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Dumitru Mînzărari

RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS AN OBSTACLE TO DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN POST-SOVIET AREA

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years there have been many voices in the West, both in the academia and in the policy world, insisting that democratic development in the post-Soviet area should be described as a failure. At the same time their invoked reasons suggested that it is internal factors such as poor governance, corrupted elites, inefficient policies, etc., leading to that failure. Indeed, the existing scholarship tends to predominantly focus on domestic obstacles to democratic development. It points out to internal structure, human agency, or the connection of the two as being the reasons for democratic transition success or failure.

Economic development, as researchers argue¹, is an important factor able to encourage or trigger the transition to democracy. Another one is the human development factor, which leads to the increase of citizens' competence and participation in the political process. It has also been considered by a number of researchers as crucial for the transition to democratic system and its consolidation. Its importance is obvious as democratic transition may require a home-grown demand for political reform in order to move forward². Also, this factor seems to play a significant role during the most painful periods of transition, when reforms may provoke dissatisfaction among the population. Then, only a more literate and sophisticated citizenry may be ready to put up with social and economic disappointing performance of the government, capable of realizing that democratic development could bring new positive changes³.

There is yet another body of research which advocates the idea that international factor

has a significant impact on the liberalization process in transition countries. It advocates the crucial influence of the "snowballing" effect as described in the case of the third wave of democratization. According to this theory, when a nation reaches certain democratization level, it will contribute to the advance of democratic transition across the border, in the neighboring countries.⁴ Similar conclusions can be found in the research done by other scholars, insisting that international influence has been the key reason behind the spread of democracy over the last few decades⁵. The efforts of the United States and European Union to promote democratic reforms around the world using diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural tools are an example of this process. Such efforts are based on the democratic peace theory, which suggests that since democratic states do not go to war against each other, then spreading democracy means promoting a peaceful international environment.

There are also opinions suggesting the Western democratization efforts may also be sometimes guided by US or EU domestic reasons, aiming at either legitimizing the domestic order at home, or boosting the national pride and self-confidence.⁶ However, significantly less research was done to reveal how international factor hinders democratic development in transition states, although there were isolated efforts mentioning the case when democratic states made attempts to subvert fragile democracies perceiving certain geopolitical interests to be at stake⁷. Otherwise there was clearly

4 Huntington (1991)

5 Linz and Stepan (1996) and Gleditsch (2002)

6 Pevehouse (2002)

7 Jon C. Pevehouse, 'Democracy from the Outside-In? International Organizations and Democratization', *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No.3 (Summer 2002), pp. 522-523

1 See Learner (1958), Lipset (1959), Londregan and Poole (1996), Acemoglu and Robinson (2001), Boix and Stokes (2003), and Epstein et al. (2006)

2 Bratton and van de Walle (1997)

3 Diamond et al. (1999)

insufficient attention paid to obstructions of foreign nature, aimed at freezing and even reversing democratic reforms, especially in transition post-Soviet countries. As any kind of foreign influence has the potential to affect the national security of a state exposed to external pressure, it is necessary to discuss democratic transition also through a security environment angle, which may push it towards success or trigger the transition's stagnation and regress.

That approach is of a significant importance, since the dominant trend among the researchers, experts and politicians is to ignore the link between democratic development and security. However the former is so much dependent on the latter that this dependence can determine its success or failure.

The aim of the current paper is to also address this issue, emphasizing the ways in which foreign factors, affecting the security of a state, may affect its process of democratic transition. The focus will be heavily on the Republic of Moldova, addressing and analyzing factors triggering the dangerous effects of the *foreign influence* → *national security* → *democratic transition* link. Similarly to the cases of other post-Soviet countries, such as Ukraine and Georgia, the main vulnerabilities of Moldova are explained by its Soviet-time experience and inheritance. They include economic, social, and political links, on the top of the connections maintained between the domestic elites of these countries and the Russian political elites.

Addressing these issues the study will examine the contemporary shifts in the security architecture of the post-Soviet area, which hints to a change in the nature of inter-state aggression. During the recent years we have observed that in that particular region the preference was given to the tools of indirect aggression. It is different from the conventional military aggression as it has a more subtle character, and while it is poorly addressed by the international law, it generates threats of a bigger magnitude. Among the indirect aggression methods

used against Moldova one could detect political subversion, economic disruption, propaganda dissemination, social disorganization and psychological warfare.⁸ They are used to exploit the loopholes of the international law, and to attain goals similar to the aims of a foreign military aggression – controlling the national government and resources of the targeted country.

This has been made easier because of the ignorance surrounding both the subject of foreign influence and its effects on democratic transition in post-Soviet area. The existing debates over the issue of democratic development did not put under scrutiny how foreign obstacles, created by other countries, can obstruct the democratization of transition countries. This paper will address obstacles that include the inimical influence and pressure from abroad, employed as a rule by an authoritarian state, which aims at controlling the targeted transition country. Developing that argument, the study will suggest reasons why democratic development in post-Soviet countries has been such a disappointment.

Identifying the reasons behind democratic failure in post-Soviet countries is an important endeavor. It offers new insights into their post-Cold War transition, when they currently seem to be predominantly experiencing either transition stagnation or a democratic reverse. The present paper claims that it is the Russian foreign policy which is largely responsible for this persistent trend. It will mostly refer to the case of Moldova, and in some instances to Ukraine and Georgia. Since these are the states that clearly expressed their will to join European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization⁹, they are the priority targets of Russian foreign policy efforts aimed at obstructing their Euro-Atlantic integration. This is done through creating influence mechanisms

⁸ Authors such as L. Damrosch (1989) and Bugajski (2004) among others, have written about the use of indirect aggression tools in the foreign policy.

⁹ Moldovan political leadership has stressed numerous times that since, according to the Constitution, their country is neutral then Moldova does not intend to become a member of NATO.

over the indigenous elites, in the attempt to control these countries' foreign and domestic policy options. Such actions lead to the erosion of the institutional checks and balances, subversion of the incipient mechanisms of these fragile democracies, and the promotion of a single party or group into power, encouraging and supporting the growth of authoritarian trends. Together with the exploitation of the separatist conflicts and tendencies on the territories of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, these foreign efforts resulted in hindering their democratic transition.

This is not a new policy, but instead a continuous element of the Russian foreign policy towards the ex-Soviet republics. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the policymakers in Moscow have strived to maintain their control over the former Soviet satellites. In many cases they managed to attain this goal through informal links and contacts with the semi-authoritarian rulers or dependent elites in former Soviet republics. With the march of "color" revolutions through the capitals of Ukraine and Georgia, the Kremlin elite have become extremely concerned that they might lose their ability to influence the post-Soviet countries.

At the same time a more active role and involvement of the West in the post-Soviet republics was also perceived by Russia as a threat to its national interests. The Western efforts to foster democratic reforms in these countries would result, according to the Russian policymakers, in their drift towards EU at the same time leaving the Russian "sphere of influence". This paper will discuss the ways Russia has intensified its foreign policy strains to hinder the democratic processes in Moldova and in other former Soviet republics; attempting to maintain its influence over them through developing and exploiting their already existing foreign vulnerabilities towards Moscow.

This process is largely overlooked and its importance is mainly underestimated in the West. Experts and politicians do not perceive it as an organized and targeted policy,

but rather dismiss it imprudently as what they see as the Russian elite post-imperial syndrome. The Western policymakers and many scholars believe it is Moscow's temporary unreadiness to accept the current geopolitical setup. Comparing today Russia with former empires like France and Britain they fall trap to a major misjudgment, shortsightedly ignoring that Russia, unlike the other two countries at their time, has all the means, the will, and the capacity for bringing desired changes in the existing regional architecture. As a result any voiced concerns regarding the real goals behind the specific Russian foreign policy moves are tabbed by most Western observers as hysteria and exaggerated fears.

The study claims that this insufficient understanding of the reasons behind the Moscow's foreign policies among the Western public, including the experts and researchers specializing on Russia, is mainly caused by mirror imaging analysis error¹⁰ and by the failure to grasp to the full extent the strategic culture of Russian influential policymakers. In order to understand the foreign policy pursued by Russia's leadership today one should be aware of the heavy influence that domestic security and military establishments have on this process, as well as the real impact that the deeply ingrained roots of the Soviet strategic thought has on the final policy choices.

The Russian early 1990s period has also had a tremendous impact on the current elite, who cut their teeth on surviving the

¹⁰ It is an analysis error, when analysts or political leaders project their own values and national culture when analyzing and interpreting events and policies of a foreign country, using models that ignores the culture and the values of political leaders of the country under scrutiny. For details see Richards J. Heuer, Jr., „The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis,” *Center for the Study of Intelligence*, CIA 1999, p. 70, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/psychology-of-intelligence-analysis/index.html>. Another interesting reading is offered by the article „Template I: Munich” of the *Bellum* project, run by the *Stanford Review*, which suggests that the West has fallen into the trap of mirror-imaging mistake when evaluating Hitler in 1938 at Munich, <http://bellum.stanfordreview.org/?p=392>

Russian “wild west” of that time, outliving many adventurers of gangster, apparatchik, KGB and military cadre breed. It was during those harsh times, when the Russian criminal world sub-culture of “thief-in-law”¹¹ has slipped into the conduct of masses, becoming a common trend of behavior of the Russian economic and political elites. This criminal sub-culture, described by usage of specific slang, aggressive behavior and a tactical thinking preferring brutal force when doing business, has persisted not only on domestic stage but has also spread further, shaping the ways in which the elites conducted their international affairs¹².

11 It comes from the Russian *vor v zakone*, meaning a thief, within the Russian criminal world who satisfies certain requirements of the Russian criminal traditions, and occupying a leading role in the criminal hierarchy. For details see Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thief_in_law

12 One of the most famous and widely-known accounts of this trend is the case when Anatoly Chubays, the former head of the Russian presidential administration, the Russian ex-minister of finance and at the time the chief executive of the Russia state-run electricity giant Unified Energy System RAO EES, threatened publicly Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin. After his adviser Valeriu Pasat, a former Ambassador of Moldova to Russia, former Moldovan minister of defense and ex-chief of Moldovan Security Service, was sentenced in Chisinau in January 2006, Chubays stated in the Russian media: “I think president Voronin should not be surprised if he faces very serious problems in the nearest future”. Few days after this statement some Moldovan media outlets have spread the news claiming the president Voronin’s elder son, Oleg, was kidnapped in Moscow. This was immediately disproved by the Moldovan presidency spokesperson. The advisor to Moldovan president, Mark Tkaciuc, came out with a public statement, saying the case was a precedent of using criminal lexicon in international affairs, which is not admissible for an official of such a rang and reputation like Chubays. See Grani.ru, “Moldovan president’s advisor: Chubais speaks the language of gangster bust-up” [Sovetnik prezidenta Moldavii: Chubais govorit na yazyke banditskih razborok], 18 January 2006, <http://www.grani.ru/Politics/World/Europe/m.100782.html>. One other example that had even a higher resonance was the case in September 1999, in Astana, when Vladimir Putin, at the time the Prime-minister of Russia, has used during the press conference the expression *mochit’ v sortire* in regards to how terrorists should be treated [*we will waste them even in the closets*]. For more details see Wikipedia http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Мочить_в_сортире.

Understanding how Russia obstructs democratic transitions in post-soviet countries is even more difficult because of the subtlety of the tools that Kremlin uses. In fact, Moscow basically reverted to the indirect aggression mechanisms that Soviet Union employed during the Cold War. Then, aware of the dangers of a nuclear conflict it confronted its rival, the United States, in third world countries through the use of proxy-wars.¹³ Since existing provisions of the international law do not cover well the realm of indirect aggression, Russia has its hands free to unleash hostile actions against its neighbors. The paper will look into this, and specifically into how the modern conditions have resulted in a transformation of the mechanisms of interstate aggression.

The main scope of the study, however, remains to investigate how indirect aggression is used in Russian foreign policy to revert democratic transition in Moldova. The following chapter will reveal the predominance of the foreign factor, namely of the Russian foreign policy, over the domestic factor, in guiding the internal process and development of the post-Soviet countries this reseach is looking at.

13 See Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proxy_war

COMPARING FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INFLUENCE

Using the Small States Model

The debate discussing whether the internal factors are more important than foreign factors in shaping a country's policies, is a very important one in the framework of this paper. If external factors are influencing the policies of Moldova's leadership to a bigger extent than the internal factors do it, as democratic development is concerned, then it is highly probable that the failures of democratic transition in the Republic of Moldova can be also explained by the attempts from abroad to obstruct the consolidation of democratic institutions inside the country. In International Relations and Comparative Politics schools both groups of factors are examined, however the existing body of literature tends to consider domestic influence as more prominent and decisive. It should be emphasized, although, that authoritative studies on this topic¹⁴ focus predominantly on bigger powers, ignoring smaller countries.

Examining the issue through a realist perspective by looking at the distribution of power in the international system, it can be stated that in the case of bigger powers domestic processes play somewhat a more significant role in shaping their foreign agenda. However, for the similar reasons, it can be deduced that in the case of smaller countries, susceptible to foreign influence and with smaller capacity to exercise sovereignty, external factors are those that have a bigger say in shaping their policies. In this paper I will examine post-Soviet countries, vulnerable to both Western and Russian pressure, and less capable to shape an independent foreign

policy. Therefore, the current paper claims that it is the literature on the small states¹⁵ which provides the most suitable analytic tools for explaining why international pressure is often more significant than domestic one in our case.

The notion of smallness is being used as synonymic to weakness. Employing the notion "small" as an analytic concept and describing it, the study refers to the literature that explains "smallness" in comparative terms of one actor's power and capabilities related to other actors, and less in terms of size or population. However, because lower resource capabilities inevitably limits the scope and domain of foreign policy, a small state will be one with reduced capacity to influence either the security interests of a great power or defend itself against an attack by an equally motivated great power¹⁶. Borrowing from the characteristics of small states summarized by J. Hey¹⁷, the states we look upon address a narrow scope of foreign policy issues, preponderantly limit their behavior to their immediate geographic arena; they employ mostly diplomatic foreign policy instruments and less military and/or economic, and mostly tend to underline international principles, laws and other type of "moral" ideals; they also heavily rely on joining multinational institutions, while being inclined to assume neutrality.

There are a number of other descriptions,

15 Vital (1967), Rothstein (1968), and Keohane (1969)

16 Miriam Fendius Elman, "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (April 1995), p. 171.

17 Jeanne A. K. Hey, ed. 'Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior,' (Lynne Rienner Publishers, February 2003), p.5

14 For more details see Katzenstein (1976), Krasner (1978), and Putnam (1988)

which have although raised questions among scholars, nevertheless are useful in the framework of this particular paper. Robert Rothstein suggested the small state is the one 'which recognizes that it can not obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so.'¹⁸ Other definitions included the description of a state whose leaders believe they will never be able to make a significant influence on the system acting alone or in small groups¹⁹. This factor pops up further in the text, when we talk about the ex-Soviet regional elites that become national elites and the inferiority complex that guides their perceptions of Russia.

