Conflict resolution after the Cold War: the case of Moldova[1]

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Abstract. This article considers some implications of the Moldovan conflict from 1991 to the present for thinking about International Relations (IR) and conflict theory, as well as more specifically about the complexities of the conflict itself. This encompasses an examination of the roles of key external actors, and particularly of the Russian Republic and of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as a subjective view of the role of the internal actors and their aims. The analysis is based on an on-going involvement in a 'problem-solving' exercise in the area.

This article uses the example of the conflict in Moldova between 1991 and 1996 to illustrate the need for a better understanding of the dynamics that are inherent in the conflicts that have erupted in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (FSU) since the end of the Cold War. Its intention is to give food for thought to both scholars and practitioners, and to those in the international organizations that deal with the area under consideration, particularly the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), about how we might best approach such conflicts with a view not merely to 'managing' but rather to 'resolving' them. I have come to appreciate that it is pointless to apportion blame or define the truth of the various 'histories' that are now developing East of the Oder, and that conflicts such as the one I shall describe in this paper are very complex. I would further suggest that we must adjust our thinking in order to understand the enduring appeal of both older and newer forms of identity politics.[2] The nature of power and of the state must be resolved as problems before there can be any true definition of the appropriate strategy that can be adopted for solving the myriad small intra- and inter-state conflicts, like that in Moldova, that exist or that risk assailing Europe. This means that we need much more detailed studies, on a case-by-case basis, of the conflicts that exist in Europe (and elsewhere) and a decision as to what kinds of instruments might usefully be employed to try and resolve them.

   At the outset I would like to make it clear that I had the privilege of working in Moldova with a group of other academics, known as the Centre for Conflict

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[2] See Fred Halliday, 'The Cold War and its Conclusion: Consequences for International Relations Theory', in R. Leaver and J. Richardson, *Charting the Post-Cold War Order* (Boulder, CO, 1993), pp. 21–4 for a good discussion of this point.

Analysis, (CCA) based in Britain and North America from 1993 to the end of 1996. We have exercised this activity with the full support of the Governments of Moldova and Transdniestria and of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The confidence vested in us by these bodies requires me to limit my comments to a fairly general level, and I shall not therefore mention any names, places of meetings or the detailed content of the discussions held. At the time of writing the conflict has not been fully resolved but high level contacts sponsored by the OSCE as well as by the Russian and Ukrainian Governments continue.

A number of problem-solving workshops have been organised periodically over the past few years by CCA both within and outside Moldova as a form of 'second track' upon the request of, and with the participation and absolute agreement of, all relevant parties to the conflict. These workshops have provided some input into the 'first track' negotiations organised by the OSCE within Moldova which have themselves been widely publicised in the Moldovan and foreign press. 'Second track'[3] activity has most famously been used in recent years in the 'Oslo Channel' of the Middle East peace process, and has by its very nature to remain secretive.[4] Certain knowledge of CCA's part in the process of attempting to bring about a resolution of the conflict in Moldova is now in the public domain and has been reported in the local press in Moldova. There is also now a definite chance of an end to the conflict, so that freer discussion can take place.[5] It is also worthwhile bringing to the attention of readers of the *Review* that good practical work can be done by academics without a necessary compromising of academic integrity or putting lives at risk through unwarranted meddling.

Although there will be some discussion of the implications of such activity later in the article, a few explanatory sentences about CCA's work may be useful at this stage. It operates within the framework of what are known as 'problem solving workshops'. As used by CCA in the Moldovan context this has involved bringing together an equal number of delegates from each main internal party and has aimed at identifying key concerns and areas where these concerns might overlap, collide or be compatible. No issue, be it small or large, is allowed to be excluded if the parties think it important. A confidential and non-adversarial atmosphere is created. The process seems to work because everything is deniable (there being no publicity); and because there is no pressure from normal political organs or individuals. In short everyone is able to think the unthinkable and create alternatives.

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[3] The expression 'second track' is generally held to have been first used in J. W. MacDonald and D. B. Bendahmane, *Conflict Resolution: Track Two Diplomacy* (Washington, 1987).

[4] Jane Corbin, *Gaza First: The Secret Norway Channel to Peace between Israel and the PLO* (London, 1994).

[5] The most detailed, albeit rather idiosyncratic, discussion of the activities of the CCA, can be found in Joe Camplisson and Michael Hall, Hidden Frontiers: *Addressing Deep-rooted Violent Conflict in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Moldova* (Newtownabbey, 1996), 44 pp. This booklet concentrates on the possible similarities that exist between the Moldovan conflict and that in Northern Ireland. It emerged as part of what was known as the Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management (MICOM) which has operated in Moldova since about 1993, although it has only been called by that name since 1994. The Centre for Conflict Analysis (CCA) has often worked alongside this organisation, which is made up essentially of people from Northern Ireland and Moldova. CCA would like to make it clear that it has no formal links with MICOM, but that it has always had very friendly relations with it and indeed admires many of its achievements for the people of Moldova. The only other publication in English that discusses some aspects of CCA's work in Moldova can be found in Jeremy Bristol (ed.) *Conflict Prevention and Resolution in the Former Soviet Union* (London, 1995), 24 pp.

Also at the outset I would like to say a brief word about 'theory'. None of the readers of this Journal will by now be unaware of the lively debate that has erupted in IR theory, especially in Britain, since about 1990 on the need for a more pluralistic and normative approach.[6] I have more or less entirely accepted this new tendency as an essential concomitant of the insights of realism, for which I still have a great respect, sharing Barry Buzan's liking for its 'timeless wisdom'. But I also accept that we need to 'widen' the debate on security, again to use Buzan's phraseology, and to accept that security cannot be guaranteed by military might alone.[7] This paper will therefore draw on these insights but I will not dwell on them excessively. On the other hand I will later on suggest how conflict resolution theory, which has long addressed the question of what might now be called, by Buzan among others, 'societal security', might be very useful in focusing attention on the practicalities of dealing with conflicts in Eastern Europe and elsewhere as a viable alternative to the heavy handed use of military force or the very expensive deployment of peace-keeping troops.

