to political and economic tools and strategies.

Comparing the relation of EU on both sides, in the right bank the Europeanization process, the EU-Moldova partnership and collaboration starting to be viewed more and more open, meanwhile, in the left part, the relation between EU and Transnistria is defined limited to the framework of the conflict settlement. The term Europeanization, in this region, is still unknown and does not represent a positive meaning. Practically, the relation between the European Union and Transnistria remains mainly developed on the economical level, and it remains linked of the further cooperation between EU and Russia [Shirokov 2009: 211].

The European Security Strategy (ESS) states brought EU near "trouble areas" and it is EU's interest that on its borders countries well-governed should exist. Because of the conflict, Moldova can only have limited progress towards the democratic consolidation and economic improvement; and, on the other hand, all illicit trafficking in ammunitions, human beings and drugs, money laundering and organized crime may deteriorate even more the stability in the zone and create more tensions between Chisinau and Tiraspol [Popescu 2005: 15-16].

The main objective of EU involvement in the resolution of the conflict is to “break the structure of interests” for creating the premises for changing the present status quo. The international actors should not wait until Transnistria will reunite with Moldova, because it will not happen. Moldova is not an attractive country from economical and political points of view; practically, it needs a better image and publicity inside the Transnistrian territory. Moreover, Moldova should first of all solve its inner political and economical problems and enforce its involvement in Transnistria, by creating a special law for Transnistria’s autonomy [Popescu 2005: 35-38].

Since 2005, the moment of EU’s involvement in the resolution of the conflict, the activity in general, is more intensive. Practically, on both sides of Dnestr River implication, funds, and efforts for the negotiation process are existing. The European Union Special Representative was appointed to Moldova with a clear task for the conflict settlement.

Unfortunately, EU’s involvement in the resolution of the conflict, is considered by local authorities in Transnistria as hostile and as a tool to destabilize the regime; while in Moldova is considered supportive and sometimes too weak to arrive to a final solution. The European Union’s implication on the levels described above is not sufficient without the diplomatic path in the negotiation of the conflict, by changing the political environment, supported by ENP, which might have a real chance to change or modify the present status quo.

But there are some changes towards the European Union in Transnistria: during the last year, the EU strengthened its economic position in the region, as dynamically as the Russian Federation did. For instance, more than 30 – 40% of exports from Transnistria are to European countries [Safonov 2009: 193]. In the same time, there are a number of plans to intensify the conflict negotiation, by using the EU funding for the development of the Chamber of Commerce in Transnistria [Mirimanova, 2010: 25].

Currently, there are some trans-border projects between Chisinau and Tiraspol, including the environmental and transport projects, which involve the neighboring countries. The

implementation of these projects could be the start of building mutual confidence between the two parts; that could lead to a beneficial cooperation and to the openness of the negotiation process for the conflict settlement [Shirokov 2009: 212].

For the Transnistrian conflict, European Union is pursuing to increase and maintain the stabilization in the region. TRACECA programme represent one of the EU projects, which implies most of the CIS countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). The aim of the project is to increase the economic cooperation and trade exchange along the Silk Road⁷¹, by building transport infrastructure and by promoting the adequate legislation. TRACECA also aims to develop and enforce the stabilization in the affected conflict regions (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova) [Strachota 2004].⁷²

Along with the economic projects and conflict settlement, there are projects related to the ecology, health and rehabilitation of disabled children, receiving funding through UNDP from the EU delegation, including a strong support for the civil society. Actually the European Union is searching its proper role in the conflict resolution between the two sides of the country. [Mirimanova 2010: 23]. European Union begun to pay closer attention to the Republic of Moldova, after the Romanian accession to the EU, on January 1 2007, because the new border could represent a threat for the European border.

Gabanyi presents that Moldova entered the sightline of the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy, not as a country looking for a future EU integration, but as a poor, unstable, ill-governed and “conflict-ridden” country at European border that needs stability and security. (Gabanyi 2007: 503)

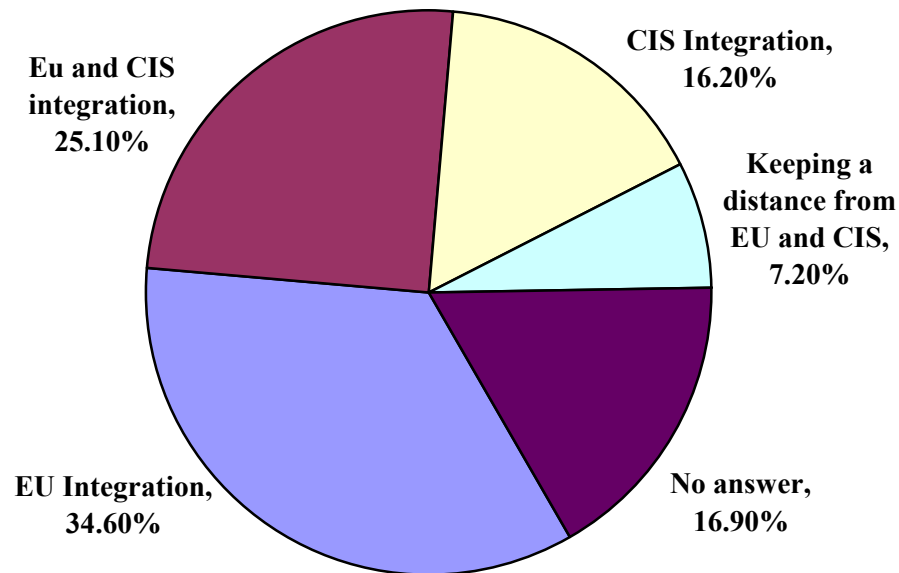
From the chart below, only 34,6% of the respondents consider that the future of the Republic of Moldova should be UE (out of whom 41,0% Moldovans/Romanians, 7,9% Ukrainians, and 6,9% Russians), 25,1% EU and CIS integration (out of whom 45,8%

⁷¹ Silk Road also called Silk Routes, represents a network of trade routes, across the Asian continent, and connect East, West and Southern Asia with Africa and Europe.

⁷² More information is available at: www.ceeol.com

Ukrainians, 40,3% Russians and 22,8% Moldovans/Romanians), CIS integration (out of whom 32,6% Ukrainians, 29,5% Russians and 12,3% Moldovans/Romanians) and 7,2% distance from EU and CIS (13,9% Russians and 6,7% Moldovans /Romanians).⁷³

Chart 9: Which should be the strategy of the Republic of Moldova?



Source: The Barometer of Public Opinion (2010)

6.3.2 THE UNITED STATES

Regarding the conflict, the position of the United States is quite clear: it considers Transnistria as a part of the Republic of Moldova, respecting the territorial integrity of

⁷³ The Barometer of Public Opinion (2010), more information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=558&parent=0>

Moldova and considers that the secession in the region does not “meet the appropriate conditions of international law”. Furthermore, the US government considers that the inhabitants of Transnistria do not represent and do not constitute a “people”, because they do not suffer of serious damages and they might find a solution, other than secession [Borsi 2007; 49].

The US is considering its relation with Transnistria through its relation with Russia and, partially, with the European Union. Practically, the United States does not agree with the presence of Russian troops in the region and, implicitly, its leverage over Transnistria. But the involvement of the US in the conflict settlement is less increased than in other conflict regions as Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh [Safonov 2009: 193].

6.3.3 THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The OSCE Mission to Moldova was established on February 4, 1993, and in Transnistria on February 13, 1995. It has an important role in the negotiation process between the two parts – the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria. Nantoi considers that, from the beginning, with the appearance of the OSCE Mission as a negotiation factor between one part – the Republic of Moldova – and the other – Transnistria – an erroneous pattern of the conflict perception has been established [Nantoi 2009: 172]. In addition, the Mission is involved in observance of international obligations and commitments regarding the democratic process and the human rights.

Regarding the OSCE report, that “the situation of the independent media is very difficult, with different methods of pressure applied on those few journalists who do not follow the

official line”⁷⁴, practically, the mass-media is censored and all newspapers, sites and television describe Transnistria as a democratic, liberal, non-militarized and soon independent country.

6.3.4 RUSSIA

Transnistria would not exist and would not survive without Russia.

Russia’s support for the regime in Transnistria was “the main threat for the independence, security and integrity of the Republic of Moldova.”, mentioned Moldova’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Tau, on 8 October 1993. [Gabanyi 2007: 502]

Actually, even today, Russian’s interest is not clear. Despite of Moldova’s strong objection and international obligations, the Russian Federation is maintaining its military forces in Transnistria, estimated at about 1,500 soldiers and 25,000 tons of armament. According with the 11th article of Moldova’s Constitution, Moldova is a neutral state and “foreign troops cannot be stationed on its territory” [Popescu 2005: 19]. The Russian Federation has been supporting Transnistria on the economical, financial, military and political levels, being interested from geopolitical point of view, to exert leverage over Moldova. The Russian mainstream Council and Defense Policy declared: “The EU is more and more on the offensive in its relations with Russia (...) it acts as a tough

⁷⁴ OSCE, *Assessment Visit to the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova: Observations and Recommendations*, Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklós Haraszti, 10 March 2005, available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/14399>

adversary and competitor (...) The EU is starting to become a competitor for Moscow already on the Russian territory itself” [Popescu 2005: 25].⁷⁵

Transnistria represents a region of gas transit; that is why Russia is still interested of this region, on economical, military and security levels. Russia has created the conflict, and now is sponsoring it, and during this period is using the conflict as a political tool and political pressure. The Russian’s support in Transnistrian question has consolidated the separatist movement, on one hand, admitting the commercial trade between Tiraspol and Moscow, and, on the other hand, by giving some grants and funds for the Transnistrian situation. Russia does not recognize the independence of Transnistria, but does not have any objections for the separatism movement.

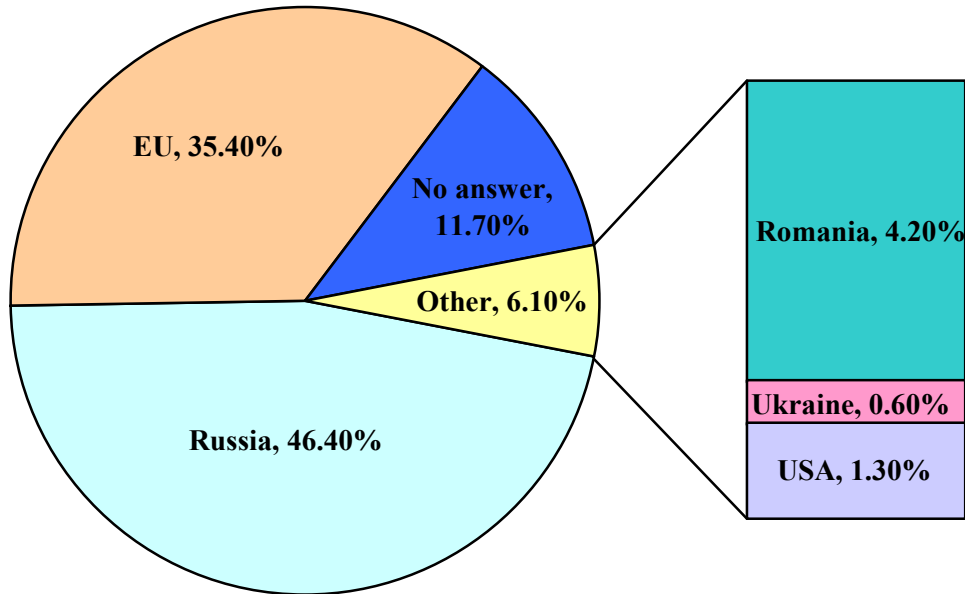
At the same time with the Romania’s accession to NATO, Moldova became more important for the Russian Federation as a NATO eastern border. Russia plays an important role in the conflict settlement, as a mediator, as a guarantor, as an actor with its own interest. The Russian Federation is strongly interested in the conflict settlement, but with several conditions, out of which the most important are: Russian military presence, a high level of influence in the Transnistrian region and Russia as an important control actor.

As the respondents consider that the future of the Republic of Moldova should be the EU, the Russian Federation remains the strategic partner of Moldova. Out of the total answers, 46,4 % consider Russia a strategic partner (out of whom 75,5% Ukrainians, 70,6% Russians, and 39,0% Moldovans/Romanians); 35,4% - EU (out of whom 41,3% Moldovan/Romanian, 13,6% Ukrainians, and 11,3% Russians); 4,2 % - Romania; 1,3% - US; 0,6% - Ukraine; and 0,4% - other country (the rest of 11,7% did not answer).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ More information is available at: <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ60.pdf>

⁷⁶ Barometer of Public Opinion (2010), more information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=558&parent=0>

Chart 10: Which country/Union should be the main strategic partner of the Republic of Moldova?



Sources: The Barometer of Public Opinion (2010)

The chart above shows the uncertainty between the opinions of citizens of the Republic of Moldova. First of all, they all desire a better life and believe in a future European cooperation and even integration, but, on the strategic level, they remain pessimistic. Russia remains the favorite strategic partner, because it has a strong and aggressive policy towards the Republic of Moldova and because the mass-media and people have a strong need to feed their security feelings (for instance, in Moldova few people know about the European forces, but everybody knows about the Russian troops – it is used as a psychological factor).

Some authors consider that some states were against the use of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) resources to settle the conflict from Transnistria, because it might “*make Russia unhappy*”. Although, the European Union and the Russian Federation,

should work together regarding their “common neighborhood”: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, all former Soviet states. The cooperation between EU and Russia might be seen as a positive issue, with benefits for both sides. But there are, unfortunately, some negative aspects: there are Russians who do not accept the EU involvement and legitimate interests in all these states; Russia is opposing to the democratic process in these former Soviet Republics, fearing the “colour revolution” as it has happened in Georgia and Ukraine [Munteanu 2007: 60-61].