Foreign policy of Moldova shows different trends comparing to the foreign policies of Ukraine or Georgia, as all three countries carry the influence of their individual specific conditions, be it the size, geography, or the way they are strategically assessed by influential international players. However, what they have in common is their vulnerability to the foreign influence of the Russian Federation, the methods of indirect aggression employed by Russia against them, and their responses. It is exactly in this context that the three countries are analyzed in this paper, since in order to better understand the processes under scrutiny we need more than one case study, to the extent that they encounter foreign factors similar to those affecting Moldova.

Therefore, the argument insisting that internal factors are more significant than external ones in countries ongoing democratic transition²⁰ is not either very convincing or valid in our case. The two independent variables, namely the structuralist aspect represented by the power of the transition

state which determines its ability to resist pressures from outside²¹, and the hypothesis on the impact of the regionalist character of democratic transition²² should not be discarded. This holds true especially when analyzing the countries that form the Russia-run Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)²³, which Moldova is also a member of.

The current study claims that both the weakness of these countries to effectively oppose foreign pressures of their former metropolis, and their specific regional pattern of transition somewhat make the CIS countries unique, when compared with other "waves" of transition, like those in Latin America, Southern Europe and even in the Central Europe. If this holds true, then there is a need to identify a different framework for analysis for post-Soviet area countries. And then much of the scholarly literature that advocates the dominant role of internal influences over the external ones, basing their argument on other regions experience, has less explanatory power when trying to describe the specifics of the post-Soviet transition. And to the contrary, foreign factors show to be more important in influencing the success or failure of its democratic transition.

At present there is more than sufficient empiric evidence to not question at all whether Russia is actually putting pressure on ex-Soviet republics, and how significant are her abilities to influence their political choices. The question is different - how and to what extent this foreign influence is affecting the democratic transition in ex-Soviet republics, and specifically in Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia? This will be discussed further, in a separate sec-

18 Robert L. Rothstein, *'Alliances and Small Powers,'* (New York and London: Columbia University Press 1968), p. 29

19 Robert O. Keohane, 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States In International Politics,' *International Organization*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (Spring, 1969), p. 296

20 Bratton and Van de Walle (1997)

21 The proximity of a stronger neighbor with both intention and recourses to interfere into a state's affairs sharply increases the chance that external factors will have a dominant influence on a country's domestic political processes.

22 See Huntington (1991).

23 In this instance and generally in the text I use the abbreviation CIS to emphasize that I am talking about all former Soviet Union countries except the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

tion. But before, it is necessary to look more thoroughly at why Russia's ability to influence these three countries is so significant, and considerably overweighs the foreign influence of the West, namely that of the United States and especially the influence of the European Union.

Regionalism and Interdependence

The existing international relations literature on regionalism and interdependence provides useful and powerful insights on why Russia has a stronger say in our subject countries. It also explains the differing nature of transition in the ex-Soviet republics comparing to other democratic transition cases. Regionalism is the concept that accounts for the specifics of the historic experience of our target countries. As Kanishka Jayasuriya has put it:

Regionalism is a set of cognitive practices shaped by language and political discourse, which through the creation of concepts, metaphors, analogies, determine how the region is defined; these serve to define the actors who are included (and excluded) within the region and thereby enable the emergence of a regional entity and identity²⁴.

It is obvious that post-Soviet space carries the weight of a dissimilar cultural and historical experience in comparison with other regions on whose transition experience the Western development agencies²⁵ are basing their strategies. Southern and Central Europe and even Latin America had more interaction with the West, which was the pioneer on the path of democratic transition and consolidation. Regardless the nature of their connection with Western Europe they were subjected to its politi-

cal and cultural influence. They were also actively interacting economically. In other words over an extended period of history they experienced intensive and complex interactions with the West.

Being either direct neighbors or colonies, they become linked through interdependence ties and mechanisms. As a result of these interactions there were created regions representing social and cognitive constructs, rooted in political practice.²⁶ Similar conditions that contributed to the development and consolidation of democracies in the West have facilitated the democratic transition in their ex-colonies and that of their immediate neighbors.

By the same token ex-Soviet republics experienced centuries of Russian influence, first when included in Russian Empire, later as a part of the Soviet Union, and now as CIS members. The West has nourished its democratic traditions over a period of natural and gradual historic development. Russia has always had an authoritarian political culture and a centralized political system, which were obviously reflected on her satellites. It is exactly in this context that the Huntington's "snowball effect", which refers to the spread of democracy from one country to its neighbors, can function in the opposite way, promoting authoritarianism from one power center to its satellites. This means, the snowball concept provides an explanatory framework for the spread of authoritarian governing practices from Russia to its neighboring conquered territories. For this reason the former Soviet republics lacked fundamental prerequisites that favored and promoted democratic development in the countries to the West, and instead carried the legacy of totalitarian control and Soviet imperial rule.²⁷

The post-Soviet countries had almost none, or very limited historic trace of statehood over the last few hundred years. And the very short flake of independence they

24 Kanishka Jayasuriya, 'Singapore: The Politics of Regional Definition', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 7, No.4 (1994), pp. 411-420.

25 The paper refers to both governmental agencies such as DFID, USAID, SIDA, and to non-governmental as UNDP, CRS, etc. are.

26 Katzenstein (2000, 354)

27 Motyl (2004)

have experienced after the collapse of the Russian Empire did not help them much in the context of state-building. This has contributed to the strengthening of the culture of mass submissiveness and fate-acceptance, because they lacked any fresh collective memory of successful rebellions against oppressors. Then, the massive collectivization that the former Soviet republics underwent and the specifics of the Soviet system did not allow developing the spirit of personal initiative and the feature of individuality in their people, or severely subverted these processes. This experience had a tremendous effect on Moldova's and other ex-Soviet republics political culture, which survived pretty much intact to our days. Add to it the fact that elites, who generally play a key role in transition, did not change. They only changed their hats, transforming overnight from regional Soviet administrators into national elites. As a result the only difference with these "new" national elites was that they did not get anymore orders and instructions from Moscow. And even if that did happen, they already had certain liberty to ignore them.

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union caught the Union's republics with virtually no effective government in regard to the way their foreign policies were conducted. The new elites, which functioned earlier only as regional administrators had no ideas how to employ state's foreign policy tools like diplomacy, military and secret services. In fact, speaking in M. Oakeshott's terms "the office of authority" was very unqualified to run a state, and did not have an effective and fully operational "apparatus of power"²⁸.

These may explain why micromanagement²⁹ is so wide-spread in the institutional

28 See Michael Oakeshott, 'The Vocabulary of a Modern European State,' *Political Studies*, Vol. 23 (June and September 1977), 319-341, 409-414

29 In this context the notion of micromanagement is used to explain the management style of managers when they show an exaggerated control over the work and actions of their subordinates. They try to avoid delegating any decision-making power at all to managers of lower levels, which affects their initiative, creative thinking and prevents the development of professional experts.

culture of post-Soviet countries even today. And these details were certainly indicative of the new national elites' ingrained fear of Russia, their complex of inferiority towards Moscow, and especially their preconception that their young states cannot resist Russia's pressure. It is only in this instance that domestic politics, beliefs and norms to some degree shaped the elites and consequently their countries' behavior in international affairs. The new national leaders were afraid to oppose Moscow's pressure and in many instances responded either passively or conceded. Hence, instead of working on consolidating their country's sovereignty, they have built its foreign dependence and vulnerability towards Russia.

Moldova, but also Ukraine and Georgia, are facing severe challenges at present, because of many mistakes they have done so far in their bilateral relations with Russia. Moldova, like Georgia, is tied up with the agreements on the secessionist region it has signed with Russia under Moscow's pressure. Ukraine is also facing similar difficulties in regard to the agreements on the stationing of the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea, and on the status of Crimea region. However, these are not the only serious challenges that our subject countries are facing.

The generations that grew up and received their life experience during the Soviet Union are still alive. There are a significant number of people in Moldova and other post-Soviet countries, whose cultural identities are dominated by their Soviet experience. The Russian language is most common lingua franca, especially in Moldova and Ukraine, where the majority of people speak this language. It is of no surprise then, that there still exists an awareness of togetherness among people³⁰ living in the regions of the former Soviet Union.

30 David B. Knight, 'Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 72, No. 4, (December 1982), pp. 518

Apart from political and economic, the social and cultural ties based on shared ideas and mindsets are very solid. This is another influential variable that contributes to the consolidation of the "post-Soviet" region. It is a region that represents a social construction, and which, citing Alexander Murphy, is 'necessarily ideological and no explanation of its individuality or character be complete without explicit consideration of the types of ideas that developed and sustained in connection with the regionalization³¹.' A very good example that emphasizes the importance of the regionalism in post-Soviet space is the Eurovision song contest, where the jury until very recently was only represented by people from different countries. There was not a completely ungrounded critique that the results of this contest are not as much based on the performance of artists, as are in line with the political preferences of the voting people³².

Consequently there are many mechanisms and tools that Russia can consider and assess as to their efficiency in influencing the policy choices of the political leadership in CIS countries. With the extension of the European Union which has brought its borders closer to the CIS, and the raise of the energy security issue on the political agenda of the West, both the US and EU have increased their economic and political presence in the area. On one side this brought positive changes for ex-Soviet republics, which declared their goal to integrate into the West. But on the other side it provoked an increased counteraction of

Russia, which elevated its opposition to the Western presence in the CIS. As a result, that expansion of EU and US into CIS has also caused a both quantitative and qualitative growth of Moscow's activities and efforts to strengthen its position, while instantly trying to reduce the influence of the Western actors.

While the United States and the European Union are investing considerable efforts to have a bigger role in the post-Soviet space, they are still at disadvantage comparing to Russia. The key element in this argument is that United States and EU are only at the beginning of building stronger, long-term ties with the countries from the area, which over the time may evolve into stronger interconnection mechanisms and lead to changing the existing regional integration pattern.

However Russia has already consolidated a plethora of leverages that it uses to undermine the efforts of Moldovan, Ukrainian and Georgian governments to move closer to the West. In other words, while the West is offering these countries significant benefits of cooperation that will be felt only in long-term perspective, Russia is threatening them with deprivation of the basic things necessary for their daily life at the very moment. Moscow created and is continuously sustaining a strong interdependency with Moldova, although of a sharp asymmetrical character. It controls the flow of key commodities and misuses its position of the main trade partner, which is a pressure on the Moldovan population and consequently on politicians. Russia is also able to threaten the very basis of these states' survival, sustaining separatist structures and igniting more ethnic discontent on their territories³³. At the same

31 Alexander B. Murphy, 'Regions as Social Constructs: the Gap Between Theory and Practice,' *Progress in Human Geography*, 1991, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 23-35

32 For example during the finals of the Eurovision-2008, the way Russia has scored the highest number of points (8,10, and 12) fits with the regionalism principles. It got 12 points from countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Armenia, 10 points from Moldova and Serbia, and 8 points from Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Montenegro. This tendency was very similar in other years of the contest and in the case of other countries. For details see Eurovision-2008 web page at <http://www.eurovision.tv/page/the-final-2008>

33 In Georgia Russia sustains the two separatist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In Moldova it backs the Transnistria separatist regime, with funds and other resources. Russia sends its public functionaries on lengthy duty trips both to Moldova and Georgia, where they counsel the rebel regions' administrations. In Ukraine Moscow inflates and exploits ethnic divisions between Russians and Ukrainians, a trend which is especially visible in the case of Crimea region.

time there is a deep-rooted feeling among Russian policymakers that their country will not be able to revive as a strong influential global player without controlling its former satellites. And there is strong indication that this has become the sacred goal of the Russian foreign policy for the foreseeable future.

The socially constructed regionalism and the asymmetric interdependence describing Russia's relations with many of its former satellites are able to explain the advantage and influence that she has in the CIS. It requires significant additional efforts on the side of the Western partners to upset this advantage. And for the time being it does not seem likely that EU and US, except for some separate cases, are willing to put enough effort and resources into this endeavor. On the top of it, many in the West are rather skeptical that they are able to do anything about the Russian influence; they see it as an unalterable trend, and not having key interests at stake, are ready to accept the status quo.

Considering that regionalism and resulting interdependence are far from being irreversible phenomena - they are socially constructed and politically contested processes - this makes them open to change³⁴. Yet, in order to be able to inflict changes, there is need for a more thorough understanding of the advantages that benefit Russia in what may become a competition with the West for regional influence. The following section will provide a more elaborated coverage of the ways Russia exploits the regionalism factor.

The Mystery of Russian Influence

Let us look into the first criterion, which makes for the vulnerability of our subject states to foreign influence. While there exists a certain influence on the side of other

34 Peter J. Katzev quoted in Edward D. Mansfield and Helen V. Milner, 'The New Wave of Regionalism,' *International Organization*, Vol.53, No.3, (Summer 1999), pp. 591

players (US, EU, international organizations), they are by far less motivated than Russia is. The so-called "Near Abroad"³⁵ represents the top priority of the Russian foreign policy, as also confirmed by the Russian former president Vladimir Putin. To the contrary, the efforts of the United States and European Union to increase their presence in CIS are dispersed, varying in their degree and intensity from one target country to another, and it stays considerably lower on their political agendas. As a result, the volume of resources deployed by Moscow "qualitatively" outweighs³⁶ those used by the West, while also the stakes are much higher on the Russian side.

The importance of stakes in a conflict was to a significant extent researched during the Cold War. They were mostly used to understand 'the relationship between the value of the objective sought and the costs involved in its attainment'³⁷, being employed especially while developing the deterrence strategies. Nonetheless, I am using it for better understanding of why Russia's influence in the post-Soviet area is qualitatively and quantitatively stronger.

While Russian influence is perceived by many countries in the region as negative, in contrast with what is perceived as a benign influence of the West, the Russia's ability to get what it wants in CIS is

35 It is a commonly used expression in both Russian academic and political circles, describing the countries of the former Soviet Union.

36 The idea refers to the nature of the political systems in subject countries, lacking the necessary institutional checks and balances, governed by corrupt elites, which predate on the state resources on the expense of the citizenry. While the resources donated by the West and international organizations are targeted at contributing to democratic development for public good, i.e. in Moldova Russia buys out local economic and political elites, subverting them, and building up dependency mechanisms that are based on elites' private interests. On the top of it, these private interests are of a long-term nature, which further increases the ability of Russia to manipulate and control the domestic elites.

37 Kauffman quoted in Vesna Danilovic, 'The Sources of Threat Credibility in Extended Deterrence,' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 3, (January 2001), p. 347

nevertheless stronger. Exactly because Russia's elite attaches such a tremendous importance to its role in the CIS space, this has objectively increased their stakes, and attracted more resources, commitment, and especially resolve. For Kremlin this is not only a reputation matter, but also a matter of rebuilding what they perceive as the "greatness of Russia". In a similar fashion, international organizations have fewer stakes and therefore apply less effort to affect economic and political transition in the post-Soviet countries. More than that, their actions are less focused and are also limited by various institutional constraints, by international and domestic laws, which do not exist in the case of Russian foreign policies.

The existing regional multifaceted connections that were erected during the Soviet Union and survived until our days represent the pivotal factor that determines the unchallenged character of the Russian influence in the post-Soviet area. A significant number of the old, Soviet-time military, political, economic, social and cultural links are still present. This happened due to both the effort of Russia to preserve them, and in many instances due to the reluctance and the lack of interest on the side of the West to replace these connections. As a result the multifaceted interaction with Russia is still considerably more intense than with other actors, which places countries like Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and other CIS members within a common political region with their former metropolis. It has been a top Russian priority to increase this intraregional flow of interactions.

