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WHITHER MOLDOVA: EAST OR WEST?

By

ROBERT WEINER

Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Associate
Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies
Harvard University

Email: Robert.Weiner@umb.edu

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Robert Weiner

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there have been some dramatic shifts in the political and geopolitical situation in the Black Sea region, which have weakened the efforts of Russia to maintain its influence and control as the major regional hegemon in the area. In sort of an Orange Revolution in reverse, the victory of the Communist Party of Moldova in the parliamentary elections of 6 March 2005 and the reelection of Vladimir Voronin as President on 4 April, have seemingly added yet another anti-Russian regime to the new political forces brought to power in Ukraine and Georgia.¹ Furthermore, the Romanian Presidential elections in December 2004, resulted in another surprise in the Black Sea region, when Traian Basescu was elected President.² Basescu, the leader of the Justice and Truth Alliance, a former sea captain and mayor of Bucharest, scored an upset victory by defeating Adrian Nastase, the Presidential candidate of the ruling Social Democratic Party. The new Romanian President, a staunch Atlanticist and ally of the United States, has developed the 'Basescu doctrine', which focuses Romania's interests on the Black Sea region and the improvement of relations with Moldova. Romania has developed a

¹ The victory of the Rose revolution in Georgia was later followed by a Russian-Georgian agreement in which Moscow agreed to withdraw its troops from its bases in Georgia, since President Putin claimed that military bases in Georgia are no longer of any strategic value to Russia. On the other hand, Russia may attach greater strategic value to its military presence in Transnistria. For the Russian-Georgian agreement, which is not going to be implemented easily, see "NATO Hails Russia-Georgia Troop Withdrawal Deal," *Interfax*, 23 June, 2005, *World News Connection* [hereinafter cited as *WNC*] (24 June, 2005).

² See L. Stan, "The Opposition Takes Charge: The Romanian General Elections of 2004," *Problems of Post-Communism*, LXII (May/June 2005): 3-15.

wider ranging concept of the 'Broader' Black Sea, which requires a viable security regime to not only combat terrorism which has been facilitated by the existence of separatist enclaves that stretch through an 'arc of crisis', but also to deal with 'soft security' threats such as international crime, money laundering, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, and the arms trade.³ On 5 June 2006, Romania hosted the first meeting of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, which is a 'process' designed to deal with common problems, and bring the Black Sea states closer to the European and Euroatlantic organizations.⁴ Moldovan President, Vladimir Voronin, speaking at the Black Sea Forum, referred to it as an 'especially important process in the European destiny of the participating states.'⁵

How do these developments affect the interests of the United States in the Black Sea region, and more importantly, how do they affect relations between Washington and Moscow?⁶

³ According to the Romanian Minister of Defense, the 'Black Sea is not a buffer zone,' but a 'strategic corridor between Asia and the Middle East'. The situation in Transnistria should be seen as part of an 'arc of crisis' which also stretches through Chechnya, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh, and Kurdish separatism in the Middle East as well. An essential component of the Basescu Doctrine is to expand the 'community of democracies' into the Black Sea region. See Traian Basescu, 'The Black Sea Area: Advancing Freedom and Regional Stability, 10 March 2005', <http://www.rompres.ro/index.php?id=260406++=ENGLLEZA=eng>. (11 March 2005).

⁴ 'Black Sea Forum For Dialogue and Partnership: What's New', <http://www.blackseforum.org.org/>, (5 June 2006)

⁵ 'Vladimir Voronin: Moldova Va Fi Un Actor Activea Forumul Marii Negre, [Vladimir Voronin: Moldova Will Be an Active Actor in the Black Sea Forum], 5 June 2006', *Moldova Azi*, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=39514>, (6 June 2006).

⁶ See the 'Testimony of Bruce Jackson Before Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on European Affairs, "The Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region," 8 March 2005', <http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2005/hrgv50308p.html>. (5 June 2005); also see O. Pavliuk and I. Klymush-Tsintsadze eds., *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

What were the factors that brought about this rather surprising turn of events in Moldova, which was previously considered to be a pro-Russian regime and which now has engaged in a significant reorientation of its foreign policy towards Europe, which has fuelled Russian fears that it is being surrounded by a new *cordon sanitaire*? As George Kennan pointed out in the first volume of his memoirs, Russia is apprehensive of anything that looks like an effort to build a *cordon sanitaire* around it and which smacks of encirclement, given traditional Russian xenophobia.⁷

Moldova and the European Union

Moldova assumes even more importance in the grand strategy of the West, as NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty organization) and the EU (European Union) press further eastward. The EU has included Moldova within its European Neighborhood Policy initiated in 2003, opened an office in Chisinau, and appointed on March 23, 2005, a special representative, Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged, to Moldova to focus on the resolution of the crisis in Transnistria.⁸ The European Commission opened up a new office in Moldova on October 6, 2005 headed by Cesare De Montis.⁹ The major strategic priority of Moldova now is membership in the European institutions.¹⁰ Moldova was the first member of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) to be admitted to the Council of Europe (although its human rights performance continues to be monitored) and later assumed the rotating chairmanship of the Council of Ministers of that organization for six months starting in May 2003. Membership in the Council of Europe is viewed by

⁷ See G. F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1967), pp. 550-551.

⁸ See 'Appointment of an EU Special Representative for Moldova,' EU_SR_moldova.pdf, (8 June 2006).

⁹ See 'The European Commission's Delegation to the Republic of Moldova', <http://www.delmda.cec.eu.int/en/index.htm>, (8 June 2006)

¹⁰ See 'The Foreign Policy Priorities of Moldova for 2003', <http://www.mfa.md/en/policyelements/policypriorities%html>, (31 July 2006).

Chisinau rather hopefully as preparation for membership in the European Union, although realistically its prospects are not good in the near term until it has proven that it has introduced real substantive political and economic reforms, not simulated reforms. Moldova would like to negotiate an Economic Association and Stabilization Agreement with the European Union, just as has been offered to the West Balkan states. Moldova also wants an Economic Association and Stabilization Agreement to offset the negative economic consequences of Romania and Bulgaria's impending membership in the European Union. Moldova also would prefer such an agreement, because it is seen by Chisinau as an intermediate step towards EU membership, as opposed to being relegated to the periphery of Europe in the EU's 'ring of friends' in Brussels' European Neighborhood Policy. The European Neighborhood Policy was concocted by the European Union in view of its enlargement in 2004, and ostensibly was devised to avoid 'new dividing lines in Europe.' However, as of 2006, the European Union prefers that Moldova concentrate on implementing the EU-Moldova Action Plan signed on 22 February 2005, within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy. It is possible that when the Action Plan ends in 2008, the European Union may prefer that Moldova sign an implementation agreement within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy, rather than consider becoming a member of the EU.

President Voronin has argued that Moldova's European orientation dates to November 2002, when it created a National Commission for European Integration by Presidential decree to prepare for EU membership.¹¹ Following that step, in October

¹¹ President Voronin has claimed that this marks the beginning of Moldova's European orientation. See 'Vladimir Voronin: Ireversibilitatea Cursului European al R. Moldova Reprerzinta Garantia Reglementarii Transnistrene, [Vladimir Voronin: The Irreversible European Course of the Republic of Moldova Represents the Guarantee for Transnistrean Rule] 16 May 2006', <http://www.pca.md/news/959> (5 June 2006).

2003, Moldova drew up a concept of European integration, which focused on the harmonization of its laws with the EU's *Acquis Communautaire*, admittedly a rather daunting task for Chisinau. Somewhat earlier, Moldova had concluded a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union in 1994, which became operational in 1998.¹² Moldova's avowed European orientation gives the European institutions some leverage as external actors to try and steer the process of democratization in Moldova, such as it is, in the direction of the benchmark of 'European standards.' The European Neighborhood policy also provides Moldova with increased financial aid to engage in a complex series of internal measures that hopefully will measure up to the European benchmarks.¹³ The implementation of the EU-Moldovan Action Plan, which was signed by the EU and Moldova on February 22, 2005, and approved by the Moldovan parliament on April 2005, to last for 3 years, and is cited by the Moldovan regime as proof of its new Western 'reorientation', is now seen as unfolding within the context of the EU's European Neighborhood Policy, which is designed, from Brussels' perspective, to stabilize the new Eastern frontiers of the European Union, with particular attention being paid to the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border.¹⁴ This fits in with the EU's security policy, which was elaborated in 2003. The European Union is especially interested in helping Moldova to solve the 'frozen conflict' in Transnistria, as Brussels believes that democratic reform in Moldova is not possible without the peaceful

¹² For the text of the agreement, which runs to some 95 pages online, see 'Partnership and Cooperation Agreement', http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/ceeca/pca_moldova.pdf (27 July 2006).

¹³ The above section relies very heavily on R. Weiner, 'The Foreign Policy of the Voronin Administration', *Demokratizatsiya* XII (Fall 2004) 541-556.

¹⁴ See Svetlana Cara, '13 Anila Straja Hotarului, [13 Years of Border Watch] *Moldova Suverana*, 10 June 2005', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md.articol.php?id=4753> (11 June 2005).

resolution of the conflict, as the two issues (Transnistria and democratic reform) are related to each other in a vicious circle. Additionally, under the New Neighborhood Policy, the EU continues to provide aid to Moldova through the TACIS (Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States) program (scheduled to end on January 1, 2007) to help Chisinau make the political and economic reforms that are necessary to implement the plan.¹⁵ Between 1991-2003, the European Commission has provided Moldova with about 238 million Euros in aid.¹⁶ Some of the more important areas emphasized in TACIS, are harmonizing Moldova's laws with those of the EU (helped by the EU's TAIEX-the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Office), developing a rule of law state, rooting out corruption, strengthening control of its borders, and privatization.¹⁷ About a year after the signing of the EU/Moldovan Action Plan, it was clear that Moldova needed help in implementing it and harmonizing its legislation with that of the European Union. In June 2006, the EU inaugurated a new program which was scheduled to last until 2008, to aid Moldova harmonize its legislation to meet European standards. Consequently, Moldova hopes to be granted associate membership status by the European Union in 2007.¹⁸ However, Moldovan associate membership in

¹⁵ A branch office of TACIS was set up in Moldova in 1999. See "TACIS branch office," http://www.delmda.cec.eu.int/eu/about_us/2.htm (27 July 2006).

¹⁶ See European Commission, 'Commission Approves EUR 25 Million Package of Technical Assistance to Support Moldova's Transition to a Market Economy', http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/moldova/intro/ipo3_1036.htm, (27 July 2006).

¹⁷ For a discussion of efforts by Moldova's Commission for European Integration to implement the Moldovan-EU Action Plan, see 'Guvernul Examinat Procesul de Implementare a Planului de Actiuni RM-UE [The Government Has Examined the Process of Implementing the RM-EU Action Plan] *Moldova Suverana*, 10 June 2005', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=4748>, (11 June 2005).

