



**Forum:** Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

**Topic:** The issue of Transnistria's Self-Declared Independence

**Student Officer:** Vasilis Fragkos

**Position:** Co-Chair

## **PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

Dear Delegates of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4),

My name is Vasilis Fragkos, and I am currently a 9th-grade student at Costeas-Geitonas School. This year, I have the utmost honour to serve as one of the Co-Chairs for the 5th St. Catherine's Model United Nations conference.

I would like to start by welcoming you to this year's SCMUN conference and congratulating you on choosing to experiment with the world of MUN. Model United Nations Conferences are unique, allowing their participants to acquire and develop multiple skills. Simultaneously, they promote the acquisition of knowledge concerning issues that directly influence modern society. Nevertheless, the benefits of MUN scale far beyond academically, facilitating new friendships, promoting diversity, and building strong bonds between people with the same interests but different perspectives.

This year's agenda of the GA4 includes two topics of utmost importance, "The issue of Transnistria's Self-Declared Independence" being the one I expertise in. The topic that this study guide addresses is a significant political issue, which has wide-ranging effects. The study guide includes the topic's historical background, previous attempts to solve the issue, possible solutions, and other information that is crucial in order to understand the issue and come up with solutions.

Nevertheless, this study guide aims to contribute to your research and your general perception of the topic. Having said that, it is recommended to conduct your own personal research and not solely rely on this study guide.



Should you have any questions or be in need of any assistance, feel free to contact me at [vassilis.fragkos11@gmail.com](mailto:vassilis.fragkos11@gmail.com).<sup>1</sup>

Kind Regards,

Vassilis Fragkos

## **TOPIC INTRODUCTION**

Transnistria, formally known as the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR), is a breakaway region in eastern Moldova along the Dniester River that declared independence in 1990. Despite this self-declared status, it remains internationally unrecognized and is officially considered part of Moldova. The region is heavily dependent on the Russian Federation, which provides political, economic, and military support, making Transnistria effectively a Russian-backed puppet state. Moldova continues to pursue reintegration, a position recognized by the United Nations as affirming Moldova's sovereignty.

The unresolved status of Transnistria is a matter of significant concern for several reasons. The region represents a frozen conflict in Europe, posing risks to regional stability and security. Russian influence in Eastern Europe is reinforced through its support of Transnistria, raising broader geopolitical concerns. Human rights issues affect approximately 465,000–470,000 residents, while smuggling, illegal arms trading, and corruption remain pervasive due to the lack of effective governance. Addressing this issue requires a “Beyond Borders” approach, emphasizing cross-border collaboration, the protection of human rights, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information regarding the conference as a whole please contact the committee's main chair Filippos Moysidis at: [filipposmoysidis@icloud.com](mailto:filipposmoysidis@icloud.com)

<sup>2</sup> Grant, Thomas D. “Frozen Conflicts and International Law.” *Cornell International Law Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2017, Cornell University, <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cilj/vol50/iss3/1/>. Accessed 2 Dec. 2025.



## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Sovereignty

"The full right and power of a governing body over itself, without any interference from outside sources or bodies."<sup>3</sup>

### Ceasefire

"A temporary suspension of fighting, typically one that is officially agreed upon by both sides in a conflict."<sup>4</sup>

### Peacekeeping

"The maintenance of international peace and security by deploying forces from neutral countries under an international mandate, often through the United Nations."<sup>5</sup>

### Federalization

"The process of dividing a state into semi-autonomous regions with a degree of self-governance, while remaining part of a single sovereign state."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Sovereignty, N. Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary." *Oed.com*, 2023, [www.oed.com/dictionary/sovereignty\\_n?tab=factsheet#21523222](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/sovereignty_n?tab=factsheet#21523222), <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED//1078157269>.

<sup>4</sup> "Ceasefire, N. Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary." *Oed.com*, 2023, [www.oed.com/dictionary/ceasefire\\_n?tl=true](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/ceasefire_n?tl=true), <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED//1040095310>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2024.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. "What Is Peacekeeping." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, [peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-is-peacekeeping](https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-is-peacekeeping).

<sup>6</sup> "Merriam-Webster Dictionary." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 18 Dec. 2025, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/federalization](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/federalization). Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.