The situation in Transnistria is worse than in Moldova, but, anyway, Moldova does not represent an attractive alternative for the resolution of the social and economic situations. On the contrary, the leaders are developing the idea of joining Russia, as a second Kaliningrad (many Transnistrians have Russian citizenship) or, at least, joining Ukraine.⁷⁷ The authorities in Tiraspol have always used the economic problem of Moldova to claim the independence and sovereignty. Of course, for Ukraine the idea to have a Russian “Kaliningrad zone” is does not sound good; Russia, instead, is very interested to create such a zone, to have more economical and political power and influence in the neighborhood.

6.3.5 UKRAINE

At the beginning Ukraine has supported the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, because the similarity between the Transnistrian region and Crimea. Ukraine might be interested in the resolution of the conflict in favour of the Republic of Moldova, because within its territory Russian separatism might exist as well, in its eastern region.

⁷⁷ Igor Smirnov states that ‘there are 100, 000 Russian citizens [living in Transnistria], and if there was a Russian consulate [in Tiraspol], there would be more, See interview for *Politicheskij Zhurnal* reprinted in *Pridnestrovie*, 21 April 2005, available at: <http://www.pridnestroviedaily.net>.

Meanwhile, the Russian military presence in the Transnistrian region represents a threat for Ukraine too.

However, Ukraine has had antagonistic positions regarding Transnistria, sometimes presenting a big interest for the settlement of the conflict or, vice versa, being interested in the process solving. In the pre-Yushchenko administration, Transnistrian separatism survived thanks to Ukrainian support too. The main illegal transports and all kinds of trafficking had passed mainly through Ukraine, by land or by sea, through Odessa and Ilichiovsk ports. Both Transnistrian and Ukrainian politicians have benefited from the illicit trafficking. After the EU involvement in the zone, Ukraine has understood that, without the democratization and monitoring process, it is difficult to create a fair cooperation in the Transnistrian region. Of course, Ukraine is still maintaining its ambiguous status in the region, but, anyway, is more interested to create more legal frameworks for Moldovan/Transnistrian border cooperation.

But Ukraine unlike Russia has an advantage regarding its relations with Transnistria: a common border. The Transnistrian region represents a transportation corridor and Ukraine is mainly interested to develop and increase the mutual cooperation between the two parts. One of the Ukrainian issues is to restore the railway traffic through TMR [Safonov 2009: 193].

Ukraine recognizes Moldova's territory and integrity, meanwhile the UNA-UNSO⁷⁸, which fought for the Transnistrian separatism, would be eager to annex Transnistria to Ukraine. Over 50 members of UNSO were awarded the "Defenders of Transnistria" orders and they justify their fight as a defense of the ethnic Ukrainian population [Wrobel 2004].

⁷⁸ UNA-UNSO – Ukrainian National Assembly – Unkrainina Nationalistisc Self Defence, represents a nationalist political organization that includes 8,000 members. The Party maintains a close relationship with National Democratic Party of Germany, considered to be a promoter of a neo-Nazi ideology. UNA-UNSO has been involved in the separatist movement in Crimea, Transnistrian conflict, Georgian – Abkazian war and others.

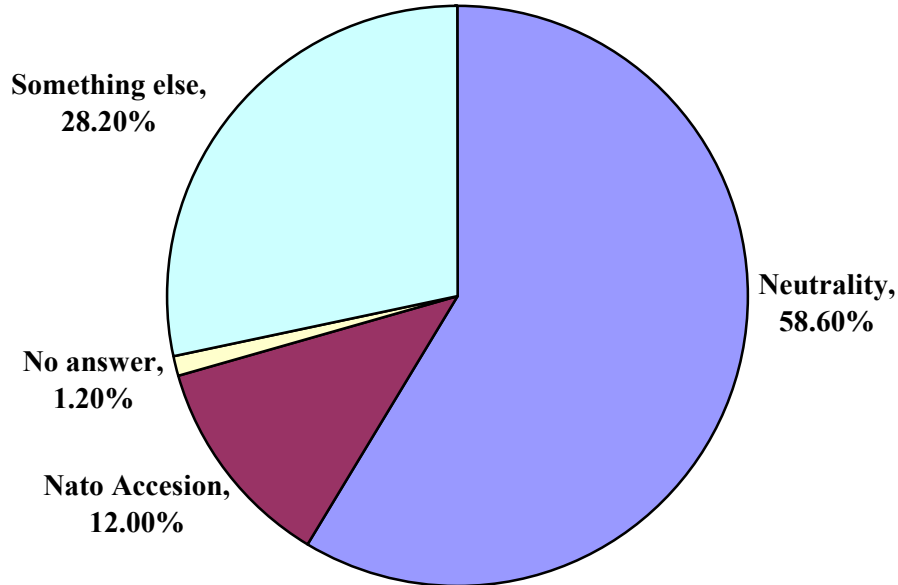
Generally speaking, apart of its antagonistic reaction, Ukraine is trying to maintain a relative neutral position in the negotiation process, as it is directly involved because of the Ukrainian minority in the Transnistrian region.

6.3.6 ROMANIA

Romania has a low level of intervention in the Transnistrian issue, because of the past accusations of interfering in Moldova's internal affairs. But Romania has an important role, offering many scholarships for Moldovan students and pupils, since 1991. In the same time, Romania became one of the most important trade partners from outside the ex-Soviet world. The level of economic cross-border cooperation remain low, because the preference of East cooperation.

We can notice the strong mutual cooperation on the educational and cultural level; meanwhile, the political life is oscillating in compliance with the international context. According to King, the "Bessarabian question" never represented a major factor in Romania domestic politics, and the problem of national identity in Moldova has been seen by Romania very clear: Moldovans are sharing the same Romanian identity [King 2000: 166]. But, on the other side, in the context when the Republic of Moldova represents a threat for the European border, Romania wants Moldova to solve its political and security problems.

Chart 11: Which should be the better solution for the ensuring the Republic of Moldova security?



Source: The Barometer of Public Opinion (2010)

The chart above represents the opinion of inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova regarding the country's security. Out of the total number of the respondents: 58,6% desire neutrality (out of whom 71,7% Russians, 68,3% Ukrainian, 55,4% Moldovans/Romanian) and 12,0% are looking forward to NATO accession (out of whom 13,3% Moldovans/Romanians, 6,9% Ukrainians and 6,0% Russians). Because of the divergences between the Russian Federation and NATO regarding the ensuring of the security in the Europe, most of the respondents have chosen the neutrality.

6.4 THE ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

6.4.1 THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MOLDOVA

In the Republic of Moldova there are more than 7000 NGOs, out of which half are operationally and 3.700 are registered only on the paper. The opinion about NGOs is that there is a severe lack of representatives and professionalism and, since 9 out of 10 NGOs are located in Chisinau, a severe lack of geographical spread [Dura 2008: 395-396]. The relations between NGOs situated in Moldova and the ones in Transnistria are very weak, to almost inexistent, especially on the political level, which is the main factor for the resolution of the conflict. In 2006, a decree was signed by the President Igor Smirnov, for prohibiting all external financing for the Transnistrian NGOs involved in political activities.⁷⁹ The citizens of the Republic of Moldova, on both sides, are not involved in the negotiation process, they do not trust or, at most, they have a weak sense of trust regarding the NGOs activities, and, on the other hand, no civil education, nor support for NGOs activities, does exist. Practically, citizens trust the mass-media, other broadcasts, churches. Another important aspect is that NGOs activities are linked to the European

⁷⁹ See U.S. Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights and Practices in Moldova

integration, democratization process, human rights and few of them are involved in the negotiation and resolution of the conflict.

6.4.2 THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN TRANSNISTRIA

It is difficult, even impossible, to organize any roundtables, meeting, seminars, workshops with both Moldovan and Transnistrian counterparts because of the Transnistrian authorities, which restrict traveling in the separatist region for most of Moldovans. For instance, in Transnistria, the chairman of the Moldovan Helsinki Committee was attacked, in July 2005, by pro-government forces, when he tried to organize a roundtable about human rights.⁸⁰

In Transnistria, there are 700 NGOs registered but all of them are controlled by local authorities, which control and limit the NGOs activities, sometimes with the help of the Ministry of the State Security. The pressure and control, especially for NGOs with political implication, may reach to the psychological and physical harassment and even detention. However, the civil society has no trust in NGOs activities, because their limited vision and, mostly, the concern of the collaboration with MGB (Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Ministry of State Security)). The international donors prefer to work through Moldovan NGOs to develop and sustain their activity in Transnistria and, in most cases, they are encountering a lot of difficulties to develop their work [Dura 2010: 9-10].

⁸⁰ See Freedom House: Freedom in the World – Transnistria/Moldova 2005, available at: www.freedomhouse.org

The Civil Society Organization's (CSO) involvement is restricted on both sides, but more in the left side of the river, because the existing authoritarian system, where political funding is prohibited and the participation of the population to the peace- and policy-making process is almost inexistent, being is very limited comparing with Moldova. To all these, the lack of professionalism of local NGOs can be added, the lack of mutual changes between both sides and the changes with the international community. In addition, all tax and legislative framework discourage the donors to make any donations and to register the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). In Moldova, mass media is used by political classes, according to their interests; in Transnistria, instead, everything is under the control of the security services.

Despite all of these, in Transnistria some opposition factors do exist, which are involved in political campaigning and election. They are trying to promote the democratic legislation, but they are constantly harassed by the security apparatus and authority. Their power is limited because of the low support from the international community and even from Chisinau, which considers that all NGOs and opposition groups are under Smirnov's rule or control. Meanwhile, the opposition group from Transnistria is considered to be the Moldovan secret agents and traitors and this increases the existing gap between the two regions of the country.

Promoting the NGOs is impossible through the mass media and public debates, because in Transnistria, actually, does not exist any independent media. The activities of all printed and electronic media is overseen and controlled by the state editorial community, including the ministers of security, foreign affairs, justice and information. It had happened that the official structure has confiscated the copies of some independent newspapers. For instance, is the case of the independent newspaper "*The individual and His Rights*" where the staff was intimidated and harassed [Mikhelidze 2008: 40].

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS

7.1. THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE DATA ANALYSIS

The research represents, most of all, an experimental approach, because of the limited number of respondents, and consequently the problem of generalization of the research on national level occurs. Also we can not consider the results valid for all ethnic minorities existing in both Moldova and Transnistria, but only for Moldovan majority or Moldovan Slavic population. Also it represents only the attitudes and the opinion of the “post-war” generation (20-30 years old).

The questionnaire includes 24 closed questions, which are structured in five sections in order to be applied to 60 respondents, 30 from the right side of the Dnestr River and 30 from the left side. In the following text, the respondents from the right bank will be mentioned as Moldovans and those on the left bank as Transnistrians.

The time needed in order to fill out the questionnaire is about 5-7 minutes.

The first section includes the general information about the respondents, in order to relax them. It offers information about the respondents’ background, age, citizenships and spoken languages. This section is important in any questionnaire because it is important to know some general aspect about the respondents.

The sample from Transnistria represents young people, 21-30 years old, mostly students or employees, one soldier and one unemployed. All respondents speak more than three

languages, from those who speak Romanian/Moldovan language, all of them mentioned that they speak *Moldovan language*. Only one mentioned that he has Moldovan and Romanian citizenships and speaks only Moldovan language. Few of them have only Moldovan citizenship, and the most have both Pridnistrovian citizenship and other as Moldovan, Russian (the most) and Ukrainian. For all respondents the Russian language represents the main language.

The Moldovan sample is also represented by people aged between 21 and 30 years old. They are students, employers and two unemployed. Five respondents mentioned that they speak Moldovan language and the rest mentioned that they speak *Romanian language*. The Russian language is spoken by the majority, but there are a few respondents who do not speak Russian. All of them have Moldovan citizenship and only few of them also have Romanian citizenship.

The second group of questions is created to reveal the level of prejudice, stereotype and ethnocentrism, which the inhabitants from the both sides of River Dnestr have about each other. Starting from the premise that there is no democratic attitude regarding mass-media, neither between the Moldovans and Transnistrians, the population has to face with strong stereotypical behavior.

Regarding the statement *to be proud* of own country, the responses are in general similar, the Transnistrians have more responses of "not sure" that may mean that they are not sure about their "country's future", while Moldovans are proud about their country, because they feel more secure and confident with this statement. Comparing the results with the Ethno Barometer the responses from the Moldovan sample to the following statement: *I am proud that I was born in Moldova* – about 86 percent agree totally or partially with this statement [Ethno Barometer 2006: 65]⁸². About the responses of "not sure" from the Transnistrian sample, it could mean also that the Transnistrian citizenship does not offer an alternative for traveling and for international recognition; even for the

⁸² More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

Russian Embassy the inhabitant represents the “*individual without identity*”. All these could lead the Transnistrians to have ambiguous feeling regarding the related statement.

Chart 12: “*I am proud to be a citizen of the Republic of Moldova/Priednistrovie*”⁸³ (being presented in two separate versions).