The way Soviet economy was designed to function has made this significantly easier for Moscow. The Soviet economic-industrial system was built so that it provides an indispensable role for the Soviet republics. All republics were elements of a common economic structure, characterized by inefficiency of its economic performance but by a strong interdependence. They were connected through energy and raw material supply networks, each making certain

contribution to the Soviet military-industrial complex, some providing spare parts and others providing final products. If, for example, a submarine was built at a shipyard in Soviet Socialist Federative Republic of Russia, it would get the necessary component parts from Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and so on. A somewhat similar situation was observed in the civilian industry sector.

It is significant to mention that among the first enterprises that Russian government or its controlled companies have purchased in the former Soviet republics were the elements of the old military-industrial complex. In Moldova the Russian state machine-building enterprise "Salyut", which produces among others engines for the newest Russian jetfighters of MIG and Sukhoy types, purchased the Chisinau-based "Topaz" company and the "Pribor" plant in Tighina, which used to work for Soviet defense industry. In 2006, at a moment of a strain in Russian-Ukrainian relations, Moscow withdrew from the common An-70 military transport aircraft project with Ukrainian "Antonov" design bureau. While officially the reason was that Russia already had its own military transport aircraft IL-76, this did not explain why then they joined the project initially. Many Russian analysts explained that decision of the Russian government by the fact that Kiev started to hardly push the NATO accession issue on Ukraine's foreign policy agenda.

The vulnerability of Moldovan economy to external shocks, namely to Russian trade and economic pressures, became obvious in 2005-2006. Then the Russian National Security Council together with the Russian government and the State Duma have agreed to use a "complex pressure mechanism" against Moldova and Georgia. As a result Russia has banned the import of Moldovan agriculture products and wine³⁸, while also banning the import of

38 New York Times, "A Russian 'Wine Blockade' against Georgia and Moldova," 6 April 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/06/world/europe/06russia.html>

Georgian wines and mineral waters³⁹. In a last year interview the Georgian Minister of Interior Vano Merabishvili has claimed that during a casual meeting in Vienna with a Russian Federal Security Service department chief, the latter insisted that Russia embargo cost Georgia close to \$1 billion. Apparently, the Georgian official intended to describe the Russian embargo as a deliberate punitive action, at the same time stating that his country's wine export to Russia did not go over \$65 million⁴⁰.

Russia also occupies a very favorable position as the monopolistic natural gas exporter to Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. All three countries are more or less extremely dependent on the Russian gas, with Georgia covering an insignificant part of its needs from its own resources, while Ukraine is able to make up for some 35% of its needs in natural gas out of its own reserves⁴¹. The Soviet-time pipelines infrastructure is also playing a significant role, since it makes it more difficult for the countries to diversify their natural gas supplies. At different instances Russia has used this vulnerability unscrupulously and without hesitation in order to put pressure on all three countries. The gas conflict with Ukraine managed to gain a large media coverage and provoke public outcry in the West. This might be explained either by the logical connection of this incident with the Ukraine's increasing pro-European and pro-NATO stance after the change of political elite during the "orange revolution", the impact of the gas cut-offs on the European energy security⁴², or by the importance at-

tributed to Ukraine in the West.

It is worth mentioning that while this pressure attempts have worked to an extent or another with these three countries, it failed with Azerbaijan. When Russia's state-run gas monopoly Gazprom more than doubled the prices of gas for Azerbaijan in December 2006 in response to Baku selling gas to Georgia, and by this undermining Kremlin economic pressure on Tbilisi, Azerbaijan responded by refusing to buy the Russian gas⁴³. It also halted the oil supplies to Russia through the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline, explaining the move by the necessity to use the oil for fueling the domestic electricity plants that previously were powered by the Russian gas. This is a very descriptive example of how differently are placed various post-Soviet states as far as their foreign dependency on Russia and therefore their vulnerability is concerned. It also suggests that if the West would support Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia to diminish the effects of the Russian pressure, the latter will be less effective, and would allow the ex-Soviet republics a larger margin of maneuver in their foreign policy.

However apart from the focus on economic interaction, there is also a significant common identity connection among Russia, Moldova and Ukraine. The backbone of this link is represented by citizenry of Russian origin, and those that were subject to the Soviet education and indoctrination. Both in Moldova and Ukraine this constitutes a significant portion of the total population. While the influence of the latter factor will decrease with the change of generations, the influence of the former is a powerful reality, which should not be discarded. Many citizens of Russian origin in post-Soviet states share a strong loyalty towards Russia, even though they hold different citizenships. They connect to Russia, preferring to

39 BBC News, "Russia Banks Georgian Mineral Water," 5 May 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4976304.stm>

40 Kommersant, "Georgian Interior Minister: Russia Pushing Abkhazia," 28 May 2008, http://www.kommersant.com/p896961/Russian-Georgian_relations/

41 The CIA World Factbook 2008, "Ukraine: Economy", <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/up.html#Econ>

42 The Guardian, "Russia Turns off Supplies to Ukraine in Payment Row, and EU Feels the Chill," 2 January 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jan/02/russia.ukraine>. For a more detailed account of these events see Jonathan Stern "The Russian-Ukrainian Gas Crisis of January 2006", Oxford Institute for Energy

Studies, 16 January 2006, http://www.oxfordenergy.org/pdfs/comment_0106.pdf

43 Eurasianet.org, "Russian Ties with Azerbaijan Reach New Lows," 25 January 2007, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012507.shtml>

view itself as a part of what they perceive to be a reviving, great, powerful and influential in international affairs Russia.

This connection is especially strong with the people that do not speak any other language except Russian. The language barrier does not allow them the access to alternative sources of information except those in Russian language. As a result they are getting a one-sided view of the ongoing events in an informational space completely dominated by Russian government-controlled media outlets. While generally this is not so prominent in all former Soviet republics, it is a key feature in the separatist regions of Georgia and especially Moldova. The self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria are using their security services to block the distribution in Transnistrian region of the printed media from the right bank, employing Soviet-type military equipment to jam any electronic media transmissions of Chisinau to the left bank area, or prohibiting local cable television operators to accept TV channels from the right bank of Dniester⁴⁴.

At the same time the bulk of the population in the post-Soviet space is still receiving news from the electronic media. New media is more popular among younger generation and the population employed in the cities, in the public sector and among better paid segments of the private sector. However even in the Internet the Russian sources are preferred both because of the language issue and since they offer a very active and detailed coverage of the events in the whole post-Soviet space. While Western media provides coverage of the area tailored for the Western public, the Russian government-controlled media provide news for the local audience, through its numerous local bureaus and offices, employing a number of local correspondents. Therefore Russian news often better resonates with the local audiences than do the Western-produced news, being crafted

44 Last year the Moldovan Communist Party-controlled NIT TV Channel was allowed by Tiraspol authorities to be present for a short time in Transnistria, through cable television.

through using complex political technologies⁴⁵, and by considering local political culture, which by and large is derived and built upon the shared Soviet cultural heritage.

To sum everything up, the effectiveness of Russia in putting pressure and influencing the policy choices of Moldova (less of Ukraine and Georgia), derives from the Chisinau's systemic dependence on Russia. While researchers often compare the overall level of foreign trade with either Russia or Western countries, attempting to assess the economic dependence factors, this is not exactly an accurate method. To make a parallel with the interdependency description of Keohane and Nye, the effects of transactions on a dependence relation will vary based on the constraints or costs associated with them⁴⁶. And while Moldova can survive without certain products or transactions coming from the West, it will confront extremely high economic and political costs if the flow of natural gas during winter is stopped. Beyond this, there are a number of shady mechanisms used by Russian elites to exercise control over Moldovan, Ukrainian and Georgian national elites, which will be explored more in detail in a separate section on indirect aggression.

The opponents may argue that European Union has also launched a number of mechanisms in order to increase its stance in the three countries under scrutiny. Among those Moldova is benefiting from the European Neighborhood Policy⁴⁷

45 For an excellent account of the political technologies employed by Russian elites to manipulate and shape public opinion see Andrew Wilson, *'Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World,'* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 2005). Even though the author refers in his book to those technologies as mostly used for electoral purposes, they are used also routinely by the Kremlin-controlled media outlets to promote official viewpoints, or to discredit Kremlin's opponents, at home and abroad.

46 Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *'Power and Interdependence,'* (Longman, 2000, 3rd Ed.), p.8

47 For details on ENP see the European Commission web-page at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

agreement, preferential trade agreements (GSP Plus and Autonomous Trade Preferences), and the Visa Facilitation agreement. However, these are all relatively new mechanisms, which did not reach even close a level able to offset the Russian influence in these areas. The second problem is that they are either too broad, including even Mediterranean countries (ENP)⁴⁸; the trade agreements pose a number of requirements, which will take a while for the local business communities to conform with them, and even longer to find new markets; while the visa agreement likewise others, has a number of flaws, that diminish its possible positive effects.

Further, EU does not seem to have an efficient mechanism to assess and offer feedback on its programs targeted at the post-Soviet countries. The intentions behind these initiatives are good, while the results are not getting even close to what it is expected. A telling example in this regard is a January 2008 article written by Igor Boțan, the executive director of the Moldovan think tank 'Adept'. He then expressed his embarrassment with the way the Common Visa Application Center in Moldova functioned and with its excessive, sometime even humiliating procedures⁴⁹. While this may not be anymore the case, it however provides an example of the shortcomings of EU initiatives at their incipient stages.

In the same line, the Eastern Partnership initiative launched recently by the European Union in Prague, Czech Republic, creates the impression that EU started to pay bigger attention towards some post-Soviet countries. Nevertheless that program currently exists only on paper, and would be able to show an impact not earlier than few years from now, and only if efficiently

managed. Also, the amount of funds provided to the six countries in the framework of that initiative is rather symbolic. There is a feeling that the project was launched by inertia, following the joint proposal of Poland and Sweden, while being accepted in Brussels more out of solidarity and because of the conjuncture, which was favorable to the proposal at that moment. In fact, the project is already suffering from a lack of enthusiasm showed by certain influential EU members. These pessimistic trends were well captured by the European press.⁵⁰

Finally it is mostly the elites who are able to use the facilitations that EU is offering Moldova and other countries. This does not impact significantly the existing regionalism factor, because ordinary people have the easy choice of a bird in the hand or the two in the bush. They either accept the petty benefits offered by Russia, however trappous they seem to be, or have to refuse them and try to live with the yet impalpable benefits promised by EU. The next section will look into the case of Moldova, providing further details into its transition process, its vulnerabilities and the factors that facilitate the influence of Russia on Chisinau policy options.

48 This may have been solved by the launching of the "Eastern Partnership" project, however at this incipient stage of the initiative it is premature to draw any conclusions.

49 Igor Boțan, 'Visa Facilitation Agreement: Beer for Members of Trade Unions Only?!', *Association for Participatory Democracy 'Adept'*, 30 January 2008, <http://www.e-democracy.md/en/comments/political/20080130>

50 See the Euro|topics Press Review, "New Friends to the East," 6 May 2009, http://www.eurotopics.net/en/presseschau/archiv/archiv_results/archiv_article/DOSSIER49929-New-friends-to-the-east

THE CASE OF MOLDOVA

The Essence of Post-Soviet Transition

Since the study focuses mostly on the indirect aggression techniques that Russia uses in the post-Soviet space, the country specifics are less important. The tools and techniques used by Russia to influence the democratic transition in Moldova are very much similar to those used against Ukraine and Georgia. Moldova's model of post-Soviet transition is a rather representative case in this regard, as it fits the analytic model of a country that has voiced the political will to integrate with the West, and at the same time is one of the countries most vulnerable to the Russian pressure. Among the three countries mentioned in this study, Moldova seems to be the most vulnerable one, allowing for a very complete overview of the indirect aggression tools that Russian Federation employs against its former satellites.

The study will not hold the primacy in insisting that CIS states in fact did not underwent democratic transition per se. And by this I do not only suggest there was no visible result of the process. The three-step development, which is usually associated with democratization and which includes the liberalization of authoritarian regimes, transition through multiparty elections, and consolidation through the strengthening of the of democratic institutions and culture⁵¹ in fact did not really take place in the CIS countries, if exposed to a bigger scrutiny. Considering the opinion that transition is an open avenue, and an ongoing process that can suffer both progress and regress, there is still an implication that in the start it has to be present a certain will, a request, or if one wishes a realization on the part of the population that certain reforms

should take place. It has to be emphasized, that in order for the transition to start, and successfully progress, there has to be a pressure on the elites coming from the ordinary people, which gives the former the impetus to promote democratic reforms. In case there is no push from the bottom, while the elites do not feel the urge to promote changes, they will feel less tension to move forward and upset the status quo, which they usually are inclined to preserve. This trend to resist changes is especially prominent when the old elites remain in power, and they keep the strong connections with the Communist past. Earlier in the text, in the section on regionalism and interdependence this was pointed to as a process taking place in the CIS countries.

Therefore, the study claims that in Moldova the transition process did not pass even the first stage, which supposes the liberalization of the authoritarian regime. What has happened in Moldova is that the country has switched from a totalitarian to a more lenient authoritarian system, which encountered sporadic, inconsistent and non-sustained patterns of relatively pluralist elections. These were possible because the competition was between few segments of the old Communist elites relatively equal in power, which made efforts to manipulate the elections in their own ways. And when one segment of these elites upset the balance of power in 2001, it consolidated the authoritarian character of the system, making the democratic reverse obvious, and hindering any possible development and consolidation of democratic institutions in state.

The post-Soviet states were created on the ashes of the disintegrating Soviet Union. While in other countries in Central Europe their transition was based on these countries shaking off their communist systems, this was not the case in the post-Soviet

51 Charles Krupnick, 'Expecting More From Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe,' *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Summer/Fall 2005, p. 150

newly emerged states⁵². The collapse of the USSR was due to nationalistic waves in the former Union's republics, and the revolt over what was perceived as a humiliating exploitation by Russia. It was directed not at the communist system but at Russians. However even this nationalism was not a deeply rooted feeling, but instead a temporary mental obsession instigated, sustained and directed by the local Popular Front movements and party elites. The fronts themselves were created in the Union republics in the late 1980s with the purpose of sustaining the perestroika policy of Mikhail Gorbachev, according to the former Secretary of the Communist Party of the Latvian SSR Boris Pugo⁵³. Gradually the local party nomenklatura exploited and directed the nationalist movements to get popular support against the central authorities in Moscow. This in fact led to the collapse of the empire due to the rebellion of the local, republics' party elites against the central party functionaries. In due time the nationalism feelings have faded away, retained only in soft forms, and mostly among the marginal radicals. In Moldova, already starting mid 1990s, nationalists

52 Baltic States were a different case, both because to a significant extent they did replace their communist elites, due to their historic experience, which again was different from these of other Soviet republics. Even during the Soviet Union they were always considered as a separate case, preserving a flavor of Western culture, based on their dissimilar regionalism experience. Also after the collapse of the Soviet Union they were the only post-Soviet states to get such an organized and intense support from the western states, especially from the Nordic ones. This support sustained the efforts of the non-communist elites to promote a democratic transition.

