

The present paper looks at the nexus between Europeanization and conflict resolution through the prism of the Transnistria conflict in Moldova. The paper begins with a theoretical account of the conditions under which Europeanization may contribute to conflict resolution. Then the paper addresses the issue of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a possible framework for Europeanization. Moldova's attitude towards the policy and a critical assessment of ENP is made, as well as how the debates on the European integration of Moldova have shaped the debates on conflict resolution. The nature of the Europeanization mechanisms of conditionality, social learning and lesson drawing are analysed from the perspective of their relevance for Moldova in general, and for conflict resolution in Transnistria in particular.

Europeanization and conflict transformation

At a theoretical level, the process of Europeanization can alter the preferences and beliefs of actors that are relevant for the conflict resolution process. Consequently, Europeanization can have an impact on conflict resolution processes, albeit this impact can be either positive or negative, i.e. it can either contribute to conflict resolution, or on the contrary, entrench conflicts. What follows are a set of necessary conditions under which Europeanization is favourable to conflict resolution efforts. The list below is by no means exhaustive. One should mention that in reality these conditions exist in mixed forms, which means that the effects of Europeanization of every single factor in concrete cases are rarely, if ever, clear-cut.

Europeanization can be conducive to conflict resolution when a number of conditions are met. These conditions include:

- *the (potential) benefits of Europeanization have to be higher than the benefits of the status quo for the dominant elites of both conflict entities.*¹ In most cases at the European

^{*} The author is grateful to Bruno Coppieters, Michael Emerson, Damien Helly, Raul de Luzenberger, Ghia Nodia and Marius Vahl and the participants at a workshop organized by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in September 2004 on “European Values, Democratization and Conflict Resolution: What is the Impact of Europeanization on EU Peripheries?” for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

periphery, however, the elites are short-term players and are not fully, if at all, accountable to societies at large. The public has only weak channels of political representation and control over these elites. This means that even if the benefits of Europeanization for the population of the respective conflict parties are evident in the long run, this might not necessarily lead to changes in elite behaviour in the short-to-medium term because these elites are self-interested players with a relatively high degree of autonomy from the population.

- *Europeanization has to be attractive for both, rather than only one, conflict party.* The normative appeal of the Europeanization perspective is in most cases not equally attractive for both conflict parties. In the cases of Transnistria or Abkhazia, elites seem to prefer “Russification” over the “Europeanization” paradigm. However, the greater the political or economic benefits of Europeanization for the main entity, i.e. Moldova and Georgia, the likelier that “Europeanization” will be more attractive for the secessionist entities.
- *Europeanization has to be attractive for the protector state of the secessionist entity.* Turkey’s EU aspirations have increased the attractiveness of the Europeanization paradigm for Northern Cypriots, thus altering the status quo in a way that was conducive to conflict resolution. The fact that Russia is not pursuing EU membership makes the positive impact of Europeanization on conflict resolution in Moldova - and in the Southern Caucasus - less likely. Furthermore, Russian-led integrationist blocks such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec), or the Common Economic Space of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine are perceived by the elites of secessionist entities in the post-Soviet space as viable alternatives to the Europeanization paradigm.
- *the benefits of Europeanization have to be credible and have to be received within a visible time span.* The longer the temporal distance until the payment of rewards, the lower the incentives for the actors involved in a conflict to change traditional patterns of

¹ Schimmelfennig, Frank, Stefan Engert und Heiko Knobel, 2003: “Costs, Commitment, and Compliance. The Impact of EU Democratic Conditionality on Latvia, Slovakia, and Turkey”, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41:3, 495-517.

behaviour.² For example, the mobilization of Turkish Cypriots in favour of reunification was made possible by the credible and close date for the accession to the EU of the eventually reunified Cyprus. One might expect that some visible and attractive intermediary benefits that fall short of an EU membership perspective, such as the liberalisation of trade or the freer circulation of Moldovan citizens in the EU, would make the Republic of Moldova more attractive to Transnistria and would alter the calculations of actors involved in conflict resolution, mainly business elites and ordinary citizens in the secessionist entity.