## Frozen Conflict

"A situation in which active armed conflict has ended, but no formal peace treaty or political resolution has been achieved, leaving the status of the territory unresolved."<sup>7</sup>

## Human Rights

"The basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death, including the right to life, freedom of expression, and equality before the law."<sup>8</sup>

## Autonomy

"The right or condition of self-government within a larger political entity, allowing a region to make decisions on local matters independently."<sup>9</sup>

## Confidence-Building Measures

"Actions taken to reduce fear of attack or conflict between parties, often through transparency, communication, and cooperative initiatives."<sup>10</sup>

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Moldova's declaration of independence

The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian SSR) was one of the 15 states of the Soviet Union (USSR), located in its southwestern part<sup>11</sup>. The citizens of MSSR could distinguish routes similar to Romania's – the language, culture, history – yet the Union, in fear of an attempt to part from its citizens, attempted to suppress that information, and distinct "Moldovan" identity through ways such as a claim that language was

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<sup>7</sup> Grant, Thomas. "Frozen Conflicts and International Law." *Cornell International Law Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1 Oct. 2017, pp. 361–413, [scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cilj/vol50/iss3/1/](https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cilj/vol50/iss3/1/).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations. "What Are Human Rights?" *OHCHR*, 2025, [www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights](https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights).

<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster. "Definition of Autonomy." *Merriam-Webster.com*, Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2018, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomy).

<sup>10</sup> "Confidence and Security Building Measures." *Www.osce.org*, [www.osce.org/secretariat/107484](https://www.osce.org/secretariat/107484).

<sup>11</sup> "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 2025.



different from Romanian<sup>12</sup>, an emphasis on differences rather than similarities, and more.

In the late 1980s, the USSR was rapidly destabilizing. Former USSR Dictator Gorbachev implemented reforms, namely glasnost and perestroika<sup>13</sup>, allowing Soviet citizens to discuss previously forbidden topics, such as those of Romanian/Moldovan history, Cultural suppression under Soviet Rule, and the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact<sup>14</sup> (which led to the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia, now Moldovan territory, in 1940<sup>15</sup>). That not only allowed for MSSR citizens to delve into their routes and comprehend their distinctions from other USSR Republics, but also to express their opinions more freely. With that, grassroots organizations such as the writers' unions, historians, students, and civic groups<sup>16</sup> began pushing for the recognition of the Romanian/Moldovan linguistic unity, the restoration of Romanian cultural traditions, and the reversal of Russification, making this cultural revival the ideological foundation for independence.

As this cultural revival intensified, nationalist forces used social pressure within the Moldovan parliament<sup>17</sup> as formal political action. Thus, changes were beginning to be formed within the region. In 1988<sup>18</sup>, the first large public parliamentary debates and demonstrations began after glasnost expanded the freedom of expression. In 1989<sup>19</sup>, the *Popular Front of Moldova*<sup>20</sup>, a pro-reform political party, was formed<sup>21</sup>, pushing many changes within the region. Moldovan (Romanian) was declared the state language<sup>22</sup>, challenging Moscow's Russification. Moldovan/Romanian history was included in the school curriculum, and specific Soviet-approved identity narratives within the educational system were abandoned. Institutional autonomy was also

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<sup>12</sup> "The Origins of the Separation Between Moldova and Transnistria," Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>14</sup> "The Origins of the Separation Between Moldova and Transnistria." Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> "The Origins of the Separation Between Moldova and Transnistria." Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>17</sup> "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service, 2025.

<sup>18</sup> "The Origins of the Separation Between Moldova and Transnistria." Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>20</sup> "The Origins of the Separation Between Moldova and Transnistria." Origins, Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>22</sup> "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service, 2025.



presented, as government bodies in Chişinău began acting independently of Moscow. In 1990<sup>23</sup>, Nationalist and reformist forces won key positions in the Moldovan parliament in the first competitive elections, “de-throning” former pro-russification politicians. Thus, nationalist political forces were now dominant in parliament. In June of the same year<sup>24</sup>, the parliament adopted the *Declaration of Sovereignty*<sup>25</sup>, which legally stated that Moldovan laws would take precedence over the laws of the Soviet Union. Even though Moldova was formally still under Soviet control, it now claimed the right to govern itself independently. More specifically, the declaration established that Moldova had control over its territory, economy, and institutions. Its citizenship and symbols could exist independently. Soviet central authorities could no longer automatically override republican decisions. Politically, it undermined Moscow’s authority in the republic and strengthened Chişinău as the real center of power. Finally, in 1991, as the Soviet Union was rapidly destabilizing, the Moldovan Republic declared its independence, going from a Soviet Republic to an independent region.