The conflict in Moldova, 1991–96—an overview

The conflict in Moldova has its origins in rival interpretations of history by the various parties concerned and in a multiplicity of reactions to the breakup of the Soviet Union after about 1989, a process that culminated in the declaration of independence by the new state of Moldova in August 1991, along with many other parts of the former Soviet Union (FSU).[8] This independence created a new relationship with Russia and other states, both from the former Soviet Union, notably the Ukraine, and outside it, notably Romania.

The past history of Russia's involvement in the area now taken up by Moldova is complicated by Moldova's geographical position as a crossroads of Europe. Before 1812 the area taken up by the 'right bank' of the Dnieper (or Dniestr in Russian) River which flows through Moldova on its penultimate stretch before its enters the Black Sea, was part of Romania and known as Bessarabia. Moldavia, as the Russian province was called after its annexation in 1812, remained Russian until 1918, when the Russian Revolution gave Romania the chance to take back its Bessarabian province. The area returned to Russia as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of

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[6] The first version of this article had some extensive and rather trite remarks about International Relations (IR) theory. The wisdom of two anonymous reviewers has convinced me that these remarks are superfluous.

[7] One of the most useful discussions I have found of the changes in broad IR theory are to be found in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds) *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (Cambridge, 1996). The chapter by Buzan, 'The timeless wisdom of realism? is on pp. 47–65. The best recent summary of the security debate can be found in Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder and London, 1998). For more examples of this 'Copenhagen School' see: Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup and Pierre Lemaître, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London, 1993) and Jaap de Wilde, 'Security Levelled Out: the Dominance of the Local and the Regional', Pál Dunay, Gábor Kardos and Andrew Williams, *New Forms of Security: Views from Central, Eastern and Western Europe* (Aldershot, 1995).

[8] Vladimir Socor, 'Moldovia Proclaims Independence: Commences Secession from USSR', *RFE/RL Report on the USSR*, 18 October 1991.

1939 on 2 August 1940 and was incorporated, together with a thin sliver of land on the left bank of the Dniestr with a population of barely 700,000 (known as 'Transdniestr' or 'Transnistria'—TD hereafter) into the new Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia.

The new Moldova (MD) of post-1991 has a mixed ethnic composition and consequently linguistic complexion (the implications of which will be discussed later). Its new status as a state was immediately compromised by a quasi-simultaneous declaration of the left bank area of TD as the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (known as PMR in its Russian version). MD and the PMR proceeded to parallel presidential and other elections, with Mircea Snegur being elected in MD in the capital Kishinev (or Chisinau) and Igor Smirnov being elected in the PMR 'capital' of Tiraspol.[9] In subsequent years two effectively separate state structures have emerged on the two sides of the river, with separate currencies, and economic and educational systems. The cleavages between the two sides can be seen as ideological, economic and, to a lesser extent, ethnic.[10]

Armed clashes ensued between the MD police and the newly formed TD forces and culminated in a short but brutal war in June 1992, in which between 500 and 5,000 soldiers and civilians lost their lives, especially in Bendery (the only town on the Right Bank still held by the PMR) which saw the worst fighting. Central to this was the presence of General Alexandr Lebed's (ex-Soviet) 14th Army which intervened on behalf of the PMR to push back the lightly-equipped MD forces over the Dniestr. A cease-fire was brokered from Moscow in July 1992 and Russian Federation peace-keeping forces have remained ever since to separate the two sides in a 'Security Zone'. Lebed's presence proved controversial as did the 14th Army, but he was very popular with the majority of the TD population who saw him as a source of great stability. After June 1995 he resigned his post and was replaced by Major-General Valery Yevnevich and his army renamed, and downgraded to, the 'Operational Group of Russian Forces in Moldova.'[11] Lebed meanwhile has gone on to a significant political career in Russia, which at the time of writing has him standing for the election in Krasnoyarsk in Siberia, with a view to attempting election as Russian President in the year 2000.

The CSCE (after November 1994 the OSCE) has acted to provide a forum for a settlement of the conflict since 1993 in a Joint Control Commission (JCC) made up of representatives of the MD and PMR governments as well as representatives of Presidents Yeltsin of Russia and Kuchma of the Ukraine. CCA also hosted problem-solving workshops in between meetings of the JCC to try and push the process forward, which the OSCE has generally agreed has been the case.[12] The

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[9] These two towns are separated in what is already a small country by about eighty kilometres of straight road with the strategic Dniestr crossing point situated at Bendery (or Bender) near to Tiraspol. I have been reliably informed that it is possible to fire an artillery shell over TD along most of its length on the left bank.

[10] A point that I will address at some length later in the article.

[11] See for example 'Women stop Russian general landing', an episode where some 500 Moldovan women blocked the runway to protest about Lebed's removal and his replacement by Yevnevich and the down-grading of the 14th Army: *The Independent*, 17 June 1995.