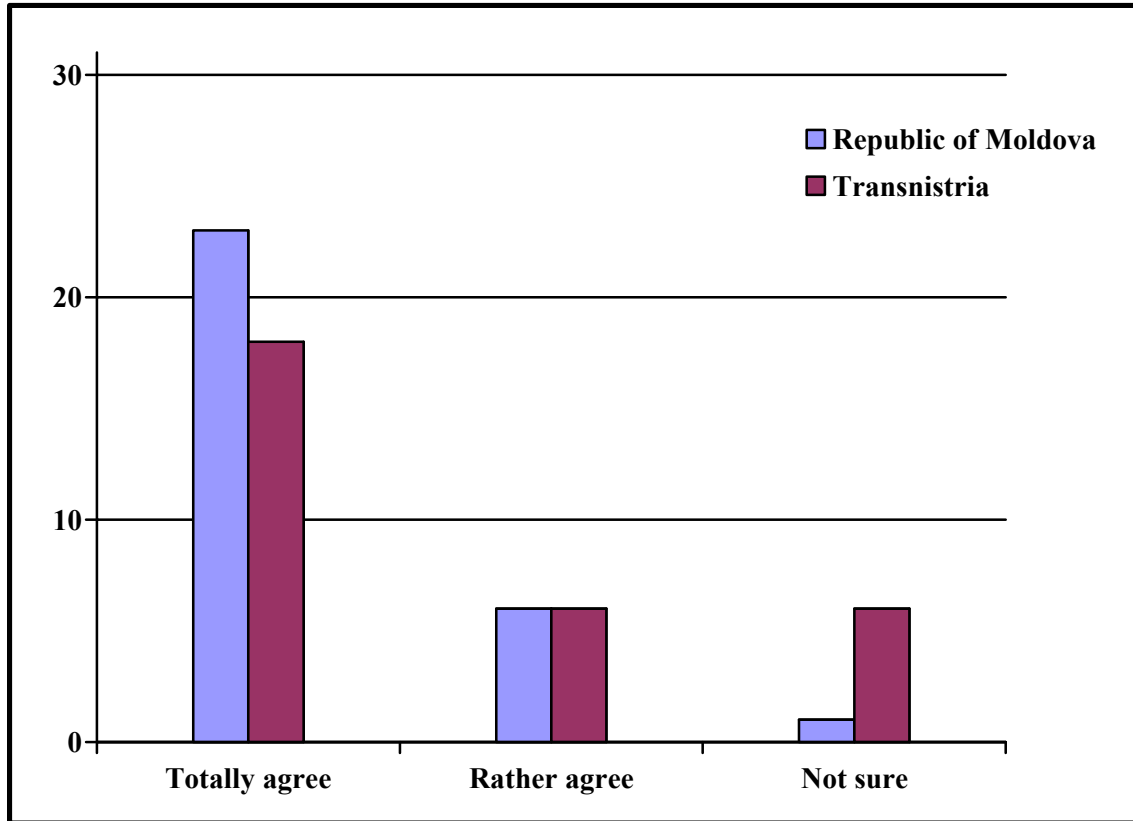
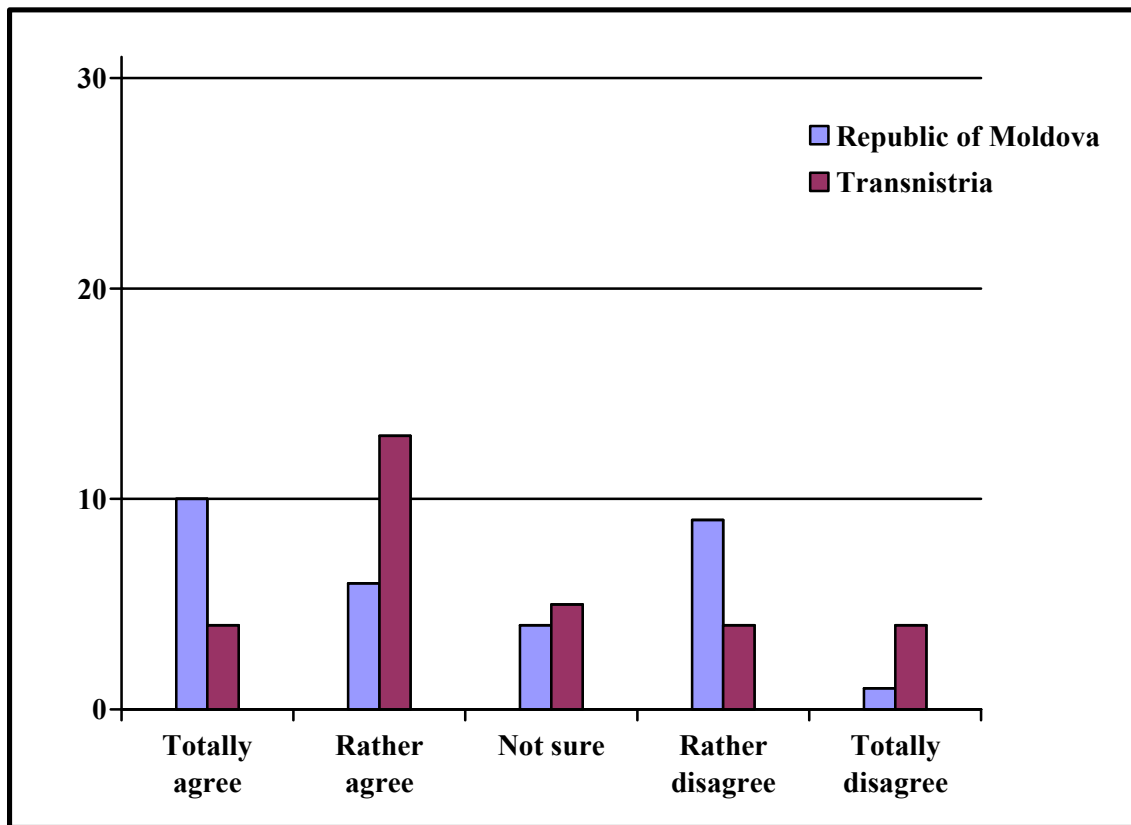


Chart 13 represents the responses regarding the opinion about own people, the most respondents from the Transnistrian sample “*rather agree*” with the statement that “*there are no better people than my own people*”, and the other respondents used half-and-half the other answers. Meanwhile the majority of the Moldovan sample chose the following answers – “*totally agree*” or “*rather disagree*”, and some of them “*rather agree*”. The

⁸³ Transnistria is the Moldovan/Romanian name of the region, while Priednistrovie is the Russian name. In the questionnaire I used the Russian name “Priednistrovie”, “Priednistrovian people”, as the Russian language is preferred in the region and in order to avoid some negative reactions. In my research I use the Moldovan/Romanian name “Transnistria”, “Transnistrians”, “Transnistrian people” and “Transnistrian identity”.

question tries to measure the ethnocentric attitudes of the individuals, and the Transnistrian sample is characterized with more ethnocentrism in comparison with the Moldovan sample. The ethnocentrism is characterized by superior feeling toward the out-group, and the Transnistrian people in general consider themselves superior to those on the right side.

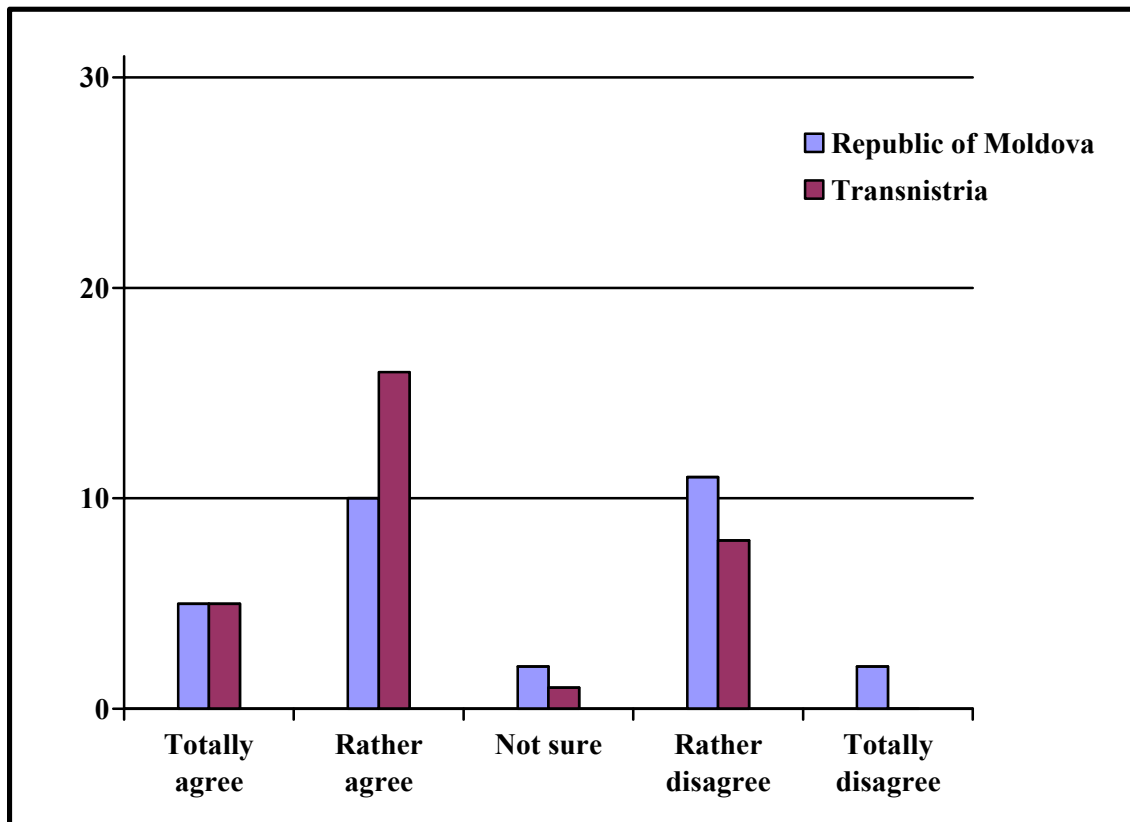
Chart 13: “There are no better people than my own people.”



Regarding the stereotypes, both samples have stereotypes about each other, but it is more frequent in the Transnistrian sample, where a considerable number has responded that they “rather agree” with the statement that the inhabitants from both sides are different. During the Soviet Era, the same stereotypical behavior and attitudes has existed too, and every difference between left and right sides has been increased in order to better maintain the Soviet power in the region. Today, the stereotypical behaviors is also

maintained, the belief that “*we are better than the other side*” is very used. For Moldovans, the inhabitants from the left side represent *the Russians, the separatists, the foreigners*, while on the other side the Moldovans are considered to be the *less developed* from the economical and intellectual level, they are *the aggressors, the occupants* –as the Moldovans remain the same *occupants* as were in the time when the conflict arose.

Chart 14: “*The inhabitants on one side of the Dnestr River believe that they are different than those on the other side*”.



Actually, Transnistria is shown in a positive position in all the comparisons between Moldova and Transnistria: it represents an industrial territory, has a better economy, it is overall more developed than Moldova. Personal need, relevant negative emotions and the need to identify with the in-group often lead to the rejection of the out-group, in the context of a psychological conflict, usually creating positive stereotypes for the in-group

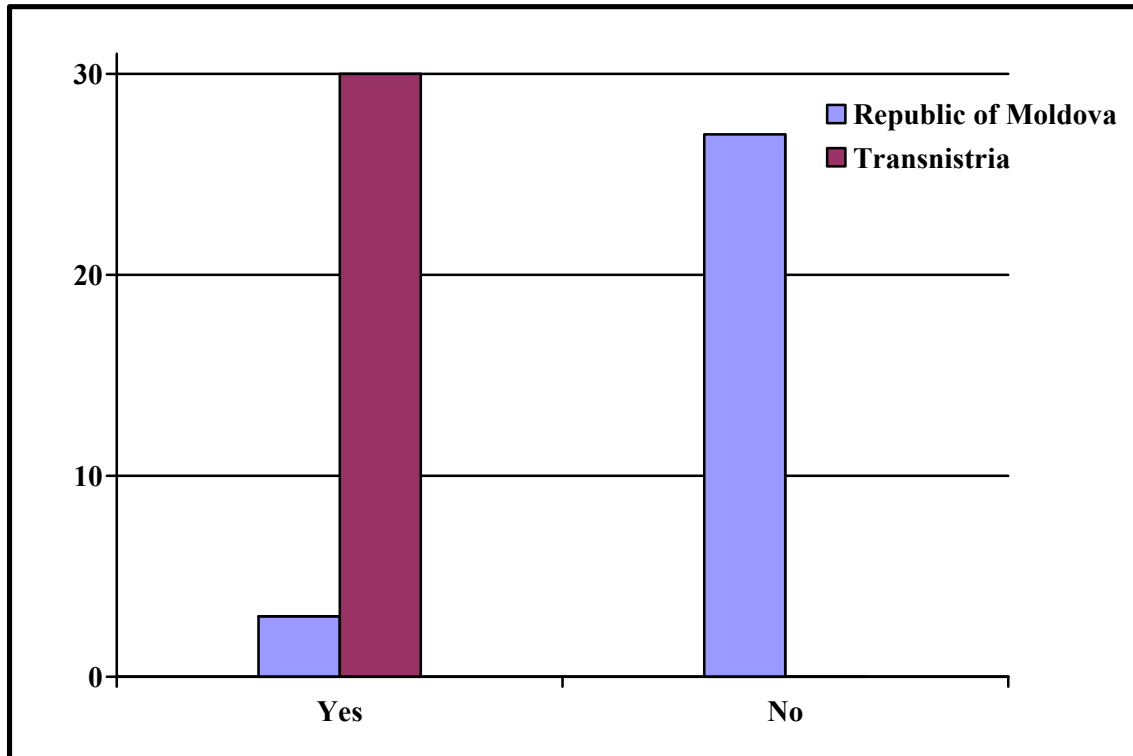
and negative stereotypes for the out-group. “*I*” am right, “*We*” are right, “*Our*” group is right, and the “*others*” are wrong, they represent the aggressors; the ideological propaganda is used in order to enforce the existing stereotypes.

The answers to the question above are similar to the ones to the question “*I have the same opinion about the inhabitants of the two banks of Dnestr River*”. The Transnistrian sample has more responses that suggest that the stereotype is believed in. And this is happening because the two sides are very distant between them regarding the communication on different levels. All media, education, NGOs and other organizations, elite and politics are working together to maintain the stereotyped attitude on both sides.

The third section includes questions about the civic, national and ethnic identity, which helps us to understand the preferred identity, and their general opinion about the identity. The questions also present the individual’s opinion about the personal and national values. Also, it reveals whether or not between the two sides the individuals’ opinions are more or less different.

Chart 15 shows that the Moldovans consider that there is no difference between the national identities from the both sides, while the Transnistrians consider that their national identity is different comparing with the identity from the right bank of Dnestr River. The Moldovans consider that the east part of the country represents only a district of the Republic of Moldova, that on the both sides are living people with the same past, the same ethnic, national and civic identities, which have some differences between them, but that could not affect their future common living. Meanwhile, the Transnistrians believe that the national identity was formed and consolidated especially during and after the separatist claim, and now they are forming the “Transnistrian people”, and there is no return path of any kind. Actually they believe that the Moldovans from the two sides are different, those from right bank are “nationalists” with Romanian origins, while those from the left bank are descendents of Slavic people.