¹⁸ For a Moldovan version of its irreversible efforts to comply with European Union conditions, see 'Integrea Europeana Este Optiunea Ireversibila Si Prioritara A Societatii Moldovenesti, [European Integration is the Irreversible Option and Priority of Moldovan Society] *Moldova Suverana*, 10 June 2005', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=4744>, (11 June 2005).

the EU may also be pushed further into the future as well (and full membership may not be a realistic option for another 20 years, if ever), given the crisis that now exists in the European Union with the rejection by France and the Netherlands of the EU's proposed constitution. The EU may live up to its commitment to admit Bulgaria and Romania in 2007/2008, but stop further enlargement eastward, particularly since the condition of 'absorptive capacity' (the capacity of the EU to absorb new members) has now apparently emerged as another criterion to be met in addition to the conditions spelled out in the Copenhagen criteria of 1993.¹⁹

Moldova, of course, has been affected by the relationship between Romania and the EU. The signing of an accession treaty between Romania and the European Union in 2005 has also had the effect of bringing Moldova further into the orbit of the European Union through Romania. Romania, which borders on Moldova, was admitted to NATO in 2004, and barring unforeseen circumstances, is scheduled to join the European Union in 2007 or 2008. Furthermore, Moldova is also now on the radar screen of the US because of its geographical location and role in the broader strategic considerations of the global war against terrorism. Moldova shares a border with NATO member Romania, as the US redeploys some of its forces from western Europe to bases in Romania²⁰.

Romania, a Black Sea and Danubian state is geopolitically important to the national interest of the US because of its proximity to the 'broader' Middle East, Central Asia, and

¹⁹ For this point, see G. Dura, 'Actuala Incapacitate de Absorbție UE Ar Putea Mentine Permanent Republica Moldova in Politica Europeana de Vecinatate [The Actual Incapacity of Absorption of the EU Can Maintain the Republic of Moldova in the European Neighborhood Policy Permanently]', <http://www.pca.md/news/948> (5 June 2006).

²⁰ U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld has visited Romania to investigate the location of U.S. bases. See 'Romanians Pitch Rumsfeld on New Base', Associated Press, 12 October 2004.

also the Caucasus. Furthermore, Bucharest has taken upon itself the role of serving as a bridge between Moldova and the West and has set itself the goal of ‘bringing Moldova to Europe’, as a sponsor of Moldovan association with the European Union, and also the numerous regional and subregional organizations that have sprung up in the post-comunist space in the decade and a half after the Soviet collapse. Especially important to Moldova are the Southeast European Cooperation Process and the Central European Free Trade Association. Moreover, Ukrainian interest in NATO membership also draws Moldova further into NATO’s sphere of interest. Additionally, Moldova already is a member of NATO’s Partnership for Peace. The fact that Moldova recently drew up an individual action plan with NATO seems an indication of Moldova’s desire for a more intense relationship with NATO.²¹ Moldova’s Defense Minister did not rule out the possibility that Moldova’s neutral status could change as well.²² Although, more importantly in a somewhat contradictory tone, President Vladimir Voronin of Moldova said on July 22, 2005, that Moldova would continue its policy of permanent neutrality, which is incorporated in the country’s constitution is not interested in joining NATO, and he has emphatically stressed that point since then.

²¹ See ‘Vladimir Voronin Requested from North Atlantic Council to Draft an Individual Action Plan Moldova-NATO, *Moldova Azi*, 7 June 2005’, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=34543,WNC>, (8 June 2005).

²² See ‘Romanian Moldovan Defense Ministers Sign Cooperation Protocol, Romanian Defense Ministry to Back Reformation of Moldovan Army, *Rompres*, 21 June 2005, *WN*’, (24 June 2005); also see ‘*Interfax*, Russia and Presidential Bulletin Round-Up for June 23, 2005, *WNC*’, (24 June 2005); also see ‘Ministrul Apararii nu Excluce Posibilitatea Aderarii Republicii Moldova la NATO [The Minister of Defense Does Not Exclude the Possibility of Moldovan Adherence to NATO] *Moldova Azi*, 16 June 2005’, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=34660>, (11 June 2005).

MOLDOVA AND THE BLACK SEA

Of course, Moldova's growing geopolitical importance to the US, also stems from the fact that it is close to the Black Sea. The security of the Black Sea is important in terms of its geographical relationship to the Caspian Sea Basin, as oil is transported from East to West. For example, on 25 May 2005, the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline was opened, and is expected to eventually carry 1 million barrels of oil a day from Baku, Azerbaijan, via Georgia, to the Mediterranean Turkish port of Ceyhan.²³ Once it becomes fully operational, the pipeline, which is also designed to reduce the dependency of the West on Middle Eastern oil, avoids Russia altogether. Russia sees this development as a threat to its interests in its former zone of influence, and so one could appreciate why Moscow would want to maintain its influence in Moldova, given Moldova's proximity to Georgia, which lies across the Black Sea. Moreover, the existence of part of the Russian Diaspora, living on the left bank of the Dniester river, also involves Moscow's interests in Moldova because postcommunist Russia has assumed the role of the protector of those Russians who were stranded in the post-Soviet space after the break-up of the USSR.²⁴ In a similar fashion, Ukraine is also interested in the fate of its kith and kin in Transnistria.

The "Frozen Conflict" in Transnistria. Most importantly, the resolution of the 'frozen conflict' in Transnistria, lies at the heart of a marked deterioration of relations between Russia and Moldova which has taken place since 2003. The EU has now placed

²³ 'Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline First Oil Ceremony,' <http://www.energy.gov/news/1909.htm> (27 July 2006).

²⁴ See 'Official Says Russia Wants Moldova to Defend Rights of Ethnic Minorities, *ITAR-TASS* (in English) 9 June 2005, *WNC* (9 June 2005).

a major strategic focus on resolving this conflict, and has invested considerable effort and energy in a variety of ways. Transnistria, a slice of territory of about 555,000 people located on the east bank of the Dniester river between Ukraine and Romania, and now led by a pro-Russian political elite, had separated from Moldova in 1990, and with Russian aid, defeated Chisinau in a war for its 'independence' in 1992.²⁵ When Vladimir Voronin, who was born in Transnistria, and who was a former Interior Minister in Moldavia during the Soviet era, was elected President of Moldova in 2001, perhaps he hoped that a somewhat sharper eastern reorientation of Moldova's foreign policy toward Moscow would result in more effective Russian mediation of Transnistria's reintegration into Moldova.²⁶ The Transnistrian separatist regime, heavily subsidized by Russia, has been depicted by well-known allegations from Moldova and the international community as a 'black hole of criminality' and as a source of instability throughout the entire Black Sea region, southeastern Europe, the continent, and some argue indeed the world, supposedly smuggling and exporting weapons to various terrorist groups. The corruption in Transnistria has also infected Ukraine and Moldova as well, and has complicated efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict as evidenced by some of the defects in a plan introduced by Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko in 2005, which was sharply criticized by Chisinau as just another version of the Russian proposal known as the Kozak memorandum submitted in 2003. The ruling class in Transnistria, consisting of the Smirnov clan and its inner circle (now reportedly being challenged by a more reform-

²⁵ The population of Moldova consists of about 64.5% Moldovans, 13.8% Russians, 13.8% Ukrainians (includes the population of Transnistria) and about 150,000 Gagauz, a Turkic Christian group of people living in the south. Source is the CIA Factbook online.

²⁶ For an interesting discussion of Voronin's administration, see P. Quinlan, 'Back to the Future: An Overview of Moldova Under Voronin', *Demokratizatsiya*, XII(Fall 2004)485-504.

minded liberal business element), claims that this entity possesses all of the attributes of a sovereign state (although no state currently recognizes Transnistria, not even Russia), such as a constitution, political institutions and a legally elected President.²⁷ The Transnistrian constitution states that the ‘Transdnestrian-Moldavian Republic is a sovereign, independent, democratic, law-based state.’ In reality it is an authoritarian enclave ruled by the Smirnov clan with strong Russian influence via economic interests and penetration of the Transnistrian secret police. One of Smirnov’s sons, Oleg, also plays a key role in controlling critical sectors of the economy. Much of the economy is also controlled through a shadowy corporation rather inappropriately named “Sheriff.”²⁸ Order is maintained by a repressive secret police apparatus led by the Minister for State Security, Vladimir Antyufeyev, who may have been involved under another name in Soviet repression of dissidence in Latvia in 1991.

MOLDOVA’S EASTERN ORIENTATION

Coming to power in 2001, after the Moldovan population had grown weary of the inability of the postcommunist democratic parties to resolve the country’s economic problems, the Moldovan communist party also seemed like a throwback to the Soviet era

²⁷ The Transnistrian regime published a foreign policy concept in June 2005. See ‘Tiraspol Anunta Ca Are Propria Politica Externa,[Tiraspol Announces That It Has Its Own Foreign Policy]WNC’ (1 June 2005). Tiraspol states that ‘The strategic priority of Transnistria is to gain recognition as a sovereign independent state.’ The regime believes that the development of close relations with members of the CIS contributes to the recognition of the sovereignty of Transnistria and counteracts Moldova’s European orientation. Furthermore, the position of the regime in Transnistria is that the termination of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by the Russian Duma in 1995 contributed to Tiraspol’s independent status. See *Moldova Suverana* 1 June 2005, <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/stire.php?id=4146> (1 June 2005).

²⁸ J. Bugajski, *Cold Peace: Russia’s New Imperialism* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), p.107; also see Andrew Right, ‘The People and the Landscape Look Much the Same’, <http://www.welcome-moldova.com/articles/transnistria.shtml>, (27 July 2006).

of politics. It stood out as an anomaly to the trend of ‘decommunization’ that had been underway in the former communist world since 1989. In his first year in office, Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin met frequently with Russian President Vladimir Putin. After assuming office, Voronin said ‘Russia and Moldova synchronize their steps on major issues of foreign policy.’²⁹ At first, Voronin seemed to take a classic Marxist-Leninist view of Moldova’s position in the international hierarchy of power, when he described Moldova as an East European version of Cuba, which was surrounded by imperialist ‘predator’ states, and stressed his admiration for the political systems of Vietnam and China. He supported the idea of Moldova’s joining the Russia-Belarus union. (subject to approval in a referendum, which was never held). The Voronin administration also advocated the use of Russian as an official state language. It focused on the development of the concept of ‘Moldovaness’ in an effort to delineate a Moldovan national identity which was distinct from a Romanian national identity, a policy which was reminiscent of similar efforts during the darkest days of Stalinist totalitarianism. Moldovan-Romanian relations also deteriorated during the first term of the Voronin administration, exacerbated by Romania’s depiction of Moldova as an ‘imposter’ state, and Moldova’s cool attitude towards Romania was marked by complaints to the European institutions about Romanian interference in its internal affairs. A ‘Cold War’ marked the relationship of the two kin states, as Romania’s Social Democratic regime

²⁹ See *ITAR-TASS* (in English), 20 November 2001, *WNC* (26 May 2005).

failed to conclude a treaty of friendship with Moldova, in spite of claims by Bucharest that the two states enjoyed a special or privileged relationship with each other.³⁰

EUROPEAN REORIENTATION OF MOLDOVAN FOREIGN POLICY

The major turning point in the deterioration of relations between Moldova and Russia, and a more significant European reorientation in its foreign policy, stemmed from the heavy-handed efforts by Moscow to impose by diktat a settlement of the Transnistrian issue. The Russian proposals were embodied in a plan known as the Kozak memorandum drawn up in November 2003. Voronin, who above everything else is a consummate pragmatist interested in staying in power, was ready to sign the Kozak memorandum, which ostensibly would have provided Russia with a military presence as a guarantor in Moldova for 20 years, and virtually give the separatist region of Transnistria equal status with Moldova in a new federal arrangement, which fell short of the Moldovan model of an asymmetrical federation.³¹ President Putin was scheduled to visit the Moldovan capital of Chisinau for a signing ceremony of the Kozak memorandum in November 2003. However, Putin's visit was cancelled at the last minute when Voronin refused to sign the plan. . Voronin was forced to back off by pressure from the streets, with

³⁰ Relations between Romania and Moldova had recently improved considerably. See "Moldova Are Nevoie De Romania, Deoarece Aceasta Va Deveni In Curand Membru Al Uniunii Europene, Sustine Valdimir Voronin," [Moldova Needs Romania If It Wishes To Become a Member of the European Union Soon, Asserts Vladimir Voronin] *Moldova Azi*, 28 February 2005' <http://www.azi.md/news?id=33222> (1 March 2005). However, relations between Bucharest and Chisinau worsened when President Basescu, in July 2006, called for the unification of Moldova and Romania within the framework of the European Union. This revived Moldovan fears that Bucharest had not abandoned its historic ambitions of regaining control over Moldova, resulting in President Voronin's observation that Moldova had been occupied by Romania from 1918 to 1940.