### Transnistria’s separation from the Republic of Moldova

Transnistria had been a district of the Moldavian SSR, located in its far eastern part, along the eastern part of the Dniester river, bordering Ukraine. In 1990, after the MSSR declared sovereignty, it declared itself a separate “Pridnestrovian Moldavian SSR”<sup>26</sup>, refusing to recognize Chişinău’s liberation within the USSR. It did not accept Moldovan laws or independence decisions, yet the rest of the world still recognized it as a part of Moldova. The reasons under which recognition of liberation was opposed varied from ethnic compositions and political loyalty to economic and strategic factors. Precisely, Transnistria’s population was mostly composed of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians<sup>27</sup>, unlike the rest of the state. Many feared that independence and endorsement of its roots would mean Romanian cultural dominance and the potential marginalization of Russian-speaking communities. Additionally, on the political front, the region had been

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<sup>23</sup> “Transnistria: The History Behind the Russian-Backed Region.” Origins, Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> “Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy.” Congressional Research Service, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> “Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy.” Congressional Research Service, 2025.

<sup>26</sup> “Transnistria: The History Behind the Russian-Backed Region.” Origins, Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> “The Origins of the Separation Between Moldova and Transnistria.” Ohio State University, 2022.



more loyal to the Soviet system and to Moscow. Many local leaders and residents identified strongly with the USSR rather than a newly independent Moldova, further endorsing the separation. On the economic front, Transnistria was industrialized compared to the rest of Moldova and had strong economic links and dependencies to other parts of the USSR, which once again enabled the split. Ultimately, Transnistria's strong ties, roots, and reliance on the Soviet Union formed the conclusion that separation was most beneficial, and thus that approach was carried out.

In 1991, the former Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), backed up by the majority of the citizens within the region, formally gained its independence, breaking off from the collapsing Soviet Union and eventually becoming a sovereign state. Even though the plurality was pleased, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (PMSSR), once again, believed that independence was not the right choice and therefore refused to recognize the new Moldovan state. That was the moment when dual power emerged, as both governments (Moldova's in Chişinău and PMSSR's in Tiraspol) claimed control over the disputed land of Transnistria, creating a constitutional deadlock.

Militarization began in late 1991 - early 1992. The PMSSR, in an attempt to stand firmly in opposition to Moldova's attempt at control over Transnistrian land, formed armed militias and security forces. Moldova itself began forming its own army, preparing to seize its separated territory. A major factor in both sides' militarization was Soviet depots, from which all materials were seized and distributed accordingly within each side's militias. A primary role in militarization was Russia's former Soviet 14th Army<sup>28</sup> – a Soviet military formation stationed in Transnistria. It controlled huge weapons depots, had lots of tanks, artillery, and ammunition stored, and was served by thousands of soldiers. After the Soviet Union's collapse, the Russian Federation, with the MSSR government's endorsement, it became a Russian military force. With the Russian Federation's pursuit of control over Western Europe, Transnistria, in support of the newly founded state, played a major role in its achievement of such a goal. Thus, the state's desire to support the PMSSR in its militarization. This situation transformed a political dispute into an armed conflict.

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<sup>28</sup> "TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT: Origins and Main Issues." U.S. Department of State, 2001.



Even though rare clashes between the two sides were occurring from 1990, with November of that year being the starting point, the situation was always content. In late Spring of 1991, however, the first minor armed conflicts intensified. Roadblocks, weapons seizures, constant armed patrols, irregular shootouts – were all beginning to be deemed as common occurrences. Similar events continued, with tensions standing at an all-time high, until eventually, on the 2nd of March, 1992<sup>29</sup>, the shift to war was made. The day marked a significant achievement for the Moldovan state, as it was the landmark day when it was admitted into the United Nations.

June of 1992<sup>30</sup> became the turning point. Moldovan forces launched an operation, deploying into the PMSSR-controlled city of Bender. Intense urban fighting between Moldovan forces and Transnistrian fighters broke out, transforming the city into a totalled warzone. Units linked to the former 14th Guards Army intervened with heavy artillery fire, worsening the Moldovan army's condition. Eventually, the sovereign state, after suffering heavy losses, was forced to retreat. With a very much weakened Moldovan army, the battle acted as the final hit, and effectively decided the military outcome of the war.

Direct involvement of the Russian Federation became undeniable after the battle of Bender. Moldova, understanding the imminent threat posed by the combined forces of Russia and the PMSSR, initiated diplomatic talks between the two sides, with the Russian government acting as the representative of the separated region. Eventually, a ceasefire agreement was signed on July 21st, 1992<sup>31</sup>, between the two sides. Following the agreement, a security zone (demilitarized buffer zone) was created, with the Dniester river physically separating the Moldovan and Transnistrian forces. It served the purpose of stopping direct military contact between the two sides and preventing renewed fighting, acting as a measure to ensure that the ceasefire was not broken. Additionally, Russian “peacekeeping” forces were deployed, ensuring that tensions remain political, and that no violations of the ceasefire occur. Finally, the Joint Controlled Commission (JCC)<sup>32</sup> was created. It is a tripartite military-political body,

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<sup>29</sup> Kupatadze, Alexander. “Containing the Armed Conflict in Moldova (Transnistria).” George Mason University, 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Kupatadze, Alexander. George Mason University, 2022.