Chart 15: “Do you think that the inhabitants on both sides of Dnestr River have two different national identities?”



On the other hand, the identity is building up over time, it is very vulnerable to the historical, political and cultural changes, and this is why the two sides have two different opinions. As long as the individual has a strong need to identify himself to a particular collectivity, which satisfies personal needs and gives a strong self identification, the individual is searching the right collectivity that could provide him with a strong sense of identity. The right side could not satisfy the Transnitrians with its own national identity, because it has a weak sense of identity, being a new independent country, and all this might create individual and collective conflicts. Both Moldova and Transnistria are passing through the identity crisis, Moldova because is a new state, which is trying to consolidate its sovereignty, and has to face the national movement and the consolidation of its history, while Transnistria desires to become an independent state and aspires to enforce the stateless Transnitrian identity.

Chart 16 presents the confusion between the citizenship and national identity, as we can see there are similar responses; it could also represent the wish to respond through civic identity, making it easier to avoid some other responses. Civic identity represents a sense of belonging, equality and solidarity with the local community members, being linked to the state structure. The civic identity is linked to the political or civic nation, and it was developed in the Eastern Europe, implicit in the Republic of Moldova. The political class and elites are using this new concept to manipulate as it was happening during the Soviet Era, when the same concept of civic identity was used on purpose to avoid the development of other types of identity, such as national or ethnic. Considering an empirical analysis the civic identity can be based on local or state identity, which implies rights and duties, perception about common goals and future. So the individuals are making confusion between the civic identity, that is state identity, and the national identity, which represents personal feelings that belong to a certain nation.

Chart 16: “Do you think that the national identity can be substituted by the citizenship?”

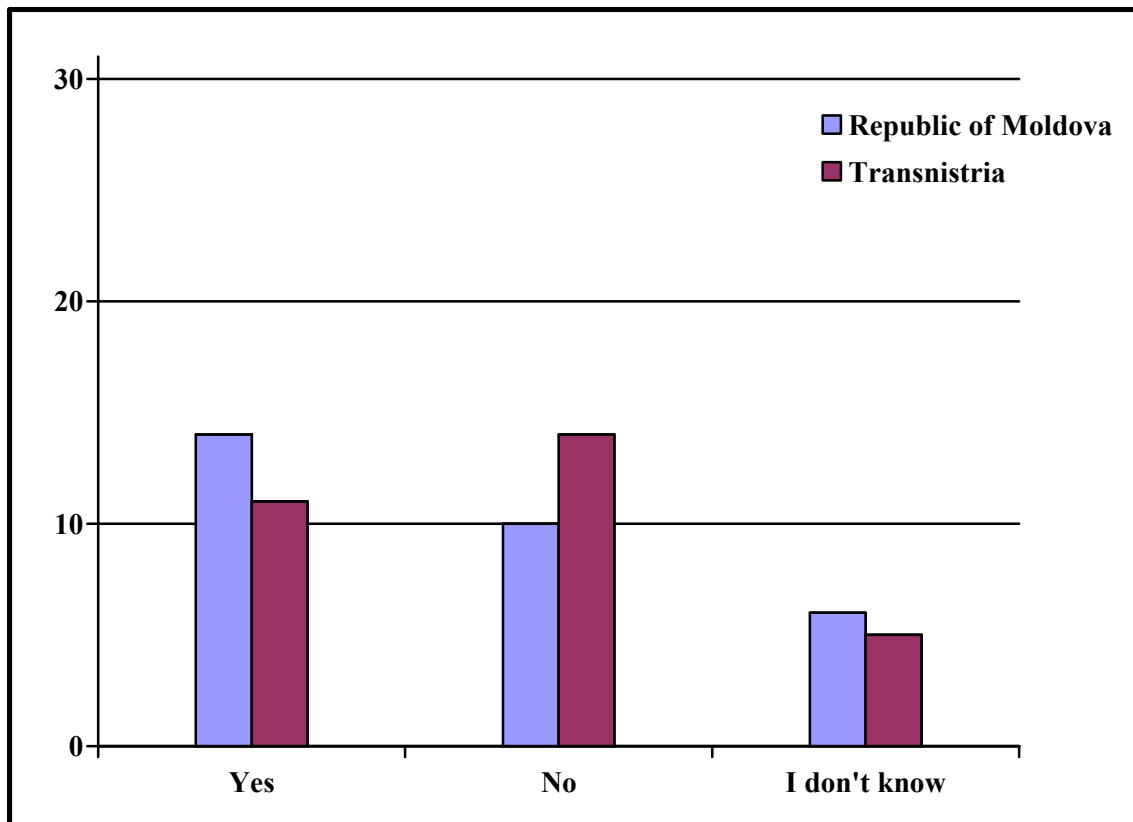
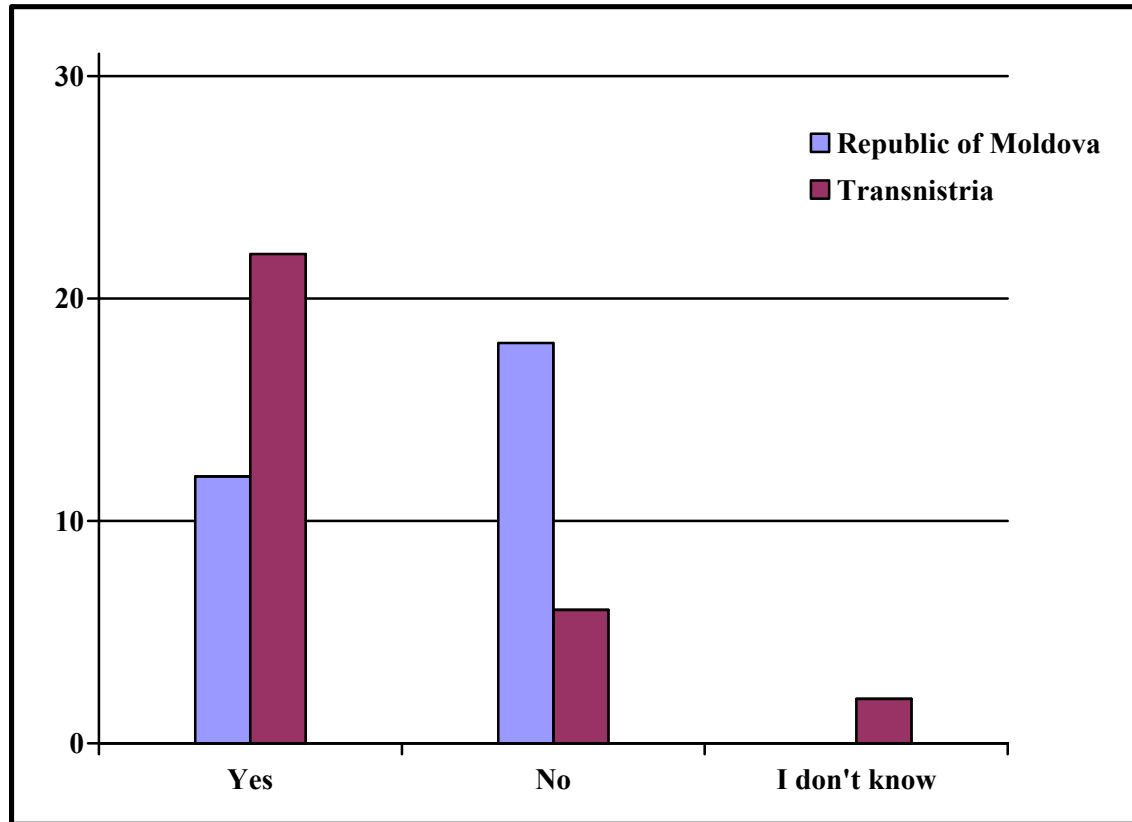


Chart 17: “Do you think that the concept of national identity is based rather on personal and individual values?”

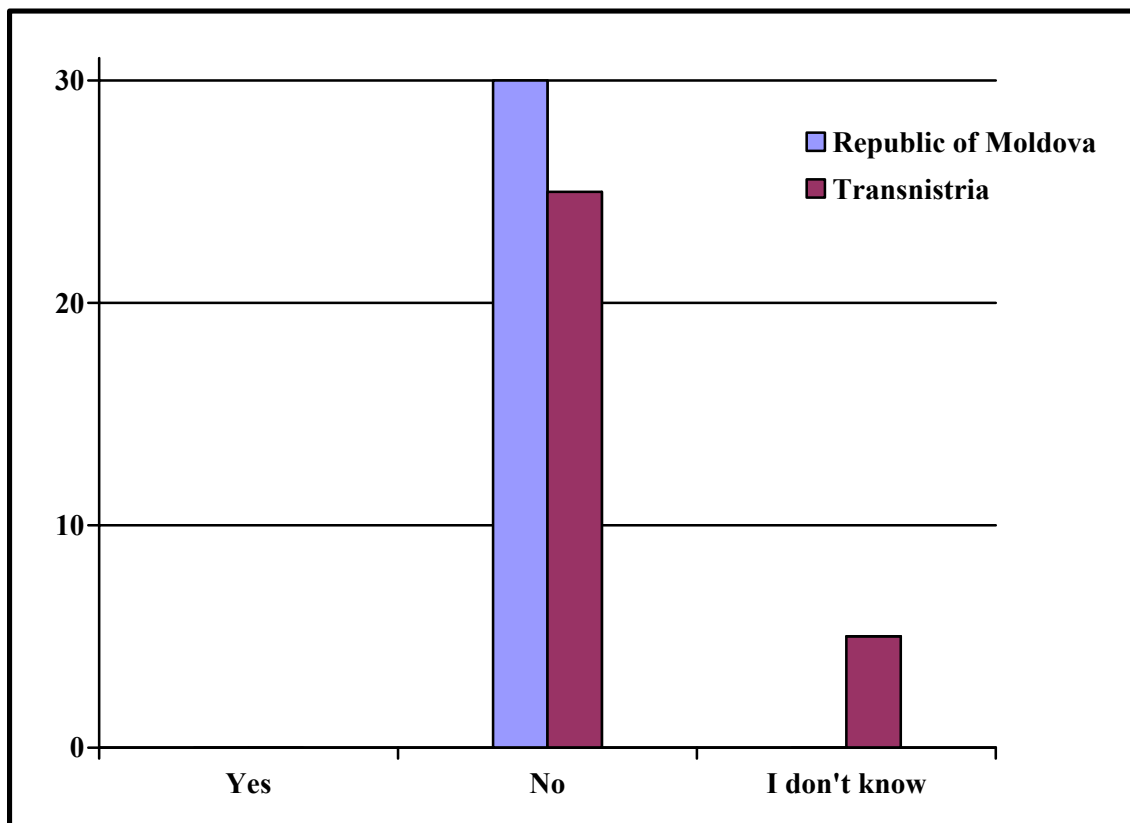


Regarding the national identity based on personal or national values, the Transnistrians consider that it is based more on personal values and less on national values; meanwhile the Moldovans endorse the opposite point of view. The responses had to do with the political situation in the region, more specifically that in Moldova the politics tried to consolidate the Moldovan nation, and implicitly the national values. In the Transnistrian side, the people are Transnistrians because they do not want to be Moldovans, but there does not exist a strong national feeling, only an ethnic feeling exists – Russian people, Ukrainian people, and because they are aware of their country’s unsolved situation. The Transnistrian people exist only in antithesis with the Moldovan people, actually the separatist region exists only in antithesis with the right side, otherwise, in any other situation, this region might be incorporated to Ukraine or could become a Russian enclave officially. Under these circumstances, the national identity is based more on

personal values, because the identity expresses the values which the individuals or groups share with other individuals or groups, values that enforce all types of identities. The people there are sharing the common values with Russians, Ukrainian people, but they do not have strong national values.

There is no confusion between the national identity and ethnic identity, only some respondents from Transnistrian sample chose “I don’t know”. The answers show that there is no confusion about ethnic identity, and that the conflict is not based on ethnical reasons, as both Moldovans and Transnistrians have more or less the same ethnic proportion of people.

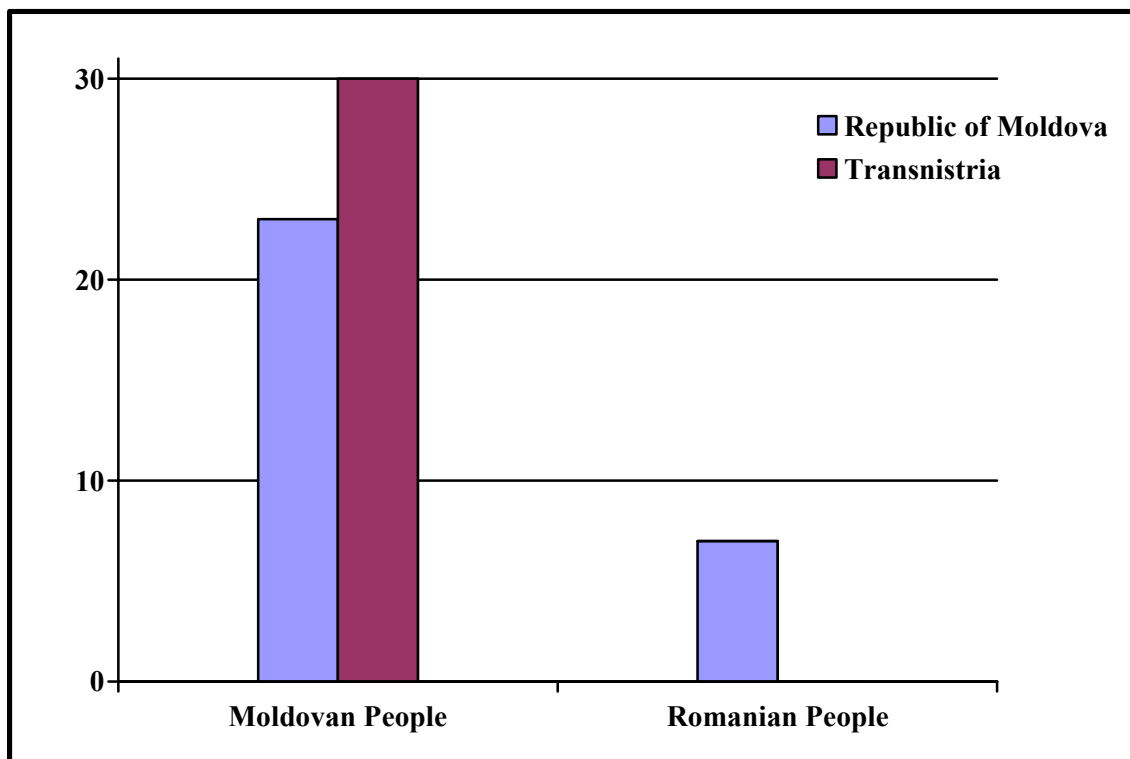
Chart 18: “Do you think that the national identity can be substituted by the ethnic identity?”