[12] This is widely discussed at the meeting in London in March 1995, attended by various OSCE officials, that resulted in Bristol (ed.) *Conflict Prevention and Resolution in the Former Soviet Union*, pp. 12–14. It has also been made clear to CCA that their presence was welcomed by the OSCE on a number of previous and subsequent occasions, without which CCA would voluntarily not have played any further role.

culmination of this process was the initialling of a Memorandum of Understanding on 8 May 1996, which was supposed to be signed by the principals of the parties in Moscow in the same month. This never happened but the Memorandum is still on the table. Its summary contents are that Moldova must remain a unitary state, with the TD region being given a special status, as well as clauses relating to the need to decide on a division of legal competencies and the provision of national and international guarantees. It is in effect an agreement to come to a future agreement.

In November 1996 Petru Lucinschi was elected as the new President of MD on a ticket which was widely assumed would lead to him signing the Memorandum upon taking office on 15 January 1997. He has not yet done so, according to some sources because he believes that the Memorandum in its present form undermines the integrity of MD. TD did not participate in the vote but held its own election in which Snegur was reelected, an election which is not recognised as valid by the OCSE. Security tensions still exist between MD and the PMR, exacerbated by periodic reports of illicit sales of ex-14th Army weaponry and by the continued re-organisation of PMR armed forces. The overall impression gained by CCA observers and others is that a lack of trust still exists between the two sides and that until this is ovecome there will continue to be an unresolved conflict situation, although the chances of war breaking out are considered far less than in 1992. Rumours have reached RFE/RL that an agreement as to how to resolve the conflict was reached in Odessa in the Ukraine on 26 March 1998, but there is no confirmation of what this might really mean. It would not be the first such rumour.[13] What is certain is that the economic situation in TD has gone from bad to worse and that it now has the lowest *per capita* standard of living in the FSU. As it had one of the highest standards of living in the FSU before 1991, given its status as a heavy industrial zone, the misery being experienced by the population does not have to be described in detail.[14] Much doubt has been shed on TD viability as a state given its size and outdated industrial base.

The wider problematique of conflict in the former Soviet Union (FSU)

The parameters of conflict in the FSU

The MD/TD conflict is an interesting case in that it encapsulates many of the key problems facing the new states of the FSU. The Cold War repressed many pre-existing tensions in the whole area by submerging what were, in Mark Hoffman's words, 'a diverse range of actors with apparently irreconcilable differences over the protection and attainment of their material interests, the preservation of the historical and cultural values of a community, and the fulfilment of the need for some

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[13] *RFE/RL Newsline*, 27 March 1998.
[14] Eye-witness observations by the author, September 1995 and May 1998. For a detailed description of the relative economic conditions in MD and TD see: Pal Kolstø and Andrei Malgin, 'The Transnistrian Republic: A case of Politicized Regionalism', *Nationalities Papers*, 26: 1, (1998), especially pp. 112–14.

form of recognized identity.'[15] During the existence of the Soviet Union and until the end of 1991 many of these differences were to do with the repression of ethnic and national identity, or even the creation of an 'official' nationalism overlaid with a Soviet nationalism that was often perceived by subject races of the Soviet Empire as a direct assault on their sense of community. But since the end of the Cold War other factors have arguably been more important, such as the generalized collapse of state authority (within and outside Russia); growing economic disparities; the proliferation of weaponry, much of it the legacy of the Red Army's policy of leaving huge arms caches for the eventuality of a major war, and the demographic legacy both of carelessly drawn internal (and now international) borders and the consequent huge Russian diaspora within the newly independent states of the FSU, often referred to as the 'Near Abroad.'[16]

Moldova is important for Russian internal politics, as Lebed's role has demonstrated,[17] both in defining its attitude to the Russian diaspora and in possibly showing how Russia might interact politically with the now independent states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and economically in the parallel Economic Community, both of which Moldova signed up to as a member in late 1991. It also gives Russia a chance to see how its military presence might be prolonged or even institutionalised in the 'red berets' of its peacekeeping forces, which is what Major-General Yevnevich now commands.[18] During the early years of the transition from the USSR, the PMR was also conspicuous in its support for Communist hardliners in Moscow and in the words of Vladimir Socor of RFE/RL was 'described by its allies as a custodian of Soviet values and of Russian great-power interests.'[19] Consequently its size has constantly belied its importance for Russian politics and no government in Moscow can afford to ignore its existence no matter how much the new Russian liberal élites might find it an aberrant throw-back to an un-regretted era.

Regions and boundaries in Europe

So how might we begin to conceptualise a solution to these dilemmas? And how might we devise a strategy, as the 'West', to help bring about a resolution of the conflict in such places as Moldova? A useful first step is to examine our own relationship with the peoples of Eastern Europe. There does seem to be a belief that

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[15] Mark Hoffman, 'Third Party Mediation and Conflict-Resolution in the Post-Cold War World', in John Baylis and N. J. Rengger, *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford, 1992), p. 262.

[16] For a summary of this see the remarks in Bristol, *Conflict Prevention and Resolution in the Former Soviet Union*, pp. 1–3.

[17] A typical comment in the Western press about Lebed was when Lebed was asked by Yeltsin as his National Security Advisor to mediate in the Chechen war: 'Lebed's moment: a blunt military man saves Yeltsin—and transforms Russian politics', cover of *Newsweek*, 1 July 1996.

[18] For a discussion of this see Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Aussenpolitik*, 1 (1993), pp. 98–107. Romanian and other Western commentators have perhaps understandably been very suspicious of the Russian presence as 'peace-keepers' in TD, cf. Jonathan Eyal, 'A border war we filed away', *The Independent*, 10 February 1994.