<sup>31</sup> “Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts.” U.S. Department of State, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). “Confidence-Building Measures.” 2023.



including representatives from Russia, Moldova, and Transnistria, as well as observers from the OSCE (Organization for Security & Co-operation in Europe)<sup>33</sup>. Its main functions were to supervise the security zone, control the deployment of peacebuilding forces, investigate ceasefire violations, and coordinate responses to security incidents. The fact that the PMSSR was recognized as a member of the JCC and given diplomatic and security rights officially made it a de-facto state, marking a significant moment in the state's history.

The aftermath was and can still be described as a frozen conflict<sup>34</sup>. Active fighting has elapsed, yet a final peace treaty has never been agreed upon. Transnistria officially became a de-facto state. That, however, does not signify total independence, as the Moldovan nation has de jure sovereignty over Transnistria. So, while the Transnistrian government has in practice control (de-facto control), Moldova is lawfully recognized as the rightful owner of the territory (de jure control).

### Russia's affiliation/influence

On July 21st, 1992, the ceasefire agreement between Transnistria and Moldova<sup>35</sup> was one where the Russian Federation stepped in as a mediator. This, mainly due to the nation's involvement in the decisive clauses of the agreement<sup>36</sup>, provided a legal framework for them to operate in. In an attempt to assure Western nations that there was no imminent threat posed by the agreement, the Russian Federation officially described its role as a neutral peacekeeper. Russian troops did remain stationed long after hostilities ended<sup>37</sup>, stating actions strictly of monitoring and ensuring Transnistria's independence, even though it was continuously challenged by the Moldovan nation, yet to no effect. The mentioned deployment prevented Moldovan forces from reasserting control over any Transnistrian territory, eventually ensuring that the ceasefire agreement was upheld.

The Russian military has indirectly contributed to the accession of the Moldovan country to the European Union<sup>38</sup> and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The accession of countries to the European Union must demonstrate territorial control and political stability<sup>39</sup>. The Moldovan nation fails to demonstrate political stability owing to

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<sup>33</sup> Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Oxford Analytica / Cornell Law Journal. "Frozen Conflicts and International Law." 2021.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of State, "TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues"

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Department of State, "TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues"

<sup>37</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy"

<sup>38</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy"

<sup>39</sup> Baltag, "What the War in Ukraine Means for Moldova"



the territorial conflict between Moldova and Transnistria. NATO does not desire countries that continue to experience territorial disputes. Such countries may entitle NATO member-states to respond when attacked through the principle of collective defense<sup>40</sup>. It can be identified that the Moldovan nation does not bear the consequences of the outcomes, yet the state of affairs could've not have been ignored. The Russian military presence in the Transnistria region of the Moldova nation and despite being termed as purely peacekeeping missions do not demonstrate the constitutionally recognized neutrality of the Moldova nation and may raise potential legal and security concerns as to how military troops from a foreign nation are allowed to remain without consent from the host nation.

Russia's influence can be clearly shown through Transnistria's dependence on the Federation to function. The Transnistrian state, given its almost non-existent export market<sup>41</sup>, recognizes its issue with a lack of funding. The Russian Federation, in an attempt to assert control and influence the state, has provided the nation with numerous economic and social dependencies. Financial subsidies and energy dependency<sup>42</sup> are being used by Russia as leverage. Given that the receiving country cannot possibly pay the providing nation, the accumulating debt can be used as a means of control. Furthermore, the Federation provides the de facto state with pensions and social assistance<sup>43</sup>. That action reinforces loyalty, allowing for easier control. Finally, the Russian military presence. As mentioned previously, the "Russian peacekeeping forces" do not allow for the Moldovan nation to reassert control over the de facto state, meaning that Russian troops basically act as a security guarantor. That, being of utmost importance to the Transnistrian government, allows for the Russians to further exert their influence over the self-declared nation.

Lastly, the Russian nation is directly affiliated with how the conflict remains "frozen" multiple decades later. The lack of progress is not accidental, but strategic. Under the status quo, the Russian leverage elaborated on above is preserved. The Russian Federation, by acting as a mediator in the active conflict, is able to accumulate even more dominance over the conflict and its development. If there were to be a resolution, Moscow's strategic position would be weakened. Depending on the outcome, the nation might've not contained the amount of influence, which allows them to have more influence on Western Organizations and Nations, as explained above. Thus, the will and attempt to not actually resolve the conflict, but preserve it, as presented in the model of the "Russian peacekeepers".