The fourth section includes the general questions about the country’s future and what the right solution to solve the country’s problem could be. The section is important for the better understanding of the peoples’ expectations in the region and how they will decide to choose the future of their country. It includes, as well, the individuals’ preferred resolution of the situation.

Chart 19 suggests that the Moldovans consider themselves to be *Moldovan people* and only few of them *Romanian people*, while the Transnistrians consider the right side inhabited only by Moldovan people. It is obvious that the political project to develop and consolidate the Moldovenism has been successful, and the major part of Moldova considers that the Moldovan people exist, and implicitly the Moldovan identity exists also.

Chart 19: “What do you think is the most appropriate name for the inhabitants on the right side of Dnestr?”



On the other hand, there might be some confusion between the citizenship and the ethnic identity, as all are considered to be Moldovan people discounting the national desire, because the term “Moldovan” does not have ethnic connotations, but highlights that they are the residents of the Republic of Moldova. None of the Transnistrians consider that Romanian people live on the right side, as on the left side Russian people do. Actually there is deliberate use and confusion between the ethnic minority, national identities and the citizenship. In Moldova, the use of the term “Moldovan people”, generally represents the community with all ethnic minorities, the terms is used to avoid some discrimination towards some ethnic minorities. To avoid some interethnic divergences among people the total sum of individuals of the country is called “Moldovan people”.

Chart 20: *“What do you think is the most appropriate name for the inhabitants on the left side of Dneestr?”*

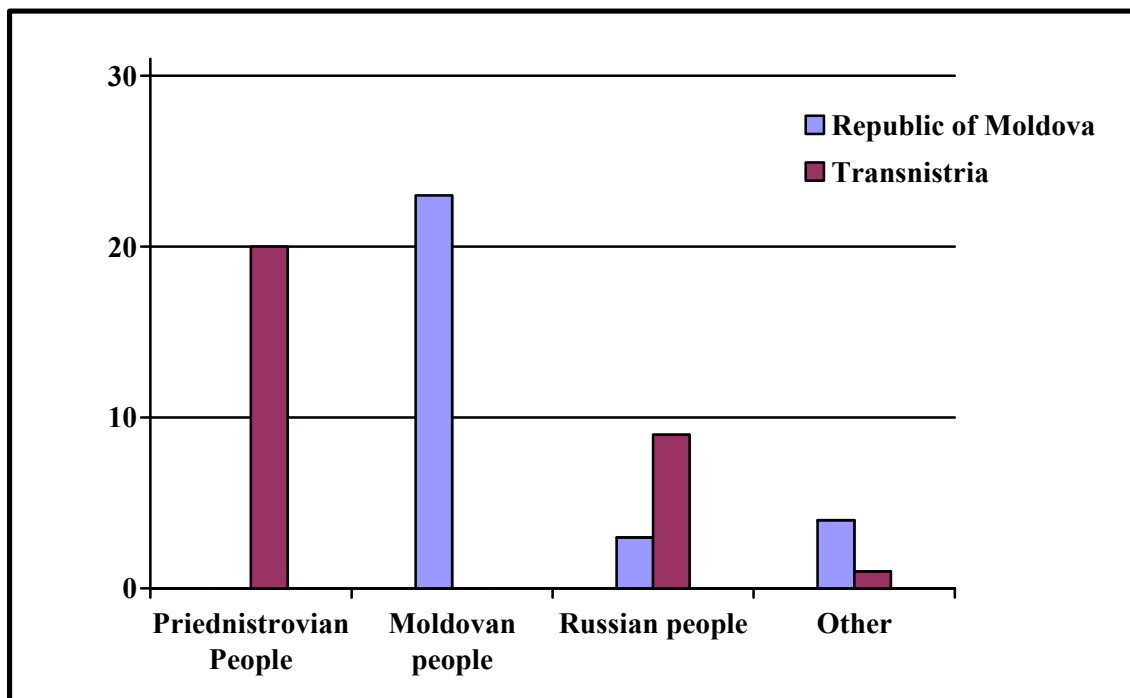


Chart 20 represents the opinion about the inhabitants of the left side and the responses are more different compared to the answers about the right side. The Transnistrians consider

about themselves that they are “Priednistrovian people” – the majority, and only few of them consider that are Russian people, while the majority from the Moldovan sample consider that the left side is populated by the Moldovan people and only few of them consider the Transnistrians Russian people. The only particular responses are that the left side is viewed by few Moldovans as Romanian people, and a Transnistrian respondent considers that it is a *separatist region*.

The similarity between Moldovan and Transnistrian samples is given by the “Russian people” answer; on both sides there are individuals who consider Transnistria inhabited by Russian people – descendents of the Homo Sovieticus. Meanwhile, the difference between the two samples consists in fact that only from inside Transnistria there is the “Transnistrian people”, as Anderson asserts that the communities are imagined because *in the minds of each lives the image of their communion* [Anderson 1991:7]. The Moldovan sample refuses to consider that on the left side “Transnistrian people” live and have their separate “Transnistrian identity”. The Moldovans consider the two sides should have a common future, as a common state, named the Republic of Moldova; Transnistrians, on the other hand, desire to have an independent country, inhabited by Transnistrian people, with their own identity, different of Moldova’s. The responses might be explained by the fact that the Transnistrian identity is a political, newly created identity, which is recognized only by the separatist region. The Transnistrian people and identity started to be created after the collapse of the USSR, and has been enforced especially during the frozen conflict; therefore it is only 20 years old. There are a lot of authors who believe that “Transnistrian identity” and “Transnistrian nationalism” became an instrument of political manipulation, by using it to develop and maintain the idea that the most important events are happening near Transnistrian Moldovan Republic border.

The new identity has also been formed for another reason: the psychological dimension, the need to have an identity. Because of the existing propaganda, that the two sides are quite different between them, the Moldovan identity does not satisfy the left side, so the *concept of a new identity* was created. In other words, the Transnistrians are passing through the *identity crisis*, as Erikson asserts that the identity crisis appears because the

people lose “a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity” [Erikson 1963: 153]. The Transnistrians are very offended if somebody reminds them that they have common ties and origins with the Moldovans. And in this amalgam of concepts, stereotypes, propaganda, elite’s and political interest, the existing border between the two banks of the river, the languages used, the desire to be more closer to a country or other, all these lead to a desire to be different, to have own “self-propriety”, actually own self-identity. Considering the existing propaganda in the region, it is hopeless to change something, because the inhabitants from the left side are hearing every minute that the two sides are inhabited by different people. They could not impose Russian, Ukrainian or even Moldavian identity, because of the mix of ethnic minorities, as long as both regions are inhabited by the same ethnic groups –Moldovan, Russian, and Ukrainian – so they avoided to create the confusion and to impose a determinate identity. That is why they formed a new Transnistrian identity, which is a common tolerant identity in order to de-escalate the conflict.

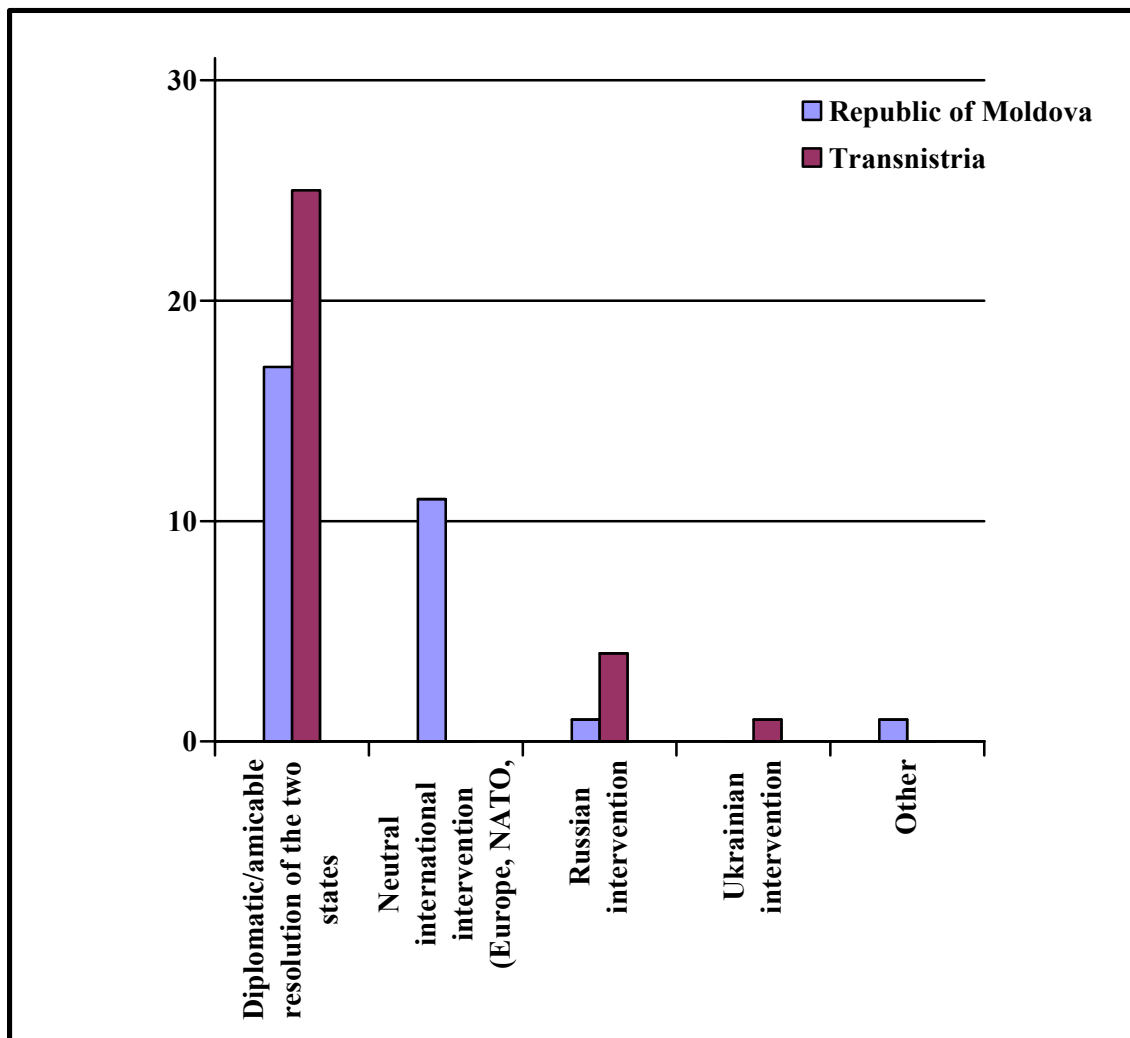
In 2002⁸⁴, when a study about the collective memory on forming the *Transnistrian identity* has been conducted, the term identity *was still taking shape*; compared with that period, in our research everybody in the Transnistrian sample considers the left side “Pridnestrovian people”, so we can be sure that the things have been changing and the percentage of the people who believe in “Transnistrian people and identity” has increased considerably. Also considering that, from the total population of 550.000, over 270 thousand people, aged 18 or more, who live in Transnistria, opted for the Republic of Moldova’s citizenship, while the Smirnov regime encourage to increase the number of person who have or opt for Russian citizenship.

Analyzing chart 21, it is obvious that the respondents from both sides consider that diplomatic intervention is the best way to solve their conflict, which actually represents the similarity between them. The main difference is that Moldovans consider that the neutral international intervention could be a solution, while Transnistrian respondents trust more in the Russian help. Some particular responses were that *Ukrainian*

⁸⁴ Suhan (2002)

intervention represents the only way to solve the conflict - from one Transnistrian respondent, while a Moldovan respondent considers the solution is the *strengthening of the Moldovan statehood*.

Chart 21: “What do you think is the best way to solve the conflict?”



Comparing the responses of the questionnaire with the responses of the Barometer of the Public Opinion (2010)⁸⁵, which has been held in Moldova only on the right side, some

⁸⁵ Raportul final BOP – noiembrie 2010. More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=156&id=558&parent=0>

similarity results, namely the trust of the Moldovans in the neutral resolution of the conflict, while Transnistrians do not trust this option; they consider the best way is represented by the diplomatic or amicable resolution between the two sides.

Chart 22: “How do you see the future of Priednistrovie?”