- *Europeanization has to lead to a differential empowerment³ of those actors that are likely to favour a resolution of the conflict, thus altering the structure of interests that keeps certain conflicts unsolved.* This means that EU actions or the effects of Europeanization have to favour actors that support the settlement of the conflict. Particular circles within government and business could, for instance, benefit from increased trade opportunities and regional stability. Making the positive effects of Europeanization, and eventually conflict resolution, visible for societies and business elites, can help weaken the vested interests of those groups and individuals that benefit from the *status quo*. There are, of course, limits to the possibilities for strengthening social actors in such cases, particularly under authoritarian regimes or when non-economic arguments (such as the fear of extinction) play a central part in secessionist discourses. Rational cost-benefit analysis plays a role in the formulation of interests of conflict parties, but it is not always the only factor.

There is also a set of conditions under which Europeanization is likely to sustain conflicts or deepen the cleavage between conflicting parties. These conditions include:

- *When the costs of conflict resolution for interested actors are higher than the benefits from integration through Europeanization.* These costs may include loss of control over political processes or economic activities (legal and illegal). There are strong vested

² Schimmelfennig, Frank and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds), 2005, forthcoming: *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

³ Risse, Thomas, Maria Green Cowles and James Caporaso, 2001: “Europeanization and Domestic Change: Introduction”; in Risse, Thomas, Maria Green Cowles and James Caporaso (eds): *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, pp. 1-20.

interests that support the *status quo* in the unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus and Moldova. Such actors reap considerable benefits from smuggling, trafficking and from re-export activities that are often of an illegal nature.

- *When the resolution of the conflict is perceived as going against the Europeanization strategies of one of the conflict parties.* If a party to the conflict considers that its moves towards Europeanization will be complicated or even hampered by sharing sovereignty with the other entity, it may consider that conflict resolution through federalism is less valuable than the benefits stemming from Europeanization. This argument has been made by the Serbian political party ‘G17 plus’ in Serbia, where a mutual agreement on the dissolution of the Union with Montenegro seems to be feasible and would be acceptable to the European Union. The idea that a reunification with Transnistria at this stage would make the Europeanization of Moldova more complicated, if achievable at all, is likewise gaining ground in Moldova. Contrary to Serbia, no major political party supports the idea of letting the secessionist entity go. As it was demonstrated in Cyprus, state division does not make Europeanization and even EU membership impossible.

The Europeanization offer for Moldova: European Neighbourhood Policy

From the EU’s point of view, the main channel for the Europeanization of Moldova is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). To support the aims of ENP, a joint EU-Moldova Action Plan (AP) has been developed and a Neighbourhood Instrument (NI) is due to be created. The question of an EU membership perspective for Moldova has been excluded by the EU from the agenda. Formally, the EU is saying that the ENP does not lead to, but also not does exclude the possibility of EU membership. This logic is referred to as “constructive ambiguity”.

Box 1: The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

The policy presupposes the creation of a semi-integrated neighbourhood of the EU and intensified co-operation between the Union and its neighbours on a wide range of policies. Initially, the EU offered a “stake in the internal market” and further integration

and liberalization to promote the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital between the Union and its neighbours through the ENP,⁴ which would increase the prosperity and stability in EU's neighbours. The conflict resolution dimension of the Neighbourhood policy, while explicitly stated, is not its central objective. The priorities of the policy are trade liberalization and democratization. The mechanism is that of conditionality where EU market access is granted in exchange for democratic and economic reforms in the EU neighbours. Co-operation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs is envisaged, as well as possible EU participation in (post)conflict management efforts. Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are all involved in the ENP, are all involved in secessionist conflicts.

Moldova's attitude towards its inclusion into ENP has been less than enthusiastic. Since 1999 consecutive Moldovan governments have argued that Moldova is a Southeast European state that should be treated the same way as other countries from the region affected by internal conflicts; i.e. it should be included into the Stabilization and Association Process⁵ (SAP) and sign a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, acknowledging and supporting Moldova's European aspirations. The long-term promise of EU membership is at the core of SAP. The claim was that Moldova has more in common with SAP countries such as Macedonia or Albania – including the problem of Transnistria, rather than with Ukraine or Russia. The SAP framework would therefore be better suited for Moldova than any policy that puts Moldova in the same basket with other post-Soviet states, as is presently the case with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) framework.

Despite certain reservations, Moldova and the EU are due to sign a comprehensive ENP Action Plan covering a considerable number of policy areas in the autumn of 2004. 2007 and 2008 will be crucial years for Moldova's relations with the EU. Firstly, Romania will join the EU and consequently Moldova will both become a direct neighbour of the EU and gain a strong supporter among the EU member states.