## Current Situation

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<sup>40</sup> U.S. Government Publishing Office, "Will Russia end Eastern Europe's last frozen conflict?"

<sup>41</sup> Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, "The Economic Prospects of the Transnistrian Peace Settlement"

<sup>42</sup> Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, "Russia and the Moldovan Crisis"

<sup>43</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,



Under the current state of affairs, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) operates as a de facto state<sup>44</sup>. With the support of the Russian Federation, it maintains its own government institutions, armed forces, police, judiciary, and administrative system<sup>45</sup>. It issues its own currency, the Transnistrian ruble, a currency not recognized by the United Nations and not accepted by any other state. It is worthy of mention that the de facto state succeeds in maintaining internal borders and checkpoints<sup>46</sup>, important for the assurance of safety within the region. All these structures function independently from the Moldovan Nation, even though they do lack international legal standing.

Transnistria, formally the PMR, is not recognized by any United Nations member state<sup>47</sup>. Legally, it is considered a de jure state of the Republic of Moldova<sup>48</sup>, even though the de facto state has expressed its firm disagreement with the legal standing. After decades of separation, there has not been a formal recognition<sup>49</sup>, a fact that only reinforces its status as an unrecognized republic. Given its international ambiguity, the PMR has to face heavy limits on diplomacy and agreements.

The region holds its own elections, disregarding the fact that they are not internationally recognized<sup>50</sup>. Even at limited capacity, the Transnistrian government does maintain foreign relations with other unrecognized and Russian-aligned territories, such as Abkhazia or South Ossetia<sup>51</sup>. With Russia as the mediator, the self-declared nations do maintain those relations, often symbolically. The relationships are mostly of a political and economic nature, often focusing on self-reliance and self-governance. Arguably, even if it does not equate to legal recognition, those foreign relations do bolster its legitimacy internally and signal a degree of external support, even if that is to a certain extent.

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<sup>44</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>45</sup> "Transnistria: The History Behind the Russian-Backed Region." Origins, Ohio State University, 2022

<sup>46</sup> Kupatadze, Alexander. "Containing the Armed Conflict in Moldova (Transnistria)." George Mason University, 2022,

<sup>47</sup> "TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues." U.S. Department of State, 2001,

<sup>48</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>49</sup> "Transnistria: The History Behind the Russian-Backed Region," Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>50</sup> Wolff, Stefan. *A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?: The Domestic and International Politics of Self-Determination in Moldova and Transnistria*. Princeton University, 2007,

<sup>51</sup> Baltag, Andrei. "What the War in Ukraine Means for Moldova." EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, 2022,



## Recent Political / Security Developments

In 2023, right before the Moldovan elections, (now former) Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean issued a statement<sup>52</sup> concerning the deployment of thousands of Russian troops within the Moldovan peninsula. Within his statement, he mentioned how, if a pro-Kremlin party, namely the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), won the elections and came into power, Russia might significantly increase its military presence in Transnistria, up to 10,000 troops<sup>53</sup>. His goal was to raise awareness internationally and domestically that Russian troops are a strategic lever, capable of exerting pressure on Moldova. How the citizens of Moldova should discourage any political involvement with parties aligning with such beliefs, to maintain peace and stability within the nation. Even if eventually, the PAS party did win a majority of seats within the parliament, no major upscale of Russian troop numbers in Transnistria has been detected<sup>54</sup>.

While Recean's statement might've not predicted the short-term outcome of the positive votes for the party, concerns regarding the further deployment of additional Russian troops cannot be dropped. The number of Russian troops stationed within the PMR is believed to be from 1.000 to 1.500<sup>55</sup>. However, the Moldavian Reintegration Policy Office labels some Russian troops as illegally stationed<sup>56</sup>, sparking concerns between the 3 states. Ultimately, under the status quo, the verdict can be one: tensions, instead of de-escalating, are taking a rapid increase. Recent political and security developments seem to make a resolution more feasible, but contrary to that, less possible to reach.