[19] Vladimir Socor, 'Moldova', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 3: 6, 22 April 1994.

much of Central and Eastern Europe, for example Bosnia, is 'on Europe's doorstep' to the 'real' Europe. As Delanty says, '[t]he idea of Europe during the greater part of the twentieth century was subordinated to the notion of the West,' at least since 1945. We have not, in other words, come to terms with the idea of Europe beyond that of a 'Cold War construct'.[20]

The post Cold-War debate about Europe has led to a difference of opinion about who is 'in' and who is 'out' of the civilisational 'club' of Liberal capitalist states, ones that are actually or potentially successful. In the language of pre-1989 there was a reasonably clear 'East-West divide', institutionalised very handily as the Warsaw Pact/Comecon states versus the European Community/NATO states. Where does the boundary now lie? Many Central Europeans, understandably, want to be seen as a third region, between 'East' and 'West'.[21] They cite history, culture, democratic advances and so on to confirm their view. They also point to the economic, political and other chaos prevailing in the FSU as indicating three *de facto* 'regions' in Europe. There has been a 'partial absorption' of the two non-Western regions, especially through the medium of the EU and NATO, but it is as yet still a 'Europe à la carte'.[22]

Institutional definitions

The three regions indeed roughly correspond to the post-Maastricht European Union (EU)'s definition of Europe. The 'Core West' has its borders within the currently enlarged EU of sixteen; the 'waiting room' is filled up with the so-called 'Visegrád' states of Central Europe (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and, according to certain versions, the Slovak Republic); the 'also-rans' are the FSU states, the Balkan states and the Baltic states, although this latter are being kept in the third camp one suspects more out of respect for the feelings of the Russian Federation than for economic or political reasons. Institutions like the OSCE require only recognised statehood and a stated agreement with certain basic norms for membership, although there has been in practice a public agreement with the Helsinki Principles of 1975 and 1992 and the Budapest Final Document of 1994.[23] Other institutions, like the Council of Europe, require a strict adhesion to legal norms and the internal upholding of human rights in the West European sense. Many FSU states have not been granted admission to this more exclusive club, including the Russian Republic itself, until 1996.

As to the OSCE, seen by many as the cornerstone of a future European Security Architecture (although others cynically call it an 'alphabet soup'), its true role is still not clear. As Fraser Cameron has commented, '[d]espite the advances at Budapest [in November 1994, when the CSCE became the OSCE], there remains no consensus

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[20] Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity and Reality* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1995), p. 115.
[21] Pál Dunay, 'Debunking Certain Myths of Post-Cold War Military Security in Europe' and Monika Wohlfeld, 'The Former non-Soviet Warsaw Treaty Organization Countries' Security Choices in the Post-Cold War Era', in Dunay, Kardos and Williams, *New Forms of Security*, pp. 3–54.
[22] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 141.
[23] Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *CSCE, Budapest Document, 'Towards a Genuine Partnership in New Era'* (Budapest, 1994).

on the future direction of the OSCE. Should it remain a political forum for all participating states? Or should it develop further its self-declared role as a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN which would imply a commitment by participating states to endow it with the necessary resources?'[24] The 'Security Model' promulgated at the OSCE Conference in Lisbon in December 1997 gave a clearer idea of the OSCE's role in FSU conflicts, with paragraph 21 specifically referring to Moldova as a place where action by OSCE and ODHIR[25] monitoring was appropriate.[26] But it is not unreasonable to say that the resources the OSCE is capable of committing at present are extremely thinly spread.

Moldova—Self Definitions

Given its geographical position and history, perhaps Moldova was and always will be a case apart. Since its independence in 1991 it has struggled to define itself as a new state, and the initial surge of support for a reintegration into Romania has clearly receded, not least because Romania has not had a happy existence since 1990. There has been an attempt to stress its uniqueness, even linguistically, with an emphasis being put on 'Moldovan' as the majority language (as opposed to Romanian), a definition that many linguists find a little difficult.[27]

The (internationally recognised) state of Moldova has proved worthy of high praise from the IMF,[28] has been granted membership of the Council of Europe, has been very innovative and correct in its dealings with minorities, as with the Constitution and special status granted to its Gagauz (Turkic Christian) minority and gets constant support and indeed praise from the OSCE for its reasonable attitude towards Transdniestria, at least since 1992.[29] The OSCE's (confidential but leaked in the Russian press) 13th Report has served as the basis of the OSCE's continuing analysis of the situation in MD. It largely condemns the PMR Government as a non-representative one that should be rapidly reintegrated into the MD homeland politically, economically and territorially. The Report was nonetheless

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[24] Fraser Cameron, 'The European Union and the OSCE: Future Roles and Challenges', *Helsinki Monitor*, 6: 2 (1995), pp. 21–31.

[25] The Office for Democratic and Human Rights of the OSCE, established in 1992. The OSCE clearly sees the ODHIR's role as conflict prevention rather than resolution.

[26] It must be said however that the OSCE has committed all the resources that it can to the Moldovan theatre. Its monitoring of the 1996 Presidential Election led to a very large commitment to the monitoring process, second only to the effort made in this area to that committed in Bosnia and Russia.

[27] See for example Igor Munteanu, '"Moldovanism" as a political weapon', *Transition*, 4 October 1996 and Piotr Pacholski, 'The country without a nation', *Uncaptive Minds*, 5: 3, Fall 1992. An attempt by President Snegur in April 1995 to replace 'Romanian' courses in the universities of MD was rejected by the student body, ironically also in the cause of Moldovan independence: 'Moldovan history bid goes up in flames', *Times Higher*, 7 April 1995. For a sophisticated linguistic analysis see Donald L. Dyer, 'What price languages in contact: is there Russian language influence on the syntax of Moldovan?', *Nationalities Papers*, 26: 1 (1998), pp. 73–86.

[28] Rudolf A. Mark, 'Progress amid crisis', *Transition*, 15 February 1995. The Moldovan *lei*, introduced in January 1994, has proved one of the more stable currencies of the FSU.