⁴ European Commission, Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, COMM 2003, 104 Final, 11 March 2003.

⁵ As its name suggests, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) for the Western Balkans is a political instrument for both EU association and stabilization. It is the main framework for EU policy towards this region. The logic of SAP is that the stabilization of Southeast European countries affected by conflicts is not possible without a European perspective, and that European integration is not possible without stabilization. The SAP includes intensified political dialogue, trade liberalisation and financial assistance.

Secondly, the present Partnership and Co-operation Agreement - that defines Moldova-EU relations - expires in 2008 and a new type of contractual link governing EU-Moldova relations could then be discussed. Moldova and the EU have different views on this matter at present. Moldova envisages the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement in 2007/2008 and a formal recognition of Moldova's EU membership perspective, while the European Commission favours a Neighbourhood Agreement which does not provide a membership promise.

Thirdly, the time span of the implementation of the Action Plan (AP) to be signed at the end of 2004 is three years. The likely consensus between Moldova's European expectations and EU's reluctance is that the nature of the future agreement between the EU and Moldova will be defined by the progress in the implementation of the AP. This progress will be assessed in 2007. The implication of the 2007/2008 juncture is that ENP is not seen in Moldova as a long-term framework for its relations with the EU, but rather a short-to-medium term instrument that would prepare Moldova for association with the EU.

The effectiveness of ENP as the main EU policy framework for Moldova may be problematic due to a set of factors, such as:

- *Low visibility of rewards:* The potential benefits of ENP are predominantly long term and the road map toward them is rather vague. The perspective of a gradual integration into the single market is attractive, but too distant to be a vehicle for reforms in the near future. Promoting reforms for long-term goals is never an easy task. It is all the more so as Moldovan political elites are short-term players.
- *Lack of a strong EU leverage:* The leverage of the EU in the neighbouring states cannot be compared to the EU's leverage in the (former) candidate countries, which are already EU members or countries of the Western Balkans. This imposes considerable constraints on the capacity of the EU to induce change in its Eastern neighbourhood. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, there is no EU membership perspective or significant funds for the EU's Eastern neighbours. Secondly, the EU agenda is not the only one, nor is it predominant in the region, as both Russia and the US have their own priorities in the EU's (and NATO's) new neighbourhood.

In order to strengthen the EU's capacity to promote the ENP objectives in Moldova, one of the main priorities for the EU should be to gain leverage with its Eastern neighbours, as well as to supplement the long-term focus of ENP with visible and attractive rewards. To achieve that, a number of incentives for reform should be considered. In order to make EU conditionality work, the EU has to increase its offer for the new neighbours at least in the mid-term. The most obvious incentives are increased market access for EU's neighbours and a clear road map towards facilitated and eventually visa-free travel for countries that comply with EU requirements. For Chisinau one of the strongest incentives would be increased direct EU participation in the conflict settlement in Transnistria, including as a mediator and guarantor, as it has consistently been requesting.

Mechanisms of Europeanization

The record of applying Europeanization mechanisms to Moldova has been quite limited. This is especially the case of the conflict resolution process in Transnistria, where the EU played virtually no role until 2003.⁶

Conditionality

Conditionality, as the coercive mechanism of Europeanization,⁷ aims at changing the behaviour of actors through a logic where compliance is rewarded, and non-compliance leads either to the withholding of rewards, or even sanctions. The actor that has to comply with conditionality does so in order to benefit from the rewards and/or to avoid the sanctions.

In the case of Moldova, the record of conditionality has been very limited. EU conditionality has been mainly in line with policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the main actors using conditionality to alter the behaviour of the government. EU

⁶ On the European Union's policy towards the conflict in Transnistria see the author's "EU's Foreign Policy Change Towards Moldova", Strategic Issues Review Nr. 4, NATO Studies Center-SNSPA, Bucharest 2003.

⁷ Checkel, Jeffrey T., 2000: *Compliance and Conditionality*, ARENA Working Papers WP 00/18, http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/wp00_18.htm, p. 18.

conditionality has been linked to some financial assistance through the TACIS program and has mainly played a supportive role of the conditionality of international financial institutions.