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<sup>52</sup> Recean, Dorin. "Moldovan PM: Russia Wants Pro-Kremlin Government in Chişinău and 10,000 Troops in Transnistria." *European Pravda*, 4 June 2025, [Eurointegration.com.ua](https://eurointegration.com.ua),

<sup>53</sup> Recean, Dorin. "Moldovan PM: Russia Wants Pro-Kremlin Government in Chişinău and 10,000 Troops in Transnistria." *European Pravda*, 4 June 2025, [Eurointegration.com.ua](https://eurointegration.com.ua),

<sup>54</sup> Bandouil, Sonya. "Russia Seeks to Deploy 10,000 Troops to Transnistria, Potentially Undermining Election, Moldovan PM Recean Says." *The Kyiv Independent*, 5 June 2025,

<sup>55</sup> Bandouil, Sonya. "Russia Seeks to Deploy 10,000 Troops to Transnistria, Potentially Undermining Election, Moldovan PM Recean Says." *The Kyiv Independent*, 5 June 2025,

<sup>56</sup> Office for Reintegration Policy Announces Russia's Military Strength in Transnistria. *IPN*, 28 Feb. 2025, [ipn.md](https://ipn.md)



## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date of the Event	Event
1990	Transnistria declares independence from Moldova.
March-June of 1992	An outbreak of armed conflict between Moldovan forces and Transnistrian separatists occurs, supported by elements of Russia's 14th Army.
July 21st, 1992	A ceasefire agreement was signed in Moscow between Moldova and Russia, formally ending hostilities.
July-August of 1992	Deployment of a trilateral Joint Control Commission peacekeeping force (Russia, Moldova, Transnistria) along the Dniester River security zone. Russian peacekeepers remain to this day.
May 8th, 1997	The Moscow Memorandum (signed by Moldova and Transnistria under Russian and Ukrainian mediation, with OSCE involvement) outlines principles for future relations.
November of 2003	The Moscow Memorandum (signed by Moldova and Transnistria under Russian and Ukrainian mediation, with OSCE involvement) outlines principles for future relations.
September of 2006	A referendum was held in Transnistria. The official results claim 97% support independence and eventual integration with Russia (not recognized internationally).
March of 2014	Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, Transnistrian



	authorities requested to join Russia, however, the request was not acted upon by Moscow.
June 22nd, 2018	The UN General Assembly adopts a resolution calling for the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from Moldova (including Transnistria).
April of 2022 (and onward)	Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine raises concerns of spillover; several security incidents occur in Transnistria, such as explosions near government facilities and the Cobasna depot.
2023-2024	Moldova accelerates its EU integration efforts, while Russia continues to maintain a reduced but significant military presence (around 1.500–2.500 troops).
February of 2025	Reports confirm Russian troop numbers in Transnistria have declined from around 5.500 to approximately 1.500–2.500, but Chisinau maintains that their presence is illegal.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### The Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a sovereign state that gained its independence from the Soviet Union only in 1992<sup>57</sup>. Under international law, it has de jure sovereignty over the state of Transnistria<sup>58</sup>. Due to the self-declared state's connection to the Republic of Moldova (previously elaborated), the nation does not recognize the PMR as a sovereign state<sup>59</sup> and demands its return as a region of the nation. Due to the challenges posed to

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<sup>57</sup> "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service, 28 Aug. 2025.

<sup>58</sup> "TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues." U.S. Department of State, 2001.

<sup>59</sup> "Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts." U.S. Department of State, 2009.



them by the mobilization of Russian troops within the PMR, the country advocates for the full withdrawal of foreign troops<sup>60</sup> and supports negotiations under the OSCE “5+2” framework<sup>61</sup>. It is constrained by a lack of de facto control over Transnistria, Russian influence, security vulnerabilities, and negative assessments from Western Organizations. The nation plays a major role in the de facto state’s sovereignty and international recognition, given its attempts to condemn all acts of sovereignty, independence, and the use of foreign aid (mainly from Russia).

## Russian Federation

The Russian Federation plays a vital role in Transnistria’s independence. Given the nation’s long-standing attempt to influence Western countries and organizations, it provides economic, political, and military support to Transnistria in a strategic act<sup>62</sup>. Through means elaborated on previously, the nation is in direct affiliation with the PMR, influencing it and forcing its own goals. Russian troops stationed in Transnistria serve as peacekeepers<sup>63</sup>, based on the original narrative. However, it is commonly known that through military means, the Federation once again has strategic leverage on Transnistria<sup>64</sup>. Lastly, the Russian Federation is directly linked to the fact that the conflict has remained “frozen” for several decades<sup>65</sup>. It is important to note that this is no accident. Through their work as active mediators in an active conflict, they gain even more leverage over this conflict and this process. If there had been an end to the conflict, Russia’s leverage would be compromised. This could have led to them having failed to contain the degree of their leverage, which allows them to have more leverage over Western Organisations and Nations.

## Ukraine

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<sup>60</sup> “Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy.” Congressional Research Service, 28 Aug. 2025.

<sup>61</sup> Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). “Confidence-Building Measures.”