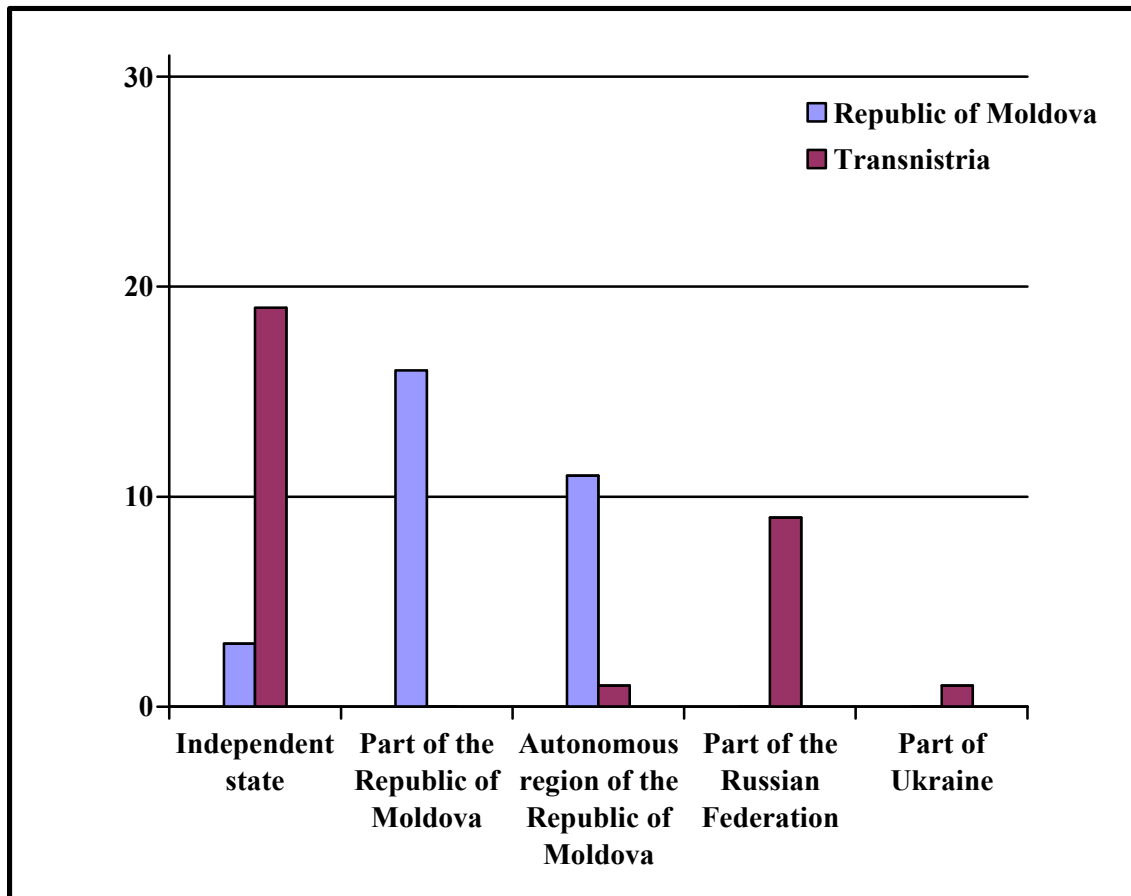
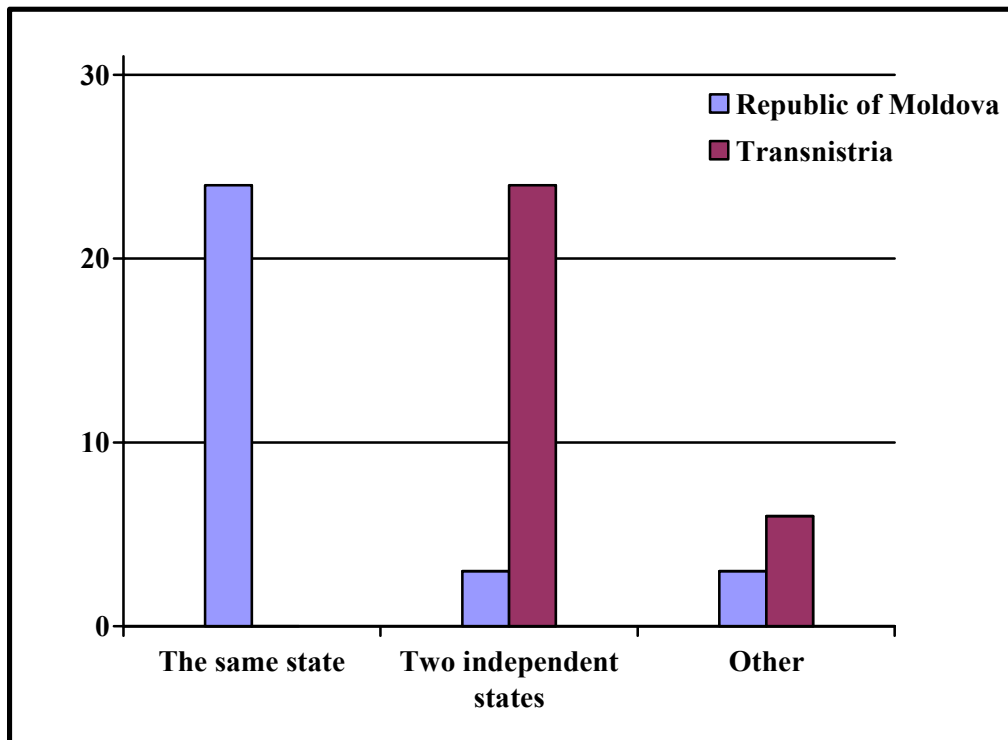


Chart 22 shows that the two samples have different responses for the future of the two sides of the country. The Transnistrians consider that the best way for the left side is to become an independent state or to be incorporated into the Russian Federation, while the Moldovans consider that the left side should be part of the Republic of Moldova, either as a common region, with no statutory special rights or as an Autonomous Region of Moldova. The only particular answer was from a Transnistrian respondent that he agrees

that Transnistria should become an Autonomous Region of the Republic of Moldova, which could mean that the inhabitants might start to see the possibility of a common future of the two sides as a Federative State. The survey made by O’Loughlin in 2010⁸⁶ confirms that some of the Transnistrians accept to be part of the Republic of Moldova, since 15% from the Transnistrian sample has chosen this answer. Another particular response is to become part of Ukraine, from a Transnistrian respondent.

Chart 23: “How do you see the relation between the two sides of Dnestr River evolving?”



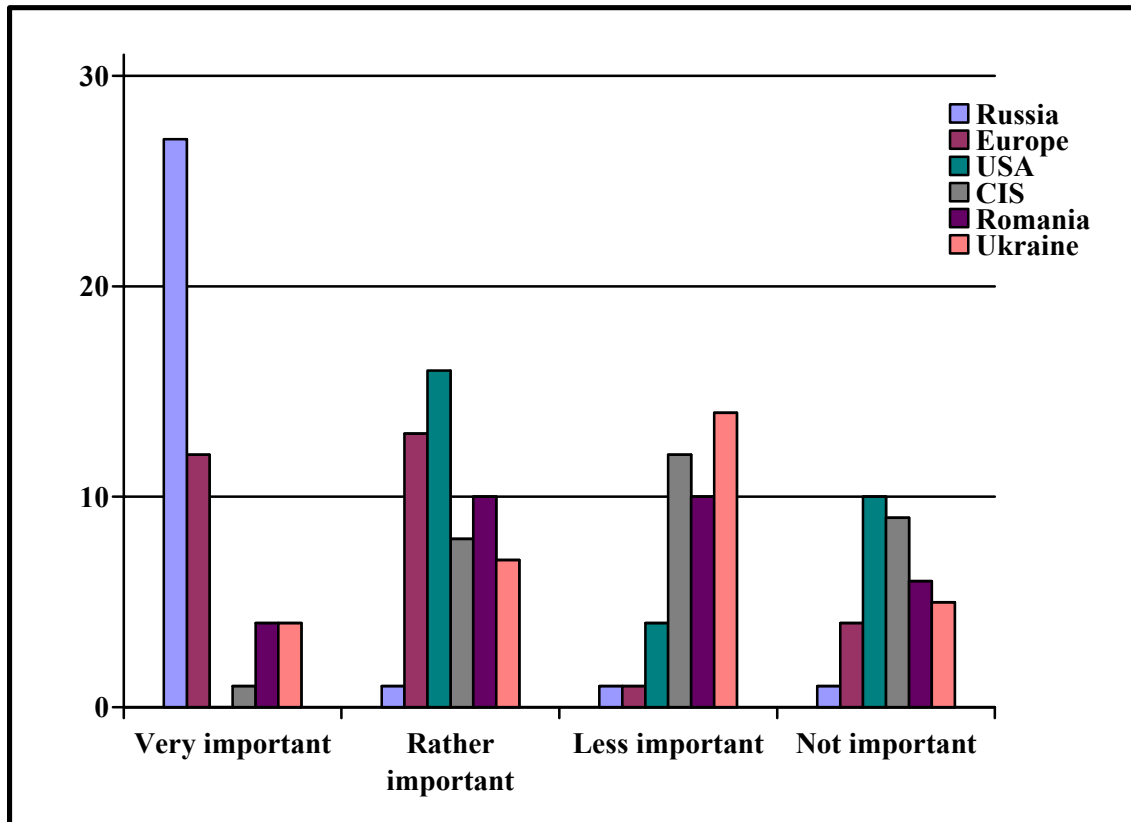
The chart above shows that Moldovans have a high desire to re-integrate the region, given their responses that the relationship between the two sides should evolve into the same state; Transnistrians, on the other hand, consider that the region should be independent. The particular responses are to be part of Ukraine or part of Russia.

⁸⁶ More information is available at:
http://www.colorado.edu/ibs/pec/defacto_states/docs/GWU_28Sept_graphs-notes.pdf

Actually, comparing to other surveys, the Transnistrians consider their future and relation closer to the Russian culture than to the Moldovan or other cultures.

In the O’Loughlin survey⁸⁷, both Transnistrian and Moldovan samples consider that the Soviet model was the best model – Moldovans 40% and Transnistrians 50%. The elder respondents opted for the Soviet model, while the younger preferred the Western systems. As the author shows, there is a gap between the Soviet generation and young generation.

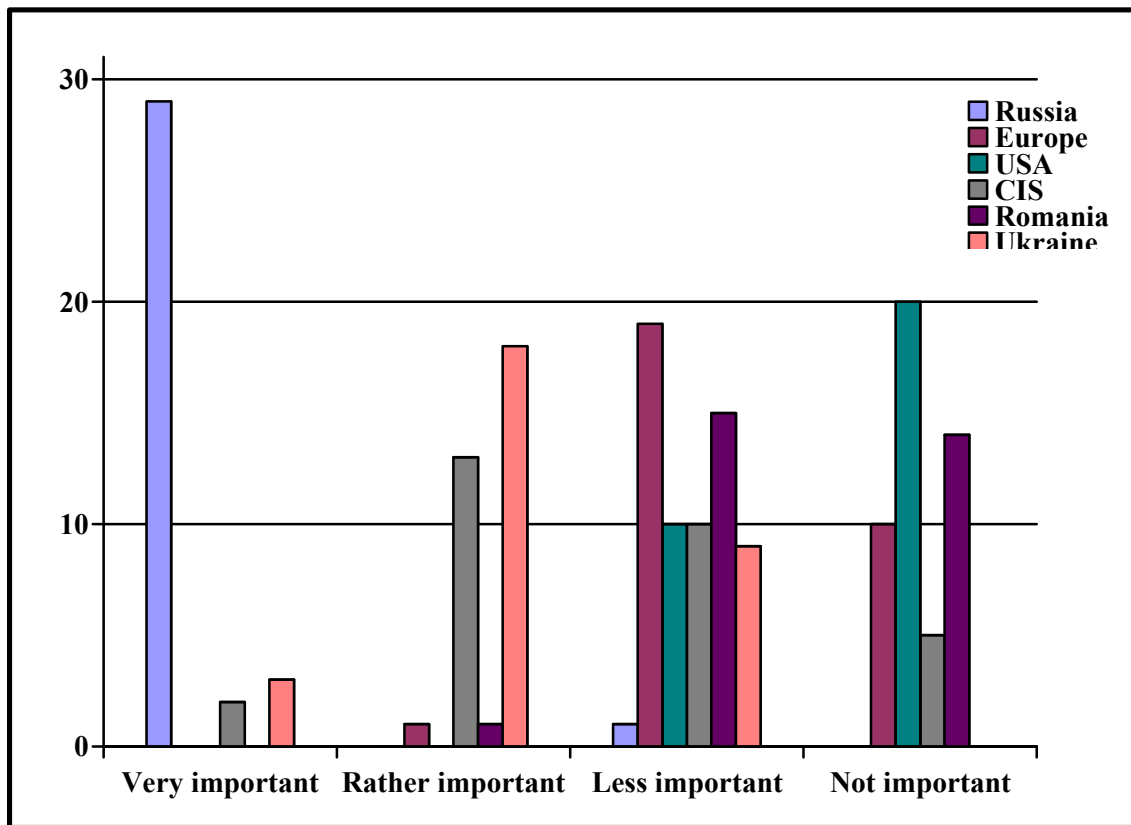
Chart 24a: “Please identify the importance of the following actors regarding the resolution of the present situation between both sides of Dneestr River”- the Moldovan sample.



⁸⁷ More information is available at:
http://www.colorado.edu/ibs/pec/defacto_states/docs/GWU_28Sept_graphs-notes.pdf

My approach includes only the post-war generation because they represent the future, and they could work together to make the demanded changes. They are more flexible to learn and achieve more information. But unfortunately, the gap between the young generations from the two sides exists, and with the passing of the time the gap is deepening.

Chart 24b: “Please identify the importance of the following actors regarding the resolution of the present situation between both sides of Dnestr River”- the Transnistrian sample.



Another particularity of the responses is represented by the fact that both types of respondents consider that Russia has an important role in the conflicts settlement, as it is shown in charts 24a and 24b. The Transnistrians do not consider USA important at all, Ukraine has a major role because of its adjacency, while Europe only for few of them represents some importance, but minor. Meanwhile, the Moldovans consider Russia the most important actor and on the second level is the European Union. This is because the

closeness of Transnistrians to the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and because they are feeling and thinking in Russian language, and their unique present rescue is represented by the Russian Federation. The Moldovans are closer to the European identity and feelings. This might be because most of Moldovans have European citizenships and prefer to work in European countries, compared to the Transnistrian citizens who have Russian or Ukrainian citizenships and prefer the East Europe to live and work. Romania is considered to be important only by the Moldovan sample, because of their affinity and proximity. CIS is considered to be the least important by both samples.

The last group of questions includes the individual possible behaviors and attitudes regarding a possible new armed conflict. This section also analyzes the individual readiness to the conflict, and whether or not they are ready to fight for this cause, and the opinion about each other regarding the readiness for the fight.