When referring to EU expectations on Moldova, one might talk of “requests” rather than “conditions”. The EU has a list of expectations from Moldova, compliance with which might lead to increased co-operation with the EU, but the terms of the requests, as well as the possible rewards are rather vague. In most cases, there is no clear link between compliance by Moldova and clear EU rewards. Among the most important EU requests is the continuation of reforms, adherence to the “values of democracy, rule of law, human rights including freedom of the media”, free and fair elections⁸ and the implementation of the Action Plan. At the same time, the EU promises a “stake in the internal market”, increased participation in conflict resolution in Transnistria and asymmetric trade preferences for Moldova. However, it is not clear how far is the EU ready to participate in conflict resolution in Transnistria, nor is it clear whether the asymmetric trade preferences will include textile and agricultural products, which are of primary importance for Moldova, but also very sensitive for the EU. The general character of the requests and the ambiguity of assessing compliance with these requests do not serve to strengthen EU leverage.

One visible instance is the case in Transnistria where EU conditionality was applied is related to the introduction of a travel ban for 17 Transnistrian leaders considered responsible for obstructing the conflict settlement process in February 2003. The EU declared that “...the Council decide[d] to implement targeted sanctions in the form of a travel ban. The EU reserve[d] the right to consider additional targeted restrictive measures at a later date. The EU [would] review its position in the light of further developments, in particular steps taken by the Transnistrian leadership to make substantial progress in negotiations”.⁹ The immediate effect of the travel ban was that Transnistria agreed to participate in the working of a Joint Constitutional Commission that was supposed to draft a constitution for a reunified Moldova. However, participation in meetings did not mean that Transnistria ceased its obstructionist attitude in the negotiations. The EU travel ban, which is still in force, was insufficient to alter the behaviour of the Transnistrian leadership. This sanction, while not being a measure that

⁸ EU Council, *General Affairs and External Relations - Conclusions*, 10189/04 (Presse 195), 2590th Council Meeting, 14 June 2004, Luxembourg, p.14.

⁹ EU Council, 27 February 2003: *Moldova: Council adopts restrictive measures against the Transnistrian leadership*, Brussels, 6679/03 (Presse 56).

would push the conflict resolution process, still decreased the benefits of the *status quo* for the leadership in Tiraspol.

To sum up, EU conditionality on Moldova has been mainly reactive. Among its main problems are the vagueness of requests and rewards, and the fact that it does not meet a number of criteria for effectiveness, such as the benefits from compliance should be higher than the costs, clearly defined and achievable in a visible time span. The EU has not deployed stronger incentives such as the perspective of association with the EU in Moldova, as it did in the Western Balkans, nor credible promises of increased financial EU assistance. In the specific case of the conflict with Transnistria, the burden of conditionality was put on the secessionist entity with limited effects. There are hopes, however, that increased cooperation between Moldova and the EU will strengthen those actors in Transnistria willing to normalize relations with Moldova.

Among the EU priorities in conflict resolution in Transnistria, should be one to gain more leverage with both Moldova and Transnistria by increasing the stakes politically and economically. Considering the fact that the higher the economic exchange between the EU and a target country, the more likely conditionality will be effective,¹⁰ the EU should encourage more interdependence with Moldova through increased market access. This is likely to make reintegration with Moldova an attractive option for a considerable part of the business circles in Transnistria, especially considering Transnistria's high dependence on trade with EU member states.¹¹

Socialisation

Socialisation as a mechanism for Europeanization in Moldova with an eventual impact on the conflict resolution process has been relatively modest. The density of institutions that would support the socialisation of Moldovan elites is insufficient. Up to 2004, the EU did not have a

¹⁰ Schimmelfennig, Frank, Stefan Engert und Heiko Knobel, 2002: *The Conditions of Conditionality: The Impact of the EU on Democracy and Human Rights in European Non-Member States*, Paper prepared for Workshop 4, “Enlargement and European Governance”, ECPR Joint Session of Workshops, Turin, 22-27 March 2002

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECPR/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/turin/ws4/Schimmelfennig.pdf>, p.12.

¹¹ For an account of the Transnistrian economy see: Centre for Strategic Studies and Reforms, Research Paper on Transnistrian Economy, November 2003, <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/0311%20transn-research.pdf>.