³¹ For the text of the Kozak Memorandum, see 'Russian Draft memorandum on the Basic Principles of the State Structure of a United State in Moldova Kozak Memorandum', http://www.eurojournal.org/more.php?id=107_0_6-M5 (27 July 2006).

demonstrations led by Iurie Rosca, the leader of a significant right-center opposition party-the Christian Democratic Popular Party. There was also pressure from the United States and European institutions such as the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) not to go along with the Russian plan for the federalization of Moldova (although both the OSCE and the United States had supported previous versions of federalization). A major reason for Moldovan refusal to sign was that Voronin may also have feared that he would be ousted by a Georgian-style “Rose Revolution”, but instead he actually turned out to be shrewd enough to co-opt the anti-Russian democratic opposition at the time. Voronin decided to play the nationalist and pro-Western card, as a strategy for ensuring victory for the communist party in the parliamentary elections in March, and his reelection as President in April. 2005.

THE MOLDOVAN ELECTIONS

Consequently, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova was reelected in 2005, although it did not carry a majority of the 101 seats in the unicameral National Assembly, but instead wound up with 45.98 per cent of the vote and 56 seats.³² The percentage of the popular vote won by the communists had dropped about 4 percentage points from 2001. Despite the drop-off of support from the previous election, Voronin’s party’s victory could be partly attributable to the fact that he astutely focused on anti-

³² The BMD-the Democratic Moldovan Bloc-led by Chisinau mayor Serafim Urechean,picked up 28.53% of the vote,the Christian Democratic Popular Party,led by Iurie Rosca,who had been one of Voronin’s bitterest opponents, won about 9.7% of the vote and 11 seats in Parliament.For more information on the results of the elections, see <http://www.elections2005.md>. (1 August 2006).

Russian sentiment, finessing the opposition forces.³³ For example, in a surprise visit to Kiev four days before Moldova's parliamentary elections, he said that 'Russia needs to renounce its imperial ambitions and to treat these states(former Soviet republics)as independent states.'³⁴ Voronin rather cleverly supported the Ukrainian opposition Presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko during the Orange Revolution and attended his inaugural ceremony. Voronin also met with President Georgian Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia, who had been brought to power by the 'Rose' revolution which tumbled Gorbachev's former Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze from power.³⁵

Even though its is evident that Moldova faces a number of obstacles in extricating itself from the communist legacies of the past, and in consolidating a truly democratic system, international observers from the West all concluded that although there were some problems, such as access to a biased state controlled mass media by the opposition forces and government control of the Central Election Commission, the 2005 elections had met 'European standards.'³⁶ There had been a turnout of about 65 per cent of the

³³ For more details on the program of the communist party, see Corneliu Mihalache, 'PCRM si-a Prezentat Lista Electorala,'[The PCRM Has Presented its Electoral List]*Moldova Suverana*, 14 January 2005', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=3879> (14 January 2005).

³⁴ 'Ce A Cautat Saakasvili La Voronin,[What Saakashvily Wanted from Voronin]*Timpul*,4 March 2005', <http://www.timpul.mdl.net/article.asp?idIssue=968idRubric=1425+idArticle=3764> (6 March 2005).

³⁵ See 'Vladimir Voronin and Mikhail Saakashvily Intend to Fight Against Europe's "Black Holes"' <http://www.azi.md/news?id=33284>, (5 March 2005).

³⁶ For the importance of the "legacies of the past" or path dependency to the study of the evolution of postcommunist transitions,see P. G. Roeder, 'The Revolution of 1989:Postcommunism and the Social Sciences',*Slavic Review*, LXVIII (Winter 1999) 750; also see V. Bunce, 'The Political Economy of Postsocialism', *Slavic Review* LXVIII (Winter 1999) 761. The path dependency approach argues that 'the set of options available...is constrained by the legacies of the past, i.e., by nationally different paths of state socialist and postsocialist development.' See J. Beyer and J. Wielgohs, 'On the Limits of Path Dependency Approaches for Explaining Postsocialist Institution Building: In Critical Response to David Stark', *East European Politics and Society* XV(Spring 2002)362. 'Path dependency suggests that the legacies of the past limit the range of current possibilities and or options in ...innovations.' See K. Nielsen,B. Jessop and J. Hausner, 'Institutional Change in Postsocialism:Institutional Dynamics in the Transformation Process', in J. Hausner,B. Jessop,and K. Nielsen,eds. *Strategic Choice and Path Dependency in Post-Socialism* (Brookfield: Aldershot, 1995), 6.

eligible electorate and a 50 per cent turnout was needed for the election to be considered valid.³⁷ The Moldovan Central Electoral Commission, considered to be significantly influenced by Voronin, had also certified the results of the elections, as had the Constitutional Council. With 56 seats, the communists had sufficient control of the parliament, because only 52 seats were needed to constitute a simple majority and form a government. Washington helped contribute to the creation of a collection of NGOS(Non - Governmental Organizations) 'Coalition 2005', which despite complaints of interference by the Voronin administration in its internal affairs, did perform a watchdog function to try and ensure that the elections were fair³⁸. However, on the other hand, during the elections, about 100 CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) observers were not allowed to enter the country, further exacerbating relations between Moscow and Chisinau. Russian political consultants were also arrested and deported, for supposedly engaging in illegal campaign activities.³⁹

At first, Voronin rather coyly had not indicated whether or not he would be available (serving briefly as interim President after the parliamentary elections) for

For comments on the standards followed in the elections, see 'Declaration on the Moldovan Elections, Speech by Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 23 February 2005', http://europa.eu.int/comm/externalrelations/news/ferrero/2005/spo5_/09.htm, (5 March 2005); 'PACE Concerned over Moldovan Election Campaign and Transnistria Vote', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines* 22 February 2005', <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/4-see.asp>, (22 February 2005); 'U.S. State Department, Senate Call for Free and Fair Elections in Moldova', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines*, 22 February 2005', <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/4-see.asp> (22 February 2005); 'Report by the OSCE on the Elections', http://www.news/show_news.php?id=4759 (20 March 2005).

³⁷ 'OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report', http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/06/14919_en.pdf (10 April 2006).

³⁸ See *Moldova Azi*, 23 February 2005 (online edition) (23 February 2005).

³⁹ See 'Moscow is Still waiting for Intelligible Answer from Chisinau', *Moldova Azi*, 25 February 2005', <http://www.azi.md/news?id=33209>, (26 February 2005); 'Moldovan Foreign Ministry Reluctant to Issue Accreditation to CIS Observers-CIS-EMO', *Moldova Azi*, 4 March 2005', <http://www.azi.md/news?id=33306> (5 March 2005).

reelection to another term as President. If the Moldovan parliament cannot elect a President after three tries, a new set of parliamentary elections must take place. The communists correctly believed that they would be able to gain the votes that they needed from the opposition bloc BMD (the Moldova Democratic Bloc), which began to break apart after the elections. Indeed, by 28 March 2005, the Democratic Party, which had been part of the BMD, and its leader Dumitru Diacov, announced that it was forming a separate parliamentary faction to pursue its social, democratic agenda, which in effect assured Voronin of its support. The Moldovan constitution requires that there be at least two Presidential candidates, so some members of the communist party perfunctorily nominated the President of the Moldovan Academy of Sciences, Gheorghe Duca, as the second constitutionally required presidential candidate. (he subsequently received one vote). The Moldovan Parliament elects the President and when the Presidential elections took place on 4 April 2005, Voronin easily won with 75 votes out of 101, as just 61 votes were required to win. (the communists had won an earlier test of strength by electing their candidate, albeit ostensibly an independent, Marian Lupu, as President of the National Assembly). Voronin won because of the fragmentation of the opposition forces, with defectors from the Democratic and Social Liberal Parties voting for him for President. And in a stunning reversal of its previous position, the fiery opposition Christian Democratic Popular Party, cast all of its votes for Voronin. Accused of betrayal of the Democratic opposition, Iurie Rosca, the leader of the Christian Democrats, claimed that he had discussed the conditions for backing Voronin with him beforehand, and was satisfied that Voronin had turned over a new leaf. Voronin promised to introduce various reforms in the system, such as stepping down as party leader while he continued to serve

as President of the country. (Although as of early August 2006, Voronin had not yet given up the position of leader of the communist party; instead, the Communist party contemplated the introduction of a series of reforms in the Fall 2006). According to Rosca, Voronin had accepted a series of reform proposals that the leader of the Christian Democrats had proposed.⁴⁰ Supposedly a reason for the shift by Rosca is his belief that the national interest of Moldova, especially the pro-European orientation of the country, now took precedence over the antagonism that existed previously between the two leaders. The idea of improving the prospects for association with the European Union also supposedly persuaded some other members of the opposition to shift their support to Voronin. Apparently as part of the deal in return for his support, Iurie Rosca was rewarded with the position of Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, with unsubstantiated rumors that he was interested in running for President himself. In early August 2005, about four months after the election of Voronin as president, Rosca expressed his satisfaction with the direction which Moldova was moving.⁴¹

AN ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Voronin was inaugurated as president on 7 April 2005. In his inaugural speech, he referred to ‘the inspiration and moral support which he derived from the Rose and Orange revolutions’. However, an extremely curious situation developed in Moldova, in which an illiberal communist regime assumed a more anti-Russian posture thereby infuriating

⁴⁰ See Nicu Popescu, ‘The Revolutionary Evolution in Moldova’, <http://www.moldova.org/editor/ale/eng/32> (15 June 2005).

⁴¹ For a further explanation by Iurie Rosca of his motivations in supporting Voronin for the Presidency, see V. Cusnir, ‘Moldova’s Orange Revolution: Interview with Iurie Rosca’, *Demokratizatsiya*, XIII (Fall 2005) 537-542.