Chart 25: “How will you proceed to obtain the resolution of the Dnestrovian conflict, if it will be necessary to fight?”

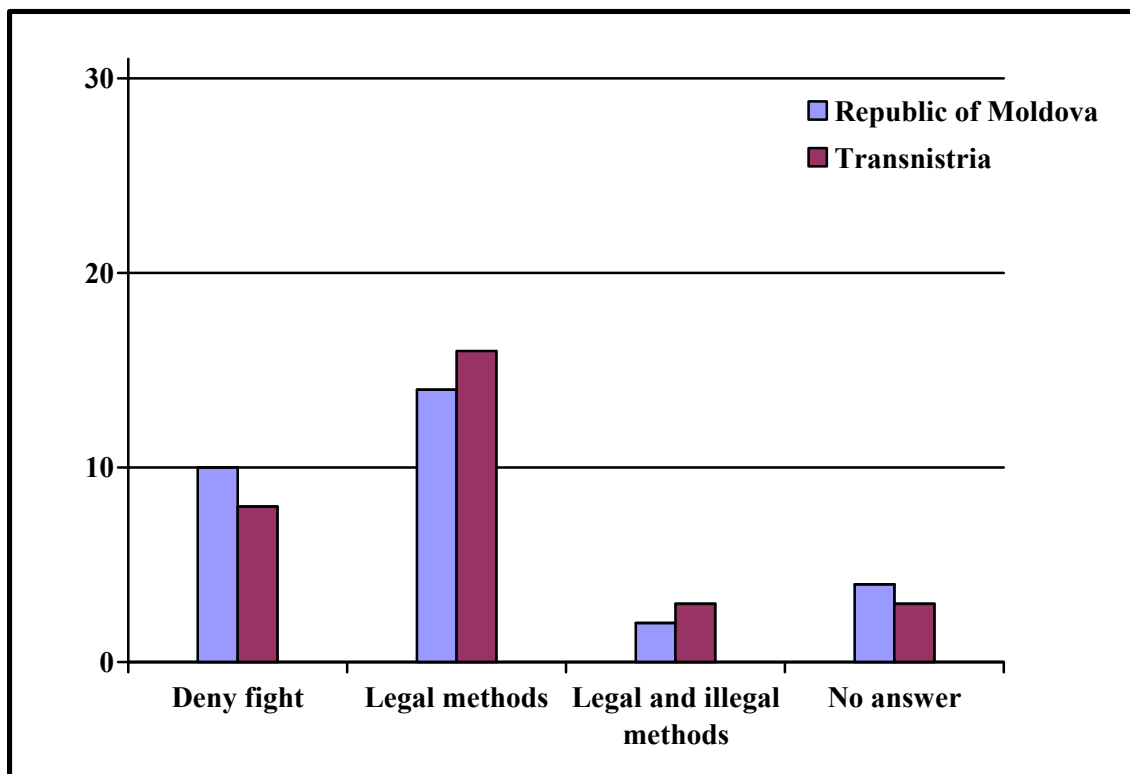
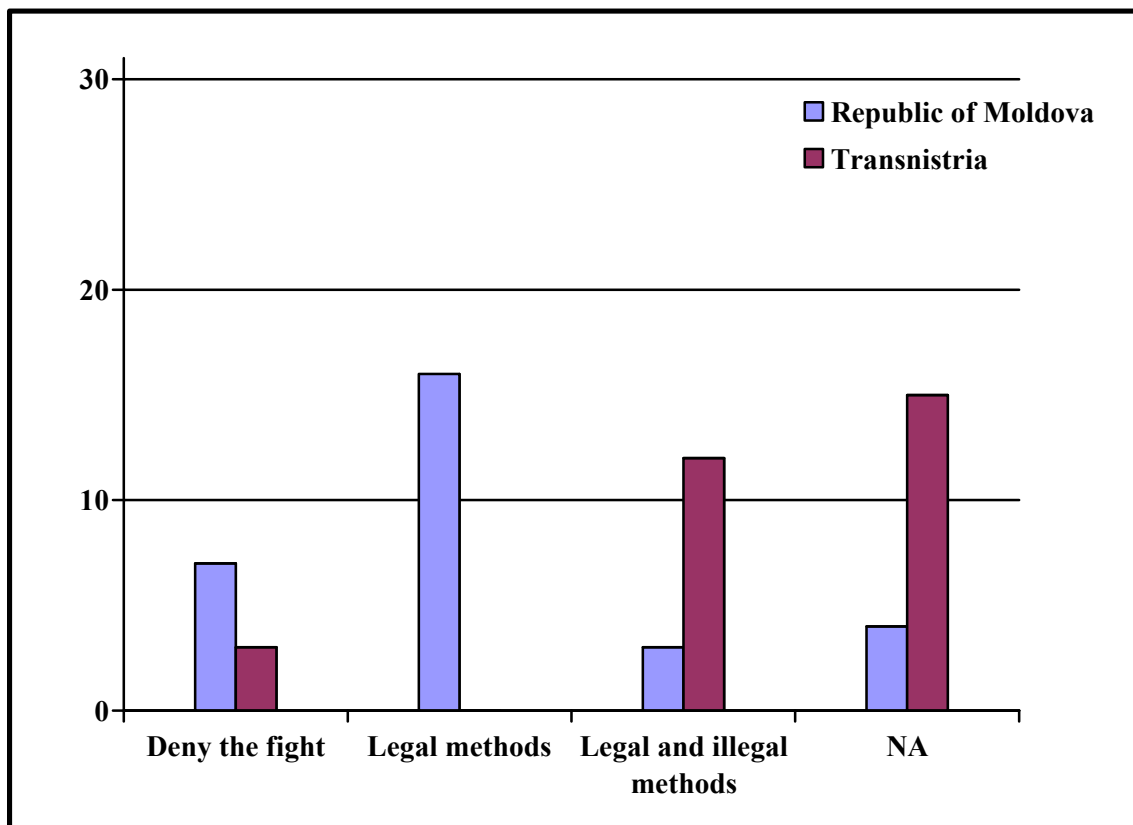


Chart 26 presents that the Moldovan sample chose the answers that the Moldovans will use most of all legal methods to fight in order to defend their country or at least will deny the fight; only few of them chose “no answer” or considered that it is possible to use both legal and illegal methods. Meanwhile, the Transnistrians believe that Moldovans will use all legal and illegal methods to fight, and the major part responded “No Answer”; only few of them considered that the right side will deny the fight and nobody from the Transnistrian sample answered that the Moldovans will *use only legal methods*. This is because of the existing propaganda against the Moldovans, stating that Moldovans started the conflict and they represent the “oppressors” of the Transnistrian people. The right side is pictured as it would be impatient to conquer the left region by all means.

Chart 26: “What do you think is the attitude of the people on the right bank in terms of a possible armed conflict?”



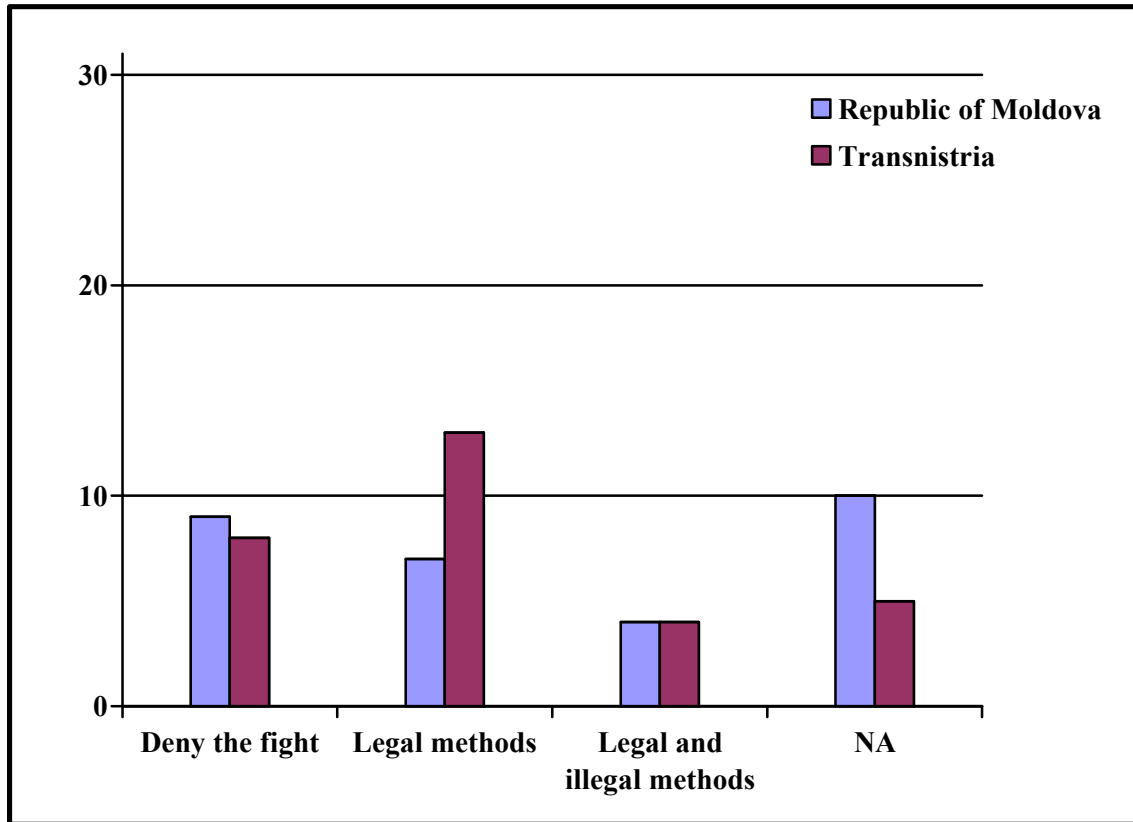
Actually, Transnistrians consider that Moldovans are ready to fight against them, according to the existing opinion in the region, that Moldovans started the war and they could start it again. To predict their adversaries' behavior, the individuals usually believe in the stereotypes, or they are more likely to rely on past behavior. The inverted relation between victim and aggressor is also used, by using a constant Soviet propaganda. The method of accusation is still used by separatist leaders, using a defensive language, that they are victims and are suffering because of the aggressor's behavior. The Transnistrian sample presents the fact that, in Transnistria, the negative stereotype that Moldovans represent the negative "Others" is enforced.

Comparing with the results from the Ethno Barometer, conducted only on the right side, the fear that an armed conflict could happen again is 10-15 %, and those who expressed such fears indicate Transnistria and Romania as aggressors [Ethno barometer 2006: 106]⁸⁸. At the question – *Do you think that an armed conflict with the neighboring countries is possible?* – 30% from the majority group fears about a possible armed conflict, out of which, 82% fears that the war could happen between Moldova and Transnistria, while 9% consider that it could happen between Moldova and Russia All this demonstrates that stereotype, created by propaganda, exist in the Moldovan side too and the gap between the two sides has created different opinion about each other.

Chart 27 shows the results about the Transnistrian's attitude regarding a possible armed conflict. The Transnistrian sample considers that they will deny the fight or will use only legal methods to defend their separatist region, only some of them consider that all legal and illegal methods will be used and few refused to respond. The Moldovan sample considered Transnistrians not to be very aggressive; actually, the most respondents considered that they will deny the fight and some of them refused to answer. The respondents who believe that Transnistrians will use all illegal method to fight are equal to those in the Transnistrian sample.

⁸⁸ More information is available at: <http://www.ipp.md/libview.php?l=en&idc=163&id=76>

Chart 27: “What do you think is the attitude of the people on the left bank in terms of a possible armed conflict?”



The conflict readiness is considered to be interconnected with “cognitive and affective components of prejudice”, and all negative prejudice, stereotype and beliefs reinforce it [Korostelina 2007: 55]. The interesting issue is that both samples believe about themselves that will use *only legal method to fight* or *will deny it*; that means that the readiness to fight exists, but only with legal methods and under some particular circumstances. While the Moldovans are considered by the Transnistrian sample to be more aggressive and to have a higher conflict readiness state, for both illegal and legal method, this is mainly because the right side attacked the left one in 1992, in order to maintain the independence of the state; so the same belief still exists, that one day the right side could attack again the left one, in order to take control. Transnistrians enforce this negative belief, because the young generation, which was born during the war, still fears that Moldovans might attack again.

7.2 FURTHER INTERPRETATION

As the identity represents a key element, which gives a sense of personal stability to the individuals, through it the individual can express its personal values by sharing them with a collectivity; identity gives to the individuals strong feelings of self-esteem, dignity and confidence; this represents a reason why the identity is so complex to express, to quantify, to develop and to define.

The Republic of Moldova represents a young state, it is characterized by a weak sense of identity and the inhabitants have been affected by this fact. According to some scholars (Feinstein 2010) Moldova has been characterized by identity crisis before becoming a Soviet Republic, and Moldova is still represented by the identity crisis, considering the historical continuity as a question. As long as the debate about the history among the Moldovans – about their Romanian or Slavic roots – will continue, the identity crisis will not be solved. Between the consolidation of the state and the sense of the identity there is a mutual relation, the strong sense of identity creates and maintains the capacity to consolidate the integrity of the territory and to enforce the national identity. The integrity of the state also can not be consolidated because of the unresolved conflict. As long as the identity is strongly linked to the conflict, specific conflict relations might appear and this is because the inhabitants are looking for a society with a strong sense of identity in order to satisfy their intense need to identify with it.

In the past, in the separatist region, the identity crisis was satisfied by the Soviet identity and by the ethnic Russian identity, which is very strong and it represents a pattern for the newly created “Transnistrian identity”. Most part of the population believes that the Russian Federation represents the only rescue from this uncertain situation – the unrecognized state. The Transnistrians feel the weak Moldovan identity and refuse to identify with it; they prefer to create a new identity with Soviet patterns. Comparing with the research made by O’Loughlin⁸⁹, nearly half of respondents want to unify Russia and have the Russian identity.