Commission delegation in Moldova. The idea of appointing an EU Special Representative on Moldova that would increase the EU's visibility in Moldova until a delegation can be opened was put forward, however the European Council had not given the green light as of September 2004. Even the number of meetings between EU and Moldovan officials is lower than in the case of other Southeast European countries, Ukraine or Russia. Moreover, the language barrier is important because few Moldovan officials outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) speak foreign languages, other than Russian, fluently.¹²

Social learning is a long-term process and it is hard to detect its effects quickly. However, some positive developments are visible. Currently, there is a certain consensus that EU membership is Moldova's long-term objective. The EU as a norm-setting agent is practically uncontested, and the general idea of European integration is supported by a majority of public opinion in Moldova. All relevant political parties, even the governing Communist Party, favour integration into the EU, and sometimes justify their actions by invoking European norms and compliance with EU requests. The EU has become central to the debates on Moldova's future and conflict resolution in Transnistria. What is lacking is a clear understanding of how the EU functions. Too often, the EU is perceived as a geopolitical player or just an economic block, which makes important actors underestimate the importance of democratic reforms if progress in relations with the EU is to be achieved.

Possibilities for the socialization of Moldovan players are increasing. With Moldova's participation in the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe since 2001, a higher number of Moldovan officials, not only from the MFA, have been involved in networks of officials and experts from Southeast Europe and the EU. The ENP Action Plan includes the possibility for twinning programs for Moldova that would facilitate policy transfer to Moldova.¹³ The increasing exposure of Moldovan political players to a "Europeanized" international environment is likely to have certain socializing effects.

Possibilities for the socialization of actors from Transnistria are lower than in Moldova. Social interaction with unrecognized entities is generally more difficult, but also self-isolation has been a deliberate choice of the Transnistrian leadership. On a number of occasions the Transnistrian leadership has refused to talk to, or even blocked the access of, representatives of international organisations, including the EU and the OSCE, to the territory

¹² The Moldovan Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense were exposed to socialization networks which are part of NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

¹³ Interviews in Chisinau, August 2004; and Brussels, September 2004.

controlled by the secessionist authorities.¹⁴ The authoritarian leadership controls the political space and all unsanctioned expressions of political or civic dissent are suppressed. The relations of Transnistrian non-governmental organisations with similar organisations in the Republic of Moldova or other countries are also closely monitored and even discouraged,¹⁵ which limits the possibilities for the socialization even of non-governmental actors as well.

The EU travel ban against the Transnistrian leadership does not increase the possibilities for socialisation, nor is it likely to reduce them. Between 1992 and 2003 the Transnistrian leadership, which remained practically unchanged during this decade, travelled easily around Europe for personal (including medical) reasons,¹⁶ as well as for conferences, seminars and negotiating rounds which were part of the conflict resolution processes. Thus, the expectations that these leaders would socialize into certain norms of behaviour acceptable in Europe did not materialise. Nor did this socialization channel lead to any relaxation of the authoritarian regime in Transnistria.

Lesson-drawing

A third possible mechanism of Europeanization is lesson-drawing.¹⁷ This mechanism is defined as an instance when “knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and so on at one time or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and so on at another time or place”.¹⁸ States look for lessons abroad when they are dissatisfied with the *status quo*, though lesson-drawing does not necessarily imply an import of policy.

¹⁴ See for example “Tiraspol Authorities Deny Entry of OSCE Representatives in Transnistria”, Basa Press, Moldova Azi, 18 August 2004, <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=30491> and

“Tiraspol Authorities Would Not Care to Meet With European Parliamentarians”, Infotag, Moldova Azi, 13 June 2003, <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=24478>.

¹⁵ Interviews in Chisinau and Tiraspol; June, August 2004.

¹⁶ “Tiraspol leader held at Vienna airport”, 9 December 2002, Basa Press, Moldova Azi <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=21949> and “Tiraspol refuses to comment on Smirnov’s arrest in Vienna” (in Romanian), Moldova Azi, 10 December 2002, <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=21936>

¹⁷ Schimmelfennig, Frank and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds), 2005, forthcoming: *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹⁸ Dolowitz, David and David Marsh: “Learning from Abroad: The role of policy transfer in Contemporary Policy Making”, *Governance*, 13:1, 2000; quoted in Brocklehurst, Helen, Noel Stott, Brandon Hamber and Gillian Robinson: *“Lesson drawing from negotiated transitions in Northern Ireland and South Africa”*, Paper presented at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/publications/pdf/APSAHamberBran.pdf>, p. 13.