<sup>62</sup> Wolff, Stefan. “A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?” Princeton University, 2007.

<sup>63</sup> “TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues.” U.S. Department of State, 2001.

<sup>64</sup> “Unrecognized Republic, Recognizable Consequences.” *Journal of Advanced Military Studies*, 2022.

<sup>65</sup> “Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts.” U.S. Department of State, 2009.



Ukraine is a neighboring country of Transnistria<sup>66</sup>. Its main concern about the conflict is stability on its western border. More specifically, Transnistrian smuggling networks<sup>67</sup> and Russian connections could destabilize its own territory; thus, the nation is forced to be on constant alert, monitoring the situation. It is one of the 5 nations to participate in the OSCE 5 + 2 mediation talks<sup>68</sup>, where it attempts to regulate a potential spillover and successfully resolve this long-standing conflict. Its main reason for attempting to do so is to prevent destabilization near its borders. Meanwhile, it successfully balances those values with national security, attempting to uphold its safety standards.

### Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The Organization for Security and Co-operation Europe (OSCE) acts as the main organization through which an attempt to resolve this long-standing problem is made.<sup>69</sup> It acts as the primary mediator through a 5 + 2 format, where 5 members (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Transnistria), along with the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA), who act strictly at a viewing capacity, all collaborate. Its role is to provide a neutral diplomatic framework. Given its limited enforcement power<sup>70</sup>, it relies heavily on the willingness of the parties to collaborate.

### European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) supports Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>71</sup> It provides economic aid and integration incentives<sup>72</sup>. It does so to strengthen Moldova politically and economically so that it can resist external pressures and move closer to European norms, without escalating tensions with Transnistria or Russia. In the past, it

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<sup>66</sup> "Transnistria: The History Behind the Russian-Backed Region." Origins, Ohio State University, 2022.

<sup>67</sup> Kupatadze, Alexander. "Containing the Armed Conflict in Moldova (Transnistria)." George Mason University, 2022.

<sup>68</sup> *Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). "Confidence-Building Measures."*

<sup>69</sup> *Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). "Confidence-Building Measures."*

<sup>70</sup> Wolff, Stefan. "A Resolvable Frozen Conflict?" Princeton University, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service, 28 Aug. 2025.

<sup>72</sup> Baltag, Andrei. "What the War in Ukraine Means for Moldova." EUROPP, 2022.



has sanctioned the Russian Federation<sup>73</sup> because of its interference, even though a more neutral approach is often deemed more appropriate. The European Union is very important as it acts as a soft-power counterweight to Russia<sup>74</sup>. With limited reach to Transnistria itself, it leverages economic and political incentives to stabilize Moldova.

## **RELEVANT UN TREATIES CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS**

### **UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/282 - 22 June 2018**

The mentioned GA resolution of 2018 advocates for the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, including Transnistria. It was adopted with 64 votes in favor, 15 against, and 83 abstentions.

### **UN Charter Article 2(4)**

The said UN Charter article(s) prohibit the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

### **OSCE Agreements / "5+2" Framework**

The mentioned system is an ongoing negotiation mechanism including Moldova, Transnistria, Russia, Ukraine, and OSCE, with the EU and the USA as observers. It provides a platform for dialogue, monitoring, and confidence-building measures.

### **Moscow Memorandum - 1997**

The Moscow Memorandum is an agreement between Moldova and Transnistria, which was signed under Russian and Ukrainian mediation, and calls for the establishment of principles for peaceful coexistence and dialogue.

### **Kozak Memorandum Proposal- 2003**

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<sup>73</sup> "Russia and the Moldovan Crisis: Blunting Democracy in the Near Abroad." Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, 2023.

<sup>74</sup> "The Economic Prospects of the Transnistrian Peace Settlement After the Russian Invasion of Ukraine." Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 2023.



The Kozak Memorandum is a Russian proposal to federalize Moldova, including Transnistria. It was ultimately rejected, illustrating the complexities of external influence and negotiation efforts.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

### **Ceasefire Agreement - 1992**

The 1992 Ceasefire Agreement was an early attempt to address the conflict arising from Transnistria's self-declared independence by bringing an end to the brief but violent war between Moldovan forces and Transnistrian separatists. The agreement successfully halted fighting and prevented further bloodshed, establishing a security zone monitored by a Russian-led peacekeeping force, which provided short-term stability. However, as a solution to the independence issue, it was limited and ultimately ineffective, as it failed to resolve Transnistria's political status or reintegrate the region into Moldova. Instead, the ceasefire froze the conflict, entrenched Transnistria's de facto independence, and enabled Russia to maintain long-term influence in the region, leaving the core issue unresolved.