Moscow, while a significant opposition democratic coalition the BMD led by then Chisinau mayor Serafim Urechean, had been favored by Moscow in the elections. Urechean was specifically targeted by the Voronin administration for his connections to Russia, and efforts were made to prevent him from traveling to Moscow before the elections. Further, Urechean was the subject of a criminal investigation by the regime and accused of having ties to the separatist regime in Tiraspol.⁴² His parliamentary immunity was lifted in October 2005, possibly opening the way for his prosecution by the regime.

Moldova faces a number of problems in meeting the European standards associated with a liberal democracy. The Voronin administration is allegedly quite corrupt, hardly a model for meeting the criteria of a rule of law state, necessary for associate status with the European Union. For example, as mentioned earlier, one of Voronin's sons, Oleg Voronin, according to the Moldovan media, allegedly has extensive interests in the Moldovan economy, such as the timber and sugar industries, among other things.⁴³ Furthermore, the Voronin administration has not shrunk from using its resources to control the state media, although there are a number of relatively independent newspapers in Moldova such as *Jurnal de Chisinau*, and *Timpul*, which are critical of the regime. In 2005, the regime supposedly divested itself of control of *Moldova Suverana*, which had served as an instrument of the administration, but in reality it still seems to reflect official policy. But it has been a struggle to reduce state efforts to control electronic media such as Teleradio -Moldova and enact a law which would result in the creation of an Audio-Visual Council not subject to the control and

⁴² See *Moldova Suverana* 14 March 2006, WNC (14 March 2006).

⁴³ See <http://politicom.moldova.org/articole/=Rom/421/> (6 March 2005).

pressure of the administration.⁴⁴ In early May 2006, a number of embassies posted to Chisinau, and representatives of the EU, OSCE, and the Council of Europe as well, urged the Moldovan government ‘to make real progress in reforming the media.’⁴⁵ The US, in the section of its most recent annual human rights report dealing with Moldova, drew attention to the harassment of political opponents, media repression, and the need to develop the rule of law.⁴⁶ A recent statement by an EU spokesman indicated that Moldova, along with Ukraine, would not be ready for European Union membership for a long time, perhaps even longer now that the movement for a European constitution has been stalled.⁴⁷ The uppermost question was, whether Voronin after his reelection as President in 2005, would really proceed to further democratize the illiberal regime which has been functioning since 2001 in Moldova?⁴⁸ Leaders of the opposition parties that decided to support Voronin for the presidency because it was in the national interest,

⁴⁴ For criticism by the OSCE of Moldovan efforts to draft an AudioVisual law, see Dr. K. Nyman-Metcalf, ‘Comments on the Draft Audiovisual Code of the Republic of Moldova’, http://www1.osce.org/documents/rfm/2006/04/18723_en.pdf (26 July 2006). The main concerns of the OSCE were the extent of the control that would be exercised over the public broadcaster by the proposed Audiovisual Council, ensuring that the Audiovisual Council would not be stacked with political appointees, clarifying the guarantees for minority broadcasting, protecting freedom of expression, and ensuring equitable conditions under which a broadcasting license could be withdrawn.

⁴⁵ ‘Statement on the Occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2006’, <http://www.azi.md/tribune?id=39110> (10 May 2006).

⁴⁶ See ‘Moldova, 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices’, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61664.htm> (10 June 2006). The United States has also lambasted Moldova for trying former Defense Minister Valeriu Pasat on charges of financial mismanagement in connection with the sale of MIG aircraft to the U.S. New charges of attempting to foment a revolution on behalf of Russia in Moldova have also been leveled at Pasat. See *Moldova Azi* (online), 8 February 2006. (8 February 2006).

⁴⁷ See ‘Moldova Will Not Enter the EU Within Next 20 Years-EU Commissioner for Enlargement, *Moldova Azi*, 20 February 2006’, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=38117> (20 February 2006). The EU appears to have added a new condition for membership dubbed “absorptive capacity” in addition to the 1993 Copenhagen criteria.

⁴⁸ For example, Voronin’s celebration of Lenin’s birthday in April, 2006, seemed to mark somewhat of a reversion to Leninism (in comparison to the debunking of Lenin in Russia), in which Voronin said, “Lenin and his ideas may feel safe and sound in Moldova,” *Moldova Azi*, 26 April 2006, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=39016> (26 April 2006).

originally expressed their belief that reforms were being instituted, for example, in such areas as the justice system, in an effort to comply with European standards. But by 2006, Dumitru Diacov, leader of the Democratic Party, and Oleg Serebrian, the leader of the Social Liberal Party, expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of progress in reform, and felt that Voronin had not lived up to his end of the bargain. Serafim Urecheanu, leader of the opposition Our Moldova Alliance, which had never supported Voronin, spoke of 'pseudo-reforms.'⁴⁹

THE TRANSNISTRIAN CONUNDRUM

However, at the time, the political dynamics of the region shifted somewhat with the dramatic changes which have occurred in the leadership of Ukraine and Georgia. . The West Europeans seemed to believe that the election results Ukraine (before the Orange coalition collapsed) and in Moldova, given the concern of an eastward expanding EU and NATO for stability on their easternmost borders, provided a great opportunity to try and resolve the 'frozen conflict' in Transnistria, which has defied a solution for the past fourteen years. Moldova's aspirations to join the European Union also depend on a resolution of the Transnistrian conflict as well, nor would Moldova want to join the European Union without Transnistria.

Chisinau had unsuccessfully proposed in June 2004 that the major actors involved in the Transnistrian negotiations sign a Security and Stability Pact for Moldova (SSPM),

⁴⁹ 'Moldovan opposition Party rallies Against Europe's Last Communist Regime, *Basapress*, March 13, 2006', *WNC* (13 March 2006).

which could be used as a basis for the settlement of the Transnistrian problem.⁵⁰ There was really not very much support either in the West or Russia or Romania for signing such a treaty, but both the EU and the US were willing to support the issuance of a Declaration on Security and Stability, rather than adhere to a treaty, on security and stability.⁵¹ Part of Moldova's problem in negotiating guarantees for its security, stemmed from its recent dissatisfaction with the negotiating structure that had been devised to deal with Transnistria. Even before the 2005 elections, the Voronin administration indicated that it would like to change the negotiating format that had been serving as the framework for resolving the status of Transnistria since 1992. The negotiations since 1992, had taken the shape of a so-called Pentagon, including Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Transnistria, and the OSCE. This arrangement had worked well to serve Russian interests. In the pentagonal format, the Russians to some extent could control the Kuchma regime in Ukraine, the regime in Transnistria, and even the OSCE (given that all OSCE decisions must be made by consensus). But following the "color" revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, and his reelection, Voronin wanted to further internationalize the negotiating process format, by bringing in the US, and the European Union. Moreover, Romania was also interested in joining the negotiations. For instance, on 8 June 2005, Adrian Jacobovitz de Szeged, the Special Representative of the EU to Moldova,

⁵⁰ For a summary of the basic principles of the proposed pact, which was presented by Moldova with very little consultation with the other interested parties, see <http://www.infoukes.com/rfe-ukraine/2004/0602.html> (4 June 2006).

⁵¹ For initial EU reaction, see 'Javier Solana Thinks Declaration Signature is Possible, *Moldova Azi*, 29 October 2004', <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=31577>, (4 June 4,2006). However, due to Russian opposition, the Declaration was not adopted by the OSCE at its summit on December 6/7, 2004. See Vladimir Socor, 'Moscow Blasts Moldova's Call For Help, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (online) 17 December 2004.' (4 June 2006).

expressed support for the participation of Romania in the negotiations.⁵² But this proposal was unacceptable to Moscow, which preferred to maintain the pentagonal negotiating format as delineated in the Kozov memorandum. However, after discussions, on 14 July 2005, Ukrainian president Yushchenko and Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov issued an invitation to the US and the EU to participate in the negotiations. Although the US and the EU were certainly welcome, Moldovan skeptics questioned whether they would participate in the negotiations in a substantive fashion, or simply be relegated to the margins in an observer capacity. Nonetheless, an agreement was reached on 27 September 2005, that the EU and the United States, would participate as observers in negotiations dealing with Transnistria in a format known as '5+2'. However, to date (2006) the expanded negotiations format had not resulted in a solution to the Transnistrian problem. Romania was not included in this diplomatic arrangement, despite its interest in participating in it.

GUAM VERSUS RUSSIAN HEGEMONY

In an effort at further enhancing its security, the illiberal regime in Moldova joined forces with the "new democratic regimes" in Georgia and Ukraine to form a bloc or axis within a subregional organization, GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova - previously known as GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova) prior to the withdrawal of Uzbekistan) which had been set up in 1997 by the US to help maintain a framework for the secure transportation of Caspian Sea energy resources to

⁵² 'Official Calls Romania to Participate in Dniester Talks Via EU?', *Rompres*, 8 June 2005', (online version) (8 June 2005).

markets in the West. . Moldova has also joined the Community of Democratic Choice, which is a regional version an organization known as the Community of Democracies, that also functions on an international scale and at the United Nations..The creation of the Community of Democratic Choice, was the result of a joint initiative by the Presidents of Ukraine and Georgia,and is designed to create a community of democracies on a regional scale, encompassing the Baltic-Black-Caspian sea regions.⁵³ Therefore, given the changing dynamics of the Black Sea region, Russia now faces the prospect of a bloc of anti-Russian states operating to counter its hegemony in the area, which adds to Moscow's perception of threats to its interests, as Black Sea efforts at regional and subregional cooperation link up to similar efforts in the Baltic and Caspian Sea regions. It is reasonable to assume that Russia is also interested in curbing the power of Ukraine in the region, while Moldova would like a strategic partnership with Ukraine to counter Russia. Tiraspol also views GUAM as directed against it, and its efforts to construct a bloc consisting of the other separatist enclaves, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Nagorno-Karabakh is not included in this) in the 'arc of crisis' scattered throughout the former Soviet space.⁵⁴ Within the framework of GUAM, Moldova has moved rather quickly to conclude a series of bilateral agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan, specifically focusing on the guarantee of territorial integrity, one of the

⁵³ See the 'Borjomi Declaration 12 August 2005', <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=e4sm=2+id=451> (3 June 2006).