[29] Charles King, *Post-Soviet Moldova: A Borderland in Transition* (London, 1995); Various authors, 'Moldova and Russia', *Transition*, 20 October 1995. Both King and the edition of *Transition* express clear support for the Moldovan official position. On the Gagauz question see Jeff Chinn and Steven D. Roper, 'Territorial Autonomy in Gagauzia', *Nationalities Papers*, 26: 1 (1998), pp. 87–101.

accepted as the basis for future discussion by both the PMR and MD Governments.[30] MD is thus seen as a potential, if not actual member of the liberal, and therefore West European, club with the only blemish being the annoying unfinished business of Transdniestria. In the best single account in English of post-Soviet Moldova, King supports this view and says that Moldova 'has demonstrated a willingness to compromise—sometimes at exorbitant political costs—in order to ensure peace and stability.'[31]

Transdniestria's self-definition

The problem is that the PMR Government in Tiraspol and, as far as one can ascertain from grass roots contact, much of the population, do not see the situation in the same way as the MD Government. Many of the TD population and their PMR leadership seem to honestly believe that they have a special right to a much more independent status than they are so far being offered. They point to a number of factors in justifying this claim. The PMR leadership points to the area on the left bank of the Dniester river as having been part of the Ukrainian SSR of the Soviet Union until it was amalgamated with the Romanian province of Bessarabia in 1940 following its annexation by the Soviet Union under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, which as we have seen formed the Moldavian SSR. So, they assert, until then TD had never been part of a state linguistically or ethnically dominated by Romania, but rather had a Slavic, and more specifically Russian and Ukrainian view of the world. It has always, in their view, looked 'East' not 'West'. Secondly, it was the only really industrialised area of the Moldavian SSR, and therefore developed a different political culture, with a much stronger industrial and politicised proletariat. They have gone to some effort to 'prove' this historical difference.[32] This effort has been ridiculed in the right bank area of Moldova itself, but it is a factor in TD's self-definition that cannot be ignored. They have now gone further to point out that, as they see it, they are as rightful a successor state of the FSU (being 'founded' in 1991) as is MD itself, 'founded', but also internationally recognised unlike TD, in 1991.

The TD élites do not see themselves as a 'Stalinist hangover' (as they are often portrayed) but rather as trying to steer a middle way between free market capitalism, as they say is practised in MD, and a Soviet-style centralised economy. Thirdly, they believe that their future could not be guaranteed under a unitary MD state without a good deal of autonomy and lots of 'guarantees' of such autonomy, including military guarantees, given that they have already been attacked by the forces of Moldova in 1992, after specific promises that they would not. The issue of constitutional and military guarantees backed up by outside agencies is now one of the

[30] Pal Kolstø and Andrei Malgin, 'The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism', *Nationalities Papers*, 26: 1 (1998) give a summary description of the 13th Report, pp. 118–19.

[31] King, *Post-Soviet Moldova*, p. 36.

[32] This was done by the publication of a series of historical texts in Russian by the University of Tiraspol, for example N. V. Babilunga and B. G. Bomeshko, *Kurs Lektsii po Istorii Moldavii* (Tiraspol, 1992–1994). They have also published the records of the PMR Soviet, documents relative to the JCC and 'Collections of Printed Materials' (*Sborniki*) relative to the PMR Soviet.

main sticking points in the negotiations that have been taking place within the OSCE (JCC) contact groups and elsewhere since 1994.

TD representatives see themselves as having been 'saved' by their own forces and those of Lebed's 14th Army in June 1992 after Moldova's 'invasion'. Lebed has used this position to paint himself (not entirely unjustly in the eyes of the Transdniestrians and many ordinary Russians throughout the FSU) as a Slavic hero who will defend the rights of ordinary Slavs if necessary, up to and including from the Kremlin, where he briefly (in late 1996) wielded considerable influence as Yeltsin's National Security Advisor. It must be repeated that Lebed himself was often less than complimentary about the TD élites and representatives, who he has accused of corruption and worse, but the General nonetheless always saw himself as the protector of the TD population against a renewal of the 1992 fighting and any unspecified foreign intervention.

Unravelling the rival histories

Without taking sides, can we see any justification for such TD beliefs, which are not accepted as anything more then rationalisations by the OSCE, at least in public, and by many other independent observers? The historical record is not clear, as both MD and TD were part of the FSU for the entire post-war period and therefore MD should in law be the 'successor state'. On the other hand, TD was part of the Ukraine in the FSU before 1941 and had been conquered by the Russian General Suvorov, whose iconography in TD is omnipresent (even down to being printed on all the banknotes). A great deal of effort in TD has also been dedicated to proving that it was *never* part of a Romanian dominated state.[33] Is it possible to assert categorically that MD itself will not be 'reincorporated' into Romania (from whence it came), thus taking with it an area that had never been part of a historic Romania? All attempts by the Moldovan Government to allay these fears have so far been rejected.

As to its political culture and economic claims to individuality, these would be hard to square in a reunited Moldova with the demands of the IMF and the EU for a non-interventionist state structure. There is an undoubted nostalgia in the whole of the FSU, and nowhere more so than in Transdniestria, for the good old days of the Soviet welfare state. This is largely in the process of being dismantled in Moldova and the results in terms of social disruption, a growing inequality and crime, as well as a new freedom to make money if you are smart enough or lucky enough to do so, are there for all to see. They provoke great nostalgia in Moldova as well for the 'good old days', and this is not a feeling confined to the former Communists. It is also exploited, as in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, by nationalist politicians across the 'left-right' divide, or even national socialist politicians, as in Serbia and Montenegro. Are the Transdniestrians, from their own point of view, so wildly out of line with an emerging strain of Central and East European thinking? It

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[33] I was, for example, personally presented with a multi-volume history of TD by the University of Tiraspol in 1995.

might be countered that the TD élites are just an old guard trying to hold on to power, but although there is an element of truth in this it is the firm belief of at least this commentator is that this would be to hide a deep sense of fear of the future by many of the TD population that they represent.