53 Several different online sources claimed that according to the Latvian newspaper "Telegraph", Boris Pugo stated that the Latvian Popular Front was created "to strengthen perestroika in Latvia". See Kompromat.lv, 'KGB wearing smoking the Daugavpils-way' [KGB v smokinge po-daugavpilsiski], 25 November 2004, <http://www.kompromat.lv/index.php?docid=readn&id=1353> and D.Minzarari, S. Niculin and V. Solovyov, 'The Role of the Russian Federation in the Transnistrian Conflict. Part I: The Decline of URSS and the Soviet leadership conspiracy' [Roli Rossiiskoi Federatii v Uregulirovanii Pridnestrovskogo Konflikt. Chasti Pervaya: Upadok SSSR i Zagovor Tsentra], Eurasianhome.org, 4 April 2007, <http://www.eurasianhome.org/xml/t/expert.xml?lang=en&nic=expert&pid=1031> (in Russian).

have never got over 9% of votes in national general elections.

To explain the transition process, many researchers give preference to the elite-centric theories, albeit placing the elites as drivers of transition changes. Provided our cases when old, local communist elites remained in power, and did not experience strong pressure from the bottom to promote transition, they preferred to keep the status quo. On the other side, the balance of domestic power was to a degree or another in their favor, comparing to possible competitors, so they had to make only little compromises with their internal challengers. This resulted in mostly autocratic, or when the pressure of challengers was more significant, in unconsolidated, unstable regimes⁵⁴, which different scholars labeled differently: 'partial democracies', 'proto-democracies', 'illiberal democracies'⁵⁵, 'feckless democracies', 'façade democracies', or most recently 'democracy's doubles' and 'directed democracies'⁵⁶, but which in fact had little in common with a democracy.

Just let us look at some facts. It was Mircea Snegur who stayed in power in Moldova after the collapse of USSR. Until 1989 he used to be the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CC CP) in Moldova, and then Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Moldova, before becoming the first Moldovan president⁵⁷.

He was replaced as president of Moldova in 1996 by Petru Lucinschi, who worked first in the CC CP in Tajikistan, returning to Moldova

54 Michael McFaul 1963-, 'The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World,' *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (January 2002), pp. 212-244.

55 Fareed Zakaria, 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracies,' *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1997, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19971101faessay3809/fareed-zakaria/the-rise-of-illiberal-democracy.html>

56 Ivan Krastev, 'Democracy's "Doubles",' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, No. 2, April 2006, pp. 52-62

57 That made him until 1989 the party leader of Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic. For more details see Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_Snegur.

in 1989 to become the Secretary of CC CP of Moldova, and then he left for Moscow in 1991, spending the last years of the USSR working in the Communist Party Central Committee of the Soviet Union⁵⁸.

Lucinschi was replaced as president of Moldova by Vladimir Voronin, who during the last years of the Soviet Union was the Minister of Interior of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, and then in 1991 he graduated from the Academy of the Ministry of Interior of the Soviet Union. Shortly after this, in 1993, Voronin became the co-president of the Organizational Committee aiming the creation of the Communists Party of already independent Republic of Moldova (CPRM). Then, in 1994, he was elected as the Secretary of CPRM, and already in 1998 he became a Member of Parliament⁵⁹. Vladimir Voronin was elected president of Moldova in 2001, after Lucinschi dissolved the Parliament, and then reelected in 2005.

Very similar development was witnessed in Ukraine where Leonid Kravciuk, a member of the Ukrainian Politburo was in 1994 replaced by Leonid Kuchma, who was also a high placed functionary in the structure of the Communist Party, and served two terms as president. In Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, an ex-Minister of Interior of Georgia, ex-Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, he joined the Georgian politics in 1992 to become Georgia's president in 1995, and afterwards stayed two terms in power as president.

Besides this, returning to Moldovan case, it is very telling that a party bearing the label of "communist" won 40 out of 101 seats in the Moldovan Parliament in 1998, shortly after it was created, and then again received 71 out of 101 seats in 2001.

Discrediting Liberal Values

The little importance that the West placed on

58 See for details Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petru_Lucinschi

59 See Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Voronin

Moldova and its conflict in the eastern part of the country, which on the top of it involves strategic Russian interests, did not allow for a stronger involvement of the Western actors. The lack of it prevented the creation of a stronger impetus for its democratic transition process, like it happened in the Baltic States. The trend continues to a considerable extent today. Moldova is benefiting of significantly less attention from the West, comparing to Ukraine and Georgia. This happens both on the policy level and at the level of perceptions among the Western public, which is influenced by local media. When in January 2006 Russia has completely cut off the natural gas supply consecutively to Ukraine and Moldova, the latter got much less attention both in the Western media, and in the policy dialogs. Obviously this is because of certain objective reasons, like the fact that the gas cut off to Ukraine has affected some eastern EU members, since the pressure in their pipes dropped. However, there are also many subjective factors that underline the fact that Moldova is considerably lower on the list in the foreign policy agenda of the United States and the European Union. Moldova in their view is less important, since it is smaller in territory than Ukraine, and does not play a similar strategic role in its region that Georgia plays in the Caucasus. At the end of the day it is this judgment that shapes the foreign policy of the Western countries towards Moldova.

However Chisinau gets more attention from Moscow, where a certain segment of the Russian political elite believes Moldova is a pivotal state⁶⁰ in the quest towards preserving its influence in the western part of CIS. The idea goes that if Russia loses Moldova, then it will steadily lose its ability to influence Ukraine. The Russian policy-makers believe that Moldova has a key position for projecting power further in the South-Eastern

60 The concept of pivotal states can be traced to the British geographer Sir Halford Mackinder. It generally explains a country that due to different factors, temporary or permanent, is able to "determine the fate of the region but also affect international stability" – see Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill, Paul Kennedy, 'Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy,' *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 1996), Volume 75, No. 1, p. 33

Europe and Balkans⁶¹, which supposedly will mount additional pressure on the West, forcing it to withdraw from the CIS. It is perceived also as strategically well placed territory for mounting pressure on Ukraine, because it naturally extends the belt of pro-Russian areas that surround Ukraine, starting in the east at the border with Russia, going further south, enfolding Ukraine in Crimea, and moving then to the west to the Odessa region. In the views of Russian strategists Transnistria is a cultural-geographic continuation of this strip of pro-Russian areas. Similarly, the Transnistria region of Moldova, which is under the Kremlin's control, may be used to export pro-Russian and separatists tendencies into the neighboring regions of Ukraine, which as a matter of fact seem to feel less attachment to Kiev.

These perceptions are at least partially shared by many Ukrainian politicians, who perceive Transnistria as an existent danger to Ukraine, due to its high spill-over potential. It is difficult to assess the dangers posed to Ukraine by a Moldova that underwent "transnistrianization", meaning it became a Russian satellite. But one should not forget the centuries' quest of Russia to obtain access to the Black Sea, which today is left fully to the Ukrainian mercy. And Kiev is increasingly hinting it is not going to extend the agreement on the stationing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which will expire in 2017. Having very little doubt that Russia will not give up its military presence in the Black Sea; considering the almost half-by-half division of Ukraine on political and cultural lines - it should be expected that Moldova as a satellite of Russia may fit well into that equation drawn by Russian strategists. Russia will become more active in forcing Ukraine to allow the continuous stay of its fleet in the Black Sea.

The form and extent of these efforts should be assessed in a comparative perspective

61 Interview with the Russian General-Colonel Leonid Ivashov, contributing to the third, final article (in Russian) of the series *'The Role of the Russian Federation in Transnistrian Conflict'*, Eurasianhome.org, 11 May 2007, <http://www.eurasianhome.org/xml/t/expert.xml?lang=ru&nic=expert&pid=1077>

with the events preceding the August 2008 war with Georgia. Then, Russian fighter shot down a Georgian UAV over the Abkhazia, Russian military railway engineers were deployed to Abkhazia, Russians for the first time acknowledged their ground attack aircraft have violated the Georgian airspace, - which all culminated with the short war between Moscow and Tbilisi.

In fact Transnistria has already been successfully used in this game when "Proryv"⁶², a Kremlin-funded youth organization created initially in the eastern secessionist region of Moldova, had opened its branch in Ukraine's Crimea. "Proryv" was very active in promoting the idea of Transnistrian separatism as well as the Russian nationalist ideas.

Russian increasingly aggressive foreign policy in post-Soviet area developed in response to what Kremlin elites perceived as a more active involvement of the West in the CIS countries. If before this they preferred to keep the status quo, where former satellites were more or less vulnerable to Moscow's foreign pressure, Russian leadership became afraid that Western involvement may offset this state of affairs, increasing the ability of ex-USSR countries to make independent choices. This resulted in what may be assessed as a mounting confrontation for influence in post-Soviet states between Russia and the West. The key to the success or failure in this process will be the degree of involvement and interest of the parts. At the moment Russia seems by far more interested and involved than are the United States and European Union.

62 'Proryv' [*Breakthrough*], is a youth organization created in Transnistria by secessionist authorities, with support from Moscow, aiming the promotion of pro-Russian ideas among the youth, and the prevention of a "colored" revolution in the region. Modest Kolerov, who was the head of the Department for intraregional and cultural relations with foreign countries [*Upravlenie prezidenta RF po mejregionalnym i kuliturnym sveazyam s zarubejnymi stranami*] of the Russian Presidential Administration was in charge of supporting (including financially) such organizations in the ex-Soviet republics.

From the perspective of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia the regional sub-system they are part of is increasingly showing bi-polar confrontation features. While they generally perceive the West as a benign force, they see Russia as a more unfriendly, if not even hostile country, mainly due to its support to the secessionist tendencies on their territories.

On one side there is Russia, with what seems to be a developing resurrounding stance, aiming at increasing its influence in international affairs by regaining control over its former satellites. On the other side there is the United States and European Union, with different interests and priorities in the CIS. US interests look to be of a more long-term nature, expressed in attempts to restrain any strategic advantages that Russia main gain by controlling Ukraine and Caucasus. The EU on the other side seems to be more interested in securing a stable neighborhood, while tolerating a degree of Russian control over the countries at its eastern borders, as long as it does not upset the status quo. EU is limited by institutional constraints, expressed in the interest of some EU members to maintain a lucrative relation with Russia, which plays a key role in supplying them with energy resources. This explains in realism terms why some countries benefited of stronger support from the West than Moldova did.

Moldova Forced to Bandwagon

Moldovan policymakers have already faced a number of disappointments in this regard, when over the last several years they repeatedly failed to obtain the expected political support from the western partners. This was especially visible on the subject of Transnistrian conflict, during natural gas and energy cut offs, and during the high pick of conflict with Russia when it banned the import of Moldovan wines and other agricultural products.

Those and many other instances have discouraged Moldovan leaders, undermined

their hope and belief that the West is willing to help them in resisting the Russian pressures, and forced them to look for different ways of solving their problems with Moscow. Partly, the reduced Western support may be explained by their lack of understanding of the West, the insufficient communication and certain domestic constraints of systemic nature, like Communist Party's opposition to the creation of an institutional balance in Moldova⁶³. Apart from the fact that Moldova is not perceived as an important country for the western interests, local analysts believe also that EU tried to distance itself from most sensitive areas of the Moldovan-Russian relations because it was afraid Chisinau may try to use buck-passing⁶⁴ or free-riding in its regard.

As a result these had a tremendous impact on the way Moldova has built its foreign policy during the last few years. A major switch in Moldova's foreign policy happened during the late 2005 yearly 2006 period. The trend became rather obvious only in the fall 2007, after the general local elections in Moldova. However many Western partners failed to understand this was happening, and that Moldova was returning into the orbit of Russia.

Because the expectations of Western support did not match the actual support re-

63 For a detailed account see Dumitru Minzarari, 'EU-Moldova Action Plan: An Unfinished Task or a Complete Failure,' *Discussion Paper no. 2*, Institute for Development and Social Initiatives, January-July 2008, http://www.pasos.org/content/download/40268/158643/file/DP2_EU-Moldova_Action_Plan.pdf.

64 In the text I use the definition of buck-passing, as the means of avoiding the costs of resisting an aggressor, passing the burden to another state. See Glen H. Snyder, 'Mearsheimer's World-Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security: A Review Essay,' *International Security*, Vol. 27, No.1, (Summer 2002), pp. 165

ceived⁶⁵, Moldovan policymakers begin to look for other strategies to defend what they perceived to be the national interest. As it often happens in corrupt transition societies, these were tightly intertwined with the elite's own personal interests. Ukraine and especially Georgia were able to balance Russia's influence in many instances, being supported by the West to oppose the perceived source of danger from the east and north respectively. Yet Moldova, lacking the appropriate stronger ally that would allow her to balance Russia, was left only with the option to bandwagon, meaning to ally with the state that posed the major threat⁶⁶. Putting it in a simpler way, Moldova being too weak to oppose external influence, it bent under the strongest pressure, with its policymakers following the path of the least resistance. When the cost and benefit effects of the Russian pressure became significantly bigger than those coming from the European Union or the United States, Moldova (and other post-Soviet countries likewise) will choose courses of action that will benefit the foreign actor perceived as being the most powerful. Or, Moldova will bend against the

65 On 28 June 2007, shortly after the general local elections in which his Communists' Party has suffered a painful blow, president Vladimir Voronin in an unprecedented move invited foreign diplomats stationed in Moldova to his residence in Condrita. His words when he addressed his guests carried a bitter taste of disappointment; he stated that the Western partners did not provide enough support to Moldova when it was facing Russia alone, implying indirectly that their financial support was not sufficient. He also cast doubts whether the Western interest in the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Transnistria was genuine, claiming the West used the issue of military withdrawal only to annoy Russia. Spelled to an audience where the Russian ambassador was also present, Vladimir Voronin revealed his irritation at the fact that Western election observers criticized the way his PCRM party misused its position in power. It seemed his circle hoped the West will be soft on Voronin for the incumbent party elections violations if his government adopted an anti-Russian stance. This instance was assessed by domestic observers as a possible sign of a change in Chisinau foreign affairs priorities and as an attempt by Vladimir Voronin to accommodate Russia two days before his meeting with the Russian president Putin.

66 For a more detailed account on balancing and bandwagoning strategies see Stephen M. Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,' *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (Spring, 1985), pp. 3-43

Russian pressure and will subordinate itself to Moscow in case the West will fail to create a counter-pressure, capable to assist Moldova's political leadership in preserving a relative independence towards Kremlin.

Experiencing the growing Russia's influence during 2006-2007, which affected both their individual economic interests, but also their basis of political power⁶⁷, Moldovan elites were faced with the choice of paying an extremely high political and economic price for balancing Russia. Since neither US nor EU showed readiness to ease this pressure by accepting Moldova to pass them partially or completely the costs of balancing Moscow, political leadership in Chisinau had no choice but to bandwagon with Russia. In return they tried very hard to negotiate a suitable price in exchange for giving up their pro-Western stance, aiming at compensating potential losses and achieving cost minimization. This became obvious after the Moldovan local elections in summer 2007, when Chisinau improved and intensified its relations with Moscow.