Lesson-drawing is different from social learning in two instances.¹⁹ Firstly, policy changes and learning processes are driven by the “Europeanizing” states themselves rather than being induced or even supported by the EU. Secondly, the lesson-drawing model contains a rationalist dimension. Under this model states can adopt certain measures not only because they deem them “appropriate” (as in the social learning model), but also because they regard them as serving their needs. These changes do not necessarily reflect a change in beliefs or identities.

The lesson-drawing mechanism of Europeanization can be divided into soft transfers, i.e. the transfer of ideas, concepts and attitudes; and hard transfers of programmes and implementation.²⁰ In Moldova the effects of soft transfer are most important for the conflict resolution realm, i.e. attitudes and ideas about the way the conflict can be solved have been influenced by lessons from other conflicts. The lessons drawn from Cyprus are particularly important for the present discussion in Moldova: Is conflict resolution to be followed by Europeanization or, to the contrary, is Europeanization to be followed by conflict resolution?

Lesson-drawing is important for Transnistria as well, including the lessons learned from the Cyprus case,²¹ and from the present experiments with federalism in Bosnia and in Serbia-Montenegro. From the Transnistrian point of view, these were positive examples of loose federal or even confederal arrangements.²² In the negotiations with Moldova, Transnistria borrowed ideas and arguments for a more decentralised solution from these examples. This would allow Transnistria to retain as many elements of its *de facto* statehood as possible.

Europeanization and Conflict Resolution

In Moldova, the views on Europeanization and conflict resolution are increasingly centred around two approaches. These approaches seek to answer one question: “What leads to what - conflict resolution to European integration, or vice versa?”

Conflict resolution first

¹⁹ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, forthcoming, *op.cit.*

²⁰ Evans, Mark, and Jonathan Davies, 1999 "Understanding Policy Transfer. A multi level, multi-disciplinary analysis", *Public Administration* 77:2 (1999), pp. 361-385, quoted in Brocklehurst et al., *op.cit.*, p.14.

²¹ Olvia Press: “Smirnov considers the Cyprus model as the most suitable solution” / “Smirnov schitaet Kipruskuju model’ optimalnoj”, 31 August 2004, <http://olvia.idknet.com/ol169-08-04.htm>.

The ‘conflict resolution first’ approach was dominant in the last decade. It states that Moldova has no chance of joining the European Union, or even becoming an associated state, without overcoming the division of the country. There are three related arguments for this. Firstly, the EU would never accept a divided country, especially with Russian troops stationed on the territory of Transnistria. Secondly, Moldova has few chances of meeting the economic criteria of the EU without effectively exercising state functions in Transnistria which controls more than 40% of the industrial potential of Moldova, and a considerable part of the border with Ukraine. The conflict in Transnistria has often been invoked as a (false) excuse for delays in economic and political reforms. With the conflict unresolved, uncertainty over the future of the Moldovan state and regional stability are all key factors for Moldova’s nearly failed transition. A third argument is that the more time Transnistria and Republic of Moldova live separately, the fewer the chances for a solution because separation becomes normal and new generations will never feel an affiliation to the Moldovan state. The logical conclusion of this approach is that road to a European future for Moldova leads through the resolution of the conflict in Transnistria, the strengthening of the Moldovan state through reforms and only then there might be chances of joining the EU.

Europeanization first

The second approach, increasingly popular since 2003, is that Moldova should concentrate on reforms, become a modern European state, and only then will the pre-conditions for a solution in Transnistria be in place. Consequently, the resolution of the conflict should be postponed until Moldova is politically and economically strong enough to attract and “digest” Transnistria, rather than becoming “Transnistrianized”.²³

Three factors constituted the basis for the emergence and consequent appeal for “Europeanization first”. Firstly, increasing frustration over the lack of progress on the conflict

²² Interviews in Chisinau, July 2004.

²³ The terms “Transnistrianize” or “Trasnistrization” are used in Moldovan political debates to designate a post-settlement situation where Moldova imports key characteristics of the Transnistrian entity that will then become dominant in the reunified state. This would be made possible by a type of federal settlement that grants Transnistria decisive influence over the whole political process in Chisinau. These characteristics include: an authoritarian regime, strong connections between the political, economic and criminal spheres, a pro-Russian and anti-Western foreign policy, Russian as the dominant language, and the presence of Russian troops.

settlement process in Transnistria, despite Moldova's agreement to create a federation with Transnistria. Secondly, the launch of the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Balkans and the message that Europeanization is possible and can be supported by the EU without necessarily achieving a final settlement to secessionist conflicts. Thirdly, developments in Cyprus were a good empirical confirmation of how Europeanization can alter the preferences of actors in conflicts and create the precondition for a secessionist entity to accept reunification.