⁵⁴ Transnistria formed what might be called an anti-GUAM organization with two other separatist enclaves, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, that are located in Georgia.The name of the organization is 'For Democracy and People's Rights Community.'The separatist entities also agreed to set up a joint peacekeeping unit, which, for example, could be dispatched to Transnistria, in the eventuality of the withdrawal of the Russian 'peacekeepers' from the area.See 'Post-Soviet Unrecognized Republics Combine Against Russian peacekeeping Pullout, *Nevavisismaya Gazeta*, 15 June,2006', <http://toolkit.dialog.com.exp1.harvard.edu/intranet/cgi/present> (23 June 2006).

sacrosanct principles of international law. The revitalization of GUAM after Moldova's parliamentary elections also seems to constitute a major element of Moldova's grand strategy of sorts to participate in an alliance system(s) to counterbalance the power of Russia, since Moscow functions as the major regional hegemon in the Black sea area. Another words, the Black Sea is marked by what John Mearsheimer might call an unbalanced multipolar distribution of power in Russia's favor.⁵⁵ Ukraine also led a move to transform GUAM in the aftermath of the "color" revolutions from a somewhat moribund organization which has languished since its creation into a more robust international organization (a move which triggered Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the organization, although Uzbekistan's participation in GUUAM was lukewarm anyway; Moldova subsequently closed its diplomatic mission in Uzbekistan). On 23 May 2006, GUAM officially became an international organization with a Charter, and headquarters in Kiev, Ukraine.⁵⁶ It is hoped that a revitalized GUAM would have the capacity to preserve the independence of its members, reduce further Russian influence in the area, end separatism on their territories, (Ukraine is also threatened by separatism in the eastern part of the country) and counter Russian efforts to preserve its hegemony in the region. As Ukraine possibly moves closer to NATO, the Russian reaction seems to be to preserve the status quo in Transnistria, keeping it within Moscow's orbit. The efforts to transform GUAM into a more robust security organization as well is perceived by Russia as a threat to the interests of Moscow in its zone of influence, despite rather diplomatic public

⁵⁵ See J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

⁵⁶ See 'Kyiv Declaration on Establishment of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM,' *Press Release Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the OSC*, http://www.osce.org/documents/eca/2006/05/19214_en.pdf, (25 May 2006).

statements by Moldova that the revitalized organization is not directed against anyone.⁵⁷ For example, in a comment that reflected the angst caused by Russia's general loss of influence, Russian President Vladimir Putin recently referred to the collapse of the Soviet Union as the 'greatest geopolitical catastrophe' of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ US support for a resurgent GUAM which must also worry Moscow, was symbolized by the presence of a US delegation of observers at the GUAM summit which met in Chisinau in April and again in May 2006, when GUAM was transformed into a permanent international organization. In the best tradition of classical realism, the attempt to reinvigorate GUAM seems to represent the desire of Moldova to leave the 'zone of influence of Russia', although it faces a number of constraints, mostly economic, which may prevent it from completely doing so.⁵⁹ A major stimulus for the move to upgrade the status of GUAM, which its members stress is not to be seen as being directed against any third state, i.e. Russia, followed a period of economic pressure exerted by Russia against Moldova, as will be discussed later. Nonetheless, the new direction or reorientation of Moldovan foreign policy may also involved participation in the construction of a 'Baltics to the Balkans' axis, including the Caspian sea region, as part of the balance of power game that Moldova is involved in, in its efforts to contend with Russian aspirations as the regional hegemon in the area. Furthermore, there have been earlier suggestions that GUAM could

⁵⁷ On April 14, before the GUAM Chisinau summit met, the Moldovan parliament approved the Charter of the organization as well as two other agreements—one dealing with a free trade zone and another dealing with an information bureau. These agreements had actually been reached in 2002, and the agreement on the Charter had been reached in 2001.

⁵⁸ See 'Was Soviet Collapse Last Century's Worst Geopolitical Catastrophe? *Johnson's Russia List*', http://www.cdi.org/Russia/Johnson/9135_11.cfm (3 June 2006).

⁵⁹ See D. Lungu, 'Cine A Plasat Accentele La Summit-ul GUAAM, [Who Has Placed the Accents at the GUAAM Summit] *Moldova Suverana*, 28 April 2005', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=4441> (27 April 2005).

create some kind of peacekeeping force or unit that could operate in the area, an issue which has been discussed by the organization previously. in connection with security.⁶⁰ Voronin clearly wished to expand the scope of GUAM, inviting such states as Lithuania(the Lithuanian President attended as an observer), Poland, and Romania to attend the GUAM summit that met in Chisinau in April 2005.⁶¹ The result of the meeting was the Declaration of the Chisinau Summit, which focused on political/military cooperation among the GUAM states, as well as the creation of a free trade zone among its members.,a move which the EU encourages.⁶² As mentioned previously, US observers also attended the Chisinau summit in April. On the other hand, Russia was not invited to the Chisinau summit, a snub which it considered to be contrary to its status as Moldova's strategic partner,⁶³ while on 7June 2005, Turkey, a major Black sea regional hegemon, announced that it was participating in GUAM as an observer.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that for a while Romanian-Moldovan relations had also markedly improved since the Romanian presidential elections in 2004. Romanian President Basescu's first official visit to another country was to Moldova in January 2005.⁶⁴ To date, Romania and Moldova have signed six agreements in the

⁶⁰ See 'Azerbaijan, Ukraine Mull Over GUAM Peacekeeping Forces', <http://207.44.135.100/eng/articles.php?id=12694> (4 June 2006).

⁶¹ Moldova has worked assiduously to develop a special relationship with the Baltic states on a bilateral basis.The Baltic states have also helped Moldova prepare for EU integration.

⁶² See 'GUAM Summit Documents,21 -23April 2005',<http://politicom.moldova.org/comentari/eng/185> (1August 2006).

⁶³ See *Moldova Azi* April 22, 2005 (online version), (22 April 2005).

⁶⁴ See 'Romanian President Says Bucharest Stands by Moldova,,*Mediafax*, 29 January 2005',<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/4-see.asp>, (29 January 2005).

defense area.⁶⁵ and cooperation between Bucharest and Chisinau also takes place within the framework of Moldova's membership in NATO's PFP (Partnership for Peace). However, there still is a serious strain in the relationship between the two countries because of their failure to agree on basic treaty which would also resolve some border issues between them, Romania's unsuccessful efforts to be included in the Pentagonal negotiations dealing with Transnistria, and President Traian Basescu's remarks in the summer of 2006 that Romania and Moldova could join the European Union together and unite within the framework of the European organization.⁶⁶

THE UKRAINIAN PEACE INITIATIVE

However, the ability of GUAM to function harmoniously as a counterweight to Russia and the CIS, might be weakened by the fact that Ukraine, as an emerging regional hegemon, is competing with Romania for influence in the region.⁶⁷ The competition between Romania and Ukraine was underscored by several versions of a plan for a settlement of the Transnistrian question, first presented by President Yushchenko at the GUAM summit in April 2005. in the form of 'Seven Steps.'⁶⁸ The plan was to be

⁶⁵ 'Romanian, Moldovan Defence Ministers, Sign Cooperation Protocol, Romanian Defence Ministry to Back Reformation of Moldovan Army, *Rompres*, 21 June 2005', *WNC*, (24 June 2005).

⁶⁶ 'Romania's Proposal to Unite With Moldova Favorable for Dniester, *ITAR-TASS* (in English), 13 July 2006', <http://toolkit.dialog.com.ezp1.harvard.edu/intranet/cgi/present>, *WNC*, (14 July 2006). The proposal for unification was viewed by Voronin as an "unofficial" proposal, but provided an opening for the Transnistrian leadership to justify plans to hold a referendum on September 17, 2006, on the question of union with Russia or Moldova.

⁶⁷ See 'Ukraine Destined to Regional leadership, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Tarasyuk Tells *Vremya Novostey*'s Kiev correspondent Svetlana Stapanenko About Crucial issues in Ukrainian-Russian Relations, *Vremya Novostey*, 19 June 2005', *WNC*. (24 June 2005)

⁶⁸ See 'Yushchenko Presents Ukraine's Plan of Transnistrian Conflict Settlement, *Moldova Azi*, 22 April 2005', <http://www.azi.md/print/33949/en> (25 May 2005).

implemented over a period of 18 months, whereby the borders of a reintegrated Moldova, would be those of the Moldovan Soviet Republic as of 1 January 1990. The original version of the Yushchenko plan was drafted without consultation with Romania. Further, Romania was not included as one of the guarantors in the Ukrainian plan, while Ukraine and Russia were. This gave the Ukrainian plan a distinctly pro-Russian tenor even though there are of course elements of competition between Russia and Ukraine in the Black Sea region, so it should also be pointed out that there was some Russian criticism of the plan.⁶⁹ It appeared that pro-Russian elements in Ukraine left over from the old Kuchma regime, led by Yushchenko's former national security advisor, Petro Poroshenko, reportedly played a major role in the drafting of the plan (Poroshenko allegedly has economic interests in Transnistria). Most important of all, Romania also noted that the Ukrainian plan did not call for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria.⁷⁰ Russian withdrawal currently, is of course unacceptable not only to Moscow, but to the leaders in Tiraspol as well. On 15 June 2005, a deputy spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry stated rather ominously that Russia had maintained troops in Transnistria since 1791 and would keep a military force there as long as necessary to protect its interests.⁷¹ In a press conference on 20 March 2006, the Russian Ambassador

⁶⁹ See 'Margelov: Attempt at Separate Settlement in Dniester Doomed to Failure, *ITAR-TASS*, 8 June 2005', *WNC*, (10 June 2005).

⁷⁰ See 'Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* ' , <http://www.rferl.org/reports/pbureport/default.asp>, (15 June 2005).

⁷¹ See Vladimir Soloviev, Boris Volkhonsky, 'The Plan of Victory over Moldova, *Kommersant*, 8 June 2005', *WNC*, (9 June 2003); also see 'Russia is Worried About Chisinau's Parliament Statement', <http://politicom.moldova.org/stiri/eng/3246/> (15 June 2005).

to Moldova reaffirmed the fact that 'Russia has permanent interests in the area.'⁷² This resulted in Moldova recalling its Ambassador, Vasili Sturza, from Moscow at the time. Furthermore, the Russian position is that it will withdraw its remaining huge stockpiles of war material at Colbasna only after a political settlement has been reached concerning Transnistria. . Russia claims that it is eager to withdraw its materials because of the danger which they pose to the Transnistrian population.⁷³ Moscow, which has suffered a number of setbacks in the former Soviet space, is edgy but certainly one assumes would not want to become involved in any kind of repetition of the mini-war which took place in Moldova in 1992. However, Russian spokesmen did not exclude the threat of military options, in the case of a threat to Russian 'peacekeepers' in the area.⁷⁴

Critique of the Ukrainian Peace Plan. Romania and Moldova were both critical of the fact that the Ukrainian plan initially called for holding elections for a new supreme soviet in Transnistria in the Fall of 2005, according to Transnistrian, not Moldovan laws and rules, and under international electoral supervision. Bucharest, for example, objected that this approach to the 'democratization' of Transnistria would simply legitimize the existing power structure of the separatist regime led by Igor Smirnov and his clan and certain reformist elements. Moldova also objected to reference in the plan to the idea of the 'self-determination' of the Transnistrian people. The OSCE had originally volunteered to supervise parliamentary elections in Transnistria, based on its experience

⁷² See V. Socor, 'Russia-West Standoff in Transnistria: Overall Post-Soviet Order at Stake, March 24,2006',<http://politicom.moldova.org/comentarii/eng/551/>,(24 March 2006).

⁷³ See 'Russia to Pull Arms Out of Transnistria After Settlement Ivanov Brussels, *Interfax*, 9 June 2005', *WNC* (9 June 2005).