Actually, both countries pass through identity crises, and both identities have two different patterns. The similarity between the two identities is that they represent the political identities – differing only for the reasons why the identities have been created. The Moldovan identity was created in order to maintain the sovereignty of the state and is a consequence of the establishment of the state, while the Transnistrian identity and people have been created in order to create the state. Another similarity is that both identities have the purpose to avoid the interethnic conflicts.

There are more differences between those identities. The creation of the Moldovan identity started in the Tsarist period, has continued during the Soviet Era, has been enforced after the military confrontation in order to avoid other military or ethnic confrontations and was recently consolidated during the communist’s party regime. The Moldovan identity has Romanian historic ties, being mixed with Slavic influences, while the Transnistrian identity has only Slavic and Soviet influences and it is very young. It has been shaped during the Soviet Era by the existing stereotypes and differences between the two sides, but its creation started at the beginning of the 1980’, during the Perestroika and after the fall of the Soviet countries, when the national renaissance and nationalism were emphasized. In that period, the two identities started to create the gap between them. That period is also characterized by elite and political interests, state-protectorate and neighbors interests. All these led only to the deeper and deeper gap

⁸⁹ More information is available at:
http://www.colorado.edu/ibs/pec/defacto_states/docs/GWU_28Sept_graphs-notes.pdf

between the identities. Another difference is that the Moldovan identity and people have a state, while the Transnistrian identity and people are stateless.

In consequences the people from the two sides are acting in different ways, they have different aspirations regarding their future and relations, have different opinion about each other, because the lack of mutual action and communication, they are developing diverse relation with the Western and Eastern countries. Moldovans have European aspirations while Transnistrians do not trust the Western influence, actually they do not trust anybody except the Slavic culture. Moldovans aspire to European integration, are ready to start the democratization process, while the Transnistrians desire to follow the model of the Russian Federation and of other unrecognized states. The Moldovan state represents a civic concept of nation, by pointing the relation between the state and its individuals, even if sometimes the confusion between the state identity and their ethnic identity is made; the Transnistrian region has an ethnic concept of nation, with a monolingual perception – the Russian language, where the nation is forming around the core ethnic identity – the former Soviet identity and now the Russian identity, into which the other minorities must be assimilated. Moldovans consider the national values very important, because they desire the resolution of the frozen conflict, while Transnistrians are considering rather the personal values more important, because they do not have a nation yet. They are waiting to have it.

The conflict might occur when the person's chosen identity is not compatible with the identity imposed by "others" or by the social context; that is why the need to create a new identity appears, an identity which is in compliance with the need of one's own group, a common tolerant identity, in order to de-escalate the conflict. The new common created identity gives the individual more positive attitudes toward former out-group members, even if there were offenses and negative attitudes between them in the past. As Gaertner asserts, in order to produce a new national identity some specific elements connected with the concept of national identity have to be adopted, such as values, beliefs, expectations and assumptions, in order to transform the national identity in a collective product [Gaertner 2000]. That has happened on both sides, the Moldovan and

Transnistrian identities have been created to avoid all kind of conflicts, and the two identities represent two new tolerant identities in order to decrease the conflict readiness and negative attitudes, to avoid the interethnic misunderstandings. These identities are in compliance with the political leaders from both sides, with the state-protectorates of each side, with the individuals' orientation – pro Western or pro-Eastern, with the political propaganda and mass-media, with all beliefs and prejudices about each other created during the Communist times, beliefs and prejudices that exist until today.

For instance, some factors are conventionally generally accepted as factors that may lead to conflict – the personal and collective frustration, the denial of human rights, political and economical reasons, spatial and territorial disputes, the role of the political elite, the political propaganda. In the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria some of those general accepted factors are present and could lead to the conflict, such as:

- ◆ *territorial dispute*, where both Moldova and Transnistria are weak states, which try to consolidate its territory and have to face the institutional building, Moldova as an independent and international recognized state and Transnistria as a separatist region;
- ◆ the *political and economical motivation*, Transnistria is considered to be more developed than Moldova, because Transnistria is an industrial region and Moldova is agrarian;
- ◆ the *political elite* from both sides have some advantages from the “frozen conflict”;
- ◆ the *manipulation of the public opinion*, using a political propaganda, in Transnistria the Moldovan newspapers are forbidden, and both sides describe the opposite side in a very subjective and tainted way; the propaganda also includes the redefinition of history – in Transnistria the students and pupils are studying the Soviet literature, the Geography and History of Transnistria and, most intriguing, the Geography and History of the USSR; meanwhile, the Moldovans are learning the European path.

The conflict readiness is, in general, for both identities, at a low level, Moldovans and Transnistrians do not desire to pass again through a new armed conflict, they will rather deny participating to a new military intervention. They will choose to fight only if they will not have any alternative, and will fight using only the legal methods. But the belief

that Moldovans are more aggressive and will use the illegal method too in order to fight still persists among the new Transnistrian generation. This shows that the collective memory is also used to develop and consolidate the stereotypes into the young generations.

Korostelina asserts that the individuals have some negative perceptions and attitudes toward the members of the out-groups even between peaceful and cooperative groups. The negative attitudes are represented by the underestimation of the out-group beliefs and culture, degrading stereotypes, the attribution of an unacceptable behavior [Korostelina 2008:101]. Moldovans and Transnistrians have stereotypical and prejudice beliefs about each other. The stereotypes and prejudices are the same since the Soviet Era and have been “refreshed” with new prejudices, like the one that Moldovans are the “aggressors”, the “occupants” of Transnistria, the reason why the armed conflict has happened, Moldovans represent the *negative “They”*, whom it is better to avoid. Moldovans, on the other hand, see Transnistrians as being Russians, the foreigners, the separatists, the reason why the frozen conflict still remain unsolved, and, of course, the *negative “They”*.

In my opinion the existing gap was created artificially and it is still maintained the same way. If starting today every body would begin to *work together to develop a common goal* between the two sides, it will be possible to diminish the existing and the imagined diversity between the people. They need to develop and share some common activities in order to understand that there is no difference between them. Because both ideologies from Transnistria and Moldova are politically controlled, the population needs to cooperate in order to make the changes. Since Moldovans and Transnistrians have managed to live together more than 50 years without any kind of conflict, all these mean that it is possible to continue to have a common living, inside the same state. As Lungu mentioned, the population, especially from Transnistria, needs to be *self-actualized*⁹⁰, in order to understand the differences between the nations, cultures, values too [Lungu

⁹⁰ Lungu A. explains that self-actualization is connected with one’s self-esteem, considering Maslow’s Pyramid. Further, the author presents what would be the first step to achieve the self-actualization: freeing Transnistrians from cage, giving them the opportunity to travel around the world, in order to experience new things, to share the new experiences with others and to develop communication abilities.

2007: 13]. As long the Transnistrians will consider the Russians the supreme power, the situation will remain the same.

Between the two sides, it is necessary to *build trust among the population*, to convince them that “the others” not represent enemies for each other, but represent the same people that have been living together for more that 50 years; they have to share common features, and they have to learn from each other their different features to improve their knowledge. The trust can only be learned by the people for the people, within family, school, organizations, groups, and media. The NGOs could promote projects for both sides in order to create the communication between people, putting into practice the “contact hypothesis” proposed by Allport , which suggests that contacts could reduce the inter-group prejudices and stereotypes [Allport 1954 267]. The people should also understand that the differences are not always negative, but could be positive, and that between the Romans and Slavs origins friendship might exist, not only animosity.

The people from the right side could take some initiative finding the common features with the left side, developing it and trying to promote it among the population. It is important that the population should understand the reality and act in compliance with it. Moldovans and Transnistrians should understand that the resolution of the conflict depends first of all on them, should accept that they are responsible for their future. The creation of a federative state in Moldova will not solve the problems if the people are still holding the same negative attitudes towards each other and do not understand that they should start to cooperate for a better standard of their lives. Even supposing Transnistria becomes an independent state, it should cooperate with Moldova too, it should give up its attitude of being offended by everything is Moldovan or with Romanian roots. We consider that, by starting to cooperate and develop amicable communication, it will be easier to find a solution for the conflict settlement.

CONCLUSIONS

We started our research work presenting some hypothesis about the Moldovan/Transnistrian conflict. The first ones was that the frozen conflict has an impact not only on internal level – a lasting unsolved conflict, but at international level too – that the Republic of Moldova has a common border with the European Union, and a frozen conflict threatens the EU's stability. Also, illegal activities take place at the Ukraine-Transnistrian border, such as smuggling, money laundering, weapons trafficking, and all of these involving more leaders from more different countries.

The second hypothesis presumed that the two identities, which were created in the same country, but are very distinct from each other, block the settlement of the conflict, both on the national level – a practical measure can not be taken under those circumstances – and on the international level – same country having two distinct identities: Moldovan and Transnistrian; one of them is pro-European, looking forward to the European integration, waiting for the settlement of the democratization process and international cooperation; meanwhile, Transnistrian identity is pro-Russian and develops mainly an eastern cooperation, especially with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and CIS countries. Transnistrian people are reluctant to every western influence, trusting only the same way of life they are used to.

The newly formed identities are passing at this moment through identity crises and the delay of the conflict's settlement only deepens them into their crises. With the passing of

time, the differences between the two identities are emphasized and evolve in a negative manner. At this moment, we have two identities that do not manage to cooperate with each other because of a number of factors: political propaganda; stereotypes of any kind; prejudices; Transnistrian's fear that Moldova would unite with Romania, forcing them into becoming Romanians; some Moldovan's mistake, considering that Transnistrians are Russians, although the same ethnic proportions can be found on both sides of the river; a number of other misbeliefs: Moldovans being aggressors, occupants, fascists, undeveloped, while Transnistrians are superior, more Russian-like and they hate Moldovans. In addition to those, Transnistrian propaganda also uses rhetorical questions and slogans, such as: "What do we need Moldova for, since it is so poor, even poorer than Transnistria?", "Moldova wants to unite with us only to take advantage of our industry", "We have managed to survive under those circumstances, we shall survive further". The same type of manipulation is used by the Moldovan propaganda as well: "We could integrate in the EU, but the situation in Transnistria is a major set back", "All Transnistrians are Russians – therefore Slavs, we have different origins", "Transnistrian smuggle anything: weapons, drugs, human beings"; Moldovan propaganda leaves out the fact that many political leaders from Moldova are, also, involved in those criminal activities.

Another factor is the delay in finding a common settlement itself. Moldova refused all resolutions proposed up to now because none of them met their criteria, but also failed, during all these years, to come up with a well-thought plan, in order to express its convinced demand to obtain once and for all a settlement for this frozen conflict. This was most likely owed to the communist Moldovan administration, which lasted for over 10 years; nowadays, the regime has changed and the new government seems to look forward to the democratization of the country and to involve actively into obtaining a settlement for the Transnistrian conflict.

Transnistria, also, takes its time in finding a resolution, mainly because the delay suits its interests and hopes that, someday, the international context shall change and it could obtain the independence. Officially, Transnistria supported all plans presented for the

settlement of the conflict, but, in actual fact, it disagreed and would not have signed any of them. Transnistrian leaders are pleased with the actual status-quo, because they manage to picture it as a favorable situation; Transnistrian elites also enjoy the situation, since they have all economic and political power in their hands. As long as for the population, every one is for himself – immigrating, resigning or adapting to the given situation.

The new generations, both in Moldova and in Transnistria, will feel the large gap that emerged between them. New generations in Transnistria only know this region as being Transnistria, while Moldovan young generation knows that both territories once formed a single country.

If no proceeding would be taken in order to decrease this gap, the hope for a settlement is very scarce. It should begin as soon as possible, as their future, whatever it might be, depends on these proceedings. Maintaining the actual status-quo implies large costs on different levels – economical, political, social and cultural – and even the internal and international cooperation is affected by the actual circumstances.

The settlement of this situation, both of the frozen conflict, and of the two new formed identities, can only be achieved by involving the international actors. Considering the efforts made by the EU – deploying several projects in Moldova and Transnistria, as well as UN, USA, OSCE, there is one factor that should not be underestimated: the human being. In other words, along with the signed economic projects, the population should also enjoy major care. An old Romanian saying tells “the human sanctifies the place”, so only the human being can make things different weather good, or bad. All international organizations involved in the conflict settlement should deploy new projects, involving common citizens and educating them to respect each other and “the Other” – the out-group. NGOs and other international organizations involved in the defense of human rights should consider that people need to learn how to respect themselves and the other ones. Some organizations should promote diversity and the fact that all that is foreign or different should be respected, not only avoided or even censured. People, regardless of

their status, must be given the possibility to understand that their country's future depends on them and, at the same time, they should also learn how to behave in order to assure the country's stability. Unfortunately, few funds are assigned for this purpose and, out of those, not all are used according to their intended purpose.

A decision has to be taken as soon as possible to inhibit the deepening of the psychological barrier that has been created artificially. It would be necessary to elaborate various projects, mainly in education, explaining the actual context of the Republic of Moldova, including internal and international relations, and to train the population to understand and debate the subjects. Mass-media should approach the situation in more precise and objective way, more studies and papers have to be published about the situation and information should even be distributed for free. The conflict should continue to be internationalized along with the population needs. If for the present, the internal border between Moldova and Transnistria could not be abolished, it could be abolished the psychological border between the Moldovans and Transnitrians.

It should be evidenced that both sides include the same ethnic proportion, and even if the two different identities have been created and are functioning already, it could be created a strong connection between them, in order to achieve a peaceful and constructive cooperation for the common prosperous future of the country. The two different identities should not be perceived only in a negative way, but it is necessary to discover and develop the positive aspects and the strong points of the new identities; as it was happening more that 21 years ago, when people on both sides used to respect each other regardless of their ethnic, national, personal, cultural, social, civic identity, even if stereotypical differences existed too.

Concluding, both hypotheses have been confirmed. More specifically, the first one asserts that the conflict represents an international issue; until now, without the involvement of the international actors, the settlement of the conflict has stagnated. The second one asserts that the new created identities at the European border will slow the conflict settlement and will deepen the gap between them, and, as the research reveals, it is

necessary to involve the NGOs and international organizations, in order to create a “common bridge” between Moldovans and Transnistrians.

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