In this particular case an additional factor could have been the perceptions of Moldovan elites, who felt more vulnerable when their key, survival interests were at stake. The local elections in the summer of 2007 have shown that Voronin's Communist Party was losing in popular support. At the same time their excessive use of administrative resources and voters' intimidation methods⁶⁸, aimed at compensating for these losses were criticized by the western observ-

67 To put pressure on Moldova, Russia has employed a number of tools, directed both at affecting the masses of people (cutting off the natural gas supplies), and at the elites' interests (banning the import of wines and other agricultural products, which mostly belonged to elites, or businesses close to the elites). The risk of balancing Russia increased in summer 2007, when after suffering a serious blow in the general local elections, the Communists' Party of Voronin has decided to re-employ a pro-Russian stance, which is expected to improve their position in the forthcoming parliamentary elections in spring 2009.

68 Final Report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission for the 3-17 June 2007 local elections in Moldova, 21 September 2007, http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/26372_mo.pdf.

ers. In response Moldovan communists have changed their strategy. The 2007 elections became the warning signal that they may not be able to retain a majority in the Parliament after the next elections, a condition necessary to safeguard their economic interests in Moldova.

They feared a new political architecture will challenge the status quo, provoking a redistribution of economic control and benefits, similar to what have happened in Russia during Putin's rule, in Georgia after the "rose revolution", and in Ukraine after the "orange revolution". Moldovan communists have invested big hopes that Russia might accept returning Transnistria back under the control of Chisinau and secure them the support of that pro-Russian enclave in the April 2009 parliamentary elections. In return the incumbent communist party offered to create constitutional mechanisms that would provide Russia with convincing guarantees preventing any possible attempts of Moldova to join NATO in the long run. They also promised to gradually withdraw from any Western-sponsored initiatives and in a March interview to the Russian influential "Kommersant" magazine, Moldovan president even accepted that his country may leave GUAM⁶⁹.

This new wave seemed to have met certain support among the Russian policymakers and experts. Already at the end of March 2008, the Russian State Duma adopted a declaration on the secessionist regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. While using a strong language against Georgia and threatened with the recognition of independence of its rebel regions, it mentioned that the Transnistrian negotiations format still has significant potential.

These were not the only signals suggesting that Moscow might be interested in this kind of deal with Moldovan communists. It used media outlets and low-level functionaries to throw hints and express its position on that subject. One was launched by Grigory Mar-

69 Kommersant, 'My s Vladimirom Putinyim Davno Potereali Vkus k Sobstvennym Hotelkam,' 11 March 2008, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=865338>

akuta, the ex-speaker of the Supreme Soviet of the unrecognized Transnistria, exiled to Moscow by the Tiraspol leader Smirnov, who seconded him as the General Secretary of the Kremlin-sponsored "Interparliamentary Assembly of Unrecognized States".⁷⁰ In an April 2008 interview to the Russian "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" Marakuta stated that "Russia is interested in maintaining its geopolitical influence over the whole Moldova and not only over Transnistria"⁷¹. Even the most radical Russian experts started to cherish the idea that a solution to the Transnistrian conflict that would strongly anchor Moldova into the Russian orbit is very much supportive of the Russia's interests. Ghennadyi Konenko, who is in charge of the Moldova and Transnistria Department at the Institute for CIS Countries, has also recently expressed a very similar view. His opinion was that returning Transnistria under the control of Chisinau, while respecting specific conditions, will make the secessionist region into a sort of a filter, which will prevent Moldova from entering NATO. Konenko's conclusion was that such a solution would promote well the interests of Russian Federation⁷².

The political system erected by the incumbent Communist Party in Moldova had a direct contributing effect to the high degree of country's vulnerability against the Russian influence. Even though formally Moldova has a parliamentary form of government, in practice

70 This structure has its office in Moscow, reportedly is Kremlin-financed and regularly assists at the meetings of the Russian State Duma.

71 Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 'Russia Needs the Whole Moldova, not only Transnistria: Moscow is Looking for a Universal Model to Extend its Geopolitical Influence' [*Rossii nujna vsya Moldova, a ne toliko Pridnestrovyie: Moskva ishet universalinuju modeli dlea rasshireniya svoego geopoliticeskogo vliyania*], 28 April 2008, http://www.ng.ru/courier/2008-04-28/15_moldavia.html

72 KM.RU, 'Why Russia Doesn't Want to Recognize the Independence of Transnistria?' [*Pochemu Rossiya ne Hocet Priznavati Nezavisimosti Pridnestrovyia?*], 3 June 2008, <http://opinion.km.ru/opinion/index.asp?data=03.06.2008%2018:40:00&archive=on> (audio file of the interview included). The Institute for the CIS Countries is a non-governmental think tank organization lead by Konstantin Zatulin, very notorious for his radical, revisionist opinions, advocating the idea that Russia can become a great power by using coercion, in different forms, against its former satellites.

it experienced during the 2001-2009 period of the Communist government a presidential one, with all resulting explicit and implicit consequences. The Communist Party had a legislative majority in the Parliament and was able alone to pass any law, except the constitutional ones. That is why its double hatted chairman and President Vladimir Voronin governed Moldova as if it would have had a presidential system of government.

During his two terms in power Vladimir Voronin has dismantled every sign of institutional balance that was in place before him, resulting in all three branches of state power coming under his control. The outcome of this is that now any of his personal political weaknesses or the vulnerabilities of his group will automatically become a vulnerability of the entire nation.

Given his personal and his associates' past dependencies related to their Soviet-time activities, which I referred to earlier in the text, they do attract pressure from Kremlin, which has ownership of the old KGB archives. A second factor, contributing to the Voronin's team vulnerability is their individual and group economic interests. Biggest and most lucrative businesses are directly or indirectly under their or their supporters' control. And given the regionalism trend discussed earlier, these businesses are in a way or another linked to Russia.

When Vladimir Putin came into power, one of his first steps was to build and strengthen the Russian state's control over the business sector, which now gave Kremlin the power to influence foreign companies and interests that have stakes in the Russian business sector. The ban on the import of Moldovan wines and agricultural products was less directed at the Moldovan people, than at the local elites, which had their share of interest affected.

Critics may attempt to point to what they perceive as internal factors that describe Moldovan vulnerabilities to foreign pressure. However, I would like to refer to Peter Gourevitch in answering that 'in using domestic

structure as a variable in explaining foreign policy... we must explore the extent to which that structure itself derives from the exigencies of the international system'.⁷³ On one side it may seem that the Russian pressure is so effective on Moldova because it has a presidential system of government, which lacking institutional checks and balances becomes increasingly authoritative. On the other side, I would like to point out to what Almond refers to as Seeley-Hintze law. It states that the higher the outside foreign pressure on a state, the less is the liberty of domestic political system.

The Seeley's conclusion that 'given a community which has to maintain itself against great difficulties and in the midst of great dangers, you may expect to find in it little liberty and a great deal of government', was tested by Hintze, based on historic evidence analysis. The latter wrote that '...free constitutions emerged only where a number of states existed next to each other on equal terms, the independence of each one being recognized by the other...' ⁷⁴. Nevertheless, at one point Almond questions the utility of the Seeley-Hintze formulation in every single case⁷⁵, indicating certain deviations from the framework of the law:

The contending powers have ideologies which direct the kind of influence which they exert on the internal affairs of other powers. Thus the pressure of the Soviet Union on Eastern Europe has tended to perpetuate internal power concentration, but the counter-pressure generated within these countries is pluralistic. American external pressure on

73 Peter Gourevitch, 'The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,' *International Organization*, Vol. 32, No. 4, (Autumn, 1978), p. 882 quoted in Gabriel A. Almond, 'The International-National Connection,' *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (April 1989), p. 241

74 John Robert Seeley, *Introduction to Political Science*, (London: Macmillan, 1886), p. 131; and Otto Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 164 quoted in G. Almond, 'The International-National Connection', p. 242

75 Almond, Gabriel A., 'The International-National Connection,' *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 19, No. 2, (April, 1989), p.245

other countries is often pluralistic in its internal consequences.

However, what we could derive out of this is the conclusion that the nature of the foreign pressure has a very determining influence on the type of regime that may emerge on domestic arena. And what confirms my assumption is the conclusion that an authoritarian regime's pressure from outside contributes to the consolidation of an authoritarian government inside the country, exposed to this external influence. A benign foreign influence creates conditions favorable to the transition to a more liberal regime. This formulation also follows the logic of the well-known democratic peace theory.

The Almond's hesitations do not affect the above statement either. The potential of the pluralistic counter-pressure generated inside the country (in response to the authoritarian pressure from the outside) to produce a more liberal regime will be inversely proportional with the force and intensity of the foreign authoritarian pressure. Which means, the bigger the pressure from a foreign authoritarian country is, the weaker becomes the pluralistic movement inside the targeted country. It is so because 'the presence of external security threats to states can inhibit and erode moves toward democracy. Democracy can suffer setbacks during security crises because leaders will often consolidate their own power to mobilize resources to meet (or make) external threats.'⁷⁶

As such, authoritarian regimes will strengthen their grip on power by exploiting the security fears of the population and then sidelining their domestic competitors. That will consequently oppress and dismantle pluralistic processes in the country. And while there are voices questioning this hypothesis, insisting governments have different ways to cope with foreign threats, this still seem to be exactly the case when weaker states face

a regional or great power, and have limited or no ability to pass the buck. Thus, this model reflects well the realities of the situation in which Moldova was caught, while the presented ideas offer a powerful explanatory force for understanding the post-Soviet transition of Moldova. The recent events unfolded after April 2009 parliamentary elections, which included the anti-communists youth protests and the violent crackdown by police and security forces on the demonstrators, are also better understood using that framework of analysis.

Therefore, while we do not have a significant volume of empirical evidence, these ideas are working at least in the cases of the three countries we refer to in the paper. We could observe that after the "colored" revolutions in the post-Soviet space, when the Putin's administration pressure on the three states increased, we could witness a significant increase of authoritarianism, especially in case of Moldova. A somewhat similar trend is starting to be visible in Georgia⁷⁷, while Ukraine has faced considerable democratic backslide and domestic tensions since its "orange" revolution.

We are able to conclude at this stage that a negative, aggressive foreign influence is more promoting of authoritarian regimes. Because of their nature, such regimes are easier to manipulate and control from the outside. Since there is one force dominating the national political system, without being constrained by other internal actors, such a regime even attracts and encourages foreign pressure. Building the mechanism to control the leadership of a weak, authoritarian country gives one the ability to control the entire system of the state. This seems to be the main goal of the Russian foreign policy in post-Soviet area, represented by Moscow's efforts to maintain and support authoritarian governments in CIS.

76 William R. Thompson, 'Democracy and Peace: Putting the Cart Before the Horse?' *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Winter, 1996), pp. 141-174 quoted in Jon C. Pevehouse, 'Democracy from the Outside-In?'

77 The last two elections in Georgia (presidential in January 2008 and parliamentary in May 2008) have shown a sharp increase in authoritarian practices being used by president Saakashvili-led incumbent United National Movement Party. For details see the ODIHR/OSCE EOM final reports.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL AGGRESSION

Switching to Non-Military Aggression

The nature of international conflict has suffered significant changes since the end of the Cold War. While for the most part of the human history war was considered an acceptable tool of foreign policy, today this perception has underwent certain changes. Due to the spread of liberal democratic ideology, embraced by the most industrially developed countries that act as its influential agents, the international public opinion is intolerant and increasingly condemning of any use of military force by the governments as an instrument of coercion. And disregarding this change may significantly affect the international prestige of a country, which together with other elements like wealth and power creates the capacity of a state to influence international affairs. As Gareth Evans has put it:

[T]he patterns of global conflict are different from those of the past. Traditional interstate war is now conspicuously rare, for a number of reasons. First, in sharp contrast to the values of the colonial era, there is now a strong global norm underpinning the international legal proscription against territorial aggression; bellicisme, the ideology that saw virtue, nobility, and glory in war, has virtually disappeared in the advanced industrialized countries.⁷⁸

Prestige is especially important for a country that strives for the role of an international influential leader. It was always a top priority even for the Soviet leadership to build up their country's prestige and

discredit the United States in their ideological confrontation with the West. Then the Soviet propaganda used to largely criticize the 'aggressiveness of the world capitalism' in its competition with the US over the global influence.

Prestige also is a very important issue for today's Russia political establishment⁷⁹, and so is the international public opinion. The latter is perceived by researchers and policymakers alike to be the "arbiter of the history", and a "measure as well as a source of power".⁸⁰ It is of no surprise then, that these are powerful incentives for a reviving and assertive Russia.

However, there exists a strong belief of an obsessive force among political establishment in Russia that their country cannot get back on its feet as a powerful player in international affairs, able to balance the United States as an equal, if it does not control its "Near Abroad". Hinting to ex-Soviet republics, now independent states, that conviction grows on the strategic culture shared by the Russian leadership in Kremlin.

It is based on the Soviet strategic culture, which determined the ways in which the Soviet leadership, including its security and military apparatus viewed international af-

79 For example Russian analysts describe the incidents at Abu Ghraib U.S. military prison as carrying "serious strategic consequences": Harlan Alman, 'The War, the World, and the Future' [Voyna, mir i budushee], *Eksport Voorujenii*, Russian Center for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, No. 5 (September-October 2004), <http://www.cast.ru/journal/2004/alman/>

80 Alan K. Henrikson, 'Discussion Paper in Diplomacy: What Can Public Diplomacy Achieve?' Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' 2006, p. 4

78 Gareth Evans, "Cooperative Security and Intrastate Conflict", *Foreign Policy*, No. 96, (Fall, 1994), p. 3

fairs and the use of military forces. There are other factors contributing to this idea, such as the “deep defense” tradition⁸¹ or the will to recover the Soviet-time economic structure. The former is due to the historic experience of Russia, having huge land borders that it had to defend, and as a result the tendency to build large buffer spaces between itself and the potential enemy has emerged.

While there still remains some skepticism among Russian-accommodators in Europe around the idea that Russia has the obsession of controlling its former Soviet satellites, there is also an increasing understanding of this fact in the West. This is not questioned or perceived anymore as an overreaction and paranoia on the side of the East-European countries, whose fear of Russia was until very recent seen as lacking any ground. In his 2004 refreshing book, Janusz Bugajski wrote in the introduction headline the revealing phrase: ‘near or temporary abroad?’, - stating that ‘during the 1990s, the Kremlin sought to regain much of its influence and leverage and to limit Western penetration in the region.’⁸² In a last year publication even the usually Russian apologist Michael Emerson admitted the ‘Russia’s bullying foreign policy towards its smaller neighbors’, and that “Russia manifestly sees its national interest in sustaining tensions over Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia”.⁸³

Moscow wants to strengthen its control over the CIS countries but at the same time its political leadership is aversely against openly using military force to achieve this goal. It wants to avoid international condemnation or jeopardizing its quest for the title of international leader. Therefore it mainly uses non-military

means, which were crafted and meant to reach an unimaginable level of sophistication and subtlety for the western public. Kremlin has inherited the significant experience and methodology that Soviet Union has acquired during the proxy-wars with its Cold War competitor. Russian elites benefit from the lack of any kind of domestic restriction, as there is no pressure from the Russian public on the government to abide by the rule of law in its foreign policy, neither there is a competitive and effective mass-media which would reveal such violations to the domestic audience. Russia has a very long historic experience of using this sort of foreign policy tools, and one of the well documented cases was the attempt of the Russian tsar to influence domestic affairs at the end of nineteenth century in then friendly Bulgaria, which initially failed.⁸⁴

In post-Soviet Russia the tendency for this kind of foreign policy comes probably from the early 1990s. Then Moscow, dependent on the Western financial assistance, did not want to cause extra irritation that would affect this support, and to a great extent resorted to non-conventional aggression. There is a volume of research in the post-Soviet space providing convincing arguments that the post-soviet conflicts were in fact skillfully plotted by Politburo and KGB through political subversion and social engineering techniques.