Association with the EU as a stabilisation mechanism for the Balkans encouraged Moldova to request its inclusion into SAP, but possibly the most attractive model for Moldova was that of Cyprus. The 2003-2004 events in Cyprus contributed considerably to the popularity of the "Europeanization first" approach to conflict resolution in Moldova. Among the lessons that were drawn from Cyprus one might mention: (1) a divided state can move closer and even join the EU; (2) Europeanization makes a state more attractive to the secessionist party; (3) what matters most is not the negotiating process over reunification, but (positive) internal developments in each entity and shifts in the negotiating power between the conflicting parties; (4) with international support and internal commitment to reforms, economic progress is possible even when a considerable part of the economic potential is not controlled by the main entity; (5) the "no" vote on the Annan Plan in Southern Cyprus in April 2004 encouraged the idea in Moldova that it is better to solve the conflict later when the distribution of power between the conflict parties and their external supporters allows for a fairer settlement agreement, where Transnistria would not dominate policy making in Chisinau.

Conclusions

The understanding of the impact of Europeanization on conflict resolution should start with highlighting the causal links between one process and the other. As stated above, Europeanization is likely to contribute to conflict resolution when the following conditions are in place: the benefits of Europeanization are higher than the benefits of the *status quo* in a conflict; Europeanization is attractive for both rather than for only one conflict party; it is attractive for the protector state of the secessionist entity; the benefits of Europeanization are credible and achievable within a visible time span; Europeanization strengthens those actors that favour the conflict resolution.

The impact of Europeanization in Moldova, in general, and on conflict resolution in Transnistria, in particular, has been relatively limited, though its importance is increasing. In the context of EU enlargement, there has been an increasing understanding that the EU should play a bigger role in the Transnistria conflict.

The mechanisms and the effectiveness of Europeanization in Moldova reflect the overall level of relations between the EU and Moldova. EU conditionality has been limited, as the EU's expectations towards Moldova have been formulated as mainly general requests, rather than clear conditions linked to certain rewards. Socialisation of Moldovan elites seems to be on the rise, as the density of the EU-Moldova contacts increases, particularly since Moldova's inclusion into Southeast European networks of cooperation, and the development of an ENP Action Plan. Lesson-drawing has also played a complementary role to the other two Europeanisation mechanisms, as a way to compensate for the relative lack of EU presence and interest in Moldova. Developments in Cyprus have played an important role in this lesson-drawing process.

The level of EU engagement with Moldova and the conflict resolution process in Transnistria is not yet clear, as the shape of the European Neighbourhood Policy is in the process of development. In order to strengthen the EU's capacity to promote the ENP objectives in Moldova, one of the main priorities for the EU should be to gain more leverage by increasing the political and economic offerings of the ENP, as well as supplementing the long-term focus of ENP with visible and attractive rewards. Increased market access; a clear road-map towards facilitated and eventually visa-free travel; and increased, direct EU participation in the conflict settlement in Transnistria would significantly increase EU leverage in the country.

In Moldova, the views on Europeanization and conflict resolution are increasingly centred on two approaches. These approaches seek to answer one question: "What leads to what - conflict resolution to European integration, or vice versa?" The "conflict resolution process first" approach, stating that Moldova has no chance of joining the European Union without overcoming the division of the country has been loosing ground. An alternative approach, termed "Europeanization first" has been increasingly popular since 2003. It states that Moldova should concentrate on reforms, become a modern European state, and only then will the pre-conditions for a solution in Transnistria be in place. Consequently, the resolution of the conflict should be postponed until Moldova is politically and economically strong enough to attract and "digest" Transnistria, rather than become "Transnistrianized".

Independent of the sequence between Europeanization and conflict resolution, the positive effects of Europeanization on conflict resolution in Transnistria will be directly dependent on the degree of EU engagement with Moldova generally. Increased co-operation, and eventually deeper integration between the EU and Moldova in political and economic terms, is likely to strengthen those actors in Transnistria that would favour a settlement over the possibility of secession.

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