⁷⁴ 'Russian Envoy Regrets EU and USA Joining Dniester Talks, *RIA-Novosti*, 13 March 2006', *WNC* (14 March 2006)

in conducting elections in such tension-ridden areas as Kosovo.⁷⁵ Tiraspol favors this approach, because it is based on the model of Kosovo which is leading in the direction of some form of sovereignty beyond the UN mandated status of substantial autonomy for the Serbian province. (Tiraspol has been further encouraged by the example of the Montenegrin referendum of 21 May 2006, which led to its independence, as well as the Russian position that there is a universal principle of self-determination that ostensibly could be applied to such separatist entities as Transnistria, as well as Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia.) But the OSCE also originally took the position that it was up to the regimes in Chisinau and Tiraspol to decide by themselves whether the proposed elections would be conducted under the Moldovan or Transnistrian constitutions and laws. The position of the Smirnov regime is that elections should be held under Transnistrian laws, but it had stated earlier that it was amenable to an arrangement to be worked out by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission or the OSCE itself.⁷⁶ The Venice Commission (The European Commission for Democracy Through Law) has worked for years with Moldova on such questions as constitutional reform, electoral reform, and the status of minorities.⁷⁷ However, Moldova believed that the Ukrainian plan did not provide enough time for sufficient preparation for elections; furthermore Moldova argued that, a number of conditions had to be met before any elections in Transnistria were held, such as: the release of political prisoners (especially the remaining two members of the "Ilascu group,"

⁷⁵ See *Moldova.Reporter.md*, 17 June, 2005 (online version) (17 June 2005).

⁷⁶ According to a statement by Valery Litskay, Transnistrian 'Foreign Minister'. See 'Moldova: Dniester Foreign Minister Says Elections To (Be) Held under "Own Laws"', *Kiev Interfax Ukraine*, June 18, 2005', *WNC* (24 June 2005).

⁷⁷ See 'Venice Commission. Cooperation with Moldova', http://www.vence.coe.int/site/main/coop_MDA-E.asp (10 April 2006).

Andrei Ivantoc and Tudor Petra-Popov), the demilitarization of Transnistria, the dismantling of the secret police apparatus there, the creation of conditions in which free political parties and non-governmental organizations could function, and the guarantee of a free press, among others.⁷⁸ However, Tiraspol decided to go ahead and hold scheduled parliamentary elections itself anyway on 11 December 2005, despite Moldovan objections, and the OSCE's latest position that it would not sanction or oversee such elections, although the OSCE did unofficially observe the elections. The elections, in which over 50 per cent of the eligible electorate participated, were not recognized as legitimate by the international community.⁷⁹ The Smirnov (Igor Smirnov supposedly will be a candidate for the Presidency in 2006) group ostensibly did not do well. A group of businessmen and "liberal" economic reformers belonging to the "Renewal" (*Obnovlenye*) party, reportedly tied to the "Sheriff" company (but its connection to the Smirnovs is still not entirely clear) which wields vast interests in the Moldovan economy, won 23 out of the 43 seats in the single chamber Transnistrian Supreme Soviet.⁸⁰ However, it should be pointed out that the 'reformers' are just as pro-Russian as Smirnov and the pro-government party. Smirnov's 'Respublika' group finally wound up with 13 seats.⁸¹ The

⁷⁸ For a wide-ranging criticism of the Ukrainian plan by the Moldovan Foreign Policy Association, see 'Declaratia Asociata Pentru Politica Externa Cu Privire La Planul Reglementare A Problemei Transnistrene Propusde Ucraina La 16 Mai 2005 [Declaration of the Foreign Policy Association Concerning the Plan for Resolving the Transnistrian Problem Proposed by Ukraine on 16 May 2005] *Moldova Azi*, 30 May 2005', <http://www.azi.md/tribune?id=34419> (1 June 1999).

⁷⁹ Officially 56.3 per cent of the registered voters participated in the elections. See 'Opposition Wins Democratic Election', <http://pridnestrovia.net/11dec2005Selection.html>, (15 July 2006).

⁸⁰ The Sheriff company has its own website, which lists its many business activities ranging from sports to supermarkets.

⁸¹ See 'Transnistria 2006: Is Regime Change Underway? British Helsinki Human Rights Group', <http://www.BHHRG.org/countryreport.asp?Report+ID=260+countryID=16> (9 April 2006); the final breakdown of the elections were 23 seats for 'Renewal' who were joined by six other members of the

leader of the 'Renewal' party, Yevgeny Shevchuk, was elected speaker of the Transnistrian parliament.⁸² The Smirnov administration would have the rest of the world believe that the results of the elections illustrate how democratic the system in Transnistria really is.

Furthermore, Moldovan unhappiness with current peace and security arrangements is illustrated by the fact that it has had an on again off again relationship with the Joint Control Commission (JCC). For example, as a protest against the lack of freedom of movement of its citizens in Transnistria, Moldova did not participate in the meetings of the JCC since 19 April 2005. Moldova returned to the work of the commission on 15 July 2005, but then withdrew from participation again. On 4 May 2006, Moldova announced that it was once again resuming participation in the JCC, because the issue of allowing the peasants in the town of Dorotscaia to work in their fields had been resolved in a satisfactory fashion.⁸³

The JCC was set up in 1992, as part of the agreement that ended the civil conflict there. As part of that settlement, each one of the parties involved deployed a contingent of peacekeepers in a security zone which was established.⁸⁴ The Moldovan military observers in the security zone recently refused to cooperate with the Russian co-chairman of the JCC. Moldova has called for the replacement of the current military observers in

Supreme Soviet to create a reformist bloc of 29; 'Respublica' or Smirnov's government party wound up with 13 seats, and one seat was held by an independent. See 'Opposition Wins Democratic Election', <http://pridnestrovie.net/11dec2005Selection.html> (15 July 2006).

⁸² For some background on Yevgeny Shevchuk, see 'Reformer Yevgeny Shevchuk, New Head of Parliament', http://pridnestrovie.net/evgeny_shevchuck_bioprofile.html (15 July 2006).

⁸³ See 'Moldova Participates Again at Joint Control Commission Sessions, *Moldova Azi*, 5 May 2006', <http://www.azi.md/news?id=39168> (10 May 2006).

⁸⁴ 'Moldovan Peacekeepers in Dniester Region Refuse To Obey Russian Joint Command, ITAR-TASS, 16 June 2005', *WNC* (24 June 2005).

the security zone with military and civilian international observers under the aegis of the OSCE, in spite of Moldova's wary attitude toward this pan-European organization; furthermore, the OSCE according to Chisinau, should also come up with an arrangement to oversee the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria.⁸⁵ Moscow's position is that it will not withdraw its troops until a political settlement is reached between Transnistria and Moldova. In June 2006, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, Chairman-In-Office of the OSCE, called for the deployment of an international force to replace the current peacekeeping arrangement in the security zone of Transnistria. After meeting with Igor Smirnov, the OSCE official proposed that the organization would even be willing to finance the withdrawal of Russian military forces from the area.⁸⁶

Moldova's attitude is also influenced by the fact that the Moldovan parliament adopted a law delineating the special autonomous status of Transnistria on July 22, 2005, to further strengthen its negotiating position and provide the basis for a political settlement, from its perspective.⁸⁷ The Moldovan regime had indicated that it would be willing to concede to Tiraspol a "broader autonomy", greater than what the autonomous Turkic region of Gagauzia in Moldova currently enjoys.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See 'Russia Slams Moldova Parliament's Move on Transnistria, *Interfax Russian and CIS Diplomatic Panorama for 16 June 2005*', *WNC*, (16 June 2005).

⁸⁶ See <http://www.rferl.org/newline/4-see.asp/> (2 June 2006).

⁸⁷ See V. Socor, 'Moldovan Law Changes the Logic of Settlement of Transnistria,, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, July 26, 2005', http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=407+issue_id=3414+article_id=2370063 (3 June 2006).

⁸⁸ According to Deputy Minister of Reintegration, Viktor Postolaki, <http://politicom.moldova.org/stiri/eng/33281>; for Voronin's view on Gagauzia as a possible model of autonomy for Transnistria, see 'Alocutiunea A Presedintelui Republicii Moldova Vladimir Voronin, Rostita La Sedinta Solemna Prilejuita De Aniversarea Ce 10-La A UTA Gagauz-Yeri [Address Pronounced by the President of the Republic of Moldova at the Solemn Session pn the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of thr UTA Gagauz-Yeri] *Moldova Suverana*, 24 December 2004', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=3774> (24 December 2004).

Barring a negotiated solution, there is always the possibility that the regime in Tiraspol could declare its independence and be recognized as a sovereign state by Russia. There is also some support in the Russian Duma for the Transnistrian entity to become a part of Russia. Not surprisingly, a former major opposition figure to the Smirnov regime, Aleksandr Radcenko, (since eclipsed by the rise of the leader of the “Renewal” party, as Radcenko was defeated in his bid for reelection) also preferred that Transnistria be reintegrated with Russia, rather than pursue a pro-Western orientation perhaps as part of Moldova.⁸⁹ Furthermore, it is possible that the more reformist elements in Transnistria mentioned earlier in connection with the December 2005 parliamentary elections, could bring about a regime change and engage in effective negotiations with Moldova.⁹⁰ But more likely Transnistria could also hold a referendum and declare its independence, or opt for some form of association or incorporation into Russia (this could also include observer status or actual membership in the CIS), as Tiraspol received substantial financial aid from Russia in the aftermath of the customs regime introduced by Ukraine in Transnistria on 3 March 2006. Indeed, the Smirnov administration has announced that it will hold such a referendum, dealing with the relationship between Transnistria and Russia and Moldova, on September 17, 2006.⁹¹ The apparent strategy seems to be to link the incorporation of Transnistria into Russia, along with the Georgian separatist enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as these three separatist entities coordinate their policies.

⁸⁹ See ‘Transnistria-Rezervatia Exploziva A Europei [Transnistria-Reserved European Explosion] *Moldova Suverana*, 17 June 2005’, <http://www.moldova-suverana/md/articol.php?=4768> (17 June 2005).

⁹⁰ For a recent unsuccessful effort by the opposition in Transnistria to challenge Smirnov’s power, see *Novoya Gazeta*, 22 June 2005’, *WNC*, (24 June 2005).

⁹¹ Transnistria has held about eight referenda since separating from Moldova. For example, in a referendum which was held in 1998, a majority of the population of Transnistria voted for independence.

Officially, Russia in the past has not endorsed such referendums in Transnistria, but recently the Russian position seems to have shifted to a more favorable stance, in support of the application of the ‘universal principles’ of self –determination. The position of Moldova is that it will not recognize the results of such a referendum. The OSCE has also taken the position that it would not consider such a referendum as legitimate.⁹²

Presently (2006), Chisinau has stated that it will not negotiate with the current leadership which it regards as rogues, but is willing to talk to other unspecified representatives of Transnistria, such as, presumably ‘foreign minister’ Valery Litskai.⁹³ For example, the attitude expressed on 21 August 2004, by President Voronin still prevails: ‘Tiraspol is now ruled by a fascist-like totalitarian regime led by a handful of Russian carpetbaggers and oligarchs.’⁹⁴ However, the international community believes that Moldova still could show some flexibility in negotiating with representatives of the Tiraspol leadership on such issues as the democratization and demilitarization of Transnistria., as urged at times by the OSCE.

CONCLUSION: WHITHER MOLDOVA?