Mircea Snegur, the first president of Moldova, claimed that at the end of 1990 he had a meeting in Moscow with Mikhail Gorbachev and Anatolii Lukianov, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. According to Snegur, Gorbachev told him angrily that if he does not sign the new Union treaty, which was supposed to keep Moldova inside Soviet Union, then he ‘will get both Transnistrian and Gagauz republics’. Lukianov, who was present, added to it that ‘they already have one [a separatist

81 Andrei Kokoshin, *‘Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91,’* MIT Press 1998, pp. 225

82 Janusz Bugajski, *‘Cold Peace: Russia’s New Imperialism,’* (Westport: Praeger 2004), p. 1

83 Michael Emerson, ‘Time to Think of a Strategic Bargain with Russia,’ Center for European Policy Studies, Policy Brief No. 160, May 2008, p. 1 and 5

84 See Paul W. Blackstock, *‘The Strategy of Subversion: Manipulating the Politics of Other Nations,’* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964).

republic] on the left bank'.⁸⁵ And it was Lukianov who through the "Soyuz" group of the USSR Supreme Soviet deputies has coordinated and granted significant support to the Igor Smirnov's secessionist group in Transnistria.⁸⁶

It becomes obvious that the current interstate aggression model is undergoing considerable change due to the increasing role of international public opinion, which is intolerable of armed aggression; and due to the importance of international prestige for countries that risk its significant deterioration when they wage military aggression against other states. Therefore the costs of launching an armed aggression against another state are too high, both politically and economically, given the recent experience of the United States of failing to install a reasonable control in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Therefore it was clear for Kremlin that overt or direct control over the CIS countries is impractical and expensive.⁸⁷ Over the

⁸⁵ Interview with Mircea Snegur for 'The Role of the Russian Federation in the Transnistrian Conflict. Part I: The Decline of URSS and the Soviet leadership conspiracy' article. In the same article there is a reference to Vadim Bakatin, former KGB Chairman, who in a 1993 interview to the Russian "Moskovskie Novosti" newspaper has admitted that at the end of 80s KGB was creating 'interfronts' in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to oppose them to the Georgian national movement. According to Bakatin the creation of such 'international fronts' in unruly republics aimed at dividing their societies into two irreconcilable camps.

⁸⁶ In April 1992 P. Lutenko, a senior investigator from the Moldovan Prosecutor Office went to Moscow to study the file of Anatolii Lukianov, investigated for taking part in the August 1991 Russian coup that aimed at overthrowing Gorbachev. Moldovan investigator found in Lukianov's personal archives an address from the Supreme Soviet of secessionist Transnistria requesting to sign with Moscow the new Union treaty as an independent legal subject. The document had Lukianov's signature and instructions to a certain "comrade Nishanov" to think over the issue and draft the strategy on how Transnistria would be able to sign the Union's treaty. Later, even though Chisinau has refused to take part in the referendum for preserving the Soviet Union structures, Moscow has sent to Moldova the troops of the Ministry of Interior of the USSR who together with the 14th Army enforced the referendum in Transnistria and also in the Gagauz-populated areas in the south of then still Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

⁸⁷ Bugajski (2004, 30).

years Russian policymakers and generals have learned to disguise their actions, describing them in images and language acceptable to the Western audience. Even though it was the instigator and a key side to the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, it claimed Russian military troops were stationed on the territories of its ex-satellites for peacekeeping purposes. It invoked on numerous occasions humanitarian justifications for various actions in breach of sovereignty of CIS countries, and of international law. A good example is the deployment of Russian military railway troops to Abkhazia prior to the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war.

Apart from this Russian government has exploited old links with the national elites to create dependency mechanisms; it has attempted to influence elections results by supporting with campaigning and money certain contestants; it has taken over the key sectors of the economy; it also encouraged and supported the promotion of its sympathizers into high positions in the government structures of CIS countries.

As an example, the Transnistrian administration-funded Olvia-Press news agency has published in 2003 an article, where among its usual propaganda mix it provided some scraps of data regarding the Moldovan National Army cooperation with NATO "Partnership for Peace" Program, which apparently only insiders would know.⁸⁸ Another telling case has happened shortly before president Voronin appointed a new head of government in the early 2008. On a Moldovan forum a Russian speaking user has written that among Tiraspol political circles the news about the demission of the Tarlev government had been discussed for more than two months. The post stated that Tiraspol secessionist leadership also believed that Zinaida Greciannii would become the new prime

⁸⁸ "Olvia-Press", 'Moldovan Iceberg: The Top and the Underwater Sides of a Neutral Country' [Moldavskii Asberg: Nadvodnaya i Podvodnaya Chasti Neitralinoi Strany], 24 April 2003, <http://www.olvia.idknet.com/ol124-04-03.htm>

minister. Few days later even many informed persons in Chisinau were surprised to learn that Voronin indeed has proposed the candidature of Grecianii as new head of Moldovan government.

There have been a number of signals in the form of articles both in printed and on-line media, pointing to leaks towards Transnistrian and Russian interested agencies. If this proves to be real, that would confirm the fears insisting that Moldovan government agencies are full of people who served in the Soviet Union and did not undergo any lustration procedure, similar to those which were previously conducted in the countries of Central Europe and in Baltic States. Their presence in Moldova's government institutions increases the country's vulnerability towards Russian foreign influence. Moldova probably should look towards other countries that joined NATO and EU and have done a more thorough job in fixing this problem.⁸⁹

Understanding the New Trends of Inter-State Aggression

Due to the mentioned obstacles to the overt use of military forces in regaining its control over the ex-Soviet republics, which are now independent states, Russian Federation has relied extensively on more subtle tools of aggression. The way it dealt with the secessionist conflicts in the area of former Soviet Union was recognized by researchers as being similar to the proxy-war techniques⁹⁰ that were extensively employed by the two Cold War competitors. This kind of actions has found in the literature many descriptions, including "political subversion", "covert operations",

89 Simon Araloff, 'The Guardians of Europe: Polish Secret Service Protects the Borders of the European Union, Part VI,' *Axis Information and Analysis*, 27 May 2005, <http://www.axisglobe.com/polish123.htm>
90 Anneli Ute Gabanyi in "The Balkan Prism: A Retrospective by Policy-Makers and Analysts", Deimel, Johanna; Meurs van, Wim, eds., (Munchen: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2007), p. 501

"political action programs", "political operations", "nonforcible influence", "indirect aggression", and others. While all of them do have certain specific trends, they generally tend to describe the efforts of a state to influence another state, by using tools of foreign policy, short of military force. Through such subtle and unobvious tools expansionist countries are aiming "to promote political fortunes of forces that they believe will be sympathetic to their respective interests and ideologies."⁹¹

Techniques that are being used by Russia today against Moldova, but also against Ukraine and Georgia are identical to those used both by the United States and the Soviet Union in their competition for influence over the Third World countries. They were labeled by the United States in the late 50s of the last century as "indirect aggression" and were condemned in strong phrases, which stated that "the imperialistic policies of Communist Russia have led, through direct and indirect aggression, to the subjugation of the national independence of ... states".⁹² These methods of indirect aggression, already referred to in the text, include financial support to the internal pressure groups which are tasked by aggressor state to promote policies undermining the sovereignty of the target state; putting economic and trade pressures aimed at squeezing economic and political concessions; and applying political-military pressure by exploring the separatist and Russian pro-unionist tendencies, etc. Therefore looking at the Cold War history, it becomes clear that the ongoing trend when Russia is using non-military coercive techniques to force ex-Soviet countries fulfilling Moscow's will are not generally new, but in practice represent strategies used before by the USSR.

Many critiques will point out that today not only Russia but also EU and US alike

91 Lori Fisler Damrosch, 'Politics Across Borders: Nonintervention and Nonforcible Influence Over Domestic Affairs,' *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 83, No. 1, (January 1989), p. 2

92 See Quincy Wright, 'Subversive Intervention,' *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 54, No. 3, (July, 1960), pp. 521-535

are using this kind of tools to strengthen their roles in various regions of the world, including in these countries. Nonetheless this looks so only in appearance and making a difference between the two approaches is of a key importance.

I will not consider as a distinct factor whether the target state has accepted or not the foreign influence under certain form, since a dictatorship may ask for assistance from another authoritarian state to stay in power. Likewise a government undergoing democratic transition may need assistance from other democratic countries to cope with transition period challenges and not to allow for political extremists to manipulate insufficiently informed or polarized constituencies. Instead I will consider the two approaches, of Russia on one hand, and of the Western actors on other hand, by the purpose and form of their foreign influence.

On one hand there is the foreign aid or foreign political influence aimed at assisting a state to build its institutional balance, to strengthen the rule of law and institutional capacities of the government. They are exercised having in mind the creation of the necessary conditions for the population of the targeted country to "exercise their political rights and freedom that are a component part of the body of international human rights law", and targeting the promotion of "constructive and nonviolent relations among states."⁹³ It does not strive to build a domestic government which would act like an agent of the foreign influencing power, but instead to create the necessary framework for the people to exercise the right for a free and an informed choice, and force the ruling elites to be more accountable to them. This kind of influence is usually transparent, and is aimed mostly at building institutional capacities, developing civil society, and educating the citizenry. And this is the influence that the West, as a rule, is targeting towards Moldova,

93 Ibid, p. 6

Ukraine and Georgia.⁹⁴

Contrary to this, there is another type of foreign influence. It follows the goal of setting up that type of political structure in the target country, which would allow for the influencing actor to easily control the policy choices of the influenced state, isolating the domestic constituencies from the participation in decision making. It promotes into power a small group or a person, which would destroy any institutional balance, since the more authoritarian the system, the more vertical the power relations are, the easier for the foreign country to establish its control. As a result the targeted country develops an authoritarian political system, which does not allow for the protection of citizens' human rights and freedom, and favors its political elites. Largely, that description fits Moldova, especially after the parliamentary elections in April 2009, when Russia showed an unprecedented support to the Communists' Party of Moldova. This support was given both through declarations of the Russian leadership, but also was visible in the official messages of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of its formal messages read that "the results of Moldovan elections are reflecting the interests of Moldovan and Russian peoples"⁹⁵.

94 There is a strong feeling shared by experts and researchers that United States support of M. Saakashvili in Georgia failed over the last few years to prevent the raise of authoritarian tools that the incumbent party is using, among them intimidation of opponents and manipulation of elections. See for example Jonathan Wheatley, "Georgia's Democratic Stalemate," *OpenDemocracy.net*, 14 April 2008, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/36213/pdf> and International Crisis Group Report No. 189, 'Georgia: Sliding Towards Authoritarianism?' 19 December 2007, http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/189_georgia_sliding_towards_authoritarianism.pdf.

95 That phrase published on the web-page of the Russian MFA on 7 April 2009 was later edited, and in its newer version said that "the results of elections... reflect the interests of the people of our countries" (http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/BDD58EAFE7738317C325759100299AAC?OpenDocument), while its initial version stayed unmodified on the web-page of the Russian state news agency Novosti Moldova, http://www.news moldova.ru/news.html?nws_id=812785, accessed on 26 May 2009.

Therefore, the difference in purposes of foreign influence is either to control the policy choices of a country or to provide it with the conditions where the citizens will contribute to these policy choices. This difference is also reflected in various ideologies that distinguishes the West from the increasingly assertive Putin's Russia. The West is dominated by the liberal-democratic ideas, where the democratic peace theory has strong roots and cooperation is the key determinant of interstate relations. Russia's political technologists have crafted a different ideology, which has borrowed massively from the balance of power tradition of Metternich's era. The buzz words of this new-brand Russian ideology are 'status quo', "order", "stability", while in fact Kremlin's intention is very much similar to the one of this Austrian statesman of nineteenth century:

Moreover, his [Metternich's] much vaunted direction of the other powers in preserving the European order was really a mask for maintaining Habsburg influence in international affairs far out of proportion to the power that the monarchy actually possessed.⁹⁶

In a similar fashion Russia, painfully observing the extension of the West into what perceives as its courtyard, and the popularity of Western ideologies - it frantically opposes it. It does so by both discouraging post-Soviet countries to integrate into the Western institutions and protesting or even denying the West the right to extend. Russian government claims that the West, which it perceives as dominated by the United States, should agree on a pact, which will accept unconditionally Russia's dominance of the post-Soviet space, without interfering or obstructing Moscow's action in those countries. Only this way is possible, according to the Russian policy-makers, to preserve the order, stability and peace on the European continent. Russia is afraid that the incorporation of its former

satellites into Western institutions will create a different regionalism pattern that will irreversibly link them to the West. And together with the military protection of the West, this will make impossible for Russia to retake, in any form, control over the territories of ex-Soviet republics.

I will argue further, that the plans that Russia cherishes and the tools that it employs against CIS countries that would like to integrate into Western institutions (Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia) are of an aggressive nature, representing the classic purposes and tools of war. The famous Clausewitzian classic definition of war, which he understood to be the continuation of state politics by other means, is a more political science interpretation of war than a legal one. There are many definitions of war, and one that includes most largely accepted conditions defines war as a struggle between two or more countries, involving armed forces confrontation, and aiming at constraining one adversary to give up any opposition and accept the other side's conditions.

War is an act of aggression and hostility, where by use of armed people one side exercises a coercive action upon another side. The efficiency of this coercive mechanism is based on the amount of damage and suffering inflicted on another side, and continues until one belligerent part realizes that it cannot bear anymore the costs of continuing the war as a perpetrator or as a defending side. The use of armed force or its threat is the oldest tool of coercion. Because in the early history the humanity was not very developed and interdependent, other possible tools of coercion than use of military force were not existing or useful. However, in the modern world, characterized by an advanced civilization development and increased interdependence, there are many other tools of coercion, like economic, political, and cultural. The last one includes both the societal and ideological realms.

⁹⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica: The Age of Metternich, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/44183/Austria/33361/The-Age-of-Metternich-1815-48>

Since traditionally war implies the use of armed forces, use of other tools of coercion, including military ones, may be considered and placed under the umbrella of aggression. Nevertheless, war should not be anymore perceived in narrow, conservative terms of a declared belligerent status among certain countries, but as an action, following the specific goal to coerce the enemy to fulfill one's will. And therefore it should not be limited at only considering the use of armed force, but instead should be focused on effects and goals. If it has the goal of forcing one country to fulfill the will of another country, by using tools of coercion that bring destruction and/or suffering commensurable with those inflicted by military force, then it should be treated by the international law similar to military aggression.