Romanian nationalist politicians in Moldova point to the suppression of the Latin script in Transdniestria, as although Romanian, as well as Russian and Ukrainian, is a 'national' language on the left (i.e. Transdniestrian) bank it is written in Cyrillic script. An unhappy parallel for this is the split between Serb (written in Cyrillic) and Croat (written in Latin letters) in the former Yugoslavia, which are nonetheless the same language. The above-mentioned attempt to create a unique linguistic identity in 1994, with the laudable aim of making everybody on both sides of the Dniester feel at home, by declaring that Romanian in Moldova had become 'Moldovan' did not impress in TD or on the Right Bank. However, this gesture is indicative of an important common belief on both banks of the Dniester that there should be no domination of the whole area of Moldova (or of the former Moldavian SSR) by any outside power, be that Romania or Russia. The language issue is therefore indicative of a deep-seated desire for a defined 'identity' that both sides feel has been stripped from them by their historical domination by Moscow or Bucharest. There is a small but vocal demand for integration with Russia in Transdniestria and with Romania in Moldova. This might of course change if the conflict is not resolved and the present state of uncertainty persists.

Given the assertion by some that there are ethnic elements to the Moldovan conflict, a paragraph on this is in order at this point.[34] Moldova (the unitary area) has a population that is composed of roughly 60 per cent of Romanian, 25 per cent Russian and about 20 per cent Ukrainian ethnic background, with a small minority of Turkic Christians known as the 'Gagauz'. The ethnic/linguistic mix and distribution of the population, even by official Moldovan calculations, indicates that the main towns on both sides of the river reflect this percentage distribution quite accurately, with the Moldovan capital Chisinau/Kishinev itself having no linguistic group in an absolute majority. In the countryside there are areas on both sides of the river that are either predominantly Russophone or Romanophone but there are also many mixed villages. However in numerous interviews with both official and non-official Moldovans and Transdniestrians I have rarely heard it said that the conflict has a real ethnic dimension. Many families are 'linguistically mixed' and it is not unusual to find, say, a family with a 'Romanian' name speaking mainly Russian at home and vice versa.

This is not to say that the linguistic question is not an issue, especially when it comes to the education of children in the different languages concerned, especially in Transdniestria where the Romanian language is written with a Cyrillic alphabet, a leftover from the FSU. Some extreme Romanian nationalists within Moldova have insisted on the Romanisation of the school system and bureaucracy, but these views

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[34] Cf. Stuart J. Kaufman, 'Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War', *International Security,* 21: 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 108–138, and Stuart J. Kaufman and Stephen R. Bowers, 'Transnational Dimensions of the Transnistrian Conflict', *Nationalities Papers*, 26: 1, (1998), pp. 129–146. It is interesting that Kaufman seems to downplay his own thesis of the importance of ethnicity in his later article.

have largely been overruled and attempts by them to create confrontation on the issue have not succeeded (if that is the right word).

Before and during the war of 1992, the graffiti inviting the Slavic population of Transdniestria towards '*Chemodan, Vokzal, Moskva*' (suitcase, railway station, Moscow) was a clear attempt at a version of ethnic cleansing by some elements, but far from all, of the MD side. There are those on the TD side who would willingly engage in like behaviour towards Romanian speakers, especially some of the irregular Cossack units who, I was told, were the most brutal of all in the 1992 war. But the main implication of this ethnic factor has been in the attitude of the outside powers, especially Russia and Romania, in insisting that they have an interest in the resolution of the conflict. This should most emphatically not be seen as a mirror image of the ethnic component of the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia.

One way of looking at the MD/TD divide is that there are a number of communities on both sides of the Dniester that have different views about the causes, and thus about a possible resolution, of the conflict. The ideological, economic, linguistic and ethnic differences make this a problem of how they define 'community'. A Moldovan might well refer to a 'unitary community', while an inhabitant of Transdniestria would refer to a 'unity of communities'. There is perhaps a parallel between this and the debate on Europe, where some talk of a '*Europe des nations*' and some of a 'United Europe'.

These are the subjective realities that a conflict analyst must bring to a view of the conflictual situation of many parts of Eastern Europe, and certainly to Moldova/ Transdniestria. The political élite in Transdniestria presents itself as defending a principle, one of the right to identity and an autonomous path to development, and is prepared to almost starve its population to death to uphold that principle. No economic sanctions have worked except to strengthen their bitterness and resolve. Military action cannot work, as the abortive invasion of 1992 showed. Any attack on their integrity will only confirm them in their *laager* mentality, one which has quite a few supporters on the other side of the Dniester and certainly in the FSU. It is therefore difficult to be categorical in placing Moldova/ Transdniestria in a clear 'region' because the two parts see themselves as existing in two, if somewhat overlapping 'identity' regions, with all that that implies in terms of 'civilisational' (for want of a better word) or institutional and normative frameworks.

Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Management or Settlement?

The implications of the discussion so far are that we need to find new 'road maps' in our active search for solutions to such conflicts. One way of doing this is to turn to the insights provided by the conflict analyst.