### **"5+2" Negotiations**

The "5+2" negotiations were a later diplomatic effort to resolve the Transnistria issue through dialogue, involving Moldova and Transnistria as the main parties, with Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE as mediators, and the EU and US as observers. This framework aimed to reach a comprehensive political settlement while demonstrating broader international engagement. While the talks helped maintain communication and achieved limited confidence-building measures, such as agreements on trade and movement, they failed to produce a final resolution on Transnistria's status. Deep disagreements between the parties, Russia's continued support for Transnistria, and the absence of enforcement mechanisms meant the negotiations largely preserved the status quo, making them an incomplete and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to solve the issue of Transnistria's self-declared independence.

### **EU & OSCE Mediation**



The EU and OSCE mediation represented an international attempt to peacefully resolve the Transnistria conflict by promoting dialogue, confidence-building measures, and respect for Moldova's territorial integrity. Through monitoring missions, diplomatic facilitation, and support for negotiations such as the "5+2" format, these organizations helped reduce tensions and prevent a return to armed conflict. However, their impact was limited by a lack of enforcement power and dependence on consensus among involved states, particularly Russia. As a result, while EU and OSCE mediation contributed to stability and incremental cooperation, it failed to deliver a lasting political settlement, leaving Transnistria's self-declared independence unresolved.

### **Moldova's federalization proposals**

Moldova's federalization proposals were a political attempt to resolve the Transnistria issue by offering the region limited autonomy within a unified Moldovan state, aiming to preserve national sovereignty while accommodating Transnistria's demand for self-governance. In theory, this approach addressed key grievances and provided a potential compromise short of full independence. However, the proposals were ultimately unsuccessful, as they were rejected by Transnistrian authorities, who sought greater autonomy or independence, and were further complicated by Russian influence in the negotiation process. Consequently, federalization failed to achieve reintegration and instead highlighted the deep mistrust and external pressures preventing a sustainable settlement.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **International Mediation**

International mediation involving the OSCE, UN, and EU represents a possible solution to the Transnistria issue by relying on neutral and experienced actors to facilitate dialogue between Moldova and Transnistria. By following the established "5+2" negotiation format and holding continuous diplomatic sessions, this approach aims to encourage compromise, build trust, and reach a mutually acceptable political settlement while avoiding renewed violence. The involvement of multiple international



organizations increases legitimacy and reduces the risk of unilateral dominance by any single actor. However, the effectiveness of international mediation remains uncertain, as past efforts have shown limited success due to entrenched positions, lack of enforcement mechanisms, and external influence—particularly from Russia—which can obstruct progress. While international mediation offers the most peaceful and credible pathway toward resolution, its success depends on sustained commitment, genuine cooperation from all parties, and the willingness to move beyond maintaining the status quo.



## **Autonomy Framework**

The Autonomy Framework can be proposed as a possible solution to the Transnistria issue by encouraging Moldova to offer the region limited but clearly defined self-governance. This would involve establishing specific legislative, economic, and cultural powers for Transnistria while maintaining Moldova's territorial integrity, addressing key local concerns without granting full independence. A negotiated timeline for implementing these measures—supported through international mediation and facilitation by the OSCE and EU—would help ensure gradual progress and build mutual trust. The allocation of UN personnel and international observers to monitor the autonomy arrangements would increase transparency and compliance. Despite challenges such as political resistance and external influence, a monitored autonomy framework provides a pragmatic and peaceful approach to resolving the long-standing conflict.

## **Economic and Humanitarian Support**

Another possible solution to the Transnistria issue is the Economic and Humanitarian Support strategy, which emphasizes improving the daily lives of civilians in the region while promoting stability. Through continued cooperation with organizations like the UNDP and EU, aid would target essential sectors such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. By linking assistance to compliance with human rights and the ceasefire, this approach encourages responsible governance and reduces tensions, without legitimizing Transnistria's self-declared independence. Although it does not directly resolve the political dispute, providing practical support can build trust, mitigate conflict-related hardships, and create conditions more favorable for long-term peace.

## **Confidence-Building Measures**



A possible solution to the Transnistria issue is the implementation of Confidence-Building Measures, designed to foster cooperation and trust between Moldova and Transnistria. This approach would promote cultural, educational, and trade exchanges, as well as the development and monitoring of joint projects, creating opportunities for interaction and collaboration between the communities. Organized under international guidance and facilitated by the OSCE, these measures aim to reduce tensions, encourage dialogue, and lay the groundwork for more substantive political negotiations. While not a complete solution to the region's status, confidence-building initiatives help create a more cooperative environment and gradually bridge the divide between the parties.

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