This is convenient also because the Charter of the United Nations does includes acts of aggression as cases that have to be dealt with by the UN Security Council. The problem in this case is caused by the lack of a legal definition of interstate aggression in the legal framework of the United Nations that would include other tools of coercion except the military one. According to the Charter, it is the Security Council who makes the decision whether there is or not an act of aggression.⁹⁷

In the past there were attempts at the United Nations to come up with a definition of aggression.⁹⁸ And the issue has already been a hot discussion topic among scholars and practitioners for a good while.⁹⁹ However the efforts to come up with a single definition were not very successfully, as it could have been expected. It is interesting, although, how certain regions have succeeded in defining aggression, given their historical experience of foreign

97 Charter of the United Nations, Chapter VII, Article 39

98 See John N. Hazard, 'Why Try Again to Define Aggression?' *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 62, No.3, (July, 1968), pp. 701-710

99 See Myres S. McDougal and Florentino P. Feliciano, 'The Initiation of Coercion: A Multi-Temporal Analysis', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (April, 1958), pp. 244-246

interference. The Charter of the Organization of American States specifically emphasizes that states should not interfere in the internal affairs of other states, prohibiting not only use of military forces, but "also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements".¹⁰⁰ These principles were also reflected in the 1975 CSSE Helsinki Final Act, and in the few declaration of the U.N. General Assembly.¹⁰¹

There are also opinions opposing the consideration of the techniques of subversion, labeled as "indirect aggression", as aggression in terms of the UN Charter provisions. The reason invoked is that such a move "would be contrary to the primary purposes of the United Nations to prevent 'the scourge of war' and 'to suppress acts of aggression and other breaches of the peace'".¹⁰² Yet, such arguments were more appropriate in 1960 than at present time. If used today, they first of all fail to consider the changing nature of human society and that wars can be waged using means other than military ones, with no less effectiveness and with no less human suffering.

The changing nature of interstate aggression that affected the way countries wage warfare was very well captured in a study produced by two senior Chinese officers in 1999. Underlying the decrease in visible armed violence in the future wars they concluded:

War which has undergone the changes of modern technology and the market system will be launched even more in atypical forms. In other words, while we are seeing a relative reduction in military violence, at the same time we definitely are seeing an increase in political, economic, and tech-

100 L. Damrosch (1989:7)

101 Ibid, pp. 7-10

102 Q. Wright (1960, 529). The article claims that the label "indirect aggression" was promoted to include "subversive intervention" in the category of aggression and by this to justify military actions by states or by United Nations to stop it.

nological violence. However, regardless of the form the violence takes, war is war, and a change in the external appearance does not keep any war from abiding by the principles of war.¹⁰³

Therefore, it is possible that a country is threatened by a war which may take atypical and non-traditional shape and form, employing political, economic, cultural or technological tools, instead of the military ones. Then, the fact that the target-country does not want to accept it is at war, will not save it from the real consequences of beligerent actions launched against it. Ignoring these new forms and disguises of war is similar to the case when a government does not do anything while foreign armies are invading its territories.

The Chinese officers claimed to have identified a new trend that is already influential and would dictate the wars of the future, labeling them "non-military war operations".¹⁰⁴ They refer to the international terrorism by pointing out that the use of such untraditionally means of warfare by terrorists have brought no less destruction to the international community than a military war.¹⁰⁵ And even if considering the use by state actors of new methods of non-military warfare, which threaten the political, economic, and military security of a state, 'the destruction which they do in the areas attacked are absolutely not secondary to pure military wars.'¹⁰⁶

The new methods are especially dangerous because they do not carry a very recognizable pattern of aggression, in the military traditionally perceived way, which makes the target unaware and undefended until it is too late. They may aim to disrupt the trade connections and/or financial system, affecting the economic balance and

103 Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, 'Unrestricted Warfare,' (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999), p. 6, [*FBIS Translated Text*], <http://www.terrorism.com/documents/TRC-Analysis/unrestricted.pdf>

104 Ibid, p. 50

105 Ibid, p. 132

106 Ibid, p. 116

prosperity. While this in turn would corrode the societal links, allowing flourishing the conditions that increase the division along cultural, religious, societal lines; the society itself can become a direct target. Media warfare may be used to weaken the values and ideological cement that keep the society together, affecting its fabric. Regulatory warfare can block an effective response to a crisis by international community; foreign aid warfare may undermine democratic transition in unstable regions and promote authoritarian regimes; and ideological warfare can be targeted at undermining the credibility and legitimacy of the West in regions critical for international peace and security.

While military aggression most of the times destroys the armed force of a country, its economy and infrastructure, which then can be rebuilt, the "indirect aggression" has the ability to inflict irreparable damage. It can divide countries and peoples, poisoning relations among them for longer periods, and creating areas of lengthy intractable conflicts. There are "indirect aggression" techniques, in fact, that create major impediments for democratic transition in countries like Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, since they serve as the invisible weapons arsenal of Russia to disturb the healthy processes that otherwise would provide conditions for efficient democratization.

If we look at the trend of democratic transition in the world, then we can observe a pattern of democratic spillover, when the transition waves from democratized countries would reach their neighbors, and then their neighbors' neighbors, and so on. It only stopped when it reached countries bordering Russian Federation, since the force of transition has clashed with a counterforce, aiming to promote a different type of transition, an authoritarian one. Now it is the force and energy of these two opposite waves that will decide which transition is going to be promoted in Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.

The Tools of Indirect Aggression

Bugajski identified a number of mechanisms that the Russian strategy aiming to increase its influence over its former satellites consisted of. In a way they reflected such generally known strategies as political subversion, economic disruption, propaganda dissemination, social disorganization and psychological warfare.

Building up influence over their foreign and security policy choices was among the first goals. Then, through targeted foreign investments and takeovers of economically critical infrastructure the Russian government-controlled companies aimed at reaching monopolistic positions on internal markets of post-Soviet countries. Through involvement with officials, parties, media outlets and pro-Russian NGOs they were to gain influence on the territories of the targeted countries. The creation of energy and economic investment dependencies were meant to transform into long-term intergovernmental influence.¹⁰⁷

At the same time Russian officials opposed the strengthening of the Eastern countries' ties with the West, attempting to limit the scope and pace of the enlargement of Western institutions.¹⁰⁸ This was done because Kremlin understood that integration of its former satellites with the Western institutions would diminish the regionalism pattern with Russia and would build new regional links with Western countries, moving CIS states into another region. As a result it would become extremely difficult for

Russia to rebuild its influence over these countries. As such, the NATO enlargement is opposed by Kremlin for no other reason than the fear that it would prevent Russia itself from enlarging over the territories of these countries, since they will be defended by the Alliance institutional agreement of mutual defense.¹⁰⁹

However, these were goals, but the tools to achieve them included diplomatic pressures resulting in the manipulation of treaties and interstate agreements, various provocative and inflammatory declarations by Russian officials; propaganda attacks, which included demonization and disinformation techniques, targeting politicians both in our examined countries and in the West; direct military threats and deployment of troops under the cover of peacekeeping or humanitarian needs, deployment of Cossacks recruited through the Russian Ministry of Defense offices¹¹⁰ and other kinds of volunteers-patriots; energy control and economic leverages, including through attracting high level politicians to invest on Russia's controlled territory and thus making them dependent; and inflaming social discontent and exploiting divisions on ethnic, cultural and religious lines.

The covert character of these tools makes it harder to uncover, understand and believe that it is possible for such things to happen. It often comes out as insignificant elements of various investigative articles. Such as the 2002 "Moskovskie Novosti" newspaper article, claiming that the GRU¹¹¹ was training and sending military personnel to do covert operations in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. The same article

107 During president Lucinschi term in office, Moldovan government reportedly tried to ease its dependency with Gazprom by selling its debts to a foreign company, which was interested to get involved on Moldovan energy market. The Gazprom representative visited Moldova, had some tensed discussions with its leadership, then went to Tiraspol, and soon Moldova was encountering energy shortages due to energy cuts. That particular initiative of the government to address the energy dependency on Russia has then failed, as Moldovan government backed from its respective agreement with a Western company.

108 Bugajski (2004, 30-31)

109 Ibid, p. 2

110 Oleg Elenski, 'The New Volunteers' Army' [Novaya Dobrovolicheskaya Armiya], *Nezavisimoye Voennoe Obozrenie*, 25 August 2006, http://nvo.ng.ru//forces/2006-08-25/4_kazaki.html#. In this article it is also revealed that Russian Cossacks have fought in post-Soviet conflicts in early 90s, including in Transnistria. It is clear also that they are also, through some arrangement, a part of the Russian official military structures.

111 Russian Defense Intelligence Agency (GRU – Glavnoe Razvedyvatelinoe Upravlenie)

confirmed the habit of Russian intelligence to infiltrate into foreign organized crime groups and use this for further intelligence activities.¹¹²

Apart from these methods Kremlin has built upon the Soviet-time regionalism in developing cultural and educational ties, involving politicians, academics, journalists, formal and informal leaders, and erecting its political influence capital. To decrease Western interest and involvement in CIS countries Russia has attempted to isolate the latter's leaders, pushing them into corner until they had no other perceived ally or supporter than Russia. As mentioned earlier Moscow has also increasingly used its intelligence officers to penetrate criminal networks in target countries, and through their locally built connection mechanisms to influence local authorities; it penetrated military and intelligence services of its former satellites.¹¹³

These strategies were tested and used to an extent or another all over the former Soviet Union, which proves the claim that Russia had a structural and organized approach towards using indirect methods of aggression against its neighboring countries. It was not only Moldova and Georgia that tasted the bitterness of this treatment. Bugajski gives a thorough account of this, writing that:

In order to return Kyiv more firmly under its control, Moscow engaged in various forms of subterfuge and subversion. The diverse methods included energy blackmail, economic buyouts, media propaganda, discrediting pro-independence politicians, attempts at diplomatic isolation, manipulation of ethnic and regional issues, threats of direct military intervention to protect Russian ethnics, lingering territorial claims, and challenges over the ownership of the Sevastopol naval base in Crimea.¹¹⁴

In fact Russian politicians and analysts did not shy away from accepting they used subterfuge, subversion and indirection as key tools of their foreign policy in post-Soviet area. Konstantin Zatulin, who is a member of the State Duma on the party list of the pro-Putin "Edinaya Rossiya", and exercises the duties of the first deputy chairman of the Committee on CIS affairs and relations with compatriots abroad of the Duma, is a revealing example in this regard.

In a 1997 Zatulin has co-authored an article, where he claimed that Russia have to "use all its economic, military, ethno-demographic and other instruments of influence, and not allow for the consolidation of state power around forces of an anti-Russian and anti-integrationist orientation. Only active measures (including destabilization of situation on domestic arena in regions where the anti-Russian and anti-integrationist forces are especially active) are able to prevent the slow but irreversible process... of those countries leaving the Russian sphere of influence and transforming CIS into fiction.' The article also mentioned in relation to Azerbaijan that Russia has to support military superiority of Armenia over Azerbaijan¹¹⁵, to instigate the unionist feeling of Lezgin people, a part of which lives in the north of Azerbaijan, and to bring back on the agenda the issue of Talysh autonomy, triggering the federalization of

115 This is another widespread trend of a tool largely used by Russia in Georgia and Moldova. Mikhail Bergman, the military commandant of the Benderi (Tighina) garrison in his 'Leader in a Strange Pack' [Vojdi v Ciujoi Stae] book, republished by Transnistrian newspaper "Celovek i ego Prava" has alleged that in 1993 the commander of the 145 motorized rifle division (12 military base of the Russian Ministry of Defense) Major-General Vladimir Gladyshev delivered to the representatives of Adjarian Ministry of Interior and of the Ministry of State Security 1300 light weapons (automatic rifles and machine guns). He did it at the verbal order of his superior, Colonel-General Fedor Reut, the commander of the Group of Russian Forces in Caucasus who in his turn received a verbal order from Pavel Grachev, the Ministry of Defense of Russian Federation. The transfer of arms was done with all necessary paperwork, under the supervision of the Federal Security Service of Russia (FSB). See <http://www.lindex.lenin.ru/Lindex4/Text/9220.htm>

112 Igor Koroliov, 'Killers' Trade Union,' *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 25, 9 July 2002

113 Ibid, pp. 29-49

114 Ibid, p. 81

Azerbaijan and making the country unstable for hydrocarbon-related foreign investments. Similar things were said in relation to Ukraine, insisting the only powerful guaranty of a friendly and cooperating Ukraine is its federalization in regard to Crimea.¹¹⁶ All these ideas resemble very close the principles used by Russian in its foreign policy towards Moldova.

Moscow has taken as habit to provide Russian passports to people leaving in the areas of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. When according to some sources the number of people with Russian passports have reached as high as 80-90% in Georgian secessionist regions and some 25% in Transnistria¹¹⁷, Russia began insisting that it has the right to "defend its citizens" in the conflict regions even using military means, if necessary, putting additional pressure on Georgian and Moldovan governments. In the case of Moldova, however, because Chisinau did not accept the Russian request for the opening of a consular office in Tiraspol, Moscow has started to deliver visas in Transnistria through the office of the Russian LDPR in Tiraspol, using it as a de-facto Russian consulate.¹¹⁸ Other organizations, including the youth movement "Pro-ryv" were also involved in similar activities.

On 2 November 2000 the consular office of the Russian Federation in Chisinau has signed a contract with the "Edinstvo" [Unity] organization in Transnistria, who presented itself as a social movement.

116 K. Zatulin and A. Migranean, 'CIS: the beginning and the end of history. Changing the landmarks' [SNG: Nachalo i Konetz Istории. K Smene Vek], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 March 1997, <http://www.zatulin.ru/index.php?§ion=publications&id=35>

117 Vladimir Bukarski, 'A Fort on Nistru' [Fortpost na Dnestre], *Zavtra*, No. 35 (667), 30 August 2006

118 'Moldova's Uncertain Future,' International Crisis Group Report, No. 175, 17 August 2006, p. 17, http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/moldova/175_moldova_s_uncertain_future.pdf. LDPR stands for the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and its leader is the notorious Vladimir Jirinovski. Actually it has become a habit for all Russian parties with a nationalistic agenda to open their offices in Transnistria, as if it was a Russian province.

The contract allowed "Edinstvo" to deliver consular services on behalf of the Russian Consular Office in Chisinau for a period of six months, and allowed an extension for another half a year. According to the contract "Edinstvo" had to provide in Bender and surrounding territories necessary assistance and issue passports to people who would like to become Russian citizens. The Russian Consular Office in Chisinau took the responsibility to provide "Edinstvo" with all necessary consultation and documents.¹¹⁹ The dramatic consequences of this "passportization" policy of Kremlin in the secessionist regions was seen during Duma and presidential elections of Russian Federation, when despite the protests of Tbilisi and Chisinau, who insisted the polling stations should be opened only at the Russian Embassy and consular offices, Russia has opened numerous polling stations in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.¹²⁰

The procedure of "passportization" has started very soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and took the form of Russian government efforts to implement the institute of double citizenship in the ex-Soviet republics. The Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev called this process "the most important instrument" necessary for the solution of the "key strategic goal of the Russian foreign policy".¹²¹ Even though initially it faced the opposition, either overt or more subtle, Russia has managed to overcome them. Starting 1997 it started to encourage the receiving of Russian passports by

119 On behalf of the Russian Embassy in Chisinau the contract was signed by Andrey Viktorovici Kainov, and Vlarii Valentinovici Avdeev, the deputy chair of the "Edinstvo" executive committee has signed it on behalf of "Edinstvo". See "The Role of the Russian Federation in Transnistrian Conflict. Part III", <http://www.eurasianhome.org/xml/t/expert.xml?lang=en&nic=expert&pid=1077>

120 Another result of the deliberate "passportization" policy is the "humanitarian" interventions of Russian military in secessionist regions.