The discipline of Conflict Analysis has been divided for many years about what theoretical insights can be drawn from a case study of third party activity within conflict situations. The main relevant body of thought hinges around the definition of what a third party is actually *doing* by being involved in someone else's conflict. Is the party a 'mediator', a 'problem solver', or an 'arbitrator' for example? Sharp distinctions between these categories of action are often drawn. Many miles of print

have been used up on definition.[35] The argument often hinges around the initial 'paradigmatic approach' taken by the theorist of conflict (be they 'realist', 'marxist' or 'pluralist') the nature of the actor involved (individual, state, international organization, etc.) and the level of power in the hands of this actor. Some writers put more emphasis on the need for psychological training in the third party (such as John Burton in his many books); others point to the need for great knowledge of the dispute in question; others to a preferred ignorance about it.

It is, however, arguable that the functional result of any such activity is the same, whether it be by an official mediator (in the MD/TD case Russia or the OSCE), the official 'first track', or an unofficial third party actor, (often referred to as a 'second track' actor). Clearly in the Moldovan conflict the official Russian and Ukrainian mediators are difficult to present as being perfectly impartial. However they and the OSCE representatives who chair the talks between the two sides feel a clear commitment to resolving the conflict as it destabilizes the region and contributes a continuing volatile aspect to their domestic politics.

All these third parties are trying:

- To complement, or even to constitute the basis for, the negotiation process. They are not likely to be the only party trying to act as a third party. In this case the OSCE and other groups were involved in a similar role (especially the personal representatives of Presidents Yeltsin of Russia and Kuchma of the Ukraine).
- To both 'manage' (or 'settle', often by coercive means) *and* 'resolve' the conflict. A great deal of the academic debate is about the distinction between these two modes of operation. Bercovitch and Rubin even have 'management' in the title of their book, thus implying a 'realist' pessimism about them ever being 'resolved'. I cannot see the utility of distinction in practice since the conflict is not in the hands of the third parties, but of the parties to the conflict. 'Managers' and 'resolvers' should perhaps now forget their rather sterile argument about the likely outcome of their actions and accept the best they can in any given situation, while having the long-term aim of 'resolution'.

What is perhaps different about the 'problem solving' approach, which aims at long-term 'resolution', as opposed to other forms of mediatory activity, is the emphasis put by its theorists on encouraging a 'dialogue between adversaries' which 'implies acceptance of the other person's fundamental values and the worth of the person him- or her-self', the goal being in Kelman's words 'to establish working trust.'[36] The aim is thus a transformation of *consciousness*, so that the adversaries try and work side by side, not face to face. Maybe this overestimates the desire by most adversaries to try and accommodate the other in some way.

It is at least feasible to suggest that different variants of third party action (mediation in the 'management' sense, arbitration, etc.) might be useful at various stages of the conflict, in varying degrees.[37] Such a 'contingency model' where there

[35] See for example: Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffry Z. Rubin, *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management* (London, 1992); or Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, *Conflict Resolution in Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (Manchester, 1993).

[36] J. Montville in Sandole and van der Merwe, *Conflict Resolution in Theory and Practice*, p. 115.

[37] R. J. Fisher and L. J. Keashly, 'The Potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation within a Contingency Model of Third Party Intervention', *Journal of Peace Research*, 28: 1 (1991), pp. 29–42.

can be a matching and sequencing of different forms of third-party intervention seems to be the most useful approach. There might even be simultaneous use of informal ('second track') problem-solving workshops (like those organised by CCA) and 'first track' mediation, such as that undertaken in the MD/TD case by the OSCE.[38]

After all, during the Cold War there were many 'channels' that opened or closed as the conflict's inner dynamic unfolded. In the recent talks between the Palestinians and Israel there were often three 'tracks' ('Official' ending in Madrid, the UN and the 'Oslo Channel') operating either simultaneously or separately in varying geometries. Hanan Ashrawi partly attributes success in the Middle East peace talks to this parallel process.[39]

Conclusion: conflict resolution or conflict settlement in Moldova?

Some elements of the basis of the conflict have been elaborated above. They are by no means exhaustive. The question is, what are the likely methods that could or should be deployed to resolve or settle such conflicts? The idea of conflict 'resolution' implies a need for full cooperation and freely-given agreement of the major internal (and indeed external) parties, the latter 'settlement' could be imposed by some form of bribery, cajolery or even force.

The OSCE would like to see, essentially, a 'settlement', if a 'resolution' is not possible, and shares the commonly held belief that TD cannot hold on forever given the state of its economy, its non-recognition by any other state (except briefly Chechnya) and the general impatience of the Russian authorities for some sort of unblocking of the situation. The OSCE managed to get both sides to the dispute to sign an agreement, in 1994, agreeing to seek a comprehensive solution based on dialogue and addressing the legal and constitutional questions and refers specifically to the need for 'mutual and international guarantees to underpin the agreements reached'. The JCC was set up to further this process.[40] It also demanded in early 1993, in line with the Personal Representative of the Chairman in Office of the (then) CSCE, Adam Rotfeld, the withdrawal of the 14th Army back to Russia,[41] a request that was agreed in principle by the Russian Government and can be said to have been implemented since Lebed's departure in 1995. A later, end-1996, OSCE plan was that Russian peace-keeping forces should be reduced to battalion level by late 1997 and eliminated by early 1999. This was however contingent on the Memorandum being signed at Easter 1997 and has not therefore happened as planned.