The analysis that Moldova is irreversibly moving towards Europe in the aftermath of the ‘color’ revolutions and Voronin’s reelection, may at first seem to be overly optimistic. Clearly, however, Moldova’s reorientation toward Europe seemed to be

⁹² ‘OSCE Will Not Recognize Results of a Referendum in Transnistria, 7 April 2006’, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=38790> (7 April 2006).

⁹³ According to the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament. See *ITAR-TASS*, 16 June 2005’, *WNC* (24 June 2005).

⁹⁴ ‘Moldovan President Says Negotiations possible Only After Transdniester Gets Rid of Junta, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines* 24 August 2004’, <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/4-see.asp> (24 August 2004).

intensifying beyond expectations. However, the European Union is now going through a period of soul-searching and taking stock in the aftermath of the failure to secure approval of the EU constitution. Also, at the present time, the European Union may not want to jeopardize its relations with Russia by becoming too heavily involved in Transnistria., to the point of a confrontation with a newly assertive Moscow . The European institutions prefer that Moldova try and cooperate with Russia. Furthermore, Russia can seek to develop support for its position that the Kozak Memorandum can serve as the basis for a settlement, by engaging in bilateral negotiations with individual members of the European Union, such as France.⁹⁵

In mid-June the special EU representative for Moldova, Adrian Jacobvitz de Szeged, stated that the European Union did not have a plan for the settlement of Transnistria, but this was belied by the fact that the EU sent a Border Assistance Mission (BAM) to monitor the Transnistrian section of the Ukrainian-Moldovan border, while the OSCE had earlier offered to oversee any elections in Transnistria as suggested by the Yushchenko plan.⁹⁶ The EU's Border Assistance Mission was created in response to a joint letter(preceded by a joint agreement between Moldova and Ukraine in December 2005) was sent by Voronin and Yushchenko on June 2, 2005 to the Secretary-General of the European Union and the President of the European Commission. In particular, the two Presidents asked for financial help from the EU to strengthen customs control over

⁹⁵ See 'La Paris Au Avut Loc Consultari Franco-Ruse In Problema Transnistreana [Franco-Russian Consultations Took Place at Paris on the Transnistrian Problem]*Moldova.reporter.md* 18 June 2005' (17 June 2005).

⁹⁶ See *Moldova Suverana*, 15 June 2005,<http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=4773> (15 June 2005);also see 'OSCE Ready to Stage Elections in Transdnier Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline',<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/4-see.asp> (20 June 2005).

the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border of 286 miles.⁹⁷ A tightened, honest, effective customs, regime (barring substantial Russian assistance) would it was believed, strike a serious blow at the ability of the Transnistrian elites to survive financially. Perhaps one of the unintended consequences of the customs regime has been to promote the further Russian economic and financial penetration of the Transnistrian economy.⁹⁸ On June 7/8, 2005, Voronin also traveled to Strasbourg and Brussels and appealed to the European Parliament and NATO for help.⁹⁹ In October 2005, the EU reached an agreement with Moldova and Ukraine to send a Border Assistance Mission to help in securing the frontier (a major goal of the European Neighborhood Policy) between Moldova and Ukraine, including the Transnistrian segment of the border, a mission which has expanded its operations since it began on 1 December 2005.

Earlier in June 10, 2005, the Moldovan parliament (after a press conference of all of the significant party leaders expressed their criticism of some of the major elements of the Yushchenko plan) adopted a Declaration expressing its position on the plan, which to some analysts in effect amounted to killing it.¹⁰⁰ The Moldovan Parliamentary Declaration complained about the repressive nature of the regime in Transnistria and also

⁹⁷ See S. L. Myers, 'Ukraine Battles Smugglers As Europe keeps Close Eye,' *The New York Times*, May 28, 2006', p.4.

⁹⁸ Some Transnistrians suspect that the Russians are taking advantage of the crisis to advance their own economic interests at the expense of Tiraspol.

⁹⁹ 'Vladimir Voronin S-a Intretinut La Strasbourg Cu Presedintele Parlamentului European [Vladimir Voronin Has Met at Strasbourg with the President of the European Parliament] *Moldova Suverana*, 10 June 2005', <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/articol.php?id=4745> (11 June 2005).

¹⁰⁰ 'Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova Report, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines* 6 June 2005', <http://www.rferl.org/Reports/pbureport/default.asp> (15 June 2005).

stressed that elections there should be supervised by international monitors.¹⁰¹ The Moldovan legislative body also called for the proposed elections in Transnistria to be based on Moldovan laws, a position which Chisinau has consistently adhered to, especially in light of the Transnistrian decision to go ahead and hold elections in December 2005 anyway. Not surprisingly, this Moldovan stance was rejected by the Transnistrian leadership. The Smirnov regime argued that such an arrangement would only allow¹⁰² Moldovan citizens in Transnistria (which number about 150,000) to participate in the elections.¹⁰³ The OSCE was on record that all inhabitants of Transnistria, not just Moldovan citizens should vote in the elections.¹⁰⁴ Therefore it is understandable that some political elements in Moldova believe that the OSCE is at times partial towards the Russian and Transnistrian position. on a resolution of the problem. The Moldovan parliament also adopted in June 2005 resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops by the end of 2006 (President Voronin on June 10, 2005, speaking before the NATO Council called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Moscow's forces) and the demilitarization of Transnistria. In October 2005, just before the "5+2" negotiations were scheduled to start, the Russians floated a new proposal which seemed to be a combination of the Kozak memorandum and the Yushchenko plan. It was

¹⁰¹ 'Appeal of the Moldovan Parliament for the Democratization of Transnistria *Moldova Suverana*, 14 June 2005', <http://www.moldova.suverana.md/articol.php?id=4757> (17 June 2005); also see 'Moldovan Parliament Approves Ukrainian Plan For Transdnierster *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newswire*', <http://www.rferl.org/newline/4-see.asp> (11 June 2005).

¹⁰² 'Voronin Believes Withdrawal of Russian Forces from Moldova Will help Settle Transdnierster Conflict, *Interfax*, 8 June 2005', *WNC* (10 June 2005).

¹⁰³ 'Dniester Region Rejects Moldovan Amendments to Ukrainian Leader's Plan, *ITAR-TASS* 17 June 2005', *WNC* (24 June 2005).

¹⁰⁴ 'OSCE Representative Says All Residents of Dniester Region Would Vote in Election, *ITAR-TASS*, 18 June 2005', *WNC* (24 June 2005).

unacceptable to Chisinau because it virtually gave Transnistria equal status with Moldova in a new confederal arrangement.¹⁰⁵

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A major development occurred on March 3, 2006 (some months after the deployment of the EU Border Assistance Mission) when after some hesitation beforehand, Ukraine introduced a new customs regime (before the scheduled Ukrainian parliamentary elections in March 2006) that was especially important for the Transnistrian segment of the long Moldo-Ukrainian border. As we have seen, this step was facilitated by greater EU involvement in the Transnistrian problem, the resolution of which is viewed by Brussels as critical to Moldova's prospects for European integration. The introduction of the new customs regime required that all goods and products exported from Transnistria to Ukraine needed to bear a Moldovan customs stamp. The new system was specifically aimed at stopping the flow of illegal, criminal smuggling activities along the border between Transnistria and Ukraine, perhaps hopefully bringing about the economic collapse of the Smirnov regime, or at least promoting regime change which would enhance the prospects for a negotiated settlement. However, the Smirnov administration, with Russian support, argued that the new Ukrainian customs regime amounted to an economic blockade, and Tiraspol subsequently withdrew from the '5+2' negotiations that had been underway. There was some concern that the collapse of the

¹⁰⁵ For a much more positive view of the Yushchenko plan, and its prospects for serving as the basis of a settlement which would bring about the reintegration of Transnistria, see O. Protsyk, 'Moldova's Dilemmas in Democratizing and Reintegrating Transnistria', *Problems of Post-Communism* LXIII (July/August 2006) 29-41.

'Orange Revolution' coalition in Ukraine after 2004, and the poor showing of Yushchenko's 'Our Ukraine' party in the March 2006 elections, would undermine the new customs regime. However, as prolonged negotiations to form a new coalition government stretched out in 2006, Ukraine continued to maintain the new customs regime, but it is difficult to predict whether it would do so in the future depending on what kind of political coalition eventually emerges in Kyiv. Moscow and Tiraspol claimed that the customs regime was a violation of a 1997 agreement concluded by the parties to the dispute, which allowed Transnistria to engage in external foreign economic activity, an interpretation of the agreement which was rejected by the Moldovan government. Moscow also argued that Ukraine had lost its position as a 'guarantor' of the cease-fire settlement that had been reached in 1992, and should resolve the crisis on the basis of the 1997 agreement (known also as the Primakov memorandum).¹⁰⁶ The European institutions (especially the EU and the OSCE) urged Tiraspol to return to the '5+2' negotiations which it had boycotted in protest against the introduction of the new customs regime, as Transnistria also engaged in a 'self-blockade' limiting the movement of goods from Ukraine. Tiraspol claimed that the new customs rules had created a 'humanitarian crisis' and was causing significant economic damage to the Transnistrian economy. The Smirnov regime stated that a precondition for returning to the '5+2' negotiations was the lifting of the customs regime and also supported a proposal by the Russian government to adopt a 'transit protocol' that would allow Transnistria to export

¹⁰⁶ 'Dniester Crisis Should Be Discussed Jointly-Lavrov, ITAR-TASS, 14 March 2006', *WNC* (14 March 2006).

goods to Ukraine.¹⁰⁷ In the meantime, Russia placed its approximately 1500 troops in Transnistria on alert, while Tiraspol called on Moscow to increase its number of ‘peacekeepers’ in the region. Furthermore, the Russian Ambassador to Moldova stated at a press conference on March 20, 2006, that Russia would protect its interests in the former Soviet sphere, sparking a reaction of outrage in Chisinau. The Russians also provided economic and financial aid to help Transnistria survive the economic blockade.¹⁰⁸ However, Chisinau scored somewhat of a victory in requiring enterprises in Transnistria to register in Moldova in order to be able to do business, probably in part because Transnistrian and Russian business interests did not want to absorb further economic losses. For example, by May 2006, Moldova claimed that about 160 enterprises had registered, including the Rybnitsa steel works, one of the most important enterprises in Transnistria.¹⁰⁹

Rather than celebrating what may have been a pyrrhic victory, however, it is clear that Moldova’s somewhat more bolder reorientation toward Europe can be constrained by the principles of classical realism. The ‘irreversible integration’ with Europe touted by Chisinau won’t be easy because Russia is Moldova’s biggest trading partner. Even before the introduction of the new customs regime, Moldova faced the continued prospect of economic sanctions from Russia to bring its European reorientation into line with Moscow’s efforts to maintain/regain its influence in the former Soviet space. This

¹⁰⁷ ‘Transdnestr Foreign Minister: Signing Transit Protocol May Resume 5+2 Negotiations’, <http://www.regnum.ru/english/652631.htm> (9 June 2006).

¹⁰⁸ On 23 May 2006, Tiraspol and Moscow signed a protocol, which promoted further cooperation between Russian and Transnistrian business interests.