121 I. Zevelev, 'Sootchestvenniki v Rossiiskoi Politike na Postsovetском Prostranstve' [Compatriots issue in the Russian Foreign Policy on Post-Soviet Area], *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 1, (January-February 2008), <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/30/9127.html>

people living in CIS countries, often going against the will and the law of post-Soviet countries. As I. Zelenev put it, "by treating Russians in the near abroad not only as national minorities in those countries but also as compatriots, Moscow has built the reason, when convenient, to raise this issue in her relations with neighbors. The newly drafted "Russia and compatriots" concept allowed Kremlin to address the topic of diasporas as an internal issue."¹²²

Apart from this there are few other techniques used by Kremlin to justify its intervention into the domestic affairs of its ex-satellites. Its apologists argue that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the former republics are undergoing degradation. They insist that Russia is surrounded by a ring of states incapable of developing without any foreign assistance; that they need not even financial but especially political, organizational, and moral assistance. As a result, insist Russian researchers, these post-Soviet states can either progress with the help of Russia, or get bogged down in their development, continuing to degrade. However, they continue, the degradation of post-Soviet space will lead to chaos, which will spill over into Russia. Therefore Russian government should pay more attention to oppose this chaos in post-Soviet republics, being proactive, instead of wasting resources in tackling chaos inside Russia, which is in their view an unnecessary reactive approach.¹²³

The sovereignty of ex-Soviet republics is also questioned, in academia, expert community and policymakers' circles. There is a sufficient amount of Russian scholarship literature, insisting that CIS countries lack sovereignty, or are only in the process of building their statehood. And that it is the Western radicals, neoconservatives, and Russophobe-minded persons from Wash-

ington¹²⁴, that took control over many centers of the state power in Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, and are forcing these countries to promote anti-Russian policies. The very illustrative case happened during the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit, when Russian president V. Putin reportedly told United States president G. Bush that Ukraine is not even a state.¹²⁵ Also in a similar line goes the effort to promote ideas alleging that the post-Soviet countries have the features of failed states, they cannot take decisions by themselves, and in exchange for Russian assistance and support they should think to trade the remnants of their sovereignty, meaning supporting the efforts of Russian foreign policy in international fora.

There is a lot of work done to promote cultural and identity ties between Russia on one side, and Moldova and Ukraine on the other, although in Russia itself many overzealous critiques assess this activity as insufficient. Obviously Ukraine and Moldova represent higher priority targets, due to the considerable level of Russian minorities and speakers they have and the role that Russian language plays in the daily lives of their citizens. This is done through promotion and opening of TV stations, local offices of Russian radio stations and newspapers, funding of Russian history study and cultural programs, supporting of NGOs and even whole universities. While many of these initiatives are declared as cultural support, they end in financing nationalistic

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ M. Deleagin, 'Posle SNG: Oдиночество Rossii' [After CIS: The Loneliness of Russia], *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4, (July-August, 2005), <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/15/4512.html>

¹²⁴ Inter-Media Consulting, "Deputat Gosdumy RF Sergey Markov: Ukraina Potereala Svoi Suverenitet' [Russian State Duma Deputy Sergey Markov: Ukraine has Lost its Sovereignty], 12 May 2008, <http://www.imk.com.ua/ru/articles/25794>

¹²⁵ Kommersant, 'Blok NATO Razoshelsya na Blokpakety' [NATO Blok Divided into Block Packs], No. 57, 7 April 2008, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=877224&NodesID=5>. According to the article, Putin addressed Bush angrily "You understand George, that Ukraine is not even a state, don't you! What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is Eastern Europe, another part, and a significant one, are the territories donated by us!" Putin went on, suggesting that if Ukraine will be offered NATO membership, then it will disappear as a state, since Russia will seize the eastern regions and Crimea from Ukraine.

groups, parties, and initiatives, which advocate the increase of Russian influence. An increasingly large support is offered through the Russian media to the idea of having CIS countries joining a supra-state structure of the type of European Union but under the Russia's leadership.

A special attention should be paid to the efforts of Moscow to build a virtual history around the origins and nature of the Transnistrian conflict, the role of Russian Federation in it, as these efforts are very visible on the Internet¹²⁶; however this is beyond the scope of this paper. Russia conducted rather successful propaganda campaign, promoting pro-Russian ideas, discrediting the European Union and United States, and local politicians that supported the integration with the West, and demonizing the pro-Romanian opposition. For its purposes it used domestic printed media, local publications of popular Russian newspapers, and especially the new media. The latter deserves special attention, since it targets mostly the youth, and judging by the nature of the posts on forums and other online platforms, it does it rather successfully. The reduced level of education, the growing tendency among students to buy their grades and degrees, encouraged by the increasing number of foreign remittances they are receiving from their parents, contributes to the general level of ignorance among much of the Moldovan youth. This, coupled with the Soviet-time inherited political apathy and illiteracy created conditions, that led communication studies conclude that a less educated

126 Both Tiraspol authorities and Russian agencies are putting efforts into flooding the Internet with stories of "ex-combatants", witnesses, "victims", that "have seen with their own eyes" what has happened during the conflict. Funds and efforts are put into printing books and writing articles. An especially interesting example is the case with Wikipedia: Tiraspol authorities have hired personnel who write detailed descriptions of the Moldovan-Russian relations, Transnistrian conflict events; they manipulate the facts and generally attempt to promote a different version of the conflict, similar to how Soviet-time specialists were building virtual history.

ed public is an easier subject to stylistic and rhetorical manipulations.¹²⁷

An important place in the Russia's arsenal of indirect aggression techniques used in post-Soviet area is occupied by the so-called CIS peacekeeping operations. After the collapse of the USSR Russia has benefited of the fact that it had military troops in the regions and the West was afraid and reluctant to get involved in former Soviet Union. As a result Russia had it hands completely free to continuously promote local conflicts, in the orchestration of which Soviet leadership had played such an instrumental role. Usual strategy included siding with the rebel regions, fighting on their side against the ex-republics, either directly; or by using its military mobilization system it recruited ex-militaries willing to fight for money, and seconding them to the conflict regions.

Russian political leadership would get involved again when militarily rebels would achieve a good strategic stance, and when they wanted to keep it unchallenged. Moscow would press the capitals of newly independent republics into cease-fires, forcing on them the same Russian military that participated in the conflict as peacekeepers. Afterwards, it practiced the maintenance of a "controlled" level of tensions in the conflict, which were not serious enough to become a destabilizing factor, but at the same time they were used to continuously claim the necessity of preserving the Russian peacekeeping in the regions.¹²⁸ It has pushed for the recognition of CIS as "international organization" by the UN, since this would have allowed Moscow to decide "peacekeeping" deployments without prior UN Security Council approval.¹²⁹

127 G. Ray Funkhouser & Nathan Maccoby, 'An Experimental Study on Communicating Specialized Science Information To a Lay Audience,' *Communication Research*, Vol. 1, 1974, p. 110

128 Bobo Lo, 'Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy,' Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House Papers (London: Blackwell, 2003), p. 92.

129 Bugajski, (2004:37)

In Moldova Moscow's peacekeepers turned into the protective force, which provided the cover for the separatist leadership to consolidate its quasi-institutions and build its own armed forces. Russian military that were portrayed as peacekeepers have violated numerous times even the agreements imposed on Moldova by Russia. In 1994 it has unilaterally withdrawn many of its military control posts at the river Nistru, allowing them to be immediately manned by the Tiraspol armed groups. This has led to the establishment of the customs and border guards' posts of the secessionist leadership at the conditional separation line with the territory controlled by Chisinau.

When Moldovan leadership started to largely advocate both at home and abroad the idea of Russian troop's withdrawal, pointing out that there is no role for them anymore, Moscow responded aggressively. It launched a wide media campaign underlying how crucial is for the security of the region the continuous stay of its militaries and that in case they leave the conflict may switch to the violent stage again. It has staged a number of dramatic scenes bringing to the region Rus-

sian officials, Russian Orthodox Church leaders that were praising and chanting the importance of Russian soldier on Nistru [Dniester] river, delivering decorations and gifts, and providing an abundant media coverage of this.

One of the most frequent strategies employed by Russia in the conflict region is to force Moldova to accept Transnistria as "an equal side" in negotiations, in an attempt to cover for the fact that it is Moscow behind the conflict, and to promote instead the secessionist region as a victim of Chisinau's aggression. Western countries are also the targets of this strategy. In case Russia succeeds in these efforts, it will be able to unquestionably promote its own agenda behind the scenes, presenting its initiatives on behalf of the Transnistrian leadership, able to stall and block anything that does not fit its interests. It will offer Moscow the possibility to endlessly freeze the conflict resolution conflict, when Chisinau or its Western partners will offer solutions that would have the capacity to offset the Russia's monopolistic role in the conflict resolution process.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to address a subject, which is completely ignored in Moldova, and understanding which would, in the opinion of the author, considerable advance the efficiency of Chisinau's foreign policy. For the sake of objectivity we should recognized that the subject is not very popular in the West either. The paper had few goals. First, it aimed to point out that the failure of democratic transition in Moldova cannot and should not be only explained by internal factors. Instead, it is necessary to realize that Moldova's democratic transition is heavily influenced by the external factors, and namely, by the negative pressure of the Russian foreign policy and the indirect aggression techniques used by Moscow against Chisinau.

Then, the study sought to address the idea, that while Moldova is placed on the confrontation line between two political transition waves, - democratic from the West and authoritarian from Russia, - it is mostly affected by the authoritarian wave. In both cases, this is explained by Moldova having inherited and its political system being dominated by Soviet inherited trends and mechanisms. That determines its integration into a Russian dominated region, and therefore generates its vulnerability to Russia. Another factor that makes Moldova more vulnerable to the authoritarian wave from the East is the environment of insecurity generated and maintained by the Russian Federation. Both conditions, as explained by the Seeley-Heintz law, provide for favorable ground for the development of an authoritarian system of governance.

The third conclusion of that paper suggests that the West has significantly lower stakes in Moldova, comparing to what Moscow has, which results in Russia generating more resources, stronger policies and more decisive and intense actions. The expansion of Western policies in post-Soviet countries gener-

ates opposition and competing policies from Kremlin. It is as simple as that: many Western efforts to promote democratic transition in post-Soviet area, including in Moldova do not succeed or bring limited results because they are opposed by counter-policies of Russian Federation. This explains to a great extent the failures of Western actors to promote democratic reforms in CIS, an explanation not entirely accepted in Brussels. Metaphorically we could say that while in post-Soviet area Russia plays wise, at full strength and aiming for victory, the West is laid-back, untroubled, relaxed and plays for fun, without investing sufficiently well thought efforts, necessary to attain more ambitious goals.

The study offers suggestions in regard to the policies of foreign aid coming from the West, and particularly on the democratic development assistance promoted by organizations such as USAID, DFID, SIDA, UNDP, etc. The volume of assistance they offer has an increasingly reduced output, while its efficiency is subjected to a growing criticism of the Western experts. The democratic development assistance efforts are undermined by the employed strategies. They are not entirely adequate because they fail to grasp the realities on the ground. It is suggested that Moldova and other post-Soviet states should be treated not as much focusing on the influence of domestic factors, but considering the security threats of foreign origin, which corrupt the political system of government, turning it into an inefficient and authoritarian one.

This idea has strong repercussions at least in the case of Moldova, because it underlines systemic errors of the Western development efforts, both governmental and non-governmental. One of the main consequences of these efforts, due to the ways and strategies they are promoted through, is that they are offering the financial support and the legitimacy that the authoritarian political leadership in

Chisinau needs for mimicking the democratic processes. Therefore, there are cases when Western democratic development endeavors essentially contribute to the consolidation of the "smart authoritarianism" in Moldova, both through its actions and inactions.

Similarly, the paper strongly suggests that the democratization of the post-Soviet area, in the absence of significant Western balancing of the Russian foreign pressure targeted at the CIS countries, will inevitably fail. The reason behind this is that Moscow is also powerfully promoting a wave of authoritarianism, likewise the West is trying to promote a process of democratic transition. Ironically, this very much resembles the ideological confrontation between USSR and the West taking place during the Cold War. Then, each side was promoting practices and political regimes that would allow them to cultivate and maintain loyalties or dependencies in the targeted weaker countries. For specific political and economic reasons Brussels refuses to accept that, being more interested in calming Kremlin, than in effectively addressing the issues on which the West and Russia of today are natural competitors. As a result Russia perceives these moves as concession and submission. This places, EU especially, on the Russian strategy map as a weak opponent, with obvious vulnerabilities, which Russia is eager to exploit, maintain and even develop. This Russian perception of the EU as being weak is guiding Moscow's policies towards Brussels, as the Russian political and strategic cultures see concessions to a weaker opponent as shameful and disgraceful.

Therefore any political leadership in Chisinau, indifferent of its color and affiliation, will be forced to flirt with Moscow, as long as the West will not be able to provide a level of support, substantial enough to assist Moldova in balancing the Russian foreign pressure. A first step in this regard would be the a political move of a "surgical" type, which instead of an evolutionary integration of Moldova into the EU would employ a more quick one, detaching Moldova from CIS with its post-Soviet features, dominated by Russia, and linking it to the West

through institutional economic, political, cultural, and security ties. This also exposes the reality that Republic of Moldova will not be able to advance on the democratic transition path, as long as it is not integrated into the European Union. Only that would free Moldova of the vulnerabilities linked to its placement in the CIS region dominated by Russia and will protect it against any resulting consequences of that Russia-dominated regionalism.

The paper provides the following recommendations for the interested actors:

Western partners of Moldova, including the international development agencies would have to understand the dominant influence of foreign factor, as the Russian foreign policy is, on the failure or success of democratic transition in Moldova and would need to adapt their policies and strategies of engagement; there is a strong necessity to study the transformation of interstate aggression, and the new non-military aggression methods and techniques employed by Russian Federation to take political control over Moldova and other CIS countries; as well as the effects that the threats to their national security have on the dynamic of democratic transition and the emergence of authoritarianism; as Moldovan leadership is not capable to resist alone the foreign pressure of Kremlin, the only possibility to prevent the transformation of Moldova into a classic satellite of Russia is convincing the West to get involved in Moldova more actively, continuously countering the Russian policies of foreign influence, and potentially offering it the EU membership.

The current paper is designed as a reading for experts, but also for students interested in the studies of security and democratic transition. While it focuses predominantly on Moldova, the paper provides useful ideas for understanding the failures of "color" revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, contrary to some that are claiming that "color revolutions bring chaos and instability"; the particularities of democratic transition in post-Soviet area, the Russian foreign policy in that region, and the influence of the Soviet heritage of CIS countries on their post-Soviet transition.

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NOTES

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