Can therefore a second track approach help the first, OSCE, track along? Clearly such actors as CCA have no resources that they can promise the parties to the

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[38] An approach advocated by V. Koutrakou, M. Walters and Keith Webb in Bercovitch and Rubin, *Mediation in International Relations*, see footnote 35 above.
[39] Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace* (New York, 1995).
[40] OSCE Newsletter, May 19, 1994—'A Breakthrough in Moldova?' General Lebed gave this process his blessing, but did not hold out much hope for its success: *Nezavasimaya Gazeta*, 7 June 1994.
[41] Adam Rotfeld, 'Final Report on the Conflict in the Left Bank Dniester Area of the Republic of Moldova' (Prague, 1993).

conflict. However, the key problem to be identified by Rotfeld in his *interim* report (of September 1992) was far less categorical about what needed to be done than about what was the essence of the underlying problem. This he defined as the need for a 'durable foundation' to be established and the basis of this had to be 'political and ideological [and] . . . economic'.[42] A key element of this was the fear of integration into Romania by the TD side or 'dependence on Russia' by the other (MD) side.

This was in effect an admission that a lasting resolution of the conflict needed to take into account TD's deeply felt fears about its future within a newly reinvented liberal capitalist MD. TD saw itself in 1993 (and even to a large extent now) as a residual part of the Soviet Union.[43] The élites of the PMR and the majority of the people of TD felt that they had been deprived of their superior status in the FSU, indeed of their birthright. One does not need to agree that this was correct to undertand that they were and, in many cases, are committed to holding on to what they held most important to them—their identity as an élite corps within the Soviet Union.

However, Rotfeld's final report had virtually no mention of causes, but was a realist litany of the need for states to face up to their responsibilities and suchlike statements.[44] What happened betwen edits can only be guessed at. But the change of tone was not very helpful as the implication is that only a virtual capitulation by TD will suffice. However, it is worthwhile suggesting that this will not take place under the present rules of engagement. Given the above remarks about increasing TD bitterness, and Lebed's continuing popularity in Russia, it would be incredibly difficult for any Russian Government to let the Russian-speaking population of TD go completely. Add to that the unwillingness and inability of MD to go to war again, and a mutually acceptable solution of the problem has to be found.

The second track problem-solving workshops organised by CCA have been acknowledged by the OSCE as extremely useful and complimentary to their work, as we have mentioned above. There is no progress likely to be made by threats and cajolery, as the OSCE has discovered, although it could be argued that the OSCE would find it difficult to make any really credible threat such is its meagre presence on the ground. What is necessary and what has in fact happened since 1994 is to approach the conflict by transforming it through better communication and trust between the parties. The OSCE's JCC and, with all due modesty, CCA's workshops, have helped to achieve this. But building trust in a deep-rooted conflict is a long and drawn out process, rather like psychotherapy in individuals, and with no more guarantee of ultimate success.[45] A transformation process requires a progressive identification with the key actors involved of what their 'community' is, what indeed their 'identity' is seen to be. This is a process undertaken within communities that

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[42] Idem, 'Interim Report on the Conflict in the Left Bank Dniester Area of the Republic of Moldova' (Prague, 1993).

[43] Anecdote here is the best teacher. I was addressed frequently in Tiraspol in 1993–4 with the title *tovarisch* ('comrade'), without a trace of the irony used by Russians these days. It is also quite astonishing how the PMR has maintained an atmosphere in Tiraspol of the FSU. Soviet-style banners adorn buildings, the old statues are still there, the political and more general artistic style is socialist realist. Those who laugh at this merely entrench the commitment of the PMR hardliners to keep what they have. It is the basis of their dignity.

[44] Cf. footnote 41 above.

[45] A parallel drawn by Tarja Vayrynen, 'Sharing Reality: An Insight from Phenomenology to John Burton: Problem-Solving Conflict Resolution Theory', PhD thesis (Canterbury, 1996).

feel dispossessed by their circumstances, as peoples feel across the whole of Eastern Europe. Ultimately it will require, both in Moldova and Transdniestria, an acceptance of the identity of the 'other'.

The stated intentions of both internal actors are for peace, while the OSCE and the main external actors (Russia and the Ukraine) have become increasingly exasperated that this has not translated into a peace treaty. But we should resist the temptation to dismiss TD as just a hangover that will be resolved by such logic. The sense of alienation of the Russians of the 'Near Abroad' and their championing by a slowly resurgent Russia makes it imperative that a resolution, not a settlement, of the conflict in Moldova/Transdniestria be implemented, to the satisfaction of all sides.

There can be no peace of the graveyard in Moldova, as the Russian Government would not just fulminate in the event of 'its' side being attacked again, as it did in the Yugoslav crisis. It would act, in its national interest, and with the full support of its population. The probably successful attempt to 'settle' the status of the breakaway statelet of Chechnya by negotiation not force (ironically by General Lebed) should not lead the international community to believe that a settlement of the Moldovan question by force and to the detriment of Transdniestria would inevitably meet with indifference in Russia. It would be met with considerable military force. The only solution is conflict resolution through a careful process of parallel 'tracks' in both problem-solving workshops (or something like them) and in the JCC (or similar) of the OSCE in order to bring all parties to the dispute together in a common and lasting resolution of the conflict. There may then be a possibility of a new common future for MD and TD in whatever political and constitutional framework can be mutually elaborated.

What we definitely need is a way of assessing 'success or failure' in various geometries of third party activity, especially that of the 'second track' initiative. This can only be achieved by examining as many cases as possible and then generalizing across them. One general conclusion that I have drawn from CCA's Moldovan experience is that the third party(ies) must have credibility, assumed in the case of the OSCE, hard won in CCA's case. There must be a willingness to stay with the conflict over a prolonged period and to make sacrifices with no real hope of either recognition, thanks or success. Finally the 'second track' group must not outstay its welcome—once their job is seen as having being done by the parties or 'first track' they must withdraw, with the comforting thought that they have had an interesting and, hopefully, useful experience.