¹⁰⁹ ‘EU helping to End Moldova Conflict, Says President, 23 June 2006’, <http://www.europa.md/eng/innfto/82> (16 July 2006).

obviously raises the question as to whether or not the EU and the United States can provide Moldova with enough economic and financial support to counter Russian economic pressure.

For example, in March 2005, the Russian Duma adopted a resolution calling for the imposition of sanctions against Moldova, to punish Chisinau for its anti-Russian policies and economic pressure against Transnistria.¹¹⁰ Also in March 2005, the Deputy Russian Foreign Minister discussed plans underway by the various Russian Ministries to apply economic leverage against Moldova.¹¹¹ Russia had the option of shutting off the export of natural gas to Moldova, or charging world prices for it. Indeed, on January 1, 2006, the Russian energy giant Gazprom did increase the price of natural gas exported to Moldova from \$80 per 1000 cubic metres to \$110 per 1000 cubic metres.¹¹² Further negotiations have led to an increase in the price of natural gas to \$160 dollars per 1000 cubic metres, leading to very serious negative economic consequences, since Moldova is highly dependent on Russia and Transnistria for its energy. Gazprom also wanted to increase its share of control in a joint Russian-Moldovan gas company (Moldovagaz), from 50% to 100%, also reflecting a consistent Russian policy of enhancing its 'energy power' by gaining control over the energy infrastructures of the states in the former Soviet space.¹¹³ Chisinau at first viewed the price rises of natural gas as an effort to

¹¹⁰ 'Duma Ready to consider Sanctions Against Moldova, *Moldova Azi* February 18, 2005', <http://www.azi.md/news?id=33115> (18 February 2005).

¹¹¹ For more about an alleged Russian plan to maintain its influence in Moldova, see 'Moscow Drew Up a Plan for Keeping Moldova Under Russia's Influence, *Moldova Azi*, 8 June 2005', <http://www.azi.md/news?id=34553> (8 June 2005).

¹¹² *Moldova Azi*, 25 October 2005 <http://www.azi.md/news.id=36528> (28 October 2005).

punish Moldova for shifting to a more EU-policy, moving further out of Moscow's sphere of influence, a view also shared by the European Union.¹¹⁴ Moscow certainly is also interested in making money.¹¹⁵ In retaliation, there were some Moldovan threats to block Russian efforts to join the WTO(World Trade Organization),although it remained to be seen whether or not Moldova would want to do this or could even veto Moscow's bid for membership in the international trade organization.¹¹⁶

Russia has also applied economic pressure on other various Moldovan exports..By May 2006 Russia had actually imposed restrictions against the importation of Moldovan meat, requiring negotiations with Chisinau to ostensibly certify that the meat fulfills European health standards.¹¹⁷ The Russian Duma has also restricted the export of fruits and vegetables from Moldova to Russia¹¹⁸ At the end of March there was also a shut down in the flow of Moldovan wine to Russia, which serves as a major source of export earnings for Chisinau. The Russian ban on Moldovan wine, supposedly for health reasons,was levied after the Ukrainian introduction of the new customs regime in Transnistria in the Spring of 2006. The outbreak of a "wine war" between Russia and Moldova, caused yet another severe economic blow to the Moldovan economy,although

¹¹³ Russia controlled about 50% of Moldovagaz, Moldova about 34%,and Transnistria about 13%.Transnistria has turned its share in the company over to the Russians, to offset some of the huge energy debt it owes to Moscow.

¹¹⁴ 'Moldovan President Says Russian Sanctions Price to Pay for Independence,*Interfax* 23 June 2006', <http://toolkit.dialog.com.ezp1.harvard.edu/intranet/cgi/present>, *WNC* (23 June 2006).

¹¹⁵ M. N. Katz, 'Exploiting Rivalries for Prestige and Profit:An Assessment of Putin's Foreign Policy Approach',*Problems of Post-Communism*, LXII (May/June 2005) 27.

¹¹⁶ 'Moldovan Official Vows Support for Russian Accession to WTO, ITAR-TASS,11 April 2006, *WNC* (11April 2006).

¹¹⁷ See *Moldova Azi*, 8 February 2006, <http://www.azi.md/news?id=37955> (8 February 2006).

¹¹⁸ 'Motivul Sanctiunilor Este Cusut Cu Ata Alba[The Motive for the Sanctions is Sewed with White Thread] *Moldova Suverana*, 24 May 2005 (23 May 2005).

the European Union supported Moldova symbolically (but not as much as it could economically) as it urged Chisinau to seek more diverse markets for its alcohol products.¹¹⁹ It is estimated that the Russian wine ban affected the livelihood of about several hundred thousand Moldovan workers, since approximately 80-85% of Moldovan wine exports went to Russia.¹²⁰ The response of the West to increased Russian economic pressure on Moldova has been the extension of the European Union Generalized System of Preferences, a reduction of Moldova's debt to the Paris Club, and the renewal of IMF aid to Moldova (which had been stopped in 2003).¹²¹ The World Bank may also provide supplemental aid to Moldova (within the context of a program to reduce poverty), to soften the impact of the external shocks (rise in the price of natural gas and the ban on exports of wine to Russia) which the country's economy experienced in 2006. (The negative economic consequences of Bulgaria and Romania's accession to the EU in 2007 on Moldova's economy also need to be taken into consideration as well.)

Transnistria, which has also been subjected to economic pressure from Moldova, can also apply economic sanctions as well as military pressure against Chisinau in turn. Transnistria can block railway communications with Moldova, (although Moldova can try to circumvent Transnistria) cut off electrical power, and the supply of natural gas.¹²²

There are also more direct forms of pressure that can be applied by Tiraspol against

¹¹⁹ See 'Declaratia Privind Embargo-ul Impus Vinurilor Moldovene Estide Rusia[Declaration Concerning the Embargo Imposed on Moldovan Wine by Russia]', <http://www.pca.md/news/932> (3 June 2006).

¹²⁰ For the effects on the Moldovan economy of the Russian wine ban, see V. Condratchi, 'WTO-Final Solution Or Maybe Not...', <http://www.azi.md/comment?id=38964> (10 May 2006).

¹²¹ 'IMF Approves New Arrangement for Moldova, *Moldova Azi*, 10 May 2006', <http://www.azi.md/news?id=39186> (10 May 2006).

¹²² 'Transdnier Threatens To Block Moldova Traffic to Ukraine, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, 17 June 2005', <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/4-see.asp> (17 June 2005).

Moldova. In the summer of 2004, Transnistria closed some schools that taught Moldovan in the Latin script and obstructed efforts by OSCE observers to investigate the situation. In March 2005, special security forces from Transnistria attacked a village on the East bank which was under the jurisdiction of Moldova. In April 2006, Transnistrian forces seized part of the harbour facilities of the Moldovan town of Varnitsa.

Maintaining Equidistance Between East and West

However, President Voronin, even though insisting that integration with Europe is irreversible, has tried not to burn all of his bridges to Russia, although there has been very little reciprocation on the Russian side since 2003. For example, Voronin attended the 60th anniversary celebration of VE day in Moscow in May 2005, even though the Presidents of Georgia and Azerbaijan boycotted the celebrations. Speaking on Russian radio on May 8 2005, Voronin was careful to stress that Russia remains one of Moldova's 'strategic partners' and that the only problem separating the two states was the problem of Transnistria.¹²³ Voronin observed that Moldova 'cannot sever its historic relations with Russia' which 'is in Moldova's genetic code.' Consequently, the EU should view developments in Moldova and the Black Sea region with a strong dash of realism, cognizant of the fact that Moldova, which is still an illiberal democracy, continues to pursue a policy of balance of power politics based on astute calculations as to where its national interests lie, between Europe and Russia.¹²⁴ Voronin attended an

¹²³ 'Europeanization Is Not a Deadly Sin: President of Moldova Professes Friendly Relations with Moldova's Northern Neighbour, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 April 2006', <http://toolkit.dialog.com/espl.harvard.edu>, WNC (12 April 2006).

¹²⁴ Of course, domestic political considerations may also play a role in Voronin's efforts to try and maintain a semblance of good relations with Moscow.

‘informal’ CIS summit in Moscow in July 2006, stressing that Moldova would not withdraw from the CIS at that time, but also criticized Russia for supporting the separatist movement in Transnistria in violation of the basic treaty signed in 2002 between Moscow and Chisinau.¹²⁵

As mentioned earlier, the US is now involved along with the EU as an observer in the negotiations regarding Transnistria as part of the ‘5+2’ arrangement, and supports the territorial integrity of Moldova. The US supports the efforts of the EU and other European institutions to find a solution to the frozen conflict in Transnistria. When Vice-President Cheney met with President Voronin in Vilnius, Lithuania within the framework of a regional meeting in early May 2006, he said that ‘Moldova has many friends ready to help it’¹²⁶ However, the United States, which supports EU, Council of Europe and OSCE involvement in solving the crisis, would be making a grave mistake, given the sharp Russian reaction to the Vice-President’s statement, if it dispatched for some unimaginable reason any troops to participate in NATO, UN or OSCE operations in Transnistria.¹²⁷ Although of course, Moldova might favor a UN Security Council resolution which authorized the dispatch of international police units under UN, EU, or OSCE authorization. Moldova and other members of GUAM plan to request that the 61st

¹²⁵ Voronin is a proponent of reforming the CIS, which will be discussed at the next summit meeting in November 2006. See ‘CSI Va Fi Reformat, *Moldova Suverana*, 23 July, 2006’, <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/> (24 July 2006).

¹²⁶ ‘U.S. Says Moldova Has Many friends Ready to Help It’ <http://www.politicom.moldova.org/stiri/eng/12709/> (9 May 2006). The statement provoked a sharp reaction from President Putin, as evidence of US interference within what Russia considers to be its sphere of influence, if not exclusive area of interest. The question of ‘frozen conflicts’ was not raised by the U.S. at the G-8 summit which met in Moscow in July 2006.

¹²⁷ In December 2003, then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, had expressed support for the dispatch of international forces to the Transdnister. See ‘Powell Seeks International Peace Force for Moldova, *Reuters*, <http://www.gazeta.ru/cgi-bin/newsarc.cgi>; also see ‘Chisinau Proposes Sending Observers and Experts to the Republic to Monitor the Process of Demilitarization of the Dniester Region, *Agentsvo Voyennykh Novostey WWW-Text*’, WNC (10 June 2005).

general Assembly of the United Nations meeting in the fall of 2006 consider the 'frozen conflicts'.

Finally, the 'color' revolutions in the Black Sea region which can stall and are subject to reversals of fortune, as seen in the case of Ukraine in 2006, mean that an easy solution will not be found to the conundrum in Transnistria . One must also appreciate the extent to which Russia can inflict real economic pain on Moldova and alternatively, Moscow flush with profits from the sale of energy, can also provide Moldova with positive economic incentives through an increase in economic aid within the framework of the CIS or on a bilateral basis. Furthermore, the ability of Europe to resolve the conflict in Transnistria as the critical step in Moldova's path towards European integration and internal democratization (both the EU and Moldova recognize the interrelationship between the two), has been damaged by the current identity crisis which the European Union is experiencing, which could adversely affect European Union's efforts at stabilizing the security of the Black Sea region and surrounding areas, within the framework of the New Neighbourhood Policy.